Bugabo: Arts, Ambiguity, and Transformation in Southeastern Congo

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From late in the nineteenth century through the first forty years of the twentieth, "Bugabo" was a mutual-aid society among peoples throughout what is now southeastern DRC, including eastern Luba, Hemba, Boyo, Goma, Tabwa, and related clans, chiefdoms, and other on-the-ground socio-political groupings.[2] Bagabo—that is, members of the society—

[1] This paper was written in 1992 for "Power Figures in Central Africa: Transition, Transversion and Process," a symposium organized by Dr. Dunja Hersak at the Free University of Brussels in collaboration with the Fowler Museum of Cultural History at the University of California, Los Angeles. Warm thanks are extended to those convening and participating in this engaging event. Editing and reference updating has been undertaken in 2009. My writing here is based upon forty-five months of field research from 1974 to 1977 in and around the large village of Mpala-Lubanda along the southwestern shores of Lake Tanganyika in what was then the Republic of Zaïre, formerly the Congo Free State (1885-1908) and the Belgian Congo (1908-1960), and now the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). At the time, I was a doctoral student in Anthropology at the University of Chicago. Extensive archival research has also been undertaken in Brussels and Rome. Because eastern DRC has suffered more than thirty years of dire civil strife and secondary effects such as famine and epidemic disease, many Tabwa have fled to Zambian refugee camps where they are only now being repatriated after living there for decades; as a consequence, it is not clear what—if any—beliefs and practices that I studied in the 1970s are still observed today. My research was conducted in Swahili, since this has been the first language of people living at Lubanda for two or more generations; people living in remote villages still speak Kitabwa.

[2] Bugabo was sometimes known—or at least written—as Bukabo, Buhabo, or Bwabo according to local dialects. A member of the Bugabo society was a *mugabo*, and *bagabo* was the plural of the term.

possessed hunting, healing, sorcery-finding, and other sorts of powerful magic.[3] As an inter-ethnic society, the tenets of Bugabo offered an overarching alternative to social organization based upon kinship, lineage affiliation, sacred chiefship, and clan (cf. Zangrie 1947-50: 66, 70-71). The networks and particular relationships that one could establish across these differences were undoubtedly important to regional as well as local-level politics. Bugabo had particular importance during the early decades of the colonial period, when, at least in the minds of certain Belgian missionaries and administrators, it became a focus for anti-European and proto-nationalist sentiment among Congolese.

Bugabo as an identifiable ritual complex seems to have begun sometime in the last decades of the nineteenth century (Colle 1913: 601). Its elemental metaphors and basic practices are undoubtedly much older, however, and from a twenty-first-century remove, it is difficult to ascertain the degree to which the integrity of Bugabo as a particular society was an on-the-ground reality, and to what degree it was a colonial invention. Pol Pierre Gossiaux (1990, FN 13) suggests that Bugabo was a collective term referring to "several initiatory societies" rather than a single one. Did these multiple Bugabos form a nexus, or did a more basic paradigm exist among groups without particular connections, as a set of beliefs and practices that varied from one identity group to another and over time? As Daniel Biebuyck (1981: 23) aptly notes, the "synthesizing tendencies" of peoples in southeastern Congo "frequently make it possible for elements of disparate cults to be brought together locally into a new and complex system." In other words, representational forms are begged, borrowed, imitated, stolen, invented, cast off, and rediscovered. Such *bricolage*, as Claude Lévi-Strauss

[3] Despite the controversy of such terms, I shall use the word "magic" to translate *bwanga*, *dawa,* and other local terms that refer to the "science of the concrete" (Lévi-Strauss 1966) through which people of southeastern DRC exploited their world during the colonial period—as they most certainly still do. I shall also use the term "sorcery" (*bundozi* or *bundogi* in local dialects, *ulozi* in Swahili) with reference to the application of magic to achieve fell deeds, while asserting that *ulozi* can also be very positive in its intentions and accomplishments, and refers to a far broader ontology than the word "sorcery" implies in English. A valuable source on such matters is Geschiere 2004.

(1966) would have it, is the essence of creativity (cf. Roberts 1992, 1997), and was to prove especially important to people in southeastern Congo as Belgian authorities outlawed one mutual-aid society after another as they suspected them of subversion (cf. Douglas 1969). Each time they did so, local people proved their tactical resilience by inventing new forms to meet old and emerging needs for dignity and security. As we shall see, elements of what became Bugabo in the colonial period existed before and after the society's demise, and indeed, some of these elements (as practiced under different rubrics) were of critical importance to Tabwa people living around Mpala-Lubanda in the mid-1970s.

The name "Bugabo" has an intriguing etymology. Colle suggests that it is derived from the verb *–aba*, "to share," and "undoubtedly signifies sharing or *communism*" (1913: 601, my emphasis). "Communism," even in 1913, may have been a "red flag" indicating Colle's antipathy toward the society and its motives as being at variance with those of the White Fathers, much as Monsignor Roelens (1904: 292) equated Bugabo with Freemasonry as another Metropolitan institution despised by conservative Catholics of the time.[4] While it may be that "Bugabo" plays on the Luba verb *–aba*, "to share, divide, honor or recognize someone through giving a portion" of food or other goods (Van Avermaet and Mbuya 1954: 2), based upon the Proto-Bantu root *-gab*, "to give" (Werner 1978: 93); other direct senses or puns were probably available, since with a tonal shift, -àba means "to feel great emotion for or want a great deal, to lust after," while *mukabo* is "a polygamous wife" (ibid, 2, 214). Schmidt (1912: 273) was told that the "real" derivation of the word is from *gabo* or, more probably, *ngabo*—"shield"—as it was with such a device that the subterranean initiation to be

[4] See also Schmidt 1912: 272. This last source is important to the present discussion, and it should be understood that the ethnic term "Holoholo" that Schmidt uses is problematic, despite the fact that there is a linguistic monograph (based, I understand, on exceeding brief research) by A. Coupez (1955) that would seem to confirm the "tribal" nature of the designation. The complexities of social identity could not be more evident, since local people do sometimes refer to themselves or call other people using this reference, yet "Holoholo" have more in common with their neighbors than not, and in particular, clan relations are the sine qua non of most political matters. For further discussion, see Petite 1993, Roberts 1985, and Roberts and Roberts 1996.

described below was closed to the surface. All such references might be apposite depending upon contexts and purposes of the society, since homonymy and other word play suggest analogies without any necessary contradiction.

Historical linguistics offers other understandings of the Proto-Eastern-Bantu root of "Bugabo." Douglas Werner (1978: 93 and passim) suggests that from sometime around the beginning of the Common Era, the term *mu-gabo* "evidently meant a special person who dispensed spiritual power."[5] He further asserts that "the spirits of certain individuals who were given special recognition for controlling supernatural phenomena when they were alive, came to be honored by their followers after their deaths at natural shrinal centers" associated with territorial spirits (Werner 1978: 99-100; cf Werner 1971). Dialectical differences among closely related Bantu-speaking groups transform *mu-gabo* into *mwao* (plural: *miao*) among Fipa and other peoples of southwestern Tanzania and northeastern Zambia, for whom the term "refers to the spirits associated with natural shrines who are believed to control the forces of weather and disease." Furthermore, "this shift of meaning from person to spirit seems to underlie a good deal of the history of territorial cults in the region" (ibid; cf. Robert 1948 and Willis 1968, 1981). Extending such analysis farther, Werner (1978: 100) suggests that with a dialectical shift, *mwao* becomes *nyau*, the society celebrated for its masked performances among Mang'anja, Chewa, and related groups of northern and central Malawi (see Aguilar 1996, Yoshida 1993).[6] Of similar interest is the fact that an early stage of initiation to the Bwami (Bwamè) Society best known among Lega but once found among neighboring

[5] Werner's approach is based upon the work of his mentor, the noted linguistic historian Christopher Ehret (1973). Thanks to Professor Ehret for discussing these matters with me in July, 2009.

[6] The constellation of ideas and practices subsumed by "mugabo" may have extended much farther due to population movements associated with the slave trade that evacuated tens of thousands from central toward and to coastal east Africa in the last half of the nineteenth century. For example, in writing of Mombasa, Terence Ranger (1975: 24) mentions "the Vinyago masking traditions of the despised slaves from Central Africa," and one wonders if "Vinyago" might be another dialectical extension of *mugabo* via *mwao* and *nyau*.

Bembe as well, was known as "bwamè bwa bùgabo" (Gossiaux 2000: 45; Baeke 2009: 40).

If "mugabo" has such broad extension across the centuries and vast expanses of central Africa, how is one to situate the Bugabo Society of southeastern Congo as described in writings of the colonial period? Following the functionalist social science of the times and *la politique indigène* as a Belgian version of indirect rule developed in the 1920s and 1930s, "tribes," "paramouncies," and other groups were formalized as their defining characteristics and "boundaries" were clarified for practical as well as ideological reasons (see the essays of Vail 1989). The "fuzzy" nature of identity and mundane transactions, wherein one group merges into another so that ethnic differences are often more a matter of degree than of distinct discontinuities, was ignored, either purposefully or unwittingly (see Roberts and Roberts 2007, Petit 1993). Similarly, inter-ethnic sodalities and other institutions transcending social particularities were often misunderstood.[7] As one result, a "secret society" such as Bugabo may have become as much the fantasy of colonial agents as a lived reality among Congolese.[8]

What is one to make of colonial descriptions of Bugabo, all these years later then? The synthesis to be presented here must be understood as just that: a collage of bits and pieces of ethnography that may or may not have ever existed as coherently as presented. That is, my account is problematic, given that there are no descriptions of actual performance events and very little first-hand exegesis from Bagabo themselves—if any at all. In any archaeology of knowledge (cf Foucault 1982), a hypothetical model of what *might* have existed is proposed as a combination of elements in an order that is possible rather than proven. Some aspects of ritual may have never found a place in practices with others, while still others remain unknown

[7] One might note that such misunderstandings of social dynamics are anything but a thing of the past, witness the gross miscalculations and disastrous consequences of a coherent "al Qaeda" as imagined by "intelligence experts" within the Bush Regime of the United States in the early 2000s.

[8] On Bugabo as a "secret society," see Anonymous 1919b and 1925a, Vandergam 1930, and Vanden Bossche 1954, among many others.

despite the probability that they were of critical importance. Underlying such content, however, are structures of logic and praxis

Bugabo in the Colonial Period

The expressive culture of Bugabo included rituals, invocations, songs, and dances, as well as several forms of carved wooden sculpture associated with important magical devices. The best known of these latter—with outstanding examples in public and private collections—is a wooden power figure called *kabwelulu* (Vandergam 1930).[9] These are finely carved anthropomorphic heads, heads and torsos, and sometimes full figures that are usually female and may be holding or gesturing to their breasts in a mode referring to how women guard collective secrets that is common to Luba and Luba-influenced works (Roberts and Roberts 1996: 205 and passim). Many *kabwelulu* were made to be fitted to the tops of spherical gourds or set into baskets. The figures are sometimes hollow from top to bottom, or have a cavity in the top of the head to hold a magical bundle, sometimes contained in the horn of a Grimm's duiker (*Sylvicapra grimmia*) or another small antelope. In several known examples, a quartz crystal occupies this central position (ibid, 239). Often, Giant African Snail shells, quartz crystals, seeds, beads, animal pelts, and other elements are added to skirt the juncture between the wooden figure and the gourd or basket, and as complementary devices with their own magical efficacies (see Petridis 2008: 43-45).

