

From the extensive literature I mention: Apter 1961; Aphiroppe 1959; Fallers 1955; Fortes & Evans-Pritchard 1969; Mair 1936; Richards 1935, 1960; Schapera 1943, and 1963

Nkoya court culture especially music, also cf. Brown 1984

reading and evidence on specific points, cf. my publications as listed in the bibliography. On Advancement of Tropical Research (WOTRO) for a writing-up year in 1974-75. For background for the African Studies Centre for adequate research funds, and to the Netherlands Foundation for the participants, to the members of my family who shared in the fieldwork, to the Board of the 1988, 1989, 1992 (twice), 1994 (twice), and 1995. I am indebted to the Zambian research migrants from this area in Lusaka, in 1972-1974, and during shorter periods in 1977, 1978, 1981, Anthropological and oral-historical fieldwork was undertaken in Western Zambia and under

versions of this paper.

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African traditional leaders, or chiefs, were a showpiece of classic anthropology,<sup>3</sup> and thus revealed the links both chiefs and anthropology have entertained with the colonial project. This may have been an important reason why these chiefs did not feature

*Resilient chieftainship*

*Introduction*<sup>2</sup>

Wim van Binsbergen

**NKOYA ROYAL CHIEFS AND THE KAZANGA CULTURAL ASSOCIATION  
IN WESTERN CENTRAL ZAMBIA TODAY  
*resilience, decline, or folklorisation?*<sup>1</sup>**

prominently in the post-colonial blueprints as worked out by constitutionalists and political scientists in the 1950s-1970s. The emphasis was on the unitary state with a unique source of authority: the people, whose will was expressed through the regular secret ballot. Chiefs have appeared to exist on a different plane, deriving their authority and power from sources outside the post-colonial nation-state, even if they are co-opted into the latter's institutions through subsidies, state control over procedures of appointment, recognition and demotion, membership of governmental bodies of the modern state sometimes including a House of Chiefs (comparable to a House of Lords, or Senate, in North Atlantic parliamentary democracies), and ceremonial respect extended to the chiefs on the part of state officials. Post-colonial African economies and systems of governance may have declined, but chiefs have often risen to new levels of recognition and power. Still their position does not systematically derive from, nor coincide with, the constitutional logic of the post-colonial state.

Chiefs in Africa<sup>4</sup> have managed to maintain for themselves a position of respect, as well as influence and freedom of manoeuvre in the wider national society far exceeding their formal powers as defined by post-independence constitutions. This is obviously related to the legitimation gap of a modern bureaucratically organised state based on mere legal authority (Weber 1969), in a social context where for most citizens the ideological, symbolic and cosmological appeal of such legal authority is partial and limited. Considered to be heirs to pre-colonial kings, the chiefs are co-opted in order to lend, to the central state, some of their own legitimacy and symbolic power. By virtue of occupying a pivotal position in the historic cosmology shared by large numbers of villagers and traditionally-orientated urban migrants, the chiefs represent a force which modernising state elites have found difficult to by-pass or obliterate.

This is only one side of a process of interpenetration of traditional and modern political organisation. It is not only the state which co-opts the chief as an additional power base. On the strength of the respect their traditional position commands, chiefs have also successfully penetrated the state's administrative and representative bodies, thus acquiring de facto power bases in the modern political sector. Of this phenomenon we shall encounter a striking example below, when we examine the many modern offices our protagonist, Chief Kahare of Western Zambia, has held since the 1960s.

#### *Approaches to African chieftainship*

Various approaches have tried to interpret the situation of African chiefs.

One of the earliest attempts to make sense of the structure of colonial society was that of *dualism*, which was thought to inform not only the colonial economy for which it was first conceived, but to apply also to the political and legal structure of the colonies; these

<sup>4</sup> E.g. van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal 1984, 1987, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, Nana Arhin Brempong c s 1995; and references cited there.

were thus depicted as *plural societies*, with a hierarchical multitude of ethnically defined socio-political and legal domains, integrated only by the colonial administration.

Later the discipline of legal anthropology was to develop the perspective of *legal pluralism*,<sup>5</sup> in order to add subtlety to the concept of the plural society, trace in greater detail its implications in the legal sphere, and extend the analysis to the postcolonial situation and to North Atlantic society. It is the legal emphasis which has made the concept of legal pluralism has cast much light on the nature of the chief in modern Africa: chiefs are defined at the intersection between modern and traditional systems of constitutional law, and one of their principal spheres of activity is the judiciary.

Another attempt to cope with the chiefs' being situated at the intersection between two apparently independent and autonomous systems, has been the neo-Marxist theory of the *articulation of modes of production*, according to which each mode of production hinges on its specific logic of exploitation underpinned by symbolic and legal institutions while the relationship between modes of production is one of exploitative reproduction; while this approach has also been applied to African chieftainship (Beinart 1985; van Binsbergen & Geschiere 1985: 261-270) and illuminated the economic aspects of chieftainship, it was less successful in tackling its many other sides.

Both the modes of production approach, and the plural society approach, have taken for granted - by the assumption of firm boundaries between fundamentally distinct 'logics' or 'systems - what perhaps needs most be problematised and explained: the nature of constitutional and legal dualism in modern Africa, and the way in which it is socio-culturally produced and reproduced. Are the boundaries between the traditional politics in which chieftainship defines itself, and the modern state, not situational rather than absolute? Much of the practice of African chieftainship consist not in the strict observance but in the manipulation, crossing, even denial of these boundaries. Is the insistence on two different spheres perhaps not so much an analytical fact but an ideological construct of interested actors, waiting to be exploded by scholarly analysis? This leads, as a fourth theoretical variant, to a *transactional approach* to African chieftainship, which traces interactions and relations between the various actors (individual and collective) in the contemporary African states, and beyond the formal features and demarcations of legal systems, traces the actual forms of their material exchanges, power and influence.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Cf Bentsi-Enchill 1969; Vanderlinden 1989; Griffiths 1986

<sup>6</sup> Here I have to admit to an inconsistency in my earlier work to chieftainship, which perhaps can be taken as an indication of the analytical pitfalls in this field in general although my comparative study of Zambian chiefs and the state (van Binsbergen 1987) was implicitly conceived along such transactionalist lines, with a wealth of detail on boundary crossing, my specific work on the chiefs of western central Zambia, by contrast — based on much richer data gathered in the course of 25 years in a limited geographic area — has been largely dualistic. I am afraid this inconsistency has not been totally resolved in the present paper, due to my own limitations certainly, but also to the analytical and theoretical difficulties of modern African chieftainship

My use of the term 'transactional' could create confusion. Broadly, the term is understood to denote at least two somewhat different approaches in modern anthropology:

- (a) The departure, as from the 1960s, from rigid structural functionalist models of social organisation in terms of enduring, well-defined and strictly bounded institutions; and their replacement by much more fluid conceptualisations of the social and political process. In the latter, the social order springs not from individuals' blind and slavish copying of institutional patterns, but from these individuals' creative and strategic enactment of such contradictory principles as are available in the normative and symbolic systems at their disposal. The names of Barth, Bailey and Boissevain<sup>7</sup> are traditionally associated with this innovative departure, but there is much to be said for the view that these three authors merely made explicit a development which had already been implicit in much Manchester School work from the 1950s onwards.
- (b) A rationalistic narrowing-down of the approach under (a) in such a way that methodological individualism is claimed as anthropology's only analytical stock in trade; the wider - partly unconscious - structural patterning of individual perception and choice is swept under the carpet; the social actors are presented as virtually omniscient, eminently rational; and far from being confronted with a plurality of contradictory cultural and cosmological orientations, these actors' are presented as subject to only one, unitary and consistent orientation.

Clearly my use of the term 'transactionalist' throughout this paper is in terms of variant (a), not of the reductionist variant (b). A transactionalist approach does not make the actors in the field of modern chieftainship any more rational than actors usually are wherever in the modern world; specifically it leaves room for actors aspiring - for local cultural and cosmological reasons defining a man's ideal career pattern - to a historical political role as 'traditional ruler', even if - like in Zambia today - the concrete benefits of such an office in terms of financial remuneration and central state power are minimal.

The main advantage of transactional approaches over structural-functionalist approaches, is that a transactionalist approach does not already take for granted the conceptual boundaries between the so-called 'traditional' and the so-called 'modern' sphere of politics in colonial and post-colonial African states. On the contrary, a transactional approach invites us to study how, concretely, the actual interactions between chiefs and their various interaction partners at the local, regional and national level, in themselves *create and maintain* these boundaries. By implication, much as the distinction between traditional and modern politics permeates the literature on chieftainship in modern Africa and is often considered to be illuminating and inevitable, it is this very distinction which needs to be explained most. A transactional approach may come some way towards such an explanation. It shows chiefs and non-chiefs

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Boissevain 1968; Bailey 1969; Barth 1966; 1969

constantly moving back and forth in the so-called traditional and the so-called modern domain, in demonstration of the fact that the boundary separating these domains is far more porous and situational than all these actors are prepared to admit in their own official normative and ideological statements. A rigid institutional approach takes the boundary for granted and as such risks begging the question which is at the heart of the analytical problem posed by contemporary African chiefs.

However, the case becomes more complicated, and transactionalism less convincing, when the local actors at least believe in the neat compartmentalisation which their interaction has thus created - like in the Zambian case.

