Table of contents

Chapter 0. Introduction, acknowledgments, provenances 5

0.1. INTRODUCTION
0.1.1. Vicarious reflections
0.1.2. A transcontinental career
0.1.3. The fundamental unity of humankind
0.1.4. Intercultural philosophy: 'There and Back Again'
0.1.5. Comparative mythology as a way out
0.1.6. A philosophical adventure
0.1.7. Why I cannot give up my reticently empiricist position: An attempt to define the social-science perspective
0.1.8. From social science to philosophy – *'There and Back Again'*
0.2. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS
0.3. SUMMARY: THE STRUCTURE OF THE PRESENT BOOK
0.4. PROVENANCES

Table of contents 69

List of figures, tables, and text blocks 77

PART I. CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY AS A FORM OF INTERCULTURAL KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION – ITS POTENTIAL AND SHORTCOMINGS 83

Chapter 1. Virtuality as a key concept in the study of globalisation: Towards an anthropology of present-day Africa's symbolic transformation 85

1.0. AFRICAN TOWNS: SOME SOCIOLOGICAL ASPECTS
1.1. GLOBALISATION, BOUNDARIES, AND IDENTITY
1.1.1. Introduction
1.1.2. The globalisation process
1.1.3. Forms of self-organisation impose boundaries to the global flow

(c) 2015 Winiwan Bhasaraguru Chilkaden Press – infringement will be prosecuted

and thus produce identity
1.1.4. An example: The religious laundering of globally mediated items
1.2. INTRODUCING VIRTUALITY
1.2.1. Virtuality provisionally defined
1.2.2. Non-locality as given, locality as an actively constructed alternative, virtuality as the failure of such construction
1.3. THE VIRTUAL VILLAGE: CHARACTERISING AFRICAN VILLAGE SOCIETY AS VIRTUALISED
1.4. SOME THEMES IN THE PHILOSOPHY AND CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY OF 'MEANING'
1.5. THE PROBLEM OF MEANING IN AFRICAN TOWNS TODAY
1.5.1. Back to the virtual village: Even the rural African community is problematic
1.5.2. Town and country
1.6. THE VIRTUAL VILLAGE IN TOWN (A): GIRL'S PUBERTY CEREMONIES IN URBAN ZAMBIA
1.5.1. Historic ('traditional') village-derived ritual in African urban settings today, and its interpretation
1.5.2. Girls' initiation in the towns along the Zambian 'Line of Rail'
1.7. THE VIRTUAL VILLAGE IN TOWN (B): 'VILLAGISATION' AND ETHICAL RENEWAL IN KINSHASA AND LUSAKA
1.7.1. Kinshasa, Democratic Republic Congo: 'The aftermath of unwhitening'
1.7.2. The oneiric village and urban cultural consensus
1.7.3. Urban ethical renewal and traditional ritual initiative: Kinshasa and Lusaka compared
1.8. THE VIRTUAL VILLAGE AS NATION-WIDE DISCOURSE: TWO STUDIES OF WITCHCRAFT (CAMEROON) AND HEALING (MALAWI)
1.8.1. Introduction
1.8.2. A healing movement in Malawi
1.8.3. The status of 'witchcraft' as an analytical term
1.8.4. The absence of witchcraft in Chisupe's movement
1.8.5. The construction of a discursive context for analysis: (a) the village as the dominant locus of cosmological reference
1.8.6. The construction of a discursive context for analysis: (b) leaving the village and its cosmology behind, and opting for a globalising perspective
1.8.7. The possible lessons from a rural-orientated cosmological perspective on witchcraft
1.8.8. The felicitous addressing of virtuality
1.8.9. Virtuality and time
1.8.10. Section conclusion: The rural-orientated perspective on witchcraft and healing as an anthropological trap?
1.9. THE VIRTUAL VILLAGE IN THE VILLAGE: A RURAL ETHNIC FESTIVAL IN WESTERN ZAMBIA
1.9.1. Introducing the Kazanga festival
1.9.2. Virtuality in Kazanga
1.9.2.1. Production of identity in Kazanga
1.9.2.2. Commoditification and virtuality
1.9.2.3. Embodiment and virtuality

(c) 2015 Wim van Binsbergen / Shikanda Press – infringement will be prosecuted

1.9.2.4. Virtuality and the role of the state
1.9.2.5. Virtuality and inequality
1.9.3. Cultural performance as virtual production
1.10. CONCLUSION

Chapter 2. Ethnographic field-work and the problem of inequality: *"There and Back Again"* ····169

Chapter 3. Crossing disciplinary boundaries while crossing cultural ones: From anthropologist to sangoma in search of an intercultural approach to health ····179