[9] Also written *kabwelugulu*, *kabwegulu*, and *abulugulu* following different dialects and, undoubtedly, the "ears" of those transcribing the term (Van Vijve 1927; Biebuyck 1981: 23; Schmidt 1912: 426). Nowadays, Tabwa at Lubanda use the variant *kambwilungu*.

Mead Art Museum, Amherst College, Amherst, Massachusetts.
The Barry D. Maurer (Class of 1959) Collection of African art purchased with Amherst College Discretionary Fund and funds from H. Axel Schupf (Class of 1957), AC 1999.10.

To date, very little has been written about the Bugabo society, its important place in the colonial history of southeastern DRC, or its arts, other than a few colonial reports, several obscure publications from the colonial period, and museum catalog entries based upon these latter. Much of the older material was written with an explicitly Eurocentric bias, and at least one more recent publication repeats missionary assertions about the evils of Bugabo without further reflection or more recent ethnography. The exception is a usefully detailed article by Daniel Biebuyck (1981) on *kabwelulu* figures he observed and collected in the early 1950s among Goma people living along the northwestern shores of Lake Tanganyika.

In the present paper, I shall propose a processual model of the senses and purposes of *kabwelulu* power sculpture and related works used by Bugabo adepts of the early 20th century. I shall propose a synthesis of the structuralism of Luc de Heusch (1972) and the empiricism of Victor Turner (1970) in an effort to understand the forms that thought takes and has taken in a vast field of transformations from one closely related ethnic group to another, and the purposes such thought serves as ideas are enacted in the "social dramas" of local-level political economy.

Bugabo sculpture will be examined to understand its efficacy and impact in contexts of tension and social change (cf. Roberts and Roberts 2007). *Kabwelulu* figures were "process art" meant to be transformative in circumstances requiring decisive action (cf. Roberts 1985: 10-16). Although the archival and published literature is sketchy at best with regard to particular circumstances when *kabwelulu* figures were used by bagabo, cases of what may be related figures and magical bundles in use among Tabwa in the 1970s permit a consideration of their powers and how earlier expressive forms were deployed. In turn, diachronic study of this sort allows one to consider the ways that verbal and visual tropes (metaphor, metonym, and synecdoche in particular) are continually modified, recontextualized, invented outright, or discarded as people seek to cope with the vicissitudes of life which, in the case of bagabo, included overt opposition to the society by certain Catholic missionaries and colonial authorities.

A broad range of historical materials about Bugabo exists, mostly in the form of unpublished administrative reports or missionary diary entries

from the early 1900s. In many cases, such authors repeat the data, conclusions, and interpretive biases of two influential colonial writers: Robert Schmidt (1912), an early officer of the *Comité Spécial du Katanga* in the days of its concession with the Congo Free State, and Father Pierre Colle (1913) of the Missionaries of Our Lady of Africa, better known as the White Fathers. As often as not, such repetition—often bordering on plagiarism—is without reference to original sources (cf. Reefe 1981: 14-19, and Nooter 1991: 4-5, 13-22).

Bugabo may have originated among Tabwa people living in the Marungu Massif southwest of Lake Tanganyika (Vanden Bossche 1954: 34), or among Luba-influenced Tabwa living northwest of the Marungu in a land called Urua in early colonial literature (Roelens 1904: 292). Alternatively, it may have begun north of the Lukuga River in southeastern Maniema (Colle 1913: 602; Van Geluwe 1981: 225). With regard to such a possibility, Schmidt felt that the home of Bugabo was near the striking double peaks called Kabwe north of the Lukuga, toward the source of the Luama. It is here that the territorial spirit Kabwelugulu (or Kabwelulu) is deemed to reside, and for which the *kabwelulu* power figures of Bugabo may have been named (Schmidt 1912: 273-74). For his part, Daniel Biebuyck suggests that Goma people along the northwestern shores of Lake Tanganyika consider Bugabo to be "one of their genuine old traditions" (1981: 22, 29), but just as likely, such an ideological assertion could and would be made by any group in which Bugabo flourished.[10] More probably, Goma, Tabwa, Hemba, and other peoples of the region share ritual logic and praxis that made a movement like Bugabo—with its political aspects of specific importance during the early years of the twentieth century—consonant to them all, as suggested by the discussion of historical linguistics in our first pages. No matter wherever and among whomever it did originate, Bugabo as known in the Belgian Congo soon spread among closely related groups of southeastern Congo, extending

[10] Biebuyck mentions that Bugabo ritual experts "were involved with the initiation and burial of the…consecrated chief" of the Goma, and that a related group he calls Bazhoba "characterize *buhabo* as some sort of god living in the bush" (1981: 28). While he suggests that neighboring groups incorporated "various conceptually interrelated cult and healing elements" (ibid, 29), he offers no details.

from the shores of Lake Tanganyika westward to the Lualaba River (Vandergam 1930: 11; Anon. 1925a), and quite probably to communities of western Tanzania as well (Roberts 1994a).

By the late 1920s, Bugabo was known as "by far the most powerful association, and because of this, the most feared" among people throughout southeastern Belgian Congo (Van Vijve 1927; cf. Biebuyck 1981: 22). As one colonial administrator wrote, bagabo "are socially powerful first of all, and then magically as well. Their misdeeds are constant and their specialty is mysterious murder. Poisoning carefully hidden? Magnetic forces? Who knows?" (Anon. 1919a). Clearly, the officer was as awestruck as his interlocutors may have been, and the dread of Europeans probably added to the popularity of Bugabo among Congolese (cf. White 2000).

Such mystification has continued in more recent times. Echoing colonial assessments, Huguette Van Geluwe asserts that "the Buhabo maintained that its intention was to promote mutual aid, but the principal, if unavowed, goal was actually the enrichment of its members. By using aggressive methods including poison and murder and by preying on people's fear, gullibility, and belief in sorcery, the Buhabo extorted payments from their victims" (1981: 225). One is left wondering how the writer could know of any such goals if they were "unavowed."

This does not mean that Bugabo was lacking in aggressive potential. In a description of the magic associated with the *kabwelulu* figures central to Bugabo practice, for example, Father Colle noted that such a sculpture was often set into a basket that contained activating agents (known to Tabwa as *vizimba*, *kizimba* singular) such as pieces of the skulls of "(1) a man killed with a spear, (2) a man who has died with edema (*hydropique*), (3) a man discovered dead in the bush, and (4) and finally, a *muhungu* cadaver, that is, one that has been disinterred and partially destroyed to chastise [the ghost] for having molested its survivors" (1913: 604).[11] Other ingredients might

[11] The third of these *vizimba* would be called *kapondo* by esoterically versed Tabwa at Lubanda. For a case study of the histories implicit to such relics as well as the uses and consequences of *kapondo*, see Roberts 1997. The fourth of Colle's ingredients would likely strike a Tabwa of the 1970s as the work of a Tulunga

include stones from mountains associated with important earth spirits, red and white powders, fragments of bone marrow or spinal cord [human?], scrapings from inside elephant tusks, and bones from the wild dog [*Lycaon pictus*] locally known as *muhonda* (ibid). This ghoulish repertory is similar to that composing magical bundles I examined or had explained to me in the 1970s, and especially the central device of divination and healing by Tulunga shamans (see below, and Roberts 2000). The explosive powers of such confections meant to address local-level political purposes will, depending upon which side of a conflict one is on, invariably be considered by some to be *ulozi*—sorcery, that is—and just as certainly the stuff of heroism by others. It is worth noting that such ambivalence characterizes many aspects of culture in southeastern DRC, including the nature of political leadership (see Roberts 1996b).

An intriguing if fragmented sense of Bugabo activities can be constructed from archival sources. The *bene ba Kabwelulu* (that is, "stewards" of the figure and its powers) were also diviners and healers. Again, any such arcane abilities are subject to interpretation, because for every person seeing them as a boon, there will be others who condemn them as evil. So it was that Schmidt could report that Bugabo adepts were "*bandogi* sorcerers and not *baganga* healers. They kill but do not heal" (1912: 276)—a stark assessment that some within any given community would share if their purposes were not served by Bugabo activities, and similarly, an opinion consistent with colonial perspectives about the dangerous proclivities of Congolese under their authority.

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shaman sufficiently endowed with magical and mystical abilities to disinter a body determined through divination to be the lodging place of a *kizwa*—that is, an aggressively vengeful ghost. Such a spirit will be calmed, not "chastised," however. The practitioner will take parts of the cadaver as a *kizimba* for later use in potent medicines, but this would not be considered "destruction" as Colle had it, especially insofar as the practitioner and his clients would consider use of such a *kizimba* to be benign and beneficial. Those antagonistic to these same parties would probably consider possession, deployment, or even knowledge of such devices to be sorcery. For a long case study of social disruption caused by a *kizwa* (or *kiswa*), see Davis 2000: 133-162.

It is not clear who might or might not have approached a practitioner of Bugabo, since no case studies appear to have been recorded; but judging from the practices of specialists such as Tulunga diviner-healers I knew who were active in the 1970s, it can be assumed that both Bugabo members and those outside the association might have sought assistance when dire circumstances justified the undoubted expense (see Roberts 2000). A gift of beads, iron hoe blades, cloth, chickens, and/or a goat would be brought by the supplicant, with the importance of the prestation determined by the gravity of the case at hand. Van Vijve (1927) offers the following description of an idealized divination séance concerning a sorcery accusation, as it might have been held in the region of Luizi.[12]

> When the diviner is ready, he places his [*kabwelulu*] fetish before him, begins to tremble, and in halting phrases addresses his fetish ... "Kabwe, you who fear no men, do not refuse me what I ask of you (*Kabwe kamandamanda, kampamampama akuamba kintu kutambulanga*). When the diviner feels he has seen faces appear in the eyes of his fetish, he turns his own eyes to look into an earthen pot filled with water that is beside him, into which he throws little pieces of carved wood. Over the water he says the same words he has addressed to his fetish. When he believes he has seen images in the water he cries "I now know it, it is X (and he offers the name of someone in the village) who has cursed you.

Other Bugabo members then brought the accused before the diviner, and the person was forced to undergo the poison oracle if s/he refused to admit guilt. Those surviving this latter were deemed innocent (ibid).[13]

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[12] It is difficult to determine the ethnic identity of those Van Vijve describes, for Luizi is an area where Hemba, Luba-influenced Tabwa, eastern Luba, and probably other peoples from north of the Lukuga River converge. To my knowledge, the place has received little scholarly attention (although see Agthe 1983, Blakeley and Blakeley 1994, Gossiaux 1990, and Neyt 1977). This passage by Van Vijve is reproduced nearly verbatim (but not as a direct quotation) by Biebuyck (1981: 23), and is explicitly alluded to by Van Geluwe (1981: 225).

[13] Many different divinatory devices have long been available in southeastern Congo, including ones that use water or other reflective surfaces as outlined here (see Roberts 1988, 2000). Van Vijve's reference to "little pieces of carved wood" begs for further explanation, for it could be that this is a variation on Luba gourd

Bugabo adepts also possessed the secrets of powerful protective magic, which they could produce at the behest of others. Vandergam (1930) lists the contents of several bundles, stating that these ingredients were known to individual Bagabo and were not necessarily common knowledge. Indeed, adepts of other societies may have made (and as of the 1970s, still did make) bundles of the same name and often with some or all of the same substances. Judging from the literature on Bugabo as "the most powerful association" of the early colonial period (Van Vijve 1927) as well as my own research in the DRC, there was probably a hierarchy among the various societies or named circles of knowledge, and it may have been that a magical bundle made by a mugabo might have been deemed more powerful than the same sort of device produced by someone not associated with Bugabo.

