'Fishers of Men': Religion and Political Economy among Colonized Tabwa

Author(s): Allen F. Roberts

Source: *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, 1984, Vol. 54, No. 2 (1984), pp. 49-70

Published by: Cambridge University Press on behalf of the International African Institute

Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/1159910

Africa 54(2), 1984

'FISHERS OF MEN': RELIGION AND POLITICAL ECONOMY AMONG COLONIZED TABWA

Allen F. Roberts

In the late nineteenth century, Catholic missionaries among Tabwa[1] southwest of Lake Tanganyika (now Zaire) sought to create a cohesive community of African Christians. The priests prohibited communal practice of Tabwa religion in the vicinity of their churches (established at points of densest population) and appropriated important means of food production like river-fishing grounds, for their own exploitation or to reward those loyal to them. As they enhanced their own economic and political influence, they contributed to Tabwa anomie, rather than community.

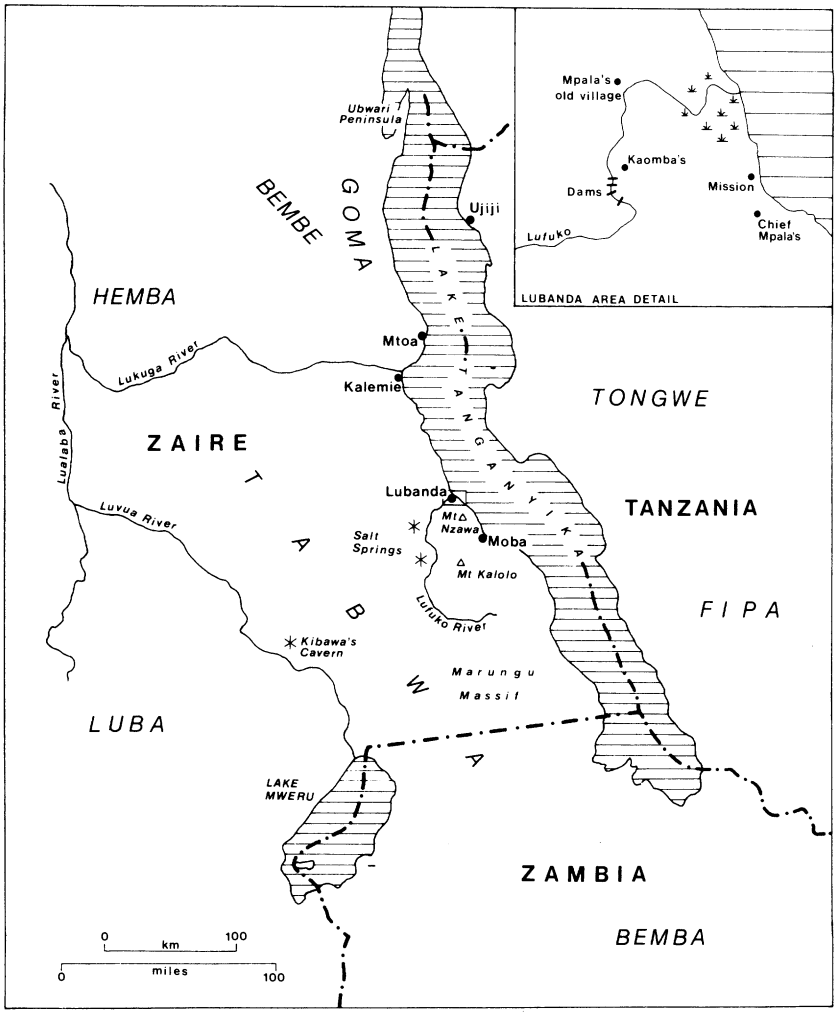
The White Fathers' first permanent mission was at Lubanda, on the fertile delta of the Lufuko River. Every year, catfish called *ndjagali* ascend the Lufuko to spawn in its reedy meanders near Lubanda. In the nineteenth century, smoked *ndjagali* were eaten with relish by Tabwa, and traded far afield for salt and iron. In this paper, Tabwa explanation of the annual spawning of *ndjagali* and related ecological phenomena will be presented to set the scene for a discussion of religious and politico-economic change in the early colonial years.

Tabwa religion in the 1880s had important communal foci in ceremonies offered to *ngulu* earth spirits and *mipasi* manes. At Lubanda, the earth spirit Kaomba both symbolized (in the form of a bored stone) and assured community vitality by bringing *ndjagali* catfish to spawn in the Lufuko meanders. Wim van Binsbergen (1981: 111, 97–8) has suggested recently that 'territorial' or 'ecological cults' to earth spirits like Kaomba form 'a unique complement – an actional, symbolic and spatial counterpoint' to 'everyday ecological activities', in this case, like river-fishing. As Tabwa ecological activities changed, so did the complementary and contrapuntal religious practices. A 'technological revolution' permitted Tabwa at Lubanda to fish far out on Lake Tanganyika; this was an individual pursuit, rather than the corporate one river-fishing had been, however. Initiative in this domain was consonant with emphasis on the individual, rather than the corporate group, placed in other economic and political circumstances. Tabwa religion, too, shifted, to the intensely personal experience of spirit possession, a religious form more adaptive to the new social context because it is 'open to everyone' rather than to a few chosen by organizational principles suspected, deemed or proven inappropriate or impractical because of their condemnation by the missionaries. A reconstruction of turn-of-the-century culture and history is attempted here through the use of mission diaries and other unpublished documents, as well as information gathered among present-day Tabwa.[2]

KAOMBA, THE EARTH SPIRIT

Tabwa believe the Earth harbours spirits called *ngulu* (KiTabwa) or *mizimu* (Swahili). Tabwa country, part of the Western Rift system, is one of sheer mountain slopes rising from Lake Tanganyika, jutting peaks, exfoliated

domes and oddly shaped rock formations. Many, but not necessarily the most obviously unusual places are earth spirit sites. In the early to middle years of the last century, a person suddenly and spectacularly possessed by an earth spirit would identify a site thereafter recognized by the greater community. This form of possession, called *kasesema*, only happened to the individual once, and is said to have been startling to all involved. Thereafter, the Earth spirits received offerings at particular times or in particular circumstances, and such practices are continued with a degree of dedication and enthusiasm depending upon physical and cultural distance from Catholic missions, government seats or other points where outside influences hold sway. Where offerings are no longer made, no one denies the past or present existence of *ngulu*; they say instead that the spirits have 'lost their strength (*kupoteza nguvu*)', a statement which invariably sparks debate and the recounting of



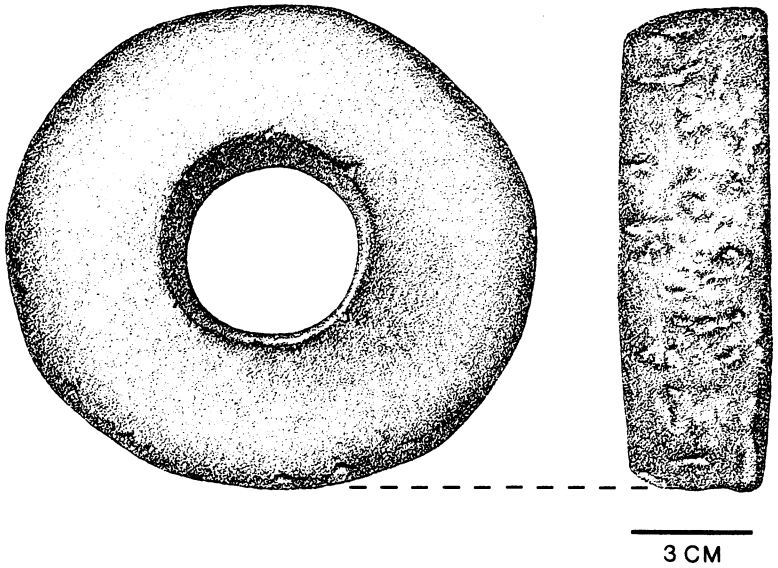
anecdotes 'proving' that the *ngulu* are still active and powerful (see Cancel, 1981: 35–7; Cunnison, 1967: 220–25, Oger 1972 and Werner 1971 on *ngulu* among southern Tabwa and adjacent peoples).

Ngulu spirits are a means by which man can relate to the land: 'from the heights of their mountains and the tops of their gigantic trees to the bottoms of their caverns and the depths of Lake Tanganyika, . . . [the *ngulu*] direct the course of what is human' (Debeerst, 1894: 2; cf. Kaoze in Kimpinde, 1982: 84). Offerings made to the *ngulu* assure the bounty and balance of cosmic forces essential to life. As one Tabwa chief told me, the meaning (*maana*) of chiefship in his prerogative to contact *ngulu*. His esteemed ancestors buried in the earth and his relation to *ngulu* (the two being different) are the essence of a chief's identity with the land; no other person has this, nor can one chief possess this capacity in the land of another. Changes in man's relationship to the earth spirits are synonymous with changes in Tabwa chiefship.[3]

Earth spirits manifest themselves in a number of ways. They are described as great serpents, altogether 'white' (the most auspicious colour) with a necklace of blue beads, or 'sparkling like the stars'. They may be pythons, mambas or other snakes encountered near the spirit's site. Kaomba, the most important *ngulu* of Lubanda, can assume this as well as several other forms. It is said, for instance, that before the missionaries arrived at Lubanda and built a bridge over the nearby Lufuko River, most people could safely ford at a particular place. Occasionally, though, someone would step into 'a hole covered with sand', sink down and die if alone and unassisted. This place – what we would call quicksand – was Kaomba.[4] In the past, too, Kaomba would appear as a whirlpool in Lake Tanganyika off the point of land where the Catholic mission was later built at Lubanda. These manifestations of Kaomba were occasional and ephemeral, however, as opposed to by far the most significant one: its embodiment in a granitic, bored stone, used in important annual ceremonies.

Bored stones have been found in many parts of Central Africa.[5] One hypothesis about them is that like the *kwe* of !Kung of the Kalahari, the stones were used as counterweights for digging-sticks. That a number of bored stones have been found in the exceptionally fertile alluvia of the Lufuko delta at Lubanda might accord with this, since such a singular locale (with two annual harvests rather than the ordinary one) must have been attractive to early visitors as it is to present-day farmers (cf. Cabu, n.d.). If, as other archaeologists have surmised, bored stones were used as currency, their discovery at Lubanda may attest to the successful economic life of early residents, based on agriculture and river-fishing.

