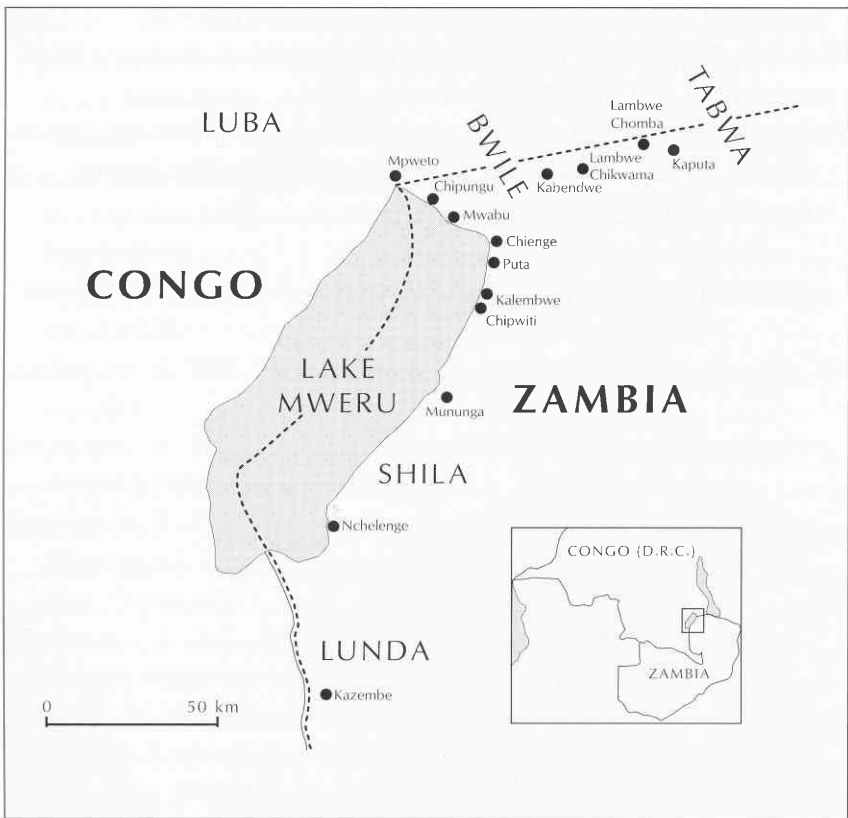




# Tradition and Agency

Tracing cultural continuity  
and invention

*Edited by Ton Otto & Poul Pedersen*



*The Bwile and their neighbours.*

# 'Be Proud to Be Bwile: It is Your Tribe!'

## Ethnicity, Political Jubilees and Traditions of Origins among the Bwile of Zambia<sup>1</sup>

*Pierre Petit*

### Traditions and political praxis

The invention – or construction (Linnekin 1992) – of tradition has usually been approached through its connections with political processes. In studies of cases ranging from British royal pageantry to the 'Arab' dress-code by the Mauritian Muslims (Cannadine 1983; Eriksen 1993: 72), it has been argued that supposedly 'authentic' cultural traits are appropriated, objectified and staged by social actors to enforce their current status or to manifest their claims in confrontation with others. This is a universal creative process, but it appears more frequently when 'a rapid transformation of society weakens or destroys the social patterns for which "old" traditions had been designed, producing new ones to which they were not applicable, or when such old traditions and their institutional carriers and promulgators no longer prove sufficiently adaptable and flexible, or are otherwise eliminated' (Hobsbawm 1983: 4-5). In other words, the process is more likely to happen on a large scale when social actors are caught up in the dynamics of change, i.e., the frame of political praxis.

Hobsbawm distinguished three 'overlapping types' of invented traditions:

- a) those establishing or symbolizing social cohesion or the membership of groups, real or artificial communities,
- b) those establishing or legitimizing institutions, status or relations of authority, and

1. *In memoriam* Albert Makungu, my interpreter and most exceptional research assistant among the Bwile and their neighbours, who was killed in dramatic circumstances in 2001. This article owes so much to him.

c) those whose main purpose was socialisation, the inculcation of beliefs, value systems and conventions of behaviour (1983: 9).

Since the focus of the present chapter is on the political context of tradition, I shall not take into account type (c), even though politics to some degree pervades any form of socialisation. As soon as politics becomes preponderant, however – as when a sporting activity is raised to the level of a national sport – (c)-type traditions turn into type (a) or (b).

If we focus on the first parts of Hobsbawm's definitions: 'establishing or symbolizing social cohesion', and 'establishing or legitimizing institutions', it becomes quite difficult to distinguish between (a) and (b). The difference here seems to lie less in the nature of the subject than in the approach taken to it. The legitimisation of an institution tends to strengthen social cohesion (whether we speak of cohesion within the institution or between it and the global society); conversely, social cohesion cannot be strengthened unless some legitimacy is accorded to the institutions that frame it.

Hobsbawm's distinction becomes more useful, I think, if we concentrate on the concepts of 'membership' and 'authority' that occur in the second part of his definitions. What is at stake in type (a) is the horizontal integration of society, i.e. the compelling agency through which one gets one's sense of sameness, of shared identity, of common fate with one's fellows. Type (b) relates more to the vertical integration that bounds society in a hierarchical way, and allotting different degrees of power, prestige and authority among its members.

Two well-differentiated types of invented traditions would result from this rephrasing. The first encompasses those that have been brought to the fore by scholars of ethnicity and nationalism. To define itself, a social group needs emblems that differentiate members from non-members, a process first documented for anthropology in Barth's celebrated *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (1969). Wearing the kilt or dancing the Kalela dance, two practices that formerly had no political content, have become reliable identity markers in Great Britain and Northern Rhodesia respectively (Trevor-Roper 1983; Mitchell 1956). Traditions of this type are intended to draw a taxonomic divide between an 'Us' and a 'Them', drawing attention to boundaries.

The second type of tradition has been given prominence by authors interested in the pomp and rituals displayed by political authorities (Beidelman 1966; Geertz 1977; Cannadine 1983; Cannadine and Price 1987; Devisch 1988; Abélès 1990, etc.). With less connection to the supposedly authentic popular culture included in type (a), traditions of this type tend to highlight the titular(ies) of an office – or even the office itself, when power is not properly embodied – as the central axis round which the whole society revolves. They could be seen as an enactment in the always-contested field of the semantics of power.

Most scholars have devoted their attention to type (a) processes, which according to Hobsbawm (1983: 9), are these that occur most frequently in the modern Western world. This has led to a tendency to associate the invention of tradition too closely with 'identity withdrawal' – or even with xenophobia – since such taxonomically-oriented traditions tend to enhance a group's cohesion through distinguishing clearly members from non-members, and often stigmatising the latter. In this chapter I will argue that this association is not binding, since traditions of type (b) can have the quite opposite effect, which might be termed 'identity expansion'.

## The Bwile of Zambia and their tradition of origins

My discussion is based on five months' fieldwork in Zambia among the Bwile, a population living astride the border of Zambia and Congo (see map). The Bwile of Zambia are a matrilineal Bemba-speaking people whose economy is based on slash-and-burn agriculture and on extensive fishing in Lake Mweru, on the northern shore of which most of the Zambian Bwile are concentrated.<sup>2</sup> At the time of my research (1993-1994), there were eight Bwile chiefs of some importance, but only one of them had been recognised as such by the Zambian administration: Puta, who bore the prestigious title of 'Senior Chief',

2. According to a 1980 census, there were 67,392 inhabitants in Nchelenge District (Nchelenge village excepted); Shila people probably represent about half of the district population (1980 Census).

while the others were mere 'village headmen' (*mwine mushi*).<sup>3</sup> From 1937 until 1999, the incumbent of the title was Puta Kasoma, who was succeeded in 1999 by Puta Mwase Shebele George. The status of Senior Chief allows Puta to get a regular wage and to settle conflicts (which yields more income).