3.1. EXPERIENCES OF AN ANTHROPOLOGIST
3.2. BECOMING A DIVINER-PRIEST
3.3. INTERCULTURAL PHILOSOPHY
3.4. FOUR WOODEN TABLETS
3.5. DISTANT OFFSHOOTS
3.6. ANOTHER UNEXPECTED FIND
3.7. CROSSING CULTURAL BOUNDARIES

PART II. RELIGIOUS HEGEMONY AND SOME OF ITS REMEDIES ····189

Chapter 4. "See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil" Towards a cultural anthropology of evil in present-day Africa ····191

4.1. INTRODUCTION
4.2. TUNISIA
4.3. SOUTH CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN AFRICA
4.4 THE RELATIVE NATURE OF EVIL
4.5. POSSIBLY HEGEMONIC IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY OF EVIL

Chapter 5. Towards an intercultural hermeneutics of post-'9 / 11' reconciliation: Comments on Richard Kearney's 'Thinking After Terror: An Interreligious Challenge' ···· 207

Chapter 6. Jacques Derrida on religion: Glimpses of interculturality ····223

6.1. INTRODUCTION
6.2. STRATEGIES OF INVESTIGATION
6.3. RELIGION AS A PAROCHIAL CATEGORY – LEXICAL DETERMINISM
6.4. ISLAM AS RELIGION
6.5. TOWARDS A PHILOSOPHICAL THEORY OF RELIGION
6.6. JUDAISM
6.7. PARTICULARISING *EMIC* 'CHRISTIANITY', OR GENERALISING *ETIC* 'RELIGION'
6.8. PLACE
6.9. CONCLUSION

(c) 2019 Unisa Press. Unauthorised distribution / Sprekonda Press – infringement will be prosecuted

Chapter 7. In search of spirituality: Conceptual and theoretical explorations from the cultural anthropology of religion and the history of ideas 243

7.1. BACKGROUND AND OUTLINE
7.2. SOME THEORETICAL RESOURCES IN THE ANTHROPOLOGY AND SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION
7.2.1. Overview
7.2.2. Implications for the study of religion in multicultural pluralism
7.3. INTRODUCING SPIRITUALITY
7.4. SPIRIT AND SPIRITUALITY
7.5. SPIRITUALITY: A SURPRISINGLY INSPIRING *NEW AGE* APPROACH
7.6. A PROVISIONAL ANALYSIS OF THE PRESENT-DAY CONCEPT OF SPIRITUALITY, AND SOME OF ITS THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

Chapter 8. African Spirituality: An approach from intercultural philosophy 267

8.1. INTRODUCTION
8.2. IS THERE A SPECIFICALLY AFRICAN SPIRITUALITY?
8.3. EPISTEMOLOGY: CAN WE KNOW AFRICAN SPIRITUALITY?
8.4. THEMES IN AFRICAN SPIRITUALITY
8.5. AFRICAN SPIRITUALITY AS BOUNDARY PRODUCTION AND BOUNDARY CROSSING AT THE SAME TIME – IN OTHER WORDS AS INTERCULTURAL PHILOSOPHY
8.6. THE POLITICS OF SOCIABILITY VERSUS THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE INDIVIDUAL SELF IN AFRICAN SPIRITUALITY
8.7. SPIRITUALITY BETWEEN LOCAL PRACTICE AND GLOBAL ETHNOGRAPHIC / INTERCULTURAL-PHILOSOPHICAL DESCRIPTION

PART III. NAMES-DROPPING: HOW NOT TO CRUSH AFRICA UNDER NORTH ATLANTIC THOUGHT 287

Chapter 9. Aristotle in Africa Towards a comparative Africanist reading of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission 289

9.1. INTRODUCTION: WHY DID WE NEED A POSTSCRIPT TO THE COLLECTION *TRUTH IN POLITICS*, AS PUBLISHED IN *QUEST: AN AFRICAN JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY?*
9.2. ARISTOTLE
9.3. THE TRC AND AFRICA (A): RECONSTRUCTION IN THE AFRICAN POST-COLONY?
9.4. THE TRC AND AFRICA (B):THE MODEL OF THE AFRICAN POST-COLONY AS A SWORD OF DAMOCLES HANGING OVER DEMOCRATIC SOUTH AFRICA
9.5. WHEN DOES DISCLOSURE BRING CATHARSIS?
9.6. 'PAIN IS NOT AN ARGUMENT'
9.7. THE TRANSCENDENT STATE AS A PRECONDITION FOR APARTHEID
9.8. THE ANCIENT WORLD'S LIMITED RELEVANCE FOR AN UNDERSTANDING OF TODAY'S ISSUES
9.9. WHAT THE IMMANENTALIST DOMAIN BROUGHT TO THE TRC
9.10. THE TRC AS A NATION'S BIRTH PANGS