According to nineteenth-century sources, Tabwa called bored stones *tubwe* (singular, *kabwe*). Auguste Van Acker (1907: 23) offered longer generic terms, *kabwe kabangwa* and *kabwe lulu*. The second name was given to a bored stone by an informant of mine who had found it years ago.[6] *Kabwe kabangwa* (also the name of a particular earth spirit near the town of Moba) is the more significant, in that *kabangwa* is the reflexive form of the verb *kubanga*, 'to speak' or, more generally, 'to inform'. The name, then, might be translated as 'the informed stone'. Another expression from the same verb, *mu kabanga*, is 'east'. This seems an odd association unless it be known that Tabwe believe that at death one's speech becomes light.



A bored stone from Lubanda, probably like but not the same as that invested by the earth spirit Kaomba. Drawing by M. Van Bolt, 1982.

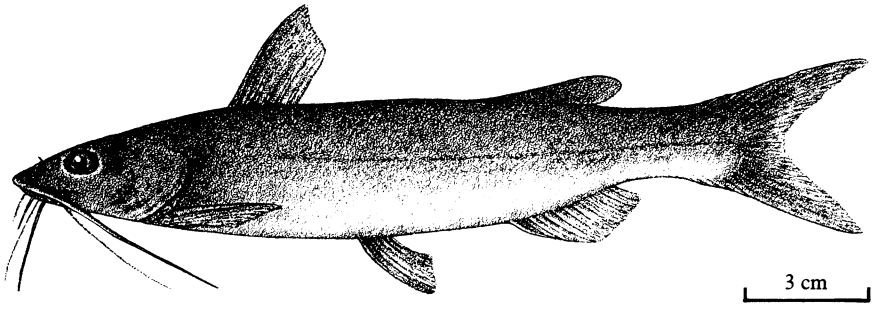
It is said that the spirit of a dead person goes to reside with Kibawa, the chthonic spirit to be introduced below, but also that it eventually returns to the east to be 'reborn'. In part, this is a 'nominal reincarnation', as a grandparent's name is given to a newborn (cf. Stefaniszyn, 1954: 131).[7] The east is the place of dawn, the light which one's speech becomes at death. 'Speech' is communication and Tabwa say words 'mature' (*kukomesha*) a person or context by making manifest its essence (see Davis-Roberts, 1981: 314; cf. Devisch, 1978). The east is dawning and 'dawning' (i.e., recognition), enlightenment and 'enlightenment'. The 'reborn' spirit will guide and counsel its grandchild, thus assuring the continuity of wisdom.

The 'informed', bored stone of Kaomba offers in economical form and expression the most essential associations and transformations of Tabwa life: recognition, procreation and the provision of nourishment. Kaomba, like all *ngulu* Earth spirits, is felt to have both female and male manifestations and sites. The bored stone, as one informant said, is female (*jike*, the term used for female animals) 'because of its hole'. One word for 'hole' in the Tabwa language (and there are others) is 'eye' (*licho*). An eye sees and allows perception (when light permits). The 'female' hole or 'eye' of Kaomba's stone 'sees', seizes and provides. Tabwa told early priests that such bored stones had fallen from the sky and brought rain, fertility, bounteous harvests and protection from lightning (Debeerst, 1894: 4; Van Acker, 1907: 23). Tabwa associated through metaphor each of these phenomena, conditions or results with sexual intercourse, but each requires knowledge of ritual magic and technology to be exploited to the benefit of mankind.

Older Tabwa say that offerings of first fruits (*ngelelo*) were made to Kaomba, and one added that seeds would be brought to the earth spirit's site prior to planting (as is still done by southern Tabwa – see Cancel, 1981: 48, note 22).

The male, however, and not the female manifestation received such offerings. Female manifestations are associated with terrestrial waters, are geographically lower in this mountainous region, and (like Kaomba's whirlpool and quicksand) are 'troublesome' (*wa matata*) for the unwary; not so their male counterparts. Gender symbolism here must reflect wider Tabwa social organization with matrilineal descent: a husband is an 'outsider' to his wife's descent group, a mediator between that of his wife and children, and that of his mother and sisters. The place of the affine is one of paradox and some tension in Tabwa society. For instance, Tabwa author Stefano Kaoze wrote in the 1930s that 'the father [is] responsible for all illness and misfortune which may befall young children' (in Kimpinde, 1982: 174). This would be a gross overstatement according to present-day perception of disease causality by Tabwa (based on the several thousand consultations of Christopher Davis-Roberts, an anthropologist studying traditional medicine who maintained a paramedical clinic at Lubanda from 1975–77), yet it is evidence that living the 'matrilineal puzzle' is not without its difficulties, which are also contemplated through the abstraction of myth (Roberts, MS 3; cf. Douglas, 1979: 295–302; Poewe, 1978). In a number of circumstances, including marriage, men manage exchange concerning 'troublesome' women; sisters leave brothers when they marry, wives threaten to return to brothers if husbands lack generosity or are severe. The 'calm', male manifestation of the earth spirit mediates between mankind and his (and man's) 'troublesome' female opposites by accepting offerings made by the priestess to secure bounty and protection and to reaffirm the balance of gender as reflected in the greater universe.

Kaomba provided many services in the past, but that best remembered today concerns river-fishing. Kaomba assured that a catfish of the family Bagridae, 'Chrysichthys sianenna' called *ndjagali* in KiTabwa, would mount the Lufuko River in great numbers every September to spawn in the reedy meanders of Lubanda Valley.



The Bagrid catfish 'Chrysichthys sianenna'
Drawing by M. Van Bolt, 1982.

Both Tabwa and missionaries who have worked among them say that the Lufuko is the only river emptying into Lake Tanganyika which the *ndjagali* ascend. (WF, 21 July 1934).[8] The fish are smoked and their 'sweet' flesh is especially prized. Nineteenth-century residents of Lubanda traded smoked

ndjagali far into the Marungu Massif to their southwest, sometimes for millet (which grows best on the grassy, high plateaux) to brew beer, but most often for iron hoes made by Tabwa craftsmen from the rich ore of Mount Kalolo (WF, 22 August 1890), or for salt extracted from springs which empty into the Lufuko upstream (Anon., 1901: 623). River-fishing must have contributed substantially to the wealth and well-being of Chief Mpala and his people.

My informants' details concerning Kaomba's role in this context were remarkably similar to accounts recorded at the end of the last century.[9] An entry in the White Fathers' mission diary from 1890 explains that:

> When the fish should mount the river, the 'grand sorcier' of the village exposes it [the bored stone] to the veneration of the public which comes to offer it presents of flour, maize, chickens and even goats. Then everyone spits beer in its face, as the custom bequeathed by the ancestors would have it. Then someone places the *mzimou* in the river. The first fish taken will be given to the *sorcier* who, in secret, will go and put it into the hole [of the stone] of which I've spoken; then he'll return to the village to show everyone the *mzimou* with the fish [in its hole], saying, 'Kahomba has taken a *nzagari*' (the name of the fish). Everyone cries bravo, thanking Kahomba, and prepares to begin fishing (WF, 23 September 1890).

As a 'consequence' of this contact with the Earth spirit, Tabwa told me, the fish would ascend in such numbers that they could be scooped from the water. In effect, the mission scribe noted that at season's height, 400–500 traps set into seven or eight dams would catch 30–50 kg. of fish apiece *daily*, with a 10 kg. minimum (WF, 22 August 1890); the most fortunate 'brought home, every morning, as much as 100 kg. of fish taken in a single trap' (Anon., 1905: 209).

Details of this text can be elaborated, drawing upon the accounts of present-day informants. The 'grand sorcier' of the Fathers' account was a *mweleli*, one who makes *ngelelo* offerings (Weghsteen, n.d.), and *mwine mwezi* in KiTabwa or *mwenye mtoni* in Swahili, 'the one identified with the river'. For the Lufuko, this priestess was *ng'inamfumu*, 'mother of the chief', Mpala. *Mwine mtoni*, 'the one identified with the river', is 'mother' of *mwine kyalo*, the chief 'identified with the land'. Water (priestess/mother) and land (chief/son) are again complementary, as are the two manifestations of the Earth spirit, female (water) and male (elevated land).

A Tabwa chief is identified with all lands within the bounds of his chiefdom.[10] While Lake Tanganyika, which is so long as to be deemed 'endless' by Lakeside Tabwa at Lubanda,[11] belongs to everyone regardless of chiefdom, portions of rivers cross specified lands, and are therefore identified with particular chiefs. Chiefs are responsible for maintaining good relations with the Earth spirits of those parts of the rivers which are theirs. Chiefs delegate responsibility for portions of land, as well as for the rivers that cross them, to favoured dependants. Ideally, then, each river has a *mwenye mtoni* for every tract of land it crosses.

The *mwenye mtoni* would make offerings to the Earth spirits of her river. As nonagenarian Kizumina Kabulo described the process in 1977, *matambikio* offerings would be made to Kaomba just before the river-fishing season was to begin in September, toward the end of the dry months. Making *loanda* fishing weirs across the Lufuko is an arduous task which is begun in June as the rains abate and the swollen river begins to diminish in width, depth and speed of current. Most of the work is completed by September, after which *migono* traps

are made, eventually to be fitted into 'doors' in the weirs. Chief Mpala would call upon his ancestral spirits (*mipasi*) and say, 'the way things are, we are dying naked for lack of food. Let us sit and count [the fish that will come if you, spirits, answer]'. Upon seeing the harbinger whirlpool near the Lufuko's mouth (only visible at certain moments of the year due to water volume and currents) the *mwenye mtoni* priestess would begin offerings to Kaomba. Kaomba's stone would travel to the river, 'submerge itself', and 'catch' the first *ndjagali* catfish to mount the stream that year. The *mwenye mtoni* would then take the stone with the fish lodged in its aperture and place it in the door to her house, that all might know the offerings had been made, accepted by Kaomba, and the season thereby begun.