Puta Kasoma's political status was problematic: his precedence had sometimes been disputed, but all the chiefs who brought their case against him to the Zambian administration did so in vain. In the 1990s, these chiefs ceased to question Puta's excessive rights because they were afraid of his occult powers. Born in 1914, Puta was enthroned in 1937 and ruled until his sudden death in 1999, an extraordinary record of political longevity, by Zambian – or any other – standards. Only his possession of occult powers, it was argued, could account for Puta's long life.

As Vansina puts it, 'A royal genealogy signifies that monarchy was the form of government here for a long time, that it enjoyed certain privileges and obligations, and that the present king is the rightful holder of the office' (1985: 101). For sure, African royal genealogies have other functions (e.g. symbolic), but the Bwile chiefs would certainly agree with Vansina's assertion, and it is not surprising that Puta Kasoma, anticipating the rival claims from his opponents, imposed as the first subject of our interviews his account of the foundation of the chieftom. His version was quite similar to a second one that I

3. The other Bwile chiefs were Chipungu Twaileta, Mwabu, Kalembe (all three settled on the shore of Lake Mweru), Lambwe Chomba, Lambwe Chikwama, Kabendwe and Mulolwa (all four settled upland at the time of my enquiries). Since my fieldwork, many political changes have taken place among the Zambian Bwile, as I have been informed by my interpreter, Albert Makungu. Chienge 'sub-district' has become a full district in 1997. In July 1996, Lambwe Chomba was appointed as 'chieftainess' by the administration, and managed in the next months to banish Lambwe Chikwama to Chipwiti, on the shore of Lake Mweru, about 60 km south of his former village (in which a young man has since been appointed as headman). Chieftainess Chipungu Twaileta had been involved in legal proceedings with Chipungu Kapulo, a Shila chief installed in Chipungu village, and won her case in 1998: Chipungu Kapulo's enclosure was then razed by Chipungu Twaileta and Puta Kasoma's followers, and he moved to the Shila chieftom of Mununga, where he has been appointed as headman. Since the beginning of the present war in Congo (1998-), thousands of refugees have crossed the border to settle among Zambian Bwile and Tabwa.

recorded during the jubilee celebration, recounted by Mr. Koti (see below). What follows is an abbreviated synthesis of both accounts.

The Bwile were forced to flee from their original homeland (Kola, or Luba country) as a consequence of wars waged by the Lunda, a population settled on the south of Lake Mweru and ruled by Chief Kazembe. In their exile, they were led by two chiefs, Mpweto – whose descendant is a Bwile chief in Congo – and Puta. Close to their present country, they had one final battle with the Lunda, which they won thanks to their magical powers. Mwanto, a Bwile princess, was noticed by the local Shila chief (the Shila being the former landowners of the whole country around the lake). He fell in love with her and they eventually married. Later, when she was pregnant, he had a dish cooked for her, containing all the foods prohibited for the royal Bwile clan. Consequently Mwanto aborted, wasted away and died. Puta and Mpweto rightly called for death dues, and Mwanto's widower – advised by the Shilas' paramount chief (Nkuba) – sent them a large amount of ivory. But Puta and Mpweto were not satisfied, and the widower eventually had to hand over to them the whole territory north of Lake Mweru, where the Bwile live today. Mpweto settled in the west, where he assigned districts to his subordinates, the ancestors of the lesser chiefs presently ruling among the Congo Bwile. Puta settled in the east and also gave estates to his subordinates: Mwabu, Kalembwe and Lambwe Chomba, i.e. the three most important Zambian Bwile chiefs after Puta.

This history is a founding charter that legitimises the current political order. The status assigned to the protagonists perfectly reflects the present political organisation of the Bwile: in the story, Puta and Mpweto – ancestors of the two chiefs who bear their names – are on an equal footing, the first settled in the east, the second in the west. This division corresponds exactly to the contemporary borderline between Zambia and Congo, where the present Puta and Mpweto act respectively as the Bwile paramounts. Afterwards, they divided the country into lesser chiefdoms which they assigned to their 'subordinates', the forebears of the present Bwile sub-chiefs in both countries.

The role conferred by Puta on his illustrious ancestor tallies perfectly with his present status. But, if we consider the local genealogies collected at the beginning of the 20th century, or if we take into account some of the oral traditions circulating among the Bwile nowadays, the Puta chiefdom in the earlier periods would appear to have played a less central role among eastern Bwile than it currently does. These data support the view that Mpweto alone was the Bwile paramount, and/or that the first Puta chief, the first Kalembe chief and the first Mwabu chief were all sisters' sons of the first Mpweto (Mwabu Kasenge 5/12/93; Kingo Swayi 30/11/93; Mukula 1973: 5, 21-23). No definite proof can be found for the historical veracity of this account – Livingstone's 1868 journal leaves the question unanswered, since at that time all three chiefs (Puta, Mpweto and Mwabu) applied for paramountcy (1880: 242, 281, 283) – but, except among Puta's faction, there was and still is a consensus on this version. Puta's discourse challenges this consensus in placing his ancestor on the same footing as the first Mpweto, and on a higher footing than the ancestors of chief Mwabu and chief Kalembe, to whom the first Puta chief would have entrusted parts of his domain. It also challenges the traditions relating to Lambwe Chomba's lineage, presenting it as subordinate to his, although all upland Bwile chiefs claim to be the offspring of Mutumpa, who is reportedly unrelated to Puta or to Mpweto.

This allows Puta to raise his lineage to the first rank, since his ancestor and the first Mpweto were supposedly equals. And since the present hierarchical relationship between two chiefs should ideally mirror the one that linked their respective ancestors – according to the principles of 'positional succession' and 'perpetual kinship' which have been clearly documented in this area by Cunnisson (1956) – the superiority of Puta over all the other Zambian Bwile chiefs seems unquestionable, and his title of Senior Chief entirely legitimate.

There are two reasons for saying that Puta's story 'challenges the consensus' rather than 'mystifies the account'. First, as we have seen, there are no data to prove definitely who is right and who is wrong. Second, to allude to mystification would situate the debate on the level of the *content* of tradition, whereas what I am concerned with here is practice, that is, the use to which tradition is put. As Kilani puts it, in



his discussion of genealogical traditions in the Tunisian oases, 'from the actors' perspective, the value of a belief proceeds not so much from its content as from the effect of persuasion it could imply; not so much from the phrasing of its content as from the kind of relation it sets up between the actors... So when... an Oasian claims prestigious origins or a Sherifian ascendancy, he is not trying to prove through this assertion a 'real' kinship with these prestigious characters; he is trying to get his equals to admit that it might be possible, which is sufficient to allot him higher prestige and to strengthen his position on the social scene' (1994: 259-60).

This description also applies just as well to the Bwile story. Whether he is addressing a passing anthropologist or the two or three thousand people brought together for the chief's jubilee, the narrator is certainly not so naive as to delude himself that his words will be taken for granted: there are too many divergent versions, too many open or latent contestations. But in proclaiming this 'History according to Puta' loud and clear, the narrator proves that such a discourse *can* be delivered publicly and without explicit protest, a performance that validates Puta's authority. In this way his version is successfully imposed.

The story has a second, more collective significance in legitimising the Bwile's settlement in the area. The territory has been transferred to them by the Shila, its former owners. In this region of Africa, land ownership is normally non-transferable, the one exception being in the case of death dues, as this account illustrates. Even if things did not happen as smoothly as we are told in this traditional account (since the estate transferred through death dues is generally much smaller), the story successfully presents the Bwile as the rightful landowners of their present territory.