In the 1980s African chiefs were rediscovered as exponents of a domain of legal and political relations where the true, richly complex and contradictory nature of contemporary African states can be confronted with the formal and restrictive models of constitutional legislators and positive political scientists. Here the details of the performance of the African states can be studied, and formal defects as well as informal remedies recognised. This resulted in a limited number of studies of African chieftainship in a transactionalist vein, highlighting the chiefs' continuing and increasing power not only outside but also within postcolonial African states.<sup>8</sup> Such insights also allowed us to reinterpret the position of chiefs under colonialism according to less static models (Chanock 1985; Prins 1980). In the present study the emphasis will likewise be transactionalist, although an underlying theme will be that at the background of such transactions as in fact occur we may yet discern the existence, not of two but of three fairly distinct socio-political domains: the postcolonial state, the indigenous political system, and the civil society.<sup>9</sup>

#### *The present argument*

The main purpose of this paper is to confront the thesis of the resilient chief with a limiting case from western central Zambia. After setting the descriptive framework we shall examine in detail the chiefs' power base and their room for manoeuvring. This power base turns out to be declining and the chiefs are desperately experimenting with new strategies in order to survive. They are driven into the arms of new actors on the local scene, against whom they are rather defenceless. One of these new actors is an ethnic voluntary association founded and controlled by the chiefs' most successful urban subjects, often their own kinsmen. This non-governmental organisation has been amazingly successful in bridging indigenous politics and the state in a process of

<sup>8</sup> The work of my friend and colleague van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal, as cited in my note 4 above, is an excellent example of this trend

<sup>9</sup> The literature on chieftainship in Zambia is far more extensive than can be discussed in the scope of this article. In order to save space, I refer to the extensive references in van Binsbergen 1987 and 1992

ethnisation; gradually however the revival of chieftainship which this non-governmental organisation has brought about, is turning out to lead not to resilience but to impotent folklorisation if not annihilation of chieftainship, and as a result tensions are mounting between chiefs and the ethnic association.

During much of the argument we shall be guided by a transactionalist orientation. However, towards the end we shall have to admit the limitations of a transactional approach as indicated above. We shall have to concede that the contradictions of modern African chieftainship cannot be fully understood within a transactional framework. The need for further theoretical work in this field will be manifest from my continued inability to convincingly resolve the contradiction between the transactionalist and the structural functionalist perspective. Here the role of the chiefs' urban, elite subjects may be that of a *deus ex machina*, saving our analytical day because, transactionally, their cultural and organisational bricolages around the Kazanga festival and the Kazanga Cultural Association in general, at the same time

- help to construct the dichotomy between the traditional political domain and the modern state, and
- dissolve that dichotomy by involving the chiefs in a process of ethnisation that essentially bridges these domains in the context of the elites' political and symbolic manipulation.

### *Traditional rulers in western central Zambia*

Today there are no independent states on the fertile, well-watered, only slightly elevated lands on the Zambezi/Kafue watershed: western central Zambia. Around 1850 the several small-scale local states came to be politically and economically incorporated in the expanding state system of the Kololo (militarily organised South African immigrants who had captured the Luyana state of the Lozi or Barotse, whose centre was the Zambezi flood plain between today's towns of Kalabo and Mongu). While the Luyana state was recaptured on the Kololo in 1864, its hold on the local states persisted; it even tightened with the advent, in 1900, of the colonial state, which allowed the indigenous Lozi administration considerable freedom. Only two royal titles in the region managed to survive, as senior royal chiefs, the incorporation into the Lozi state: Mwene ('King') Kahare of the Mashasha people and Mwene Mutondo of the Nkoya Nawiko. The proper name Nkoya originally referred to a stretch of forest near the Zambezi/Kabompo confluence, then became the name of a dynasty associated with that area; the latter in turn gave its name to the Mankoya colonial district, and finally the name became an ethnonym for all non-Lozi original (i.e. pre-1900) inhabitants of Mankoya (as from 1969 Kaoma) district. The many other royal titles were replaced by Lozi representatives. Two other royals who were closely related to the Mutondo dynasty has in time moved their capitals to outside Barotseland (now Zambia's Western Province):

Mwene Kabulwebulwe and Mwene Momba, who from the outset had been recognised by the colonial state in their own right.

A decisive year in the development of 'Nkoya' to a self-assertive ethnic group was 1937, when the Lozi king established, smack in the middle of Mankoya district, a filial branch named<sup>10</sup> Naliele of his own court in order to control the local chiefs, judiciary and district finance. Another such year was 1947, when Mwene Mutondo Muchayila was demoted and exiled for ten years by the Lozi king on grounds of restiveness. Lozi arrogance, limited access to education and to markets, and the evangelical South African General Mission, stimulated a process of ethnic awakening. As from the middle of the twentieth century more and more people in eastern Barotseland and adjacent areas came to identify as 'Nkoya'. The usual pattern of migrant labour and urban-rural migration endowed this identity with an urban component, whose most successful representatives distinguished themselves from their rural Nkoya nationals in terms of education, income and active participation in national politics. While the Lozi continued to be considered as the ethnic enemies, a second major theme in Nkoya ethnicity was to emerge: *the quest for political and economic articulation with the national centre, by-passing the Lozi whose dominance at the district and provincial level dwindled only slowly.*

Since they shared (albeit very modestly) in the Barotse subsidy, in return for which the Lozi king (and his successors, the Lozi Paramount Chiefs) had accepted incorporation in the colonial state in 1900 and in Zambia in 1964 (cf. Agreement 1964), court culture was preserved through much of the twentieth century at the capitals of Mwene Mutondo and Mwene Kahare. The complex historic organisation of their courts has continued to define such offices as the king (*Mwene*, plural *Myene*), his sisters (*Bampanda wa Mwene*), his wives (*Mahano*), princes and princesses (*Bana Mwene*, any offspring born to the incumbent *Mwene* or previous *Myene* while in office), his Prime Minister (*Mwanashihemi*), senior councillors with titled ranks as judicial, protocolary and military officers, priests, executioners, musicians and hunters. In addition the court houses clients, many obliquely reputed to be of slave descent. If court offices have continued to be coveted and contested until today, it is not only because they have offered virtually unique opportunities for salaried employment in the local countryside, but also because the political and symbolic order these offices represent is still vital to the subjects of the *Myene*. As a distinctive physical structure (marked by a royal fence with pointed poles (*Lilapa*), within which the *Mwene's* palace, audience/court room,

<sup>10</sup> Significantly, this name derived from that of the 19th century Lozi capital. The new branch court was originally headed by the Lozi prince Mwanawina; when, following a system of positional succession, he had become Paramount Chief of the Lozi, he was succeeded by prince Mwendaweli, who had been Gluckman's research assistant. This is only one indication of the fact that Gluckman's view of the Lozi indigenous administration including its judicial role was partial to its ruling elite (cf. Brown 1973, Prins 1980). For an understanding of the Nkoya situation this is unfortunate (van Binsbergen 1977); but in all fairness it has to be admitted that such partiality in fieldwork is inevitable (my own work on the Nkoya shows a complementary partiality); nor did it prevent Gluckman from being one of the most impressive anthropologists of his generation.

regalia shelter and royal shrine are situated), with at a conveniently short distance<sup>11</sup> the sacred grove where the graves of earlier *Myene* are administered by the court priests, these capitals (*zinkena*, sing. *lukena*) have constituted the spatial centres of Nkoya political ideas through much of the twentieth century. The main element of court culture which disappeared from the surface of tradition politics in the area is human sacrifice, which played a prominent part in the nineteenth century. The *Kazanga* royal harvest festival, whose falling into disuse during the colonial period is not unrelated to the central role human sacrifice played there, was only reinstated in 1988, in greatly altered form, and not by the chiefs but by an ethnic association enlisting the chiefs' support. Formally, slavery and tribute labour (the two main sources of labour at the *zinkena* in the nineteenth century) lost their legal basis in the 1910s, and in practice they ceased to exist in the 1930s; but the chief can and does still command inputs of free labour time when it comes to such tasks as the maintenance of the royal fence, the construction of shelters at the *lukena*, and similar productive labour undertaken in the context of development activities (erection of schools, clinics, maintenance of roads) concentrated around the *lukena*. Formal tribute (*niupu*) is no longer levied by the *Myene*, but in practice the customary greeting of the *Mwene* by villagers and returning urban migrants tends to be accompanied by gifts (still designated *ntupu*) in the form of cash or manufactured liquor, while in local production by villagers around the *lukena* (e.g. beer brewing, alcohol distilling, hunting, fishing, agriculture) the *Mwene*'s prerogatives are often recognised by a gift of produce. However, even in this cash-starved rural environment these material prestations cannot be considered anything but minimal; they no longer come close to the order of magnitude of court-village exploitation in the nineteenth century. Of the military, political, economic and ideological structure of kingship of that time, it is mainly the ideological elements which have persisted, no longer effectively supported by, nor supporting, material exploitation.

Of course, at present, at the end of the twentieth century, it is virtually impossible for the local villagers to maintain the view — which must have rather well corresponded with the realities of the first half of the nineteenth century — that the *lukena*, in a largely implicit but well developed ritual, political and economic spatial cosmology, is the hub of the universe. The present-day *Myene* have themselves been active in the outside world, usually pursuing salaried careers there before acceding to their royal office; and after accession their involvement with distant state institutions, organised on a very different footing from the *lukena*, make it clear that the *lukena* is now very much only a periphery of the world. Admittedly, most of these royal activities occur outside the gaze of the subjects. The subordination which these outside involvements imply for the *Mwene*'s position is seldom made explicit but usually covered under traditionalist

<sup>11</sup> This is only a twentieth-century development, caused by the fact that under the colonial state a royal capital could no longer, as in pre-colonial times, be moved over distances of scores of kilometres after the death of the king. However, pre-colonial royal burial sites surrounded by deserted *zinkena* which have returned to bush, have continued to be venerated even if at great distances from the capitals of later incumbents.

decorum with plenty of respectful squatting and hand-clapping on the part of modern state officials and other visiting outsiders. As late as the 1970s many of *Mwene Kahare*'s subjects could therefore still cherish the illusion that whenever he was summoned to the national capital Lusaka to attend a meeting of the House of Chiefs (an advisory body to the government with hardly any formal powers) he went there 'to rule Zambia'. But the villagers could not fail to notice that preciously little benefits from this 'rule' were coming their way, in the form of improved roads, clinics, produce markets, educational opportunities etc.