One of the bundles explained to Vandergam (1930) prevented or cured snakebite. Its *vizimba* activating agents included parts of three serpents called *dobezia*, *tambwatanda*, and *pela* by the administrator's interlocutors, as well as *lenda* roots and a piece of root crossing a path that has caused someone to trip. Although Vandergam made no note of it, this last ingredient is used in many magical preparations as a means to interrupt and so thwart malicious designs. These things were burned and their ashes mixed. "For the magic to take effect, the possessor adds this formula: 'Now, I am a Mukabo, and if a snake bites me, I will not die.'" Such an amulet was effective against serpents sent to attack bagabo by those associated with rival societies, or by those with more general evil intent.[14]

Another magical bundle described by Vandergam (1930) was called *mwanzambale*, and magic of the same name was still made and used in southeastern DRC in the 1970s (Roberts 1995: 93-95). Vandergam suggested that the full name for this device, *mwanzambale kibalanga mwana*

divination that uses small sculptures, pieces of medicinal wood, and other objects, artifacts, and relics; see M. Roberts 2000, 2010.

[14] Snakebite is a constant worry in this part of Africa, given the number of venomous species; see Roberts 1986a for a case study of how medicines of the sort have ready political dimensions.

muntu onga kambala, means "I am not searching for or attacking anyone, but if that person comes after me and takes this poison, he will die." Similarly, knowledgeable Tabwa told me that *mwanzambale* amulets possess a reflective property so that an adversary's evil intentions will afflict him instead of his would-be victim (cf. Colle 1913: 469). Vandergam was told formulae for *mwanzambale* by Bugabo adepts Kabondo Kakinbanga and Chief Kabamba Vubu: part of an *ndale* serpent's head, a spiderweb, stool from someone with diarrhea, bark from a *musongamania* tree, skin from a man's forehead (*kinika*), tree thorns, and red and black ants. Tiny bits of these were reduced to powder and placed around the perimeter of someone's home to "close" it from evil, and remaining ingredients were placed in a duiker horn to be carried by the supplicant.

Judging from the constitution of a *mwanzambale* bundle made for Christopher Davis and me in 1975, it is quite likely that Vandergam was not told of certain ingredients that may have been included in this powerful magic, given how problematic knowledge of such things can be.[15] In all probability, the two human relics he does mention were complemented by others reflecting key aspects of human experience that the practitioner wished to protect and/or manipulate. The *mwanzambale* we commissioned was made by a practitioner of Buyembe, a society or circle of knowledge that is the same as or derived from an earlier association called the Bakazanzi, best known for its identification and pursuit of sorcerers among eastern Luba (Roberts and Roberts 1996: 180-181). Many of the ingredients of our *mwanzambale* are as macabre as those described by Colle, and several are the same (Roberts 1996; cf. Hersak 1986: 121). Because of such elements, people are very ambivalent about magic like *mwanzambale*, for while such powerful elements may protect someone, they may also be used aggressively and are the stuff of sorcery itself.

[15] Christopher Davis and I were married at the time, and conducting our different doctoral research projects in Anthropology among Tabwa people of Mpala-Lubanda. She has written of the contents of the *mwanzambale* created for us (2000: 267-271), and provides other contextual information and analysis. I have discussed the contents of the same *mwanzambale* bundle as an illustration of instrumental tropes (and especially synecdoche) that are fundamental to magic in general; see Roberts 1995: 93-95.

Other protective magical bundles explained to Vandergam (1930) by Chief Kabamba Vubu were *dawa ya kahudi*, consisting of skin from the forehead of a buffalo, worms found in the head of a *gondji* antelope, and scrapings from a *mumo* tree; and *dawa ya kisi*, which contained a piece of a person's heart and a root crossing a path. Powder from these (and undoubtedly other) ingredients were placed inside the dried test of a *kisi* beetle, which Vandergam described as "a sort of tick." The insect in question is the large weevil that Tabwa call *kisi* or *kafwabubela* (*Brachycerus apterus*), whose rock-hard, red-and-black carapace they stuff with the most potent of magic, including that which allows them to become invisible to sorcerers and other ne'er-do-wells (Roberts 1986: 16). The juxtaposition of red spots on its black test and the fact that the beetle is said "never to die" are the sources of the insect's special powers.

Still other Bugabo magic protected the possessor from accidents and illness (Vandergam 1930). Some was used to heal persons made ill by inadvertently coming into contact with Bugabo paraphernalia and the spirits residing in the special stones collected by adepts which were said to "contain all the power of *bukabo*" (Biebuyck 1981: 25). Rosa Nkunga, an elderly Tabwa woman whom I knew in the mid 1970s, told me that Bagabo also had magical powers that allowed them to enforce the sharing of food among society members. Bugabo elders would visit the home of an adept when he was absent, to see how much food was available. When his wife returned home from gardening, they would ask her for a meal. If she refused and said there was not enough food, they would leave but as soon as they crossed a stream, the woman would fall ill and her whole body would itch terribly because they knew she was lying to them. As he found her in such a state, her husband would ask what was wrong and had anyone visited their home? She would tell of the elders, and the man would run after them to plead that they return to his house to dine with him. As they enjoyed the resulting meal, the elders would chuckle and the woman would no longer be ill.

Bagabo also made aggressive magic to punish their adversaries. Kabonda Kakinbanga explained to Vandergam that one such device was called *kifubia* or *puhu* after the tree that was its principle ingredient. *Puhu* ashes were mixed with shavings from a crocodile's snout and placed in a

medicine horn. Every day, Kakinbanga took a pinch of this concoction and placed it on his tongue, thereby becoming immune to its otherwise baneful effects. If someone defied him, Kakinbanga would secrete some of the same powder in food he shared with the person. The victim would perish, while Kakinbanga would remain unscathed. As Biebuyck comments, "the use of poison by *buhabo* was…a threat that could secretly be executed against members and nonmembers accused, for instance, of divulging secrets, of not observing the prescriptions, or of attempting to use witchcraft against a member of the corporation" (1981: 29; cf. Hersak 1990). In all likelihood, the "threat" was as (or more) effective than the alleged "poison" itself.

Final purposes of Bugabo to which brief allusion is made in the literature were for rainmaking or more general control of the weather, and to assist in hunting. A clay or wooden figure called *mbulu* that represented a Nile monitor lizard (*Varanus varanus niloticus*) was created by Bugabo hunters and kept in a special shrine.[16] *Mbulu* figures were still made in the 1970s by Mbote hunter-gatherers living in the mountains southwest of Lake Tanganyika.[17] In 1976, I witnessed the making of such a figure by an Mbote elder named Abunamboka, and I watched a duiker antelope being butchered in front of an *mbulu* shrine to honor the spirit and implore it to improve the disastrously poor hunting of Abunamboka's band. Mbote have long interacted with Tabwa people and they now speak a mix of the Tabwa language and Swahili. They exchange forest for garden products, and are known for certain sorts of healing. In certain ways, they maintain Tabwa culture in more conservative ways than Tabwa themselves—including,

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[16] On Nile monitors in sculpture and for related exegeses, see Neyt 1977: 495; Biebuyck 1981: 23; Burton 1961: fig. 14 after p.76; Gossiaux 2000: 59-64; and Roberts 1995: 65-66, 68.

[17] Paul Schebesta (1952) would have called Mbote "Pygmoid," for they are more or less hunter-gatherers and distantly related to Mbuti and other "Pygmies" of rain forests well to the northwest of Lake Tanganyika, and undoubtedly to Twa and other groups closer by. Hideaki Terashima (1980) is the only expatriate scholar to have studied Mbote to date. Mbote are the same height as Tabwa.

perhaps, elements of the now-defunct Bugabo Society such as use of *mbulu* shrines.

Bugabo Initiation

Among peoples of southeastern DRC, Bugabo membership is said to have surpassed that of the dozen or so other sorcery hunting and healing societies of the colonial period, such as Ukanga or Toni-Toni that seem to have come and gone or morphed one into the next as social fads and colonial opposition permitted (Van Vijve 1927; cf. Hersak 1986: 121). Both men and women could join Bugabo, but men were in the majority (Schmidt 1912: 273), and masculine pronouns will be used in this discussion as a consequence.

As with similar societies, public performances alluded to the secret knowledge and powers of Bugabo adepts. Public dancing was an important activity that set off and framed more esoteric moments of Bugabo ritual, and some Bugabo songs were remembered and still sung by Tabwa in the 1970s during Bulumbu possession rituals (see Roberts 1988) or other moments of collective affect.[18] Those not in the society were derided as unsophisticated by adepts, and were called *ngulungu*, or "bushbucks" (*Tragelaphus scriptus*), after an animal that Tabwa consider anomalous because of its spotted and striped coat and its truculent behavior that suggests that it "does not know its proper place" (Roberts 1995:52-56).[19]

[18] Schmidt (1912: 276) reported that Bugabo members did *not* dance and were unusual because of this. It is not clear whether this variance from accounts by other observers (e.g. Vandergam 1930) was a regional difference or a matter of observational interest.

[19] This may be too Tabwa-centric a read of the bushbuck as understood in Bugabo contexts, since Bembe find the bushbuck's somewhat larger, forest "cousin" the bongo (*Tragelaphus eurycerus*) to be "immortal, in permanent contact with the dead, [and] it garnishes the shields (*ngabo*) of warriors, less to protect them than to menace the enemy with 'the shadows of the beyond'" (Gossiaux 2000: 21).

Such people would provide the audience for public performances of Bugabo activities. Entertainment was one obvious goal of Bugabo dancing, and according to Vandergam, bagabo performed naked except for plumed headdresses, and necklaces of snail shells and *kilande* seeds. Their faces were painted white and red, the latter being "the color of the sect." Bugabo choreography included "contortion of the hips" with a special step: "The dancer bends deeply at the waist, and then reaching behind himself, he violently pulls his penis and testicles backward between his thighs. He continues dancing like this, with his thighs squeezed together, much to the hilarity of the spectators" (Vandergam 1930: 1). If one is to believe such an account—and it should be recognized that many colonial writers actively disparaged the "primitive" Congolese they observed by making them appear as ridiculous as possible to their readers—the distinctive movement would seem to have bespoken reversals or release from classifications of several sorts, including gender.

Father Colle (1913: 602) stressed the involuntary initiation of persons into what he considered a "strongly immoral" society. Those who "allowed themselves to be initiated" in some faraway village returned home to "force their compatriots to enter into the sect, either through fear or audacity or even the menace of being ensorcelled and killed." Colle concluded that once a critical number of adepts were initiated in a community, they could proceed to choose wealthy people upon whom they would force initiation in exchange for "heavy payment." The missionary's scathing assertion was echoed by Huguette Van Geluwe (1981) some seventy years later. Early on, local chiefs resisted Bugabo, Colle continues, but then they joined willingly so that they too could enjoy the plunder.