Finally, the traditional narrative draws an idealised and edifying picture of Bwile history. Bwile origins are glorious since they came from Buluba, or Kola, the mighty Luba kingdom situated north-west of their present country. This kingdom stretched over a very large part of the Oriental Savannah of Central Africa, from the 18th to the 19th century. Its expansion – coupled with the bestowal of titles or regalia on faraway polities – led to the Luba kingdom's becoming the main historical reference by which most of the polities of that region

*Photo 1: Chieftainess Lambwe Chomba with her regalia: the tail and the tusk of an elephant, a whisk (mpunga), and the section of a conus shell (mpande) held to her mouth. She sits on her kyambaso stool.*



defined, and still define, themselves. All Zambian Bwile chiefs claim that their ancestors originated from Buluba – which is further reported to be the homeland of first rank religious powers – and prove it through the display of regalia which would have accompanied their ancestors during their migration, such as Lambwe Chomba's *mpande* shell and *kyambaso* chair (photo 1; see also Petit (1996c)).

## Tracking Lungwana memories

The edifying character of the story also derives from the seemingly heroic leadership of Puta and Mpweto. According to their oral traditions, the Bwile had not been vanquished since their flight from their original homeland, and they defeated the Lunda in a battle close to their present territory. In fact, however, many less glorious episodes are left out of the account: the Bwile were actually invaded and subjugated by five different groups during the 19th century. The Luba king Kumwimba Ngombe (+/- 1810 – +/- 1840) fought a war in their

country; subsequently, the Bwile were defeated by the Lunda of Kazembe, then by the Tabwa of Nsama; a large colony of Arab-Swahili settled in their country and the Bwile were eventually subjugated to British colonial rule in the 1890s.<sup>4</sup> Far from being the consequence of the slow and irresistible erosion of memory, forgetting is a very active process (Antze and Lambek 1996: xxv; Ricoeur 2000).

Let us enquire further into one of those 'lapses' of memory. From the 1860s to the 1890s, Bwile country – especially the northern shore of Lake Mweru – was a base of operations for a large community of Tanzanian ivory- and slave-traders who are generically referred to in the literature as 'Arab-Swahili' or 'Lungwana'. They managed to subdue the area militarily, claimed a tribute on salt, and took part in succession struggles, appointing their protégés to rule Bwile chiefdoms (Livingstone 1880: 238-91; Hanna 1969: 220; Mukula 1973: 22). When questioned about the history of the region, the Bwile chiefs unanimously hushed up this invasion, yet it is one of the keys to understanding the Bwile past. This black-out is all the more striking when one knows that after 'Pax Britannica' most of these former traffickers settled in the Tabwa chiefdoms east of and close to the Bwile country, where some of the mosques were still frequented in the 1970s, although this practice was by then on the wane (Chiengi District Notebook 1; Mc Donald 1979: 204).

Putu never mentioned these former slave-traders. When tackled on the topic, other chiefs also minimised their influence: Lambwe Chomba presented them as mere ivory traders, and the Tabwa chief Kaputa went so far as to claim that they never passed through his chiefdom. One of the chieftainess Mwabu's headmen, however, did acknowledge that these 'Lungwana' had formerly been present in the area: family elders presented them to young relatives as their own kin, and urged the young people to follow them obediently; in other words, certain Bwile took part in this trade.

4. Reeve 1981: 134-6; Labrecque 1951: 27-30; Whitely 1974: 23; Mwata Kazembe Chinyanta IV 5/1/94. The victory of the Lunda of Kazembe over the Bwile is manifest not only in the oral and written traditions of the former, but also in the oral tradition of some of the latter, who report that a sister of Mpweto was taken as hostage and wife by Kazembe (Kingo Swayi 30/11/93; Mwabu Kasenge 5/12/93).

Another account came from a very old man, Bruno Mulapi, a commoner living in Kaputa, the Tabwa chiefdom closest to Bwile country (1/11/93). He distinguished between two successive waves of Tanzanian immigrants: first came the 'Lungwana' or 'Arabu', then the 'Swahili'. The latter were merely fishermen (or buyers of the local fish?), whereas the former were ivory- and slave-traders. They bought young people for cloth, or simply kidnapped them. No one dared to claim their enslaved relatives, for fear of being abducted themselves. My informant's maternal aunt fell into the hands of the Lungwana; her father followed the slave caravan, hoping to retrieve her, but in vain: he gave up when he learned that she had been shipped to the Tanzanian shore of Lake Tanganyika, never to be seen again.

Such dramatic events must have been very common in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Bwile chiefs' silence about this recent past must therefore be understood not as amnesia, but as a defence against this potentially traumatic memory. Indeed, although public oral traditions have 'forgotten' the Lungwana past, it remains encoded in objects that act as *lieux de mémoire*, or visual supports where this memory surfaces incidentally. Lambwe Chomba's *mpande* shell (photo 1) was reportedly bought from Lungwana merchants by her ancestor Mutumpa, before the latter left Luba country (26/10/93). Similarly, chieftainess Chipungu Twaileta, Puta's niece, asserts that her uncle's present *mpande* was part of a lot of three bought from Lungwana, the two others of which he could bestow on his nieces or nephews (18/10/93). The recent acquisition of these *mpande* is all the more surprising since they are the very symbols of the continuity of chieftainship, as we shall see below: but the stress on the antiquity of heritage seems more a Western than a Bwile concern. Finally, the garments worn during public ceremonies by high-ranking Bwile officials, as well as by Bwile mediums during rituals, are reminiscent of the Arab-Swahili tunic and cap (see photo 2). When he referred to the Tanzanian Swahili, Bruno Mulapi immediately mentioned their distinctive long white tunic. Most convincingly for my argument, chief Puta had *no* special name for his tunic or cap, although he described them as the typical garb worn by his predecessors (8/10/93). For the Bwile chiefs, then, the Arab-Swahili past seems literally to be unspeakable.



*Photo 2: Three mediums (cilumbu, tufunga) during a ceremony in praise of Chipungu Twaileta's guardian spirit (22/10/93).*

Note the paradox underlying the status of these objects. Mnemonic artefacts have usually been approached through their 'positive' use, i.e. as aids in remembering the past and lending support to present interests, topics and worldviews (see Nooter Roberts and Roberts 1996). Here, however, they recall something undesirable. The comments I collected were never expressed spontaneously; it was as if the past was performatively domesticated on a scenic and material level, but remained unspoken.

Contrary to their assertions, then, the Bwile have not always been the rulers of their own country. The oral tradition uttered during public celebrations (such as the one described below) creates the sense that the Bwile have been the masters of their own destiny. Presenting themselves as the main agents of a glorious history empowers the Bwile on a symbolic level, even though – as any critical analysis of archives, written or oral, demonstrates – their country has in fact been little more than a buffer state between much more powerful political centres, for which the Bwile were of little account.

## The celebration of Chief Puta's jubilee

The Bwile also display their symbolic creativity through rituals. Indeed, they celebrate their chief during jubilees of which the first recorded occurrence was in 1962, when Puta Kasoma celebrated his 25 years of rule. The programme of that celebration corresponded closely to that of the feast I observed 31 years later.<sup>5</sup> A major celebration also took place in 1987 on the occasion of Puta Kasoma's 50<sup>th</sup> jubilee. It was described as a real success since many high-up officials took part, including the Lunda paramount chief Kazembe, and the highest administrative officer of Luapula Province.

