

Part II

The Rituals of *Lemba*: Management of Reality

“Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? There is not one.”
—Job in Job 14:4

“Those who suffer He rescues through suffering and teaches them by
the discipline of affliction.”—Elihu in Job 36:15

Introduction

The present section examines *Lemba's* rituals and their role in *Lemba's* influence over society and its material resource. The authority of *Lemba's* adherents rested on the right of the most pure to levy fines for moral transgressions. The high level of rhetorical skill and influence of *Lemba* priests and priestesses created an effective governing order over a network of markets, alliances, and trade routes. The *Lemba* priesthood thus usually coincided with the bases of economic and political power in the wider society and with the possession of crucial knowledge. Songs, puns, legends, and rites indicate that the authority wielded by *Lemba* was rooted in an ideology of esoteric and mystical sources such as ancestors and spirits. Practitioners of *Lemba* thus consolidated its governing capability and coordinated public resources by manipulating ritual symbols effectively. This is why a closer examination of *Lemba* rituals, the task of this part of the book, is important for an understanding of *Lemba's* overall impact on seventeenth- to early twentieth-century Congo coast society.

The major source of evidence on the *Lemba* rituals is a set of largely unpublished indigenous texts, with supporting evidence coming from ethnographies and the mute records of museum artifacts. These textual, ethnographic, and artifactual—art historical—sources will be presented in the form of four Lower-Congo, regional variants and a composite profile of *Lemba* in the New World. Chapter 4 presents the northern variant among the Kamba and the Yaa people living to the right and the left of the Kwilu-Niari River valley in today's Republic of Congo. Chapter 5 presents the eastern variant among the Lari north of today's capital of the Congo, Brazzaville. Chapter 6 depicts the central variant of *Lemba*, among the so-called Bwende and Nsundi peoples of the Manianga region of Lower Zaire. Chapter 7 provides the western variant from the inland Yombe and the coastal Vili and Woyo, the former living largely in Zaire, the latter in Cabinda and Congo. Chapter 8 presents the New-World extension of *Lemba* with material from Brazil and Haiti. Unique characteristics and problems in the source materials will be discussed at the opening of each chapter; a more general methodological and theoretical critique of the issues in analyzing rituals needs to be explored first.

One issue concerns the varied nature of the evidence and the random manner in which it was collected. A set of old ethnological questions may be asked: Are the variations spurious or significant? What are their underlying determinants? Are the varied song texts, ritual acts, and symbolic forms and combinations "free variations" which reflect individual creativity within a latitude of more structured limits? Or are they due to structural variations in social, economic, possibly even ecological zones described in foregoing chapters on the *Lemba* region?

The four regional variants are in part grounded in a quite self-conscious differentiation made by the indigenous writers between "schools" or "styles" of *Lemba* ritual. The author of Text 1 (northern variant) speaks of a distinctive "Kamba" style which is contrasted to a "N'tini a Mongo" style with which he is more familiar. Similar allusions are made in the indigenous accounts of "Yaa" and "Lari" *Lemba* rites which have, in the eyes of the authors, distinctive features. These "ethnic" diacritica will be used where appropriate, but cannot however be systematically applied. In fact they seem to be used by authors outside their home areas, and these latter, such as "Nsundi" and "Bwende," do not appear in the indigenous accounts, nor do "Yombe," "Vili," or "Woyo." It is possible that these ethnic designata, which I have critiqued in Chapter 2, were and are introduced by Europeans and are not part of the indigenous culture at all. Or if they are, they pertain to distinctive *Lemba* zones or stylistic characteristics.

Some stylistic variations not consciously announced by the indigenous writers are however significant in terms of structural variations in the societies of the *Lemba* region. For example, as will be explained in more detail later, coastal Vili and Woyo *Lemba* shrines reflect a less elaborate initiation rite and a less complex *nkobe* than is found farther eastward; this is combined however with an extensive backyard grove and sometimes a fixed "house" shrine. Such a gradual transition from the portable *nkobe* to the backyard shrine may be correlated with a gradual transition in local political structure from the market governing committee without chiefs, historically, to the presence of prominent local chiefs and even kings nearer the coast. The western variant of *Lemba* seems warranted then because of the unique set of symbols correlating with a specialized type of political structure.