Other accounts contradict Colle's assessment, as did people with whom I discussed Bugabo during my research of the 1970s. Rather than coercion, it would seem that initiation was actively sought for the arcane powers of healing, hunting, and protection from sorcery that the society afforded its members, to say nothing of the possibility that it presented opportunities for collective opposition to conservative figures such as Father Colle. According to Vandergam (1930: 4-5), an initiand was obliged but was also more than willing to pay a substantial fee to gain entry to the society, and similar determination of value is still the case among Tabwa

when esoteric knowledge and practice is sought.[20] Rather than exploitation, such fees reinforce the politics of secrecy (cf. Nooter 1993) while equating urgency and ability with economic exchange. Active adepts voted to accept or deny a person's request to join the society, following principles that remain unexplained but that surely reflected local-level politics. Colle was told that if accepted, an initiand would offer a chicken to the "steward" of Bugabo and request that he be given the society's emblematic necklace of knobby seeds called *mpiki*, as well as a tooth or teeth of bushpigs, leopards, and other animals of social prestige and symbolic importance. Van Geluwe (1981: 224-225) identifies *mpiki* seeds as from the plant *Cleistopholis patens,* notes their "therapeutic or prophylactic value, particularly in their treatment of fevers and intestinal worms," and suggests an association between their use in Bugabo and healing rituals.[21] *Mpiki* were also associated with *kabwelulu* figures (Roberts and Roberts 1996: 204-205), and occasionally other sculpture as well.[22]

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[20] The useful neologism "initiand" was introduced by Victor Turner (1970) to refer to a person engaged in ritual processes initiating him or her to a new circle of knowledge and the prerogatives and social status so conferred.

[21] It seems that the bark, roots, and wood of the tree are more commonly used in healing than the seeds, for which no medicinal value is listed in the Kew Gardens résumé of the tree's utility. Sometimes known as the salt-and-oil tree in western Africa or "killing-cough" (*apakó*) among Yoruba, the tree has a great many practical as well as medical uses, and has wide distribution in semi-tropical regions of the continent. It is sometimes used for hepatitis, sleeping sickness, tuberculosis, and the fever and edema of other diseases. See www.aluka.org/action/showMetadata?doi=10.5555/AL.AP.UPWTA.1_242&pgs =&cookieSet=1.

[22] A photograph taken in 1930 of the famed figure of Lusinga, a Tabwa chief assassinated in 1884 by the men of Emile Storms, then leader of the fourth expedition to central Africa of the International African Association, shows a strand of *mpiki* beads around the figure's forehead (long missing). Was Lusinga associated with Bugabo? These matters are discussed in a book in progress by the present author.

Kabwelulu or *Kabwelungu* (without calabash). Elephant ivory.
H. c. 19 cm. Studied on the field (Ankoro, Lubaland) by Prof. P. P. Gossiaux
in 1972. Photo : Ex M. Wolf Collection.

During these first proceedings, the initiand ate the raw heart of the chicken he had brought to the Bugabo leader, who oversaw the chicken's being cooked with two small stones taken from the basket in which his *kabwelulu* figure was held. A piece of chicken was served on one of the stones, and although it does not appear it was swallowed with the meat, the initiand was told that he had "eaten the Earth spirit (*ngulu*)" associated with the mountain from which the stone had been taken (Colle 1913: 603). Schmidt (1912: 274) was told that quartz crystals were used for this procedure, and that during this same phase of the ritual hair and nail clippings of the initiand were placed in a cavity within the *kabwelulu*.

Next phases of the ritual were conducted at a "cavern" dug into the ground of a remote area of bush. The initiand entered this hole that was then closed over by branches covered with loose dirt, or perhaps by a shield (Schmidt 1912: 273). It was said that a long, subterranean voyage followed that might last a few days but could be for a far longer time.[23] During this period, the initiand's family brought gifts to the stewards of Bugabo that could include goats, dogs, hoes, axes, machetes, brass bracelets, blankets, cloth skirts, raffia or barkcloth panels (*maliba*), mats, and perhaps even a slave, with the number and importance of these gifts helping determine the length of time the initiand would be kept underground (Van Vijve 1927).[24] It was said that people might perish during the process, in which case the cavern was shut up as a grave while

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[23] These details are found in Colle 1913: 607; Schmidt 1912: 275; Vandergam 1930: 4; and Van Vijve 1927. The use of tunnels and other subterranean places is common to initiation rituals among people in the area, and aside from metaphorical associations with gestation and rebirth, reference may be made to particular burrowing animals such as the aardvark (*Orycteropus afer*) that are important to local cosmologies; see Roberts 1985: 24-25.

[24] References to enslaved persons in these descriptions are not explained further, as to whether these were domestic "slaves"—that is, persons of restricted rights who had been acquired through debt or violence and who were often brought into lineages through fictive kinship—or people associated with vestiges of the late-nineteenth-century slave trade to the east African coast. The ravages and more general history of this trade are reviewed in harrowing detail in Coupland 1967; see also Alpers 1975 and Harms 1981.

the Bugabo leader announced to the community that the Earth spirit would retain the person forever after (ibid; Colle 1913: 608).

Most survived and as the trial ended, the Bugabo leader would say that "the ground hornbill (*mungomba*) is singing," which Colle (1913: 608) suggests was a pun meant to fool uninitiated persons who might hear.[25] The initiand was dressed in a skirt made from wild onions and was given a quartz crystal to lick (Van Vijve 1927). He was rubbed with wet sand "so that the uninitiated would believe that he had really emerged from inside the mountain" (Colle 1913: 609). As the initiand was led back to his community, bagabo would sing "Lift up this child to Kabwelulu, let us awaken, 'cook' him for Kabwelulu; let us applaud him, let us applaud him, he has killed the galago and eaten the meat, he has killed the galago and eaten the meat" (Vandergam 1930: 6).[26] The initiand then climbed onto the roof of his own home or that of the Bugabo leader and according to one account, he was given a rooster and told to bite off its head and then throw the head and headless body from the roof, in different directions (Van Vijve 1927).[27] Another account suggests that the rooster head was placed in the inner peak of the house's conical roof (Colle 1913: 610). A hole was

[25] Mungonge is an initiatory society among Lunda-related groups of southwestern DRC and adjacent countries, for which the ground hornbill is a central reference; see Heusch 1972: 47 and passim. One must wonder whether similar reference to the ground hornbill in Bugabo is because the bird is a "natural symbol" (Douglas 2003) of obvious metaphorical utility, or whether ritual elements are being shared through unknown histories.

[26] "Cooking" here is a common metaphor for cultural transformation; see Davis 2000. Vandergam (1930) understood that *kabundji* was "a sort of leopard, but smaller," but the word ordinarily refers to a galago or bush baby, perhaps *Galago granti*—unless this was a term of obfuscation from a "secret language" of Bugabo. Vandergam gives the lyrics for other Bugabo songs in what I was told by someone in Kalemie to whom I showed them, was "a dialect of Kiluba influenced by Kikalanga."

[27] Even a minor detail such as the separation of the chicken's head and body can be significant as a reference to symbolic differences between "head" and "loins," hence intelligence and fertility (Willis 1967, 1991).

practiced in the thatch by those inside the structure, and the initiand descended to join bagabo seated in a circle before the steward and his *kabwelulu* figure (Vandergam 1930). The initiand was given a headdress made of the crimson plumes of Lady Ross' turaco (*Musophaga rossae*) that are often reserved for homicides in this part of central Africa, and his face was painted red with camwood powder and white with chalk (Schmidt 1912: 276; Vandergam 1930). These pigments were taken from the gourd or basket in which the leader's *kabwelulu* figure was kept (Colle 1913: 610).

The initiand was queried as to which spirit mountain he had entered during the ritual. He answered and produced a stone from the place that was put in the leader's *kabwelulu* basket (Colle 1913: 609-610). After this a string was tied to the initiand's penis which was then drawn backward between his thighs as in the Bugabo dance step. Crouching, the man exited the house backwards to be led around the village by bagabo holding the string (Vandergam 1930). Another account has it that the Bugabo steward and the initiand tied strings of beads to their penises and then covered themselves with a mat "like a carapace."[28] They danced in this way, accompanied by a girl who would become the initiand's *kayambi* or assistant. The leader and initiand sang a warning to non-initiated "bushbucks" to flee these men with decorated genitals. Eventually the mat was flung away and the initiand took a seat upon an up-turned mortar, the *kabwelulu* figure on the ground between his knees (Colle 1913: 610-611). Thereafter the initiand was led to the chief's house and instructed to insult the genitals of the chief and his wives. The chief would respond with equal insults but state that "I am the one who is identified with the mountains, rivers, and trees.[29] The man who has insulted me is a *mugabo*, so no one should be angered by his words" (Van Vijve 1927).

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[28] The "carapace" was presumably that of a turtle, and one is left wondering what resonance this ritual moment might have had with mnemonic activities among Luba and related people using *lukasa* memory boards that make symbolic reference to turtles, among many other things; see Roberts and Roberts 1996.

[29] Van Vijve (1927), writing in French, asserts that the chief announced that "the mountains, rivers, and trees belong to me," and while the vernacular phrasing is not included, in all likelihood the expression was *mwine*, which connotes identity with and so stewardship for something rather than ownership in that word's

The initiand was brought back to the Bugabo leader's house and seated before the *kabwelulu* figure while the leader danced, a staff in hand.[30] As he tapped the staff on the ground, he called out the names of bagabo present and assigned a name to the initiand, either in recognition of who had sponsored the man's initiation or of a deceased but well-remembered member of the society (Vandergam 1930; Van Vijve 1927). The leader struck the head of a chicken on the top of his staff when the appropriate name was chosen (Colle 1913: 611) and then informed the new mugabo about food prohibitions, how he should not brace his door shut with a bent section of bamboo grass (*matete*), and that he must never strike a fellow mugabo with this *matete*. He was also instructed to share food with bagabo without reservation. Once all such matters were stated, the steward held his *kabwelulu* figure before the man and explained that its spirit would now assist the person in divination, but would kill him if he ever ate bushbuck mean or broke other prohibitions (Vandergam 1930, Van Vijve 1927). All bagabo then expectorated into a pot holding millet beer, flour, and the bark of *musye* and *kifombe* trees. As the new mugabo drank this concoction, he was told that he had ingested his fellow bagabo and he could do them no harm nor they him. The pot was broken and its shards and other artifacts of the ritual were placed in a hole dug into a termitary atop which a horn filled with magical materials was placed (Colle 1913: 612-613). A feast followed from food provided by the new *mugabo* (Van Vijve 1927).

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capitalist sense. The phrase *bene ba Kabwelulu* to be mentioned below (with *bene* the plural of *mwine*) as "stewards of Kabwelulu" follows such reasoning. Exchange of insults as between the mugabo and his chief are similar to those between "joking partners" in different Tabwa clans who bury each other's dead, castigating the defunct and his kin as they do. Such a reference to established practice may suggest that clans as primary references of social identity were being supplanted by Bugabo, at least to some degree in some circumstances.

[30] It is unfortunate that no details concerning these objects are provided, for carved wooden staffs are exceptionally important throughout the region as mnemonic devices used to recall and recount political histories; and they also often possess magical charges and can be used instrumentally in certain ritual procedures. See Gossiaux 2000: 26-28, M. Roberts 1994 and 2010, the essays of Roberts 1994, Roberts 2000, and Roberts and Roberts 1996 and 2007.

Such an initiation was followed by accession to more and more esoteric levels of Bugabo. Some might accede to the title of *bene ba kabwelulu*, or "stewards" of the figure and its efficacy, after a second initiation for which there is only the most cursory explanation in available literature. Important gifts were given, estimated as equivalent in value to two or three slaves (Colle 1913: 613; Schmidt 1912: 275). Blood from a goat brought to a Bugabo dignitary able to oversee such a ritual would be allowed to flow through the hollow part of his *kabwelulu* sculpture, and the blood of a cock known for its especially piercing cry would be poured over the figure as well, while the rooster's head would be placed in the eaves of the elder's home (Colle 1913: 613-614). A field photograph of a *kabwelulu* figure now in the collection of the National Museum of African Art in Washington, D.C., shows an incrustation undoubtedly due to sacrificial materials of this sort (Van Geluwe 1981: 225; Roberts and Roberts 1996: 204-205).