(c) 2017 Sun Media Bloemfontein / Sharing this PDF with others is infringement and will be prosecuted

9.11. COUNTER-HEGEMONIC CHALLENGE AS A PRINCIPAL TASK FOR AFRICAN INTELLECTUALS
9.12. INTERCULTURAL KNOWLEDGE BETWEEN UNIVERSALISM AND PARTICULARISM
9.13. LEARNING FROM THE REST OF AFRICA IN ORDER TO BETTER UNDERSTAND SOUTH AFRICA
9.14. CONCLUSION

Chapter 10. The eclectic scientism of Félix Guattari: Africanist anthropology as both critic and potential beneficiary of his thought 321

10.1. INTRODUCTION: THE HISTORICITY OF SUBJECTIVITY
10.2. BETWEEN NATURAL SCIENCE AND THE POETICS OF MAGIC: GUATTARI'S 'SCIENTISTIC' STYLE OF WRITING AND THINKING
10.3. GUATTARI'S SOCIAL SCIENTISM: THE CULTURAL, HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL OTHER: GUATTARI'S SELECTIVE AND SUPERFICIAL APPROPRIATION OF CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY
10.3.1. '*How Natives Think*'
10.3.2. The West African *legba*
10.3.3. Primitives and barbarians: The exotic and archaeological other as a literary topos
10.3.4. Bateson and Castaneda
10.3.5. The price of the superficial appropriation of a field of study
10.4. AND YET: GUATTARI'S POTENTIAL FOR ANTHROPOLOGY
10.4.1. Identity and globalisation
10.4.2. Virtuality
10.4.3. The culture of capitalism
10.4.4. Towards an anthropology of non-meaning, of violence, and of the subconscious
10.4.5. Towards a liberating aesthetics of anthropological field-work?
10.5. CONCLUSION: THE FUTURE ROLE OF ART AND ANTHROPOLOGY FROM A GUATTARIAN PERSPECTIVE

Chapter 11. Philosophising *à l' africaine*: J.B. Amougou on M. Hebga's rationality 371

11.1. OUTLINE OF AMOUGOU'S ARGUMENT
11.2. CONCLUSION

PART IV. BEYOND AFRICA: THE PRICE OF UNIVERSALISM 381

Chapter 12. 'An incomprehensible miracle': Central African clerical intellectualism versus African historic religion: A close reading of Valentin Mudimbe's *Tales of Faith* 383

12.1. INTRODUCTION
12.2. MUDIMBE'S METHOD IN *TALES OF FAITH*
12.3. WHAT *TALES OF FAITH* IS REALLY ABOUT (1) THE NARRATIVE OF CLERICAL INTELLECTUALISM IN CENTRAL AFRICA
12.4. WHAT *TALES OF FAITH* IS REALLY ABOUT (2) HOMELESSNESS AS MUDIMBE'S CENTRAL PREDICAMENT
12.5. BEYOND THE DREAM OF AN AFRICAN HOME

(c) 2015 Wim van Binsbergen / Shikanda Press - infringement will be prosecuted

12.6. IN VINDICATION OF AFROCENTRISM
12.7. THE PROMINENCE OF DEATH IN MUDIMBE'S WORK
12.8. AN EXCURSION INTO THE PLURALITY OF AFRICAN CULTURES
12.9. DEATH AGAIN
12.10. *MÉTISSITÉ*
12.11. MUDIMBE AND HISTORIC AFRICAN RELIGION
12.12. A COMPARISON BETWEEN MUDIMBE'S ITINERARY AND MY OWN

PART V. INSIDE AFRICAN KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS 443

Chapter 13. The underpinning of scientific knowledge systems: Epistemology or hegemonic power? The implications of Sandra Harding's critique of North Atlantic science for the appreciation of African knowledge systems 445

13.1. INTRODUCTION
13.2. HARDING'S ARGUMENT
13.3. EPISTEMOLOGICAL UNDERPINNING OR SOCIO-POLITICAL AND HISTORICAL CONTINGENCY?
13.4. AN EPISTEMOLOGICAL UNDERPINNING, AFTER ALL?
13.5. CONCLUSION

Chapter 14. Time, space and history in African divination and board-games 483

14.1. INTRODUCTION
14.1.1. Heinz Kimmerle in Africa
14.1.2. Board-games
14.2. THE THEORETICAL CONVERGENCE OF DIVINATION AND BOARD-GAMES; WHAT IS DIVINATION?
14.2.1. Divination
14.2.2. Board-games and divination compared
14.2.3. Board-games and divination as formal models: the miniaturisa tion of time and space
14.2.4. Relation with narrative literature
14.2.4. Relation with symbolism and mathematics
14.3. HISTORICAL PROBLEMS POSED BY DIVINATION SYSTEMS AND BOARD-GAMES
14.3.1. Appearance in human history
14.3.2. The relative a-historicity of divination systems and board-games
14.3.3. Three basic variants of the historical relation between divination and board-games
14.3.4. Neolithic production as a key to the imagery of mankala and geomancy
14.4. MODELS OF TIME