Kizumina said that once the preliminary ceremonies had been completed and the *migono* traps set in place, those managing the weirs would leave the river to return the next day. Upon approach they would hear the 'bugutu, bugutu, bugutu' of the many fish thrashing against the insides of the traps. The whole catch, no matter how great, would be taken and while some fish might be given to the *mwenye mtoni* in thanks for her service and recognition of her identification with the stream, all the others would be cooked. Joking partners (*baendo*) and twins would come and sing with exaggerated understatement, 'You give us a little, [only] a little', and all would eat to satiety. There would be so much food that cooked fish and *bukali* polenta would be thrown away.[12] After that, so many fish would be caught that the traps could not be lifted without the aid of poles, used as levers.

Kaomba assures an abundant catch of gravid catfish. The 'female' hole in the stone catches the first fish upstream, just as other female manifestations, whirlpool and quicksand, may engulf the unwary. Tabwa know the fish ascend the Lufuko to spawn – they relish the roe smoked with the fish. The interruption of this procreative process by catching the fish, marked by metaphorical sexual intercourse between a first *ndjagali* and the earth-spirit-as-bored-stone, is a moment of violence, a transformation effected that man may eat and prosper and himself procreate. Christopher Davis-Roberts has recently suggested that for Tabwa, 'ceremonial intercourse' involves a 'manifest continuity of imagery of bodily events with that of natural occurrences'. When coitus is 'ceremonially framed' through interruption or its being performed in unusual contexts, 'the fabrication of "new" cultural entities' results (1981: 311–12). So *ndjagali* are shifted at the act of symbolic intercourse from natural to cultural realms, from living creatures to food or items of exchange. The builders of *migono* traps abstained from sexual intercourse during the process (WF, 26 August 1888). Tabwa explain that one does not want to 'spoil' fishing or hunting luck, beer-brewing, iron-smelting, or other crucial cultural transformations. At issue is a dangerous redundancy: coitus is to be 'framed' and made sacred through metaphor, to effect discontinuity and change of state. There must be no confusion as to this framing – hence their sexual abstinence – if the process is to be begun and brought to fruition.

EUROPEAN 'CAPTURE' OF KAOMBA

The first Europeans to visit the western shore of Lake Tanganyika found Lubanda a bustling place, and in 1883 an outpost of the International African

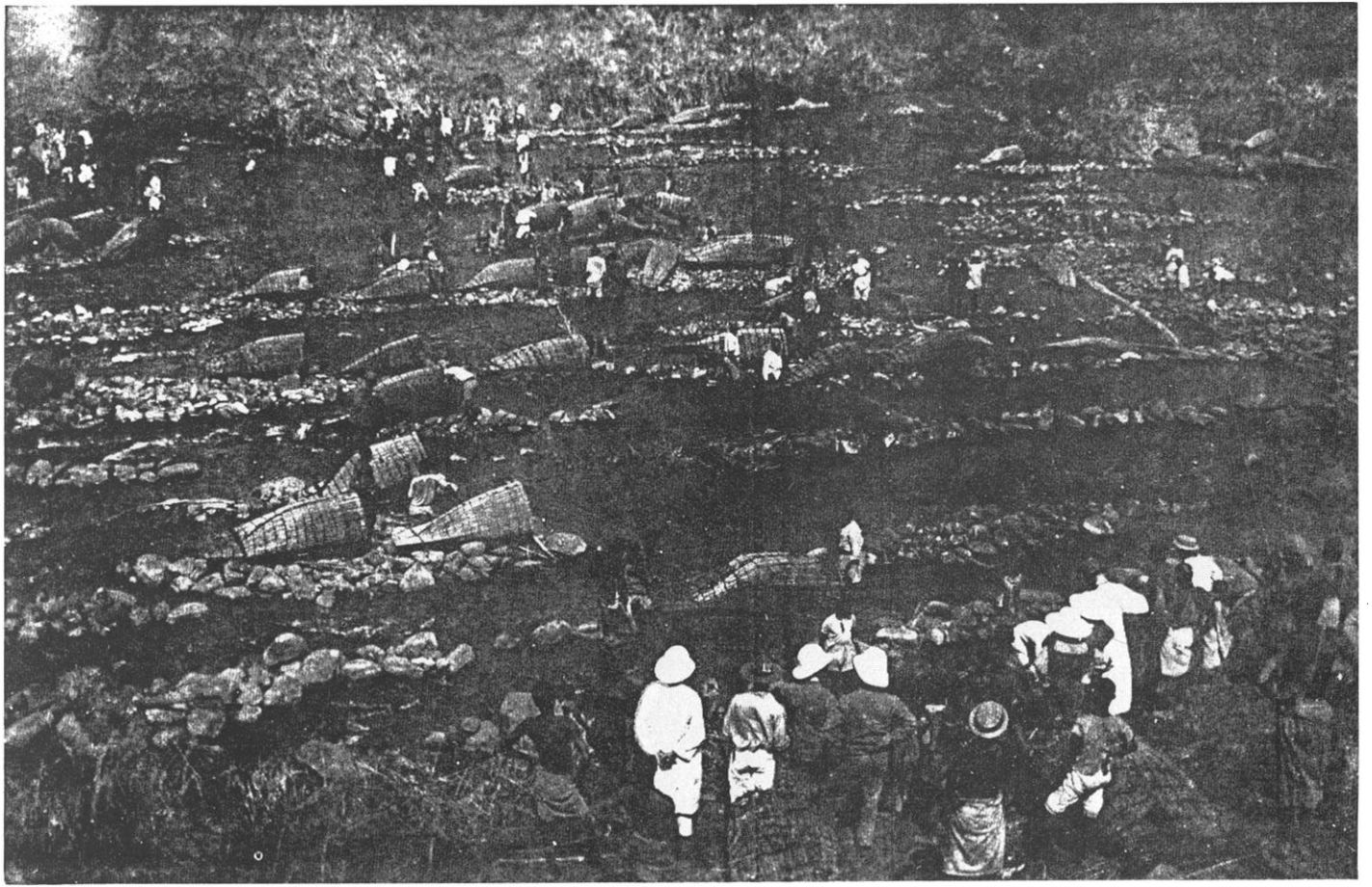
Association was established there. Two years later, the little fort was ceded to the White Fathers and transformed into what would become their first permanent – and long a flourishing – mission (see Heremans, 1966; Roberts, MS 1).

Environmental phenomena were felt by Tabwa to underscore the moment of the Europeans' arrival and subsequent acts. The spectacular Sungrazer comets of 1880, 1882 and 1887 are said to have portended the Europeans' coming, and 'imported a change of Time and State' (to paraphrase Shakespeare) whose fearful dimensions included the deaths of chiefs, famines and pestilence (Roberts, 1982). In August 1880, the Lukuga River, reported by the earliest European explorers to empty into Lake Tanganyika, burst a barrier fifteen kilometres upstream because of an unusual rise in the lake's level. The Lukuga thus joined the Lugimbie which already flowed westward into the Lualaba, and became the lake's only known outlet (Delhaise, 1908). As a result, the level of the lake sank some three metres, which caused disastrous flashflooding of lands now downstream along the Lukuga. This cataclysm is said to have been linked by contemporary Africans to Edward Hore of the London Missionary Society settling at Mtoa north of the Lukuga mouth/source, and to his launching a small steamboat for lake travel (Schmitz, 1912: 568; Wolf, 1970: 87, 174–5). Between 1884 and 1890, the lake dropped twelve metres more (Anon., 1898).

At Lubanda the effects were no less noteworthy. The marsh beneath or beside which early chiefs Mpala had been buried, was drained (Roberts, 1980: 497). Kaomba's whirlpool off the old mouth of the Lufuko disappeared and as new lands emerged from the descending waters, the Earth spirit (is now said to have) moved inland to a rocky outcrop along the river. The lake retreated by as much as a kilometre in one place near Lubanda, making new delta land available for agriculture.

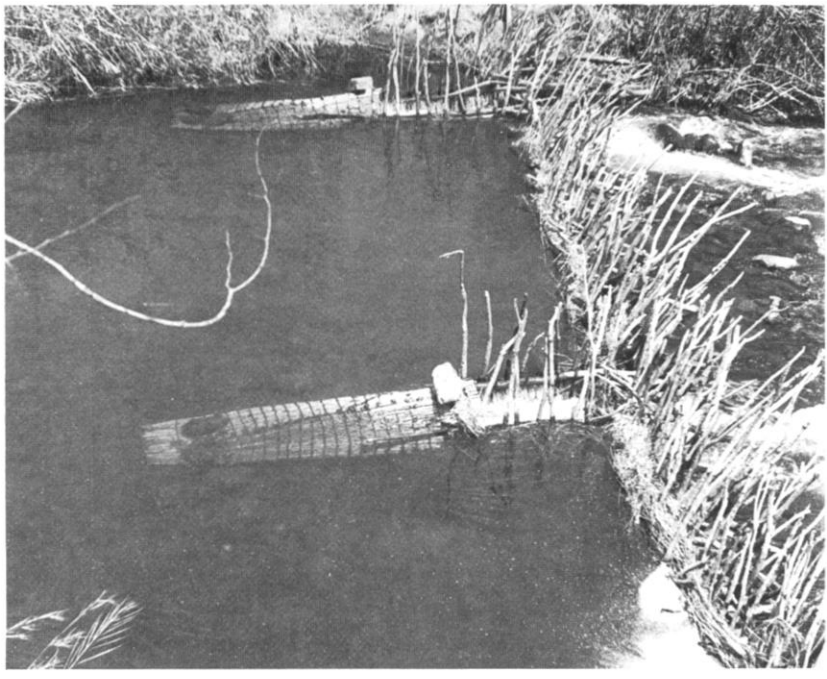
The White Fathers who settled at Lubanda in 1885 were devoted to evangelization and sincerely believed the religion of the Tabwa to be inspired by Satan. They and their zealous followers (Tabwa and other Africans) set about the systematic denigration and destruction of Tabwa ritual and sacred objects. The *ngulu* spirit sites proved easy targets. Great trees in which some spirits resided were felled and burned at the mission (WF, 8 July 1890). Monsignor Roelens himself seized Kakasu Kapele, an *ngulu* recognized by people for miles around Lubanda, and threw its rock – shaped like a 'winged hoe' – into a deep ravine. When Tabwa recovered and replaced it, Roelens dispatched a priest and a monk who destroyed the stone with hammers and threw the pieces in Lake Tanganyika, much to the amusement of Christian converts (Roelens, 1899: 342; *idem.*, 1948: 82–3, 107–8; cf. Stuer, 1903). In 1888, a fiery sermon which elaborated the scriptural dictum that one cannot serve two masters, instigated the faithful of the Mpala Mission to search all houses, fields and even *ndjagali* traps for 'diabolic devices'. Statues to ancestors, medicine horns and bundles, and baskets for a variety of spiritual offerings were seized and destroyed (WF, 26 August 1888).