The celebration that I witnessed started on 26 November 1993 and was staged in honour of Puta's 56 years of reign.<sup>6</sup> My wife and I received an official typed invitation, including the programme, which turned out to be only loosely respected since some of the billed activities were cancelled. The celebration began with a short and relatively private prayer session in Chief Puta's enclosure. The chief, his wife, his sister and his eldest son wore their ceremonial dress, while his other relatives and close relations carried a red scarf across their shoulders (in the case of the men) or a red headband over their headscarves (in the case of the women). Three pastors of the United Church of Zambia (UCZ) presented songs, biblical lectures (Kings I) and a sermon to Puta and his wife. The lecture related to King Solomon: Puta was compared to the biblical king, attention was drawn to their common wisdom and intelligence and to their long reigns. A further comparison was made between Solomon's construction of the Temple of Jerusalem and Puta's generous financing of the building of the local UCZ temple.<sup>7</sup> Finally, the leading pastor blessed Puta and the whole assembly.

5. It consisted of prayers, transport of the chief and his wife in a sedan chair, 'traditional' dances and songs, speeches (by high administrative officers and dignitaries) praising Puta for his qualities, the presentation of gifts (including a Bible), sketches by pupils and students from different schools, tea, football matches and award of a cup to the winners, reception and beer drinking (Senior Chief Puta file, nos. 1-5).

6. This decision had been taken well before my arrival in Bwile country.

7. Puta Kasoma had been converted to the UCZ by his wife, but everyone knew that he carried on his 'traditional' rituals.



Photo 3: The *mfukula* dance group.

Then came a singer who poetically praised Puta's talents. The growing crowds were pressed by the organisers to manifest their happiness more openly through ululations. The central ground then became the stage for two successive dance troupes: the first consisted of three dancers who excelled in acrobatics and buffoonery; the second, in sharp contrast, was more static and less clown-like and was composed of three youngsters led by an elder who beat a chest-drum, *mfukula*, which has given its name to the choreography of their dance (photo 3).

The UCZ choir, all in impeccable red and white uniforms sang the praise of Solomon who had asked God for wisdom, not for wealth: 'Are we acting the same way in present days?'. Then the *mfukula* dancers took the stage for the second and last time.

When Puta and his wife sat down on the sedan chair (*muselo*), which was to be carried by 12 men, a gun was fired. The singer brandished in front of them the *mbafi*, a ceremonial axe that was part of Puta's official regalia (photo 6): at this point, Puta looked up, while his wife looked down to the ground. A procession was then formed and began moving in a deafening uproar (photo 4), headed by a



*Photo 4: Chief Puta and his wife on the sedan chair.*

group of women – mainly relatives of Puta – who sang and played percussion instruments as they walked. The *mfukula* company closed the procession.

The destination, at the other end of the village, was reached after a quarter of an hour. The procession slowed down, and walked the last metres using a special gait (photo 5): a few paces forward, a few paces backwards (a gait also used when a wedding procession approaches the in-laws' house).

Puta and his relatives sat down under a little shelter ornamented with flowers, the *mfukula* dancers sitting on the ground in front of them. The speeches that followed were broadcast through the loudspeakers of a vehicle stationed nearby. At first, the singer recited Puta's genealogy and praised him again for being so elegant; he declared that the whole of Bwile country belonged to Puta; that Puta was like a stinging plant from which it was wiser to keep a distance; that he was a powerful man, feared for the length of his reign, and so on.

Mr. Koti, the chairman of the celebration committee, then invited Puta to deliver a speech. The old chief's bearing as he did so was imposing: he explained that the assembly were now standing where





Photo 5: *The final gait.*

his maternal uncle's enclosure formerly stood, and where he himself had been enthroned. He then went on to recall his genealogy in detail, proving that he was the rightful heir of his uncle. Finally, he called for the blessing of the ancestral spirits.

After further songs, the procession started up again and moved on to the sports ground of the principal school in the village. Once more, Puta and his main hosts sat under a shelter, the *mfukula* dancers sitting on the ground just in front of the chief. About two to three thousand people were present. For the next half hour, the prominent guests were invited up to the microphone one by one and requested to deliver a message to Puta, which was invariably full of praise and expressed the speaker's wishes for his long and peaceful reign. Afterwards, the guests put some money in a winnowing basket lying in front of Puta. Pressed by the other guests and the organisers I participated by making a brief speech.

Then Mr. Koti told the history of Puta and Mpweto as presented above, and concluded his account by stressing the legitimate pride the assembly could take in being Bwile.

For the next two hours the sports ground was taken up by dan-



*Photo 6: Elderly relatives of Puta singing in front of the shelter. The singer, on the left, is holding the mbafi ceremonial axe.*

cers, singers and actors. Elderly relatives of Puta, who had headed the procession, opened the rejoicing with seemingly comical songs and dances (photo 6). Troupes of pupils or students, from different schools, danced and/or sang hymns devoted to Puta: 'In order to praise him, we say "Puta who tastes of salt;<sup>8</sup> the son of Mwanto."<sup>9</sup> Or: 'Here in our country, who is the chief? He is Puta, the shadow of our home. Do not fall sick, you, our granary we have set up!'

Other schoolgirls danced in a gymnastic fashion, sometimes joined by older relatives of the chief who added bits of humour to their performance.

8. There are many salt pans in Bwile country which were formerly exploited on a large scale (Moore 1937; Petit 2000). Salt is a 'sweet' food for the Bwile, as sugar is for Europeans.
9. In the oral tradition, Puta is not presented as Mwanto's son, perhaps because this would lower him one step beyond Mpweto. According to genealogies collected at the beginning of the century, Mwanto was the sister of Mpweto; her son was the first Kalembwe chief, while Puta was the offspring of another sister of Mpweto: Chipampi (Chiengi District Notebook 1: 133-34, 166, 184).

Pupils then performed a playlet that was met with great applause: the story of a man bewitched by his wife who enforced him to carry out women's duty. A friend advised him to go and see a medium (*ci-lumbu*). The latter went into a trance, diagnosed the wife's witchcraft and prescribed a charm to counteract the spell. The charm worked, and the wife eventually became submissive to her husband, who cheerfully thanked his friend for his advice.

Next came a puppeteer, who made his puppet dance to a song praising Puta. This entertainment was followed by a much applauded belly dance performed by five boys to the beat of a friction drum (*kikwitikwiti*). The morning festivities ended with a performance by a woman who cycled round the stadium on a bicycle, carrying a bucket of water on her head.

At one o'clock in the afternoon selected guests were offered a meal in Puta's enclosure. During the afternoon, the local football team played against a team from another village; the locals won and were awarded a cup by the organiser of the match, the manager of a local cooperative. Finally, at half past five, a reception took place in Puta's enclosure, and alcoholic drinks were offered to the guests.

## The dialectics of centre and periphery

To analyse this jubilee, we need to put it in its local and global context. We have seen that the second half of the 19th century was a dark period for the Bwile, who suffered from intense slave-trading. At the turn of the century, Bwile country became a stronghold of the British in their penetration into Central Africa: in 1890 and 1891, British agents, 'impressed by the powerful personality and friendly attitude of Puta, the chief of the Bwile' established at Chienge (or Chiengi), next to Puta's village, 'the first Government station to be set up in what was to become North-Eastern Rhodesia' (Thomson 1955: 68; Chiengi District Notebook 1: 3). As a result, the country became an important place of transit in the trade with Northern Rhodesia. 'There was then a comparatively large European community, traders and administrators, settled at Chiengi and Kalungwishi' (Moore 1937: 137). But as Rhodesia gradually became less isolated thanks to the railway linking it to South Africa, colonial trade ceased to fol-

low the route of the Lakes; the administrative post at Chiengi was closed, and the region gradually became a remote border area in the British empire. By 1937 it was possible to say that 'Chiengi [was] now one of the farthest points in the country from European civilization' (Moore 1937: 138; Thomson 1955: 77). Independence did nothing to change this state of things, so that by the beginning of the 1990s, at the time of my fieldwork, Bwile country was a *cul-de-sac* that could only be reached by following a rough path. The area was little known to officialdom, and reported to be very backward by Zambian civil servants, who tried to escape any assignment there. A borderland, whose administrative headquarter, the Chienge boma, was only 20 km from the border of Congo (then: Zaire) – an unruly neighbour not appreciated by the Zambians. Because of its location, there was a great deal of traffic to and fro, and most of its population, permanent or seasonal, came from Congo. It was also seen as a hotbed of unrest: Congolese bandits had already led a number of incursions into it, and the fishermen were known to have dealt violently with the officials who had tried to enforce the annual closure of fishing in 1993.