Chapter 15. Does African divination 'work', and if so, how it is this possible? Divination as a puzzle in intercultural epistemology 505

15.1. HOW HAS IT BEEN POSSIBLE THAT AFRICAN DIVINATION SURVIVED?

(c) 2015 Wim van Dijk Bergen / Shikanda Press - infringement will be prosecuted

15.2. AFRICAN MATERIAL DIVINATION AS PROCEDURAL, INTERSUBJECTIVE, OBJECTIFIED KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION
15.3. THE MAINSTREAM SOLUTION: AFRICAN DIVINATION AS NORMAL WISDOM PRODUCTION BEYOND STRICT PROCEDURE
15.4. THE RADICAL ALTERNATIVE SOLUTION: AFRICAN DIVINATION AS PARANORMAL, VERIDICAL KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

Chapter 16. Traditional wisdom: Its expressions and representations in Africa and beyond: Exploring intercultural epistemology 519

16.1. THE RESILIENCE OF WISDOM AS A TOPIC IN MODERN THOUGHT AND SCIENCE
16.2. IN SEARCH OF TRADITIONAL WISDOM
16.3. THE DILEMMA OF EXPRESSION IN WISDOM
16.4. 'TACIT MODERN UNWISDOM'...
16.5. ON THE POSSIBILITY OF AN INTERCULTURAL TRANSMISSION OF WISDOM, WITHIN AND OUTSIDE AN ACADEMIC CONTEXT
16.6. TOWARDS AN EPISTEMOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE
16.7. FOUR EXAMPLES OF VIABLE AFRICAN TRADITIONAL WISDOM WITH POTENTIALLY GLOBAL APPLICABILITY
16.8. SITUATING INTERCULTURAL PHILOSOPHY FROM A WISDOM PERSPECTIVE
16.9. CONCLUSION

PART VI. REFERENCE MATERIAL 561

Cumulative bibliography 563

Envoy 649

Index of authors 651

General index 663

(c) 2015 Wim van Binsbergen / Shikanda Press – infringement will be prosecuted

List of figures, tables, and text blocks

Fig. 0.1. Global distribution aspects of the theonym Nyambi 21

Fig. 0.2. Global distribution of spider mythology (van Binsbergen 2010: Fig. 9.7, p. 185) 28

Fig. 1.1. Old-World geomantic systems 109

Fig. 1.2. The problem of meaning in African towns: A rare but instructive sight in urban Africa – an insecure villager at Chachacha Road, Lusaka, Zambia, 1978 120

Fig. 1.3. Overview of the PWD squatment, Francistown, Botswana, 1998-1999; the highest hilltop in the background is Nyangab[g]we ('Rock Hill'), from which Francistown derives its, identical, local name. The cylindrical structure halfway the lower top is a water reservoir belonging to the municipal Public Works Department (PWD), where some of the original inhabitants of this squatment were employed 126

Fig. 1.4. Clustering of residents according to their village homes, PWD squatment, Francistown, Botswana, 1988-1989 127

Fig. 1.5. Menarche in an African town. Seated on a rush mat next to the woman who will be her mentrix, a Nsenga girl (middle left) who only minutes before was found to have her first menstruation, is respectfully and joyfully saluted by her mother, elder sister and a woman neighbour, while the latter's husband holds ready an axe and a pumpkin which are to be held over the girl's head in evocation of agricultural tasks she, as an urbanite, may never discharge. Chelston suburb, Lusaka, Zambia, 1978 129

Fig. 1.6. Do the rural cosmology and ritual practice constitute the principal

(c) 2013 Wim van Binsbergen / Shikanda Press - infringement will be prosecuted

referents of urban puberty rites? Coming-out dance of a girl (standing, left, with head scarf), escorted by her under-age second (standing, right, with bead scapular), under the encouraging eyes of her mentrix (centre, with beads in her hair), Mukunkike village, Kaoma, Zambia, 1978 ····· 134

Fig. 1.7. Village shelters are giving way to urban bars as foci of the male social process. A bar in the Monarch residential area, Francistown, Botswana, 1989 ····· 139

Fig. 1.8. Although the global economy is omnipresent (notice the enamel basin, petrol drums, plastic bucket, manufactured textiles, next to locally grown calabash containers), viable agricultural production, of which various produce is shown in the picture, provided relevance to the ancient rural cosmology. Nkeyema, Kaoma, Zambia, 1978 ····· 145