Such purges would be repeated on catechumens' 'own initiative' in years to follow (WF, 1 September 1889), and bear some resemblance to *kamuchape* 'witch hunts' of later decades (cf. Willis, 1968). The one of 1888, though, had particular focus: one hundred *ndjagali* traps were searched. When one trap was



Fishing for 'ndjagali' on the Lufuko at Lubanda, c. 1910. Photographer unknown.

White Father overseeing emptying of 'ndjagali' trap on the Lufuko River near Lubanda. Anonymous photographer, *c.* 1912.



'Ndjagali' traps in position on fishing dam across the Lufuko River near Lubanda. A. Roberts, 1975.

Replacing 'ndjagali' trap and its 'door' in fishing dam across the Lufuko River near Lubanda. A. Roberts, 1975.

Replacing 'ndjagali' trap in fishing dam across Lufuko River near Lubanda. Man in background is stuffing straw into dam. A. Roberts, 1975.

Removing 'ndjagali' trap from fishing dam across Lufuko River near Lubanda. A. Roberts, 1975.

found to contain a medicine bundle, the missionaries exposed the bundle to the crowd, proclaimed the possessor as one who had turned to Satan for illicit aid, and had the trap destroyed. Another man was castigated for his sexual abstinence while building his trap (WF, 26 August 1888). This search marked the beginning of the priests' assault upon Kaomba and their seizure of *ndjagali* fishing grounds. Among the objects taken in a village an hour from Lubanda were two bored stones, 'Kalunga and her daughter' (WF, 26 August 1888).

Over the next two years, White Fathers mocked Tabwa belief that Kaomba could propel its stone by its own volition, and that it would not desert the people of Mpala who had long honoured it with offerings. Tabwa said that if disturbed, the stone would roll back to its place. According to a contemporary missionary, the Fathers first challenged them to prove that Kaomba could move about as they said it could; the Tabwa refused to respond, and the Fathers 'resolved to disabuse these poor people'. Their attempts to seize the stone were thwarted by local people who moved and hid the sacred object. Tabwa said Kaomba knew what the priests were about, and had 'gone wandering to the lake' (Guillemé, 1895–96: 345). Finally though, 'catechumens, who had sworn war to the death on all superstitions practised in the villages, took it'. To the consternation of the Tabwa, Kaomba's stone did not return as expected. Several days before the opening of the *ndjagali* season of 1890, Brother Jerome set the stone in a sill at the mission, to accommodate the pintle of a hingeless door (WF, 23 September 1890). It was later removed and sent to the White Fathers' museum in Mechelen, Belgium (Anon., 1901: 623).

Present-day Tabwa have a different version, a tale known to six informants of different ages and clans. The missionaries repeatedly tried to seize the stone. They thrust a stick through its hole, wrapped it in many white cloths, bound it with a heavy chain and put it into a beautiful suitcase. Every time they did this, Kaomba would escape and return to Lubanda. One time the suitcase reached Matadi (the Zaire river port where ocean ships are loaded), but there was discovered to be empty. After such mistreatment, Kaomba became angered and fled from Lubanda. As one man concluded the above account, 'Kaomba cannot die or disappear [altogether]: can a mountain die? The earth cannot but continue on, rightly directed (*bulongo inastahili kuongoka*)'. Kizumina said that some still encounter Kaomba.[13]

There is an ideological side to the Tabwa version: it is an 'indigenous critique of colonialism' (cf. Willis, 1973). The 'female' stone, deemed to bring fertility and bounty, was desecrated by a priest's thrusting a stick or cane through its hole. The spirit–stone continually slipped off and escaped. Not only does this parable tell of the 'rape' of the *ngulu* and the people who believe in it, but I suggest it to be a joke upon the celibacy, hence the presumed sexual impotence, of the missionaries.

Tabwa resentment was made painfully clear in a conversation with two men, one being old Kizumina, long a critic of the mission and its politics. When discussing the priests' destruction of *ngulu* sites, Kizumina said: 'When those people [the missionaries and converts] were in their church, we never knew what they were doing, all we heard was hoo-haa-ho-haa,[14] and there was the sound of people kneeling but we didn't know what they were doing. Lo and behold they were stealing our earth spirits, taking their strength for their own

[icons].' Kizumina's friend, a gun hunter and possession-cult adept, added that the missionaries 'took all our spirits and filled *their* place [the church] with them; then the elders who used to make offerings [to the *ngulu*] were changed,[15] the missionaries would make them pay money [taxes and tithes] and do whatever else. The priests bought the elders, and they answered and obeyed . . . and the Earth spirits moved away.' Kizumina added that 'if anyone were caught making offerings to the *ngulu*, he would be castigated and locked up right there. This is what brought us our wretched lameness [*kilema kya ubovu*]. The missionaries said we should leave our spirits, and it was in this that they employed their cunning [*mayele*].' There followed a discussion between the two men of how Tabwa spirits and the objects they invested had been destroyed and Catholic ones – the icons of Mary and the saints – presented in their place. Kizumina's friend said: 'You have your own spirits but you flee them to go to the spirits of others.' Kizumina interrupted: 'And if you then call your own spirits, will they agree to answer you? No, you have insulted them, you have said they are worthless. We have thrown away our [spiritual] wealth . . . They will no longer answer, you have given them nothing.'

FISHING SITES AND 'FISHERS OF MEN'

That the priests' seizing Kaomba's bored stone in 1890 was not only a religious, but a politico-economic act, was immediately apparent to Mpala and his people. Tabwa assumed that with this sacrilege fishing would be poor; and so it was for the first days of the season. Then fortunes changed. In a single night the mission adherents, mobilized by the Fathers for the task, caught some 3000 kilograms of *ndjagali*! This was particularly pleasing to the missionaries, as it 'proved' to Tabwa that the God of the white man was stronger than Kaomba (WF, 22 August 1890; 23 September 1890).

Around the same time, the priests assumed direct control of the river as a resource. This event is not documented in any of the diaries or other sources consulted,[16] but by 1896, rules had been created for the assignment of weir positions. A mission man would maintain the last one downstream (and thus the first fish would reach) for the priests, and would receive a gift for his labours at the end of the season. The next lines of traps upstream would be reserved for Christians, and Lukungwe (the strawman chief of the mission, recognized by the government in 1913 in Mpala's stead) saw to their allocation (Schmitz, *c.* 1903). By 1934, it was a 'vieille habitude de la maison' that the Fathers distribute fishing-dam positions to 'the aged, the infirm, regular workmen [of the mission], Catechists, etc. . . . Were our dear blacks [*nègres*] left to do this themselves . . . they would kill each other!' As in years past, it was planned that fifty traps would be laid, to accommodate 200 people; later that month, however, it was wisely decided to restrict the number to a single dam opened only at night, that the greatly depleted *ndjagali* be allowed to multiply (WF, 7 and 21 July 1934). My own informants have never seen such numbers of fish as were described in the priests' early accounts, and the lack of any control or restraint nowadays may assure the fish's eventual extinction, at least from Lubanda's waters.

By the 1940s, the Fathers had ceded to Chief Mpala the first and best dam,

but all others were still reserved for use by mission personnel or followers. When the chief of the 1970s, Mpala Kaloko, assumed the office in the mid 1950s, he found that the priests considered themselves the rightful 'owners' of the river, having, as they said, purchased the rights from his predecessors. The chief told me he had asked them for written proof of this, which they could not provide. Mpala then rejected their claim, saying in essence that they had been granted temporary use, but ultimately the river, like the lands more generally, were his as *mwine kyalo*, the one identified with the land. The Fathers objected, saying they would continue to assign a foreman (*kapita*) of their own to oversee dam-site allocation, but Mpala insisted they would no longer, and it was he who prevailed.

These last events must be seen in light of wider economic and political changes. In 1954, the Catholic Party lost its majority in the Belgian Parliament, and the Colonial Ministry, for seven years held by Catholics (and aside from a two-year hiatus after the war, for all but a year of the twenty-one previous to that) passed to Auguste Buisseret, a Liberal. An anticlerical, 'he adopted policies which were to radically alter the relationship between the Catholic missions and the state – and thereby the political character of the Belgian Congo' (Markowitz, 1973: 76). Specifically, Buisseret 'tried to re-establish the authority of the chiefs by improving their material situation, giving them higher status . . . by increasing their power at local government level'. These measures, 'much appreciated by the mass of the population', were feared and resented by entrenched interest groups. The Social Christians generally, and Catholic missionaries locally, condemned the Colonial Minister and traditional authorities alike as either condoning or engaging in pagan, abusive and corrupt acts (Brausch, 1961: 74–5). Nonetheless, Chief Mpala's new assertiveness – till then unthinkable and a product of this changing political climate – reflected trends which would lead to Congolese independence in 1960. That the White Fathers should acquiesce in Mpala's demand was a function of this new political climate, but was one of more specific, local-level economic factors as well.

A TECHNOLOGICAL REVOLUTION

The manner in which *ndjagali* were caught in the past seems to have been different from how it is done now. Data are scant, but one author recorded that:

> When the return of the fish is signalled, all the inhabitants of the valley unite to decide the locations to be occupied by the various villages. Then each family chooses a place, clears it, and plants stakes to hold a trap. Beside this, another family does the same, then a third and so forth, till a veritable dam is formed which forces the fish to enter the traps. As many dams as villages are thus formed (Anon., 1901: 623).

