

ZAMBIA SOCIAL SCIENCE JOURNAL

Editor

Jotham Momba

Managing Editor

Chewe Nkonde

Deputy Managing Editor

Maio Bulawayo

Associate Editors

Fay Gadsden, Manenga Ndulo, Caesar Cheelo and Marja Hinfelaar

Editorial Advisory Board

Edward Bbaale, Makerere University, Uganda

Kassahun Berhanu Alemu, Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia

Nic Cheeseman, University of Birmingham, United Kingdom

John Ssentamu-Ddumba, Makerere University, Uganda

Edna Litana Kabala, Copperbelt University, Zambia

Evans Kaimoyo, University of Zambia, Zambia

Steve Kayizzi-Mugerwa, Georgetown University, USA

Joyce Luma, World Food Programme, Italy

John Lungu, Copperbelt University, Zambia

Edwin MacLellan, Cape Breton University, Canada

Sulemana Mahawiya, Kumasi Technical University, Ghana

Albert Makochekanwa, University of Zimbabwe

Felix Masiye, University of Zambia

Mirfin Mpundu, Dimensions Health, USA

Moses Musonda, Zambian Open University, Zambia

Sylvia Mwamba-Shalumba, SAIPAR, Lusaka

Pamela Nakamba-Kabaso, University of Zambia, Zambia

Muna Ndulo, Cornell University, USA

Alistair Nolan, OECD, France

Bizeck Phiri, University of Zambia, Zambia

Lloyd Sachikonye, University of Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe

Mohamed Salih, Institute of Social Studies, The Netherlands

Sishuwa Sishuwa, University of Zambia and University of Cape Town

The Zambia Social Science Journal is published under the auspices of the Southern African Institute for Policy and Research. The primary objective is to publish scholarly work in the social sciences and development. Serving as a forum for argument, debate, review, reflection, and discussion, the Journal is informed by the results of relevant and rigorous research. The published papers are peer reviewed by anonymous reviewers. Final acceptance or rejection of submitted papers rests with the Editorial Board. The Editorial Board reserves the right to refuse any material for publication. The Journal is published biannually, with editions coming out in May and November. Subscriptions rates are available on request.

© Southern African Institute for Policy and Research.

ISSN 2079-5521

Zambia Social Science Journal

Volume 7

2017/2018

Number 2

Articles

- 'A Western Missionary Cooked in an African Pot': Religion, Gender and History in Zambia – Essays in Honour of Father Hugo F. Hinfelaar**
Chammah J. Kaunda and Marja Hinfelaar 1
- From “White Fathers” to “Black Fathers” in Kasama and Mpika Dioceses in Zambia**
Anthony B. Tambatamba, Austin M. Cheyeka and Tomaida C. Milingo 11
- Women in Religio-Cultural History: A Reflection on their Representation in Hugo Hinfelaar’s Scholarly Work in Zambia, 1960s to 1990s**
Nelly Mwale and Joseph Chita 35
- Female Initiation Rites as part of Gendered Bemba Religion and Culture: Transformations in Women’s Empowerment**
Thera Rasing 55

'A Western Missionary Cooked in an African Pot': Religion, Gender and History in Zambia – Essays in Honour of Father Hugo F. Hinfelaar

Chammah J. Kaunda

United Graduate School of Theology, Yonsei University
and

Marja Hinfelaar¹

The Southern African Institute for Policy and Research (SAIPAR)

Introduction

The concept of 'Cooked in African Pot' is inspired by Klaus Fiedler, Paul Gundani and Hilary Mijoga (1998) who argued that clay pots represent African cosmic views, traditions, anthropology and epistemology. It is these ingredients that would form and sharpen Father Hugo Hinfelaar's reinterpretation of Christian faith for Zambia. And it is this inspiring and honourable work and legacy that necessitated these two special issues dedicated to one of the distinguished missionary scholars of religion in Zambia. In what follows, we argue that Hinfelaar dedicated himself to what could be described as a soul search to deconstruct and recapture Christianity for the Zambian people on the margins.

A Journey of a Thousand Miles Begins with the Self

Hinfelaar was born in the Hague on the third of April 1933, the second child and first boy of Stephanus Leonardus Hinfelaar, a professional carpenter and cabinet maker, and Petronella Aleida Vermeulen. As Hugo related in his unpublished autobiography, in 1945 the choice of secondary schools was not great. The small number of grammar schools, called gymnasia and lycea in the Netherlands, were mostly occupied by children of the upper middle and professional class:

For the young men and women, who felt they 'had a vocation', who wanted to do something special with their lives and for this receive secondary education the main and often the only choice was service within the Church as priests or religious brothers and sisters. Moreover, the status of 'someone who went into religion' was very high and rendered a family respectable. Many parents prayed daily that one of their sons or daughters would become a priest, a religious sister or a brother (unpublished autobiography).

Hinfelaar was 12 when he started minor seminary, followed by major seminary and White Father training in both the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. He finalised his studies when he was 25 and was ordained in 1958. His motivation to become a missionary was mixed, and here we quote at length

to understand the historical and personal context of his choice:

The joyful example of men like Fr Nico Hendriks made me decide to become a missionary like him and to go out to exotic countries. I was never attracted to the more ritual and liturgical dimensions of the so-called 'secular priesthood' of the parish priests and their curates.... My experience of the [second world] war had made such an impression on me that my motivation could be regarded as serious, even at the tender age of twelve. The war had made our generation grow up quicker. I agree that my motivation might have been mixed. But does a pure motivation ever occur? My parents, especially my mother, who as a young girl had not been allowed to become a teacher, wanted her children, and in particular her eldest son, to be given the opportunity of social advancement. Entry into the seminary was certainly a sure way of achieving this. Personally, the tribal wars of continental Europe with its misery of exaggerated nationalism, followed by a joyful liberation by the Anglo-Saxon soldiers, made me vaguely aware that another world was possible, that human beings should unite whatever their religion, nationhood or ideology. Finally, the fact that I [...] wanted to move on and see what else life had to offer, might also have contributed to my saying farewell and leave home.

It was in his second year of formation at Scholasticate² in 's-Heerenberg in 1955 that he had an encounter with Father Piet de Ruijter who was serving as a missionary in Northern Rhodesia (present day, Zambia) in 1950. During his first visit to 's-Heerenberg Father de Ruijter, who had come straight from Africa, met with each Dutch student individually. Hinfelaar would confide in him about the severe challenges he faced studying in Scholasticate. He reassured Hinfelaar to "Push on. Africa is different. Once you are in the treadmill of mission work over there you will enjoy it!" this gave him enough impetus to keep going. He also listened to a series of discussions on life in Africa by the Superior Father Emile Geurts who had worked in Tanganyika (present day Tanzania), and later became the rector of the WF Scholasticate from 1947 until 1956. Hinfelaar was also inspired by thought-provoking stories of the White Fathers who would return from Africa for vacation. He reminisces "I could never get enough of them." (unpublished autobiography) At his ordination he received his appointment to the then Northern Rhodesia to serve in the diocese of Abercorn (current day Mbala), Northern Province (part of it transferred to form present-day Muchinga Province) of Zambia where he arrived in December 1958. He would work as a Dutch White Father missionary in both this province and Lusaka until he retired in 2014. He is admired as one of the most outstanding and long-lasting missionary-scholars (Hinfelaar and Macola, 2003). He recalls:

I have been in Zambia on and off for almost half a century. I have known the Catholic Church before and after the Second Vatican Council. I lived with all its subsequent tensions. I did not 'leave' or sit on the ecclesiastical fence but held out in one way or another. During these years I experienced change of status, from being sent by the parish community as a hero to being regarded as a remnant of old colonial furniture. (unpublished autobiography)

Hinfelaar's work in Zambia, which included not only practical ministry but would evolve into rigorous research in religious anthropology, is enormous. Hinfelaar's need for further studies arose from the belief of Father Louis Oger, the director of the Language Study Centre in Ilondola, Northern Province, that as time progressed the Centre would need more qualified lecturers. Father Oger asked Hinfelaar twice to go for further studies and then to come and teach at the Language Study Centre. Though reluctant at first, Hinfelaar studied for both a master's degree and a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) which he obtained from the University of London in 1989. This would empower him to make a more academic oriented contribution in religious anthropology. He engaged with various issues of religion and Roman Catholic Christianity in particular, which ranged from history, gender, politics, independent Christian movements and the impact of religious colonialization in Zambia. He also lectured at the Major Seminary of Lusaka and was the resource person for continuing lay formation in the Archdiocese of Lusaka. Hinfelaar witnessed the rise of nationalism, being based in the same area as future President Kenneth Kaunda and future Vice-President Simon Kapwepwe.

Hinfelaar was also an eyewitness to the rise and demise of the Lumpa movement founded by Prophetess Alice Lenshina. He visited her during the time of her house detention by former President Kaunda, following what is described as the 'Lumpa Uprising' – a resistance movement against earthly political authority shortly after Zambia's independence in 1964. It was this uprising that forced him to rethink the Western Christian thought that informed his religious imagination. He was surprised that "intelligent people, many of them with babies on their backs, would run into a hail of bullets rather than be instructed in the Christian faith as brought by the missionaries" (Hinfelaar, 1992, 193). He questioned, if "The Gospel was meant to be Good News why then were they so afraid of Christ on the cross? Why did they see mission-work as an imposition rather than as a liberation?" (Hinfelaar, 1992, 193). He refused to reduce Lumpa Church followers into mere objects of study by taking simplistic approaches from social science or socio-economic analysis. He would discover that "the cross of Christ had become a symbol of a religious cosmology" that reduced the

masses, especially women into docile obedience to a patriarchal bourgeoisie, it had taken their means of resistance against oppression and exploitation and eroded their moral and cultural empowerment (Hinfelaar, 1992, 195). Hinfelaar (2004) saw inculturation, the rooting of Christ's message among Zambians, as a weapon of resistance and emancipation for the marginalized and excluded. It is through inculturation that the Christian faith was to be liberated from the powerful and the rich. In this way, Hinfelaar (2004) perceives inculturation as not only the means of rooting Christian faith in Zambian cultures but a viable tool for liberation and promotion of justice-oriented articulation of the Gospel.

Hinfelaar moved to Lusaka in the early seventies where he founded the Matthias Mulumba Parish in Bauleni. He wrote a couple of influential works on Zambia. Most notably: *Bemba-Speaking Women of Zambia in a Century of Religious Change* (1994), a book based on his PhD; the article "Women's Revolt: The Lumpa Church of Lenshina Mulenga in the 1950s," published in the *Journal of Religion in Africa* (1991) and *History of the Catholic Church in Zambia, 1895-1995* (2004). These works were described by scholars as a collection of "African theology which does not come from desks only but from the experience of life and experience of God in people's lives" (Aguilar and de Aguilar, 1994, 139). Hinfelaar's search to Africanise the church is evident in the decorations of this parish with "Bemba motifs, such as the star motif from the girls' initiation and certain other symbols used by that tribe in its initiation rites, (which) have been used in creative ways" (Ott, 2000, 271).

Archbishop Emmanuel Milingo as an Eye Opener

It was during the time he was appointed as the secretary to Archbishop Emmanuel Milingo, former Archbishop of Lusaka, from 1971 until Milingo's exile from Zambia in 1981 that Hinfelaar's struggle for the creation of a locally shaped and informed Christianity in Zambia became consolidated. Hinfelaar was constantly present at Milingo's exorcism sessions, which he described as biblical. He assessed that "the ceremony consisted of a rite of healing which was based on the Bible" (1992, 173). Hinfelaar's interactions and personal observation of healing and exorcism sessions brought him to the conviction that Christianity without adequate cultural incarnation could not sufficiently respond to the people's deepest existential challenges and questions. Milingo forced him to question the very nature of the Christian faith as he knew it and began to see it as an imposition on Zambia. He writes, "as secretary to Archbishop Emmanuel Milingo in Lusaka and witness to his healing sessions, I became slowly convinced that somewhere something had gone amiss in the proper transmission of Christ's message of liberation" (1992, x). It was this gap that Milingo filled as he sought to engage with a spiritual ontology and cosmology which Western missionaries had

demonised but yet remained resilient in the religious practices of many Zambian people. Hinfelaar became convinced that Milingo sought to inculturate Christian faith “not as a mere practical convenience, but because he considered that” the African spiritual universe offered “valid perspectives for articulating Christian theological commitments” (Bediako, 2004, 86). However, for Hinfelaar, there was much more to Milingo’s Christianity than merely legitimising the African spiritual universe. Hinfelaar realised that missionary Christian discourses were embedded in bourgeois Christianity which Milingo’s spirituality resisted. Milingo represented the grievances and resistance to middle-class Christianity that undermined the masses, especially women. Hinfelaar lamented that:

Unfortunately, Milingo was surrounded by a mainly expatriate clergy who were overworked in the rapidly growing city of Lusaka. Many had come from overseas, ill-prepared for pastoral work among an uprooted people. Some were obviously prejudiced and ill-equipped to understand the linguistic, cultural, or religious backgrounds of the different peoples of Zambia. They had no guidelines by which to judge what was and what was not genuine inculturation. It is hardly surprising that Milingo found himself practically alone in his ministry (1992, 173).

As a pioneer in inculturation, Milingo was admired by the missionaries but was opposed fiercely by some Zambian priests who had internalised colonial missionary values and religious practices. They had become so deeply entrenched in the colonial thought system that they rejected their own history and traditions and found it difficult, if not impossible to accept any change (Hinfelaar, 2004). This could be expected because Milingo functioned in a complex spiritual universe that was impossible for a conceptually colonised mind to accept, but which the laypeople embraced in its various dimensions. Milingo constructed his theological ideas of healing, exorcism and pastoral care based on such “thought-patterns, perceptions of reality and the concepts of identity” (Bediako, 1995, 92). In speaking of Milingo’s ministry, Gerrie ter Haar (1992, 263) argued that recent developments within the churches were indicative that many Christians around the world had become aware of the need for a contextualised “Christian response to the problem of evil, whatever the form it may assume.” Hinfelaar (1992, 184) considered that Milingo’s exile³ to the Vatican in Rome, Italy, hindered the process of “genuine inculturation” of Zambian theology.

Women as the Soul of Emancipatory Christian Faith in Zambia

It was Hinfelaar’s gender-sensitive theology that forced him to defy missionary Christian discourses that deployed techniques that sought to paganise and

primitivise Zambian beliefs, rites, and institutions. His search for emancipation and liberation of Zambian women gave him only one option, to inculturate Christianity. He recalls, “many of the people who flocked to the Archbishop during the seventies were women who suffered all kinds of sickness and disease. They seemed to be plagued by an increasing array of evil spirits rather than to have been freed from captivity by the teaching of Jesus Christ” (1992, x). Despite being male, Hinfelaar had seen how Roman Catholic patriarchy with its wholesale rejection of traditional cultural values was destructive to the gendered Bemba religious system of thought. Hinfelaar, therefore, does not apologize when it comes to promoting Bemba-speaking women’s resistance against foreign religious domination and suppression. Looking at the time he was writing, it is safe to argue that Hinfelaar was among the first progressive male scholars to start charting theological gendered research which has the potential to promote gender justice and equality. Even among pioneering African male theologians, the experiences of women were neglected in their theologies of inculturation (Phiri, 1997a, 18; 1997b, 69; Njoroge, 1997, 80).

Without shame, Hinfelaar would engage from a religious perspective with the most private female initiation rites called *imbusa* which were heavily policed against outside intrusion. *Imbusa* forms the cultural foundations of Bemba philosophy. Hinfelaar believed that *imbusa* was a womb of many “‘Seeds of Revelation’ that were yet to be discovered as building stones for genuine African Christianity” in which women are a crucial and equal partner (1992, 192). He emphasised that by taking seriously the cosmic conviction embedded in *imbusa*, the church would do itself a favour. Hinfelaar’s vision is shared by the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians who have underlined that emancipation and liberation can only be achieved if women are included. As Mercy Oduyoye (1995, 202) argues, the household of God can only be experienced as emancipating when all are empowered, all are included, all are affirmed, all are recognized, and all are heard “as children in a parent’s home and around the one table”. Women must be empowered to “express their experience of God in affirming cultural beliefs and practices, while they feel called by God to denounce and to deconstruct oppressive ones” (Oduyoye, 1995, 202).

Conclusion: Mission as ‘Discovery of One’s True Identity’

As Hinfelaar started out with a mission to convert, he would awaken to a realization that the opposite was also true, he was being converted to becoming more human. It would become even more clear that he did not bring God to Zambia; it was God who brought him to learn that Christianity can only be ‘Good News’ to Zambians to the extent that it authentically and adequately established its African credentials within the local spiritual universe, traditions,

anthropology and epistemologies. Hinfelaar's subsequent search for viable inculturation missiology demonstrates that the Christian faith liberates both the missionary and the missionized people within the interstitial spaces of mutual acceptance, appreciation and affirmation of each other for what they are. Hinfelaar demonstrates that it is not just the gospel that is culturally translatable. Emancipatory missionaries are also translatable as divine tools that help the local people make Christian faith relevant and accessible through the host culture. The missionary is a critical space for the local people to make sense of the gospel within their historical and cultural context. Hinfelaar made himself vulnerable enough to enter the "ambivalent zones" (Hinfelaar, 1992, 53) of African cosmology to have a glimpse of what God was doing among the Zambian people. Thus, missionary work "is in itself the discovery of one's true identity. It will make us say openly, sometimes humbly, but always in all solidarity: "That is us" (Hinfelaar, 2004, 2).

Summary of Hugo Special Issue

This special issue brought together scholars from various disciplines to reflect on topics that Hinfelaar interrogated through his engagements with Zambian Bemba worldviews. Given the number of articles we have divided it in two issues. In the first issue, Anthony Tambatamba, Austin Cheyeka and Tomaida Milingo employ indigenisation theory to interrogate "The Withdrawal of Missionaries of Africa from Kasama and Mpika Dioceses in Zambia." They argue that while it appears that the White Fathers accomplished their mission, on the principle of the "three selfs" (the establishment of a self-propagating, self-sustaining and self-governing church), the self-sustaining has not been realised. The authors propose a re-engagement of the discourse of 'self-sustainability' which appears to be ignored, especially as the Catholic Church continues to Zambianise its clergy but struggles with resources.

Nelly Mwale and Joseph Chita are concerned with understanding how Zambian women are historically represented through the prism of patriarchy. They employed African feminist theory to explore the representation of the place of women in the religio-cultural history of Zambia to highlight Hinfelaar's contributions to the study of Zambian women. They argue that Hinfelaar represents women as pillars in the growth of the church and active players in religio-cultural heritage. Hinfelaar provided a gendered history that subverted the patriarchal representation of women in this church history in Zambia.

Thera Rasing's "Female initiation rites as part of gendered Bemba religion and culture," examines the resilience and transformations of female initiation rites in the past century from a religio-gendered perspective. She affirms

Hinfelaars' thesis that Bemba women lost their significant socio-religious position, and argues that the practices of female rites are means of exerting their power which is encouraged by the Catholic Church today.

In the second issue, Bernard Udelhoven builds on Hinfelaar's work to analyse "Domestic morality, 'traditional dogma', and Christianity in a rural Zambian community." He argues Christianity was quick to condemn traditional dogma but the void it left has not been filled by the Christian faith. He concludes that Hinfelaar's call for inculturation as a creative and critical dialogue between Christianity and traditional dogma has continued as slow process. Mutale Mulenga-Kaunda is concerned with the implications of cultural values that appear less applicable in the contemporary Zambian context that is increasing in patriarchal tendencies. She utilizes African feminist jurisprudence to critique the Bemba cultural value of "Children Belong to the Mother" as promoting male irresponsibility in the context of increasing numbers of absent fathers, feminisation of poverty and the growth in poverty rates among children. She argues that such cultural values should be regarded as obsolete in the modern context as it negates the calls that are promoting child maintenance rights in Zambia. Chammah Kaunda, Inshita (Time), seeks to open a discussion on the possibility of developing a Bemba philosophy and epistemology. He argues that the Bemba myth of origin presents time as a relational value deeply entrenched in human quest to manifest God's mutuality and solidarity in the world. Kaunda stresses that the Bemba concept of time is never conceived in terms of the past or the future, rather, as the locus of intercourse, a critical site of spiritual interaction, transaction, and exchange aimed at actualizing equilibrium in all relationships.

Endnotes

- ¹ Marja Hinfelaar is Father Hugo Hinfelaar's niece, who first visited him in Zambia in 1990 to do research in Chinsali District. She has a doctorate in African history and has been a permanent resident of Zambia since 1997.
- ² Before 1968, all formation of Missionary of Africa priests took place in theology seminaries called 'Scholasticates' (Missionaries of Africa White Fathers, 2018).
- ³ Milingo's approach to healing through exorcism was not well received by the church. It was perceived as heresy as the church at that time was against practices of deliverance as it did not believe in the existence of demons. He was accused of being a witchdoctor and after pleading the case with the Pope in 1983, was forced to resign as Archbishop of Lusaka in 1984 and was put into exile in Rome (Yandolino, 2016).

References

- Aguilar, Mario I. and de Aguilar, Laurel B. 1994. "Book Reviews: Hinfelaar, Hugo F., 'Religious Change among Bemba-Speaking Women of Zambia' (PhD dissertation; University of London, 1989 [available from Senate House

- Library, Malet Street, London, WC1].” *Feminist Theology* 3, 7, 139–141.
- Bediako, Kwame. 2004. *Jesus and the Gospel in Africa: History and Experience*. Orbis Books: Maryknoll.
- Fiedler, Klaus; Gundani, Paul and Mijoga, Hilary (Eds).1998. *Theology Cooked in an African Pot*. Zomba: ATISCA.
- Hinfelaar, Hugo F. 1994. *Bemba-Speaking Women of Zambia in a Century of Religious Change*. Leiden: Brill.
- Hinfelaar, Hugo F. 2004. *History of the Catholic Church in Zambia*. Lusaka: Bookworld Publishers.
- Hinfelaar, Hugo F. Unpublished Autobiography (Father Hugo F. Hinfelaar).
- Hinfelaar, Hugo F. 1991. “Women’s revolt: The Lumpa Church of Lenshina Mulenga in the 1950s.” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 21, 2, 99-129.
- Hinfelaar, Marja and Macola, Giacomo. 2003. “The White Fathers’ Archive in Zambia.” *History in Africa* 30, 439-445.
- Missionaries of Africa White Fathers. “Formation in the Society (PE nr. 1087 – 2018/01),” <https://mafrome.org/9072-2/>
- Njoroge, Nyambura J. 1997. “The Missing Voice: African Women doing Theology.” *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 99, 77-83.
- Oduyoye, Mercy A. 1997. “The African Experience of God through the Eyes of an Akan Woman.” *CrossCurrents* 47, 4, 493-504.
- Ott, Martin. 2000. *African Theology in Images*. Blantyre: CLAIM, 271.
- Phiri, Isabel A. 1997a. “Doing Theology in Community: The Case of African Women Theologians in the 1990s.” *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 99, 68-76.
- Phiri, Isabel A. 1997b. *Women, Presbyterianism and Patriarchy: Religious Experience of Chewa Women in Central Malawi*. Blantyre: CLAIM.
- Ter Haar, Gerrie. 1992. *Spirit of Africa: The Healing Ministry of Archbishop Milingo of Zambia*. London: C. Hurst and Co.
- Yandolino, Frank. 2016. *Frank & Charli: Woodstock, True Love, and the Sixties*. New York: Skyhorse Publishing.