According to a stereotype current in South Central Africa, chiefs are the focus and the leaders of an ethnic group, and guide their subjects in ethnic self-articulation. At first glance, such a situation also obtains in western central Zambia. On closer analysis, however, the situation is more complicated. Under the precolonial conditions of the 19th century, kings were often ethnic strangers (cultivating a Lunda identity e.g. by the Lunda language, allegiance to the Lunda king *Mwatiyamvo* in what is now Zaire, and circumcision; cf. Bustin 1975), heading multi-ethnic, sprawling and shifting local polities based on tribute, military force, and chief-controlled ritual. Only in the 20th century did the emergence of the concept of 'tribe' under the combined efforts of colonial administrators, missionaries, and African Christian intellectuals, produce a situation where the chiefs, as heirs to the precolonial kings, were the administrative and judicial heads of the areas they administered and whose inhabitants came to be conceived as one 'tribe'. The successive incorporation, more or less at minority status, in the wider state systems of the Kololo, Luyana and British, served to blur the cultural and structural distinctions between the 'Nkoya' court and the local villages, since now the court was no longer the exploitative 'other' but, to the contrary, the instance from which the local population derived their ethnic name and their increasingly vocal ethnic identity amidst the inimical and exploiting wider world. Yet the equation of ethnic group and chief was not self-evident and therefore remained capable of being challenged or at least ignored by actors (like the Kazanga Cultural Association, as we shall see below) seeking to capture Nkoya ethnicity as a resource for their own political game. In the 1930s and 1940s, the local struggle against the Lozi was largely concentrated at the royal courts. In the process however, chiefs gradually lost the initiative to church leaders and successful urban migrants — a new elite largely composed of their own junior kinsmen. An ethnic voluntary association, the Kazanga Cultural Association, emerged among successful urban migrants as the latter's main instrument of ethnicisation in the 1980s.

Before we can examine the interaction between chiefs and this non-governmental organisation, and interpret it in terms of the central theme of African chiefs' performance in today's social and political landscape, let us first discuss the chiefs' power base and, in the next section, the details of the ethnic association.

### *The chiefs' power base today*

The social dynamics around Nkoya chieftainship can hardly be characterised in terms of resilience. There are signs of attempts at active adaptation to new political and economic conditions, but these attempts are desperate and largely unsuccessful. Often the chiefs are mere marionettes in a play staged by outsiders. This will be clear from the following detailed examination of the chiefs' power base today; we shall concentrate on the situation of Chief Mwene Kahare. For this purpose I shall discuss, with varying degrees of detail, the following topics:

- the chief among his kinsmen, including royal councillors;
- chief, subjects and land tenure;
- judicial aspects of chieftainship;
- the impact of the existence of another royal chief in the district;
- the Lozi indigenous administration;
- the modern state;
- chiefs strategies for enlarging their scope for manoeuvring, by embarking on new modes of action
- the role of encroaching outsiders

#### *The chief among his kinsmen, including royal councillors*

Among other roles, the chief is a kinsman. His kinship obligations have a double effect: they impose upon the chief, as upon all other heads of families in Zambia today, the burdensome obligation of providing financial resources in a steadily declining economy; but they also remind the chief that as a kinsman he is only the equal or the junior of many of his kinsmen, and has to be heedful of the advice (*ku longesha*) especially from those of his kinsmen who are senior headmen themselves.

The very fact that the royal successor is not determined by inflexible rules but depends on election (with candidates being chosen by senior headmen from among a pool of half a dozen or so serious contenders, all of them — not necessarily very close — bilateral consanguineal kin of previous incumbents; cf. diagram 2) makes the power base of these chiefs in traditional constitutional law relatively weak, and liable to factional machinations from defeated candidates. This is, incidentally, a major reason why the chiefs of this region have individually welcomed the protection from a superior political power (be it the Lozi king, Paramount Chief, and the colonial and postcolonial state) as from the second half of the nineteenth century.

Membership of the royal council (only its two or three most senior members are remunerated and recognised by the district secretary) is a prerogative of certain village headmanships; incumbents of any village headmanship are selected by the village's

secret council of elders, subject to recognition of a village headman by the chief holder of the communal land.

Chiefs have always been very much aware of the dangers they are under at their own court, and it is the chief's sister's obligation to act as cup bearer, tasting all food and beer and ensuring that it is not poisoned. Nor are the stories of regicide entirely a thing of the past:

*Mwene Mutondo Chipimbi's autocratic nature.* The new chief's failure to accept such criticism and to stick to court protocol within a few months created such disenchantment between Mwene Mutondo Chipimbi (elected in 1991) and his councillors, that his own and his wife's death within a year after his accession was readily attributed to these courtier's aggression, either through sorcery or through poisoning.

#### *Chief, subjects and land tenure*

In the eyes of his subjects, the chief's most obvious characteristic is his hereditary status as legitimate, elected successor to (in fact, the incarnation of) the Kahare title, which is at least 200 years old; this ensures him of the unconditional support of his subjects in so far as they have no aspirations for the throne themselves. His royal status has a direct implication for his subjects' access to land as the principal agricultural resource. Despite the reform of land tenure in Zambia in the 1970s, the chief has retained the right to issue land to individuals, regardless of ethnic affiliation, residence or citizenship. This makes him the benefactor (and beneficiary of the usual, irregular, and usually very small tribute in money and alcoholic beverages), not only of his own local people identifying today as Nkoya, but also of a considerable number of Lozi immigrants who since the 1970s build their village in one of the valleys under chief Kahare's authority. He was also a key figure in the creation of the massive Nkeyema Agricultural Scheme in 1970. In Kaoma district, agriculture is not just subsistence agriculture; already around 1970 the transition to producing hybrid maize for the market was made on a very small scale, with a few bags per household, but due to the poor performance of the marketing organisation which never pays up in time, market agriculture has become very unattractive.

The need to provide cash as the head of the extended family of royal kinsmen (especially classificatory sisters) converging on the palace, coupled to the state's failure of providing a stable and sufficient income, may bring the chief to abuse his powers in desperate egoistic acts such as large-scale issuing of land to ethnic strangers, of which we shall see a striking example below.

### *Judicial aspects*

Shortly after independence, Kahare's customary law court was moved dozens of kilometres away from his palace and (like all other chief's courts) put directly under the supervision of the Ministry of Justice; officially the chief merely retained the right to endorse the appointment of the members of what was henceforth called the Local Court.<sup>12</sup> In the late 1980s a customary court was reinstated at the palace; its members are senior councillors (the chief only acts as a distant advisor not present during the sessions) and although its jurisdiction is limited and shady, the court enjoys great popularity and authority.

### *The other royal chief in the district*

Besides the Lozi chief of Naliele, Kaoma has two royal chiefs identifying as Nkoya. The competitive nature of these two royal chiefs' relations means that — in a typical zero-sum game situation — one's chief ascendance implies the other chief's decline, and even if it does not (specifically, when ascendance is due to new, national-level political resources opening up, outside the district level, so that the zero-sum game situation no longer applies) it is still interpreted in these terms by either chief's subjects. This severely limits the possibility of enlarging the chief's power bases by inter-chief alliances.

### *The Lozi indigenous administration*

Gwyn Prins (1980) made a name for himself in African history by proposing a transactional model of active strategy on the last independent Lozi king, Lubosi Lewanika (1878-1916), in order to supplant the image of passive and impotent submission to the imposition of colonial rule, at the turn of the twentieth century. At present, almost a century later, and encapsulated in the postcolonial state, Lewanika's successor the Lozi Paramount Chief is a prominent member of the Seventh Day Adventist Church, and in all respects an example of the resilient chief found elsewhere in Africa today.

The constraints from the part of the Lozi traditional administration upon the chieftainship of Mwene Kahare and Mwene Mutondo are clear from the fact that as from 1994 (when new incumbents acceded to both titles) both royal chiefs and their courts have been without remuneration from the state for lack of recognition by the Lozi Paramount chief: they had refused to go and prostrate themselves before him in the traditional manner. This reflected unprecedented escalation of the Lozi-Nkoya conflict

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Hoover c.s. 1970a, 1970b; Spalding 1970

(including a war of newspaper articles, occasional ethnic violence, the construction of the major royal drums by the new Mwene Mutondo - denied to the Nkoya chiefs such drums since the mid-19th century! - and the death of chief Litia attributed to Nkoya sorcery). Lack of recognition by the Lozi Paramount Chief made it impossible for the Kaoma district secretary to confirm the new appointments and to pay out the salaries. At the Kahare capital, the musicians are no longer paid and (disrupting a virtually unbroken tradition of at least two centuries)<sup>13</sup> they have allowed the royal drums to remain silent, — except for a few occasions when a prominent visitor manages to bribe the unemployed and absent musicians to once more go through the motions, for a few minutes, of what used to be a honourable and coveted profession. This stands in sharp contrast with the situation in the early 1970s, when half an hour of ceremonial drumming and singing by the chief's orchestra, every sunrise and every sunset, was the reassuring signs that the king was alive and well. Meanwhile, the Paramount Chief's court, and the Naliele court, continues to function as an appeal court in traditional constitutional matters and as the only court where royals can be tried (even in cases involving traditional family law); ethnic and regionalist defiance of Lozi overlordship is not enough to terminate this situation, and even if it did it would leave a legal vacuum of the very sort which instigated the colonial administration to create the Naliele court in the first place, in the 1930s.

### *The modern state*

Once recognised by the Lozi Paramount chief, the incumbent of the Kahare title further requires the recognition from the President of the Republic, who has the new incumbent gazetted as a condition for his remuneration through the district secretary's office. That office also recognises and pays all other court officials eligible for remuneration. With his virtual monopoly over state motor transport in the district, the district secretary also regulates the chief's access to governmental bodies and to the outside world at large. In fact, the chief is not allowed to leave his area without formal permission from the district secretary.