Socially speaking, this method may be egalitarian within each village, but is hierarchical as to position up or downstream. By 1901, the White Fathers were allocating these positions, and the favoured villages were the closest to the mission both in physical proximity and loyalty. Significantly, residence in these villages was based on a desire to follow church faith and rule and to receive its very tangible economic benefits (see Roberts, MS 1, MS 2), and not

upon kinship and affinity as was the case in ordinary Tabwa villages. The first dam upstream from the lake – the one at which most fish are caught – was reserved for the missionaries themselves (Schmitz, *c.* 1903).

A judge of Chief Mpala's told me that after 1940 when Mpala resumed control of the first dam upstream from the lake, the Fathers retained the second, the White Sisters (at Mpala Mission from 1898) the third, and loyal mission adherents those farther upstream. With this, the same method observed in the 1970s, the several men who pool their labour to build and manage the weir share the catches. There is privilege, however, in getting a portion of the river's course that is relatively more suited for a fish weir; for a great many more fish are caught in the first traps upstream from the lake than in the later ones. No one, Chief Mpala's judge included, could explain how the distribution of sites had evolved, but it is quite clearly one consonant with status and privilege within the local political system as it evolved over the years of colonial occupation. Of the first seven dams upstream from the lake (a total of fourteen were exploited in 1976), two were held by acting or retired judges of Chief Mpala's court, three more by close clanfellows of Chief Mpala, another by a son of a previous chief, another by a *quartier* chief. Chief Mpala had given his up, due to his advanced age and the poor return in fish. Allocation of these sites follows a pattern. When the missionaries controlled river-fishing, their adherents profited; so it is with Chief Mpala's closest henchmen now.

Fishing and related technology has changed radically through the twentieth century, as has the demography of the Tabwa region. Present-day Tabwa say their ancient migrations took them from somewhere north of the Lukuga River, southward along the Luvua River and Mwila Divide, to swamplands east of Lake Mweru, whence they moved northward again throughout the early and mid 1800s into the Marungu Massif. Although some settled along the western shores of Lake Tanganyika, by their own accounts Tabwa remained for many an 'inland' people. At Lubanda, Tabwa say their ancestors did not venture out onto Lake Tanganyika,[17] and only learned how to make and use canoes in the second half of the nineteenth century. The technique was brought to them by 'Goma', a Bembe-related group living on the western lake shores just south of the Ubwari Peninsula, who traded canoes with those engaged in the slave trade. Lubanda was the end of an important trail from the southwestern interior, a place where slavers' dugouts were left in safekeeping (Livingstone, in Waller, n.d.: 284). The slave traders were attracted to the rare montane forest atop Mount Nzawa just south of Lubanda, and its immense tree trunks from which pirogues seating forty could be hewn (Giraud, 1890: 519). Chief Mpala would provide food for those who had come to make canoes and, as *mwine kyalo,* would receive one of every two produced (Jacques and Storms, 1886: 63). Using canoes, Tabwa began to exploit Lake Tanganyika in ways unknown to them till then.

The fish of Lake Tanganyika are extraordinary in quantity and variety. Through the use of sonar, United Nations scientists in 1973 estimated the biomass of Lake Tanganyika as 2.8 million tons. The greatest accumulation of pelagic fish is found in the central region of the lake off shores like Lubanda's. While more than 200 species have been identified, two are predominant: sardine-like *dagaa* (*Stolothrissa tanganicae*) and snoek-like, piscivorous *mvolo* (*Lates* [*Luciolates*] *stappersii*) (Hall *et al.*, 1975: 5–9; Greenwood, 1976: 78).

An entry in the White Fathers' Mpala Mission diary of 16 August 1909 records what must have constituted a technological revolution: introduction of a method by which *mvolo* could be caught with a lure of white feathers, nowadays replaced by scraps of aluminium or tin, affixed to three barbless hooks. These might be attached to some 25 cm. of leader tied to the end of poles 50 cm. long. When swished on the lake's surface, *mvolo* strike at the lure and can be flipped into the pirogue behind the fisherman with an arm's swing, as the barbless hooks are easily disengaged. If a school of *mvolo* is pursuing one of *dagaa*, a fortunate and skilled fisherman may catch hundreds of 1–3 kg. *mvolo* in two or three hours.[18]

Mvolo follow yearly and monthly rhythms. As the phases of the moon progress from the first quarter to full, fishermen must paddle ever farther out onto the lake, with a maximum of about two hours' journey (several miles from shore) occurring at full moon, to decrease thereafter (Roberts, 1980: 166–8). Dugout canoes are essential for this activity.

DISCUSSION

River-fishing for *ndjagali* at Lubanda declined with the rise of lake fishing in the first decades of this century, and the balance of importance between the two has increasingly shifted to lake-fishing ever since. For Tabwa at Lubanda, the adoption of a new technology and its attendant methods of fish conservation and exportation was an 'adaptive strategy'[19] resulting from both the missionaries' assumption of river-fishing sites, and a nascent colonial economy which rewarded initiative. By the 1940s and 1950s, White Fathers at Lubanda might consider fishing weirs on the Lufuko an expendable resource.

In recent years, *ndjagali* fishing has become increasingly poor. Some Tabwa hold that the major reason for this is over-fishing. A combination of dams without any 'doors' left open for some fish to escape and spawn, and the catching of tiny *ndjagali* in fine-mesh nets in the lake off the Lufuko delta, have proved especially damaging. Others have different, complementary theories. Chief Mpala said that years ago, during the salting process of the dry-season months at the springs of Kakonto and Ng'anza far upstream from Lubanda, much saline water would be spilled into the Lufuko River.[20] The resulting 'cold' (*baridi*) and 'sweet' (*tamu*) water was what attracted *ndjagali* to mount the Lufuko and no other river, seeking to escape the 'heat' (*moto*) of Lake Tanganyika. There may be a figurative element in this description, for the attraction of the fish to the brackish water corresponds to the trade of smoked *ndjagali* for salt from the springs. According to informants, the colonial administration prohibited the making of salt at such places, so that Tabwa would be required to purchase imported salt sold by European merchants (and thus become enmeshed in the greater colonial economy). Since then, Lufuko water has lacked the 'sweetness' that once characterized it, and Chief Mpala concluded that as a consequence *ndjagali* no longer mount the river in their earlier numbers.

Another theory current among Lubanda Tabwa is based on the fact that, nowadays, fishermen tend to 'forget' their obligation to give a portion of their catch to the chief. Young men in particular deny there is any reason for 'giving their fish away' in this manner, and prefer to sell their whole catch. Older

Tabwa describe this as *upumbafu*, the ignorance or idiocy of young people these days; they lack *utaratibu*, measure and manners. If more fish were given to the chief, I was repeatedly told, he would make a greater effort to supplicate his *mipasi* ancestral spirits to bring more fish. And if Kaomba were again propitiated (*kutulizwa*) and made offerings, surely the *ngulu* would return from exile and bring the fish back in the quantities for which Lubanda was once so famous.

Lake-fishing has long since replaced river-fishing in importance, an economic fact with socio-political implications. River-fishing at Lubanda requires the construction of weirs in rushing water and the manipulation of sodden traps which are laden with fish. While most activities these days (like agriculture) are not corporate for Tabwa, river-fishing must be, both because of the intensive labour involved and the restricted number of sites where weirs can be constructed. Before 1890, when the White Fathers assumed control of the dam sites, those working together were close kinsmen or, at the widest spread of identity, of the same clan. In colonial days, missionaries grouped their ethnically heterogeneous adherents for this. Nowadays, friends and neighbours may be invited to join in building and exploiting the weir and traps of a man who holds a fishing site. The shift in river-fishing organization and from river- to lake-fishing more generally, has been one from corporate to individual responsibility.[21] The reduction or cessation of big-game hunting, salt-making and warfare have had similar effects. In lamenting the *upumbafu* of youngsters refusing to offer a portion of fish to the chief, elderly Tabwa are reacting to this aspect of socio-economic change.

It is generally overlooked that while rivers are identified with the particular chiefs whose lands they cross, 'endless' Lake Tanganyika is not. The juridicial question of whether a chief has a right to a portion of lake-fisher's catch was not an issue until the 'technological revolution' early in this century. Chief Mpala holds that since fishermen must land their canoes and live in villages on shore, they should recognize his identity with the land by gifts of lake fish. There has been a noteworthy demographic shift from the Marungu Massif and other lands west of Lake Tanganyika, to the shores where all men can engage in lucrative fishing. Deterioration of roads, depots and other facilities needed to export cash crops to mining centres, coupled with the incentive of an ever-expanding market for dried lake fish, has brought great numbers to settle in every habitable nook of the lakeshore (see Roberts, 1979: 224–30). Mobile youngsters are those most attracted; and they are least likely to feel obliged to give the chief respect in any manner so tangible as offering him a portion of their catch.[22]

Tabwa religion has also changed in some ways significant to my argument. The White Fathers put a stop to communal ceremonies such as those to Kaomba, at least in areas directly under their scrutiny; such practices were condemned as 'lies', the deceit of 'Satan and his lackeys (*suppots*)', which must be given up if the 'Real Religion' was to be understood and sought. Salvation would be a *personal* trial, a *personal* triumph if the four years of catechism came to fruition. Tabwa who gained entry to the church tended subsequently to receive very tangible benefits: instruction in trades; assistance in growing European vegetables and in raising livestock for sale in mining centres and markets; health care (especially smallpox vaccination) not readily available to

others because of a critical shortage of locally made vaccine; armed protection from slavers or other aggressors in the early years, and from government harassment later. Initiative in religious, economic and political fields was rewarded by the missionaries. As van Binsbergen (1982: 159–67) has noted, this tendency, which would continue to grow throughout the colonial period as Africans were drawn into world capitalism, was at variance with an egalitarian ethic common throughout Central Africa. Those who strove to achieve far beyond the norm were (and are – this conflict is by no means resolved for Tabwa) considered sorcerers whose success could only be the result of stealing the life force of others (*kujendula* in Swahili, *kutekunia* in KiTabwa) to add to their own. It was in the interest of those who *would* seek fulfilment through realization of personal ambition, then, to ridicule and, if possible, destroy an older system of thought and practice by which they and their actions would be deemed illicit, evil, the stuff of sorcery. The glee with which catechists destroyed *ngulu* sites and disrupted their ceremonies must, in part, be seen in this light: an attempt to mock a system that condemned them.