From “White Fathers” to “Black Fathers” in Kasama and Mpika Dioceses in Zambia

Anthony B. Tambatamba

Ministry of General Education, Teacher Education and Specialised Services,

Austin M. Cheyeka and Tomaida C. Milingo

University of Zambia

Employing the missiological theory of Henry Venn (1796-1873) and Rufus Anderson (1796-1880) on indigenisation of churches, this article explores the lived experiences of black Zambian Catholic clergymen, nuns, catechists and lay people at some of the mission stations that were once in the hands of Missionaries of Africa, popularly known as White Fathers, from 1891 to 1991 in the Archdiocese of Kasama and Diocese of Mpika. To write about the White Fathers from the point of view of our interviewees accords us an auspicious opportunity to pay tribute to Fr. Hugo Hinfelaar to whom this article and this particular issue of the Zambia Journal of Social Sciences is dedicated. Having arrived in Zambia as a young Dutch White Father missionary in 1958, Fr. Hinfelaar desired to understand the culture of the Bemba people among whom he was working. He, therefore, became a serious field worker – an anthropologist, historian and theologian. He retired and returned home in 2014, after having contributed to the efforts of indigenising the Catholic Church’s clergy and inculturation of the Catholic faith in the country. The article demonstrates that the indigenisation of Kasama and Mpika Dioceses was incomplete. This is because, of the “three selves”: self-propagating church, self-sustaining church and self-governing church in the indigenisation theory, the self-sustaining church has not been realised according to the respondents, although some of them spoke of the White Fathers having accomplished their mission. This article proposes a re-engagement with the discourse of ‘self-sustainability’ which has largely been abandoned by local Catholic theologians. However, it is now an issue which has become all too apparent to be ignored as the Catholic Church becomes more and more indigenised, at least in terms of its clergy. This article proposes a new theme in Church history in Zambia, namely, the localisation of the personnel and self-sustainability in the Catholic Church in Zambia.

Keywords:

Missionaries of Africa, White Fathers, local priests, dioceses, Fr. Hugo, mission station, parish, Mpika Diocese, Archdiocese of Kasama, Northern Province, Muchinga Province, missionary, indigenisation, sustainability

Introduction

In response to a call for papers in honour of Fr. Hugo Hinfelaar (henceforth, Fr. Hugo as he is popularly known in Zambia), this article's intention is to introduce a post White Fathers' history of their erstwhile mission stations in the hands of Zambian diocesan priests. Implicit in doing so is the question: What happens when parishes that were under an international Catholic congregation or society are placed in the full charge of local people? We do not claim to have exhaustively answered the question, but propose a new chapter in mission history in Zambia. The focus of this article is twofold: to understand how priests in Zambia perceived the White Fathers' withdrawal from the Archdiocese of Kasama and the Diocese of Mpika in Northern and Muchinga provinces respectively, and, secondly, the fiscal implications of that withdrawal.

The first part of the article is a note on the White Fathers' entry and establishment of mission stations in northern Zambia. The second explores lived perspectives of Zambian indigenous priests and other people (lay and religious) on the departure of the White Fathers from mission stations that had been oases of Catholicisation and Westernisation of the indigenous people of Northern and Muchinga provinces. Overall, the article accounts for the White Fathers' departure from the two dioceses, which began in 1991, from the point of view of those who participated in the study, and explores their responses relating to economic challenges resulting from the absence of the White Fathers.

In order to capture this theme of the special issue of the *Zambia Social Science Journal (ZSSJ)* in honour of Fr. Hugo, we are reminded of Fr. Agbonkhianmeghe Orobator (2008)'s book, entitled *Theology Brewed in An African Pot: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine from An African Perspective*. Fr. Orobator introduces the reader to two characters in Chinua Achebe's novel, *Things Fall Apart*, a literary account of an encounter between missionary Christianity and African traditional religious beliefs. Fr. Orobator argues that the character of the fictitious Mr. Brown who had led a small band of pioneer Christian missionaries to the village of Umuofia in Achebe's novel, is a clear depiction of early missionary encounters with African traditional religious beliefs. Mr. Brown is described as someone who used to dialogue with Chief Akunna about religion through an interpreter. According to Fr. Orobator, Achebe tells his reader that neither of them (Mr. Brown nor Chief Akunna) succeeded in converting the other. However, each learned more about their different beliefs and in the end, Mr. Brown earned the respect of the people for his restrained and sensible approach to the deep religious differences that divided members of his church and the people of Umuofia (Orobator, 2008, 13). In our article, we liken Fr. Hugo to Mr. Brown. Like Mr. Brown, Fr. Hugo did not convert to Bemba religion, but came to understand it through dialogue. The converts on their part mixed Catholicism

and their religion. Had discarding of existing indigenous religious beliefs been a requirement for conversion to the Catholic faith, Fr. Hugo would admit that it would have been a non-starter.

Methodology and Theory

Anthony Tambatamba's doctoral dissertation supervised by Austin Cheyeka and Tomaida Milingo provides the preliminary findings for this article which is based on interviews in ongoing fieldwork. Methodologically, the study employed a qualitative strategy of data generation and analysis. With regard to design, the study is an illustrative case study aimed at showing what participants in the study felt about the withdrawal of the White Fathers from Northern and Muchinga provinces and its implications. The article is based on fifteen (15) interviews of the thirty five (35) that will constitute the findings chapter in the doctoral dissertation.

The 'indigenous church mission theory' of Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson has been employed to make sense of what is clearly an episode in mission history, and the place of Fr. Hugo therein. Given the nature of the subject of the article, the theory is undoubtedly appropriate for two reasons. Firstly, it reflects the purpose of the White Fathers, which is to set up a local church (Hinfelaar, 2004). Secondly, the theory provides a lens to evaluate the success of the White Father's objective in mission in the two dioceses.

Venn was Secretary of the Church Missionary Society in the United Kingdom from 1841 to 1872, while Anderson was Secretary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission (Hastings, 1994). Their strategy for the indigenisation of churches is explained as follows:

For Anderson and Venn, it was becoming increasingly clear that the task of the missionary was not just to go abroad to preach and convert people or even to translate and spread afar the scriptures... The task of the foreign missionary is to go where there is no local church in order to establish one. Once a native church is functioning, he can and should move on. A self-governing church is to be followed by the 'euthanasia' of the mission (Hastings, 1994, 294).

To put it differently, the objective of foreign missionaries ought to be the creation of well-organised churches and then handing them over to local converts so that the foreign mission acts as a scaffolding, which must be removed once the community of believers is functioning properly. By then, missionaries would have provided education, pastoral care, sacraments, buildings, finances and trained local converts to take over these responsibilities so that the church becomes indigenous – self-supporting, self-propagating and self-governing. As

mentioned by Hastings above, Venn and Anderson were Protestant theoreticians, but *Propaganda Fide* (the department of the pontifical administration charged with the spread of Catholicism and with the regulation of ecclesiastical affairs in non-Catholic countries) has provided for the duo's theory in the Catholic Church by stressing the formation of a native priesthood (Hastings, 1994, 295). Indeed, in 1890, the founder of the society of the White Fathers, Charles Lavigerie, Archbishop of Algiers who later became Cardinal Lavigerie (July, 1882) even made a suggestion to the Pope to allow a married priesthood in Africa. The suggestion was rejected (Hastings, 1994, 297).

The White Fathers in the Context of Christianity in Zambia

In discussing a topic relating to Christian churches, it is important to place it in the broader context of Christianity in the country. As at mid-year 2019, of the 17.9 million people in Zambia, 95.5% was estimated to be Christian, 75.3% Protestant and 20.3% Catholic (US International Report for 2019, 2). Statistics of denominational affiliation are difficult to obtain from churches and government departments such as the Central Statistical Office. Given the period of time that Northern and Muchinga provinces have been evangelised by the White Fathers, it is possible to reason that the two provinces are likely to have more Catholics than any other provinces in Zambia, notwithstanding the fact that many would have migrated to urban areas.

As indicated already, this article is situated in mission history or missiology. From its inception, according to Robert Strayer (1976, 1), mission history was part of the metropolitan-ecclesiastical school of mission history, which focused on European strategies for the planting of Christianity in Africa and on the heroic missionary efforts to implement these plans. This literature hardly spoke to the theme of encounter of missionary Christianity and African Traditional Religions. In this respect, it resembled the early colonial history, which saw Africa as a stage on which Europeans of all kinds played out their interests and their fantasies (Strayer, 1976, 1).

Today, the history of missions is a special history and treated separately from secular history. More importantly, mission historians have given attention not only to what missionaries did, but also to the contribution of Africans to the evangelisation of their fellow Africans. To this end, Brian Garvey wrote *Bembaland Church; Religious and Social Change in South Central Africa, 1891-1964* from the backdrop of the new mission historiography. Garvey's first chapter describes Bembaland and its societies in terms of religion, politics and customs. The last chapter deals with the establishment of the structures of the Church, namely, an African clergy, mission education and teachers as well as catechists. In *History of the Catholic Church in Zambia* (2004), Fr. Hugo paid

particular attention to the local Zambians – priests, nuns, catechists, teachers, helpers and others – describing their role in evangelisation and the growth of the Church. In addition, in his seminal *Bemba-Speaking Women of Zambia in a Century of Religious Change (1892-1992)* published in 1994, Fr. Hugo describes most comprehensively the religious context of Bembaland and the religious roles of the Bemba woman. The White Fathers in Kasama and Mpika Dioceses became social anthropologists in their own right. Overall, they were sympathetic to the local culture, which made them forbearing and accommodating towards Bemba culture and religious beliefs (Udelhoven, 2017) because they adhered to their founder's instructions of respecting local cultures (Ceillier, 2011, 155-169).

The White Fathers and Fr. Hugo in Mission History

It is an all too familiar story: the beginning of Christianity in Zambia was aided by the Scottish missionary, Dr. David Livingstone, who died at Chitambo village in 1873 in what is now Chitambo District in Central Province. The coming of the White Fathers to Zambia was influenced by Livingstone's writings. Jean Claude Ceillier (2011, 18) states that Cardinal Lavigerie read with great interest Livingstone's reports to the British and American newspapers during his travels.

There is a wealth of documentation of the White Fathers' mission to Kasama and Mpika Dioceses, attributable to the society's own powerful intellectual tradition (Vaughan, 2013, 1; Hinfelaar and Macola, 2003). About the coming of the White Fathers in the two dioceses, we learn that some were active in eastern Africa from 1878 and made contact with the Bemba in 1891. After establishing a post in the area of the Mambwe, north of the Bemba boundary (Garvey, 1977) and until the arrival of the first Jesuits in 1905 in Southern Province, the White Fathers were the sole Catholics in the territory. From Mambwe-Mwela, they moved into Bembaland led by Bishop Joseph Dupont nicknamed *Moto Moto* (Fire Fire) (Hinfelaar, 2015, 19) because of the ferocity of his expression and his temper (Gordon, 2012, 52). The White Fathers' founder had encouraged his pioneer missionaries to seek out and convert important rulers (Garvey, 1977), a medieval throwback called the 'Clovis model', which was premised on the logic that once the king had converted, the subjects would follow suit, thereby establishing a Christian kingdom (Hastings, 1994). In 1895, Dupont established contact with Chief Makasa, who invited him to open a mission station at Kayambi (Hinfelaar, 2003, 367). Dupont later left Zambia in 1912 and died in Tunisia in 1930. He had become a legendary figure in Bembaland partly because of the popular belief that for a short period he had held the Mwamba chieftaincy (Hinfelaar, 2003, 365). In 2000, his bones were brought back to Zambia and reburied on 15 December in the old chapel at Chilubula Mission (Hinfelaar, 2003, 365), which had served as the Headquarters of the White Fathers for years.

After founding Chilubula Mission, the White Fathers became, as Fr. Charles Hannecart (2012) described them, “intrepid sowers” of the Gospel, opening up new mission stations in line with their founder’s pastoral action for the development of parishes, the formation of the clergy, provision of schools, and youth ministry (Ceillier, 2011). The term ‘mission station’ as Reinhard Henkel (1989, 24) suggests, is so frequently used in Zambia that its meaning seems to be too obvious to require any definition. However, in its original use, the term ‘mission station’, meant, ‘a place of residence for one or more missionaries from Christendom’ (Henkel, 1989, 24). This meant that a mission station could only be called so when there was a European, American, Canadian or British missionary in residence. A well-known example of this in Zambia is the Lubwa Mission of the Free Church of Scotland which was presided over by David Kaunda from Malawi, but only came to be called a mission station when in 1913 the first European missionary, Reverend Robert McMinn, settled there (Henkel, 1989, 25). In this article, we will use ‘mission station’ and ‘parish’ interchangeably, but, what is popularly used after the departure of the White Fathers is ‘parish’.

Clearly, the White Fathers had the resources and the personnel from overseas. They created several mission stations, which became oases of not only Western civilisation, but Christianisation as well. The school, chapel and clinic were the tools of evangelisation. From the early days, although not from the outset, the White Fathers attempted to establish Christian villages, which entailed basic education. As a result, it became important for a mission to have a “school” in as many areas as possible (Carmody, 2002). Nevertheless, the main concern of the White Fathers was conversion to Catholicism and the formation of a native clergy. The school became pivotal in achieving the latter and in promoting the growth of the local church to the extent that, in 1922, Pope Pius XI petitioned missionaries to build schools and hospitals instead of churches and episcopal palaces (Carmody, 2002, 784).

Enthroned in 1993, the late Archbishop, James Mwewa Spaita, the third indigenous Zambian Archbishop of Kasama witnessed the White Fathers’ withdrawal and wrote:

The missionaries, like the apostles, realised their duty to promote vocations to the priesthood and the religious life. When I was a boy, there was a prayer for vocations at the end of mass.... There were many sermons about the priesthood and the religious life (Spaita, 2012, 10).

Most of the current priests in Mpika and Kasama dioceses are from parishes that were created by the White Fathers (Spaita, 2012). Their formation was an undertaking that Fr. Hugo participated in as a lecturer at Mpima Major Seminary from 1989 to 1993 and it is not philosophy or church history that he taught, but

Social Anthropology and African Traditional Religion. Our assumption is that his objective in teaching these courses was to assist seminarians to understand their own cultures from which they had become uprooted and alienated as a result of rapid social change in a modernising and Christianised society, but more importantly, to help them present the gospel to their parishioners meaningfully in the vernacular. In assessing the formation of priests in Zambia, Fr. Hugo stated forthrightly that the training was, and is still solid and numbers of vocations were encouraging (Interview, 22 November 2017). To be sure, as far back as 1919, Pope Benedict XV had emphasised, “When speaking of a native clergy, the church intends to produce a clergy who would be equally well educated as those in Europe or America. There should be no question of a second-class clergy” (Carmody, 2002, 784). If the indigenous priests were to take eventual responsibility for running their own church, this was necessary (Carmody, 2020, 29).

Promoting vocations to the priesthood in Kasama and Mpika Dioceses started as far back as 1921 when the White Fathers opened the first seminary in Zambia at Chilubula Mission. However, it took many years before the first black priest, Fr. John Chali Lyamibaba was ordained as a diocesan priest in 1946 (Spaita, 2012, 11). At least, when gauged by the vocations to priesthood since 1946 as observed by Archbishop Spaita (2012), the evangelisation of the people of what are Kasama and Mpika Dioceses today, must be regarded as one of the greatest success stories in the history of the White Fathers. However, vocations to priesthood in the fold or society of the White Fathers itself appeared long after the White Fathers had established themselves. The reason, according to Fr. Hugo is that, “The White Fathers were not intent on perpetuating their society amongst the local Zambian population.... Most of the young men were gently but firmly refused any access to their ranks” (Hinfelaar, 2004, 238). Even then, the number of indigenous diocesan priests remained small and the White Fathers themselves gradually became the leaders of the local Zambian church. They lost some of their missionary zeal, the will to go out to other regions and areas to announce the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The loyalty of a number of them was more to the local bishop, than to their own missionary society (Hinfelaar, 2004, 237). The first local (black) Zambian White Father priest was ordained on 25 August 1991 at Chilubula Mission together with nine diocesan priests on that particular day (Spaita, 2012) during the 100-year jubilee of the Church in Zambia.

Sadly, the jubilee and the departure of the White Fathers marked the beginning of a different departure – an unprecedented number of deaths of diocesan priests in the Archdiocese of Kasama. From 1991 to 2012, twenty-four (24) priests died (Spaita, 2012). Before his death in 2012, Fr. Joseph Mutashala composed a song about *ukushinshimuna imipashi* (venerating the spirits of

the dead) in memory of the deceased priests and reproduced it several times to add other deceased priests from other dioceses of the country. One of the priests of the Archdiocese informed us that on the eve of the departure of the White Fathers, there were about seventy-five diocesan priests (Interview by A. Tambatamba, 12 July 2020). Deaths and leaving the priesthood brought about a serious shortage of priests in parishes. While there were three to five White Fathers in a parish, currently, many parishes have only one or two priests in charge.

Fr. Hugo arrived at Mulanga Mission in 1958 and worked in several parishes. He once served as Rector of the Catechists' Training Centre at Mulilansolo. He ended up, figuratively speaking, being cooked in the Bemba pot. At Mulanga Mission, Fr. Hugo experienced the horror of the Lumpa Uprising that sent him into deeper reflection on the encounter of Christianity and African Traditional Religion. The Lumpa Uprising involved a clash between an African Independent Church under the leadership of a woman called Alice Lenshina and the colonial government soldiers just before Zambia's independence on 24 October 1964. The conflict resulted in the destruction of Lumpa villages and considerable loss of life. Fr. Hugo's research and publications, especially *Bemba-Speaking Women of Zambia in a Century of Religious Change (1892-1992)*, suggest that his missionary purpose was not primarily to reform or erase traditional religious Bemba beliefs in his parishes. He was sympathetic to the Bemba cultural beliefs that were at the same time religious, and made every effort to understand them. Because he had learned the CiBemba language, he was able to delve deep into 'the hearts of the people' (Ter Haar, 1996, 217). Fr. Hugo entered the world of the Bemba to see how their worldview had come to be. Consequently, while many of his contemporaries, particularly his superiors (and especially the bishops) treated Alice Lenshina's Lumpa Church and Emilio Mulolani's Church of the Sacred Heart as if they were a disease to be cured, Fr. Hugo set out to understand why these two Bembas founded their own churches. In so doing, he paid particular attention to the Bemba encounter with Christianity and in tandem therewith, their defensive reaction to Protestant and Catholic Christianity respectively.

Paying particular attention to the Bemba woman, Fr. Hugo studied her traditional religious roles and illustrated how modernity and Roman Catholicism had modified them. He developed his own anthropological framework with which to analyse Alice Lenshina's protest against Western Christianity. The three roles of the Bemba woman of *Chibinda wa Ng'anda* (Enabler of the Domestic Cult); *Kabumba wa Mapepo* (Initiator of Worship); and *NaChimbusa wa Chisungu* (Tutor of the Transcendent) had been, he argued, irrevocably disturbed. This was because the Bemba were socialised in the new cultural

matrix of modernity and the Christianity of the White Fathers – ordained male priests and Protestant clergymen of the United Church of Scotland at Lubwa. On Lenshina, Fr. Hugo remarked, “She pleaded for what later would be called: Inculturation (Hinfelaar, 1994, 99). About Mulolani, he opined, “It may be that if he had launched his movement a decade or more later, he would have been taken far more seriously by religious thinkers” (Hinfelaar, 1994, 125). Mulolani made a serious attempt to integrate traditional religion with the teaching of the Catholic Church in a way that was attractive to the Bemba speaking women as enablers of the domestic cult, initiators of worship and transmitter of the sacred heritage (Hinfelaar, 1994). Tarcicius Mukuka, who interviewed Mulolani in 2010, opined that Mulolani argued for Afro-centric Christianity, Zambian Catholicism, Christian egalitarianism and a Maria or Mary-centric Christianity, and because of the centrality of the woman in Bemba traditional cosmology Mulolani added *Namfumu Maria* (Mary, mother of Jesus) to the Trinity (Personal communication, 10 April 2021).

Above all, we argue, Fr. Hugo’s sourcing of funds from contacts back home to build Bauleni Parish and a Centre named Faith and Encounter Centre Zambia (FENZA) in Lusaka is a clear illustration of the profound influence that traditional Bemba religious beliefs had had on him and he on them. At FENZA Fr. Hugo was aiming to help Zambian Christians to speak of Christ in their own languages, using their own symbol systems.

The parishes that were established and remained under the White Fathers for many years were not exclusively manned by expatriate priests from Holland, France, Germany, Canada and England. Black Zambian diocesan priests also served in the White Fathers’ mission stations or parishes as diocesan priests and lived with their expatriate colleagues. In fact, before ordination, many seminarians from Kasama and Mpika Dioceses did their pastoral experience in the parishes of the White Fathers. However, we learned from a White Father that some black priests resisted appointments to the mission stations under the White Fathers because they felt that “they were done with formation and did not want to be subjected to the control of whites” (E-mail to A.Cheyeka, 8 January 2020). The point to repeat is Archbishop Spaita (2012)’s acknowledgement that, to date, nearly all the vocations in Kasama and Mpika Dioceses were nurtured at the White Fathers’ mission stations. The White Fathers were the only Catholic missionary society of priests in the two dioceses. The Zambian priests we interviewed had their vocations to the priesthood fostered by the White Fathers. They returned to the parishes that had been under the White Fathers for pastoral work and, as parish priests or assistant parish priests upon ordination. What we focus on here are their views rooted in their daily experiences of the absence of the White Fathers.