Other variations of importance in understanding social change are not of a regional nature. All writers describing *Lemba* initiations

meticulously detail the type and quantity of economic object exchanged. Thus it is evident how the economic levels of the initiations vary from the opulence of the Kamba area near copper mines and rich agricultural lands to the relative poverty of the Lari area on the sandy Teke plateau, and from dues paid in traditional goods to the use of colonial tax currency in the Western variant. Changes introduced with colonial currency are not to be explained as mere regional variations, they are part of the eroding exchange economy of the early colonial period in which *Lemba* had by 1930 been destroyed.

Another important variation in *Lemba* ritual which is not regional is the differential reference to widespread patron spirits such as earth goddess Bunzi, dualist demigod Mahungu, trickster Moni-Mambu, and numerous ancestral figures. It is not easy to account for alternating uses of these spirits in *Lemba* since they exist throughout much of the region in most local pantheons. Differential reference to the one or the other may reflect a "sectarian" preference, or the subordination of one figure to another.

To adequately capture variations bound both by regional considerations and those spanning regions or those having no particular regional articulation requires an analytical approach which can combine both local, concrete and more abstract issues. For this reason the chapters of this section will each begin with a portrayal of local rites based on textual accounts, but will then in the latter part of each chapter pick up themes which may figure more widely such as the social structure of clan alliance, the logic in *Lemba* medicines, *Lemba* naming, or the characteristics of *Lemba's* patron spirits.

Related to the variation of *Lemba's* rituals is the issue of the assessment of type and quality of data, and the determination of which is the best analytic framework for the uneven assemblage of lyrics, medicinal recipes, lists of rules, etiological myths, historical and ethnographic interpretations, and artifacts. In other words, which theoretical model best bridges all the textual, ethnographic, and art historical (artifactual) data? An initial determination of types of available data and their locations of origin was made in Figure 1 (see also the essay on sources, below). Sources were divided into "artifactual" objects derived from authentic *Lemba* settings and events; "etiological texts" derived from authentic *Lemba* events and explanations in KiKongo; and "ethnographies," that is attempts to describe *Lemba* and to relate it to its social and physical environment. Despite the high quality of these sources, they are of varied scope. The ethnographies of *Lemba* initiations range from those

which are event-specific, probably even based in a few instances on eye-witness or participation, to those which describe norms or customs or even ideals. Among the lyrics, some appear to be highly original and individualized, whereas others, or parts of all of them, appear to be standardized phrases which occur widely. In the case of the artifacts, some are crude whereas others reflect great craftsmanship. It is necessary to exercise a critique of quality which delineates the type of data, its inner form as intended by the actor or as interpreted by the analyst, as well as its quality as an aesthetic object or performance.

These concerns for assessing the data and analyzing the various kinds of evidence of *Lemba* ritual will be met through the use, in each of the following chapters, of a limited number of *expressive domains* drawn out of textual and artifactual evidence. These expressive domains will for the moment be defined as areas or modes of behavior with a high degree of consistency in form and meaning and a considerable specificity in the vehicle used, because they are based upon a cultural consensus or are inherent in the sensory capacity of all actors. Expressive domains to be used in following chapters are: (a) the spatial and temporal distribution of events in the séances, that is the formal events structured by an apparent sense of the sacred; (b) the exchanges of goods and symbols in these events, tied to the local economy of subsistence production as well as the regional and worldwide commercial economy; (c) the social organizational idioms used in *Lemba*, often based on kinship, with special emphasis on modes of achieving public order; (d) the sacramental objects (*min'kisi*) composed for the séance and given meaning in the context of the culture's classification system; (e) verbal categories of ritual process as found in indigenous exegeses and descriptions of the institution; and (f) lyrical scores of songs and etiological myths of *Lemba*. This set of domains is not exhaustive. It excludes, for example, dance and instrumentation, both known to have been primary in *Lemba* but unavailable for analysis because of *Lemba's* extinct status. Nor is this set of domains necessarily composed in the only manner possible. Colors could have been dealt with separately, as they have been by several authors.¹ However, colors are often part of a larger ritual code and have here been subsumed under the sacramental objects. The rationale for the present choice of expressive domains lies both in the demand for a consistent analytic format in the face of randomly composed data, and in the theoretical understanding of how a rite such as *Lemba's* initiation generates meaning, affect, and