Until 1997, Bwile country was synonymous with Chienge sub-district, the sub-district being a second-class administrative division. To cash their wages, the few Chienge civil servants had to go to the neighbouring district of Nchelenge, 100 km away. The administrative post, the 'boma', was no longer supplied with water or electricity, and its remaining equipment was sometimes cannibalised by Nchelenge officials. Hence some of the Bwile had begun to feel a certain resentment: why should they pay taxes when they received nothing in return?

This peripheral status partly explains why the Bwile were despised in the small urban centres to the south (Mansa, Nchelenge), where the very word 'Bwile' was an insult. The toponym and ethnonym 'Marungu', which applies to the country and the populations living upland in Bwile country, had undergone a similar fate. I was first told that Marungu was nothing more than a 'desert'; when I travelled there, I realised that this was not the case in any sense of the term, and that this assertion was just another indication of the way the whole area had been stigmatised as backward and unsophisticated. Nobody – or hardly anybody – acknowledged that they

lived in the Marungu, whose borders were always pushed further away from the village where the question was asked.<sup>10</sup>

But the Bwile were unwilling victims of this marginalisation, and struggled against the stereotypes that were used to defame them. The celebration described above represented part of their enterprise to rehabilitate their people. The ethnic dimension of the jubilee came to the fore when Mr. Koti concluded his speech, in the overcrowded stadium, with a lesson for the future and a call for respect:

All this (the Bwile history) will be written down in children’s books. The Lunda of Kazembe have done this with their *mutomboko*.<sup>11</sup> Don’t let it get on your nerves if people call you Bwile. Be proud: it is your tribe! Thanks to the annual<sup>12</sup> celebrations, the Bwile, formerly little known, are nowadays better known in all Zambia. Let us be proud to be Bwile!.

Thus the effort to mobilise Bwile ethnicity – which was made most visibly, during my stay, on the occasion of the jubilee – occurred during a ceremony centred on the personality of Puta. The jubilee set off a movement of symbolic expansion by which a man (Puta), a community (the Bwile) and the whole world were telescoped together through a play of metonymies. This process reminds of Geertz’s definition of charisma as ‘a sign of involvement with the animating centers of society’, the latter being surrounded by an ‘aura of being not merely important but in some odd fashion connected with the way the world is built’ (1977: 152-53).<sup>13</sup>

10. Similarly, Congolese Tabwa deny living in the Marungu (Roberts 1985: 6).

11. Formerly a war dance ritual, *mutomboko* was transformed in 1961 into an annual ceremony praising Chief Kazembe and Lunda ethnicity (Munona Chinyanta and Chileya Chiwale 1989; Mwenya n.d.). This modern tradition has inspired the Bwile jubilee as well as others carried on in the chiefdoms of Kaputa, Mununga, etc.

12. Mr. Koti hoped the celebration could be held every year, but this wish remained ungranted. He also planned a ceremony celebrating the Bwile’s departure from Luba country.

13. One may ask if such a definition would not equate charisma with the fascination exerted by any power as soon as it is properly ‘staged’ (de Heusch 2003: 33-34).

Putá's jubilee was aimed precisely at (re)installing a centre of power in an area where it was said to be lacking. The act of praising Puta as a chief of multiple talents, lifting him on a sedan chair to parade around the village, claiming an oral tradition legitimising his lineage, bringing thousands of people together around him, all contributed to presenting him as an outstanding and exemplary being. Through this symbolic centralisation, the celebration amounts to a ritual work that, to follow Geertz's words, links Puta with the animating centres of society: for a closer study of the ceremony reveals it as an attempted recapitulation of the animating forces behind the whole of Bwile society.

The concept of a 'total social fact' designates 'a privileged moment... when a society appears as whole in setting the entirety of its institutions and representations in motion' (Jamin 1992: 457). Puta's jubilee – where men followed women, young people followed elders – can certainly be described in these terms. Christendom, through the agency of the UCZ Church, gave its blessing to Puta: to close the prayer session, a pastor requested God to give life, health and intelligence to the chief, and to bless all the people attending the ceremony. Leaders of different churches were among the chief guests present at the stadium. But, as a counterpoint to this, non-Christian religious powers were also evoked. Puta ended his speech on the site of his enthronement with these words: 'Thanks to all this [Putá's genealogy], we have the right to pray here where the ancestral spirits (*mipashi*) of the chiefly authority (*bufumu*) lie, blessing us and allowing us to live peacefully'. At this moment, as indeed during the rest of the ceremony, a man could be observed standing close to Puta: a reportedly dangerous sorcerer, who, according to gossip, was protected from the people's vindictiveness by the chief, who needed his help for his own occult activities. Non-Christian powers were also invoked in the playlet (which praised the efficacy of a medium's charms) and, less publicly, during the football match: Puta's team reportedly won thanks to the powerful magic of a medicine man (*nganga*).

This involvement of both Christian and non-Christian authorities was only one aspect of the all-encompassing structure of the ceremony as a whole, which alternated between references to the Bwile local world and to the 'modern' global world. As Ranger has noted

apropos of the Zimbabwean state, the Bwile claim ‘simultaneously to be the heir to African tradition and to colonial modernity’ (1993: 106). Thus, the *mfukula* dancers exemplify the former in displaying symbols which, in Bwile imagery, are linked to their ancient culture. At the jubilee ceremony, they were stripped to the waist, had feathers in their hair and wore skins attached to their belts; they beat the rhythms of their dances with rattles held in their hands or tied to their legs. The chest drum from which the dance gets its name (*mfukula*) is unquestionably an ancient instrument formerly used in an area stretching from Lake Mweru to Lake Tanganyika.<sup>14</sup> The conus shell (*mpande*) ornamenting Puta’s headdress during the celebration is similarly an ancient symbol. It is the main regalia of all Bwile chiefdoms: when the chief dies, the shell is put on his mouth (as on photo 1), then removed; later on, during the enthronement of his successor, put on the latter’s mouth, and in Lambwe Chomba’s chiefdom a song is uttered by the kingmakers at that moment: ‘I come back’ (*Nabwela eee*). The ‘breath’ of the dynasty is seemingly captured, preserved and then breathed into the new recipient of the royal office, a process accomplished, among the western neighbours of the Bwile, through the use of relics. The spiral design inside the shell might also evoke the unbroken succession of royal generations (Puta 29/9 and 9/10/93; Lambwe Chomba 26/10/93; Petit 1996a: 360-62; see also Roberts (1985: 26) for the Tabwa). The *mpande* shell was indeed put on Puta Kasoma’s mouth after his death in Lusaka, in 1999.

By contrast, the UCZ choir, the policemen standing close to Puta during the ceremony, the schoolgirls wearing uniforms and ties, or dancing in ranks to a martial beat punctuated by whistle blows, evoke values linked to the modern Zambian nation. High Zambian administrative officers had been invited but declined; nevertheless, their absence was balanced by the conspicuous presence of Mr. Koti, the leading organiser of the celebration, a former UNIP member of the national parliament (UNIP was the party of former President

14. At the turn of the century, among the Tabwa (the eastern neighbours of the Bwile), this drum was played by minstrels who sang the praise of chiefs and accompanied men to battle to give them courage (Roberts and Maurer 1985: 56, 196-97).