In exchange for this massive dependence the chief receives a remuneration far lower than the legal minimum wage in formal sector employment. Moreover, payment of salaries has been dependent upon the availability, at the distant district capital, of cash and transport for the paymaster arrears of several months have not been unusual. This irregularity, added to the fact that not the chief himself but the district secretary controls remunerated court appointments, has left the chief with little practical power over his

<sup>13</sup> Near the turn of the twentieth century, Mwene Kahare Shamamano killed his drummers on the suspicion of adultery with the royal wives; as punishment the Lozi king Lewanika deprived Shamamano from the right to a royal orchestra; Shamamano — one of Lewanika's military officers — had owed his accession since he was of the wrong lineage. Only in the 1930s were the Kahare royal rums reinstated.

courtiers and their ceremonial and judicial activities. As a result, the chief is in an incessant financial crisis. His main source of cash for the upkeep of himself and considerable numbers of royal kin is from irregular tribute. In the 1970s chiefs were still heavily involved in hunting and the ivory trade — a remnant of their extensive precolonial rights over natural resources and natural species. By 1990 this source of income had entirely disappeared, due to the extermination of game in the 1980s (not only by poaching locals but also by ethnic strangers using machine guns), and by the tightening control of the ivory trade under the CITES international treaty.

However, dependence of the chief upon the state at district level used to be only one side of the medal. Between 1960 and the 1980s Chief Kahare held the following impressive modern offices, all of them for many years in succession: he was a Trustee of the United National Independence Party (UNIP, which ruled Zambia between 1963 and 1991), a member of the House of Chiefs, a non-elected member of the Kaoma Rural Council, and a member of the Provincial Development Committee of Western Province. Unfortunately, this substantial power base in the modern state did not survive into the 1990s. The link with UNIP ceased to be an asset when this party lost out to Mr Chiluba's Movement for Multi-Party Democracy (MMD) in 1991. The resignation from other modern offices reflect not only the ageing chief's gradual retreat from public life but also the effect of Lozi and Mbunda/Luvale political mobilisation against the Nkoya at the district and provincial level, despite the considerable overall political success of Nkoya ethnic politics since the late 1970s.

*Chiefs desperately seeking to enlarge their scope for manoeuvring, by embarking on new modes of action*

All this suggests that the chief's power base is fairly limited, and declining. He does not have many options for the execution of their own authority. It is remarkable that such attempts as the Nkoya chiefs have shown in recent years to enlarge the scope of their options have all been in the field of nostalgic symbolic production. Principally this includes responses triggered by the successful emergence of the Kazanga Cultural Association; these we shall discuss below. But there have been other responses in a similar vein in the course of the 1990s.

The initially eager adoption of the format for self-assertion which the Kazanga Cultural Association accorded them, suggested that outside the domain of nostalgic symbolic production the chiefs had little option for manoeuvring. This is also clear from the other nostalgic initiatives which they showed in the mid-1990s and which shall be summarised below: the construction of new kettledrums, the sending of a punitive expedition, and the appropriation of the Kazanga festival premises by an enterprising chief's son.

*Mwene Mutondo's new kettledrums (1994).* In 1994 Mwene Mutondo, only acceded one year previously, for the first time since ca. 1850 defied the prohibition from the part of the Lozi indigenous administration and its Kololo predecessor, and ordered major royal kettledrums (*maoma*) to be made. Following the surviving traditions to the letter (van Binsbergen 1992: *passim*), the drums were sculptured with the images of a lizard and a python, in a very crude fashion because woodcarving as a craft disappeared when witchcraft eradication movements in the interbellum cleared the region almost entirely and permanently from all wooden effigies (the only exception known to me being the Mutondo royal shrine). In making the drums, the historic pattern was emulated even to the extent that two small children were sacrificed to the new drum. While other, minor royal drums are played by court musicians with client status, Mwene Mutondo took it upon himself to beat this central symbol of chieftainship. Significantly, the new drums were kept at the palace for over a year before being exposed to the public gaze at the Kazanga annual festival which the ethnic association of the same name has organised in the district since 1988.

*Mwene Kahare Kubama sends a punitive expedition (1994).* The year 1994 again saw a similar emulation of a precolonial historic pattern. Mwene Kahare Kubama, a few months after his accession, was confronted with the usurpation of one of his sub-chieftainships, that of Mwene Kakumba, by a Lozi incumbent who had simply ousted the original incumbent during his life. When protests from Mwene Kahare's Ngambela (Prime Minister) were not heeded, Mwene Kahare told young men from around his palace to arm themselves, travel to Kakumba's village across a distance of 35 km, and remove the Lozi impostor from the subchief's palace by force: a punitive expedition (Nkoya: *nzita*; the Sotho/Lozi word *impi* is more familiar) to issue from the palace, for the first time since the 19th century. This was also the first time that ethnic tension in the district actually led to bloodshed. The desperate and unrealistic nature of the attempt is clear from the fact that the dozens of Nkoya men involved in this violent action were arrested, and that a year later they were still awaiting trial. Clearly the chief can still rely on his subjects as a power base, but to little strategic avail. Yet the move was not totally rejected by the state: the Kaoma district secretary, who as a Lunda entertains a felling an ethnic affinity with the Nkoya chiefs, issued a decree to the district's Lozi chiefs (apart from the Naliele royal chief) to the effect that they had to obey the Nkoya chiefs as their overlords — in itself a unique triumph for Nkoya anti-Lozi militancy.

That the backward-looking, nostalgic nature of these moves is not incidental but reflect the general orientation of Nkoya traditional politics today is further brought out by the following case, even if this one involves not a ruling chief but his son.

*An enterprising prince.* Mr Daniel Muchayila, in his late thirties, is a son of Mwene Mutondo Muchayila; as we have seen above, the latter was one of the main heroes of Nkoya identity. Daniel is merely a *Mwana Mwene*, i.e. a prince, and on two occasions (1991, 1993) he failed to succeed to his father's throne. This did not prevent him from taking up residence at the new festival grounds which had been created for the Kazanga annual festival, and specifically in the branch court building reserved there for the Mutondo chief and his staff. Here Daniel even tried cases for the benefit of the surrounding villagers, charging fees and fines and keeping the proceeds for himself. Not being a chief, by such action he polluted the sacred quality of the Mutondo chief's court at the festival grounds, even if this constituted a totally new situation unforeseen by traditional rules. Although the prince's action had tacitly been condoned by the Mutondo court, the building had to be relinquished. During the Kazanga festival of 1994 Chief Mutondo had to make use of either of the buildings erected for Mwene Momba or Mwene Kabulwebulwe, who had not been able to attend. It is as if the traditional outside forms of the imitation royal courts at the festival grounds demand being filled with traditional forms of socio-political behaviour (such as holding court), endowing such forms with a deceptive appearance of reality. And against the background of 20th century Nkoya history the episode reminds one inevitably of the founding, in the 1930s, of the Naliele court - the most hated symbol of Lozi suppression, a branch of the distant Lozi Paramount Chief's court over which Yeta III appointed his son as branch manager.<sup>14</sup>

### *Encroaching outsiders*

In addition to nostalgic and ineffective ways of responding to the changing political landscape of today, the chieftainship of western central Zambia is becoming the toy of other categories of actors representing different fields of socio-political organisation than the indigenous political system. The most conspicuous actors in this connexion are: expatriate commercial farmers, and the Seventh Day Adventist Church, besides of course the Kazanga Cultural Association.

<sup>14</sup> This is not the only example in the context of Nkoya-Lozi relations that proclaimed ethnic antagonism is contradicted by actual rapprochement. Other examples in the context of the present argument are Mr Kalaluka's Lozi ancestry although he was for decades the highest-ranking Nkoya politician; and Mr Mayowe's functioning as the district representative of the Lozi-dominated National Party, while he was running for the chieftainship of Mwene Kahare. Many more such examples could be quoted. This highlights the manipulative, strategic element in ethnicisation (cf. van Binsbergen, in press), and will only puzzle those who have not understood that the emphasis on ethnic identity - in the Nkoya case and in general - as ascribed and inevitable is in itself merely ideological and strategic, not factual.

*A refuge for apartheid.* In the early 1990s Mwene Kahare put himself in the debt of a dozen South African White, Afrikaans-speaking commercial farmers, to each of whom he issued a farm (a section of the people's communal land) of the general Zambian standard size of 2500 ha i.e. 25 km<sup>2</sup> (!). After surveying this land is registered as freehold land in the hands of these stranger entrepreneurs, who have already managed to establish apartheid-style rural labour relations in Mwene Kahare's area. However, the local peasants are prepared to turn themselves into underpaid farm hands, despite the obsolete and racist labour conditions offered. Small-scale subsistence and commercial farming is therefore grinding to a halt and entire villages resettle near the farms because they constitute the only source of local cash income. These short-term economic opportunities have persuaded the average villagers to accept the alienation of their communal land; protests, and accusations to the effect that the chief has actually sold the land to the immigrant Boers, are only heard from educated locals with a senior-ranking urban career behind them and themselves engaging in commercial farming. They realise, more than their kinsmen in the villages, that Nkoya/Lozi ethnic conflict in Zambia Western's Province is increasingly going to be a conflict over arable land as a major economic resource, so that the introduction of a third party, the stranger farmers, in the long run can only be to the detriment of the local peasants.

*A Paramount Chief's church.* Another actor on the local scene since 1990 has been the Seventh-Day Adventist Church (SDAC), whose close association with the Lozi Paramount Chief made it an unwelcome but insistent newcomer in an area which in the 1920s-1950s was missionised by the evangelical South African General Mission (which led on the Evangelic Church of Zambia), as from the 1930s has seen a militant Watchtower movement settle down to become the emphatic religious identity of selected local villages, where the Roman Catholic Church also has made some inroads as from the 1940s, but where by and large cults of affliction and other historic forms of African religiosity have constituted the dominant religious expression also in the second half of the 20th century. Near Mwene Kahare's palace, the SDAC quickly finished a self-help clinic project initiated as long ago as the late 1970s. In return, the chief who had frequented the Evangelic Church of Zambia services prior to a spell of polygamy, had no option but to join the SDAC and to allow his orchestra to be silenced on Saturdays — before the drums were finally silenced throughout the week for the musician's lack of remuneration.