social control. It will become clear that what I call expressive domains provides *Lemba* actors with a set of related yet autonomous vehicles of expression to deal with difficult issues and formidable contradictions. I shall illustrate this shortly.

The approach taken rests on several lines of analysis in the study of symbolism, metaphor, and communication, and it is appropriate to review these approaches very briefly. Proponents of the so-called symbolist approach to the study of expressive behavior have emphasized the many-layered "strands of meaning" in symbols and their expression of "deep meaning" or "dominant" themes.² In this view, a culture's basic values and themes, as well as its major institutional profiles, can be gleaned best through the study of ritual symbols performed in "total events" such as cockfights,³ electoral campaigns,⁴ divination séances,⁵ festivals, pilgrimages,⁶ healing and initiation ordeals,⁷ and religious movements, to name a few. Criticism has been leveled at this approach for allowing arbitrariness and mere description to substitute for explanation of symbolic behavior. To counter this criticism, some proponents of the approach have emphasized that expressive symbols are always rooted in materialistic, sensorily observable areas such as the physiological, emotional, affective, and economic realms of human experience.⁸ It is a strength of this approach that, indeed, the sensory and emotional can be combined with the cognitive realms of human life. These are appropriate emphases for a study of *Lemba* which for three centuries constituted a major north-bank institution and provided the context for dominant symbols and social ideologies. The fact that these symbols focused on illness and healing confirms the importance of a theoretical view rooting symbols in materialistic considerations on the one hand and in ideologies on the other.

Another scholarly tradition in the study of expressive domains has emphasized the structure of metaphor. In this view the linkages and associations between expressive domains are made the primary focus in analysis. Modes of expression such as sculpture, literature, myth, music, masking and the like are considered to each have their inherent, autonomous characteristics. Analysis looks at the combined, "orchestrated" media, and the structure by which combinations of media are joined. This line of analysis yields "root metaphors"⁹ and "deep structures"¹⁰ which articulate common principles across all expressive media. Although these metaphors and structures resemble the deep or dominant symbols of the foregoing approach, there is here a greater emphasis on understanding the

manner by which a metaphor achieves “movement,” the way in which one domain is associated with another or with the total social context to achieve evocative and emotional power.¹¹ In the study of *Lemba*’s expressiveness this approach is of considerable help. While the distinctive contribution of each mode of expression—be it song, proverb, medicine, fictive kinship, gift exchange, choreography—must be understood in its own terms, all must be related to the dominant metaphoric statement about *Lemba* alliances, economic ties, and healing. There is in *Lemba* ritual an orchestrated quality by which each “instrument”—each expressive domain—plays its unique music but contributes to the overall harmony of the major themes which are more than the sum of their parts.