Kaunda). The UNIP vehicle, used for broadcasting the speeches, was also conspicuous at the jubilee.

Finally, I and my wife were also linked, as Europeans, to the values of the global world. Counting among the few notabilities originating from beyond Chienge sub-district, we were often given a prominent place at public events and on this occasion were allotted seats close to the chief guests in the sports ground. The good wishes that I briefly expressed to Chief Puta during the ceremony were undoubtedly expected from me by the organisers of the celebration.

The jubilee celebration set Puta at the centre of a cluster of acting powers. At least, that was the intention, though in this respect the ceremony was not entirely successful. Some of the guests told us in confidence that they were disappointed by the poor reception they were given: some did not even get any food; others were most surprised by the conspicuous position held by Puta's wife's children from her first marriage (who were not of royal blood), who took a lot of liberties and treated Puta's close relatives as virtual 'strangers'. Moreover, none of the Zambian Bwile chiefs – with the sole exception of Chipungu Twaileta, Puta's niece and protégée<sup>15</sup> – came to the jubilee, which was a way of showing their disapproval of the central role Puta would undoubtedly hold throughout the performance. For these reasons, many people expressed the opinion that it would henceforth be difficult to find people willing to organise and financially back such a celebration, especially since the funds collected for the 1993 ceremony amounted to a mere 30% of what had been hoped for by the celebration committee. Rituals have usually been studied in terms of their positive results, but failures and setbacks in this area could also prove to be a very interesting avenue of research.

A ritual creates power, but it never ensures a monopoly on it. It would be most naive to believe that after the jubilee, all Zambian Bwile would compulsively rally around Puta, their exemplary leader. 'Social systems, including ours, are not systematic and coherent... Power does not emanate from a single source and social formations are composed of centers and epicenters of power in dynamic rela-

15. Members of the Mpweto royal family had come, but since they are Congolese Bwile, they had no reason to fear or openly to criticise Puta's self-celebration.



tion with one another' (Arens and Karp 1989: 16). The pageantry displayed by Puta, the oral tradition uttered by Mr. Koti (who called for it to be written down in children's books) faced severe opposition from Puta's rivals: the other Zambian Bwile chiefs, who had their own arguments and wanted them to be put on record by the passing anthropologist.

Thus chieftainess Mwabu reported that her chiefdom was previously a dependency of Mpweto, not of Puta; Puta had been arbitrarily chosen as Senior Chief by the colonial administration, and had since become a real despot who arrogated the right to a tribute on all the local products, even the small fry fished on the shore of Mwabu's chiefdom; but Puta Kasoma's opponents were terribly afraid of him and would not dare to take any action against him (Mwabu Kasenge 5/12/93).

Chieftainess Lambwe Chomba, in similar vein, claimed that her ancestor Mutumpa was not related to Puta and in no way indebted to him; her subordination to Puta was not voluntary, but enforced by the State (Lambwe Chomba 26 and 31/10/93).

Chief Lambwe Chikwama, a great rival of Lambwe Chomba, likewise reported also that his ancestor Mutumpa was in no way answerable to Puta, who had come later in the area; his subordination to Puta was due only to the fact that Puta's usurpation had been validated by the State. Nevertheless, Puta would not dare to claim a tribute from Lambwe Chikwama's subjects; and if he attempted to impose one of his protégés as the head of their chiefdom after the present chief's death, 'it would lead to a war of axe-blows!' (Lambwe Chikwama 3 and 17/11/93).

As for Chief Kalembwe, he had already launched a move to secession, when in 1980 he proclaimed himself Senior Chief, a claim quickly denounced by the Zambian administration (Senior Chief Puta file no. 32).

## Polar ethnicities in Africa

Let us now return to the distinction summarised in the introduction, which proposed to establish two types of politically-orientated invented traditions:

- a) those in which tradition acts as an emblem distinguishing members from non-members;
- b) those in which tradition grants authority and centrality to one (or many) character(s) around which society will supposedly be organised.

Hobsbawm suggests that invented traditions of the first type are the most common in modern Western world (1983: 9): traditions of the second type are certainly known, but occur less frequently. With the reservations called for in any such comparison, I think that rural Central Africa – and especially the cluster of societies in the Southern Savannah – presents the reverse situation. The difference could be linked to the paradigms on which collective identities have been founded in these two areas.

The Western world is indebted to Classical thought for its strict notion of categories and concepts – ‘membership in a category must be all or none’ – which has shaped the dominant discourse about ethnicity and nationalism (Mahmood and Armstrong 1992: 4). As Eriksen puts it, ‘Nationalism and other ethnic ideologies hold that social and cultural boundaries should be unambiguous, clear-cut and “digital” or binary [...] an ideal which is very difficult to uphold in practice’ (1993: 114). Traditions of type (a) are presumably one of the main tools in enforcing this ideal.

This model of clear-cut identities was exported to Africa. Ethnic geneses or (re)configurations which took place in colonial contexts relied largely on this digital model, because of the ‘classifying (and sometimes frankly racist) tendencies of colonial science and social science [...] European classifications and inventions of race, or tribe or language in effect created a series of empty boxes, with bounded walls but without contents’ (Ranger 1993: 82, 84). But this assertion does not imply that there was nothing close to ethnicity in pre-colonial times. Precolonial Central Africa experienced its own ethnogeneses, but these were – and still are, mainly in rural regions – usually based on a different model, which could be described as ‘polar’.

This model is consistent with the frequent derivation of Central African ethnonyms from the name of a chief or of a historical heartland, as if an identifiable centre was needed for self-definition. Such

is the case with Luba ethnicity: its pole lies in the historical heartland of the old kingdom, a region called Buluba, i.e. 'Lubaland', from which Luba identity radiated to the many populations that gravitated round it (Petit 1996b). Similarly, Bemba identity, which at present extends to most of the population of northern Zambia, has grown from an originally small strip of land: Lubemba ('Bemba land'), the district of the Bemba paramount (Richards 1940). Historical traditions of the Tabwa point to a core area, the region called 'Litabwa', which is now in the Bemba chiefdom of Mporokoso, as a place of chiefly origins (Roberts 1985: 7-9, 1989: 205).

A second argument for the polar paradigm is that certain well-documented examples of the invention of ethnicity in pre-colonial Africa reveal that it involved not so much the imposition of a common culture on all the people that the ethnonym would eventually apply to, but the ideological and semantic enforcement of a *centre*. The Zulu state was very heterogeneous, culturally speaking, but it fostered a strong sense of identity through 'the development of a hierarchy of dialect... Most of the previous prestige terms were drawn to the centre of the new state. At the same time, "ethnic terminology" was developed in order to *differentiate* as well as to *consolidate*' (Ranger 1993: 87). Thus the Zulu ruling lineage paradoxically constructed a large generic identity through the monopolisation of symbols of excellence by a few.

This polar paradigm is not designed to turn Barth on his head by claiming that Central African ethnic groups spontaneously sprouted in age-old core areas, a claim that would be inappropriately raise the essentialist approach from its ashes. On the contrary, these identities, like any others, appeared through interaction and regular contacts, mostly of a political nature: no 'Us' is thinkable without a 'Them'. But the resulting attributions of identity do not automatically imply what Barth's theory of ethnic boundaries suggests: namely that these social frontiers have to be enacted and maintained at the basic, micro social level of the members: 'If a group maintains its identity when members interact with others, this entails criteria for determining membership and ways of signalling membership and exclusion'; or: 'Entailed in ethnic boundary maintenance are also situations of social contact between persons of different cultures: ethnic groups

only persist as significant units if they imply marked difference in behaviour, i.e. persisting cultural differences' (Barth 1969: 15-16).