Those Tabwa outside the Christian circle were nonetheless affected by these same events and tendencies. It was to them that Kibawa came. During 1893, in a time of famine due in large measure to the disruption of ordinary agriculture by slave raids (Debeerst, 1893), a great chthonic spirit named Kibawa sent plagues of red locusts (from their breeding ground in the region of the Mweru-wa-Ntipa swamps of northern Zambia) making food shortages even more acute, then an epizootic of rinderpest which decimated game, and particularly ungulates, in Tabwa lands (Rouviere, 1942: 19). The resulting abundance of scavenged meat was Kibawa's means of indicating to Tabwa their interest in recognizing him. Kibawa's advent was not simply that of another Earth spirit, but rather marked a paradigm shift for Tabwa religion, from one of communal ceremonies to profoundly personal spirit-possession rituals.[23]

At first, Kibawa was an oracle, and Tabwa and others in the region would visit his cavern in the Mwila Mountains just east of the Luvua River. In the 1930s, *bulumbu* spirits who reside with Kibawa or in the peaks, boulders and other landmarks long recognized as *ngulu* sites, began to announce themselves through that affliction of individuals. Resolution might be achieved through spirit possession.

The ritual of a first possession may be a public event requiring the drumming and singing of many concerned kin and friends, and is usually conducted in remote villages where interruptions by Christians and non-believing hecklers is unlikely; yet not all who seek to become possessed are successful. The entranced person experiences an 'ontological transformation' (Devisch, 1978: 179–80) through the assumption of an alternative persona (the everyday self is momentarily abandoned to 'sleep' as a *kapondo* – see Davis-Roberts, 1981 and Roberts, 1983). It is hoped by Tabwa that the spirit who speaks via the possessed will bring order and understanding to the afflicted. Allusion is made in song and through the attire of adepts to the dense bamboo stands surrounding Kibawa's cavern: the practitioner must guide the supplicant through this maze to reach Kibawa or, inversely, must find a way for spirits to leave the cavern and reach the supplicant. Finding the path through bamboo is a metaphor for discovering one's history, hence the 'significant truth' (Davis-Roberts, 1981: 313) of the cause of present difficulty,

knowledge of which allows one to seek remedy (cf. Turner, 1970: 351: Devisch, 1978: 179–82). Thereafter, for those who do succeed, possession may occur in private in the very shadow of a mission, without coming to the attention of those likely to be critical of it.

Change from a collective to an intensely personal focus in Tabwa religion was concurrent with and complementary to a similar change in organization for economic activities like fishing. Most collective or corporate activities have been abandoned; when I arrived in Lubanda in 1974, no offerings had been made to Kaomba in over forty years. Kaomba's manifestation as a bored stone, symbolic of perception, procreation and nurturance, and of the ambivalence and violence associated with each of these, has been 'sent to a museum', 'captured', or has 'fled untoward harassment', depending upon one's perspective.

A further stage in this study would be to investigate more specifically the consequences of growing individualism among Tabwa. Lake-fishing, for instance, is a lucrative pursuit enabling even teenage boys to draw immense profit by selling their smoked catches. Such wealth allows Tabwa to marry earlier than in the past when raising bridewealth required assistance from older kinsmen; it is not common, but it does occur that Lakeside Tabwa men become polygamous before the age of twenty. Yet such ambition, initiative and accomplishment are not without more negative effects, as determined through divination when misfortune strikes. Tabwa who are outstandingly successful in fishing or farming are still suspected of sorcery, and the resulting conflict may be violent to the extreme of homicide (Roberts, MS 5). The Bulumbu possession cult provides Tabwa with an alternative system of explanation to that based on sorcery beliefs.

As Van Binsbergen has noted for other Central African groups, possession, affliction and other sorts of cults have arisen 'among the achieving individuals' as derived 'from the personal, semi-conscious tension between the incompatible values of . . . achievement as evil egotism and . . . achievement as rendering to life its ultimate meaning and redemption' (1981: 165). Just as older religious forms such as recognition of *ngulu* like Kaomba were complementary to the social organization necessary for the exploitation of resources like river-fishing, so must these new forms assist in accommodating expectation and commitment in the changing circumstances of a colonial and post-colonial political economy.

NOTES

[1] Tabwa observe matrilineal descent and are closely related to neighbouring Bemba to the south and Luba to the west. Swahili has been spoken along Lake Tanganyika for over 100 years, and has been a first language at Lubanda for at least two generations. I have suggested elsewhere (Roberts, MS 4) that ethnicity as now known among people in this area – 'Tabwa' – is recent, in part a product of missionary efforts (Debeerst's 1894 grammar and Van Acker's 1907 dictionary of the Tabwa 'language', otherwise very similar to Bemba) to define their sphere of activities and of African response to a changing focus for economic organization as outlined here.

[2] Four years of anthropological fieldwork among Tabwe of Zaire were conducted at Lubanda, village of Mpala, a hereditary, Sanga ('bushpig') clan chief now a *chef de localité* in the Zairian administration. The ethnographic present used here refers to 1974–77. This research was funded by the US National Institute of Mental Health (1-F01-MH-55251-01-CUAN), the Committee on

African Studies and the Edson-Keith Fund of the University of Chicago, and the Society of the Sigma Xi. Thanks are extended to Professor Emeritus Reeve M. Bailey of the Fish Division, the University of Michigan Museum of Zoology (who is studying Lake Tanganyika Bagridæ) for identifying *ndagali* and showing me preserved specimens of *Chrysichthys sianenna*; to Margaret Van Bolt, illustrator at the same museum, for the two drawings commissioned through a Mellon Foundation grant at Albion College; to Father René Lamey of the White Fathers' Central Archive, Rome, for making the turn-of-the-century photograph of *ndjagali*-fishing available to me; and to the Mellon Foundation for a Faculty Development Grant at Albion College, allowing me to visit the Rome archives in 1983, where this photograph and other relevant materials were discovered. Earlier drafts of this paper were read by Bogumil Jewsiewicki, Omari Kokole, Mary Kojawski, Pierre de Maret, Louise Palazzola and Mathew Schoffeleers, some of whose thoughtful comments have been incorporated here. All responsibility for this paper's content remains my own. Kukumbuka marahemu Fungafunga Alexandre.

[3] This point is at variance with findings among Bemba neighbours directly south of the Tabwa, most recently elaborated by Wim van Binsbergen (1981: 119–24), based upon earlier arguments by Richards (1939: 241) and Werner (1971) and generally supported by Zambian missionary scholars like Etienne (*c.* 1948: 93–4), Maier (1976: 15) and Oger (1972). Certain *ngulu* were honoured before the Bemba arrived in their present lands (Etienne, *c.* 1948: 93), and 'in order to consolidate and legitimize the immigrant dynasty, a royal cult had to be developed [by Bemba] that could compete with, encapsulate, and so accommodate earlier politico-religious authorities' like the *ngulu* priests (Van Binsbergen, 1981: 121). This, then, is a difference not so much in the nature of Tabwa and Bemba *ngulu*, for which there are quite similar beliefs and practices; but in politico-economic history of the southern region to which Bemba were attracted and in which their subsequent prosperity was reflected in the centralized paramouncies of Mwamba, Chitimukulu and Nkula (see A. D. Roberts, 1973). Tabwa chiefs do not appear to be of a different wave of migration from their subjects, and (with the exception of Nsama and for a very brief period, possibly one or two others) did not achieve powers even approximating those of the great Bemba lords.

[4] Although informant Kalulu did not say so, it would be consistent with other data that those 'chosen' by Kaomba would be deemed sorcerers in afterthought.

[5] Pierre de Maret writes, 'the list for the bored stone is endless and, judging from the diversity of shapes, materials and sizes, their use was indeed quite varied' (personal communication, 1980). See Van der Kerken, 1951: 60. Bored stones are associated with the first phase of the Nachikufan Industry, 'among the earliest "Later Stone Age" industries known in Southern Africa' dated from about 10,000 BP (Clark, 1970: 175, 241; cf. Miller, 1976). The oldest bored stones from Matupi Cave in northeastern Zaire have been dated at *c.* 20,000 BP (Van Noten 1977). They are found throughout the *circum*-Tanganyika area. Used in rain-making ritual, a pile of them was seen early in this century before the house of a Pimbwe chief living near Lake Rukwa in (what is now) Tanzania (Maurice, 1929: 28). See Cunnison, 1967: 221, for a case of the discovery and use of bored stones by Lunda King Kazembe at the turn of the century, which bears striking resemblance to the Tabwa beliefs and practices to be described below.

[6] *Kabwe* is from the same root as *libwe*, 'stone', but it is not the ordinary diminutive in KiTabwa, which is *kalibwe*; it is a special word unto itself (Van Acker, 1907: 23). *Lulu* or perhaps *lugulu* (Debeerst, 1894: 2), is the singular of *ngulu*, but is archaic; the latter is now employed as a collective noun. My informant gave as the name of his own bored stone, *kabwengulu* (rather than *kabwelulu*), reflecting this.

[7] Innocent Onyewuenyi (1982) is correct to point out the possibility of Eurocentric bias in use of terms like 'reborn' and 'reincarnation', if they are taken literally. Then African cultural identity may be 'undermined . . . in that their cultural respects paid to their ancestors which are tokens of fellowship, hospitality and family continuity, are misconstrued as incentives for reincarnation'. 'Nominal reincarnation' as a concept avoids this dilemma, for Tabwa, like other Central Bantu (cf. Tempels, as cited by Onyewuenyi, 1982: 77) believe the recognition of the ancestral tie, made manifest in the name a person shares as a *majina* ('[same] names'), honours the continued love of one now dead who will offer strength and inspiration as *mbozwa*, 'guardian'.

