

K. SPIRITUALITY AMONG THE ZAMBIAN NKOYA. For instance, a number of spiritual complexes, including one revolving on the veneration of dead kings, another on girl's initiation and the spirit of menstruation and maturation named Kanga, another on commoner villagers' ancestral spirits, yet another on spirits of the wild as venerated in cults of affliction and in the guilds of hunters and healers, together make up the spiritual life world of the present-day Nkoya people.<sup>309</sup> This statement needs to be qualified in view of the fact that many who today identify as Nkoya, including the group's dominant ethnic brokers and elite, have undergone considerable Christian influence and would primarily identify as Christians of various denominations notably the Evangelical Church of Zambia, Roman Catholicism, and recent varieties of Pentecostalism. Moreover, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries CE, Islamic Swahili long-distance traders penetrated into the land of Nkoya and left some slight cultural traces there.<sup>310</sup>

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<sup>309</sup> van Binsbergen 1981; 1992, 2011a, and in press (a), 1992b; van Binsbergen & Geschiere 1985a, with a long section specifically on religion.

<sup>310</sup> KK. CULTURAL IMPACT OF 18-19<sup>TH</sup>-C. CE SWAHILI TRADERS AMONG THE NKOYA. In the labyrinth of transregional influences upon which Nkoya culture turns out to be build, specifically Swahili mercantile traces are not easy to identify. These traders spoke a Bantu language with considerable Arabic admixture in the lexicon, dressed in Arabian style, possessed fire-arms and swords, moved in heavily armed caravans, and confessed a fairly unadulterated version of Islam. Their impact on dress style, language, and Islamic spirituality must have been minimal, for nothing of it remains in material culture, speech and oral traditions – whereas South Asian elements are still abundantly manifest among the Nkoya (van Binsbergen 2012g, 2012e, 2012c, in press (a) ) although they hail from a far remoter past. The occasional dislike of pig meat might have to do with these Islamic traders, but it is (like circumcision) a trait widely found among Bantu speakers, and is probably very much older than the 18<sup>th</sup> c. CE. As slavers the Swahili traders did not particularly come to represent a local reference group or cultural ideal, yet they created a context in which the close kin ties among the Nkoya (which strongly discourage verbal and physical violence within families and breed a fascination and reliance on occult violence), obtained an alternative in the sense that, with this opening to the world market, close kinsmen (especially mother's brothers) could now callously trick and sell their kin (especially sister's daughters) into slavery – bribing the bereft mothers (female royals, often) with otherwise unattainable luxury goods. The proceeds from such sales are still remembered and, to a limited extent, still in circulation: cast iron cooking pots, antiquarian guns, very large beads, calico. The beads and textiles have installed themselves as indispensable items in female puberty rites, during which a large bead is inserted into the girl's vagina to test its enduring muscular strength, and the girl's hips are lavishly adorned with thick layers of cloth in order to imitate a mature womanly appearance. Meanwhile the shocking commercialisation of kin ties enhanced the important contradiction between commoners and their productive villagers, and royals with their parasitic capital villages (van Binsbergen 1993c / 2003 j, 1992b, 2012a). There must have been contacts with the Indian Ocean coast prior to the advent of the Swahili traders sometime in the 18<sup>th</sup> century CE; *Conus* shell bottom (*mpande*) worn as regalia testify to this. Not among the Nkoya proper, but among the Barotse (whose capital attracted much trade in the 19<sup>th</sup> c. CE, as well as missionary activity), the geomantic four-tablet oracle (for attestation see van Binsbergen 2012d: Fig. 8.4, p. 269) may have appeared in about the same period as the Swahili – and since this form of divination was invented and introduced to Africa in an Islamic context, it is possible that the traders were responsible for its regional introduction; Arabs at the court of Monomotapa, Zimbabwe, in the 16<sup>th</sup> c. CE, are reported to have wielded such tablets there (dos Santos 1901). Round about the same time as the Swahili traders among the Nkoya, cults of affliction appeared as a new, morally neutral discourse on illness and misfortune; and since these cults were reputed to have come from the Indian Ocean coast (where they are well attested; cf. Alpers 1984; Lam-

All these complexes define insiders and outsiders in their own right, to such an extent that most Nkoya people today could be said to be outsiders to most of what in some collective dream of Nkoyanness would be summed up as the basic constituent features of the Nkoya spiritual world! All Nkoya men are in principle excluded from participation in, and knowledge of, the world of female initiation; women and all male non-initiate hunters are excluded from the hunters' guild's cults except from the most public performances of its dances and songs, and so on. Over the past decades, my research on identity, culture and globalisation in Zambia has concentrated on the annual Kazanga festival,<sup>311</sup> the main rural outcome of a process of ethnicisation by elite urban-based Nkoya in the 1980s. The central feature of this festival is that elements from all these spiritual domains (with the exception of Christianity, which however contributes the festival's opening prayer and the canons of decency governing dancers' clothing and bodily movements) are pressed into service in the two-day's repertoire of the festival. The effect is that thus all people attending the festival

(whose globally-derived format (including a formal programme of events, the participation of more than one royal chiefs seated together (in a terrible infringement of traditional cosmology), the (obviously merely performative) re-enactment of girl's initiation dances by young women who have already been initiated, the use of a public address system, the opening prayer and national anthem, the careful orchestration of dancing movements by dancers who are uniformly dressed and who receive payment for their activities, etc. etc.) is entirely non-local,)

are forced into a performative, vicarious insidership, by partaking of a recycled form of spirituality devoid of its localising exclusivity. Here boundaries are crossed and dissolved, and the most amazing thing is that -- as I argued at greater length elsewhere -- the Nkoya people involved do not seem to notice the difference between the original spiritual dynamics, and its transformation and routinisation in the Kazanga context. Or rather, if they notice the difference they appreciate the modern, virtualised form even more than the original village forms. However, one might also argue that it is only by sleight-of-hand that the illusion of a more extensive insidership is created here whereas in fact the essence of the virtualisation at hand is that all people involved, also the original insiders, are turned into outsiders, banned from the domain where the original spiritual scenario<sup>312</sup> could be seen to be effective.

When such transformations of inside participation and outside contemplation and exclusion exist, already within one cultural or linguistic community with a small window on the wider, ultimately global world, we should be very careful with claims as to the sharing or not sharing of the spirituality involved. *Central to my argument is that African spirituality consists in a political scenario, and that in that context the minutiae of contents of a specific cultural repertoire, and a specific bio-*

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bek 1981), and are well attuned to the world of long-distance trade (van Binsbergen 1981b), they might have been brought by the traders. Yet the contacts between the villagers and the traders were superficial and single-stranded, and I cannot see how under such circumstances a totally new cosmological conception can be successfully mediated.

<sup>311</sup> van Binsbergen 1992a, 1999f. Further discussions of the Kazanga festival in my argument on *virtuality* (reprinted in the present volume as Chapter 1), and in van Binsbergen 2000d.

<sup>312</sup> Such as was fully accessible to me during prolonged field-work in the 1970s, when the Nkoya pre-festival, pre-virtualised musical and dancing repertoire was still in place and informed rituals and celebrations often on a weekly basis.