On the contrary, I think there is *no* marked behavioural or cultural difference between, for example, the common Bwile and their neighbours (Tabwa, Shila, Lunda...), who seem to live in a cultural continuum. 'The organization of culture difference', to take Barth's celebrated sub-title, is for the most part the business of political or ritual incumbents – or, more precisely, of the polar institutions they embody – which act as ethnic landmarks for commoners. And here, traditions of type (b) are needed in order to create or maintain a centre that will rally commoners by displaying a difference with other, competing poles.<sup>16</sup> Perhaps part of the reason why Europeans misunderstood African ethnicity is that we tend to project apparent differences between polar centres onto the level of the common people, who are not themselves the main actors in creating ethnic boundaries.

It could be argued that this polar model of ethnicity is relevant only in state societies, where the central authority can enforce its image of centrality on its subject polities. It may indeed be true that the polar model is less frequently found in stateless societies, but those close to a state often undergo a chain-like reaction that compels them to self-definitions compatible with the ethnic idiom imposed by their powerful neighbour. Moreover, the polar paradigm sometimes applies to groups which never had any contact with any pre-colonial state. The ethnic groups that crystallised through the colonial system – Ranger's 'empty boxes' – have been given meaning by their members through the process of 'moral ethnicity', and this reimagining of identity has often amounted to the invention of a lost, original centrality. Hence some of the most important historical traditions of the Duala in Cameroon refer to the Ngondo, a reportedly pre-colonial 'centralizing institution (...) a judicial or (...) general governing body presided over by the major Duala chiefs' (Austen 1992:

16. The sense of difference conveyed in a polar system is less marked than in a clear-cut, taxonomic model. This explains the well-documented fluidity of ethnic self-ascription in rural Central Africa. Being a member of group A does not preclude one from also being a member of group B. Radiating ethnicities are not mutually exclusive, and may overlap without too much incongruity from the actors' point of view.

286-87). This historical tradition is not an accurate description of the past – the Ngondo myth was invented at the beginning of the 20th century – but the image of centrality is important for the Duala's sense of unity and shared past. The Giriama of Kenya present another example: these culturally heterogeneous people define themselves by reference to a ritual site where a palladium stone called Ngiriama is buried; the persistence of their shared identity depends largely on the rituals celebrated at this site, which represents a kind of umbilical cord, mystically linking all the Giriama together (Parkin 1991).

To cut a long story short, my intention here is to show that ethnogenesis in rural Central Africa has more to do with installing a centre than with defining clear-cut frontiers. If this is right, one can understand why the invention of tradition in Africa has usually taken the form of type (b), which aims at embodying various powers in one centre. Both types of traditions (a and b) play a role in the construction of ethnicity, but they do so in different ways. The former acts according to a dichotomous logic: they create a frontier inside which membership is shared on an equal footing, and beyond which begins the realm of otherness. The latter acts inversely through a cumulative and expansive logic, that has less regard for frontiers. Instead of a frontier, they install a central point, a kind of magnet or gravitational pole that attracts heterogeneous elements around it. The difference between these two models of ethnicity is reminiscent of the distinction made by Anderson (1991) between two models of political systems: the modern nation and the dynastic realm.<sup>17</sup> As he puts it, 'In the modern conception, state sovereignty is fully, flatly, and evenly operative over each square centimetre of a legally demarcated territory. But in the older imagining, where states were defined by centres, borders were porous and indistinct, and sovereignties faded imperceptibly into one another' (1991: 19). Note, however, that Anderson's distinction, though closely related to mine regarding ethnicity, does not make the latter redundant, since polar ethnicity may be seen where dynastic realms are lacking (see above).

As it appears in the Bwile case study, some populations of Central Africa achieve this image of centrality not merely through references

17. See also Kopytoff 1987 and Foster 1991: 253.

to their ancient, reportedly authentic patrimony, but, in a more open and pragmatic perspective, by forging a novel synthesis between that heritage and symbols originating from the 'modern' world. The Bwile jubilee gathers together in a single performance all the people, institutions, values and powers that constitute their present society, and put them all into orbit round Puta.<sup>18</sup> Whatever the outcome of this performance in the current political contest between Puta and his rivals, this expansive and encompassing ritual process goes beyond the oppositions that structure everyday society, and hence contributes to giving the Bwile an integrated, cosmopolitan picture of their world.

## Bibliography

- 1980 *Census of Population and Housing. Preliminary Report 1981*. Lusaka: Central Statistical Office.
- Abélès, M. 1990. *Anthropologie de l'Etat*. Paris : Colin.
- Anderson, B. 1991. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Revised Edition). London: Verso.
- Antze, P. and M. Lambek. 1996. Introduction: Forecasting Memory. In: P. Antze and M. Lambek (eds.), *Tense Past. Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory*. New York: Routledge, xi-xxxviii.
- Arens, W. and I. Karp. 1989. Introduction. In: W. Arens and I. Karp (eds.), *Creativity of Power. Cosmology and Action in African Societies*. Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, xi-xxix.
- Austen, R. 1992. Tradition, Invention and History: The Case of the Ngondo (Cameroon). *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines* 126, 285-309.
- Barth, F. 1969. Introduction. In: F. Barth (ed.), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries. The Social Organization of Culture Difference*. Bergen-Oslo: Univeritets Forlaget, 9-38.
- Beidelman, T.O. 1966. Swazi Royal Ritual. *Africa* 36, 373-405.
- Cannadine, D. 1983. The Context, Performance and Meaning of

18. This encompassing ritual structure could be interestingly compared to African sacred kingship (Petit 1996a, de Heush 2003) and to the South Asian cosmological frame of 'galactic polities' (Tambiah 1976: 102-31).

- Ritual: The British Monarchy and the "Invention of Tradition", c. 1820-1977. In: E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 101-64.
- Cannadine, D. and S. Price (eds.). 1987. *Rituals of Royalty. Power and Ceremonial in Traditional Societies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Chiengi District Notebook, vol. 1. (Kept at the National Archives of Zambia, Lusaka.)
- Cunnison, I. 1956. Perpetual Kinship: a Political Institution of the Luapula Peoples. *Rhodes-Livingstone Journal* 20, 20-48.
- de Heusch, L. 2003. *Charisme et royauté*. Paris. Société d'ethnologie.
- Devisch, R. 1988. From Equal to Better: Investing the Chief among the Northern Yaka of Zaire. *Africa* 58: 261-90.
- Eriksen, T.H. 1993. *Ethnicity and Nationalism. Anthropological Perspectives*. London and Chicago: Pluto Press.
- Foster, R.J. 1991. Making National Cultures in the Global Ecumene. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 20: 235-60.
- Geertz, C. 1977. Centers, Kings and Charisma: Reflections on the Symbolics of Power. In: J. Ben-David and T.N. Clark (eds.), *Culture and its Creators. Essays in Honor of Edwards Shils*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 150-71.
- Hanna, A.J. 1969 (1956). *The Beginnings of Nyasaland and North-Eastern Rhodesia, 1859-1895*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hobsbawm, E. 1983. Introduction: Inventing Tradition. In: E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1-14.
- Jamin, J. 1992. Mauss, Marcel. In: P. Bonte and M. Izard (eds.), *Dictionnaire de l'ethnologie et de l'anthropologie*. Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 456-58.
- Kilani, M. 1994. *L'invention de l'autre. Essais sur le discours anthropologique*. Paris-Lausanne: Payot.
- Kopytoff, I. 1987. Introduction. In: I. Kopytoff (ed.), *The African Frontier*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 3-84.
- Labrecque, E. 1951. Histoire des Mwata Kazembe, chefs lunda du Luapula. *Lovania* 18: 9-33.
- Linnekin, J. 1992. On the Theory and Politics of Cultural Construction in the Pacific. *Oceania* 62: 249-63.