Fig. 1.9. In town, witchcraft fears tend to focus on urban concerns such as the acquisition, and subsequent protection, of a modern house and a car. Somerset East Extension, a brand-new site-and-service housing estate in Francistown, Botswana, 1988 ····· 151

Fig. 1.10. Operating under the smoke of Francistown's magnificent new Nyangabgwe hospital, an urban diviner, in what is locally known as 'his surgery', casts his divination tablets (ultimately derived from Arabian and Chinese geomancy, but entrenched in African localisation since c. 1500 CE) in order to diagnose a case of suspected witchcraft. Somerset East residential area, Francistown, Botswana, 1989 ····· 152

Fig. 1.11 a, b. A historic puberty rite in the throes of virtuality: the choir leader encouraging a recently initiated girl to publicly re-enact her coming-out dance, Kazanga festival, Kaoma, Zambia, 1994; as further aspects of virtuality, notice the girl's and choir-leader's identical wrappers, and the smartly dressed notable capturing the event with his camera ····· 161

Fig. 1.12. The articulation of the global and the local in the Kazanga festival. Smartly dressed national-level and regional politicians rush to donate money at the directions of the traditionally attired choirleader; Kazanga festival, Kaoma, Zambia, 1994 ····· 162

Fig. 1.13. Virtuality reigns at the Kazanga festival. A clerk of the district branch of the Department of Cultural Services, dressed up in the historic attire of the court jester (*kayoni ka Mwene*, the king's bird – a cosmogonic evocation), reminds uniformly dressed village girls to position themselves in a regular grid and to keep in line – spatial patterns without roots in any Nkoya rural situation. In the back a poorly dressed chief's court official wields a tape recorder of ghetto blaster size, so as to record the dance troupe's song. Kazanga festival, Kaoma, 1994 ····· 163

Fig. 3.1. The valley of Sidi Mḥammad as seen from my house, ᶜAṭaṭfa, ᶜAin Drāham District, Tunisia, 1979 ····· 180

Fig. 3.2. Fellow-*sangoma*s supervise one of the principal acts marking van Binsbergen's (left, squatting) initiation as a *sangoma*: the sacrifice of a

(c) 2018 Wim M.J. van Binsbergen <wimbinsbergen@gmail.com> All rights reserved. Illegal distribution, commercial use prosecuted

goat at the male ancestors' shrine in Matshelagabedi village, Botswana 182

Fig. 3.3. A senior Manjaco diviner-healer in Calequisse, Canchungu District, Guinea-Bissau, 1983, inspects the entrails of a chick in terms of the colour opposition black (the spirit's denial, rejection) / white (the spirit's confirmation, acceptance) in the course of a ceremony by which a new oracular shrine is being consecrated for the benefit of one of his colleagues 183

Fig. 3.4. The wooden tablets which have played a central role in my intellectual quest – a gift from Mrs Rosie Mmadhlovu Mabutu, one of my teachers of *sangoma*, and after the latter's death were consecrated in the blood of my sacrificial animal victims by her 'sister' / cousin, Mrs Elizabeth MmaShakayile Mabutu, Francistown, 1989-1990 184

Fig. 3.5. Sangomas in action: The younger sister, Kwani, expresses her genuine surprise at the particular fall of the divination tablets from the hands of her elder sister, Molly; Monarch township, Francistown, Botswana, 1988. Being our first encounter, this must have been (although this was a not disclosed to me until a year later) the moment when – with tremendous impact on my life and career – the oracle predicted my becoming a sangoma, and identified me as the incarnation of these young women's great uncle, Johannes. 186

Fig. 4.1. Young women and their mature female chaperones harvesting rye in the vicinity of the shrine (onder the tree marked by the arrow) of Sidi Buqasbāya al-Kabīr, valley of Sidi Mammad, ᶜAin Drāham District, Tunisia, 1968 193

Fig. 5.1. Striking the earth (with a walking-stick, in a forceful semi-circular movement so that the point bounces and leavesa chance number of multiple indentures) in order to produce the entries for an Arabic geomantic divinatory reading (after al-Toúnisi 1845) 217

Fig. 6.1. Jacques Derrida 226

Fig. 6.2. Two foci as the central characteristic of religion according to Derrida 234

Fig. 8.1. The name Africa among multiple geographical locations bearing identical or cognate place names in ancient geographies. 269

Fig. 8.2. Map rendering Frobenius' ideas (1954 / 1933, Fig. 43, pp. 295 *f.*) concerning the inroads of named shamanistic cults 276