One group of actors which significantly have scarcely bothered to woo the chiefs are national and regional politicians. The end of the Kaunda/UNIP administration and the coming to power of Chiluba/MMD in 1991 further opened national opportunities for the

Nkoya; they obtained one fully-fledged Nkoya MP for one of the district's three wards, and one MP/junior minister who is half Nkoya half Mbunda) for another. The third ward was carried by a candidate representing the Luvale, Mbunda, Chokwe and Luchazi groups<sup>15</sup> which since the 1920s have immigrated into the district and which are now numerically dominant. With the rallying for votes, and for a lasting following on a regionalist and ethnic basis, the political new men of the MMD government as from 1991 made a point of visiting the chief's capitals from time to time, kneeling and clapping hands in ceremonial respect, and leaving some tribute. It was however clear to them that the key to voting support was no longer to be found at the chief's capitals but at the meetings of farmers' co-operatives and development committees both in the villages and at the Nkeyema agricultural scheme, and among the politically ambitious chief's relatives who, after successful careers in the urban formal sector, had returned to the district to be commercial farmers. The latter have dominated the executive meetings and the massive annual festival of the Kazanga Cultural Association, the ethnic association which bundles local ethnic resentment. At the highest national level a similar attitude towards the chiefs could be discerned, when in 1993 the Brigadier-General G. Miyanga, as Minister without Portfolio third in rank in the Zambian government, went on a fact-finding mission to Kaoma district in order to ascertain the extent of Lozi-Nkoya ethnic conflict. The trip was covered extensively on Zambian television,<sup>16</sup> in a way which was greatly partial to the Nkoya point of view. Chief's capitals were visited, but most time was spent with vocal, educated Nkoya familiar with court circles but with an open eye to the wider world, and prominent in the Kazanga Cultural Association.

The SDAC was neither the first nor the most conspicuous on-governmental organisation to encroach on the Nkoya chieftainship. For with their limited and dwindling power base, the failure of nostalgic initiatives to enlarge it, and while they are exploited, bullied or ignored by outside actors, the chiefs of western central Zambia at first welcomed the initiatives of the Kazanga Cultural Association as a possible solution to the predicament of having to adapt to current political and economic circumstances.

### *The Kazanga Cultural Association*

#### *The birth of the Kazanga Cultural Association*

In postcolonial South Central Africa, ethnic associations have been rather less conspicuous than in the colonial period. The colonial state was suspicious of all forms of

<sup>15</sup> Closely related to one another by language, male circumcision, and identification with the Lunda heritage and with Mwatyamvo; and as such much less different from today's Nkoya than the latter would care to admit, cf. my study of the vicissitudes of male circumcision among the Nkoya as an ethnic boundary marker, van Binsbergen 1993b.

<sup>16</sup> 'An olive branch for Kaoma district', 26 minutes production, Zambia Broadcasting Corporation, December 1993, videotape in the author's collection.

African self-organisation which might have political implications, and became all the more so during the struggle for independence in the 1950s and early 1960s. The postcolonial state, whose functioning was based on alliances between broad regionalist blocks, feared expressions of what was then called 'tribalism'; they might upset that delicate balance — although they were discouraged in the name not of existing ethnic relations, but of a pretended constitutional universalism which supposedly rendered all ethnic particularism anathema. In the first fifteen years of independence open expressions of ethnicity were therefore frowned upon, and if involving a small and powerless minority like the Nkoya, were effectively discouraged. A number of factors however made it possible that a thinly disguised ethnic association like the Kazanga Cultural Association was registered in 1980s:

- the awareness that small local ethnic movements could erode far more powerful ethnic blocks (especially that of the Lozi) opposing the ruling ethnic alliances at the state's centre;
- the rise to prominence of one Nkoya politician, Mr J. Kalaluka, which in itself reflected the previous point;
- the growing awareness among Zambian politicians and UNIP party ideologists that controlled expression of ethnic identity could have an integrating, rather than a divisive effect on the nation-state
- while the state recognition that was the central goal of ethnic minority expressions, was realised to win precious votes in a situation of political and economic decline, such as UNIP was facing in the 1980s.

For a long time the urban component of the village community was not formalised into an ethnic association. Only in 1982 the 'Kazanga Cultural Association' materialised as a formally registered society under the patronage of the Nkoya minister. This was an initiative of a handful of people from Kaoma district who, by their middle age, and against all odds, had made the grade from insecure circulatory migrant labourer to member of the capital's middle class. With the drop in copper prizes in 1975 Zambia entered into a crisis which has lasted until today. Therefore even the urban middle class could not ignore the economic developments which were meanwhile taking place in Kaoma district. Some returned to the district forever; other started a farm there but continued to live in town. Their enthusiasm for the Nkoya identity which became ever more articulated, and whose political and (through access to rural land and labour) economic potential they more and more appreciated, brought these urbanites in close contact with the district's political elite, according them new credit in the eyes of the villagers from which they had earlier taken a distance through their class position and urbanisation. From the 18th-century name of a forest, via that of a nineteenth century dynasty and an early 20th-century, colonial district, the name Nkoya had developed to designate an ethnic group found in several districts, and at the same time a language, a culture, and a cultural project intended to articulate this newly emerged group at the regional and national level.

Founded in the Zambian capital, Lusaka, in 1982, the Kazanga Cultural Association has provided an urban reception structure for prospective migrants, has contributed to Nkoya Bible translation and the publication of ethnic history texts, has championed existing and dormant local chieftainships, and within various political parties and publicity media has campaigned against the Lozi and for the Nkoya cause. The association's main achievement, however, has been the annual organisation (since 1988) of the Kazanga festival, in the course of which a large audience (including Zambian national dignitaries, the four Nkoya royal chiefs, people identifying as Nkoya, and outsiders), for two days is treated to an overview of Nkoya songs, dances and staged rituals. What we have here is a form of bricolage and of invention of tradition (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983). The details of the contemporary Kazanga festival I have treated elsewhere. In the present context, it is important to look at the association behind the festival.

#### *The Kazanga Cultural Association as a formal organisation*

The Kazanga Cultural Association is a society registered under the Zambian Societies Act, and as such a non-governmental organisation of the type so much stressed in Africanist literature of the 1990s. Its formal nature however is largely illusory. The Kazanga association has no paying members and no membership list. Its minimal financial resources derive from voluntary individual contributions, mainly from the members of the executive themselves, who in this way gain popularity and influence. On the other hand, an executive position accords one a petty source of income via expense accounts. The Societies Act requires an Annual General Meeting which is held at the evening of the second day of the Kazanga festival. In the absence of a membership list and of fee paying, this is in practice a meeting not of members but merely of several dozens of interested persons. Executive elections mean that from these several dozens of interested persons groups of ten people are formed according to place of residence or of origin. Depending on which people happen to be present, such a group may comprise representatives from a few neighbouring villages, from an entire valley, from an official polling district as delineated by the Zambian state for the purpose of official elections, from a town at the Line of Rail (the urban areas of central Zambia), or even from the entire Line of Rail. With greater or lesser privacy these groups cast their votes for the available candidates, the votes are counted, the result announced via the festival's intercom system, after which the departing executive leaves under scorn and shame, while the new executive is formally installed and treats the voters to a 200 litres drum of traditional beer.

As basically a self-financing clique of successful urbanites and post-urbanites, the executive of the Kazanga Cultural Association has a strong class element, which I have already stressed elsewhere in my analysis of the Kazanga festival proper. Only Nkoya who are high-ranking in terms of education, formal sector career, church leadership, entrepreneurship, wealth, are eligible as candidates for the executive. Traditional status

including royal birth or esoteric knowledge does not qualify. In principle all male Nkoya regardless of status have a right to vote for the executive, but in practice only a few score do vote who have the stamina to spend another night at the festival grounds after the two day's festival, and have cash to pay for transport home or have friends who offer to provide such transport. The class element in the Kazanga executive is further reflected in the shift, during the Kazanga Annual meeting of 1994, away from an executive dominated by respected and educated, but economically insecure urban dwellers, and towards an executive whose chairman and secretary are successful entrepreneurs, retired to the district after a brilliant career:

*The composition of the Kazanga executive.* In 1988-91 national chairman was Mr M. Malapa, who after an urban career as a state registered nurse has retired to Lukulu as a peasant farmer trying to establish a rural barber shop. He was succeeded by Mr W. Kambita, a town-dwelling aged lay pastor with the Zambia Evangelical Church without a personal source of income; Mr Kambita's national secretary was Mr W. Shihanya, a town-dwelling former accountant without a permanent source of income. Both Mr Kambita's son and Mr Shihanya's wife are employed in junior positions with Zambia Educational Publishing House, formerly the Kenneth Kaunda Foundation, and a UNIP stronghold. The election of the 1994 national executive marked not only a move from town to rural district, but also to far higher levels of career achievement (the new national chairman Mr Mayowe being a former managing director of a parastatal, his national secretary Mr Lutangu a former district secretary) and wealth (Mr Mayowe operates a commercial farmer, a bar, and has a lucrative trade in fertiliser; Mr Lutangu owns a thriving grocery in Kaoma township; moreover, both draw substantial pensions, and as well as rent from a formal-sector urban house.)

#### *The political agenda of the Kazanga Cultural Association*

With all the attention for ethnic cultural production at the Kazanga festival, it is clear that the Kazanga executive does not for one moment lose sight of the fact that the festival is primarily an attempt to exchange the one resource which one locally has in abundance, competence in symbolic production, for political and economic power. The national dignitaries, and not the royal chiefs, let alone the audience, constitute the spatial focus of the Kazanga festival, and a large part of the programme is devoted to the dignitaries' welcome speeches and other formal addresses. Since the political arena is indeed the right place (and not only in Zambia) to exchange symbolic production for development projects, political allocation and patronage, the harvest of the series of Kazanga festivals since 1988 is by now eminently manifest in a marked increase of Nkoya participation at the national level, in representative bodies and in the media, and in a marked decrease of the stigmatisation to which they used to be subjected under Lozi

domination until well after independence. Kazanga is an example of how an ethnic group can not only articulate itself through symbolic production, but may actually lift itself by its own hairs out of the bog.