The overall meaning of many levels of expression in a concerted performance is grasped best by a third approach which combines the sensitivities of the symbolists for the focal symbol and of the structuralists for the relationship of expressive levels in metaphor. This approach has been called “semiotics” by some,¹² and “communications theory” by others;¹³ its varied proponents work in such a diversity of ways, however, as to render the use of these labels almost meaningless. Nevertheless, the analysis of multiple levels or modes of expression as approached by these scholars proceeds in a helpful way, for present purposes, by establishing a set of redundant messages along numerous expressive channels that point toward “meta-messages” or signification of greater generality than a single level or mode, thereby addressing the condition of the whole culture and its relationship to the natural world.¹⁴ In this approach the dichotomy culture/nature, so much a tender nerve of contention in the whole field of performance analysis, disappears before the set of messages that range along the entire spectrum from genetic to kinesic to reflexive-muscular to verbal to behavioral to the self-conscious dramatic. In other words, there is no break between the cultural and the natural; there are only numerous idioms or vehicles of performance and communication, each with their sensory modes and their intangible signification. Also, the analyst is not held to be a human deity who possesses “etic” objectivity in the study of indigenous “emic” subjectivity. Rather, each mode or domain of expression has its “code” which permits the actor to work towards performance and excellence, and which helps the analyst to achieve understanding. Such codes do not, of course, fall ready made onto the researcher’s notebook. He must construct them if they are not evident in the performance. In the analysis of performance in anthropology, folk-

lore, drama, and criticism, and in social and behavioral sciences generally, emphasis in deciphering codes has been placed either on cultural genres with their own logic and meaning or upon universal sensory-perceptive capacities. In the present study the codes of expressive domains will provide insight into mostly cultural and social rules and principles, although there is in some areas such as reproduction and spatial/temporal ordering of events, as well as in the therapeutic framework of the entire initiation, evidence of noncultural constraints.

The basic units of analysis of *Lemba's* expressiveness in the present study will then be (1) the domains—space and time in the initiation rite's layout, exchange of goods and symbols, social organization, medicine and the therapeutic, verbal categories of ritual action, and the lyrical—(2) the domains' codes, that is the regularity in terms of which variations make singular sense, and (3) the relationships between domains, in particular in whole situations with a clear context. Some of the codes will be derived from the persistent and widespread interpretations given in native exegesis to such symbols as the *Lemba* drum or bracelet, or explanations derived from verbal categories such as *handa*, "to initiate or consecrate a medicine," and *handa n'kisi*, "to enter a cure in the consecration of medicine." Other codes will be derived from recurring types of events or acts at particular places in the space-time order of the séance, or from the regularity of certain kinds of exchanges between leading figures such as father and child, husband and wife, or the initiated and the noninitiated.

Once such order has been determined within a domain, and its explanatory code established, it will be possible to perceive the metaphoric links between domains. For example, while the exchange of goods, gestures, and words builds up a fabric of reciprocal obligation between the neophyte, his kin, and *Lemba*, the lyrical domain characterizes in song and declaration the heroes of the past or spirits in whose name events and persons receive legitimation. Thus, as the neophyte's kin receive an offering of pork stew and manioc bread, the neophyte priest and his wife (or wives) receive from the *Lemba* priesthood their symbols of authority; the metaphor (or shifter) is the statement that "gods' food" is the medicine of the new *Lemba* couple. The exchange of human food against offerings of trade goods occurs contrapuntally, as it were, to the distribution of medicines. The priestly couple's political authority is established amongst the patrifilial children and the local public, while they rise in

the *Lemba* order. All this activity in the social and economic domains sets the stage for the reconstruction of reality in the lyrical domain.

Culture heroes such as earth goddess Bunzi, trickster Tsimona-Mambu, androgynous demigod Mahungu, to name a few, span the gap between a distinct *Lemba* consciousness and the conventional religious culture of the region. In conventional narrations these heroes are often entangled in dilemmas of human life, showing scenes well known to students of African oral literature. Human tragedy is frequently transformed into animal parody in which monstrous animals, ghosts, or familiars take up the plot as if they are dancing out a cleverly concealed psychoanalytic transference. In *Lemba's* etiological narratives, by contrast, these heroes avoid such traps and entanglements, taking lengthy narrative bypasses to reach what is heralded as "the *Lemba* solution." In effect, *Lemba's* ideology attempts to resolve complications enacted in the conventional narratives. The problematic, thus blocked out of *Lemba's* lyrical domain through possible resolution, is however brought back into consideration in other expressive domains such as the spatial ordering of séance events, the ceremonial exchanges, and the composition of medicines where action and object are better able to articulate contradictions and to mediate symbolic resolution. Thus the methodology of expressive domains permits us actually to see the alignment of alternatives in a culture with the intent of bypassing implacable problems.