Fig. 10.1. Giles Deleuze (left) and Félix Guattari 325

Fig. 10.2. The four dimensions of Guattari's reality 329

Fig. 10.3. Dr. Smarts Gumede's survery, Francistown, Botswana, 1989 334

Fig. 10.4. A West African *legba* shrine 342

Fig. 12.1. Valentin Mudimbe (2008) 387

Fig. 13.1. Sandra Harding 449

Fig. 14.1. Two courtiers of the Nkoya royal court of Mwene Mutondo, resting after work, while a minimalist four-row mankala board is within

(c) 2017 Wilhelm Fink Verlag, Paderborn — Unauthorized copies will be prosecuted

reach, Shikombwe, Kaoma District, 1977 485

14.2. School children at Nkeyema, Eastern Kaoma District, Zambia, having dug their own mankala board in the ground, 1978 487

Fig. 14.3. A mankala board from the Western Grassfields, Cameroon, held at the Musée la Blackitude, Yaounde, Cameroon (2015) 493

Fig. 14.4. A simple mankala board from Sri Lanka, 2012 (author's collection); probably the game was introduced to the island by forced migrants from sub-Saharan Africa around 1800 CE 494

Fig. 14.5. A *ndop* statuette held at the British Museum, London, UK, and depicting King Shamba Bolongongo of the Kuba / Bushong people, Congo, who reputedly introduced mankala in his lands in the 17th c. CE 496

Fig. 14.6. An Ifa divining board, acquired at Cotonou, Benin, 2002 (author's collection), and probably dating from the early 20th c. CE. Cowry shells are cast on the board's central rectangle which is lined with powdered white kaolin, and the four-lines geomantic symbol (each consisting of a dot or a line) is determined by the number of shells which, in four successive throws, appear with their aperture up (dot), or down (line) 500

Fig. 16.1. Headman Lubumba, photographed at the Njonjolo valley, Kaoma District, 1973. He was active as a witchfinder and (in the style of his regional predecessor Mupumani) a nature prophet in Namwala District, Central Zambia, in the 1940s-1950s, and finally ended up in the Nkoya area, as a headman and a guardian of traditions and myths – a total cripple since his gun exploded in a hunting accident. Among his repertoire was a myth concerning the origin of evil in the world: Nyambi's child (gender is undetermined in the Nkoya syntax, although the modern interpretation imputes male gender here, probably wrongly – van Binsbergen 1992: 8e *f.*) had invented sorcery and was thrown out of Heaven – with suspected echoes of the Titans, Lucifer, Ḥam, and Gnosticism 532

Fig. 16.2. Seconded by her infant granddaughter, the white-robed *Bituma*-cult leader, my adoptive mother Mrs Mayatilo, at the end of her sacred path and in front of her sacred pole hung with strings of white beads; Shumbanyama village, Kaoma District, 1973. Note the fly switch and the enamel container with sacrificial beer. Bringing a new, a-moral for guiltless interpretation of misfortune, modern, proto-globalisation-inspired cults of affliction offer a practical wisdom enshrined in bodily movements, drumming rhythm, songs 537

Tables

Table 0.1. Old-World goddesses of weaving, virginity, and prowess, often with spider-like connotations (largely based on: van Binsbergen & Woudhuizen 2011: 142, Table 6.4) 33

Table 7.1. Classic social-science approaches to religion provisionally

(c) 2018 Wim M.J. van Binsbergen - Unauthorized use or distribution prohibited and may be prosecuted

scrutinised from the point of view of spirituality and urban multicultural pluralism 256

Table 13.1. World-wide continuities: The battle between the hero and the monster 458

Table 13.2. Selected iconographic representations of the mythemes listed in Table 13.1. 462