Reasons for the Departure of the White Fathers

Two research questions of the study were utilised for this article: How did Zambian priests explain the White Fathers’ withdraw from Kasama and Mpika Dioceses? What is the major challenge that the black priests are facing after the departure of the White Fathers? In our analysis of the data, two broad themes became evident: 1) Decreasing numbers of White Fathers, increasing numbers of diocesan priests and a belief in ‘mission accomplished’, and 2) Lack of money to carry out pastoral work effectively.

Decreasing Numbers of White Fathers, Increasing Numbers of Diocesan Priests and Accomplishment of Mission

From the White Fathers’ local leadership, we learned that the withdrawal, *...was not a deliberate withdrawal. It was observed that the number of missionaries started going down, and the missionaries thought of withdrawing and giving way to the diocesan priests whose number started increasing very fast, more especially after the centenary celebration, which was in 1991 when the Archdiocese of Kasama ordained nine diocesan priests while the White Fathers ordained the first ever black White Father by the name of Fr. Patrick Mumbi. It was in the same year that Mpika Diocese in Muchinga Province also ordained three priests. Looking at the difference and the number of years – after one hundred years of Christian faith, the White Fathers had the first black father in 1991. Therefore, it was good to start handing over to the diocesan priests whose number started increasing and it was symbolic.* (Interview by A. Tambatamba, 16 November 2019).

Our interviewees repeated this response in different ways. Fr. Mumbi added, “It was not just a process of handing over, but it was also Zambianisation [localisation], so that the church could become indigenous, grow and look after itself” (Interview by A. Tambatamba, 17 November 2019). In the light of Fr. Mumbi’s point, it can be said that the White Fathers being an international congregation, priests from Europe, England and North America would have been replaced with their fellow priests from Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The Zambian clergy expected and welcomed the development of a Zambian clergy, but they were not prepared for such a rapid reduction in the numbers of white missionaries.

A priest, who had been ordained seven years after the White Fathers had left, said that the White Fathers had completed their programme because:

... They came for their mission not actually to train indigenous Zambians to become White Fathers but rather that they become ministers to their

own people... They had actually done their mission, so they started to let go many of the parishes especially here in Northern Province in Kasama Archdiocese (Interview by A. Tambatamba, 23 August 2019).

Having had two pastoral experiences in a community of the White Fathers during his formation as a priest and full of praises for the White Fathers, another priest explained the withdrawal of the White Fathers as follows:

The reason they [White Fathers] came was to establish missions, but it seems that their founder told them not to stay in those missions for ever. Eventually, they were supposed to groom the local people who could take up those activities and the mission they were carrying out (Interview by A. Tambatamba, 10 August 2019).

In an interview with one retired bishop who had served as bishop of Mbala-Mpika Diocese from 1987 to 2004, we were told: "White Fathers are missionaries and everywhere missionaries go, they do not go there to stay, they go to evangelise people and after they have seen that there is enough evangelisation, they leave.... So, time had come for them to move on to some other places. They moved to Lusaka and opened a new mission field in Western province " (Interview by A. Tambatamba, 14 September 2020).

One achievement of the White Fathers in Zambia thirty-five years after they had arrived in Zambia is the founding, by Bishop Etienne-Benoît Larue, of a congregation of religious sisters called Sisters of the Child Jesus in 1926 at Chilubula. A sister there, with fifty-eight years of sisterhood behind her, narrated her understanding of the departure of the society of her founder as follows:

I would rather say that the White Fathers phased out from these two dioceses to obey the mandate of their founder, Cardinal Charles Lavigerie. He directed them to let Africans become apostles to their own people. As such, they were sent to establish local churches.... with this spirit of accomplishing their mission and move on. The presence of a local bishop, priests and religious and Catholic laity were signs of this achievement. That is why they delayed in recruiting priestly and religious vocations to their own society (Interview by A. Tambatamba, 2 June 2020).

This sister, being a product of the White Fathers, knew their history off-the-cuff. Her fellow sister who had served for sixty-seven years at the time of the interview had this to say:

They had started to become few in number and there were no others coming from Europe and America. They were also becoming old.... Additionally, their constitution stipulated that after evangelising people

From “White Fathers” to “Black Fathers” in Kasama and Mpika Dioceses in Zambia

for a hundred years, they were mandated to go to another place. This is because they saw that people had become mature in faith and more especially that the two dioceses had their own bishops. So, from Kasama and Mpika Dioceses, they went to Mongu Diocese where they opened new mission stations (Interview by A. Tambatamba, 19 August 2019).

The third Sister who was interviewed from the Sisters of the Child Jesus had served for forty-one years. She volunteered the following explanation:

The main reason was that they were becoming fewer. Most of them were too old and there were no White Fathers coming any more. They would say, “Now it is up to you, we have done our best, you can now be on your own. It is one hundred years since we came (Interview by A. Tambatamba, 13 September 2019).

All the local priests interviewed, although not as detailed as the Sisters of the Child Jesus, who quite clearly had learned the history of Cardinal Lavigerie during their noviciate, mentioned ageing, no more vocations back home, appearance of local priests and marking of the centenary as reasons for the withdrawal of the White Fathers. At one parish, the priest in charge responded:

The reason they came was to establish the missions but it seems they were told by their founder not to stay in those missions forever. Eventually, they were supposed to groom the local people who could take up the mission stations.... That is why if you can remember in our archdiocese, the White Fathers were not very keen on making or grooming the local priests to be White Fathers. However, they were encouraging young boys to join the diocese by becoming priests so that they could take up that mission. The second is that they were growing old and some of them were dying while others were retiring and going back to their homes. Because of their age, they could not manage the many parishes hence, they began to think that their mission was done and they had groomed enough clergy, the local priests, who could run the parishes (Interview by A. Tambatamba, 19 August 2019).

All respondents explained the withdrawal of the White Fathers from Kasama and Mpika Dioceses in accordance with the first theme of “decreasing numbers of White Fathers, increasing numbers of local priests and mission accomplished”. A layperson who had worked for the White Fathers since 1959 stressed the “mission accomplished” explanation: “What I heard was that Father Superior told them to go back to their homeland and hand over the church to the locals because they were done with their work” (Interview by A. Tambatamba, 20 August 2019).

The respondents felt that the White Fathers had, in accordance with Venn and Anderson's theory, provided schooling, pastoral care, sacraments, buildings, finances and leadership, and nurtured vocations to the priesthood at different mission stations or parishes. When they proved that the dioceses of Kasama and Mpika were self-governing, and self-propagating although not, as evidence from our data suggests, fully self-supporting, they left. This was because, as Fr. Hugo had put it: "The grains of wheat had fallen into fertile soil and seed had given birth to a strong and vibrant Catholic Church in Zambia, ready to make history in the next century" (Hinfelaar, 2004, 432) under Black Fathers [*our addition*]. It is important to point out that, as far as self-governing is concerned, the Archdiocese of Kasama has been under local bishops since 1965 when Fr. Clement Chabukasansha (Diocesan priest) was consecrated bishop taking over from Bishop Marcel Daubechies. However, what is Mpika Diocese today in Muchinga Province only came to be under a black bishop when, in 1987, Bishop Teleshore Mpundu succeeded Bishop Adolf Fürstenberg of what was then known as Mbala-Mpika Diocese. In 2007 Mpika Diocese was created and Fr. Ignatius Chama became bishop of the new diocese.

One hypothetical question that would be interesting to answer is, would the White Fathers have remained in Kasama and Mpika Dioceses had they been receiving priests from their home countries? A concrete question would be: was, as David Bosch (2001, 5) calls it, a "certificate of maturity" granted too early to the black priests? While the local priests in this study praised the incredible work of the White Fathers, they felt that the White Fathers left too early. In the interviews, without exception, all the local priests bemoaned the situation of unpreparedness that they were left in by the White Fathers. In short, it would seem, from interviews, that, the black priests were not ready yet to continue the work of their missionary counterparts. At issue was the financial implications of the departure of the white missionaries.

Implications of the Departure of the White Fathers on the Dioceses

The local Zambian priests reported the implications of the departure of the White Fathers with a deep sense of concern. This is because, we think, it touched on their livelihoods and their relationship with their parishioners. One priest aptly expressed this: "Somehow, they [White Fathers] never prepared the Christians for their exit. They were also supposed to tell the Christians that they were phasing out and that the people who were taking over did not have money" (Interview by A. Tambatamba, 22 August 2019).

Challenge of Insufficient Money to Effectively Carry Out Pastoral Work

Preliminary data from the interviews indicates that the "Black Priests" are facing

financial challenges. The departure of the White Fathers has meant that the black bishops of Kasama Archdiocese and Mpika Diocese have to find resources to pay stipends for their priests and to fund developmental and pastoral projects. Sympathetic to the situation of the local bishops and their priests, one of the local Zambian White Fathers said, “Although the White Fathers have left, they should look at the Church of Africa and help financially.... It should not be a complete divorce (Interview by A. Tambatamba, 2 August 2019). Another black Zambian of the Missionaries of Africa was of the view that there was not enough preparation done for the diocesan priests (Interview by A. Tambatamba, 16 November 2019). We learned that there was not a considered handover of parishes to the diocesan priests because the White Fathers were simply taken out of the parishes and keys to their houses handed to the bishops (E-mail to Cheyeka, 8 January 2021).

The diocesan priests who came to occupy the mission stations did and do not have established resources (monetary or organisational) to carry out the work of evangelisation as did the priests they took over from. Father Hugo understood the situation this way: “While their priestly training is solid, they have the challenge of finances. While missionaries [White Fathers] used to write back home to ask for financial help, local priests do not have the resources – money, motor vehicles and material things to give to the poor” (Interview by A. Cheyeka, 22 November 2017). He went on to explain, “Africans saw us with money and thought that they would be like us. They might want to do something for the people, but they do not have the means. Unfortunately, back home [Europe] young people are not in church, so there is no collection of money” (Interview by A. Cheyeka, 22 November 2017). The significant point to make is that the sources drying up or which have dried up have tended to be those that could be used for specifically religious purposes.

The question of finances will be dealt with in two ways: the generation of money and fiscal discipline. All the priests interviewed complained about lack of money in their parishes, more so, those in the villages. In the Archdiocese of Kasama, a priest faulted the White Fathers for not having invested in real estate and companies. He complained that:

They [White Fathers] did not leave a lot of buildings. If they had invested some money in companies or estates like houses in town so that we could be getting rentals in order to run the diocese, that never happened. This has had a negative effect on us (Interview by A. Tambatamba, 22 August 2019).

The White Fathers were also accused by one priest of Kasama Archdiocese of having taken with them all the money from the treasury. He said:

The White Fathers have a religious approach where they have a common

coffer and they kept the money together which was used for pastoral purposes. And when they took the money and created their own treasury leaving the diocesans to stand on their own, I think they removed the scaffolds too quickly when the building was not completed (Interview by A. Tambatamba, 12 August 2019).

Clearly, there are two complaints against the White Fathers. First, they are accused of not having left money or money generating investments for the Zambian priests to run their parish houses and the parishes, and second, they did not prepare the parishioners to accept the poverty of the local priests. As regards the view that the White Fathers had taken with them the money instead of leaving it behind for the local priests to use, a sister contested this by arguing:

The White Fathers left a ranch with five hundred head of cattle, but there is no cattle any more. They left a garage with machinery, but there is no machinery because it has all been sold. The diocesan priests have failed to manage the fat account, which the White Fathers left with the diocesan treasury. In short, the diocesan priests depleted the account, which the White Fathers left. Maybe this is because the White Fathers did not train the diocesan priests how to manage resources (Interview by A. Tambatamba, 4 July 2020).

Interestingly, the priest who made the complaint that was challenged by the sister cited above, lamented, without any sense of contradiction, "I remember the White Fathers left a garage, trucks and a ranch full of cattle, but we have failed to sustain this so as to boost our coffers. We have become dependent on the Christians [parishioners]" (Interview by A. Tambatamba, 12 August 2019).

Another priest expressed his perspective on the local Zambian diocesan priests' situation after the departure of the White Fathers in the following statements:

The White Fathers had the resources and were highly supported especially because they had a common coffer, which was supported from abroad. To date, the White Fathers who have remained in Zambia are being supported. However, for us, we depend on the local people. If a vehicle breaks down, it is difficult to repair it and when it becomes a non-runner, buying a new one is almost impossible (Interview by A. Tambatamba, 10 August 2019).

Not aiming at a grand, large-scale survey, but with the intention to indicate responses across the country, Austin Cheyeka's (2012) survey on Zambian Catholic priests' economic situation disclosed that, overall, in many rural

parishes, it was dire. In addition, in answering the question, are the local priests enjoying the same deference as the European priests? Cheyeka found that parishioners tended to compare their current situation to the situation they were in when missionaries from overseas were present. In the present article, we note that participants believed that the local priest was not regarded in high esteem by the people who had become dependent, especially for material things, on the White Fathers. A catechist told us that, “There has been opposition and lack of confidence in the local priests. The local people are saying that the diocesan priests are young, have no money and are not doing a good job of leading the church” (Interview by A. Tambatamba, 17 August 2019). One parish priest who had been Rector of a major seminary shed more light on the observation of the Catechist by pointing out that:

The negatives [about the withdrawal of the White Fathers] are that, first of all, the handover was done too quickly in some parishes and some diocesan priests were not ready to assume responsibilities of those parishes, because they were still young and had no experience of running parishes. Worst of all, they did not have resources in terms of transport and for maintenance of buildings. It became very difficult to run parishes (Interview by A. Tambatamba, 23 August 2019).

The mentality of the parishioners especially in the remote rural areas was that they belonged to a rich church. It is not surprising that we learned that some parishioners were unsympathetic to the situation of their priests whom they branded as stingy (Interview by A. Tambatamba, 10 August 2019).

Is it tenable to argue that the White Fathers did not train the local priests how to run parishes? From the findings, it is clear that, missiologically, the White Fathers adhered to the objectives of their society. It was their unashamed aim to establish the Catholic Church in the Archdiocese of Kasama and Diocese of Mpika and move on. However, they did not do so until a century elapsed, when the flow of Western missionaries stopped and actually became a thing of the past. Black priests have no doubt found cosy parish houses to live in with modern Western conveniences. From the interviews, black priests are of the view that the White Fathers did not prepare the parishioners to be led by their local priests who would not meet their material needs. Additionally, blame has been put on the White Fathers for not having prepared black priests to live as black local Zambian priests without foreign aid. To this end, proud of his capabilities in pastoral work, one parish priest said, “When it comes to the spiritual needs of our parishioners, we have continued to do what the White Fathers did, but it is difficult for us to provide the material things” (Interview by A. Tambatamba, 19 August 2019).

The Withdrawal of the White Fathers in the Light of Venn and Anderson's Theory

In the final analysis, not all the “three selves” of self-propagating church, self-sustaining church and self-governing church in Venn and Anderson's theory of indigenisation have been achieved in the Mpika Diocese and Archdiocese of Kasama. There are two particular concerns of some black priests, namely, unpreparedness and the unavailability of finances to run the parishes. These translate into the absence of ‘self-sustainability’. The retired bishop we interviewed argued: “For me, it didn't come early enough [the withdrawal of the White Fathers]. When the White Fathers are not there any more, there is no one to look up to except yourself” (Interview by A. Tambatamba, 14 September 2020). In his book, *Facing the Challenge: Self-Sustainability for the Catholic Church in Zambia*, Fr. Marc Nsanzurwimo, an African priest of the Missionaries of Africa reminds us of the centenary in 1991 as having provided an opportunity for reflection about self-sustenance. In the pastoral letter, ‘You Shall Be My Witnesses’, the bishops asked the local church the following questions: Are we ready to accept greater responsibilities? Are missionaries themselves ready to take only a supportive role? What steps are we taking to increase the material self-reliance of our church (1991, 9-10)?

The study found that priests and their bishops have ideas on how they can raise funding to run their parishes. Farming is one of the ways that they mentioned. One ex-priest argued: “In fact the White Fathers had prepared the diocesan priests because they left land and farms on mission stations” (Interview by A. Cheyeka, 13 September 2020). The retired bishop argued: “We have vast pieces of land the parishes can utilise for agriculture. There is land on Kayambi, Chilubula, Mulanga and Chilonga because missionaries got a lot of land that would be used for agriculture but is underutilised and being taken up by squatters” (Interview by A. Tambatamba, 14 September 2020). If, as we have learned, local priests are having financial challenges, and if farming requires machinery and start-up capital, it is probably understandable that large pieces of land remain unutilised. Overall, farming requires reasonable investment, dedication and unflinching interest. It was established that there was no black priest doing farming. It was also learned that some priests had turned to teaching to draw a salary from the government in order to look after themselves, much to the disapproval of their bishops who have dismissed some of them from the priesthood. The late President of Zambia, Mr. Michael Sata, a staunch Catholic himself, had suggested to the bishops that priests should take certificates in pedagogy and be employed by the Ministry of Education as teachers so that they could sustain themselves (Cheyeka, 2012). The bishops were unenthusiastic.

From our interviews we learned that some black priests were convinced that the White Fathers had created a dependence syndrome among their parishioners. If this is the case, we argue that it was unintentional, because the White Fathers did not aim to create "Rice Christians", dependant on the missionary and converting because of what they could get out of it, although this could have been the motive for some. Our argument is that the gospel of Jesus Christ includes clothing the naked, feeding the hungry, providing water to the thirsty, and so on. The wretched of Northern and Muchinga provinces where the two dioceses this article is dealing with are found, could not, to paraphrase Scripture, live by the Word of God alone because as Archbishop Spaita (2012, 83) pointed out: "Northern Province and Muchinga Province have no industries and poverty levels are very high." This would explain the White Fathers' handouts and after all, the poor will always be present together with the rich.

The impression must not be created that 1991 provided the first opportunity to the indigenous clergy to begin to reflect on self-sustenance. We note that Fr. Alex Chanda had in 1986 published a book on the subject, but after 1991, Fr. Ignatius Mwebwe, Secretary General of the Zambia Conference of Catholic Bishops (as it is known today), re-opened the debate particularly within the clergy and religious and later to the laity (Nsanzurwimo, 2003). In his writings in church periodicals, Fr. Mwebwe urged the church to initiate self-reliance projects and challenged missionary founding organisations to prioritise investment (Nsanzurwimo, 2003). It is a known fact that priests and their bishops in Zambia, all lament that resources are not as easily accessed as hitherto when the White Fathers were in the parishes or at the treasury of the dioceses. But as Paul Gifford (2015, 94) observes, this is not prompting a move to 'self-reliance' which has only become a mantra as nobody acts on it.

There is one more important issue that black priests have to address: competition from other churches and sects. The black priests are now in a competitive environment because they and their flock are facing Pentecostal Christianity, which is no longer an urban religion, but is spreading to rural areas with an appealing message of health and prosperity. Seventh Day Adventism is now in every part of the country due to internal migrations of people and Adventist government workers retiring and introducing Adventism among the people they choose to live with. The New Apostolic Church with massive funding from Germany is another growing church reaching out to rural areas. To use Ulric Luig's words (1997, 231), it is a 'free market of Christianity' in Zambia today. In this regard, some Catholic vernacular songs warn Catholics not to fall prey to invitations from and visitations by Jehovah's Witnesses, Pentecostals and others. One Namwanga song is entitled *Sichenjeleni* (Beware!). It explicitly mentions, "Visitors dressed in black suits with neck ties and carrying brief cases,

who come to ask Catholics about their church and try to convince them not to pray to Mary". The song goes on to explain the position of Mary in the Catholic faith.

Archbishop Spaita expressed the seriousness of this issue in the following statement: "The proliferation of churches has posed many problems in a dominantly Catholic area. Many of these churches such as the Seventh Day Adventists, Watchtowers [Jehovah's Witness] have an anti-Catholic attitude" (Spaita, 2012, 83). However, whenever the laity of his diocese approached the Archbishop to request that they 'retaliate' the newer churches' anti-Catholic oratory, he told them, "*Leave them alone. Our call is to be faithful followers of Jesus. Leave the rest to the Lord*" (Spaita, 2012, 83). While it is possible for the older people to remain faithful to the Catholic faith, it is very difficult for younger people to do so in a liberalised religious space. Historically, even the first White Fathers in the two dioceses had to compete for converts with the United Church of Scotland, in what is today Chinsali District in Muchinga Province (Oger, 1991). Moreover, because of quarrels over converts between missionaries, the British South African Company that administered the then North-Eastern Rhodesia created what became known as spheres of influence which Catholic missionary societies opposed and many a time circumvented (Carmody, 2020).

Conclusion

The White Fathers have been in Zambia since 1891 and they are still in Zambia. Currently, there are thirty-four of them in the country from within Africa and Europe, serving in the dioceses of Chipata and Kabwe and the Archdiocese of Kasama (at the formation house which has been maintained), and the Archdiocese of Lusaka. The oldest among them is 79 while the youngest is 31 years old. Also, worth noting is the fact that twenty-eight (28) black Zambian "White Fathers" are working in other countries – in Africa and Europe as missionaries.

This article has provided information, based on one-on-one interviews on the experiences of the transition that took place in 1991, from local Zambian diocesan priests, sisters, catechists and some lay Catholics. In the opinion of Zambian Catholics, the missiological theory of Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson on the indigenisation of churches has been confirmed only to an extent because not all the "three selves" of self-propagating church, self-sustaining church and self-governing church have been achieved. It can be concluded that 'self-sustenance' is a huge challenge especially in the village parishes. However, there is no doubt, as Hastings (1994, 298) argued, the founder of the White Father's lasting legacy in the dioceses of Kasama and Mpika lies in his general insistence upon establishing a viable church, upon assimilating oneself to Africa, upon

the learning of languages superlatively, and upon the re-establishment of a lengthy and structured catechumenate. The vernacularisation of the Catholic faith in Kasama and Mpika Dioceses by the White Fathers in itself symbolised commitment to inculturation (Stanley, 2007). Fr. Hugo, shaped by his Dutch culture, the Missionaries of Africa’s charisma, and Bemba culture, shared this commitment, thereby contributing quite significantly to the growth of the Catholic Church which is now in the hands of Zambians.

Emphasising that the Catholic Church had become well established in the two provinces, Fr. Hugo argued, “The Catholic Church in Zambia is well established. It was there before the nation of Zambia; it was there when the nation was born and it is part of the nation today” (Interview by A. Cheyeka, 22 November 2017). Fr. Hugo had captured the spirit of the Vatican II Council in 1964 and of the 1994 African Synod, which informed the Catholic Church’s policy on inculturation and in line with the policy, perhaps inevitably, as a White Father, he supported the indigenisation of the personnel running the Church in the land of his first encounter with African Traditional Religion. However, as indicated by respondents during the ongoing fieldwork, this turn of events has been driven, at least, in part, by the inexorable diminishing of European vocations, ageing, mission fatigue and increasing numbers of the diocesan black priests. The future of Catholicism in the Archdiocese of Kasama and Mpika dioceses is now in the hands of local priests and their bishops. The transition from Western missionaries to the local clergy is complete. The massive flow of Western missionaries into Zambia is in fact, now something of the past across missionary societies in Zambia (Lado, 2020).