In 1992 the state delegation to the Kazanga festival was led by the Cabinet Minister for Education, the Hon. Arthur Wina M.P., a Zambian politician of very long standing, son of a former Lozi Ngambela (traditional Prime Minister), and in the early years a member of President Chiluba's MMD cabinet. In his speech, Minister Wina explicitly joked that, with the recent shortage of water in the Zambezi flood plain (where the Lozi Paramount Chief's residences are located) there was little point in going to the Lozi annual Kuomboka ceremony marking the Paramount Chief's annual move to higher grounds with the rising of the Zambezi river; Kazanga was said to provide an adequate alternative. In coded language this was understood by the audience as a statement on the limits, if not decline, of Lozi power under MMD conditions (although Mr Wina, and for instance a former Lozi king's grandson Mbikusita-Lewanika, are clear examples of Lozi ethnic prominence in MMD circles, which are however dominated by the Bemba ethnic coalition). Minister Wina's statement was interpreted as a sign of full acceptance of Nkoya ethnic aspirations also after Mr Kaunda's political demise, and of the fact that the Kazanga leaders are taken seriously by the state.

The members of the Association's executive usually had a solid urban career and, for their generation (born in the early 1940s), a fair level of education. This makes them adept at operating bureaucracies and politicians. At the same time they tend to be the close relatives of the chiefs, usually spent their early childhood at chief's capitals, and have kept up contact with the courtly milieu to a sufficient extent to be accepted and understood there. This puts them in the unique position of being able to mediate between chiefs and state bureaucracies, or in general between the outside world of modern political and economic life, and the narrow horizon of the village society. Since village society contains, in addition to chiefs whose powers were evidently declining, large numbers of voters, as well as potential rural workers and clients of rural divisions of bureaucracies, politicians have an interest to honour the invitations to the annual Kazanga festival extended to them by the Kazanga executive; moreover, the respectful treatment and the colourful ceremony awaiting them there make them not regret their trip.

#### *Why a formal organisation? Ethnicisation and structural bridging*

Kazanga's political agenda however could only be conceived and executed within the wider framework of ethnic processes in Zambia, and throughout sub-Saharan Africa, today. The formula of ethnic self-presentation through an annual cultural festival built, with much bricolage, out of an historic ritual, has been generally adopted in Zambia today. The television audience is regularly reminded of a growing series (now nearly a

dozen) of regional festivals similar to Kazanga. Since all these festivals are created and maintained by ethnic associations, this reveals a recent revival of such formal organisations. They are at the heart of current ethnicisation processes in Zambia (cf. van Binsbergen, in press).

Ethnicisation constructs ethnonyms so as to mark ethnic boundaries, and pre-existing culture so as to fall within those boundaries and to offer distinctive boundary markers. The cultivated sense of a shared history makes sense of experiences of powerlessness, deprivation and estrangement, and kindles hope of improvement through ethnic self-presentation. The ethnonym and the principle of ascription governing ethnic group membership by birth, then produce for the actors the image of a bounded, particularist set of solidary people. The vulnerable individual's access to national resources, and the formal organisations (in state and industry) controlling them, become the object of group action. In postcolonial Central Africa, ethnicisation increasingly includes cultural politics. A set of people is restructured so as to become an ethnic group by designing a cultural package which in its own right constitutes a major stake in the negotiations with the outside world. One dissociates from rival ethnic groups at the local and regional scene through a strategic emphasis on cultural and linguistic elements; and at the national level one competes for the state's political and economic prizes via the state's recognition of the ethnically constructed cultural package. New intra-group inequalities emerge. The mediation takes place via brokers who are more than their fellow-members of the ethnic group in a position to exploit the opportunities at the interface between ethnic group and the outside world. Asserting the 'traditional', 'authentic' (but in fact newly reconstructed) culture appears as an important task and as a source of power and income for the brokers. Ethnic associations, publications, and festivals, constitute general strategies in this process.

Ethnicity displays a remarkable dialectics between inescapability and constructedness, which largely explains its great societal potential. On the one hand, as a classification system ethnicity offers a logical structure, which is further ossified through ascription and which presents itself as unconditional, bounded, inescapable and timeless. This is what made early researchers of Central African ethnicity stress *primordial attachments*. On the other hand, the social praxis of ethnicity as ethnicisation means flexibility, choice, constructedness and recent change. Together, these entirely contradictory aspects constitute *a devise to disguise strategy as inevitability*. This dialectics renders ethnicity particularly suitable for mediating, in processes of social change, between social contexts with each have a fundamentally different structure. Because of this internal contradiction, ethnicity offers the option of strategically effective particularism in a context of universalism, and hence enables individuals, as members of an ethnic group, to cross otherwise non-negotiable boundaries and to create a foothold or niche in structural contexts that would otherwise remain inaccessible; this is how recent urban immigrants (cf. urban markets of labour and housing) and citizens (cf. bureaucracies) use ethnicity.

Ethnicisation amounts to a conceptual and organisational focusing or framing, so as to make a social contradiction or conflict capable of being processed within the available technologies of communication, bureaucratic organisation, and political representation. The emergence of ethnic associations is one example at the organisational level.<sup>17</sup> What the Kazanga Cultural Association basically does is to provide an organisational framework for bridging the state on the one hand, indigenous politics (and the rural society that it stands for) on the other.

At this point, where we aim at structural interpretation, our analysis has to proceed beyond the transactionalism that has so far guided it. We are pressed to admit that in the Kazanga Cultural Association as context of ethnicisation, two contradictory processes occur at the same time:

- the state on the one hand, the chiefs (and the rural society they stand for) on the other, are caused to be in constant interaction with each other (which makes for merging and blurring of boundaries in actual political and economic practice),
- yet at a level of the explicit conceptualisations, by the actors involved, this constant movement back and forth between what they construct as a traditional and as a modern domain, only reinforces their view that here two fundamentally different modes of socio-political organisation are involved.

The following table presents the outline of an actors' model which, from the point of view of the Nkoya elite, the Nkoya chiefs and most Nkoya commoners, would seem to sum up the structural differences between the postcolonial state and chiefs.

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <i>postcolonial state</i>                        | <i>chief</i>                                    |
| legal authority (the letter of the written word) | traditional authority                           |
| impersonal                                       | personal  |
| universalist                                     | particularist                                   |
| imported within living memory                    | considered as local                             |
| culturally alien                                 | considered as culturally familiar, self-evident |
| defective legitimation                           | self-evident legitimation                       |
| lack of cosmological anchorage                   | cosmological anchorage                          |

Table 1. A model contrasting postcolonial state and chiefs.

<sup>17</sup> However, ethnicity is not unique in this respect Elsewhere (van Binsbergen 1993a) I have presented a similar argument with regard to African independent churches and professional associations of traditional healers in Botswana, both forms of formal organisations present an organisational form in line with the logic of the postcolonial state (via the latter's Societies Act), while internally supporting ideological positions totally at variance with the principles informing the state

This model allows us to make the point that the Kazanga executive as brokers are, at least in their own perception, truly bridging two fundamentally different structures. Against the background of African ethnicity and ethnicisation, it is no surprise that they do so in an idiom of ethnicisation.

The important thing to realise is that such bridging consists in the negotiation of conceptual boundaries *through concrete interaction*, where objects and people are positioned at the conceptual boundaries between two systems, where they can serve as interfaces between the two. In the dialectics of social praxis, conceptually different domains are drawn, first, within such contradictory perceptions, motivations and exchanges as each single actor is capable of; and secondly, these contradictions are to be made convergent, predictable, and persistent over time by their being imbedded in the social organisation of such individual actors. In other words, structural bridging inevitably requires, beyond conceptualisation, effective social organisation. The modern formal organisation corresponds morphologically with the organisational logic of the state; at the same time, in the field of ideology and symbolism it can maintain as much continuity as is needed towards structural domains that are conceived according to a logic totally different from that of the state (like chieftainship). Therefore the mode of mobilisation which structurally bridges state and chiefs had to take the form of a formal voluntary association.

Let us now examine what in practice was realised of such bridging, by considering the actual interaction between the Kazanga Cultural Association and the chiefs of western central Zambia.

### *The chiefs and the Kazanga cultural association*

#### *Royal cultural revival in the Kazanga festival*

Up to a point of disaffection, which was reached in 1995, chiefs have sought to use the Kazanga Cultural Association for their own self-presentation. But the complementary process has been much more manifest: the attempt, on the part of the Kazanga Cultural Association, to use, increasingly even to harness, chieftainship for its own combined purpose of ethnic articulation, access to the state, and personal ascendance in terms of political and economic power and influence on the part of the association's executive.

Kazanga's effective negotiation between the state, the chieftainship and the villagers insists on a new symbolic and ceremonial role for all four Nkoya kings together along lines which are all bricolage and thoroughly un-historical, but which do result in restoring the kings to a level of emotional and symbolic significance perhaps unprecedented in twentieth century Nkoya history. At the annual Kazanga festival, the chiefs have grasped the opportunity to appear with all regality which they could summon and which their paraphernalia could earn them. Mwene Kahare, who used to be a

somewhat pathetic, stammering and alcoholic figure dressed in a faded suit with ragged shirt collar, finally, in his seventies, appeared at the 1992 Kazanga festival covered in leopard skins and with a headband adorned with regal *zimpane* shell ornaments — regalia he has most probably never worn since his installation in 1955 — formidably brandishing his royal axe in a solo dance that kept the audience breathless and moved them to tears. At the climax the king (for that is what he shows himself to be, in a performative revival of early 19th-century royal autonomy and splendour) kneels down and drinks directly from a hole in the ground where beer has been poured out for his royal ancestors — the patrons of at least his part of the Nkoya nation, implied to share in the deeply emotional cheers from the audience.

The successful emergence of the Kazanga Cultural Association initially promised to offer to the chiefs the opportunity for self-assertion that was well in line with their anti-Lozi sentiments. However, the competition between the two Nkoya chiefs from Kaoma turned out to be a very severe constraint in this respect. The first few Kazanga festivals were staged at the capital of Mwene Mutondo, and were thus interpreted as a sign of his seniority over Kahare and over other royal chiefs from outside Kaoma district. A truce was struck by the adoption of new, special festival grounds smack at the boundary between either chief's areas. But this led to further complications as the above case of Mr Daniel Muchayila demonstrates.