- Livingstone, D. 1880. *The Last Journals of David Livingstone in Central Africa* (2 vol.). London: Murray.
- Mahmood, C.K. and S.L. Armstrong. 1992. Do Ethnic Groups Exist? A Cognitive Perspective on the Concept of Cultures. *Ethnology* 31: 1-14.
- Mc Donald, J.J. 1979. The Kaputa Joint Development Project as a Model for Integrated Rural Development in Zambia. Thesis for the degree of Master of education, Department of adult and higher education, University of Manchester.
- Mitchell, J.C. 1956. *The Kalela Dance. Aspects of Social Relationships among Urban Africans in Northern Rhodesia*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Moore, R.J. 1937. Industry and Trade on the Shores of Lake Mweru. *Africa* 10: 137-57.
- Mukula, P.M. 1973. *Calendars of the Districts Notebook* (Luapula Province). Lusaka: National Archives of Zambia.
- Munona Chinyanta and Chileya Chiwale. 1989. *Mutomboko Ceremony and the Lunda-Kazembe Dynasty*. Lusaka: Kenneth Kaunda Foundation.
- Mwenya, A.H. n.d. *Mutomboko (Lunda Royal Dance of Conquest)*. Lusaka: Zambia Information Services.
- Nooter Roberts, M. and A.F. Roberts (eds.). 1996. *Memory: Luba Art and the Making of History*. New York: The Museum for African Art.
- Parkin, D. 1991. *Sacred Void. Spatial Images of Work and Ritual among the Giriama of Kenya*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Petit, P. 1996a. "Les charmes du roi sont les esprits des morts" : les fondements religieux de la royauté sacrée chez les Luba du Zaïre. *Africa* 66: 349-66.
- Petit, P. 1996b. Au cœur du royaume. Réflexions sur l'ethnicité luba. *Bulletin des séances de l'Académie royale des sciences d'outre-mer* 42: 759-74.
- Petit, P. 1996c. Bwile Myopia: A note from Recent Research by Pierre Petit. In: M. Nooter Roberts and A.F. Roberts (eds.), *Memory: Luba Art and the Making of History*. New York: The Museum for African Art, 236-38.
- Petit, P. 2000. *Les sauniers de la savane orientale. Approche ethnographique de l'industrie du sel chez les Luba, Bemba et populations ap-*



- parentées (Congo, Zambie)*. Brussels: Académie royale des sciences d'outre-mer.
- Ranger, T. 1993. The Invention of Tradition Revisited: The Case of Colonial Africa. In: T. Ranger and O. Vaughan (eds.), *Legitimacy and the State in Twentieth-Century Africa. Essays in Honour of A.H.M. Kirk-Greene*. Houndmills: Macmillan Press, 62-111.
- Richards, A. 1940. The Political System of the Bemba Tribe, North-Eastern Rhodesia. In: M. Fortes and E.E. Evans-Pritchard (eds.), *African Political Systems*. London: Oxford University Press, 83-120.
- Ricoeur, P. 2000. *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli*. Paris: Seuil.
- Reefe, T.Q. 1981. *The Rainbow and the Kings. A History of the Luba Empire to 1891*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Roberts, A.F. 1985. Social and Historical Contexts of Tabwa Art. In: A.F. Roberts and E.M. Maurer (eds.), *Tabwa. The Rising of a New Moon: a Century of Tabwa Art*. Seattle: University of Washington Press for the University of Michigan Museum of Art.
- Roberts, A.F. 1989. History, Ethnicity and Change in the "Christian Kingdom" of Southeastern Zaire. In: Leroy Vail (ed.), *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa*. London: James Currey and Berkeley: University of California Press, 193-214.
- Roberts, A.F. and E.M. Maurer (eds.) 1985. *Tabwa. The Rising of a New Moon: a Century of Tabwa Art*. Seattle: University of Washington Press for the University of Michigan Museum of Art.
- Senior Chief Puta file, archive kept at the District Council of Mansa (conf./28/22).
- Tambiah, S.J. 1976. *World Conqueror and World Renouncer. A Study of Buddhism and Polity in Thailand against a Historical Background*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Thomson, Justice J.B. 1955. Memories of Abandoned Bomas. Nr. 8: Chiengi. *Northern Rhodesia Journal* 2: 67-77.
- Trevor-Roper, H. 1983. The Invention of Tradition: The Highland Tradition of Scotland. In E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 15-41.
- Vansina, J. 1985. *Oral Tradition as History*. London: James Currey.
- Whitely, W.H. (ed.). 1974. *Maisha ya Hamed Bin Muhammed el Murjebi yaani Tippu Tip*. Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau.

## Oral sources

Chieftainess Chipungu Twaileta Chomba Namai was interviewed with her headman Joseph Swale Mwenya in Chipungu village on 18 Oct. 1993.

Chief Kabendwe was interviewed in his village on 24 Nov. 1993, along with his subordinate headman Chikopela.

Chief Kaputa Betwel Chansa, a Tabwa chief, was interviewed in his village (Kaputa) on 20 and 23 Nov. 1993. For the second interview, informations were also provided by Adam Kabwe Shadrak, Duncan Kitula, Lamek Chupa and Vincent Lwalika, all of which are dignitaries and relatives of the chief.

Kingo Swayi is a close cousin of the present Mpweto chief, in Congo. He was interviewed in the Zambian village of Lupya (next to Chipungu) on 30 Nov. 1993.

Chief Lambwe Chikwama Kishala Abraham was interviewed in his village on 3 and 17 Nov. 1993, along with relatives, among which his brother John Chomba provided most of the historical data.

Chieftainess Lambwe Chomba Maria Bupe was interviewed with relatives in her village on 26 and 31 Oct. 1993.

Bruno Mulapi, a Tabwa elder, was interviewed in Kaputa village on 1 Nov. 1993.

Chieftainess Mwabu Kasenge was interviewed in her village on 5 Dec. 1993, along with Paul Swali, Secondi Bwalia and Staufi Mwabu (the first two are subordinate headmen).

Chief Mwata Kazembe Chinyanta IV was interviewed with seven dignitaries in his capital of Mwansabombwe on 5 Jan. 1994. Among the seven, Kalandala Mwanamwilombwe provided much information.

Chief Puta Kasoma was interviewed in his village on 28 and 29 Sept. 1993, and on 8 Oct. 1993. He was backed during the two first interviews by Tarcitius Koti, a retired parliamentarian. Puta's jubilee, held on 26 Nov. 1993, has been described in the text.

## Tradition and Agency

Tradition helps ensure continuity and stability in human affairs, signifying both the handing down of cultural heritage from one generation to the next, and the particular customs, beliefs and rituals being handed down. In the social sciences, tradition has been a central concept from the very start.

Yet – to update the old quip about nostalgia – tradition is not what it used to be. Twenty years ago, Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger showed in *The Invention of Tradition* how new governments acquire legitimacy and status by creating “traditional” ceremonies and identities. Their work helped revolutionize the understanding of tradition in anthropology, history and sociology, stimulating an enormous amount of research on invented and imagined traditions.

However, most of this research has focussed on the cultural dynamics of specific local innovations and reactions to global developments. The present anthology seeks to highlight instead just how widespread the invention and revival of traditions is. The individual chapters feature a fascinating series of case studies from Africa, Asia, the Pacific, Australia, and Europe, while the editors provide an overview of how the various discussions address the larger questions of cultural continuity, agency and the use of cultural resources. In the postscript, Terence Ranger offers a complementary perspective by tracing the effects of nationalism, imperialism and globalised exchange on tradition.

AARHUS UNIVERSITY PRESS

ISBN 87-7934-138-1



9 788779 341388