[8] The various species of *Chrysichthys* are distributed throughout Lake Tanganyika, and *C. sianenna* is said to be 'very common'. Little appears known to the Western scientific community concerning the particularities of their behaviour (Poll, 1954: 120), although see Bailey and Stewart, 1984.

[9] My inquiries into river-fishing at Lubanda began in the fall of 1974, during visits before I moved there. It was not until about two years later that I discovered the passage cited here. By then

I knew several informants such as Kizumina, to whom I posed questions about texts like this one, and with whom I discussed my first-level abstractions or 'conclusions'.

[10] There is a debate among Tabwa as to how strictly defined these borders were precolonially. The confusion derives from (a) the fact that senior kinsmen can consider the lands of their juniors as 'theirs' in an abstract fashion, and (b) what colonial administrators made of this ethnographic datum.

[11] Tabwa know it ends, yet the length makes the lake of a paradigm with other 'endless' members (e.g., the watershed running parallel to the lake). See Roberts, 1980: Ch. II; *idem.*, 1981: 31–3.

[12] Despite the relative good fortune and prosperity enjoyed at Lubanda, shortage and famine were not unknown. Such surfeit as described here was a part of the ceremony. Twins and joking partners usually exaggerate by overstatement.

[13] Many at Lubanda hoped in the mid 1970s that Kaomba could be enticed to return to them. Attempts in 1975–76 to summon Kaomba will be discussed in a future paper.

[14] Everyone laughed at this sarcastic imitation of a mass being sung in Latin. Access to Church ritual and attendant activities was rigidly regulated, and four years' training required for baptism. At one point, missionaries considered baptizing Tabwa at Mpala under the rubric of 'idiots' because they were such recalcitrant learners (WF, 26 June 1934). Kizumina was never baptized – and was certainly no idiot!

[15] The verb here as *kuvuta-vuta*, the root's repetition for emphasis; it means 'to pervert, strain, stretch, give a new direction to, charm, lead astray' (Johnson, 1971: 520).

[16] Whatever the circumstances might have been, there was a precedent in the manner in which Captain Joubert, lay auxiliary at the mission, obliged Chief Mpala to cede to the mission the exceptionally fertile alluvial lands on the right bank of the Lufuko, as his 'tribute' for 1887 (Joubert, 14 October 1887; Roberts, MS 1).

[17] For example, when, in 1884, White Fathers first established a post at Kapakwe (near the present town of Moba, about thirty-five miles south of Lubanda), they were surprised by the lack of lake-fishing, and wondered if the fish, so plentiful in waters near the mission they had just left (Kibanga, on the northwestern shore of Lake Tanganyika), were absent here (Moinet, 1884, cited in Vanneste, n.d.). Southern Tabwa, more distant from trading centres, are by no means the ardent fishermen of their fellows at Lubanda: when some friends and I visited Chief Mulilo, whose chiefdom lies astride the Zaire/Zambia border, local people were doubtful that my henchmen from Lubanda would catch fish using the method described here, and were surprised and manifestly envious when my friends paddled in from an afternoon's fishing, their borrowed rowing boat ankle-deep in *mvolo* fish.

[18] Such luck is rare, and while one man may literally fill his canoe to the gunwales and be obliged to quit fishing to avoid sinking (Tabwa hew their pirogues from a variety of trees, some from hardwoods that do not float), another few metres away may catch none. The mission diary does not indicate where this method originated, although one might suspect another case of technological diffusion as with canoe-building, from northern lakeside people like the Goma.

[19] As a reader has suggested, the subject and data of this paper might have been addressed from other perspectives, including those of ethnoichthyology (cf. Morrill, 1967) and ecological anthropology. Bonnie McCay's 'Systems ecology, people ecology, and the anthropology of fishing communities' (1978) is both a bibliographic essay (hence useful for those such as I, unfamiliar with this subdiscipline) and a presentation of case material on Newfoundlanders' 'adaptive strategies' of 'diversification' and 'intensification' in response to drastically reduced catches over several years. Nor have I considered this history from the 'Fishers of Men's' point of view, as I hope to do soon, following Beidelman (1982).

[20] A saline spring may be called *licho lya ng'anza*. See Roelens, 1948: 94–6 for a description of the spring in question, and salt extraction there. *Licho* means 'eye' as in the earlier discussion of the bored stone. Ng'anza may mean 'hot or salt spring', but, at least homonymically, it is a name for the fig tree once used to make barkcloth worn by Tabwa, and is more generally 'human skin' (Van Acker, 1907: 17). According to Tabwa cosmology, the Earth is like a female human body. Tabwa apply medicines to the skin, saying that they will enter via the same pores from which sweat issues; one may speculate that the saline spring, then, is the Earth's 'sweating pore'. Important here is that human interaction with the Earth (e.g., extracting salt) is understood as an element of an inclusive cosmology: altering one part (salting) effects change of other, related parts (river-fishing).

[21] Fruitful comparison can be made with research concerning peoples culturally related to Tabwa. Norman Long's *Social Change and the Individual* (1969) is a study of 'new parameters for social action' among Lala of Serenje District, Zambia. Using situational and extended-case

analysis, Long discusses how new farming technology and policy have led some Lala to change from traditional matrikin affiliations to organization more conducive to capital accumulation, a subject Victor Turner (1957) investigated among Ndembu a decade earlier. More recently, Karla Poewe has written on economic aspects of the 'matrilineal puzzle' – 'the structural contradictions . . . between a productive individualism and wide consumer sharing' (1978: 207) – among Luapula peoples who, as Ian Cunnison (1957) has explained, include many southern Tabwe.

[22] This issue has been complicated by colonial notions of chiefship and attendant 'tribute'. Furthermore, many come to Mpala's Locality, not only because of the fishing and agricultural possibilities of the Lufuko delta, but because Chief Mpala Kaloko (*c.* 1905–83) was calm, wise, pleasant and not an exigent man – in striking contrast to some other chiefs. According to the frailties of human nature (the '*upumbafu* of youngsters' in particular), this is interpreted as weakness of character by some (see Roberts, MS 5).

[23] Victor Turner's distinction between 'ceremony as confirmatory . . . of social status, where politico-legal institutions also have greater importance' and ritual as 'transformative' (1970: 95) is apposite here. The manner in which Tabwa religion 'went underground' and was 'hidden in plain sight' is further discussed in Roberts, MS 3 and Davis-Roberts, MS 2. It is possible that Kibawa was a figure (personification of a complex of ideas and metaphors) that preexisted the moment 'he' is said to have announced his existence to Tabwa. His rule of the dead, whom he conveys to his cavern (as detected by the living in the frequent earth tremours felt in the area) seems basic to a religion more ancient than the 1890s. This may rather be a case of adaptation of older ideas; neighbouring groups appear to have done the same. Fipa, for instance, recognize Kaswa, 'a legendary person who gave names to all beings of the creation and who instructed the first people concerning the hidden properties of plants in nature' (Wyckaert, *c.* 1920); this same Kaswa, still called upon by diviners, 'foretold the destruction of the old social order in Ufipa . . . and its replacement by the values and technology of a capitalistic society' (Willis, 1970: 248). Similarly, Bemba recognize Mulenga, 'said to have been the first man to tame animals and . . . now the guardian spirit of domestic animals' (Oger, 1972: 13). Mulenga is 'renowned for his evil doings: epidemics and plagues', and when, in 1894, an epizootic of rinderpest killed many wild animals, Mulenga was deemed the 'author' (Labrecque, *c.* 1923: 5), as Kibawa was by Tabwa. In 1927, when smallpox was epidemic, Bemba elders reported seeing 'Mulenga flying through the air, a bow bent in his hand to kill people'; the same figure is associated with earth tremors and hunting (*ibid.*), again as is Kibawa by Tabwa, and was deemed by Father Labrecque to be more important than other Bemba *ngulu*: 'a demi-god of nature which has no particular habitat' (*ibid.*).

REFERENCES

Anon. 1898. 'Le lac Tanganika', *Missions d'Afrique (Pères Blancs)* 19(9), 309–12.

Anon. 1901. 'Une Superstition de moins' and 'La pêche à Mpala', *Mouvement Géographique*, 622–3.

Anon. 1905. 'La pêche à Mpala', *Missions d'Afrique (Pères Blancs)*, Paris edition, 174–209.

Bailey, R. and Steward, D. 1984. *Bagrid Catfishes from Lake Tanganyika, with a key and descriptions of new taxa*, miscellaneous publications, Museum of Zoology, University of Michigan.

Beidelman, T. 1982. *Colonial Evangelism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Brausch, G. 1961. *Belgian Administration in the Congo*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Cabu, F. n.d. 'Monographie sur les kwés', *Le Katanga illustré*. Undated offprint.

—— 1938. 'Contribution à l'étude de la répartition des kwés au Katanga', *Annales du Musée Royal Belge* I (4).

Cancel, R. 1981. 'Inshimi Structure and Theme: The Tabwa Oral Narrative Tradition', Ph.D. dissertation. University of Wisconsin.

Clark, J. 1970. *The Prehistory of Africa*. New York: Praeger.

Cunnison, I. 1967. *The Luapula Peoples of Northern Rhodesia*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Davis-Roberts, C. 1981. '*Kutambua Ugonjuwa*: illness and transformation among the Tabwa of Zaire', *Social Science and Medicine*, 309–16.