The opening *Lemba* initiation variant from the Kamba (Chapter 4) will offer the context in which to establish the analytic technique's usefulness. This reference text is the longest and most detailed as well as internally the most consistent of all accounts of a *Lemba* rite at our disposal. A short discussion of *Lemba* from the Yaa to the north of the Kamba stands in sharp contrast to it.

The eastern variant, based on a number of texts and accounts (Chapter 5), tests the method's capacity for identifying reportorial errors and gaps, as contrasted to simple ethnographic variation. An important element in this test is the use of the notion of "code" to explain each domain. Additional variants of the rite will allow further testing. For example, in the domain of spatial and temporal ordering of séance events, it becomes clear that an inner logic requires mediation of the village with the world beyond: the bush, forest, river, and cemetery. This rhythm between the inner household world and the outer world of "powers" is found everywhere, even in Haiti in the New World. Accounts which omit it may be considered erroneous or

partial. Elaboration of a domain's code thus lends the analysis its most effective criticism of the quality of textual material.

The central variant (Chapter 6) permits development of the analytic issue of the *Lemba* etiological text in relationship to non-*Lemba* myths in the conventional Kongo-language oral literature. Mahungu, the hero to whom *Lemba*'s origin is attributed in the central region, is compared to other Mahungu myths.

The western variant (Chapter 7) extends the analysis of hero mythology—the lyrical expressive domain—to another common figure, trickster Tsimona-Mambu. Common structural features in Mahungu and Moni-Mambu myths within and without *Lemba* permit generalizations about the “ideological” manipulation of consciousness in *Lemba*, from the “tragic” endings of the conventional narratives on these figures to the “heroic” or “resolution” endings in *Lemba* narratives. Because the vehicle of *Lemba* resolution of social contradiction is the *Lemba* medicine, the drum and the bracelet, and because of the high concentration of collected *Lemba* artifacts in the western region, full analysis of the expressive domain of “medicine” is deferred until the chapter on the western variant.

The New-World variant, concluding with Price-Mars' account of a *Lemba*-Petro séance in Haiti (Chapter 8), offers a final test of the validity of codes discovered in the expressive domains. There is at least a 150-year divergence between New-World and Old-World *Lemba* expressiveness. Not only do the Lower-Congo ritual codes and variants assist in the identification of authentic *Lemba* elements in the Haitian variant, but also the converse is true. This latter identification, which reflects an earlier level of *Lemba*, suggests the presence of “proto-*Lemba*” structures, symbols, and metaphors at the basis of both African and Afro-Caribbean culture. These features exhibit a greater emphasis on fertility than on the trade and mercantilism so prevalent in the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Congo manifestations of *Lemba*.

Chapter 4

The Northern (Kamba, Yaa) Variant of *Lemba*

“That which was a ‘stitch’ of pain has become the path to the priesthood.”—Kwamba, Text 1.94

Introduction to the Sources

The northern account of *Lemba* is based on two textual sources: the first from “Kamba” country, by Kwamba Elie,¹ an excellently detailed rendering of an initiation and healing, with insightful comments on *Lemba*’s organization and its theory of power; the second from “Yaa” country, by Lunungu Moise,² a briefer report of the rituals but with more extensive discussion of the pollution and purification theories in *Lemba*. The two authors were members of the group of sixty catechists who at the beginning of this century formed the teaching staff of Swedish missionary-linguist-ethnologist Karl Laman. At their workposts throughout north-bank Kongo they collected responses to Laman’s ethnographic questionnaire. The *Lemba* texts are a small portion of the overall catechists’ corpus of 23,000 pages.³

Very little is known about the catechists’ ethnographic instructions, although the list of questions around which Laman’s well-known Uppsala series *The Kongo I–IV* was organized indicates that all texts on *Lemba* come from answers in the section on “*min’kisi*,” consecrated medicines. It is also apparent that neither Kwamba nor Lunungu are in their home territories, since in prefatory remarks not translated here they distinguish *Lemba* as they are witnessing it with *Lemba* “at home,” or they state that it is just the same as “at home.” Nevertheless, their incorporation of technical “native” terms is noteworthy, suggesting that they had no difficulty with the language.