How will the black priests address the economic challenges that were acknowledged in interviews? That is the question that bishops and their priests have to address. It is noteworthy, however, that, twenty-nine (29) years after the White Fathers left the two dioceses discussed in this article, no parish has been closed. However, sacraments central to the practice of the Catholic faith have not fully been administered to the faithful in outstations or centres due to limited numbers of priests and logistical challenges resulting from lack of money available from local priests’ resources and from impoverished parishioners of remote rural areas.

This article has proposed a new area of missiology specific to the Catholic Church in Zambia, namely, the departure of missionaries and the takeover by local priests. This new development requires more attention in the scholarship of Zambian and African Catholicism in general (Lado, 2020). The question that Zambian Church historians have to answer is the one asked by an English anthropologist who spent many years in Zambia teaching at a Catholic mission school for boys. Anthony Simpson (2003, 377) comments: “Many Catholics in

Europe and North America point to Africa as the place of growth and hope for the renewal of a western church which is embroiled in scandals and crises and whose numbers of clergy, religious and lay people continue to fall. But what kind of church will this be? And what implicit knowledge will guide those who lead it?"

References

- Agbonkhanmeghe, E. Orobator. 2008. *Theology Brewed in an African Pot: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine from an African Perspective*. Nairobi: Paulines.
- Bosch, David. 1991. *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- Carmody, Brendan. 2020. *The Emergence of Teacher Education in Zambia*. Bingley: Emerald Publishing.
- Carmody, Brendan. 2001. "The Nature and Role of Christian Conversion in Zambia." In *Religious Conversion: An African Perspective*. (Ed) Brendan Carmody. Lusaka: Gadsden Publishers.
- Carmody, Brendan. 2002. "The Politics of Catholic Education in Zambia: 1891-1964." *Journal of Church and State* 44, 4, 775-805.
- Ceillier, Jean-Claude. 2011. *History of the Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers)*. Nairobi: Paulines.
- Chanda, Alex. 1986. *Development through Self-reliance. A Theological Perspective on Zambian Experience*. Ndola: Mission Press.
- Cheyeka, Austin. 2012. "A Layman's Appreciation of the Indigenous Roman Catholic Diocesan Priest in a 'Church in Transition' in Zambia." *Journal of Contemporary Issues* 29, 17-32.
- Cheyeka, Austin; Masaiti, Gift and Mulenga, M. Innocent. 2011. "Withdrawal of European Missionaries from St. Antony's Catholic Secondary School: What are the Implications?" *Journal of Humanities* 11, 47-65.
- Chuba, S. Bwalya. 2013. *A History of Early Christian Missions and Church Unity in Zambia*. Ndola: Mission Press.
- Garvey, Brian. 1977. "Bemba Chiefs and Catholic Missions, 1898-1935." *The Journal of African History* 18, 3, 411-426.
- Garvey, Brian. 1994. *Bemba Land Church; Religious and Social Change in South Central Africa 1891-1964*. Leiden: Brill.
- Gifford, Paul. 2015. *Christianity, Development and Modernity in Africa*. London: Hurst & Company.
- Gordon, M. David. 2021. *Invisible Agents: Spirits in a Central African History*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press.
- Hannecart, K. 2012. *Intrepid Sowers: From Nyasa to Chipata 1889-2012*. Rome: White Fathers Archives.

From "White Fathers" to "Black Fathers" in Kasama and Mpika Dioceses in Zambia

- Hastings, Adrian. 1994. *The Church in Africa 1450-1950*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Henkel, Reinhard. 1989. *Christian Missions in Africa: A Social Geographical Study of the Impact of their Activities in Zambia*. Band 3. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag.
- Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson. <http://www.internationalbulletin.org/issues/1981-04/1981-04-168-shenk.pdf> (accessed August 3 2020).
- Hinfelaar, Hugo. 1994. *Bemba-Speaking Women of Zambia in a Century of Religious Change (1892-1992)*. Leiden, New York, Köln: Brill.
- Hinfelaar, Hugo. 2004. *History of the Catholic Church in Zambia 1895-1995*. Lusaka: Bookworld Publishers.
- Hinfelaar, Marja. 2003. "Remembering Bishop Joseph Dupont (1850-1930) in Present-Day Zambia." *Journal of Religion in Africa* 33, Fasc. 4: Expressions of Christianity in Zambia 365-376. <http://www.jstor.com/stable/1581748?seq=1&cid=pdf-> (accessed on 24 June 2020).
- Hinfelaar, Marja and Macola, Giacomo. 2003. "The White Fathers' Archive in Zambia." *History in Africa* 30, 439-445. <http://www.jstor.com/stable/3172099> (accessed on 24 June 2020).
- Lavertu, Robert, "Growth of our Catholic Church in Africa." A Paper Presented at a Conference on 'Religion and Society'. 6 -9 April 2016.
- Lado, Ludovic. 2020. Catholicism as a Lived Religion in Africa. *Religion Compass*, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/rec3.12379>.
- Luig, Ulric. 1997. *Conversion as Social Process. A History of Missionary Christianity among the Valley Tonga, Zambia*. Munster: Lit Verlag.
- Nsanzurwimo, Marc. 2003. *Facing the Challenge: Self-Sustainability for the Catholic Church in Zambia*. Ndola: Mission Press.
- Oger, Louis. 1991. "Where a Scattered Flock Gathered" *Ilondola 1934-1984: A Catholic Mission in a Protestant Area, (Free Church of Scotland) Chinsali District (Zambia)*. Ilondola: Missionaries of Africa.
- Simpson, Anthony. 2003. "Personhood and Self in Catholic Formation in Zambia." *Journal of Religion in Africa* 33, 44, 377-400.
- Stanley, Brian. 2007. "Inculturation: Historical Background, Theological Foundations and Contemporary Questions." *Transformation* 24, 1, 21-27.
- Ter Haar, Gerrie (1996). "Bemba-Speaking Women of Zambia in a Century of Religious Change (1892-1992) by Hugo F. Hinfelaar." *Journal of Religion in Africa* 26. Fasc. , 216-219.
- Udelhoven, Bernhard. 2017. "The Devil of the Missionary Church: The White Fathers and Catholic Evangelisation in Zambia." *Journal of Global Catholicism* 2, 1, 5, 70-109. <https://crossworks.holycross.edu/jge/vol2/iss1/5> (accessed on 21 2020).

Anthony B. Tambatamba, Austin M. Cheyeka and Tomaida C. Milingo

Vaughan, Megan. 2013. "Translating the Soul: Death and Catholicism in Northern Zambia." In *Death, Belief and Politics in Central African History*. (Eds.) Walima T. Kalusa and Megan Vaughan. Lusaka: Lembani Trust.

Women in Religio-Cultural History: A Reflection on their Representation in Hugo Hinfelaar's Scholarly Work in Zambia, 1960s to 1990s

Nelly Mwale and Joseph Chita

University of Zambia

Although Catholic missionary historians have contributed to the writing of Zambia's many histories, the attempt at documenting women's place in religio-cultural history in the country has been overshadowed by the prominence of masculine histories. Using the example of Hugo Hinfelaar who captures women's histories in his scholarly work, this article explores the representation of the place of women in the religio-cultural history of Zambia in order to highlight Hinfelaar's contributions to the study of women and to Zambia's religio-cultural history. Informed by African feminist theory, it draws on a historical study which utilises document review and analyses the data through 'restorying' of purposively selected themes in Hinfelaar's work. The article shows that Hinfelaar represents women as pillars in the growth of the church and active players in religio-cultural heritage, as seen from their religious vocations and reactions to missionary subordination of indigenous knowledge. The article advances that Hinfelaar's representation of women ignites discourses which affirm that although unrecognised, women do play important roles in religio-cultural history. It also provides insights for the study of women's history in ways that reveal the historian's favouring of the minority in the wider web of history often grounded in patriarchy.

Keywords:

Women, religio-cultural history, Hugo Hinfelaar, representation, African feminism, Zambia.

Introduction

This article addresses the following research question: How is the place of women in the religio-cultural history of Zambia represented in Hugo Hinfelaar's scholarly work? The research question purposively focuses on Hugo Hinfelaar (henceforth Hinfelaar) owing to the nature of his scholarly contributions to Zambian church history. For example, as opposed to upholding the tone of missionary scholarship of his time, often preoccupied with historicising the growth of religious orders and other aspects of the Catholic Church in the country, Hinfelaar's work has a unique focus on women. For example, Coyne (1970), Lane (1991) and Murphy (2003) researched the history of the Jesuits

Women in Religio-Cultural History: A Reflection on their Representation in Hugo Hinfelaar's Scholarly Work in Zambia, 1960s to 1990s

in the country, while Cumming *et al* (2003) and O'Sullivan (2014) focused on Francis Mazziari (Conventual Franciscan) and the history of the Capuchins in Zambia, respectively. O'Shea (1986) traced the growth of the Catholic Church in Zambia with reference to the Copperbelt region, whereas others, such as Carmody (1992; 2002), have provided a rich history of Catholic education and its contributions to the country. Thus, Hinfelaar's work stands out for its interest in women in a context whose history has been overshadowed by masculine histories.

The article is also driven by gaps in existing scholarship on religion and gender in Zambia and in Zambian religious history. Thus, while Hinfelaar's work remains a key point of reference in studies of religion and gender in the Zambian context, there has been little in-depth analysis of Hinfelaar's account of women's contributions to religious and cultural life in Zambia. Studies have related to Hinfelaar's work without sufficiently delving into his contributions to the study of women. For example, Ipenburg (1991), Kaunda and Nadar (2012), Sendapu (2016) and Hackett (2017) draw on Hinfelaar's narrative of the Lumpa Church, while Kangwa (2011), Kaunda and Nadar (2012), Kaunda (2013) and Kaunda and Kaunda (2016), among others, refer to Hinfelaar's descriptions of the roles of Bemba women in Bemba religion. But as this article will show, there are other aspects of Hinfelaar's writing on women that have not been substantially explored.

Additionally, although Hinfelaar has contributed tremendously to African history through theology and religious cultural studies in Zambia, his work has not been the subject of inquiry. For instance, Marja Hinfelaar (2003) affirms that one of Hinfelaar (Hugo)'s contributions to Sub-Saharan African history was through his efforts in setting up the White Fathers Archive in Zambia. Despite this, his contributions have hardly been a subject of study in Zambian scholarship. Thus, while other Catholic missionaries in the history of the Church have been remembered in scholarship, Hinfelaar's contributions have yet to be given due attention in Zambian church history scholarship¹. This article makes a step in that direction by exploring the representations of women's contributions to the religio-cultural history of Zambia in Hinfelaar's scholarly work.

By purposively focusing on Hinfelaar and his representations of women's place in the religio-cultural history of the country, the article seeks to provide an example of how the religio-cultural history of women in Zambia has continually been constructed. This is deemed significant for providing insights for the study of women's history in ways that reveal the historian's favouring of the minority in the wider web of history often grounded in patriarchy. The article should thus be of interest to scholars of church history, African Indigenous Religion and general women's studies. The discussion unfolds by describing the setting

in which Hinfelaar's representation of women in the religio-cultural history of Zambia is situated, the theoretical framework, and the research design and methods. Thereafter, the article discusses Hinfelaar's portrayal of women in his scholarly work before drawing the conclusion.

The Context of Hugo Hinfelaar's Representation of Women's Place in the Religio-Cultural History of Zambia

Although the historical period on which Hinfelaar's scholarly work focuses stretches back to the 1890s, this article is situated in Zambia's post-independence context. It particularly covers the period from the 1960s to the 1990s, a time characterised by numerous trends that directly and indirectly shaped the place of women in the country's religio-cultural history.

Politically, the country won its independence from Britain in 1964. Taylor (2006) observes that independence brought new opportunities and challenges. For example, whereas colonial rule was an oppressive system of governance that could enforce compliance and cooperation, the new government had to find a way to unite Zambia's 73 different ethnolinguistic groups into one nation by non-coercive means (Taylor, 2006). Since 1964, the country has gone through an era of multi-party democracy (1964–1972) and one-party rule (1972–1990) before reverting to multi-party democracy in 1991. The 1990s were characterised by winds of political change that saw the birth of democratic governance.

Economically, the country has been dependent on the copper mining industry. However, the output of copper fell to a record low of 228,000 metric tons in 1998 after a 30-year decline owing to lack of investment, low copper prices and uncertainty over privatisation (Hampwaye and Mweemba, 2006, 105). As a result, the socio-economic conditions of the majority of Zambians deteriorated in the 1990s. Additionally, HIV and AIDS cases began to accelerate markedly in Zambia, as they did throughout Africa, creating massive social dislocation and a national crisis in human resources, healthcare and the economy (Taylor, 2006).

Religio-culturally, Zambia is a plural environment that is dominated by Christianity, while other religions such as Islam, Hinduism, Bahai, Buddhism, Sikhism, Judaism, and Zambian indigenous religion account for smaller percentages in terms of following. At independence, it was estimated that almost 20 percent of the population were Catholic, with the majority coming from the Bemba speaking areas (Hinfelaar, 1994, 159). Before the arrival of Christianity and other religions, Zambians practiced a range of indigenous religions and adhered to an array of religious beliefs. In the post-independence era, Christianity remains the dominant religion, as it has been since the early twentieth century when missionary activity proliferated alongside the establishment of colonial control over the territory.

Christianity's dominance in the religious landscape has been characterised by trends of its own. Besides the country being declared "a Christian nation" in 1991, the country's Christian context has continued to be characterised by transformation evidenced in the contemporary growth of Pentecostalism. This is an aspect that is well captured in Udelhoven's (2010) and Cheyeka *et al's* (2014) work on "the changing face of Christianity in Zambia" and in other studies that have dealt with Pentecostalism in Zambia (Kaunda, 2016; Mwale and Chita, 2016; 2018). Despite these trends, Taylor (2006) observes that the majority of Zambian communities continued to adhere to traditional practices alongside their new Christian faiths, and these practices continue to influence behaviour and cultural norms.

In this context, gender relations are characterised by a series of contradictions. For example, while women found a presence in public life in post-independent Zambia, considerable obstacles persisted and made it difficult for them to attain equality with men. As affirmed in the Zambia National Gender policy (2014), even in the 2010s women continued to lag behind their male counterparts in all spheres of national development. Accordingly, calls for the advancement of women through their active participation in all spheres of public and private life remain topical in discourses of gender in the country.

Hinfelaar's scholarly work was thus situated in a changing landscape, additionally confronted with the arrival of mission Christianity, its establishment, impact, and people's reaction to it. It is therefore worthwhile to explore how a Catholic missionary engaged with women's place in the making of Zambia's religio-cultural history in a context and period preoccupied with masculine histories.

Theoretical framework

The article draws on the feminist tradition, which deals with the position of women in society, culture, religion, production, and other spheres. Feminism has a myriad of theoretical perspectives emanating from the complexities and specifics of the different material conditions and identities of women, and informed by the many diverse and creative ways in which women contest power in private and public lives (Ahikire, 2014, 9). Aware of the numerous strands of feminist theory, the article is closely aligned with the broader principles of African feminist theory.

African feminist theory is concerned with "Africa's history following colonisation and the present struggles under neocolonialism, neoliberalism, and globalization" (Charter of Feminist Principles for African Feminists, 2006, 4). According to Wane (2011, 7), African feminism is part and parcel of African women's lived experiences and builds on African indigenous ways of knowing.

Significant to this discourse is the understanding that “African feminist theory is foregrounded in the retrieval, revitalisation or restoration of the African senses of Indigeneness” (Wane, 2011, 7). African feminist theory affirms the active roles played by women in different African contexts.

Given that struggle and emancipation are fundamental to feminism, feminist theorising is grounded in resistance and agency. According to Hollander and Einwohner (2004), resistance is not only defined by resisters’ perceptions of their own behaviour, but also by the targets’ and others’ recognition of and reaction to this behaviour. Additionally, resistance reveals the central role of power, “where there is power, there is resistance” (Foucault, 1978, 95). Resistance is also socially constructed, as resisters, their targets, and third-party observers all participate in and contribute to the construction process. Defiance is manifested when individuals or groups resist the status quo, thus it is closely linked to agency and is of concern to African feminist theory.

Agency is the capacity for autonomous action and the realising of one’s own interest in the face of often overwhelming cultural sanctions and structural inequalities (Burke, 2012). Agency is useful for feminist research on women in religions that promote strict gender relationships based on male headship and women’s subordination, as the latter are understood as actors rather than as simply acted upon by male-dominated social institutions (Burke, 2012).

This article uses African feminist theory to make meaning of the representation of women in Hinfelaar’s work. We want to argue that Hinfelaar has a pro-feminist approach to church history because of his attention to women. Hinfelaar’s representation of women in church history resonates closely with African feminism’s concern that although the reclaiming and building of Africa was in equal measure done by women who fought alongside men, their efforts have been largely unacknowledged (Salo, 2001).

Research Design and methods

The article’s methodological approach employs aspects of a narrative research design. Narrative research concentrates on studying one or two individuals, who gather data through the collection of their stories, report individual experiences, and chronologically order the meaning of those experiences (Creswell, 2003; Cassey, 1995). In this case, the focus was on Hinfelaar’s accounts and his portrayal of women in the religio-cultural history of the country as part of his Zambian church historiography.

Data was collected through document analysis of autobiographies, letters, photographs, and publications. Three key scholarly works by Hugo Hinfelaar were purposively selected for the analysis: *The History of the Catholic Church 1895 to 1995* (2004); *Bemba-Speaking Women of Zambia in a Century of Religious Change*

Women in Religio-Cultural History: A Reflection on their Representation in Hugo Hinfelaar's Scholarly Work in Zambia, 1960s to 1990s

1892 to 1992 (1994); and *Women's Revolt, the Lumpa Church of Lenshina* (1991).

In the *Women's Revolt, the Lumpa Church of Lenshina*, Hinfelaar follows the development of the Lumpa Church and observes that the religious message of its prophetess was obscured by the political disturbances and bloodshed in which the Lumpa were involved from the beginning of the 1960s. Through an analysis of the hymns composed by Lenshina, Hinfelaar uncovers the religious message and Lenshina's view on the religious role of Bemba women. In so doing, Hinfelaar shows that Lenshina drew inspiration from Christianity and aspects of Bemba religion, her main contribution being the shift away from the backward-looking veneration of the ancestors to the forward-looking acceptance of Jesus Christ. Lenshina is depicted as restoring Bemba women's religious roles as intercessors, placed between Christ and the world, and as initiators of the Christian cult.

In *Bemba-Speaking Women of Zambia in a Century of Religious Change* (1994), Hinfelaar traces the religious changes that occurred among the Bemba-speaking women between 1892 and 1992. He shows that the religious tenets of the traditional domestic cult had already been undermined before the arrival of the missionaries who based their church structures on the concept of the Bemba hierarchy. Hinfelaar also describes the creative redress of the women as channelled through independent Christian movements and mission churches and argues that the genuine reactions of women could well offer material for genuine inculturation.

In the *History of the Catholic Church in Zambia* (2004), Hinfelaar traces the one hundred years of the Catholic Church in the country from its beginnings with the arrival of the French White Fathers at Mambwe Mwela in 1891. He recounts the establishment of the first mission post at Kayambi in 1895, the arrival of the Jesuits in 1905 at Chikuni and other missionary congregations such as the Franciscan Friars Minor Conventuals and Franciscan Friars Minor Capuchins, who came to Zambia in 1931. Hinfelaar also captures the arrival of the missionary congregations of sisters who came to Zambia.

The collected data were then thematically analysed. This was done through the process of restorying, in which the aim was to detail themes that arose from Hinfelaar's representations of women in his scholarly works. As Huber and Whelan (1999, 381) point out, restorying in narrative research seeks to provide a more detailed discussion of the meaning of the story. Hence, the themes that emerged in Hinfelaar's representation of women were reorganised into a general framework that consisted of gathering stories, analysing them for key elements and then rewriting the narratives to place them within a chronological sequence (Ollerenshaw and Creswell, 2002, 329-347).

A Brief Biographical Account of Hugo Hinfelaar

Although Hinfelaar often takes biographical perspectives in his approach to history, very little has been written about his own life and person. However, a detailed account of his autobiography can be read elsewhere (www.hughinfelaarmissionarisinzambia.nl), in which he writes about his life in Zambia with the intent of contributing to a better understanding of countries in the South and ultimately to be in greater solidarity with them. For a brief biographical note, Hinfelaar was born in The Hague on the 3 April 1933. He came to Zambia, then Northern Rhodesia, in 1958 and worked as a White Father² missionary in the Northern and Central Provinces.

Having been in the country for over half a century, Hinfelaar recollects in the introduction of his autobiography that:

The first six (6) years in the Chinsali district of Northern Zambia proved to be formative and made a lasting impression on me.... I have known the Catholic Church before and after the Second Vatican Council. I lived with all its subsequent tensions. I did not 'leave' or sit on the ecclesiastical fence but held out in one way or another. During these years I experienced change of status, from being sent by the parish community as a hero to being regarded as a remnant of old colonial furniture.... The people of Zambia have taught me a great deal (Hinfelaar, n.d).

Hinfelaar's Representation of Women in Religio-Cultural History

Hinfelaar's scholarly work closely studied both women religious (women in the Catholic tradition commonly known as 'sisters' or 'nuns' who perform the vocations open to women within the Church) and religious women in Zambia (lay women who are engaged in religious devotion or who belong to religious communities). While their identities could easily be drawn into these two broad categories, the women's experiences reflected a common struggle for recognition in different spheres of life, which facilitated the nature of their reaction to the growth of Christianity and consequent contributions to the country's religio-cultural history. In this section, Hinfelaar's representation of women in the selected scholarly works is categorised into two broad emerging themes. These largely revolve around women as pillars in the religio-cultural history of Zambia through their contributions to the growth of the church, and to nation building in their quest to make African Christianity.