——MS 1 'The National Park of Savage Thought.'
——MS 2. 'Hidden in Plain Sight.'
Debeerst, G. 1893. Letter to Monseigneur From Mpala, 10 January MS C. 19–408. Central Archives of the White Fathers, Rome.
—— 1894. 'Essai de grammaire tabwa', *Zeitschrift fur Afrika und Ocean Sprachen*, 1–2.
Delhaise, C. 1908. 'Le problème de la Lukuga', *Bulletin de la Société Royale Belge de Géographie* 3, 10–2.
Devisch, R. 1978. 'Towards a semantic study of divination', *Bijdragen* 391, 173–89.
Douglas, M. 1979. *Implicit Meanings*. Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
Etienne, L. *c.* 1948. 'A study of the Babemba and the neighbouring tribes', Kasama (Zambia): Catholic Diocese. Typescript at Central Archives of the White Fathers, Rome.
Giraud, V. 1980. *Les lacs de L'Afrique Centrale, voyage d'exploration exécuté de 1883 à 1885*. Paris: Librairie Hachette.
Greenwood, P. H. 1976. 'A review of the family Centropomidae (Pisces, Perciformes)', *Bulletin of the British Museum (Natural History)* 29(1).
Guillemé, M. 1895–96. 'Autour du Tanganika', *Mouvement Antiesclavagiste* (VII) 343–8. (VIII) 101–3, 218–20, 247–8.
Hall *et al.* 1975. 'Project paper for fisheries co-operative expansion', USAID Project Paper 660–056. Kinshasa.
Heremans, R. 1966. 'Les établissements de l'Association Internationale Africaine au lac Tanganika et les Pères Blancs: Mpala et Karema, 1877–1885', *Annales du Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale*, 3.
Jacques, V. and Storms, E. 1886. *Notes sur l'ethnographie de la partie orientale de l'Afrique Equatoriale*. Brussels: F. Hayez.
Johnson, F. 1971. *Swahili–English Dictionary*. London: Oxford University Press.
Joubert, L. L. 1884–1927. 'Diaire'. Incomplete photocopy at the Musée National du Zaire (Lubumbashi).
Kimpende *et al.* 1982. *Stefano Kaoze: prêtre d'hier et d'aujourd'hui*. Kinshasa: Editions Saint Paul Afrique.
Labrecque, E. *c.* 1923. 'Quelques notes sur la religion des Babemba et tribus voisines', typescript 810/2 at Central Archives of the White Fathers, Rome. Reproduced with some editing and additions from another manuscript, in Language Centre (eds.). 1982. ' "La religion du noir infidèle" par E. Labrecque', *Bemba Cultural Data* I. Ilondola (Zambia): Language Centre.
Long, N. 1968. *Social Change and the Individual*. Manchester: Manchester University Press *for* the Institute for African Studies, University of Zambia.
Maier, H. 1976. 'Les arbres qui grandissent font la forêt: aspects symboliques de la vie bemba', Mémoire de maîtrise, Strasbourg (University not indicated). Document 803/113, Central Archives of the White Fathers, Rome.
Markowitz, M. 1973. *Cross and Sword: The Political Role of Christian Missions in the Belgian Congo, 1908–1960*. Stanford: Stanford University Press *for* the Hoover Institute.
Maurice, M. 1929. 'Les Bapimbwe', typescript 803/112, Central Archives of the White Fathers, Rome.
McCay, B. 1978. 'Systems ecology, people ecology, and the anthropology of fishing communities', *Human Ecology* 6(4), 397–422.
Miller, S. F. 1976. 'Archaeological sequence of the Zambian Later Stone Age', in H. Hugot (ed.) *VI Congrès Panafricain de Préhistoire*, Dakar. 565–72.
Oger, L. 1972. 'Spirit possession among the Bemba', paper, Conference on the History of Central African Religious Systems. Lusaka: University of Zambia/University of California at Los Angeles.
Onyewuengi, I. 1982. 'A philosophical reappraisal of African belief in reincarnation', *Présence Africaine* 123(3), 63–78.

Poewe, K. 1978. 'Matriliny in the throes of change: kinship, descent and marriage in Luapula, Zambia', *Africa* 48(3), 205–18, (4), 353–67.

Poll, M. 1953. *Exploration hydrobiologique du lac Tanganika (1946–1947). Vol. III, fasc. 5A, Poissons non cichlidae.* Brussels: Institut Royal des Sciences Naturelles de Belgique.

Richards A. 1939. *Land, Labour and Diet in Northern Rhodesia.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Roberts, A. D. 1973. *A History of the Bemba.* London: Longmans.

Roberts, A. F. 1979. 'The ransom of ill-starred Zaire: plunder, politics and poverty in the OTRAG concession', in G. Gran (ed.) *Zaire: The Political Economy of Underdevelopment.* New York: Praeger, 211–36.

—— 1980. 'Heroic beasts, beastly heroes: principles of cosmology and chiefship among the lakeside BaTabwa of Zaire', Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation. Dept. of Anthropology, University of Chicago.

—— 1981. 'Passage stellified: speculation upon archaeoastronomy in Southeastern Zaire', *Archaeoastronomy* IV(4), 27–37.

—— 1982. ' "Comets importing change of times and states": ephemerae and process among the Tabwa of Zaire', *American Ethnologist* IX(4), 712–29.

—— 1983. 'Anarchy, abjection and absurdity: a case of metaphoric medicine among the Tabwa of Zaire', in L. Romanucci-Ross, D. Moerman and L. Tancredi (eds.) *The Anthropology of Medicine: From Culture to Method.* Amherst: Bergin for Praeger Special Studies, 119–33.

—— MS 1. 'Enclave of order, seat of dissent: the establishment of a "Christian kingdom" in Central Africa.'

—— MS 2. ' "Like a roaring lion": Tabwa resistance and rebellion, 1885–1940.' Conference paper, 9th Annual African Studies Symposium, University of Illinois, 1982.

—— MS 3. 'Aardvarks and covered baskets: social change as reflected in two Tabwa origin myths.'

—— MS 4. 'On the emergence of Tabwa "Tribe" and "universal history".' Conference paper, International Conference on the History of Ethnic Awareness in Southern Africa, University of Virginia, 1983.

—— MS 5. ' "Authenticity", "alienation" and homicide: a case-study from the Zaire of the mid 1970s.' Conference paper, 13th Annual Meetings, Canadian Association for African Studies, Quebec.

Roelens, V. 1899. 'A travers la Mission du Haut-Congo', *Missions d'Afrique (Pères Blancs)* 20(7), 211–21; (8), 225–35; (9), 263–70; (10), 289–99; (11), 340–6; (12), 373–7.

—— 1948. *Notre Vieux Congo.* Namur: Grands Lacs.

Rouvière, J. 1942. *Monseigneur M. Guillemé (3 juillet 1859–7 avril 1942), Vicaire Apostolique du Nyassa.* Bembeke (Nyassaland): White Fathers.

Schmitz, B. *c.* 1903. 'Marché de Baudouinville, achats de vivres et provisions.' Manuscript notebook held at the Catholic Mission of Kirungu.

Schmitz, R. 1912. *Les Baholoholo.* Brussels: Albert Dewit.

Stefaniszyn, F. 1954. 'African reincarnation re-examined', *African Studies* 12(3–4), 131–46.

Stuer, P. 1903. 'Chez les montagnards du Maroungou', *Missions d'Afrique (Pères Blancs)*, 168.

Turner, V. 1957. *Schism and Continuity in an African Society.* Manchester: Manchester University Press *for* the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute.

—— 1970. *The Forest of Symbols.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Van Acker, A. 1907. 'Dictionnaire kitabwa–français, français–kitabwa', *Annales du Musée Royale du Congo Belge*, V.

Van Binsbergen, W. 1981. *Religious Change in Zambia.* London: Kegan Paul *for*

African Studies Centre, Leiden.
Van der Kerken, G. 1951. 'Affinités archéologiques des pierres trouées congolaises', *Encyclopédie du Congo Belge* I, 69.
Vanneste, M. n.d. 'Notices biographiques des P.B.,' typescript 925/2. Central Archives of the White Fathers, Rome.
Van Noten, F. 1977. 'Excavations at Matupi Cave', *Antiquity* (51), 35–40.
Waller, H. (ed.). n.d. *The Last Journals of David Livingstone in Central Africa, from 1865 to his Death* (first edn. 1875). Detroit: Negro History Press.
Weghsteen, J. n.d. Partial notebook written in French, perhaps by Weghsteen, or collected by him from a Tabwa seminarian. MS 803/121/A, Central Archives of the White Fathers, Rome.
Werner, P. 1971. 'Some developments in Bemba religious history', *Journal of Religion in Africa* 4(1), 1–24.
White Fathers (WF). 1885–1940. 'Diaire de la Mission de Mpala.' Typescript copy consulted at the Archives du Diocèse de Kalemie – Moba (Kalemie).
Willis, R. 1968. 'Kamcape: An Anti-Sorcery Movement in Southwest Tanzania', *Africa* 38(1), 1–15.
—— 1970. 'Kaswa: oral tradition of a Fipa prophet', *Africa* 40(3), 248–56.
Wolf, J. (ed.). 1970. *Missionary to Tanganyika 1877–1888: The Writings of Edward Coode Hore, Master Mariner.* London: Frank Cass.
Wyckaert, A. *c.* 1920. 'La journée d'un devin (chez les Wafipa)'. MS 831, Central Archives of the White Fathers, Rome.

Résumé

'Pêcheurs d'hommes': religion et économie politique chez les Tabwa

Le culte communal des *ngulu,* esprits de la terre, jouait un rôle très important dans la religion Tabwa à la fin du dix-neuvième siècle. A Lubanda, sur la côte centrale-ouest du lac Tanganika, l'esprit de la terre, Kaomba, à la fois symbolisait et assurait une vitalité commune en faisant se multiplier dans les méandres de la rivière Lufuko un poissonchat appelé *ndjagali.* Les ndjagali constituaient un mets de choix et étaient échangés dans des contrées distantes pour du sel ou du fer.

Des missionnaires d'Afrique (les pères blancs) s'établirent à Lubanda en 1885. Alors qu'ils cherchaient à créer une communauté chrétienne, ils attaquèrent avec ferveur la religion Tabwa, et Kaomba fut une cible facile. Les missionnaires s'emparerent de la sculpture de l'esprit, ainsi que des endroits de la rivière qui lui étaient dédiés. Ils permirent l'accès à ces endroits pendant de nombreuses années, selon leur propre réseau de loyautés et de responsabilités. Une 'révolution technique' au début du vingtième siècle, permit au Tabwa de pêcher en plein lac Tanganika, loin des côtes; cela devint une entreprise individuelle, plutôt qu'une occupation communale comme la pêche en rivière l'avait etê auparavant. La pêche sur la lac fut abordée individuellement plutôt qu'en groupe dû aux nouvelles circonstances économiques et politiques. La religion Tabwa s'achemina vers la possession de l'esprit intensément personnelle et devint une forme religieuse adaptée au nouveau context social du colonialisme.