What may have been an even greater honor within the society was called Kalunga-Mugabo, which Colle translated as "great master of the brotherhood" (1913: 614-616; cf. Schmidt 1912: 276). Such a person was also called Tata-bulume, or "father of virility," and he held the title for life. Among Luba, again according to Colle (1913: 614-616), only Kalunga-Mugabo and Balopwe chiefs of the sacred blood were allowed to participate in the society's activities without removing their clothing. A Kalunga-Mugabo possessed the most powerful *kabwelulu* figure of all, that further served as a model for the carving of other figures of the idiom. Renowned artists would be commissioned to create *kabwelulu* sculptures, and they would be prohibited from saying the name of what they were carving lest the wood split in two. A person hoping to become a Kalunga-Mugabo would take such a figure to an assembly of Bene ba Kabwelulu from the region, who would repair to the woods to enjoy a feast offered by the initiand. A magical bundle in an antelope horn would be fitted into the head of the *kabwelulu* on this occasion, and the figure would be taken to the mountain to whose *ngulu* Earth spirit it was dedicated. If the *ngulu* agreed that the person should become a Kalunga-Mugabo, it would rain. The wives of such a man also attained significant status, and learned powerful magic unknown to other women (ibid).

Kabwelulu or *Kabwelungu*. Probably Holo Holo (Luba-guha). Wood, calabash, quartz, sand, kaolin, shells (*achatina fulica* and *katangiensis*, *conus magnus* and *alii*, *oliva porphyria*, *iridina spekii*), cone-shaped tube of copper for magic compound. H. 31,5 cm. Private collection. Photo © Anthroposys.

The funeral of a mugabo was organized by society members who painted the right side of the cadaver's face white, the left red, and they then wrapped the corpse in "heavy and numerous" cloths. No one was to weep as these procedures were underway (Schmidt 1912: 277). After nightfall, a hole was broken into the wall of the deceased mugabo's home and the body was removed for burial in a termitary (Van Vijve 1927). A stick placed in the cadaver's mouth was allowed to protrude from the grave so that libations of millet beer mixed with ashes from the *luhe* tree might be poured down the stick and the deceased mugabo could "drink." At what seems to have been a different location from the grave, a termitary was cleared from the underbrush and a pot was turned upside-down atop it. A path was cleared from the termitary to a nearby trail, and a threshold created at this meeting point by suspending a fiber cord between two upright posts. Any Mugabo passing by would hang a small stick on this cord to honor the deceased, and libations of beer mixed with flour would be poured on the termitary (Colle 1913: 616-617).

Reflections upon Bugabo Expression

The sketchy nature of archival records and the loss of direct memories of Bugabo activities leave the highly idealized description of ritual just presented conjectural: were any or all performances organized as reported? Why were Bugabo practices deemed of such importance and potency? What was the significance of particular symbols, how were they made instrumental, and what were their purposes? If Bugabo was once so important, why did it disappear—or did it? In order to respond to such intriguing questions, "ethnographic riffs" will be necessary. That is, following the jazz idiom to which the term "riff" alludes, any excursion into esoterica to learn more of Bugabo may be intellectually engaging, but it is likely to be anything but linear, cohesive, or conclusive.

Kabwelulu was an important Earth spirit (*ngulu*) of a sort recognized throughout east-central Africa (see Werner 1971, Willis 1999). Such spirits were and sometimes still are understood to be in control of important natural phenomena and resources. A pertinent example is the association people at Lubanda make between an *ngulu* named Kaomba and the

immense annual run of a small catfish called *jagali* (*Chrysichthys sianenna*) that leave the deep waters of Lake Tanganyika to spawn in the reedy meanders of the Lufuko River. *Jagali*-fishing has long been a much-coveted economic resource, and ritual procedures assured that Kaomba would bring the fish in abundance yet another year (Roberts 1984, 2009). "Ecological" or "territorial cults" to spirits such as Kaomba have been practiced in a vast area extending from southeastern DRC through Zambia, Malawi, and into Zimbabwe (see Binsbergen 1981 and the essays of Schoffeleers 1978). Goals of Bugabo such as rainmaking, success in hunting, identification and elimination of sorcerers, and the like are also associated with such cults; and particular attributes of Bugabo practice such as an emphasis upon quartz crystals, use of wild onions, and body-painting are as well.

Take, for example, the use of quartz crystals in the ritual processes we have been considering. In some instances, Bugabo activities are said to have included "stones" without any particular description, it sufficing that they be from mountains inhabited by *ngulu* important to the society. Indeed, the word "kabwelulu" means "the little stone" (*kabwe*) of the Earth spirit (*lulu* or *ngulu*). This latter particle also refers to phenomena of height or things that are "up" more generally, whether in reference to the tall mountain peaks of southeastern DRC or as an allusion to grandeur and the sublime. More particularly, though, in local thought quartz crystals permit direct communication with spiritual forces. As an early Catholic missionary wrote, when people traveling at night chance to see "one of these crystals that naturally reflects the dubious light of the moon… they believe they recognize… the intervention of a spirit manifesting itself to them to ask for hospitality" (Guillemé 1887).

Tabwa people around Lubanda said the same in the mid-1970s, and when they hiked along mountain trails on cool, moonlit nights, they would bring home quartz crystals demonstrating the "flash of spirit" in such a way, to place in tiny shrines hidden away under the eaves of their houses or in corners of their enclosed yards.[31] In the late nineteenth century, people

[31] My sense is that the quartz crystals were and are vehicles for spirit, rather than having the sort of life force of their own that Gossiaux (2000: 15 and FN 37) reports among Bembe people, who "postulate… that the inorganic world is endowed with an elementary life, *bùlamu*; this explains how they "feed" with

living along the northwestern shores of Lake Tanganyika and especially around the Ubwari peninsula also collected quartz crystals that they kept in unusual double-spouted pots kept with their ancestral figures. Water from such pots was sipped as a powerful medicine to heal certain ailments (Guillemé 1887; cf. Biebuyck 1981: 22; Schmidt 1912: 233).[32] Southwest of Lubanda, quartz crystals were sought by Tabwa and neighboring people from the cavern of Kibawa, the most important *ngulu* of the entire region and one that Luba-influenced people associate with Mbidi Kiluwe, their culture hero (Tytgat 1918; Roberts 1988). Known as Kisimba (the name given to the first-born of twins—see Roberts 2010), such crystals are understood to be the "wives" of chiefs who keep them in special sancta where they sometimes sleep in hope of prophetic dreams.

Another key aspect of Bugabo is its emphasis upon red as "the color of the sect" (Vandergam 1930). People throughout southeastern DRC recognize the red-white-black triad of primary colors as tropes of such potency that they are a "mode of thought" here as they are for Kongo and many other African groups (Jacobson-Widding 1979). The red face paint that Bagabo used is *nkula*, a powder made from camwood bark (*Pterocarpus tinctorius*) or ferruginous minerals (Van Acker 1907: 40; Van Acker and Mbuya 1954: 303). *Nkula* is still widely used in ritual contexts when, as an important healer named Nzwiba told me, a person wishes to show that "he is fierce, he has no friendship with anyone, now he is someone else, another person. He is like a policeman. He has no father or mother or mother's brother. He is blood!" Donning such paint, then, is to demonstrate potential aggression, alienation, and ruthlessness.[33]

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applications of oil and white earth, etc., certain quartz [crystals], for example, in the cult of the spirit Bùsango Sango."

[32] It would be interesting to know if such multi-spouted pots were related to beliefs and practices concerning Lyangombe, a spiritual presence important to east-equatorial Africa that will be discussed below, and that has sometimes been associated with pots of the sort (Gossiaux 1973: 189).

[33] "Nzwiba" is a pseudonym for an elderly man I knew very well in the mid-1970s. He was widely recognized for his divination and healing, remarkable intellect, independence, and kindness.

"Red" is associated with the bloody violence of change, and can lead to the auspiciousness of "white" with its enlightenment and beneficence, or to the insightful obscurity of "black" (Roberts 1993a).[34] If "white" is a state of grace associated with ancestors and spiritual presence more generally, "black" is a looking inward to that which is not apparent but is nonetheless the essence of being. "Black" is also artfully indirect insinuation—the gnawing suspicion that there is meaning to an act or event beyond what meets the eye. "Insinuation" leads from "black" back to "red," for such a serpentine allusion captures the transformative power of "red" insofar as what one cannot discern may still be of dreadful significance. "Black" is rendered instrumental as magic, for despite their great powers, all magical devices are composed of tiny bits and shavings of precious substances pounded and mixed together, burned, or otherwise reduced to a state that no one can recognize without prior knowledge of what constitutes the amorphous results. This is the very power of magic, for what *is* in any given concoction is far less important than what *might* be—and it is *this* that people find most alarming (Roberts 1997).

The ambiguities of "red" and "black" are personified in the cosmogonies of southeastern DRC. Best known of these is the Luba Epic, with its confrontation between Nkongolo-Mwamba, the "drunken king" (Heusch 1972), and Mbidi Kiluwe, the cool, coal-black hero who hails from the east (Heusch 1991; Roberts 1991). Nkongolo is avatar of all excess and kills his own mother in volcanic fury. According to one account, his father was a spotted hyena (*Crocuta crocuta*)—itself a preposterous beast for its apparent lack of sexual dimorphism and other oddly "hot" traits (Roberts 1995: 74-76)—while Nkongolo himself was "'a red or clear-skinned man who was a monstrosity'….so ugly that no one resembled him before or since" (Womersley 1984: 1; cf. Mudimbe 1991: 90). Nkongolo is also understood to manifest himself as an immense serpent, and as such has a Tabwa homologue in Nfwimina. Both breathe forth the rainbow, often from deep lairs beneath termitaries. Tabwa say that the rainbow "burns" or otherwise brings an end to the rains, and it reddens, desiccates, and kills everything and everyone upon which or whom it may fall. The serpent's

[34] The use of quotation marks here is to suggest that color is of far greater symbolic significance than hue.

toxic breath also causes epidemics and kills men deep in the mines of the Copper Belt. Many people may die without anyone knowing why, and only the greatest *waganga* diviner-healers will be able to determine the true cause and take appropriate actions.[35]

In the old days, Tabwa women kept their pots right-side up to avoid the perilous breath of Nfwimina from seeping into and filling them from below. One can speculate that placing an overturned pot atop a termitary during Bugabo burial may have been for the exact opposite reason: to attract and capture just such chthonian essence, so as to put it to work in later applications.

Among Tabwa of the last century, rainmaking and control of the weather—other activities associated with Bugabo—were accomplished with a device called a *lilindwe* that captured and manipulated the rainbow breath of the great serpent, and required a *kizimba* of Nfwimina to do so (Weghsteen 1953). In the 1970s, Nzwiba knew what a *lilindwe* was and told me how it was constructed and used, but said that no one had undertaken such dangerous and controversial work for many years. A *lilindwe* was composed of two pots placed mouth-to-mouth, with the upper one pierced four times to manage the cardinal winds. The lower pot contained exceedingly powerful magic, and required the *kizimba* (activating agent) of Nfwimina. When the pot was set to boil, the resulting vapors could be controlled by opening or closing the holes in the upper pot, and in doing so, rains could be summoned or dispersed (Weghsteen 1953).