The translation I offer is as literal as possible. Further exegesis and commentary follow in the second part of the chapter in keeping with the method of “expressive domains” outlined earlier.

*The Lemba Séance Near Mboko Nsongo
(Among the Kamba)*

Text 1

RECEIVING THE LEMBA CURE FOR LEMBA ILLNESS

- (1) *Vo muntu una handa Lemba, buna una teka baka kubela kwa ntulu ye kihemi mu ngudi ntulu sangama.*

If a person would receive *Lemba*, first he must get a chest cough, the stitch, or breathe with difficulty.

- [(7) *Nkianguna Lemba wazensila mu nitu andi mu mubedisa.*] For *Lemba* manifests itself in his body by making it ill.

- (2) *Buna yandi una fidisa mwana ye nsusu ye malamu kwa nganga Lemba.*

Then he must send a boy with chicken and wine to the *Lemba* priest.

- (3) *Nganga una vitula mpolo yena mu nsaba ye fidisa kwa mubedo.*

The priest will mix *Mpolo* [earth] into a small pot and send it to the sufferer.

- (4) *Mubedo bu kanwini Mpolo Lemba bio kahodidi buna weka Mwana ma Lemba ye nganga weka Tata ma Lemba.*

When the sufferer has drunk the *Mpolo Lemba* and improves he then becomes a *Lemba* Child and the priest a *Lemba* Father.

- (5) *Buna una fila nsusu zole kwa Mwana ma Lemba kasukula mu nwa Mpolo kampodisila ye banzila mpe lumbu kiantula Lemba mu nitu.*

Then [the Father] sends two chickens to the *Lemba* Child whose mouth was cleansed with the *Mpolo*, and instructs him in considering a day for putting *Lemba* into his body [for initiation].

- (6) *Kadi wonso wanwa Mpolo una handa; yandi kidi kabiala mu mbongo.*

For whoever drinks *Mpolo* will be initiated; he must be in command of fortunes.

- (8) *Idiodio Mwana ma Lemba una kubama mu keba ngulu zazingi, nsusu, mbizi bia ndia biankaka bialumbu kia mpandulu mboko fila ntumwa kwa Tata ma Lemba kiza kahandisa mwana.*

Therefore the *Lemba* Child will begin assembling many pigs, chickens, and other edible animals for the day of initiation. Then he sends a messenger to the *Lemba* Father that he should come initiate his Child.

THE FIRST GATHERING OF THE PRIESTS

- (9) *Yandi Tata ma Lemba una bokila nganga zankaka bende nandi mu handisa Lemba kwa mwana wambikisi.*

The *Lemba* father then calls the other priests to help him initiate to *Lemba* the named Child.

- (10) *Bu bizi bakatumisa buna una sola makambu manata kwa mwana ma Lemba bonso buzolele Tata ma Lemba kwa yandi mu mpandulu, mbo nanguna biabionsono bivwilu mu nkisi wa Lemba ye nata.*

When the invited come then he elects a delegate to send to the *Lemba* Child expressing to him the *Lemba* Father's wishes regarding the initiation; all who possess *Lemba* come and bring it with them.

- (11) *Bu bizi tula kwa Mwana ma Lemba buna Tata una sika ngoma ye mikonzi ku fula dia bula.*

When those who will initiate the *Lemba* Child come, then the Father sounds *ngoma* and *mikonzi* [drums] at the village entrance.