Women as Active players in Religio-Cultural History through the Growth of the Church in Zambia

Situated in the wider narrative of the encounter between mission Christianity and indigenous religions, women are represented as pillars of the church

Women in Religio-Cultural History: A Reflection on their Representation in Hugo Hinfelaar's Scholarly Work in Zambia, 1960s to 1990s

through their contributions to the growth of the church and their appropriation of Christianity. With regard to the growth of Catholicism, Hinfelaar includes women's contributions to Zambian Catholic Church history by capturing the arrival of the nursing and teaching congregations of women. In addition to those who came in the pioneering stage of the growth of the Church, the groups that arrived in the 1960s constitute part of the women religious who contributed to the growth of the Catholic Church towards and after independence. These included the Canadian sisters of the Charity of Ottawa who came to the diocese of Chipata in 1962 and the Oblates Missionaries of Mary Immaculate in the Diocese of Mansa around 1962 (Hinfelaar, 2004, 175).

The women religious are portrayed as contributing to the growth of the Catholic Church not just in numbers (as the number of young women joining the religious sisterhoods grew steadily from the mid 1970s), but also in terms of the formation of local sister congregations, which included among others the Sisters of St. Francis (a congregation started by Bishop Phelim O'Shea with a small group of young women), and the Sisters of the Infant Jesus of 1969 (later changed name to Child Jesus). With reference to the latter, he observes:

The group of Bemba speaking women were apparently ready to take a more active place in the apostolic work of the local Church. One of the aims of the group was the improvement of the status of women. They also had a sense of themselves as mothers to the people (Hinfelaar, 1994, 177).

Most importantly, the local sister congregations were way ahead of the international societies and congregations of fathers and brothers in opening up to local vocations (Hinfelaar, 2004, 222). Thus, women religious were pace setters in opening up to local vocations. The inclusion of women in the narrative of the growth of the Catholic Church affirms that women were not passive, but active participants as can be noted through their religious vocations within the Church. Female evangelists took the initiative to open up outstations, and indigenous bible women's groups took the Gospel into many kraals, and yet, more attention was placed on the role of men in the propagation of the Gospel and the spread of Christianity (Isichei, 1995; Hastings, 1989). Hinfelaar contributes to Zambian church historiography by resisting perpetuation of the neglect of the women's narrative in the growth of the Catholic Church.

Additionally, women religious fostered the growth of the Catholic Church through their structural organisation, the Zambia Association of Sisterhoods of 1960. The Zambia Association of Sisterhoods was established by a total of fifteen expatriate congregations and local institutes to foster communication and co-operation between one another so as to give effective service to the Catholic Church and to the nation (Hinfelaar, 2004, 222). The organisational structures

were significant for fostering the growth of the Catholic Church, as they became the channel through which the religious sisters made their presence felt in public life, in the changing socio-economic context of the post-independence era. This was largely through the religious sisters' works of mercy in hospitals and schools:

Sisters desired to reach out in more modern ways besides their traditional roles of nurses and teachers... to become involved in social work for the poor and needy, for those who had flocked to the urban areas and had now settled in shanty compounds. Out of this desire came the sisters' contributions through the Zambia Helpers Society and the mobile clinics that visited compounds [in Lusaka] There was also a women's club and class in hygiene and childcare in addition to under five clinics. They also organised open air classes for hundreds of school age children who could not find places in the Lusaka schools (Hinfelaar, 2004, 224).

As Ngundo and Wiggins (2017, 5) observe, "teaching is one of the basic apostolates with which nearly every religious institute is involved... so that in collaboration with the governments many young people can rise and improve their lives". Similarly, sisters reach out to street children and mothers, physically and mentally challenged persons, orphaned children and single mothers based on Jesus' call for us to invite the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind to the feast in Luke 14:13 (Ngundo and Wiggins, 2017). Consequently, when African women scholars lamented that studies on religion in Africa were predominately on the role of men (both local and expatriate) and generally silent on women's involvement (Phiri, 1997), Hinfelaar's representation of women can be deemed to be contributing to making the women visible in the narrative of the growth of the church in the country through their involvement in different spheres of society. This affirms the African feminist call to recognise the contributions of women (Salo, 2001).

Women also faced struggles in trying to create and reclaim their spaces in the church. In the case of women in the Catholic Church, Hinfelaar portrays the struggles of the 'sisters' in having a presence in the male dominated Catholic Church structures and how they navigated their way:

In 1966 they were strong enough to request a form of presence at meetings of the bishops, particularly when matters discussed were related to their work. At a plenary meeting in December, the bishops agreed to invite members of the association as observers and to send copies of their minutes to them. The number of observers was to be not more than two and they were invited to sit in for discussions on matters of mutual interest. In August 1968, the Episcopal Conference asked

Women in Religio-Cultural History: A Reflection on their Representation in Hugo Hinfelaar's Scholarly Work in Zambia, 1960s to 1990s

the Zambia Association of Sisters to appoint a sister to the staff of the Secretariat (Hinfelaar, 2004, 233).

Besides highlighting the contributions of women religious to the religio-cultural history, Hinfelaar also includes religious women in this narrative. Hinfelaar depicts religious women as having been active players in the growth of the church through their strides to inculcate religious life within the mission churches. While women were attracted to Christianity, it affected their social and religious roles. As emphasised in African feminist theory, the suffering of women could not be detached from the legacy of colonialism and Christianity (Chisale, 2015).

The arrival of Christianity changed the religious role of women in such a way as to undermine their social position, destroying the religious foundations on which society had been built. Within the Catholic Church, the reaction of women took the form of inculturating religious life, which also translated in the growth of indigenous sisters' congregations who shaped the narrative of the Catholic Church in their various apostolates. The popularity of these young religious congregations stemmed in no small measure from the fact that slowly the traditional marital dogma and cosmic view had been woven into the substratum of their constitutions and in the mindset of the Bemba speaking women (Hinfelaar, 2004, 177).

Additionally, women are represented as pillars in making African Christianity outside the mission churches through African independent churches. With reference to the Bemba women, it was observed that the Protestant and Catholic missionaries perceived the sacred position of women as dangerous and reactionary and traditional teachings were dismissed as pagan (Hinfelaar, 1994; Sundkler and Steed, 2000).

As affirmed by ter Haar (1996), the decline of women's religious status was most acutely felt during the nationalist period which preceded independence. Women reacted to the declining status through protests. The women's protest was most creative in the sense that they found new ways of combining the old and the new tenets of life (Hinfelaar, 1991; 1994; 2004). Women as active agents in the creation of African Christianity appropriated religion by tapping into their traditional religion. This is portrayed in the narrative of Alice Mulenga Lenshina's Lumpa Church. For example, in recounting the birth of the Lumpa Church, Hinfelaar represents Lenshina as a symbol with whom women could identify.

Lenshina showed the missionaries how by attempting to abolish the so-called pagan taboos, which were part of their traditional morality, the whole network of marital relationships collapsed. This was regarded as the cause of much misery, sickness and death within families. She insisted

that Christianity had to be built on a foundation of tradition and that people should return to their original beliefs in order to give Christ's Church a firm foundation (Hinfelaar, 1994, 185).

Thus, Hinfelaar not only portrays women as pillars in the making of African Christianity, but also points to the creativity associated with the manner in which women react to male domination and Christianity and make something of the situation. Hinfelaar also emphasises the need to pay attention to these creative forms of redress so as to foster the growth of the church by arguing that the genuine reactions of women could offer material for genuine inculturation.

Hinfelaar, therefore, contributes to women's studies through a departure from what Mwaura (2005) calls depicting women as helpers or totally absent in shaping African Christianity and shares in the concerns of African feminism which seek to recognise the struggles and contributions of women in their contexts. This also reflects women's agency centred on the portrayal of not passively accepting religious doctrines but rather challenging male-dominated institutions in creative ways through resistance. Hinfelaar (2004) observes that in spite of a great deal of opposition and misunderstanding and the introduction of a very patriarchal form of western Christianity, the women attained for themselves a well-established position within the Christian churches, which exerts a growing influence on the specific manner of being God's people in Zambia.

Women as Pillars in Religio-Cultural history through Nation Building

Besides being represented as active players and pillars in the growth of the Church, women were active players in nation building amid a challenging context. In this representation of women as active players in nation building, Hinfelaar takes issue with the unrecognised women's contributions. Thus, he acknowledges and celebrates the women's contributions towards independence in difficult circumstances.

As in many parts of colonial Africa, Zambia's struggle for political independence was a task undertaken by the young men. The demand for labour in the mines and the sheer attraction of western modernity caused the men to flock to the urban areas. This left the agricultural work in the villages to a disproportionately large number of women and children. The women were burdened with the task of food production as well as caring single handed for the children and the elderly (Hinfelaar, 1994, 150).

This portrayal is closely aligned with the concerns of African feminist theory, which takes issue with the untold stories of women in nation building. As observed by Gatwiri and McLaren (2016), patriarchy has male-washed the significant contributions of women in building the continent in pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial times.

Women in Religio-Cultural History: A Reflection on their Representation in Hugo Hinfelaar's Scholarly Work in Zambia, 1960s to 1990s

Moreover, women contributed to nation building through the promotion of their own roles.

In order to acquire a voice to promote their economic social and spiritual roles in the society, women all over the country started to come together in non-governmental organisations... it was an agonisingly slow process often hampered by internal strife, illiteracy, misunderstandings, scarcity of funds and an apparent lack of support from the churches (Hinfelaar 1994, 165).

The critical contributions of women were situated within societal structures that disempowered them, and so women utilised their agency to empower themselves and the nation. In this regard, Hinfelaar makes the neglect of women's contributions to nation building in scholarship visible in a context where the roles of women were marginalised.

Women further sustained their cultural heritage under difficult circumstances as part of their identity. This was largely done through the appropriation of initiation ceremonies amidst the wider condemnation of these practices as pagan. Through preserving the memory of traditional religious roles, Hinfelaar depicts women as continually shaping the identity of Zambian women in the changing landscape. His work thus demonstrates the critical position of women in the religio-cultural history of the country by reconstructing the traditional religion and position of women therein.

As Hinfelaar (1994) observes, traditional Bemba religion was centred on the home shrine, which was in the custody of married women. They were the priestesses of a house religion, which put married women in the role of intermediaries between the spheres of the human and the divine. Thus, it was through women that men could gain access to the world of transcendence. In the wake of mission Christianity and the resulting loss of the religious roles of women, Hinfelaar represents women as active players in the reconstruction of their identity. This was also extended to the care for the environment:

In the midst of change, a sizeable proportion of women continued to regard the ngulu/mashawe as belonging to the traditional cosmic sphere of the forest (mumpanga) and not as something entirely negative and irredeemable... as representatives of the calo, the land, they had been and were very sensitive to the violations of the environment, the destruction of the territorial cults and the consequent upheaval among the guardian spirits all in the name of western progress. There had been, for instance, wholesale uprooting of revered woodlands, the flooding of sacred valleys for hydro-electric power, indiscriminate fishing and hunting and the dumping of slag in hallowed groves (Hinfelaar, 1996, 170).

Closely linked to the women's reaction to urbanisation, industrialisation and new religious world views, the representation of women as showing concern for the environment underscores the women's understanding of building a stronger and more durable foundation and structures for the nation's future. Given that the contributions of women were often a neglected aspect of African church historiography (Phiri, 1997; Murray, 1996), Hinfelaar represents women as active players in the religio-cultural narrative of the country as opposed to being passive in the face of the changing world view and their declining religious status. He stresses that women voiced their protest against the effects of religious and social change in a religious form. In this way, Hinfelaar's portrayal of women demonstrates his outstanding interest in women in the religious history of the country. Hinfelaar's representation of women's place in the religio-cultural history of Zambia is thus one closely aligned to African feminism with its concern with Africa's past history following colonisation (Charter of Feminist Principles for African Feminists, 2006) and as a critical aspect of African women's lived experiences (Wane, 2011).

To conclude, in Hugo Hinfelaar's scholarly work women are represented as pillars and active players in the growth of the church, the making of African Christianity and ultimately in shaping the religio-cultural history of the country. As Mwaura (2005) notes, a balanced historiography must integrate women's perspectives and experiences. This portrayal is closely related to the African feminist tradition that perceives women as active players through different forms of resistance and agency, and at the same time resonates with the portrayal of women by other scholars. For example, Mwaura (2005) and Sundkler and Steed (2000) argue that women are animators of the church and society not only during times of crisis, but even in times of stability. Hinfelaar and other scholars have voiced out by making known the reactions and their contributions to African church historiography (Bowie, 1993; Roberts, 2002; Njoroge, 2000; Hackett, 1995). Through this representation, Hinfelaar enriches the study of women in religion and contributes to the reconstruction of women's trajectories in the religio-cultural history of Zambia.

Towards an Explanation for Hinfelaar's Representations of Women in the Religio-Cultural History of Zambia in his Scholarly Work

Hinfelaar's representation of women as pillars in the religio-cultural history of Zambia can be explained from different perspectives. To start with, Hinfelaar's representation of women as pillars and active players in the country's religio-cultural history rests on his search for Bemba women's sacred positions in the pre-missionary era and consequent reconstruction of women's religious roles in Bemba religion. These were *Chibinda wa Nganda* (Enabler of the Domestic Cult),

Women in Religio-Cultural History: A Reflection on their Representation in Hugo Hinfelaar's Scholarly Work in Zambia, 1960s to 1990s

Kabumaba wa Mapepo (Initiator of Worship) and *Na Chimbusa wa Chisungu* (Tutor of the Transcendent).

As *Chibinda wa Nganda*, the woman was the maker and priestess of the home shrine and as *Kabumba wa Mapepo*, she was tasked to take small offerings to the family shrine (*Ulufuba*) built on the edge of the village behind the home shrine to obtain health, wellbeing and life from the lineage spirits. Thus, she was a medium between the living and dead (Hinfelaar, 1994). As *Nachimbusa wa chisungu*, the woman was literally the protector of the miraculous event and the mother of the things to be handed down (Hinfelaar, 1994). While the Bemba women are portrayed as having leadership positions comparable to those of men (through these positions), it can be stated that the roles of women were also tilted towards a patriarchal orientation. This is because the initiation rites and home religious discourse had a lot of elements centred on women's responsibility of looking after a man and the satisfaction of his sexual desires. Nonetheless, Hinfelaar not only makes known the lost sacred positions of women in Bemba religion, but also reconstructs the positions of women in the face of change and ultimately makes the marginalised women visible through his representation of women as pillars and active players in the country's religio-cultural history.

The depiction of women as active participants in the making of religio-cultural history shows Hinfelaar's concern for women, especially their changing and lost status. Ter Haar (1996) also observes that in examining the reactions and changes in women's initiation rites, Hinfelaar mourns with women their lost status as the initiation ritual and the ritual objects associated with women's practices were deemed to be pagan, and in turn women lost hold of the sacredness of their objects. Hinfelaar shows that through the creative protest, redress and genuine concern of the 1950s, certain religious elements emerged and gave birth to new and more local models of religious experiences, either independently or as part of the mainline churches (Hinfelaar, 1996, 180-81).

Additionally, women are portrayed as active participants in the making of African Christianity, even though women had little access to the ample resources of church leadership. Hinfelaar's depiction cannot be detached from a concern over the marginalisation of women in church leadership and the overall unrecognised contributions of women to the church and nation: 'in the thrust forward to becoming a truly African church the women were again being marginalised to a certain extent in spite of having rendered sterling service to the church for decades' (Hinfelaar 1994, 159). By depicting women as active players in the making of African Christianity, Hinfelaar reveals women's struggles and their innovations in seeking redress:

.... Catholic and Protestant women alike continued to take part in the day to day affairs of their church communities. On occasions they donned their

colourful uniforms of the different organisations, they cared for the sick and aged. Whenever allowed, they took responsibility for transmitting sacred tradition, their status remained marginal and their work poorly documented, but through their movements and organisations they continued to become more articulate (Hinfelaar, 1994, 167).

Closely in line with the concerns of African feminism, Hinfelaar's depiction can also be linked to his concern for the poor and the marginalised, not only through making known their marginalisation but also recognising their battles and sympathizing with the struggles of women. Similarly, Hinfelaar's appreciation of the distress of women and the subsequent ways of seeking redress mirror his regard for human dignity:

The people involved in such upheavals were not just objects of study to be neatly categorised according to preconceived western systems of thought but human beings with a message, an ideology, a religious-cosmic conviction of such strength that they were ready to die for it. These religious movements must be given their due, in particular by African scholars as expressions of religious culture, the bedrock of any Christian evangelisation (Hinfelaar, 1994, 194).

Hinfelaar's positionality as a Catholic missionary cannot be detached from the manner in which he represents women's place in the religio-cultural history of the country in ways that intersect with the concerns of African feminism. This is closely related to the observation made by Rasing (1996) that as a missionary, Hinfelaar was struck by the effect of the Christian religion on the lives of women, and yet women seemed to be almost completely excluded from the historiography of the subject. Hinfelaar's representation is thus closely tied to his positionality as a priest concerned with the growth of the church in the African soil. Simultaneously, ter Haar (1996) observes, as a priest, he is much concerned with the issue of inculturation, arguing convincingly that the church should take the cosmic view of women in Africa and their religious role seriously to its own benefit. By so doing, Hinfelaar contributes to African Christianity by making known the struggles of women and the manner in which the women actively shaped the course of African Christianity. As Hollander and Einwohner (2004) observe, resistance is socially constructed such that resisters, their targets and third-party observers all contribute to the construction process. By representing women and arguing for Christian evangelisation to be foregrounded in the religious expressions of women, Hinfelaar becomes part of the resisters, and together, Hinfelaar and women can be said to construct resistance.

Women in Religio-Cultural History: A Reflection on their Representation in Hugo Hinfelaar's Scholarly Work in Zambia, 1960s to 1990s

His long missionary experience in Zambia also ignited the voice he raises to represent women in the religio-cultural history of the country. Hinfelaar reminisces on how he came to share in some of women's experiences:

As a young missionary, I had been deeply and emotionally involved in the bloody uprising of the Lumpa movement of Alice Lenshina. Why would intelligent people many of them women with babies on their backs, run into a hail of bullets rather than be instructed in the Christian faith as brought to them by the missionaries? The gospel was meant to be Good news! Why then were they so afraid of Christ on the Cross? Why did they see mission-work as an imposition rather than as a liberation? (Hinfelaar, 1996, 193).

As Aguilar and Aguilar (1994) observe, Hinfelaar does not apologise when it comes to being the voice which cries in the wilderness, the voice for the Bemba women.

Conclusion

This article sought to explore the representation of women's place in the religio-cultural history of Zambia in Hinfelaar's scholarly work. Given that Hinfelaar represents women as active players and pillars in the growth of the church and in the making of African Christianity, the article concludes that this portrayal affirms the need for recognising the important and largely unrecognised role of women in Zambian religio-cultural history. This is through his positionality as a missionary who shared in the experiences of the women and one concerned with the growth of an authentic African Christianity.

The article also concludes that through Hinfelaar's representation of women as pillars in the growth of the church and in nation building, the women's struggles and innovations are made visible in Zambian church history. This portrayal further highlights not only the women's struggles and contributions but also Hinfelaar's contributions to the making of the religio-cultural history of the country. Hinfelaar's representation of women is also closely aligned to African feminist theory, especially as he portrays women's resistance and agency expressed through their revolts and reactions to missionary subordination of indigenous knowledge. Through this representation, Hinfelaar attempts in his own way to help the marginalised women and make their neglected contributions visible in the wider narrative of African Christianity, while also contributing to reconstructing the religio-cultural heritage of Zambia.

Endnotes

- ¹ For example, Marja Hinfelaar (2003) focuses on Bishop Joseph Dupont (1890-1930), while others like Mwale and Chita (2017) trace the trajectory of Tom McGivern.
- ² Hinfelaar recounts that the Missionaries of Africa, popularly called the White Fathers,

are a society founded by the French Cardinal Charles Martila Lavigerie in 1868 as the 'Missionaries of Our Lady of Africa'. The society recruited secular priests and lay brothers so as to open schools, model farms, orphanages, medical centres and homes for the elderly in Africa (Hinfelaar, 2004, 21).

References

- Aguilar, Mario I, and Laurel Birch de Aguilar. 1994. "Hinfelaar, Hugo. 'Religious Change among Bemba-Speaking Women of Zambia' PhD dissertation; University of London, 1989 (Book Review)." *Feminist Theology* 3, 7, 139-141.
- Ahikire, Josephine. 2014. "African Feminism in Context: Reflections on the Legitimation Battles, Victories and Reversals." *Feminist Africa* 19, 7-23.
- Burke, Kelsy C. 2012. "Women's Agency in Gender-Traditional Religions: A Review of Four Approaches." *Sociology Compass* 6, 2, 122-133.
- Carmody, Brendan. 1992. "Jesuit Mission School: Ally of Zambian Nationalism?" *Zambia Journal of History* 5, 37 - 57.
- Carmody, Brendan. 1992. *Conversion and Jesuit Schooling in Zambia*. Leiden: EJ Brill.
- Carmody, Brendan. 2002. "The Politics of Catholic Education in Zambia: 1891-1964." *Journal of Church and State* 44, 4: 775-804.
- Charter of Feminist Principles for African Feminists*. 2006. Accra: The African Women's Development Fund.
- Cheyeka, Austin; Marja Hinfelaar and Bernard Udelhoven. 2014. "The Changing Face of Zambia's Christianity and its Implications for the Public Sphere: A Case Study of Bauleni Township, Lusaka." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 40, 5, 1031-1045.
- Chisale, Sinenhlanhla Sithulisiwe. 2015. "The Gender Implications of the Immigration Regulations of South Africa on "Career Wives": An African Feminist Perspective." Paper presentation at the OSSREA Conference, Institute of Open Distance Learning and the Department of Development Studies, University of South Africa, 24 June.
- Coyne, John. 1970. "A History of the Jesuits in Zambia. Lusaka." (Unpublished typescript at the Jesuit Novitiate.
- Creswell, John W. 2003. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Cumming, Juniper and Charles Musonda. 2003. *The Missionary Francis Mazzieri; Conventual Franciscan*. Ndola: Mission Press.
- Foucault, Michel. 1978. *The History of Sexuality* (Vol. 1; Robert Hurley, Trans.) New York: Random House.
- Gatwiri, Glory Joy and Helen Jacqueline McLaren. 2016. "Discovering my Own African Feminism: Embarking on a Journey to Explore Kenyan Women's Oppression." *Journal of International Women's Studies* 17, 4, 263-273.