The tall, natural-draft iron-smelting furnaces called *nungu* or *lungu* for which precolonial Tabwa were justly famous worked in a similar way, for the four entries near the ground permitted entry of "all four winds of the

[35] *Waganga* (singular: *muganga*) is a generic term for practitioners of healing and other mystical, often magical processes, based upon a widely shared Bantu root. Nfwimina and its homologues Mpumina among Zela and other Luba-related peoples and Ngufwila as known to Fipa of southwestern Tanzania are the subject of several chapters of my dissertation (Roberts 1980). During my research in the 1970s, only a few people knew (or were willing to speak of) such arcane matters, but the deep structures of logic given play through such beliefs and practices were apposite nonetheless; cf Heusch 1972.

Earth." These were controlled by the *ngezia* "father of the furnace," a shamanistic figure who prepared magic placed within the furnace to assure a successful bloom, and who danced and sang while his henchmen managed the draft. It again required a *kizimba* of the great serpent to activate this near-miraculous process, and as significantly, blood-red hematite and jet-black magnetite were combined in the *lungu*. Then, through the utmost sophistication of knowledge and care, Tabwa smelters produced "a soft steel comparable to that of Sweden" (B. Schmitz 1903). When polished, this precious metal had "the gleam of silver and [it] rusts less quickly than that of Europe" (Morisseau 1910: 15). That *both* red and black ores were needed to achieve highest-quality results reinforced—yet again—the dialectic the colors represent for people throughout the region.[36]

Nzwiba raised issues of even more direct relevance to an understanding of Bugabo and its central vehicle, the *kabwelulu* power figure. Nzwiba was among the very few elderly persons I was fortunate enough to meet who could explain such arcane matters as how the great *waganga* of the past obtained the *kizimba* activating agent of Nfwimina (see Roberts 1980), and why it is that neither he nor any of his peers could do so any longer. Such inability has necessitated a quest for substitutes that include a kizimba called *kambwilungu* — that is, *kabwelulu* in the KiTabwa dialect of Lubanda.

In olden times, Nzwiba explained, the greatest waganga would build a round house without any entries, and inside this odd construction they would place a rooster and a person. The muganga gave the place a roof of reed and mud, and fitted razors, spears, knives, and other sharp instruments in the walls and roof of the building. Then he would go with bow and arrows to the deep woods where Nfwimina sleeps, shoot the great serpent with an arrow, and run back to the house, winding about and zig-zagging (*kuzunguka-zunguka*) all the way. The wound hurt Nfwimina, but slowly and surely it followed every twist and turn of the man's path until it

[36] Tabwa iron smelting is far less well known to archeologists than it is among the Fipa people living across Lake Tanganyika in southwestern Tanzania to whom Tabwa are closely related historically and culturally. On Tabwa ironworking, see Roberts 1993b, and for Fipa, Barndon 2004.

reached the house. It wound itself around the building and mounted the roof, but could find no way to enter to attack the man inside; as it searched, however, it cut itself repeatedly and terribly on the weapons placed in the walls and roof by the *muganga*. In the morning when the cock crowed, everyone knew that there was still life within the building, and they went and found pieces of Nfwimina's flesh, cut by those sharp blades. The *muganga* took these as *vizimba* to do the most powerful work and to sell to other *waganga*, but now Nfwimina has fled so deep into the ground that it cannot be tricked like this.[37]

Nzwiba continued his story by explaining what must be done these days, since even though the *kizimba* of Nfwimina is no longer available, its transformative powers are nonetheless greatly needed. A structural substitute can be obtained, but only in the most nefarious of ways. Nzwiba explained that there are sometimes women who do not give birth: "They may look like women and have breasts, but do they give birth? No." Such a "woman-man," as he called the poor soul, prepares the strongest of *nkula* camwood powder, used in a great many circumstances when change is required. If one can murder a woman-man, a *kizimba* relic called *musala* can be procured that will do the work of Nfwimina. As Nzwiba explained, "'Nfwimina' is really a woman who has not given birth…. Now that *kizimba* has the power to stop the rain. They take this *kizimba* because she is a woman-man, so if they put their magic (*dawa*) there, if they wish to control the winds and stop them, ah-ah, they make the sun stand still (*kusimika jua*). Then they go and prepare something else with other powers, and the rain returns" (Roberts 1980: 244-249). If such a woman-man dies for other reasons, her grave can be robbed to obtain a *musala kizimba*.

A "woman-man" has stopped the "water" or "rain" of men—that is, their semen has been wasted upon her. She is the dry shell of a person, and

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[37] Roberts 1980: 233-234. Father Robert (1948: 235-240) recorded closely related accounts among Fipa and related people in southwestern Tanzania, who are closely related to Tabwa by clan and lineage. The structure of this account is similar to that of the investiture of Luba *bulopwe* kings of the sacred blood in a *koba ka malwa* "little house of misfortune," and is the reversal of the pit trap in which Nkongolo Mwamba tried to kill the culture hero Mbidi Kiluwe in the Luba Epic; these matters are discussed in great detail in Roberts 1980.

a *kizimba* taken from her person will make such a power available, not just in egregious sorcery when "the sun is stood still" to cause an adversary's crops to wither and die, but in hunting magic to "dry the blood" of prey (cf. Robert 1948: 236; Gouldsbury and Sheane 1911: 212). Practices of the sort that Nzwiba described are repellant to Tabwa, however, and although some are suspected of resorting to such loathsome acts, a more benign substitute for Nfwimina is sought in *kabwelulu*.

As Nzwiba continued to reveal this deep esoterica to me, he explained that the *kizimba* of *kabwelulu* is to be found in the oddly forked hairs of an animal that he had never himself seen.[38] He added that most *waganga* who claim to possess the *kabwelulu kizimba* are frauds who take bushpig bristles, split them with a razor, and soak them in ENO-brand bicarbonate of soda so that they will turn water red and cause it to fizzle in a mysterious fashion. The *real* kizimba will not just make water red, it will dry it up just as the *kizimba* of Nfwimina used to do.

Another *muganga* told me that the *kabwelulu kizimba* comes from a rufous serval (*Leptailurus serval hindei*) called *kazamba*. He explained that in a litter of serval kittens, most will be spotted and called *libalabala*, but there may be a black one called *nzima*, and even more rarely, a rufous one called *kazamba*. The melanistic serval is the emblematic animal of Mbidi Kiluwe, the Luba culture bearer, whose very name "Mbidi" means "the black serval with a beautiful pelt" in KiLuba (Van Avermaet and Mbuya 1954: 68). The hero was known for his skin that was "black as the night" and "cool" (Theuws 1954: 15), and he was as opposed in every way to the "hot," beastly, "red" Nkongolo Mwamba, as an *nzima* is to a *kazamba*.

Yet another *muganga* denied this explanation for the *kabwelala kizimba*, and instead held that it is derived from a rabbit-sized blood-red animal. Neither he nor anyone else I could ask had ever seen such a beast, and it sounds rather like an animal known to Luba that is "no larger than a rat, living in holes in trees; it hardly has any fur, is rosy pink, and in this

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[38] I had the good fortune to meet the celebrated African naturalist Charles Guggisberg in 1976, and he told me he knew of no animal in Africa or anywhere else that has naturally forked hairs.

resembles a newborn Luba" (Van Avermaet and Mbuya 1954: 837). A *kizimba* from this odd creature is used in a bundle called *nzunzi*, and "has the reputation of surpassing all others in its efficacy" (ibid). For Tabwa and related peoples of southeastern DRC, an *nzunzi* may also be a wooden figure animated by a magical charge that allows it to move about just beyond the edge of one's noticing, as it goes about its possessor's evil bidding (Maurer and Roberts 1985: 149). Schmidt (1912: 234) learned of similar practices among related people living north of the Lukuga River, among whom "the *sorcier* sometimes sends his fetish to travel about the village at night," knocking on doors and supposedly frightening people to the point that they bring gifts to the "sorcier" (that is, the *muganga* practitioner) the next day. He adds that "the spirit that lends itself most readily to such incarnations is Kabwe; the fetish in which it resides is called Kabwelugulu."[39]

Because it is so difficult to find any of these *vizimba*, still another substitution is possible. A noted *muganga* named Mumbyoto who practiced Tulunga, the most powerful circle of knowledge known to Tabwa of the 1970s, also had an explanation of how to obtain a *kabwelulu kizimba*.[40] The bread-and-butter work of Tulunga is to prepare and administer fertility medicines called *viabiko*. In the course of such work, it may be possible to obtain a *kabwelulu kizimba*, Mumbyoto suggested. When a barren woman is given *viabiko*, she will become pregnant, but then a duplicitous *muganga* (and Mumbyoto was allegedly only speaking of others in this regard, not himself) may fool the woman and give her an abortifacient. The *kaonde* abortus that results will be buried in the *kizyala* midden as usual, but then the *muganga* will exhume it surreptitiously. Such a *kaonde* provides the

[39] Of significance to the discussion below, Schmidt (1912: 234) also mentions that "certain spirits, like Dyangombe, absolutely refuse to give themselves over to such petty schemes."

[40] "Mumbyoto" is a pseudonym for a diviner-healer with whom I worked very closely during my years at Lubanda. It was he, for instance, who demonstrated the boiling-water oracle and explained the magic of his *kalunga* horn to me; see Roberts 2000.

kabwelulu kizimba, Mumbyoto explained, while admitting that such activities constitute the most pernicious of sorcery (*ulozi*).

Mumbyoto revealed another very deep secret: *kabwelulu* was the key ingredient of the *kalunga* magical bundle that was the source of his own powers. It is this *kizimba* that gave him the strength and courage to confront the fiercest *vizwa*, or vengeful ghosts, and to do battle with the most vicious sorcerers at the behest of his clients. The *kabwelulu kizimba* was among ingredients packed into the open end of the curved horn of a Bohor reedbuck (*Redunca redunca*) that was balanced upon an iron spike inserted into the handle of Mumbyoto's carved wooden staff. In turn, this device was planted in the ground near where he conducted the boiling-water oracle or saw to other perilous business (Roberts 1994b, 2000). As the horn slowly turned upon its iron pivot, it informed Mumbyoto of any danger and the direction from which it was coming, so that he could take preemptive measures as necessary.[41]

Recalling that the highest order within Bugabo was called Kalunga-Mugabo, also known as the "father of virility," one is left to wonder if Tulunga (singular: Kalunga) practitioners might be the direct descendants of Bugabo. Might Bugabo have gone "underground" because of colonial pressure, only to remain and rise through other forms of ritual practice? Overt activities might be curtailed, but it is difficult to imagine that esoteric ideas and actions would be abandoned that were *so* attuned to cosmology and *so* necessary for the problem-solving needed to defend oneself and prosper in bitterly desperate times. The term "kalunga" is derived from a verb meaning "to join," and is used in a number of circumstances in this part of central Africa, including references to the underworld or the threshold between worlds of the living and the dead (among many others, see MacGaffey 1991). It is not possible to know whether "Kalunga Mugabo" and the name of Tabwa shamanistic healers are historically

[41] *Kalunga* horns are of a paradigm of magical bundles once used by Tabwa and related groups that include *kinkungwa* horns deployed by hunters of the Bwela Society, and *lilamfya* war horns famously used by mid-nineteenth-century Bemba kings against their Tabwa and Lungu enemies. All were set upon pivots to turn toward the sources of profit. See Roberts 1980: 276, 299, 301, and passim; and on *lilamfya*, see also Gouldsbury and Sheane 1911: 92.

associated, then, but even if they are not, surely Tulunga and Bugabo were and are closely related conceptually through the "vast field of transformations" that characterizes central Bantu-speaking societies (Heusch 1972).