Text blocks

A. The Fundamental Unity of Humankind 8

B. The Theonym Nyambi 18

BB. A Global Etymology: The Complex 'Earth / Bottom / Human' 25

C. Making Ethnographic Claims the Easy Way – But Spuriously 38

D. Churches in Francistown, Botswana 101

E. Geomantic Divination as a Well-Defined Formal System, With a Very Wide Distribution in Space and Time 107

F. Spontaneous Order and Instant Justice Around a Lusaka Bus Station, Zambia 140

G. The Post-colonial Witchfinder Tetangimbo in Western Zambia 148

H. Rijk van Dijk on Young Malawian Puritans 157

I. Why Should Nkoya Musical Expressions Be Dominant In Western Zambia? 159

J. The Nkoya Kazanga Festival: Cultural Display Implies Virtualisation 165

J.J. Love Thy Informants 176

J.J.J. The Mythical Being Ġrbān In The Light Of Comparative Mythology 195

K. Spirituality among the Zambian Nkoya 277

KK. Cultural impact of 18-19th-c. CE Swahili traders among the Nkoya 277

L. Modern Astrology As Deterritorialised in Guattari's Sense? 327

M. Egyptocentric Afrocentrism as Problem and as Solution 372

N. From Participant Observer to Participant *tout court*: A European's Path Through African Religion 428

O. Glimpses of *Le Combat Spirituel* in Present-day Congo (After Julie Ndaya) 433

P. Combat in Comparative Mythology: Note to the Following Table 456

Q. The Coelacanth: Known to Africans, unknown to North Atlantic science 523

R. The Immensely Alienating Myth of the Human Body As Basically An

(c) 2015 Wim van Binsbergen / Thinkandia Press – Infringement will be prosecuted

INDUSTRIAL PRODUCT ····· 535
S. THE MYTH OF THE FUNDAMENTAL CLOSEDNESS OF THE HUMAN PERSON ····· 535
T. THE MYTH (...) OF THE EXCLUDED THIRD AND OF LOGICAL CONSISTENCY ····· 536
U. THE MYTH OF 'MYTH' AS UNTRUTH ····· 536
V. THE HUMAN BODY IN AFRICAN TRADITIONAL WISDOM ····· 548
W. CONFLICT REGULATION IN AFRICAN TRADITIONAL WISDOM ····· 549
W.W. THE AFRICAN SENSE OF COMMUNITY: SELF-EVIDENT INPUT OR PRECARIOUS PRODUCT? ····· 550
X. THE ACCESSIBLE INDIVIDUAL MIND IN AFRICAN TRADITIONAL WISDOM ····· 551
Y. MYTHOLOGY IN AFRICAN TRADITIONAL WISDOM ····· 555
Z. WHY MYTHEMES MAY PERSIST OVER MANY MILLENNIA ····· 555

(c) 2015 Wim van Binsbergen / Shikanda Press – infringement will be prosecuted

Part I. Cultural anthropology as a form of intercultural knowledge production – its potential and shortcomings

(c) 2015 Wim van Binsbergen / Shikanda Press – infringement will be prosecuted

(c) 2015 Wim van Binsbergen / Shikanda Press – infringement will be prosecuted

Chapter 1

Virtuality as a key concept in the study of globalisation

Towards an anthropology of present-day Africa's symbolic transformation

(c) 2010 Wim van Binsbergen / Shikanda Press – infringement will be prosecuted

After my oral-historical and ethnographic field-work on popular Islam in the highlands of North-Western Tunisia (1968, 1970), I joined the Department of Sociology of the University of Zambia. Although teaching, administration, and our family life under (then, anyway, still) unfamiliar tropical conditions absorbed most of my time, living in Lusaka, the capital of a newly independent country in sub-Saharan Africa, offered immense opportunities for field-work. Moreover, local research was greatly encouraged by the University of Zambia and – in those days before the collapse of copper revenues – even subsidised, so that expatriate lecturers of social science could be better equipped for their already arduous task of teaching an unfamiliar discipline to Zambian students straight from boarding school – or, as most of my students then, not even staying at campus but dispersed all over the country and, in these pre-Internet times, only reachable through correspondence, mimeographed syllabuses, and summer schools. Under those constraints, my first field-research in sub-Saharan Africa was to be u r b a n *research, on such topics as: Lusaka churches as voluntary associations; churches as factors of social control in the management of urbanites' marital life; religious affiliation as a factor in educational success; and gradually (under the influence of the urban immigrant Mr Dennis Shiyowe from the Nkoya people in Western Zambia, who was to become my research assistant, and ended up as my elder brother) what was to remain my main topic of urban research: the staging of female puberty rites, healing-cult sessions, and funerals, by Lusaka urban immigrants. It this connection I learned the basics of the Nkoya language and of the urban migrants' Nkoya culture, but it was only after extending my research to the remote rural areas of Kaoma District, and into the recent and remote past, that*

my career's main research project began to take shape. Urban anthropology had received ample attention in the course of the excellent education I had received at Amsterdam University, yet my scientific perspective and field experience (like that of most anthropologists at the time) were predominantly rural. My early Lusaka research forced me to come to terms[77] *with the bewildering complexities and contradictions of modern African life in an urban setting, and to join my research hosts in their struggle to make sense of a life world that had left them utterly poor, powerless, deprived from most material, sexual, social, cultural and spiritual resources that could be taken for granted in their original village environment, and forced them to live among linguistic and cultural strangers. How was meaning at least partially, and fragmentarily, being reproduced, or rather restored, in their lives? What was the role of urban-rural ties in that process? What was the role of the state, the modern economy, formal education, and formal organisations such as churches, schools, mines, companies? When by the late 1980s African Studies were launched on the path of globalisation studies, these questions obtained a new relevance and new interpretative paradigms, but they were essentially familiar questions, whose answers required not just a grounding in globalisation theory and post-modern thought, but also a solid empirical familiarity with the realities of African life today.*[78] *As a stepping-stone towards the intercultural-philosophical arguments that make up the bulk of the present volume, I offer as the first Chapter of this book a long argument on* virtuality as a key concept for the understanding of globalisation in the African context. *Since towns have functioned as the main interfaces between historic African life and the outside forces of globalisation, our emphasis in most of this Chapter will be on* urban *conditions. In order to prepare the reader for this specific empirical focus, I introduce, as the first Section of this Chapter, another stepping-stone: an overview (now dated in some respects, still relevant in others) of the state of the art in African urban studies by the time globalisation studies were around the corner.*