Women in Religio-Cultural History: A Reflection on their Representation in Hugo Hinfelaar's Scholarly Work in Zambia, 1960s to 1990s

- Hackett, Rosalind IJ. 2017. "Women, Rights Talk, and African Pentecostalism." *Religious Studies and Theology* 36, 2, 245-259.
- Hackett, Rosalind IJ. 1995. "Women and New Religious Movements in Africa." In *Religion and Gender*. (Ed.) Ursula King. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 257-290.
- Hampway, Godfrey and Liberty Mweemba. 2006. "Zambia." In *A Profile of Higher Education in Southern Africa: National Perspectives*. (Ed.) Piyushi Kotecha. Johannesburg: SARUA.
- Hastings, Adrian. 1989. "Were Women a Special Case?" *African Catholicism: Essays in Discovery*. London: SCM.
- Hinfelaar, Hugo F. 1991. "Women's Revolt: the Lumpa Church of Lenshina Mulenga in the 1950s." *Journal of Religion in Africa* 21, 2, 99-129.
- Hinfelaar, Hugo F. 1994. *Bemba-Speaking Women of Zambia in a Century of Religious Change: 1892-1992*. Leiden: Brill.
- Hinfelaar, Hugo F. 2004. *History of the Catholic Church in Zambia: [1895-1995]*. Lusaka: Bookworld Publishers.
- Hinfelaar, Hugo F. n.d. Autobiography of Hugo Hinfelaar, Missionary in Zambia, Africa. www.hugohinfelaarmissionarisinzambia.nl. Accessed on 10 July 2020.
- Hinfelaar, Marja. 2003. "Remembering Bishop Joseph Dupont (1890-1930) in Present Day Zambia." *Journal of Religion in Africa* 33, 365 - 76.
- Hollander, Jocelyn A. and Rachel L. Einwohner. 2004. "Conceptualising Resistance." *Sociological Forum* 19, 4, 533-554.
- Huber, Janice and Karen Whelan. 1999. "A Marginal Story as a Place of Possibility: Negotiating Self on the Professional Knowledge Landscape." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 15: 381-396.
- Isichei, Elizabeth. 1995. *A History of Christianity in Africa from Antiquity to the Present*. London: SPCK.
- Kangwa, Jonathan. 2011. "Reclaiming the Value of Indigenous Female Initiation Rites as a Strategy for HIV Prevention: a Gendered Analysis of Chisungu Initiation Rites among the Bemba People of Zambia." Master's Thesis. University of Kwazulu Natal, South Africa.
- Kaunda, Chammah J. 2016. "The Making of Pentecostal Zambia: A Brief History of Pneumatic Spirituality." *Oral History Journal of South Africa* 4,1, 15-45.
- Kaunda, Mutale Mulenga. 2013. "A Search for Life-giving Marriage: The Imbusa Initiation Rite as a Space for Constructing Wellbeing among Married Bemba Women of Zambia." Masters dissertation, University of Kwazulu Natal, South Africa.
- Kaunda, Mutale Mulenga and Chammah J Kaunda. 2016. "Infunkutu—the Bemba Sexual Dance as Women's Sexual Agency." *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 155, 159-175.

- Kaunda, Mutale Mulenga and Sarojini Nadar. 2012. "Remembering and Resistance: Lenshina Mulenga's Search for Justice and Peace." *The Ecumenical Review* 64, 3, 346-357.
- Lane, William. 1991. *Jesuits in Zambia, 1880-1991*. Ndola: Mission Press.
- Murphy, Edward P. 2003. *A History of the Jesuits in Zambia: A Mission Becomes a Province*. Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa.
- Mwale, Nelly and Joseph Chita. 2016. "Religion and the Media: The Portrayal of Prophecy in the Zambian Media." In *Prophecy Today: Reflections from a Southern African Context*. (Ed.) Hermen Kroesbergen. Wellington: Christian Literature Fund, 41 -63.
- Mwale, Nelly and Joseph Chita. 2017. "Trailing a Missionary Teacher's Position and Contributions in Zambian Religious Education." *Religion & Education* 44, 1, 22-38.
- Mwale, Nelly and Joseph Chita. 2018. "Pentecostalising the Voice in Zambian Charismatic Church History: Men of God's Expression of Spiritual Identities, 1990 to Present." *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 44, 3: 1-13.
- Mwaura, Philomena Njeri. 2007. "Gender and Power in African Christianity: African Instituted Churches and Pentecostal Churches." In *African Christianity: An African Story*. (Ed.) Ogbu V. Kalu. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 410-445.
- National Gender Policy*. 2000. Lusaka: Office of the President.
- O'Shea, Micheal. 1986. *Missionaries and Miners*. Ndola: Mission Press.
- O'Sullivan, Owen. 2014. *Zambezi Mission: A History of the Capuchins in Zambia, 1931-1981*. Ndola: Mission Press.
- Ollerenshaw, Jo Anne and John W Creswell. 2002. "Narrative Research: A Comparison of Two Restorying Data Analysis Approaches." *Qualitative Inquiry* 8, 329-347.
- Salo, Elaine. 2001. "Talking about Feminism in Africa." *Agenda* 16, 50, 58-63.
- Sendapu, Victor. 2016. "Religious Teaching and Rituals of the Mutima Church in Kasama District, Zambia." Masters dissertation, University of Zambia.
- Taylor, Scott. D. 2006. *Culture and Customs of Zambia*. London: Greenwood Press.
- Ter Haar, Gerrie. 1996. "Hugo F. Hinfelaar, Bemba-Speaking Women of Zambia in a Century of Religious Change (1892-1992). (Book Review)." *Journal of Religion in Africa/Religion en Afrique* 26, 2, 216.
- Udelhoven, Bernard. 2010. "The Changing Face of Christianity in Zambia: New Churches of Bauleni Compound." *Fenza documents*: 1-21.
- Wane, Njoki. 2011. "African Indigenous Feminist Thought." In *The Politics of Cultural Knowledge* (Ed.) Njoki Wane, Arlo Kempf and Marlon Simmons. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 7-21.

Female Initiation Rites as part of Gendered Bemba Religion and Culture: Transformations in Women's Empowerment

Thera Rasing

Since the 1930s, female initiation rites have been a topic of interest for both anthropologists and certain White Fathers like Fr Corbeil and Fr Hinfelaar. Although the rites have been examined from various viewpoints, e.g. structural-functional viewpoints in the first half of the 20th century (Richards, 1940, 1956), and later by symbolic anthropologists (Rasing, 1995, 2001, 2004, and Simonsen, 2000a and 2000b), they are now mainly explained in terms of unequal gender relations and sexuality (Kamlongera, 1987; Kalunde, 1992). During my ongoing research (1992–2016), I was inspired by the interpretation of these rites by Hugo Hinfelaar, who, although not the first White Father who studied and attended these rites, was the first one who interpreted them in a primarily religious way, emphasising aspects such as transcendence, religion, matrilineity, fecundity and history. Moreover, by examining cultural and religious artefacts and symbols, including those used in initiation rites, Hinfelaar encouraged inculturation (which became a Catholic Church policy after Vatican II), contributed to the study of African Traditional Religion from a gendered viewpoint, and promoted Bemba female initiation rites. This paper will examine the resilience and transformations of female initiation rites in the past century from a gendered and religious viewpoint. It will claim that, in line with Hinfelaar's statement that Bemba women have lost their important socio-religious position due to bena ngandu rule, colonialism and Christianity, these female rites should be seen as a way for women to hold on to and exert their power in their families and in their communities while both initiation rites and equal gender relations are encouraged by the Catholic Church today.

Introduction

Since the 1930s, female initiation rites have been a topic of interest for both anthropologists and some missionaries. As these rites were foreign to European culture, it was difficult for European scholars and missionaries to interpret them. They have been looked upon in different ways. Initially, they were studied from a structuralist point of view, as part of indigenous culture. Later they were seen as pagan and obsolete, as oppressive for women (Geisler, 1997), and as 'degenerating' for women (Kamlongera, 1987). Today they are merely considered as a way to teach about sex (Kalunde, 1992; Kapungwe, 1997 and 2003) Yet, in all those interpretations, researchers emphasized predominantly one or a few aspects of these rites, but did not grasp their full meaning.

*Female Initiation Rites as part of Gendered Bemba Religion and Culture:
Transformations in Women's Empowerment*

It was Hugo Hinfelaar (1989, 1994) who convincingly showed that these rites were not only part of Bemba/Zambian culture, but predominantly of religion, claiming the important role the *nacimbusa* (ritual leader), as well as women in general, had in Bemba culture. Taking this point a bit further, this article will claim that initiation rites are a way for women to show their important position in family life and society. This is of particular significance today, since firstly, women have lost their important socio-religious position in the course of history, as Hinfelaar has claimed, and secondly, these rites are disappearing due to Western influence (Christianity, urbanisation, modernisation, e.t.c).

This article will start by providing an overview of interpretations of female initiation rites among the Bemba. It will then examine religious aspects of Bemba culture, including women's religious roles expressed in initiation rites, and the interpretation of these rites by Hugo Hinfelaar. Next, it will show how women have lost their important socio-religious roles. The article will conclude by claiming that by performing female initiation rites today, women may resume leadership roles in the family and attain gender equality.

Interpretations of Bemba female initiation rites

In 1933, Audrey Richards, the first anthropologist who studied Bemba culture and the Bemba political system, described and analysed female initiation rites among the Bemba in the Chinsali area. These rites were performed at the onset of menstruation, and soon after the girl got married (Richards, 1945 and 1956).

The first missionaries in the Bemba area, the Missionaries of Africa, popularly called the White Fathers, who entered Northern Zambia in 1891 and the Bemba area in 1895, were equally interested in Bemba culture. Labreque (1931–1934) was the first missionary who, at the same time as Richards, made an extensive study of Bemba culture, including initiation rites.

Richards analysed these rites from a structuralist viewpoint, as was common among scholars at that time. She described the roles of the *nacimbusa* (the ritual leader) and other important women such as the *nakalamba*, the first woman the girl referred to when she started menstruation. Further, the clay figurines and drawings, both called *mbusa* in Bemba, and songs used in these rites were described in detail. Although both Richards and Labreque described these rites in detail, they did not fully understand the meaning of all the clay figurines, drawings (*mbusa*) and archaic Bemba songs.

Richards claimed that *mbusa* means 'things handed down', which indicated that they were 'handed down' by the ancestors through tradition (*ntambi*), or culture, meaning that initiation rites including the *mbusa* had existed since time immemorial, had been passed on from generation to generation, and should be passed on to the next generation. Also, 'things handed down' refers to the

physical handing down of the *mbusa* in the rites: the *nacimbusa* would hold a clay figurine in her hand, start singing and dancing while showing the *mbusa* and passing it on to the women attending the rite, and would finally show it to the novice.

The word *mbusa* stems from the verb *ukubumba*, meaning 'to mould'. Hinfelaar (1989) explained this 'moulding' as an ancient religious role of women (see below). This moulding both refers to the moulding of the *mbusa*, and to the moulding of the girl into a woman. This explains the claims of women that girls are being changed during the rite, from girls to women, with the subsequent adult behaviour ensuing. Richards claimed that it was unclear how this change would take place. Yet, the long confinement and seclusion, in which the girl is usually on her own during several months¹ or weeks, not allowed to talk or to do anything by herself, as she is considered an unborn baby (see Turner, 1967 and 1969), the lessons learnt during the rites, the sometimes harsh treatment by the women attending these rites, and the fact that she is told that she is no longer a girl, but is now a woman with responsibilities and should behave accordingly, all account for these changes in behaviour. In addition, a young woman after her initiation rite is proud that she has become a woman, is considered mature and is believed to have gained wisdom through the rite (Richards, 1956; Rasing, 1995, 2001, 2014a, 2018).

It is interesting to note that sixty years after Richards conducted her research, in 1995, I conducted a study on initiation rites in villages near Chinsali, where Richards had conducted her study, and found that the same clay figurines and drawings were used and songs were sung, in the same way as Richards had described them (Rasing, 2001).

Others have also studied these rites, for example the White Fathers Etienne (1948), Doucette (1960s), Tanguy (1960s), Hinfelaar (1960s) and Corbeil (1982), and anthropologists such as Rasing (1995, 2001, 2004, 2014a/b, 2018), and Simonsen (2000a and 2000b, for the Mambwe). They all stated that the main aim of the initiation rites was to teach the novice and change her from girl into woman, meaning that she was supposed to learn all aspects of womanhood and motherhood. This includes many aspects of life, norms and values such as food taboos, how to dress properly, personal hygiene, menstruation, how to deal with her future husband and in-laws, sexuality, agriculture, and other aspects of society. Rasing (1995, 2001, 2004) emphasized in addition to these aspects the importance of equal and complementary gender relations, matrilineity and the line between ancestors and future children. In addition, Rasing (2001) emphasized the importance of the spirit of the initiation², i.e. the 'blood spirit of the Bemba', who is considered the first Bemba female ancestor who, through many generations, finally gives birth to the novice. Hence, the initiation rite is a

*Female Initiation Rites as part of Gendered Bemba Religion and Culture:
Transformations in Women's Empowerment*

way not only to change a girl into a woman and to establish ancestral lines, but also to establish tribal coherence.

Female initiation rites as part of Bemba religion and cosmology

During his forty-eight years in Zambia (1959–2006), Hugo Hinfelaar, a White Father, thoroughly studied Bemba culture and religion, including female initiation rites. He attended these rites and discussed them with local women. Most missionaries and anthropologists considered initiation rites as an aspect of culture, rather than religion. Moreover, the first missionaries considered Bemba religion merely as 'beliefs' or 'superstition' instead of a religion (ATR). Obviously, it is difficult to differentiate clearly between culture and religion, as they are intertwined.

Hugo Hinfelaar, however, examined Bemba religion and cosmology in their own right as a religion in which initiation rites were of great importance, and he claimed that women played an important role in this religion. In addition, he examined Bemba history, and showed how women had gradually lost their important position in society due to the overruling crocodile clan (*bena ngandu*), which became the dominant clan, and later on due to colonialism and Christianity, which emphasized the importance of men over women (Hinfelaar, 1989 and 1994). Some of women's ancient roles are shown in initiation rites, which have changed due to the altered position of women. The next sections will explain Bemba religion and cosmology, the important religious roles women had and religious aspects of female initiation rites.

Bemba religion and cosmology: concepts of a High God *Lesá*, Ngulu and Imipashi

The High God, *Lesá*, was regarded as the creator of all things. *Lesá* was both male and female, and the God of Heaven and Earth (*Lesá wa kumulu na panshi*). *Lesá* was called *Mayo na Tata*, my mother and my father. One of *Lesá's* main attributes was *Mufyashi wine wine* (a parent par excellence) and this perfection was evident in the ideal combination of the male and the female (Hinfelaar, 1989, 3). *Lesá* was a nurturing God, revealing matrilineal aspects. S/he was the provider, involved with humankind as a sustainer of people in food producing, and was thought to be omnipotent. A rainbow was a male image of *Lesá*, *buta bwa Lesá*, the bow of God. But it is also a female symbol. The word *buta* also means placenta, as in the proverb: *ubuta bumo tabwisusha ng'anda* (one placenta does not fill the house, meaning: one child is not enough³). Hence *Lesá* was also seen as female, e.g. the mother of all beasts. Other words for God are *Namulenga*, the creator (with the female *na*), *Kabumba*, the moulder, who moulds like a woman shapes her pot, *Namukungwe*, she from whom all things come.

Concepts of *Lesá* emerged in the second half of the first century. The idea of a High God might have become more visible as a result of contacts with a larger world (cf. Horton, 1971, 1975) due to trade with Arab/Swahili and European traders and missionaries. In the 19th and 20th centuries missionaries translated *Lesá* as 'he', but the gender of God in central Africa is not self-evident, as in Bantu languages the third person singular (just like the first and second person) is genderless, so translations as 'he' must therefore be questioned. Due to Christianity, *Lesá* has been stripped of her Mother-earth imagery, and was changed to a Father-sky God (Maxwell, 1983, 71).

There were different types of spirits in Bemba cosmology. The *ngulu* spirits were considered the early inhabitants of the land. They resided in natural phenomena, such as waterfalls, rocks, big trees, and large anthills. All territorial places of worship possessed the feminine prefix *na* (Hinfelaar, 1989, 4), meaning 'female' and were named after the deity. Some were associated with snake worship or were believed to be inhabited by a snake (Richards, 1939, 358). Snakes are still important figures in initiation rites today. Although they are either interpreted as male or as bad luck, I assume snakes also refer to this worship of the divinity associated with or manifested by a snake⁴, specifically associated with rain making and fertility, or blessings in a wider sense⁵.

Other types of spirits were the *imipashi* (sing. *umupashi*) or ancestral spirits. They were associated with the fertility of the bush and the gardens, and the lineage. The places to invoke the ancestral spirits were in an individual's house, at village shrines and in dead chiefs' villages (*ifibolya*). The priests in charge of the latter were called *bashimapepo* (from the verb *ukupepa*, meaning to pray). The house of the headman was the centre of the religious life of the village, but small shrines were also built outside. Headmen officiated as priests at these shrines.

Dangerous spirits, *fibanda* or *fiwa*, resided in the sphere of the cold forest. They were believed to be the spirits of the recently deceased who had left the world while bearing grievances and who needed to be placated. They would return to strike their descendants with misfortune or illness (Richards, 1956, 29).

Oger (n.d.) and Werner (1971) state that *ngulu* spirits at a certain point in time were believed to possess people, while initially only *ngulu* priests were mediums. This may be seen as a response to the ritual needs of the people after the establishment of the *bena ngandu* rule, in which they were denied full participation (Werner, 1971, 20-21). Missionaries condemned this *ngulu* possession as diabolical and superstitious, and excluded from the church those who followed the promptings of the spirits and became cult members and healers.

*Female Initiation Rites as part of Gendered Bemba Religion and Culture:
Transformations in Women's Empowerment*

However, it seems more likely that women, through *ngulu*, assumed their former religious position. When the authority of the chiefs diminished, women had the opportunity to act. It can be suggested that while men took over political roles and were being incorporated into the capitalist system, women were reclaiming their religious positions (Rasing, 2001).

The Bemba perceived the world as being divided into the village (*mushi*) and the bush (*mpanga*)⁶. The village represented an orderly way of life and the bush a more mysterious, dangerous environment which must be persuaded to yield its resources for the benefit of the people. This distinction between village and bush, between the untamed and uncultivated sphere of life and the domestic and cultivated one, is reflected in initiation rites (Richards, 1956, 27). Spirits moved about in the bush, and trees could be used for their supernatural properties. Spirits constituted a neutral presence that had to be asked to support the community.

The spiritual world and fertility

Ahmed (1998, 24) suggested that during 1000–1600 AD, sexual intercourse was of ritual importance. Female sexuality was celebrated, not restricted⁷. One finally had to become a *mupashi mukankala*, a generous ancestor that granted life and health to the next generation. Children were regarded as neutral and closer to the genderless ancestors. Especially from the 18th century onwards, elderly people were considered to have reached perfection through the ritual acquisition of one's opposite gender: the female as *mukabenye*, a wife of the sacred relics (ritual males); *nacimbusa*, a tutor towards female adult sexual and spiritual life; the male as *mwine mushi*, the head of the matrilineal village⁸; *shimapepo*, the male priest in charge of a female shrine (Hinfelaar, 1989, 15-16). The young man was taught to reach out towards the cavity of the womb and the young woman towards the protrusion of the phallus. For the young man this was symbolically expressed by the possession of the mortar, the home, the bored stone, and the cooking pot. For the young woman this was symbolized by the pestle, the snake, and the paddle.

The way to fertility was believed to be possible through the woman. In narratives of creation it was said that a young man managed to return to the divine state by going out into the forest and boring a tunnel through a small boulder. The bored stone (*ilibwe* or *cupo*, lit: marriage) was the symbol of traditional religion. It meant that access to the divine, to the life and health of the community, was through the woman who had to be approached with patience and respect (Hinfelaar, 1989, 5). All over south central Africa, the bored stone was used as an agricultural tool and was put on a digging stick to make it heavier. This stone was associated with femininity. When the sex of a newborn child was announced

to the community, the expression: *ce libwe* (is of the stone) was used for a female baby and the expression *ca nondo* (is of the hammer) for a male (Hinfelaar, 1989, 5). My informants claimed that for a girl also the expression 'a diamond' is used, which refers to the vulva and is a sign of fertility. A chevron or diamond is used in wall paintings in initiation rites. In initiation rites a ball of hard soil is made in the bush. This is called *ilibwe* or *cupo* and is regarded as one of the main relics whose meaning should be kept secret (Rasing, 2001).

The traditional symbol of the bored stone was also expressed by the word *bulungu* that signified both divinity and beads (which were originally made of stone). They decorated the waist of the women and were used as sacrificial objects to placate the ancestors (Hinfelaar, 1989, 6). These beads were given to a young woman by her *nasenge* (paternal aunt) at her wedding ceremony.

The stretching of the labia, a custom that is found all over south central Africa, enhances pleasure during the sexual act for both husband and wife and facilitates the delivery of a child. Hinfelaar (1989) remarked a similarity between the symbolical meaning of the bored stone and female parts of the body. The stretched labia might emphasize the tunnel through which the husband has to pass to come into contact with the divine, and also the channel through which a child has to pass to be born.

Access to parenthood and to the ancestors was through the woman. The importance of female sexuality is emphasized because the Bemba, like many other people in matrilineal societies, believed that a child was entirely formed from the physical contribution of the mother. It is thought that a woman has a child in her belly and only needs sperm for it to grow (Richards, 1956, 148). The father has limited rights over his children in this matrilineal system. The fact that descent was traced through the mother was also based on the belief that the couple had access to ancestral spirits through marital intercourse and that the spirit of the maternal ancestor was thought to quicken the child's development in its mother's womb. In addition, it was believed that men stimulate or nurture the unborn child by frequent intercourse.

The woman was the maker of the domestic shrine. According to the legends, it was the woman who taught man to make use of the clay of the termite hill to construct a house. It was a woman's task to finish the house by whitewashing the inner walls and the floor. Every month after her menstrual period a woman smeared the walls with new clay, which denoted a symbolic relation between soil and menstrual blood. It revealed a relationship between the purifying connotations of a woman's menstruation and the cleaning of her house. After this a woman constructed the family hearth.

The house of each householder was actually a shrine, since the ancestral spirits of the couple living there were supposed to linger. The *imipashi* were

*Female Initiation Rites as part of Gendered Bemba Religion and Culture:
Transformations in Women's Empowerment*

addressed at the birth, marriage, illness or death of a family member, or at any other event (Richards, 1939, 357).