Kabwelulu was (and perhaps still is) the key *kizimba* activating agent of another sort of potent magic called *lyang'ombe*. Anyone can perceive the most overt manifestation of this bundle, for it is the means by which *walozi* sorcerers fly through the air in a split second to seek their victims even at the greatest of distances, as seen by ordinary mortals as shooting stars; but its ingredients and functions are known only to the greatest practitioners like Nzwiba and Mumbyoto. Because of the politically dangerous nature of such arcane, highly fraught information, even persons as powerful as they would be loath to share their knowledge, since in the local epistemology, to know something as potentially evil as this is to participate in it. Nonetheless, Nzwiba explained to me that the usual container for a *lyang'ombe* is the test of a Giant African Land Snail (*Achatina fulica*), called *nkola* by Tabwa (cf. Vandergam 1930: 10). Through supernatural means, *walozi* are able to insert themselves into such a snail shell in the same way that large people somehow manage to pack themselves into a Volkswagon "bug," according to Nzwiba's humorous analogy. That this same sort of snail shell was sometimes attached to *kabwelulu* figures adds a suggestive dimension to the power of such objects, as does the fact that in precolonial times, strings of small flat beads made from the shell of Giant African Land Snails served as limited-purpose currency in the region, and among Bembe "symbolized wealth, fecundity, knowledge, and lucidity" (Gossiaux 2000: 44-45).

Lyang'ombe is an example of what Patrick Reumaux (2004: 50) calls a "mot-valise"—that is, a "suitcase-word" that contains far more than outward appearances would otherwise suggest. Although a magical bundle used by sorcerers to transport themselves instantaneously is remarkable enough in its own right, such a device quickly escalates in significance when one understands what else "lyang'ombe" can mean in east-equatorial Africa.

In Rwanda and Burundi as well as adjacent lands of the DRC, Uganda, and Tanzania, devotions to Ryangombe (sometimes known as Ryangombe-Kiranga or Lyangombe) constitute a "religion" unto themselves (Gossiaux 1983: 1; see also Rodegem 1971). The great many followers of Ryangombe constitute "a kind of 'church'" that has "the singularity to be centered upon the mystical person of a Divine Hero, of whom the history and mythology are invested in the redemptive functions of the cult and that have an authentically eschatological dimension" (Gossiaux 1983: 1). Ryangombe is best known in the Great Lakes region, where he is understood to have been a Cwezi king—that is, a founder of precepts and prerogatives of divine royalty still recognized in our times, especially among Tutsi (ibid). He is also known for his distinctly ambiguous characteristics, through the self-vaunting praise "I am Lightning, I am the urine of Thunder, I am not, I come from nowhere, I go nowhere," as reinforced by stories of his "perpetually errant" nature, his apparent hermaphrodism, and his "frenetic ferocity" and "extraordinary violence" (ibid, 3, 16, 9; idem 1973: 152). In the extremity of these Kali-like qualities, Ryangombe seems to "triumph over the empire of the dead" and, in those regions where he is most directly recognized, to possess "a power that is equal to—even surpassing—that of the creator God himself" (Gossiaux 1983: 8, 5; idem, 1973: 150).

As one moves away from the center of such understandings, the sense of *lyang'ombe* takes different forms appropriate to the needs of people who are not directly associated with Great Lakes histories and cultural complexes.[42] For example, among people living around Mtoa on the lakeshore north of the Lukuga River, "Dyangombe" is or at least once was

[42] While the present paper is not the place for it, a closer study of the concepts and practices associated with "lyang'ombe" among people living along the shores of Lake Tanganyika, and so peripheral to the cultural complex of Rwanda and Burundi, would produce interesting results. The term is known and used among Fipa and related people of southwestern Tanzania, for instance, whose chiefs are distantly associated with Cwezi heroes while commoners are closely related to Tabwa of the DRC through clans, social histories, and ongoing political relations (Willis 1981). Lyang'ombe is found farther afield as well, as a motive concept that structures practice.

considered an *ngulu*, and in this case "the great spirit of Lake Tanganyika" (Schmidt 1912: 233). *Ngulu* usually inhabit specific places like the mountain peaks alluded to so frequently in Bugabo ritual, or they may manifest themselves in particular phenomena such as the perilous whirlpools that one sometimes encounters in Lake Tanganyika as one attempts to navigate around Cape Tembwe; but in the case of Dyangombe, the *ngulu* seems to have had a more generalized identity, as though its powers were as vast as the lake itself.[43] Perhaps such a sense is derived from stories and practices drifting southward from lands where people are devoted to the Cwezi god Ryangombe. It is also possible that elements of religion, based in large measure upon logic and key metaphors shared among speakers of closely related Eastern-Bantu dialects and languages, are given names that resonate with history, however removed people may be from actual events. This brings us back to Bugabo.

The Ideology of Bugabo

While such practical purposes of Bugabo as divination to determine the causes of misfortune, protecting members from sorcery, assuring success in hunting, and manipulating the weather were important to both

[43] Care must be taken with Schmidt's writings, as his descriptions of other *ngulu* mentioned in the "Fétichisme" section of his monograph (1912: 231-236) suggest that he may not have fully understood the phenomenon, or was offered information by people so distant from what they were describing that they spoke in the most generic of terms. For instance, when he lists "Kibagwa" as "a powerful spirit that lives in Mount Nongwe, west of Lusaka. Serpent" (ibid, 232), he is referring to Kibawa, the great spirit residing in a cavern located in a bamboo thicket along the Lualaba River not far north of the present-day town of Mpweto (see Roberts 1988). The "Lusaka" in question is a small town in the Marungu Massif where White Fathers established a mission chapel and school. People speaking with Schmidt may have thought there was a serpent associated with Kibawa, but no other accounts I have found suggest this even though *ngulu* do manifest themselves in this way. Similarly, he records that "Lufuko" is another *ngulu* in the "river separating Uguha from the Marungu," that can also be a serpent (Schmidt 1912: 232). This must be a reference to the *ngulu* Kaomba, discussed in these pages, yet Kaomba is not understood in this way by people living along the banks of the Lufuko (see Roberts 1984).

mundane circumstances and moments of crisis, the society also seems to have had other, more ideological *raisons d'être*. For instance, Robert Schmidt (1912: 276) held that "any mugabo really worthy of the name" could summon leopards and lions to attack his adversaries, and that among the magical bundles possessed by Bagabo was one sort that contained fur, claws, and urine from these ferocious beasts. Such a bundle would be buried under the floor of a mugabo's home, and when he wished to summon a lion, he could tap the spot with the feline tooth he wore on his necklace of *mpiki* seeds and the lion would appear wherever its master wished to attack someone. Given known histories of resistance to colonial hegemony in the region that sometimes included deployment of *visanguka* lion-men against mission and administrative interests (Roberts 1986b), Schmidt's data deserve further consideration.

Tabwa with whom I discussed such matters in the 1970s held that there are four sorts of lion, each somewhat different from the others.[44] The first is the "lion of the bush" which can be hunted and killed and is not a particularly remarkable animal at all. As Dan Sperber (1975: 24) might quip, this is the kind of lion that is "not particularly ferocious or courageous, its mane is not really majestic, it probably yawns more than it roars, and probably it is missing a claw"—despite what a tourist would recount to the folks back home of an encounter with such a vicious king of beasts. This is also the kind of lion that is so frequently duped by Kalulu, the trickster hare of Tabwa folklore.

The second type of lion is more of the sort that one can imagine bagabo were able to summon. In earlier days, certain elders—probably the ones who became "chiefs" in the Belgian colonial hierarchy—were known as *bafuga-simba*, that is, "ones who raise lions." In order to do so, a house rat would be caught and closed up in a lidded basket until it starved to death.

[44] The discussion of lions as understood by Tabwa is presented in far greater detail in Roberts 1983 and 1986b. There are close associations between Luba sacred kings and lions, including accounts that during investiture rites, the king became a lion; see Roberts and Roberts 1996. For reviews of relevant literature and excellent cross-cultural case studies, see Gossiaux 2000, Pratten 2007, Singleton 1989, Volper 2009, and West 2007.

As its carcass decomposed, all but two maggots (*mifyondo*) would be removed, and these would be allowed to consume the rat. They were given other food and magical medicines until they grew to the size of lions of the bush.[45] It was explained that rats served this purpose because they will go anywhere and enter homes or other places as they wish, without "shame" (*haya*). The primary purpose of lions raised in this way was to protect fields from baboons, bushpigs, and other pests. One man told me that his deceased mother's brother had been a *mufuga-simba*, and that on one occasion his lions had killed an entire sounder of bushpigs and then deposited them in a circle in front of his uncle's house. These same lions would accompany their masters everywhere, even as they snuck around at night to see to amorous adventures (this comment was offered with laughter).

At the rising of each new moon (*balamwezi* or *mwendamo*—see Roberts 1985), *bafuga-simba* would call their lions forth and give them millet porridge; the lions would lick their masters submissively, and if they failed to do this, the *bafuga-simba* would pull out their teeth and claws and they would perish. *Bafuga-simba* (who, it must be stressed, were also community leaders according to other criteria) also possessed magic to "close" their villages to lions—"of the bush" or of other sorts. At the new moon a *mufuga-simba* would walk the perimeter of his village to renew his medicines while swinging a bullroarer (*kabinda*) made from a small piece of wood with holes in it tied to a cord of klipspringer hide (*Oreotragus oreotragus*, known as *kabuluka* in Kitabwa). I was told that this low, lion-like moan would "startle" (*kustusha*) lions, and they would flee (cf. Gossiaux 2000: 89-90).

Other devices were used to keep lions at bay. Scales of a pangolin were (and still are) burned at the four corners of a camp or other less permanent

[45] Beliefs and practices of the sort were once widespread in this region, to the north of Tabwa among Bembe and groups of the Great Lakes region and northwestern Tanzania (Gossiaux 2000: 77-80), and among Bisa and other groups living in the light forests and savannas of northeastern Zambia, who are related through culture and history to Tabwa; see Stuart Marks' *Large Mammals and a Brave People* (1976) and especially his *Imperial Lions* (1984).

settlement.[46] Such animals are exceedingly rare but extremely important symbolically throughout eastern and central Africa. A Tabwa aphorism has it that "the king of beasts is not the lion" but the pangolin, and it would be hard to imagine an animal less likely to be so recognized and revered—until, that is, one considers the pangolin's preposterous anatomy and behavior. This is not the place for detailed discussion of these matters, but it should be mentioned that the beaded frontlets of Bilumbu possession-cult diviner-healers among Luba and Tabwa are called *nkaka*, or "pangolin," and that the motif of an isoceles right triangle that is practiced on a wide variety of objects is called *nkaka* ("pangolin") by Luba, after the shape of the animal's scales, and is known as *balamwezi* ("the rising of a new moon") by Tabwa.[47]

As benign as these purposes and activities sound, however, lions raised by *bafuga-simba* would protect their masters from attacks by similar lions sent by adversaries, and as usual, who was at fault and whose actions were justified would be a matter of debate. A third type of lion—and one perhaps not distinguished from the second by everyone—was even more explicitly involved in aggressive behavior. These lions were also raised by *bafuga-simba* and would be seen as a rat by anyone without "eyes," or the extended ken of those initiated into esoteric circles of knowledge. Such a rat could be sent to attack an adversary. It would scurry up and over the walls of a house as rats do, but then once inside, it would transform itself into a lion to attack and slaughter the enemies living there. Once the deed was accomplished, the lion would become a rat again and leave the house. Those outside would hear noises of a terrible battle, but would see no one

[46] Usually *Manis temminckii*, but possible *M. gigantea*, all called dialectical variants of *nkaka* by Tabwa, Luba, and other regional groups.