- (12) *Ye makambu una kwenda kwa Mwana ma Lemba mu ta vo:*
The messenger [from the priests' ranks] goes to the *Lemba* Child and tells him:

- (13) *Bonga malamumu ma Ta'aku ma Lemba ye ma mimbanda wabakotisa ku lumbu lwaku.*

Fetch the wine for your *Lemba* Father and his wives and bring it to them in your enclosure.

- (14) *Buna yandi una nanguna biabio ye hana kwa Tata ma Lemba, mbo kotidi mu ngudi hata dia Mwana.*

Then the Child will hold all up and present it to the *Lemba* Father as he enters the court of the Child's village.

ENTRANCE INTO CHILD'S COURTYARD;
INSTRUCTIONS OF MPOLO CURE

- (15) *Bu kakotidi una tangununa ebu:*

When [the *Lemba* Father] has entered, he sings this song:

- (16) *Ko-ko-ko? Ko!*

Wanunga Lemba wanunga? E—Lemba!

Will you gain *Lemba*? Yes—*Lemba*!

- (17) *Kiazinga Lemba, Kuyusaul Lemba*

What *Lemba* gives, *Lemba* takes away;

Kiasa ntangu, Kuyusula ntangu.

What the sun gives, The sun takes away.

- (18) *Ndozi binunu kalotwa,*

You may have dreamed of ancestors,

Milunga mianganga miakwangi kalotwa,

The copper bracelets of priests he has dreamed.

- (19) *Ngulu zanusunguku*

Pigs to assure

Kima kiabwa mu mamba

That the thing [causing illness] may fall
into the water,

Katwizidi.

That's why we've come.

- (20) *Ko-ko-ko? Ko!*

Wanunga ngeye wanunga? E—Lemba!

Will you win it? Yes—*Lemba*!

Mboko una bonga nkunga ena:

Then [the *Lemba* Father] takes this song:

- (21) *Dibedi vwamva,*

That which was the fawn,

Diankabi lolo.

Is today the adult *nkabi* antelope.

- (22) *Dibweni mulengo ma Lemba?* *-A-ma Lemba!*
 Have you encountered
 difficulties with *Lemba*? *A-a-ma Lemba!*
- (23) *Mbe kifwanga kiaseha*
 Oh! It is that which dies, which laughs
na bambwa.
 with the dogs.
- (24) *Nieka tadulu dia kanda*
 Become guardian of
ma Lemba. *A-a-ma Lemba!*
 the *Lemba* clan. *A-a-ma Lemba!*
- (25) *Bana Lemba kukandila*
 Children of *Lemba*, protect them;
Ku zumbu kinzinga;
 And their forests and fields;
Bu kiahanda ma Lemba. *A-a-ma Lemba!*
 Those who initiate to *Lemba*. *A-a-ma Lemba!*
- (26) *Mbota tatu bungidi wo*
 Three *mbota* sticks you broke
Handa nasumika lusaba
 Initiate, and I apply the (*lusaba*) medicine pot
ma Lemba. *A-a-ma Lemba!*
 of *Lemba*. *A-a-ma Lemba!*
- (27) *Nabonga mandala minatula*
 I took palm arches and installed them,
ye mandala;
 And palm branch arches;
Mbwangi mu lusaba lwa Lemba.
 And put copper bracelets in *Lemba*'s (*lusaba*) pot.
- (28) *Nayika Tata ma Lemba*
 I became a *Lemba* Father
ma Lemba! *A-a-ma Lemba!*
 of *Lemba!* *A-a-ma Lemba!*
- (29) *Tata ma Lemba bu keti sa bobo buna ha kimosi ye Mwana*
Lemba keti longuka ye banganga bumosi beti sa bu beti
sumika lusaba luanzensila makaya.

As the *Lemba* Father sings this he is together with the *Lemba* Child who is learning from the priests when to apply the *lusaba* pot and to cut plants into it.

- (30) *Mpimpa yoyo bana kina nkununu yanene nate ye bwisi bu kiedi.*

This same night all dance a big *Nkununu* dance that ends at the break of day.