Gradually, Mutondo dominance over the Kazanga festival and over Nkoya ethnicisation in general has dwindled. The suspiciously untimely death of Muchayila's successor Mwene Chipimbi in 1992 prevented Mutondo control over that year's festival (a successor is seldom installed within a year), and anyway rendered the Mutondo *lukena* inappropriate as festival grounds in this time of mourning. Mwene Kahare's royal dance centres, of course, on a shrine situated at the hub of the festival grounds; but it is no longer the thatched shrine of the Mutondo dynasty, nor the Kahare dynasty's own wooden pole adorned with buffalo trophies, but a neutral shrub of the type found, as headman's shrine, in most Nkoya villages.

The traditionalist revival on the part of the Kazanga Cultural Association is not limited to Nkoya circles and western Zambia, as the following case reveals:

*Kazanga, and Soli ethnic revival in central Zambia.* One of the most interesting developments around Kazanga occurred in Lusaka in 1995. The Kazanga band under the direction of Mr Tom Taulo, the composer and dance leader, also gives paid guest performances in beer gardens etc. in the Lusaka area. This has produced such popularity for the band that Kazanga Cultural Association was invited to play a major advisory role on the creation of the first Soli ethnic festival at Undaunda, 100 km. east of Lusaka. After extensive preparatory meetings in which the experiences of the Kazanga Cultural Association since 1982 were lavishly shared, both the

band and the executive of the association's Lusaka branch were major official guests at the actual festival in October, 1995. It was almost exactly a hundred years after Mwene Mutondo Wahila, in the context of a diplomatic exchanges, across a distance of 500 km paid a state visit to the Soli Queen Nkomeshya. It is still too early to draw conclusions from the 1995 co-operation, yet it suggests that we are witnessing the formation of one large ethnic coalition (a 'mega-ethnic group') encompassing the whole of Central Zambia. The name 'Kafue' has already been suggested as its name, not only because this is the major river of this region, but also because this has been the historic name of various colonial administrative centres, at various locations between Lusaka and Kaoma district.

The Kazanga association has also been instrumental in reviving royal titles which did not survive Lozi expansion around 1900: the Shakalongo title, once senior to both Kahare and Mutondo, had for many years been carried by a mere village headman, but has now been reinstated as that of a royal chief; and the reinstatement of Mwene Pumpola in Lukulu district has been imminent for some years. The Kazanga annual festival offers these new chiefs the opportunity to articulate themselves publicly, even if this means that for the time being they have to make shift in a cosmopolitan three-piece suit instead of leopard skin and other historic paraphernalia. However, their formal recognition and remuneration depends on the Lozi Paramount, whose refusal we have already discussed above.

Interestingly, the traditionalist and Mwene-orientated stance of the Kazanga society enables its leaders to draw on this same reservoir of tribute-related labour for the construction and maintenance of its festival grounds, not only when these were still situated at the *lukena* of Mwene Mutondo but also when subsequently the festival was moved to a new site at equal distances from the capitals of Mutondo and Kahare — which involved the major task of clearing the new site and erecting the branch palaces and the spectators' shelters.

After the enthusiasm of the first years of the Kazanga festival, it gradually became clear that the executive of the Kazanga Cultural Association sought to use chieftainship as a resource for ulterior aims, instead of furthering it as what the chiefs and their councillors had been led to believe during the colonial period: the hub of Nkoya ethnic identity. The dramaturgy of the festival was revised so as to make clear that not Mwene Mutondo, or the royal chiefs collectively, but the association's executive was hosting the festival; by 1993 the chiefs saw themselves reduced to the status of picturesque ornaments who had to put in a ceremonial presence, avowedly as exalted guests of honour but in fact as the most senior *performers* at the festival, who imprisoned in their royal shelter, next to that of the national and regional politicians, did not even have a chance to engage in conversation with the latter.

*Interaction between chiefs and the Kazanga executive beyond the Kazanga festival*

The interaction between the Kazanga Cultural Association and the chiefs was not limited to the Kazanga festival but gradually extended to traditional politics at the chief's capitals themselves. Against the background of the postcolonial state and Zambian civil society, an extremely complex pattern emerged whose outlines are presented in diagram 1. It is difficult to imagine a better demonstration of the boundary crossings which are absolutely standard between the so-called modern political domain and the so-called traditional political domain. Moreover, the diagram makes it clear that the mediation between these two domains presupposes a third domain: that of the civil society, which in the Kazanga case concentrates on the executive of the Kazanga Cultural Association.

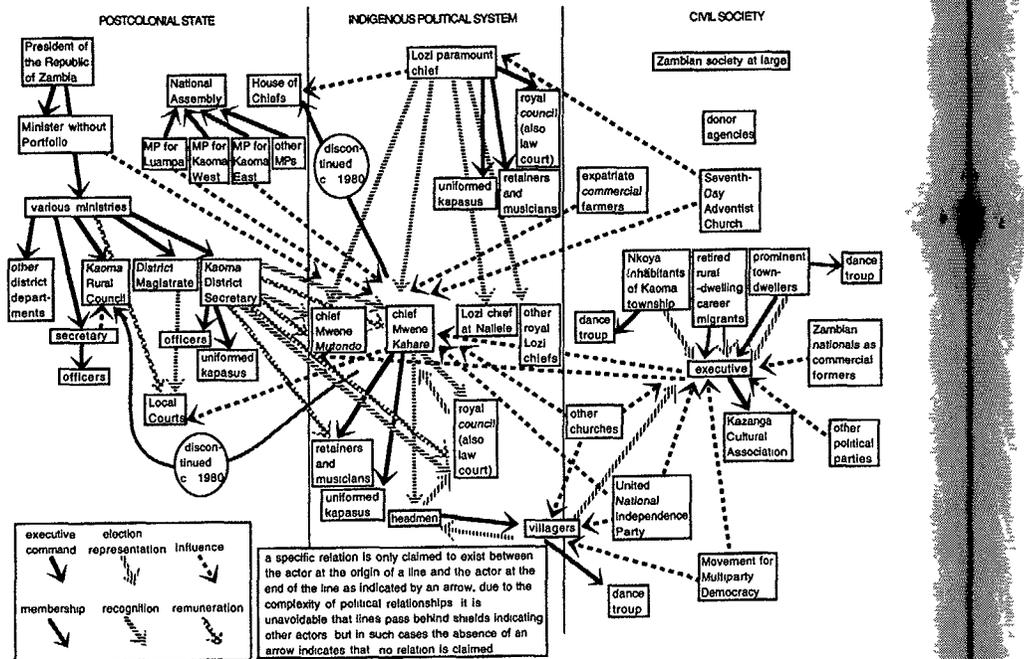


Diagram 1. Postcolonial state, indigenous political system and civil society: the background of political relations between Chief Kahare and the Kazanga Cultural Association executive.

A number of specific cases make clear that the Kazanga Cultural Association tried not only to further and revise, but actually to control chieftainship, and that this attempt was thwarted by the traditional guardians of that institution, the royal councils.

*Mwene Mutondo Chipimbi's election, and its aftermath.* A life-long town dweller and a middle-ranking officer with a Zambian parastatal, the later Mwene Mutondo Chipimbi was initially one of the founding members of the Kazanga Cultural Association in 1982. His accession to the throne in 1991 was the result of insistent rallying of the association's executive during the royal electoral process following the death of the aged Mwene Mutondo Muchayila in 1990. As we have seen, Mwene Chipimbi's untimely death (which others, along with the death of his wife around the same time, attributed to lack of resistance to malaria, as town dwellers) was interpreted as sign that the senior headmen greatly resented this intrusion from town dwelling careerists into rural traditional politics. His death was one of the reasons why the Kazanga festival had to be moved from the Mutondo capital, where the Kazanga executive during unavoidable personal and official visits in 1992-1993 literally feared for their lives. Initially, of course, the Mutondo courtiers refused to attend Kazanga at the new festival grounds, i.e. in a form which so effectively denied Mutondo hegemony. However, the Kazanga executive managed to bring a high-powered government delegation to the Kazanga festival of 1992, and made it clear to the Mutondo courtiers that their staying away would be interpreted by the new government as a anti-MMD demonstration and might therefore have unpleasant consequences. From a distant enemy, the state had become an ally; and from being introverted and divisive, ethnicity, at least in the form of ethnic mediation it has taken in Kazanga, has come to combine inward symbolic reconstruction with confident participation in the national space. But although a success from the point of view of the Nkoya ethnicisation project, its price was that the Kazanga executive had to openly deploy their state resources against the chief's council, thus revealing the contradictions between executive and chieftainship despite the former's further of chieftainship on less conflictive occasions.

*The Kazanga executive at Kabulwebulwe's.* Outside Kaoma district, at the Kabulwebulwe capital in Mumbwa district where most of the Kazanga executive are strangers, they did much better. They played a major part in the election of the new Chief Kabulwebulwe, in Mumbwa district in 1994, and were guests of honour both at the funeral of the previous incumbent and at the installation ceremony of his successor.

In the same year the throne of Mwene Kahare had to be filled after the aged Mwene Kahare Kabambi died in December 1993, after having ruled for 39 years. Here again,

like at the court of Mutondo, the Kazanga Cultural Association's offensive intended to gain direct control over the chieftainship, but failed.

*The Kazanga executive and the succession of Mwene Kahare, early 1994.* During the final two months of the electoral process, the list of possible candidates had shortened to only four names (cf. diagram 2):

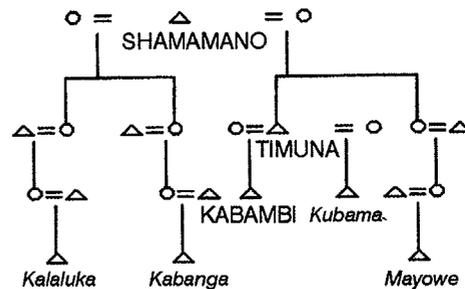


Diagram 2. Simplified genealogy illustrating the succession of Mwene Kahare Kabambi (1994 contenders for the chieftainship in italics; actual royal incumbents in capitals).