[47] Pangolin anatomy and behavior are discussed in Roberts 1995: 83-87, 144-145, as are examples of African religious practices and material arts derived from pangolins. *Nkaka* beaded frontlets are discussed and illustrated in a number of my writings, such as Roberts 1990 and Roberts and Roberts 1996. The *nkaka* ("pangolin") triangular motif of Luba and *balamwezi* ("the rising of a new moon") of Tabwa are presented in great detail in these same publications as well as in Roberts and Roberts 2007 and especially in Roberts 1985. For pangolin lore among other peoples of the region, see Douglas 1990 and Gossiaux 2000: 34-36, among others.

enter or leave; later they would discover the corpses of those inside, and wonder what had happened until a diviner could be found whose magical practices were sufficiently powerful to discern the causes of such dire acts.

The fourth kind of lion discerned by my Tabwa interlocutors was not a lion at all. Even though their actions might seem lion-like, these were *visanguka* (singular: *kisanguka*) terrorists sent to wreak havoc for a wide range of reasons, from the settling of economic or political debts to revenge for grievous insult or humiliation on the local level, with broader aims including resistance to incursion by people of rival clans or from outside the area, or social change for nationalist and millenarian purposes. Those attacked were in the wrong place at the *visanguka*'s right time—that is, victims were circumstantial rather than determined by direct motivation. People of the same clan as an enemy, people associated with intrusive groups such as the Yeke warlords that invaded southeastern DRC in the second half of the nineteenth century to hunt for ivory and slaves, people who had converted to Christianity or were somehow related to them: any of these might be killed. The fear of not knowing who might be next victims is the terrorist's most potent weapon, and *visanguka* played this gruesome game very well indeed.

Visanguka made sounds and signs as though they were lions, and when they killed, they disguised their acts to make them lion-like.[48] They are said to have possessed magical medicines that rendered them invisible to ordinary people. Among the ingredients of such a bundle, according to Nzwiba, was the *kizimba* of *nzima*, the melanstic serval associated with Mbidi Kiluwe, the Luba culture hero. As Nzwiba explained, *nzima* is so

[48] While there were what Tabwa would call "lions of the bush" in the area, at least until most big game was slaughtered during the civil strife of the early 1960s, assuming that they might be "man-eaters" is more myth than not, as suggested by the patient studies in the Serengeti by field zoologist George Schaller (1972). My assertion has been taken to task by Bruce Patterson (2004), the zoologist responsible for an exhibit of "man-eating" lions of Tsavo, Kenya, at the Field Museum of Natural History that is very popular with children. My retort—unnecessary to offer in detail here—is that the case of Tsavo needs to be understood with regard to indigenous politics of resistance to British colonial hegemony, especially given Schaller's evidence of the degree to which lions avoid killing people even when starving.

hard to see and so elusive otherwise that if by some chance one does come across such an animal in the woods and cries "There's an *nzima*!" it will disappear again before anyone else can see it. The bundle also included *vizimba* of the chameleon (*geogeo*), because it changes its color and one can walk right past without seeing it, and a shard of white porcelain plate (*kilolo*) that will make people stare blankly without closing their eyes, disregarding anyone walking past.

Magical medicines of the sort are similar to ones that bagabo are known to have had at their disposition, yet given the very limited information available (that is, about a *mugabo* tapping on the floor of his home to summon a lion via the magical bundle hidden there), it seems more likely that the lions bagabo were able to command were as *bafuga-simba* in control of the second or third type described by Tabwa rather than *visanguka*. Still, there is a haunting possibility that bagabo deployment of lions had ideological consequences, especially when reports of nativistic behavior by bagabo are taken into consideration. An example would be Schmidt's assertion (1912: 277) that bagabo set fire to houses that were deemed not to "conform to tradition," or that were larger or more beautiful that other people's. In the early 1920s, missionaries at Mpala implemented a policy obliging people within their sphere of influence to replace their round houses of mud and reed with rectangular ones built with sun-dried bricks. Such architecture was more "civilized," in the fathers' estimation, especially because rectangular homes more easily accommodated interior walls that allowed separate bedrooms to be constructed, thus alleviating the priests' concern that children might observe their parents' sexual activities (Roberts 1998). Although no direct tie to Bugabo was provided, the diary of Mpala Mission records that there were so many arson attacks upon homes in Lubanda and surrounding villages in the early 1920s that a curfew was imposed, not coincidentally at a time of intense attacks by "man-eating lions" as well (White Fathers Mpala, 23 June and 6 July 1921; Roberts 1986b).

In the first decades of the twentieth century, White Fathers at the Mission of Mpala-Lubanda were not subtle in their overt contention with bagabo. When two mortally ill individuals in Lubanda refused the sacraments because they were bagabo, the missionaries had their cadavers

thrown far out in the bush without burial or other consecration, "to give a lesson to our Blacks" (White Fathers Mpala, 18 January 1907). The very next day after disposing of the bagabo's bodies so unceremoniously, the mission was struck by lightning (ibid, 19 January 1907). No correlation between the two events was noted in the mission diary, but local Congolese most assuredly would have known there was one. The scribe did add that the priests had for some time "declared war upon these *Messieurs les Sorciers*," however. Bagabo were to be found in mission communities, and "seeing the immensity of this danger and the fear of our Blacks for these poisoners," the priests ordered society members to come forward. Local Catholics joined the effort to root out such people, and

> paramount chiefs were the first to feel the fury of the people. Tied up and brought to the mission, they received their punishment. All were obliged to bring their remedies and amulets. Soon their baskets were brought to us full of things to make the rain fall and the sun shine. All of this was solemnly burned by the sorcerers themselves. Now if someone is accused of sorcery, we thoroughly search his house and the delinquent is brought to us under heavy guard. May this lesson benefit our people and extirpate these deeply rooted superstitions that they all have (ibid).

That important chiefs were castigated and publicly humiliated must have been deeply resented, and one can assume that all that was abolished by the missionaries' harsh actions was *overt* manifestation of these important beliefs and practices.

These same years were extremely difficult ones around Mpala-Lubanda. Some local people felt that the severe drought in 1907 was the fault of Monsignor Roelens because of his heavy-handed ways and the more particular incident of his having banished an important healer (a mugabo perhaps?) who said he would take the rains with him (White Fathers Baudouinville, January 1908). When drought struck again in 1909, a catechist complained to the missionaries that a sorcerer was preventing the rains from falling. He was ridiculed and instructed to pray for rain (ibid, 3 March 1909). Epidemics of smallpox, dysentery, meningitis, and—what proved worst of all—sleeping sickness, all took terrible tolls (Debbaudt 1935: 25-26). The priests made huge efforts to aid those afflicted with

illnesses that they attributed to "the wrath of God" (White Fathers Mpala, 13 November 1906). Deaths were especially high in the dense communities around the missions, and in November 1906 alone, more than a hundred families asked permission to move away from Mpala.[49] The request was denied, and instead Christian crosses were erected in villages to protect residents, while those who were very ill were brought to the missions for treatment. Finally the fathers relented, but the mission scribe commented that such people were turned away wherever they fled for fear that they would spread sleeping sickness from the missions (ibid). The epidemics continued for several years, and at one point the fathers were faced with an insurrection of "sorcerers in secret societies," "insane" people, and "socialists" who threatened to beat one of the priests when he sought to place two such miscreants in chains. It took fifteen armed men to suppress this revolt, after which the firebrands were placed in chains and otherwise administered "paternal correction" by the missionaries (ibid, 21 May 1908).

As if these plagues were not enough, the same period saw intense attacks and killings in mission communities by what the fathers assumed must be man-eating lions, but that local people knew to be *visanguka* terrorists bent on disrupting the growing influence of the Church while undoubtedly seeking some measure of revenge for the priests' brutally high-handed ways (Roberts 1986b). To complete the picture, smugglers of wild rubber were active in the region, and "complete anarchy reigned" as a consequence. Lt. Fontana of the Congo Free State's Force Publique came to Mpala with sixty soldiers and arrested eighteen boatloads of alleged smugglers during patrols along the shores of Lake Tanganyika (White Fathers Mpala, 1-12 December 1906). Robert Schmidt—the author who described Bugabo among "Holoholo"—was then stationed at Moliro on the border with British Northern Rhodesia, as an officer of the concessionary *Comité Spécial du Katanga*. Schmidt demonstrated the authoritarian behavior typical of the times as he forced men into corvée labor and burned the villages of those who refused (White Fathers

[49] Congolese were not allowed to move about freely, and required government laisser-passés for long-distance travel; local movement was further restricted by the White Fathers, who maintained a de facto "Christian Kingdom" from their important missions at Mpala-Lubanda and Baudounville-Kirungu. See Roberts 1987 and 1989.

Baudouinville, 15 July 1909). Given how stressful these circumstances were in the years leading up to World War I, it is little wonder that Bugabo would find growing popularity as a means of resistance to European domination as well as protection against rampant illness and the perfidy of one's peers (Roberts 1987).

In later years, there is further evidence of conflict between bagabo and resident Europeans. A territorial administrator in Kongolo (Anon. 1925a) reported that bagabo threatened local chiefs if their followers favored Catholic proselytism, and for this reason, the agent concluded, most chiefs became bagabo. The Father Superior of the Mission of Bruges Saint Donat received a menacing letter from Chief Mukelenge Tambwe, warning the priest not to reveal any secrets about Bugabo that he might have learned (Anon. 1925b). Other voices called for calm on all sides, however, as when an administrator writing from Mpala (1919b) asserted that Bugabo was not anti-European despite what was said of the society. As much as these reflections concerned everyday life in the Congo, also at issue were frictions among colonial authorities and missionaries who represented differing political positions with regard to the Metropole.[50]

Historical details such as these leave one wondering to what degree Bugabo was a nativistic organization working in opposition to colonial interests, and to what degree it was more directed toward local-level politics that might or might not include European concerns.[51] Certainly many of the practices, performances, and the material culture that accompanied them existed before the early colonial period and well after it as well—and in all likelihood to the present day. Issues of human fertility were a focus of Bugabo, for instance, and as we have seen, Tulunga shamans still prepare *viabiko* medicines to help and heal those having difficulty in giving birth;

[50] Ways that Belgians resident in southeastern Congo used local parties to play out their metropolitan political differences are presented and discussed in Roberts 1987 and 1989. The overviews of such matters presented by Gann and Duignan 1979 and Kestergat 1985 remain useful, despite their being somewhat dated.

[51] Linton and Hallowell's "Nativistic Movements" (1943) remains the clearest exposition of this term that is so critically important to colonial studies.

but it may have been that the emphasis upon virility in Bugabo was also in reaction to the ways that Congolese men were humiliated and all too often physically mistreated by missionaries and early colonial authorities. Because so little evidence is at hand—and no contemporary African exegesis whatsoever—it is useful to paraphrase the Africanist historian Terence Ranger (1975: 140) from his writings about somewhat similar circumstances: Bagabo were probably not militant *because* they were members of Bugabo. Nor did they join Bugabo because they were militant to begin with. It was not Bugabo, but the cruelties of early colonial policies that led men to militancy. But these men were leaders partly because of their participation in Bugabo and its purposes and social relations, and through such work these qualities were recognized and relied upon by local communities to defend and promote them.

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