Women's religious roles

Women, holders of the domestic cult and their home shrine, were called *cibinda wa nganda* (creators of the house), and officiated at all religious services that took place in the domestic shrine (Hinfelaar, 1989, 7). *Cibinda* had religious connotations and was related to *Lesá*. *Cibinda we sumbu* was the person who invoked the ancestors and blessed the fishing or hunting nets. In the home shrine the woman had to light the fire. It had to be started by friction and not be taken from a public fire. This is still taught during the wedding ceremony. The circular home was the symbol of the woman's womb. The word *lushinga* referred both to the band of twigs that held the roof together and to the string of beads around the woman's waist. During a rite I attended in town this was explained, which shows that this symbolism still remains important.

The woman was regarded as the main celebrant of marital life and held responsible for the proper performance of the rituals surrounding sexuality. During the day she fetched water from a running stream while she kept the sacred fire burning. After sunset her husband had to approach her home with reverence (Hinfelaar, 1989, 8). In order to be granted the gift of new life by the ancestors, mutual understanding had to exist between husband and wife. This was achieved by a conversation to which the ancestors were believed to listen. It had to be ascertained that neither of them had been in touch with spirits alien to their legal marriage, for instance by the adultery of one of the partners or even after having seen or touched blood that did not belong to either of them. The wife asked the husband to swear that he had been faithful to her (*Lesá anje nga na bepa*, God may eat me if I lie). If he did not dare to say this, she could refuse intercourse and take him to her *nacimbusa* (Labreque, 1931; Hinfelaar, 1989). In this way, the woman had a firm grip on her husband. During my fieldwork in a village in 1995 this was confirmed by some men and women. The women in town, however, said they did not know about this.

A religious title for women was *kabumba wa mapepo*. *Kabumba* referred to the moulder, the potter, the creator. *Lesá* was called *kabumba* and was shaped by the women who created houses, pots and the clay models used in initiation rites. *Mapepo* is derived from the verb *ukupepa* which means to worship, to honour the spirits. The area of the religious duties of women was in the forest (where the spirits were believed to linger), and extended from the woodlands to the village. The woman was in charge of taking offerings to the family shrine to obtain health, well-being and life itself from the ancestors. Her public position within the village community, with the men in the central men's

house and herself near the domestic shrines in the houses around it, was that of a mediator between the living and the dead (Hinfelaar, 1989, 10). Men in this matrilineal and matrilocal society, where particularly young married couples lived in the village of the young woman's mother, were seen as people who had scant knowledge of the divinities and their territorial cult.

Another role in the religious life of the community concerned the women's responsibility of having to coax the gift of parental regeneration from the peripheral sphere of the forest into the security of the village. The woman involved was called *na-ci-mbusa*. The word *mbusa* was associated with the word *mboswa*, the guardian spirit (White Fathers' Dictionary, 1991).

The initiation rites symbolized a difficult journey from the liminality of the forest into the warmth of the village. The *nacimbusa* would guide the novice on this journey. The *nacimbusa* had a high status and authority. She belonged to the original inhabitants of the land and knew everything concerning territorial rituals. The *nacimbusa* was in fact a chief (*mfumu*), or at least of the same rank as a chief (Richards, 1956). This is not only because she was related to the chief's family, but also because of her position as *nacimbusa*. She wore a feather head-dress, *ngala*, a sign of her status. She was considered a priestess whose function was hereditary, from grandmother to grandchild, and was also a healer (*nganga*). She selected a young woman who had shown great aptitude in grasping the deeper meanings of the *mbusa* to assist her on every occasion and eventually to receive knowledge about the sacred emblems and titles of her predecessor. The *nacimbusa* was the girl's councillor from the moment the girl became a young woman until well after she had given birth to several children. The *nacimbusa* was the diviner during the naming ceremony and acted as a mother to the couple; someone the woman could ask for help in case of marital problems. She would also be the young woman's advocate in court cases.

Associated but distinct from the role of the *nacimbusa* was the function of *nakalamba*, the senior mother. She was the first to meet the young girl at her menarche and usually she assisted the *nacimbusa* during the girl's rite. Many roles of the *nacimbusa* and *nakalmaba* continue to exist.

The belief that people in northern and northwestern Zambia come from the west Kola (*Luba*) and will go to the east (*Twafuma ku Kola, ku masamba, tukaya ku kabanga*) formed an important part of the initiation rite. The initiate had to face the rising sun and was taught the four corners of the earth. The east signified the future, hope and expectations, light and happiness. The west was the country of origin, the past, the place of the ancient ancestors (*ifikolwe*) and darkness. The east was upwards, towards the horizon. The west was from down below. The afterlife, death, is situated in the west. The initiate was told to throw ashes towards the west, then turn towards the east and pray to the ancestors

*Female Initiation Rites as part of Gendered Bemba Religion and Culture:
Transformations in Women's Empowerment*

(Hinfelaar, 1989, 2). In my observations of these rites, this is still done⁹.

Hinfelaar (1989) claims that during the initiation rite the novice was taught to feel herself surrounded by the spirits that were potentially benevolent and had to be courted into the service of the living. Trance¹⁰ (*ukuwilwa ingulu*) or communication with spirits was compared to the movement of the sun. It went down into its female sphere when setting, after which it was re-vitalized during its journey under the earth. Divinity could be present down below and distributed life like a good wife. It was present in the womb of the earth to which each person returned after his or her death. To be divine meant to imitate the feminine. This is still symbolised in initiation by the zigzag figures drawn on the wall (Rasing, 2001).

Initiation, menstruation and the moon

According to Hinfelaar (1989), the three seasons were symbols of divine creation. The dry, cold season was a manifestation of the feminine, while the hot and dry season was that of the masculine. Perfection and fertility occurred when both seasons merged as during the rainy season. Marital intercourse was seen as the interaction of these three seasons: the cold body of the wife was believed to be prepared for the divine gift of parenthood by the hot influence of the husband. For a man, access to the divine was made possible through the marital union with his legal wife (Hinfelaar, 1989, 4). Wilson (1971, 59) noted that the right season for conducting rituals, including initiation rites was the cold season, for it was the time when the women harvest the seeds. Food is plentiful then and beer can be brewed for the rites. Also, today the cash economy plays a role here. Rites are not performed in the hot season (Rasing, 1995, 2001).

Rasing noticed that initiation rites started when the moon was waning. This denotes a symbolical relationship between the moon and menstruation (Rasing, 1995, 2001; Creten, 1996). During the absence of the moon, sexual intercourse was not allowed, as this period refers to menstruation, the period during which women are infertile. Should they happen to become pregnant at this time, there is a high risk that the child would be handicapped. This is also explained in the initiation rites. In these rites the moon is drawn as a crescent in its last quarter, denoting the time that women start menstruating, expressed with the word for menstruation *ali no mweshi* (she is with the moon). In other words, her monthly period of fertility has gone, like the moon has gone, in its four-weekly cycle of rotation. This idea corresponds with the idea that the moon is the bearer of good things since menstruation is a sign of fertility. Soon after this period, a new monthly cycle will begin. The rotation of the moon, from the time when it is invisible, grows from a small crescent to being full, wanes, disappears and reappears, corresponds to the days of fertility: the preparation of the mucus of

the uterus towards the fertile period (waxing of the moon), the fertile period (just before the full moon), menstruation (failed conception, the waning of the moon), and the infertile days (no moon). Therefore the moon symbolizes the menstrual cycle but also the cycle of life and death.

Menstruation was considered the symbol of a woman's return to *Lesa*, the High God, and seen as a journey towards the cold fecundity of the previous generation. While menstruating she moved away from human intercourse in the village towards the liminality of the forest, the abode of her ancestors, where she received the gift of her sexuality through the intercession of her ancestors (Hinfelaar, 1989, 5). Menstruation is also called *ukuya ku mpepo*, to go to the coldness (of the forest), or being in a state of coldness (*ukuba ku mpepo*), to be on a mat or in a shelter (*ukuba mu butanda*¹¹) or as fearing fire (*ukutina umulilo*). This was not only symbolical but also physical: women were supposed to rest in a hut in the bush during these periods and not to come near fire as they were thought to communicate with a spirit during this period.

Concepts of blood, sex and fire

Richards (1939; 1940; 1950; 1956) demonstrated the importance in the Bemba world view of the interrelated concepts of blood, sex and fire¹². The sexual act is considered to make the body 'hot'. In this state the individual cannot approach the ancestral spirits or have contact with any sacred object unless he has been ritually purified. Intercourse between a man and his wife, followed by a purification ritual (*ukuwamya umubili*), was the means by which magic potency was conferred and a blessing of the ancestors invoked. For this aim, at marriage the girl was given a marriage pot (*kalongo, kapalilo*) by her paternal aunt. It was filled with water and placed on the fire, with the husband and wife both holding the rim. Water and warmth are symbols of the husband's part in the reproductive process. The couple poured from the pot on each other's hands while invoking the ancestral powers who have given them the gift of life (*cuma cakwa Lesa*). This was the essential act that removed the condition of hotness from their bodies and rendered them free to touch the fire (Richards, 1956, 31). Today, at every wedding ceremony the girl is still given a pot for this purpose. Although its meaning is explained at the wedding ceremony, it can be doubted whether this pot is still used.

If sex, blood and fire were brought into wrongful contact with each other, they were thought to be dangerous, in particular to children. All mature persons are likely to be 'hot' and could pollute a fireplace. Parents who did not purify themselves after intercourse ran the risk of killing their children by touching the family hearth (Richards, 1956, 30).

Adultery was believed to be very dangerous, for illicit intercourse cannot be

*Female Initiation Rites as part of Gendered Bemba Religion and Culture:
Transformations in Women's Empowerment*

followed by the purification that is possible between legally married partners. Husband and wife perpetually carried out the dangerous act of intercourse, which thereby put themselves in each other's power and dependent on each other for ceremonial purification. A man who had intercourse with two women united the three in a perilous relationship. Their blood was mixed (*mulopa wasankanya*). If the legal wife or husband saw the blood of her or his adulterous spouse from a scratch or menstruation, the innocent one was thought to die (*cilolela*), unless she or he was saved by the right medicine (herbs) which only *banacimbusa* knew (Richards, 1956, 32–34).

If a man committed adultery while his wife was pregnant (*ncila*), it was believed that the baby would be stillborn or would die soon after birth. He had taken the spirit of the child (*asendo mupashi wa mwana*). If the woman were unfaithful while she was pregnant (*ncentu*), then she herself would die in childbirth (Richards, 1956, 35). This is still an important lesson taught in initiation rites and wedding ceremonies. Even though this belief has waned, during my fieldwork in town I heard of some cases where men were punished because they were accused of having caused the death of their new-born child.

People who ate food cooked on a polluted fire, for instance cooked by a menstruating woman, would catch illnesses, mainly of the chest (*icifuba*) (Richards, 1956, 34). It was believed that when a woman added salt to food while she was menstruating, the ones who ate the food would fall ill. The punishment would fall on the innocent and not on the guilty. The adulterous woman who cooked for her husband caused him to become ill or die. I observed that during initiation rites and wedding ceremonies stories were told to warn novices about husbands who died because of their adulterous wives. At the same time girls were assured that while menstruating they can cook but cannot add salt to the food. Also, it was explained that women should stay near the fire when cooking to prevent it from being polluted by others. During their initiation, girls are kept away from fire. At wedding ceremonies girls were told to light a new fire every morning and not to 'borrow' fire from someone else.

The first intercourse with a girl after her initiation rite is considered to be a perilous act. It is carried out with special ritual precautions (Richards, 1940, 20; 1956, 33). In this act the ritual relationship between husband and wife is valued¹³. The couple has to learn how to perform the sexual act. As the wife is the most responsible one in the act, it takes more time to teach her compared to the husband.¹⁴ The virginity of the girl (valued and stressed by Christianity) was not important in the past. In contrast, becoming pregnant while unmarried is regarded as very dishonourable for the girl. Only then (or when there is real evidence that a girl has been abused) can damage money be claimed.

In the past, the pregnancy of a girl who was not initiated was a bad omen,

and the girl and her child were chased from the village (Richards, 1956, 33). Today, although it is considered shameful, such a girl is not rejected because of the influence of Christianity and modern law. In such a case, the girl is usually quickly initiated over a short period of time.

Initiation rites in their socio-religious context in the course of history

Initiation was a central rite in all matrilineal societies. Ancient signs of female initiation rites are animal drawings and abstract figures on rock shelters that date from the period between the fourth century AD and some centuries ago. It is evident that these paintings played a part in rituals and fulfilled certain religious functions, such as for initiation rites, as some of them are similar to drawings used in initiation rites in eastern and northern Zambia today (Ahmed, 1998; Roberts, 1976; Smith, 1998; Zubieta, 2006 and 2011). Rock shelters were used for religious purposes and were believed to be the abode of spirits. At the rites I attended, women referred to a certain spirit, 'the blood spirit of the Bemba,' and to *Lesa*. Maxwell (1983, 71) stated that reference to *Lesa* in initiation rites can be traced to a primordial Mother-earth spirit.

The word *cisungu* (or *chisungu*, initiation) spread into Zambia around 1000-1600 AD, and was used by all Bantu speakers. It is derived from the verb *ukusunguka*, to be astonished, to be overwhelmed, to be surprised, or to be knocked down (White Fathers' Dictionary, 1991). To have one's first menstruation, *ukuwilwa cisungu*, was celebrated as a miraculous, divine event, when the young girl received the gift of her sexuality from the ancestors.

In the distant past, the onset of menstruation and subsequently the initiation was the time of marriage. There were two female rites: one at the first menstruation of a girl and one at the showing of her pregnancy or at the birth of her first child. *Nacisungu* is the Bemba word for a girl during her initiation rite up to the delivery of her first child. Today, when a young woman is pregnant for the first time, the *nacimbusa* throws water on the woman's belly and gives her a bracelet of white beads. These are traces of this second rite.

Initiation at first menstruation is related to giving birth. Labreque (1931) claimed that when a young woman had to deliver her first child, she was taken to the bush by some women. On returning to the village, her parents would say: "Today you have come out of the tree". 'Climbing a tree' means that one is subhuman, and to come out of a tree means that she has become human, which refers to her becoming a mother or adult, and to delivery. In initiation rites today, giving birth under a tree is still symbolised while songs about climbing a tree are sung (Rasing, 2001).

These two rites at menarche and birth giving make sense in matrilineal, matrilineal societies where marriages were relatively unstable and the woman's

*Female Initiation Rites as part of Gendered Bemba Religion and Culture:
Transformations in Women's Empowerment*

value as a member of the clan was not determined by marriage but by the production of new clan members (Ahmed, 1996, 126). Sacks (1982) and Ahmed (1996 and 1998), showed that the roles of sisters and mothers in recent centuries were even more important than wives for men. The legal and ritual relationship between brothers and sisters was an important aspect of matrilineal descent¹⁵ (Labreque, 1931; Richards, 1940, 96-97).

Marriage has been weak all over central Africa, and was less important and less elaborate than it is today. In the past, the future husband played a role in the initiation rites (cf. Richards, 1940 and 1956), which indicates that initiation was the main aspect in the sequence of rituals surrounding the marriage process.

Richards, (1940, 23) described the lack of intimacy between husband and wife. There were contradictions within societies that made a strong marital bond unlikely. Marriages were matrilineal but after some years a man could take his wife to live in his parents' village. This often resulted in divorce. In addition, the fact that a young woman did not have a hearth fire on her own but cooked with her mother and sisters resulted in a less stable marriage. Divorce was easy, bride wealth did not have to be returned and children stayed with their mothers. If a Bemba woman felt that she had fulfilled her marriage duties and had presented her husband with a few children, she could leave him.

Social and religious changes from the 16th century onwards

From the 18th century onwards, immigrants of the *bena ngandu* clan introduced a royal cult, and changed the original religion. Women's veneration of territorial shrines was made dependent on the veneration of royal relics (Hinfelaar, 1989 and 1994). Initiation rites, as well as the *banacimbusa* as former chiefs, were incorporated by the reign of the *bena ngandu* chiefs¹⁶. Chiefs of the *bena ngandu* clan saw to it that the main *banacimbusa* belonged to their clan, either along matrilineal or patrilineal lines (Hinfelaar, 1989, 34). Indeed, all Bemba *banacimbusa* I interviewed claimed to be members of the royal clan. The traditional *banacimbusa*, the guardians of the land, were not ousted by the Bemba rulers, but served royal *banacimbusa* as *banakalamba* (the woman the girl addresses when she experiences her menarche and who assists the *banacimbusa* during the rite). Roberts (1976, 90) stated that: "In this matrilineal society such rites underlay the whole structure of rituals whereby the supranational powers of the Bemba rulers were maintained". The rites had to be reported to the chiefs, but they seemed to have little control over the rites.

It was mainly men who took over political and religious leadership. Consequently the public role of women in religion and politics diminished. With this, gender relations changed. The *banacimbusa* in their marginal position, however, preserved reverence towards the initiation rite and continued to

pass it on to the next generation. Thus, the Bemba did not alter the centrality of female initiation but changed aspects of it, such as preparing the novices for marital service and teaching them to be obedient to their husbands.

In addition, in the 16th century, contacts with Arab/Swahili and European traders and the subsequent penetration of mercantilism influenced domestic life and morality. The original equality and complementarity shifted and may have led to a change in sexual norms¹⁷. Hinfelaar (1989) claimed that lessons on 'how to please the husband' mainly originated during this period of trade with Arabs and Portuguese traders¹⁸, and refers to the husband who asks for his wife 'to be danced'. This is the common expression of 'to be initiated' *ukucindilwe cisungu*, and refers to the sexually stimulating wriggling of the waist, which is an important lesson during initiation rites.

In the 20th century, women's socio-religious roles further declined due to colonial rule and Christianity. Missionaries preached about a male God, who had male servants as priests, while women had no active role in Christian services. Missionaries sanctioned only Christian marriages in which male dominance was emphasized. Colonial officers saw men as heads of households. With these socio-religious changes, women's position in the house and in marriage also changed. Consequently, initiation rites have altered. This may explain women's ambivalent views towards themselves, claiming that they are both submissive and dominant.

Initiation rites in the context of the Catholic Church

Although the Catholic Church had a negative view on initiation rites and punished women who attended them from the late 1930s to 1960s¹⁹, the Church changed its attitude towards these rites during the Second Vatican Council. At the end of the 20th century, in line with the Catholic Church's idea on 'inculturation', described as 'the rooting of Christ's message in the culture of the people'²⁰ (Hinfelaar, 2015, 13) or, revaluing traditional rituals to combine them with Christian rituals, several priests became interested in initiation rites. Trials were made to combine these rites with Christian rituals, such as blessing the novice in church immediately after her initiation rite, or combining initiation with confirmation. Most of these efforts failed.

In 1953, the lay women's group *baNazarethi* was founded in Mufulira by the priest Mutale, who later became bishop. This group spread to almost all parishes in urban Zambia. Their aim is to discuss with and teach young married women about Christian family life and marriage (cf. their constitution *Icafwilisho ca Ba-Nazareth*, 1979). The teachings are done either during their regular meetings, in which the prolonging of the labia is emphasized and songs of initiation are sung, at special meetings or during initiation rites. However, women in these groups

*Female Initiation Rites as part of Gendered Bemba Religion and Culture:
Transformations in Women's Empowerment*

teach girls in the same 'traditional' way as in other parts of (urban) Zambia. This is the believed format in which the rites have been passed on by the ancestors. The only Christian aspect added is the Christian prayer at the start of the rite (Rasing, 2001, 204). Although these rites held for already-initiated women in this group may be regarded as folklore, the gatherings reveal that for women it is important to perform (imaginary) rites to repeat their songs and knowledge. This may be done in order not to forget their previously learned knowledge, but it is also an opportunity for the women to celebrate their culture and female identity, to express their unity and to party.

In the beginning of the 21st century, some White Fathers studied initiation rites, particularly by organising groups of *banacimbusa* from the lay group St. Anna, sometimes combined with the group of lay men, St. Joachim. Supervised by priests, they organise meetings to discuss and perform initiation rites among themselves, perform these rites for newly married couples and to initiate girls.²¹ By studying and annotating these rites in order to promote culture so that it will not be forgotten, priests promote these rites and subsequently try to enhance women's position. Obviously, in the process these rites are altered in a rather Christian way.

Moreover, Catholic priests and sisters of certain denominations are nowadays initiated at their ordination or before taking the vows, in the presence of a bishop or mother superior. It is said that despite their celibacy they are supposed to know about married life (see Rasing, 2004).

Initiation rites as women's empowerment

Contrary to the positive attitude towards these rites taken by priests today is the negative attitude towards initiation rites and other traditions by the UN and NGOs. They consider them as 'harmful cultural practices' claiming that they exist for the benefit of men, while maintaining the 'inferior status of women' (UN, 1995, 2). They are said to be discriminating for women and 'are despite their harmful character and their contradiction with international human rights – not discussed by the community' (UN, 1995, 2). Several Zambian newspapers have published articles that negatively depict initiation rites, particularly but not exclusively referring to the *fisi* practice in Chewa rites²².

Judging one's own (western) cultural practices as good and foreign practices as bad or harmful – viewed through the prism of one's own values – is based on limited knowledge and misinterpretation of these practices, without knowledge of the cultural context. Also, it means that culture is considered static instead of flexible and dynamic.

Moreover, the assumption that 'harmful cultural practices' mainly exist in Africa is a one-sided approach, in which non-western women are considered 'victims of tradition' and the assumed superiority of Westerners is established

(Leye en Longman, 2011). It seems there is a struggle against African culture, while imprinting western culture and norms on the African one (Gausset, 2001; Schoepf, 2004; Dilger, 2009).

Initiation rites are misunderstood partly because they are difficult to explain, but also because in the rites it is emphasized that nothing should be revealed of what happens and is taught in the rite; everything has to remain secret for non-initiated persons. This assumes a secret cult.

It is wrongly interpreted that it is emphasized that women should be submissive to their husbands. In today's initiation rites, lessons are mainly about how to behave and personal hygiene, while in the wedding ceremony girls are taught about married life, how to have sex in such a way that it will be pleasant for herself and her husband, how to deal with her future husband and in-laws, to discuss issues at a proper time, to avoid quarrels with the husband, and how to give birth in a decent way. Novices learn that adult and married life is not always easy, how to cope with difficulties, and to listen to advice from elderly and experienced women. This is more important than to be submissive to the husband. These are lessons for life. Moreover, in the rites women explain issues about men with laughter and in a way in which men are rather ridiculed (Richards, 1956; Rasing, 2001). Also, songs are sung that a man should be good to his wife²³.