> 'When children play at trains their game is connected with their knowledge of trains. It would nevertheless be possible for the children of a tribe unacquainted with trains to learn this game from others, and to play it without knowing that it was copied from anything. One might say that the game did not make the same sense to them as to us.' (Wittgenstein 1967a / 1953: 97e, 282; needless to point out that this quotation addresses *virtuality*, and does not express the racist view of (urban) Africans as children.)

1.0. African towns: Some sociological aspects

African urban studies emerged shortly before World War II (*e.g.* Hellman 1935; Wilson 1942), as social scientists began to realise that the almost exclusive emphasis, in African social research at the time, on *rural* life was both intellectually and politically one-sided. Sizeable towns had for centuries been a feature both of the continent's coastal societies and of various parts of the interior;

[77] However, from the Africanist perspective, my colleague Buijtenhuijs and I also sought to make a contribution to the study of West European urban society; van Binsbergen & Buijtenhuijs 1978.

[78] The passion for urban African research as, especially, a quest for meaning remained with me and, apart from early Lusaka-related papers (van Binsbergen 1974, 1982), yielded such later studies as van Binsbergen 1990 (on therapeutic meaning in Francistown, Botswana), 1993d (symbolism in the context of a Botswana town a), 1995e (on globalisation and decivilisation in urban Botswana), 1997f and 2000g (how a young female migrant makes sense of her urban space in Botswana), and 2000f (on church and social conflict in a Lusaka family conflict) – as well as the present Chapter.

many more towns had been founded since the Scramble for Africa after the Berlin Congress (1881). and – largely on the basis of the migratory influx of rural-born Africans – were already rapidly expanding as administrative, commercial and industrial or mining centres.

It was the time when now classic anthropological monographs on Africa were being written – but the study of African social change, even in a rural setting, was still largely relegated to afterthoughts, *after* 'the main book'. African urban life posed enormous problems of conceptualisation and analysis to its early researchers, whose first field-work experience had normally been rural. The urban situation appeared to them as of a bewildering complexity – not unlike the experience of the urban migrants whom they followed to town from their respective rural homes. How could social research begin to capture that immense heterogeneity of regional, ethnic and cultural origins, and to see patterns of repetitive, institutionalised social relations, within the towns, and between the towns and the rural communities that fed them with people, food and no doubt also, to a large extent, with norms and beliefs? Anthropology had recognised that African village life was to a considerable – if initially exaggerated – extent organised in enduring, localised, culturally fairly homogeneous and corporate groups, which were largely conceptualised in a kinship idiom; in these groups, individuals were tied together through the converging effects of: *multiplex* (many-stranded)[79] and interdependent roles, an (often exaggerated) sense of community (as enforced by both ritual, a shared world-view, traditional politics and ethnic identity), and interlocking economic interests to be pursued within a limited rural space. If most of this seemed to be lacking in the emergent African urban society, what then constituted its structural features? Admittedly, general sociology had already offered dichotomies (such as Durkheim's mechanical / organic solidarity – 1926 / 1883; or Tönnies' *Gemeinschaft* / *Gesellschaft* – 1887) that helped to impose a first ordering on the African urban data. But specifically urban interpretative models deriving from other, more urbanised continents were still in the process of being formulated for the first time. Despite the early theorising of Durkheim, Tönnies and others, it was only in the 1920s and '30s that North Atlantic[80] urban life – the very cradle of the social sciences – was being empirically explored in detail so as to add concrete social descriptions to the generali-

[79] A common situation in traditional village environments, in Africa and elsewhere, is that one's neighbour is also one's consanguineal and / or affinal kinsmen; a member of one's own clan or of a clan with which one has a recognised, specific historic relationship; a fellow-producer in the fields and the forests; a fellow-member of the councils and courts that regulate socio-political life at the local level; a fellow-member of the ritual groups that come together on a more or less regular basis. Clearly, the relationship between such neighbours is *many-stranded*. By contrast, the relationship between an urban street peddler and his customer is in principle single-stranded: it is a-typical (though not impossible) that urban peddler and customer are at the same time each other's neighbours, go to the same church, *etc*.

[80] *I.e*. North American and North-Western European.