- Mr J. Kalaluka (a former MP, former Cabinet Minister and former Ambassador, awaiting trial for embezzlement which forced him to leave state service; commercial farmer; son of a Lozi father but, like the other three remaining candidates, raised at the Kahare court and locally identifying as Nkoya; founding patron of the Kazanga Cultural Association);
- Mr D. Kabanga (a retired state registered male nurse, former UNIP ward chairman in Lusaka, member of the Kazanga executive 1989-93, now a village farmer);
- Mr Kubama Kahare (peasant farmer from Namwala district; belongs on his mother's side to the Kamotwe/ Shipungu line from the Kawanga valley, Kaoma district, who are the original owners of the Kahare royal title);
- Mr S. Mayowe (a retired former manager of Lake Fisheries, a major parastatal; former member of the Kaoma rural council, commercial farmer, bar owner, general entrepreneur, Kaoma representative of the National Party (a Lozi-dominated opposition party), and member of the executive, Kazanga Cultural Association).

Campaigning involved conspicuous gift-giving to senior councillors and to royal women at the court, witchcraft accusations, etc. Mr Mayowe, accused of having caused, through sorcery, the death of Kabambi with whom he had repeatedly quarrelled over land issues, found that he lacked support, withdrew as a candidate and openly backed Kubama as the obvious and ideal traditional choice; Mayowe thus hoped that he would enhance his chances of succeeding Kubama, who was already in his mid-60s and reputed to be of ill health. Mr Kabanga was the least likely candidate of the four, for lack of wealth, ancestry and achievements. Mr Kalaluka, whose genealogical position was similar to that of Mr Kabanga, had already told his Lusaka elite friends that he was going to spend the rest of his life as a genuine chief, when the elders rejected him in

favour of Mr Kubama. The latter lacked personal wealth, but his three sons were holding solid positions in government and industry, his fierce and upright character recalled that of his father Mwene Kahare Timuna, and considering his mother's ancestry he was indisputably the rightful owner of the title even in the eyes of those senior headmen who still resented the title's usurpation by Mwene Timuna's father Mwene Shamamano in the 1880s (!). When a few months later Mr Mayowe was elected national chairman of the Kazanga Cultural Association it was clear that the association, while playing a major role in the election of Chief Kubama, had given up hopes of controlling the chieftainship directly, but instead had opted for a division of labour between complementary sectors of modern and traditional politics, with close kin relations and trust between the leaders on both sides.

It is interesting to note how the contradictions between the royal courts and the Kazanga association, which became manifest in the course of the 1990s, also have complemented in the religious and political affiliations of the people involved on either side. The MMD had a strong appeal among aspiring urbanites, the very category that makes up the Kazanga executive. By contrast, the chiefs' courts largely remained loyal to whom over the years had emerged as their main ally in the struggle against the Lozi: UNIP and its leader Kaunda, who only as recently as in 1990 had prevented a move by the Lozi Paramount Chief to abolish the Nkoya chieftainships. Mr Mayowe meanwhile dabbled in opposition politics and in 1994 was the district representative of the National Party which carried the Mongu by-elections in early 1994; this lonely political stance in a UNIP-oriented rural environment helped to tilt the scales against him at the royal election. In the religious field Lozi/chieftain antagonism was temporarily suspended when Mwene Kahare welcomed the oppressive intervention on the part of the Seventh Day Adventist Church; however, most of the Kazanga executive have remained loyal to the Evangelic Church of Zambia, the first missionary presence in the region, since it had provided their formal education.

The breaking point in the relations between the chiefs and the Kazanga Cultural Association was reached in 1995:

*The 1995 conflict between chiefs and the Kazanga executive.* On the first day of the 1995 festival the chiefs refused to return to the shelter after lunch, under the pretext that the royal wives had not been accommodated with them in the royal shelter but had been seated, with other prominent commoners, on the seats provided along the rim of the arena, in July's mild winter sun. Both Myene were new incumbents, installed less than two years, and with only one Kazanga festival behind them; in the earliest Kazanga festivals, the Myene were old men without formal royal wives; on the occasion of the 1991 Kazanga, Mwene Mutondo Chipimbi had just acceded while his wife was already seriously ill. So this issue of protocol had not arisen before. For most of the remaining programme the 1995

proceedings took the form of a different historic Nkoya performance: the court case. The conflict destroyed the 1995 festival; visitors left in anger.

Various contradictions reverberate in this conflict:

- gender, now beginning to be a modern political issue in this rural area, has always been an underlying current in local chieftainship: in the 18th and early 19th century, all Myene were women.
- the Kazanga festival as a celebration of viable royalty, of the kingdom (the way the festival was celebrated in the 19th century), rather as a mere nostalgic production of performative fragments (as the festival has turned out under the Kazanga Cultural Association).
- conflict between court officials and Kazanga officials; the court officials feel that their power over chieftainship is being usurped by the Kazanga executive, and seek to reclaim control by insistence on proper protocol.

These senior headmen may have spent many years in distant urban employment but in middle age can afford to have no other commitment than the preservation of *shihemuwa shetu*, 'our custom'. Far from being a dying concern, traditional politics (even if no longer remunerated) has remained a central career goal for many men from western Central Zambia.

The interaction between the Kazanga Cultural Association and the chiefs has made clear that ethnicisation does not necessarily lead to resilience of chieftainship. In the Nkoya case it has led to folklorisation: the reduction of chiefs to nostalgic ornaments of symbolic production in a festival context which is dominated by ethnic brokers orientated to the modern economy and the state.

In the early 1970s the Nkoya neo-traditional court culture was marked by a rigid, wholly introverted splendour. The maintenance of nostalgic historic forms of protocol and symbolic, particularly musical, production (which no longer correspond with any real power invested in the kingship under conditions of incorporation by the Barotse indigenous state and by the colonial and post-colonial central state) reflected the fact that *boundary maintenance* vis-à-vis the outside world was at its peak. All this strikingly contrasts with the laxity of court life at the *zinkena* today. The drums are no longer played. Court protocol which used to be extremely strict and enforced by physical sanctions (only a century ago still by capital punishment), is hardly observed today. Chiefs are no longer recognised nor remunerated, and expatriate commercial farmers with their racist labour relations are literally taking over the land.

Under such circumstances, Nkoya ethnicisation could even lead to the virtual destruction of the chieftainships that featured so prominently as a sign of ethnic identity, ethno-historical reconstruction, and the reinvention of tradition in the context of the Kazanga festival. The near future will learn if and how the current Nkoya royal chiefs, both of them new incumbents although in advanced middle age, will meet these challenges.

## Conclusion

In Zambia's Kaoma district today, the two royal Nkoya chiefs (Mwene Kahare and Mwene Mutondo) are reluctant senior members of the Lozi indigenous administration headed by the Lozi Paramount Chief. Their financial situation is miserable and leads to the further decline of chieftainship and its courtly institutions. Nor can it justifiably be said that the chiefs exist on a plane outside the postcolonial state. Until recently they participated in many governing and representative bodies of the postcolonial state, and they have no formal source of income except from the state. The latter largely controls the reproduction (which is greatly defective, anyway) of chieftainship. Besides indirect influence over the lowest law courts with jurisdiction only in the field of family law and traditional political structure, the chiefs' main independent source of power is the continued control over rural land. However, this prerogative may be used, and is used destructively. Issuing land to strangers hardly benefits the chief beyond covering part of his modest household expenses, but does lead to proletarianisation among the chief's local subjects and destroys the territorial basis for chieftainship.

Thus royal chiefs in western central Zambia constitute a limiting case for some of the general themes in African chieftainship today, as emerging from the present collective volume as a whole. They do not display the remarkable resilience of other African chiefs in adapting to social and political change. Their power base is small and diminishing. Whereas in the first decades of the postcolonial era they effectively expanded into formal administrative and representative bodies of the modern state, this process has now been reversed, largely as a result of regional ethnic conflict. These chiefs can certainly not afford to consider the bureaucratic logic of the African state merely as an accidental, foreign and imposed system. That they do not actually hold such views, and in the recent past have effectively blended with state institutions, is also partly attributable to their own formal sector employment (often as court clerks or low ranking administrative officers at the district level) prior to accession. Meanwhile they are financially dependent upon the colonial state and upon recognition both by the state and by the indigenous administration under the Lozi Paramount Chief. Under these circumstances, chieftainship in western central Zambia does not emerge as an obvious focus for democratisation processes. Instead, it is subject to folklorisation, becoming a nostalgic element in an ethnicisation process which creates new inequalities (those between on the one hand proletarianising peasants, and on the other successful post-migrant pensioners and other agricultural and commercial entrepreneurs), while seeking to abolish one particular form of politico-ethnic domination.

Under the circumstances, the annihilation of the particular form of chieftainship as found in western central Zambia is a serious possibility, which opens up further horizons for analysis. At an abstract level, the interaction between the Kazanga Cultural Association (and other formal organisations, e.g. the SDAC) and the chiefs may ultimately have to be interpreted, not as mere *bridging* (which presupposes the continued independence

existence of social contexts - chiefs and state - to be bridged), but rather as the *replacement* of one historic mode of organisation (that of the indigenous political system centring on the *lukena*) by another, formal, global mode of organisation (that of the state-registered voluntary association). Both modes organise the villagers of western central Zambia, by trading exploitation by an elite (the chiefs, the executive) for old and new goals (the chiefs: social and cosmological order, judicial and military regulation of violence, regulation of long-distance trade; the executive: ethnic cultural self-expression, economic and political access to the wider world).

In less than a hundred years, the formal organisation has established itself on African soil as the principal format for social, political, economic and religious organisation, complementing and often replacing time honoured, historic local forms of organisation. I have often stressed<sup>18</sup> that from a sociological point of view, this is one of the most significant transformations of African life, and one of the greatest blind spots in African studies today. We have largely contented ourselves with demonstrating why (for informal undercurrents, corruption, continued allegiance to older forms of organisation, lack of appreciation of legal authority etc.) the formal organisation cannot work in Africa, rather than acknowledging that defective or latent functioning of formal organisations is not peculiar to Africa, and can only be understood once the formal organisation in itself has been accepted to set the framework.

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