It is a fallacy that all initiation rites would encourage girls to have sex. Although there are some ethnic groups in which sex is promoted, such as among the Chewa, many groups emphasize not indulging in sex before marriage. Although girls receive contradicting and confusing messages about sex, they learn about sexual taboos and increasingly more information is provided about avoiding HIV and AIDS (Rasing, 2014b). Moreover, many girls already have sex before their initiation (Rasing, 2001).

Certain aspects, such as the nakedness of the novice's breasts, are often criticized by westerners, who consider them denigrating for girls. However, other women attending the rites also uncover their breasts. This symbolises the unity of women and their unity with the female God *Lesá*, the creator, and the mother spirit from whose lineage all Bemba originate. In addition, it symbolises that the young girl will breastfeed her future child, just like all women attending the rite have done. In many African cultures breasts are associated with breastfeeding, and not with sexuality.

The initiation rite is still the most important forum in which a girl learns how to behave as an adult, while grandmothers and *banacimbusa* are still the most important people girls refer to concerning sexual matters (Rasing, 2014b). The knowledge that is passed on is still relevant, even in towns (Rasing, 2014a and 2018). Each woman has the right to gain this knowledge, while elderly

*Female Initiation Rites as part of Gendered Bemba Religion and Culture:
Transformations in Women's Empowerment*

women have the duty to pass on this knowledge to the next generation.

Obviously, changes and adaptations in the rites have been necessary to continue performing these rites in modern times and in urban areas (Rasing, 2004). Recent changes such as omitting lessons about sex and teaching about how to avoid pregnancy and HIV, show the reflexivity of women, and indicate that women are no 'passive victims of their culture', but actively act and reflect on it, assessing what is good for them in their cultural context, contrary to what the UN claims.

All so called 'harmful practices' deal with sexuality, predominantly with female sexuality. Ahlberg (1994, 226) states that the problem of analysing sexuality starts when it is considered from the point of view of one's own cultural and moral values. This is exactly what the UN does. They consider the rites harmful because female sexuality is a central part of them and is celebrated, as opposed to western ideas about sexuality.

In Zambia sex is considered a pleasure and a right of both women and men, and necessary for good health and wellbeing. It is surrounded by rituals and taboos (Richards, 1956; Rasing, 1995; 2001; 2007). Sex is the most important aspect in life, as it deals with fertility and procreation. Women learn that they should have an active role in sex, and have a central position in sexuality, family life and in the lineage. This gives them power.

To undergo a rite, being secluded, and gaining knowledge, makes women strong and persevering. In addition, the rite emphasizes solidarity among women, which is especially important in urban areas. Girls are proud after their initiation that they have gained knowledge and are accepted as young adult women in society. Hence, these female rites can be seen as a way of empowerment for women and a way to reclaim and exert their power.

Conclusion

In proto-Bantu societies, women had important religious and political positions in a matrilineal culture. These societies had female initiation rites that can be traced back about 2000 years, and were related to the spiritual world. Hinfelaar (1989, 34) argued that the ancient rites were merely a series of lessons in religious education whereby the young woman was trained to be the main celebrant of marital life.

In the course of history, this socio-religious culture has changed. With it, gender relations changed from gender equality to a gender inequality that favoured men and limited women in their religious and political positions. With these changes, initiation rites changed in a direction that strengthened the social sanctions of marriage and indicated the growth of male power.

Hinfelaar claimed that with this, initiation rites were stripped of their

religious significance. I agree that the focus in initiation rites today is on marital education, while the place of religious ideas has diminished. However, several religious aspects are still symbolized in these rites.

Unavoidably, in the long history of initiation rites, some of their parts have been omitted or altered, which leads to a loss of meaning and may subsequently contribute to misinterpretation or to considering the rites irrelevant. Yet, certain aspects of the ancient religion in which women were in charge are still valued today, albeit to a lesser extent, and are still taught in initiation rites, although some of their meaning has become unclear or is interpreted differently.

The centrality of women and their empowerment was related to the matrilineal system and the matrilineal settings. While this setting has largely disappeared, women still have a central role in the family and household. Also, the importance of sexuality and fertility, controlled by women, particularly by *banacimbusa*, is still shown in the wedding ceremonies. The young woman has an active and important role in sex, as sexuality and fertility are central in the matrilineal cultures in Zambia. Womanhood is still celebrated and unity among women is established. Moreover, the fact that nothing about the rite should be revealed to the non-initiated shows that they constitute a secret cult.

The performance of initiation rites in the setting of the Catholic Church today could be seen as a way to promote these rites and to assist women to reclaim their important position in married life and in the family, and to encourage equal gender relations. The study of these rites by missionaries during and after the Second Vatican Council might be regarded in this light. Also, it might well be that Hugo Hinfelaar studied these rites and demonstrated important socio-religious positions for women in order to deprecate the way women were treated by the Catholic Church. Nevertheless, it is thanks to Hinfelaar that women's ancient socioreligious positions were revealed.

As a conclusion, female initiation rites should be seen as a way to prepare women for a leading role in their families and society.

End Notes

- ¹ In the past, the rite used to be about six months long. In 1995–1996, I attended an initiation rite in Mufulira in which the girl was secluded for five months. This was exceptional, from the 1980s onward the seclusion usually lasts one to six weeks.
- ² Etienne (1948) also mentions the spirit at initiation rites, but in a negative way. During my personal interview with the now late Bishop de Jong in Ndola in 1996, however, the bishop asked me not to mention Etienne in my research because of his negative interpretation of the rites.
- ³ In some initiation traditions, the *buta* with which the husband shoots is made out of *mulombwa*, the female tree (while the penetrating arrow became the male symbol – like the pestle to the mortar).
- ⁴ At the start of the rites, the girl is brought inside while she and the *nacimbusa* move like a

*Female Initiation Rites as part of Gendered Bemba Religion and Culture:
Transformations in Women's Empowerment*

snake, while the women sing: *Akancindi kamana cindika bakupele mutonkolo mwe mwaice*: A small river shows respect for the knowledge, you child. Also, the act of sexual intercourse is symbolized above a string of white beads representing a snake, near the river, while the women sing: *Mu kashiba tupashana mayo, mu cilengwa na Lesa*: In the pool we drain water like our mother, created by *Lesa* (Rasing, 2001, 180). Also, a snake is drawn on top of the *mbusa* as the most important figure, while another snake is drawn around a house, indicating that one is not supposed to step over it or to trespass, otherwise it will bring bad luck, also explained as: one is not supposed to have extramarital sex, as sung: *Lyongolo lyapinda ng'anda lyongolo lyapinda ng'anda ee iyongolo*: A snake is the barrier of the house, yes, a snake is the barrier of the house (Rasing, 2001, 156–157). Another incidence in the initiation rites is the crawling through the *mupeto* (the house) – explicitly imitating the python, to the song *Samba tuikule, bwansato, ico utemenwe, cikoshe mbafu* – let us crawl in the way of the python. All these refer to snake spirits. In eastern Zambia and Malawi snake worship is still more prominent in initiation rites, and associated with rainmaking and fertility (cf. Zubieta, 2006 and 2011).

- 5 An example would be the *Makumba* cult in the Luapula. The snake becomes the manifestation of the divinity. But at other times, the divinity can also choose other animals to reveal itself – meaning it is not the snake exclusively. All prayers go to the divinity, not to the snake. Moreover, to kill a python was often a religious crime.
- 6 Cf. Comaroff (1985) who made a similar division between the female space of the forest and woodlands on the one hand, and the village on the other, for the Tswana in Botswana.
- 7 Abstention from sexual intercourse could be important in some social contexts, but celibacy was considered highly unnatural except for the celibacy of 'spirit wives'. During my fieldwork on the Copperbelt I heard rumours about a certain woman who was thought to be a 'snake-spirit's wife'. In addition, some of my informants claimed that the sisters of Chitimukulu also used to live a celibate life.
- 8 It should be noted that there are also many female heads of villages, just like female chiefs.
- 9 Honouring the spirits of the four corners of the world reveals an ancient religion, and is spread all over the world. e.g. it is common among Amerindians, Siberians, ancient Asian and other ancient religions. Also, traditional healers in many societies including Zambia apply this in their rituals and preparation of medicine (personal interviews with several traditional healers).
- 10 Hinfelaar (1989) calls this 'transcendence'.
- 11 A song about '*ukuba mu butanda*', translated as 'sitting idle on the mat or in a hut', is still sung in initiation rites today. Although this refers to being in a hut during the menstruation period, it is now explained by saying that a woman should not sit idle on a mat but should work hard.
- 12 As part of many rituals, such as those for the foundation of a new village, the installation of the sacred heart, and the blessing of seeds or objects used for cultivating, a chief, headman or priest needs to have ritual intercourse with his wife. The effects of such an act can be explained by ideas on sex, procreation, their effects on fire, sacred objects and on certain human beings (Richards, 1939, 364).
- 13 The couple were mysteriously linked. If one partner died, the other had to have ritual intercourse with a relative of the deceased to 'take the death off' the living partner and to fetch back the spirit of the deceased that was supposed to be around the living spouse to make him/her free to remarry (Richards, 1956, 43; 1984). This ritual was widespread across central Africa, and may have spread between 500-1000 AD (Ahmed, 1998, 24). It still remains, although there are some alternatives for this ritual intercourse due to the fear of contracting HIV (Rasing, 2007).

- 14 During my research, some recently married couples told me the *banacimbusa* was present in the bedroom during their wedding night to guide the sexual act. In the past, if a bridegroom was not able to perform coitus, the *shicimbusa* penetrated the woman to consummate the marriage and not to dishonour the bridegroom. This was kept secret by the new couple and the *shicimbusa*. Also, people told me that when the groom failed, he had to try again the next night. If he failed again, the couple were taken to the bush to have intercourse there and if he was not successful there, the marriage was cancelled. Hence, people are anxious about the virility of the man.
- 15 When a woman died in labour or during pregnancy, it was believed that her husband had committed adultery and therefore killed the wife. In this case, he had to kill his sister as a sacrifice to his wife's kin and ancestors to compensate the loss of their sister. This practice remained until the beginning of the 20th century.
- 16 In many societies in south central Africa, female initiation had connections with political institutions.
- 17 Schoffeleers (1979) and Van Binsbergen (1979) examined folk tales about relationships between local (Malawian) men and European women, and between local (Malawian) women and European or Arab men, that probably originated in this period. They claim that the penetration of mercantilism and capitalism may have led to an emphasis on the subservience of women and 'pleasing the husband' in exchange for extremely desirable prestige commodities, on which these stories hinge.
- 18 Some words for goods that were traded are of Arab-Swahili or Portuguese origin e.g. *findana*, beads, from the Portuguese *dona*, *musambashi* or *muzambazes*, *insapato*, shoes.
- 19 White Fathers Archives, and personal interviews with Hugo Hinfelaar from 1992 to 2001.
- 20 The Christian message should be expressed in the language, the images, the symbols, the music, the proverbs, the thought patterns and even the worldview of the Zambian people. Examples are the introduction of drums and tribal dancing in the liturgy. The Church, however, intended to go much further in this process.
- 21 This happens particularly in Lusaka (St. Laurent Parish and Fenza) and in Kasama (initiation team of Archdiocese Kasama, St Ann's Parish). Their initiation and *mbusa* are annotated in *Ifimbusa*, Kasama Fimbusa Group and Lafollie, P. (2018). I attended several of these meetings.
- 22 Some Chewa rites got a bad international press in the times of HIV because of the *fisi* practice (the appointed 'hyena') In this practice, the novice is supposed to have sexual intercourse with an elderly man who is specifically appointed for this, as it is believed that the first sexual intercourse is very important and has to be done with an experienced man. Today this is explicitly forbidden by major chiefs like Gawa Undi, often in response to NGO advocacy (cf. Kamlongera, 2007).
- 23 For instance the song: *Pa mwana wandi nkamena amasense kamena amasense nkaba nkalamo*: For my child I will grow manes, I will become a lion. This means that when a husband does not treat his wife well, his mother-in-law will be bad to him.

References

- Ahlberg, B.1994. "Is there a Distinct African Sexuality? A Critical Response to Caldwell." *Africa* 64, 2, 220-242.
- Ahmed, C.C. 1996. "Before Eve was Eve: 2200 Years of Gendered History in East-Central Africa." PhD dissertation. University of California, Los Angeles.

*Female Initiation Rites as part of Gendered Bemba Religion and Culture:
Transformations in Women's Empowerment*

1998. "Mothers, Sisters and Daughters: New View in Early History in East Central Africa, 300 B.C. to 1600 A.D." Unpublished paper, Pennsylvania State University.
- Comaroff, J. 1985. *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Corbeil, J.J. 1982. *Mbusa: Sacred Emblems of the Bemba*. Mbala (Zambia): Moto Moto Museum/London: Ethnographic Publishers.
- Creten, P. 1996. "Gender en Identiteit: Een Medisch-Antropologisch Onderzoek bij de Nkanu in Kinshasa en Zuidwest Zaire." Dissertation. Katholieke Universiteit Leuven.
- Dilger, H.J. 2009. "'African Sexualities' Revisited: The Moralities of Sexuality and Gender in the Era of Globalization and AIDS in Tanzania." In *HIV/AIDS global frontiers in prevention/intervention*. (Eds) Pope, C., White R. and R. Malow. New York/London: Routledge, 124-138.
- Doucette, J.M. n.d. "The Clans of the Bemba and of Some Neighbouring Tribes." Malole Parish. Kasama (Zambia).
- Etienne, P.L. 1948. "Notes sur les Coutumes Indigènes." Unpublished Mss. Ilondola (Zambia).
- Labreque, E. 1982. *Beliefs and Rituals of the Bemba and Neighbouring Tribes*. Ilondola/Chinsali (Zambia): Language Centre. (first printed in 1931).
- Leye, E. and Longman, C. 2011. "Schadelijke Culturele Praktijken vanuit Gender Inclusief mensenrechtenperspectief." *Tijdschrift voor Gender Studies* 14, 1, 1-5.
- Gausset, Q. 2001. "AIDS and Cultural Practices in Africa: The Case of the Tonga (Zambia)." *Social Science and Medicine* 52, 509-518.
- Geisler, G. 1997. "Women are Women or How to Please your Husband: Initiation Ceremonies and the Politics of 'Tradition' in Southern Africa." *African Anthropology* IV, 1, 92-129.
- Hinfelaar, H.F. 1989. "Religious Change among Bemba-Speaking Women of Zambia." PhD Dissertation. University of London.
1994. *Bemba-speaking Women of Zambia in a Century of Religious Change*. Leiden: Brill.
2015. *History of the Catholic Church in Zambia*. Lusaka: Bookworld Publishers/Fenza Publishers.
- Horton, R. 1971. "African Conversion." *Africa* 41, 2, 85-108.
1975. "On the Rationality of Conversion." *Africa* 45, 2, 219-235.
- Kalunde, W. 1992. "An Investigation of Initiation Ceremonies' Teachings and Attitudes of Women towards them that may Contribute to the Spread of HIV/AIDS." Research report. University of Zambia.
- Kamlongera, C.F. 1987. "Denigration of a Culture or Cultural Change in Malawi:

- The Kitchen Party." *Bulletin of the International Committee on Urgent Anthropological and Ethnological Research* 28-29, 53-65.
2007. "What Becomes of 'Her'?": A Look at the Malawian Fisi Culture and Its Effects on Young Girls." *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity* 74, 81-87.
- Kapungwe, A. 1997. "Traditional Channels of Sex Information Communication and the Fight against HIV/AIDS: The Case of Puberty Rites." World Bank Lusaka, Research report.
- Kapungwe, A. 2003. "Traditional Cultural Practices of Imparting Sex Education and the Fight against HIV/AIDS: The Case of Initiation Ceremonies for Girls in Zambia." *African Sociological Review* 7, 1, 35-52.
- Kasama Fimbusa Group and Lafollie, P. 2018. *Ifimbusa: Annotated Bemba-English Edition*. (Ed.) B. Udelhoven. Lusaka: Fenza Publications.
- Maxwell, K.B. 1983. *Bemba Myth and Ritual: The Impact of Literacy on an Oral Culture*. Frankfurt on the Main/New York: Per Lang Publishing Inc.
- Mogensen, H.O. 1997. "The Narrative of AIDS among the Tonga of Zambia." *Social Science and Medicine* 44, 4, 431-439.
- Oger, L. (n.d.), "Our Missionary Shadow: A Series of Historical Flashes at the Occasion of the Centenary Celebrations of the Catholic Church in Zambia (1991) and Reflections and Second Evangelization 1992-1993."
- Rasing, T. 1995. *Passing on the Rites of Passage: Girls' Initiation Rites in the Context of a Roman Catholic Community in the Urban Zambian Copperbelt*. London/Leiden: Avebury/Asgate/African Studies Centre.
2001. *The Bush Burnt, the Stones Remain: Female Initiation Rites in Urban Zambia*. Hamburg/Berlin/Munster/London Leiden: Lit Verlag/African Studies Centre.
2004. "The Persistence of Female Initiation Rites: Reflexivity and Resilience of Women in Zambia." In *Situating Globality: African Agency in the Appropriation of Global Culture*. (Eds.) W. van Binsbergen and R. van Dijk. Leiden: Brill. 277-310.
2007. "Gender and Death: Gender Aspects of Mourning in Zambia." *Lova* 28, 2, 27-39.
- (2014a), Gender and Culture in Zambia: From pre- to postcolonial gender and cultural norms. Word and Context, Voices on Jubilee, pp. 56-64.
- (2014b), "Traditional Initiation and its Impact on Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health in Western, North-Western and Luapula Provinces of Zambia." UNFPA Zambia. Research Report.
2018. "Urban Female Initiation Rites in Globalized Christian Zambia: An example of Virtuality?" In *A Transcontinental Career, Essays in Honour of Wim van Binsbergen*. P.M. Mosima (Ed.) Papers in Intercultural Philosophy

*Female Initiation Rites as part of Gendered Bemba Religion and Culture:
Transformations in Women's Empowerment*

- and Transcontinental Comparative Studies, Pip-TraCS – 24. Harlem: Shikanda Press, 135-175.
- Richards, A.I. 1939. *Land, Labour and Diet in Northern Rhodesia: An Economic Study of the Bemba Tribe*. London: Oxford University Press.
1940. "The Political System of the Bemba Tribe - North Eastern Rhodesia." In *African Political Systems*. (Eds) M. Fortes and E. E. Evans-Pritchard, 83-120.
1945. "Pottery Images or Mbusa used at the Chisungu Ceremony of the Bemba People of North Eastern Rhodesia." *South African Journal of Science* XLI, 444-458.
1956. *Chisungu; A Girl's Initiation Ceremony among the Bemba of Zambia*. London: Tavistock Publications Ltd. Republished in 1982 by Faber and Faber.
1967. "Some Types of Family Structures among Central Bantu." In *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage*. (Eds.) Redcliff-Brown, A.R. and C.D. Forde, 207-251.
1984. *Bemba Marriage and Present Economic Conditions*. Manchester: Manchester University Press. Rhodes-Livingstone Papers, No. 4.
- Roberts, A.D. 1973. *A History of the Bemba: Political Growth and Change in North-Eastern Zambia before 1900*. London: Longman.
1976. *A History of Zambia*. New York: African Publishing company, Holmes and Meier Publishers.
- Sacks, K. 1982. *Sisters and Wives: The Past and Future of Sexual Equality*. Urbana/Chicago/London: University of Illinois Press.
- Schoepf, B. 2004. "AIDS, History, and Struggles over Meaning." In *HIV and AIDS in Africa; Beyond Epidemiology*. (Eds.) Kalipeni, E.; Craddock, S.; Oppong, J. and J. Goshi. Oxford/Malden (USA): Blackwell Publishers.
- Schoffeleers, M. 1979., "Vrijersverhalen uit Malawi." Paper presented at the African Studies Centre, 20 September 1979, 15-29.
- Simonsen, J.K. 2000a. "Cisungu Initiation Rituals among Mambwe-speaking Women in Zambia." Paper presented at the 16th Satterthwaite Colloquium on African Religion and Ritual, 16-19 April 2000.
- 2000b. "Webs of Life: An Ethnographic Account of Cisungu Female Initiation Rituals among Mambwe-speaking Women in Zambia." Ph.D. thesis, Faculty of Social Science, University of Oslo.
- Smith 1998. *Zambia's Ancient Rock Art: The Paintings of Kasama*. Livingstone: National Heritage Conservation Commission.
- Tanguy, F.W. J. 1962. *The Bemba of Zambia: Beliefs, Manners, Customs*. Chinsali, Zambia: Ilondola Language Centre.
- Turner, V.W. 1967. *The Forest of Symbols*. New York: Cornell University Press.

1969. *The Ritual Process*. New York: Cornell University Press.
- UN Fact Sheet No. 23. 1995. Harmful traditional practices affecting the health of women and children.
- Van Binsbergen, W.M.J. 1979. "Malawian Suitor Stories: Some Comments." Paper presented at the African Studies Centre, November 1979.
- Wilson, M. 1971. *Religion and the Transformation of Society: A Study in Social Change in Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Werner, D. 1971. "Some Developments in Bemba Religious History." *Journal of Religion in Africa* 4, 1, 1-24.
- White Fathers, White Fathers' Archives. Ilondola/Lusaka.
- White Fathers. 1991. *Bemba-English Dictionary*. Ilondola (Zambia): Ilondola Language Centre.
- www.kit.nl/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Study-report-initiation-ceremonies-YID-FINAL.pdf
- Zubieta, L. 2006. "The Rock Art of Mwana wa Chentcherere II Rock Shelter, Malaŵi: A Site-specific Study of Girls' Initiation Rock Art." Research Report. Leiden: African Studies Centre,
2011. "The Rock Art of Chinamwali: Material Culture and Girls' Initiation in South-Central Africa." Ph.D. Dissertation. Johannesburg, University of Witwatersrand.

ZAMBIA SOCIAL SCIENCE JOURNAL

CALL FOR PAPERS

The *Zambia Social Science Journal* is an interdisciplinary, peer-reviewed journal published by the Southern African Institute for Policy and Research. The primary objective is to publish scholarly work in the social sciences and development. Serving as a forum for argument, debate, review, reflection, and discussion, the journal is informed by the results of relevant and rigorous research. Articles are welcome from scholars and researchers at all career stages from within and outside Africa. Articles from any field within the social sciences relevant to Africa may be submitted

The published papers are anonymously peer reviewed by at least three reviewers. Final acceptance or rejection of submitted papers rests with the Editorial Board. The Editorial Board reserves the right to refuse any material for publication. The journal is published bi-annually, with editions coming out in May and November.