- (31) *Banganga bu bana swaka mwana ma Lemba, mbo yambula kina.*

When the priests have washed the *Lemba* Child, the dancing ends.

GOING TO A DISTANT PLAIN

- (32) *Lwaka mpila mosi, kwenda nseke nda mu vwota nsokia vo mbongo zina mana mu moko maku;*

Then they go to a distant plain to don *nsokia* grass skirts so money will [not] be depleted in their hands;

- (33) *kansi butuku vwikidi mulunga wankwangi mu koko bubu weka nganga yantela mu Lemba.*

but that access to the copper bracelets will be forthcoming to him who would become a priest in *Lemba*.

- (34) *Nkiangunu wonso una kuta kimpela buna ukusumuni mu diodio Lemba kana kuhanina mbongo ye una mana yandi.*

Whoever desecrates him will spoil *Lemba* because of this, and must be charged a fine thereby furthering the neophyte in his initiation.

NEOPHYTE'S DUES PRESENTED; INSTRUCTIONS CONCERNING PROFANATION; LEMBA "MARRIAGE"

- (35) *Bu bavutukidi ha hata, buna makambu una kwenda ye mwana ma Lemba ku lutengo mu mukamba biayenda na Lemba vo muntu swakulu bonso ena: ngulu yamimbanda, ngulu tanu zanganga zanatwa kwa Tata ma Lemba; ngulu tatu zanene zambudulu ngungu ye Tat'aku ma Lemba.*

When they return to the village, the priests' delegate takes the *Lemba* Child aside and informs him that those initiating to *Lemba* owe the following at this point: a pig for the priests' wives; five pigs for the *Lemba* priests—which are brought to

the *Lemba* Father—three pigs, large ones, to the *Lemba* Father for the drumming of the *mukonzi*.

- (36) *Buna una hana ngulu zazonso bonso butudi makambu; mboko honda ngulu ye mwangisa menga mu muzumba kinzungidila madienie kansi ngulu tatu zambulu nkungu zina kebo zamoyo nateye nganga zazo zenzi, mboko honda zo.*

Then [the Child] gives all the pigs, as the delegate instructed. Then they kill the pigs and spread the blood in a circular trench. But the three pigs of drumming the songs are kept alive until all priests have spoken, then they are killed.

- (37) *Tata ma Lemba bu kahondidi zo, buna una bonga menga ye zunga ha bunsaba.*

When the *Lemba* Father has killed them, he takes the blood of an *nsaba* pot measure

- (38) *Mboko tula ku nima nzo ye ha mwelo.*

and puts it behind the house and on the door.

- (39) *Mboko bana kwenda ye Mwana ma Lemba ha nima nzo mu kaba ngulu zozo ye kunkamba vo: tala mpala nkute kimpela.*

Then they go with the *Lemba* Child behind his house to distribute these pigs and to instruct him in guarding against strangers who would disrespect him or profane him.

- (40) *Buna una tomba mono yakubela makambu mu kufutisila dio kidi watala bonso nganga Lemba kasilanga nkasu mu dia mbongo za Lemba.*

Then [instructs his *Lemba* Father] you will call me to show you how to demand the fine, so you can see how the *Lemba* priest exhibits vigor in collecting *Lemba's* money.

- (42) *Mukento bu kena mu mamba vo bakala una kulumuka ye lembo kunkamba katomboka mu mamba kaluta, buna una futa.*

If a woman is at a stream, and a man descends and speaks to her, and ascends together with her, he must pay.

- (41) *Nga ti ndonga yamwana buna lomba malamumu kaka.*

[For this instruction] a single “wine” is request from the ranks of the neophyte.

- (43) *Mbo bana nwa malamumu koko nima nzo ye mimbanda miatata ye mwana ye sika minkonzi ye nkunga ena:*

Then they drink this wine behind the house together with the wives of Father and Child, and drum *minkonzi* for this song:

- (44) *Tata na Mwana basunda ko,*
Father and Child will succeed in all,
ma Lemba. A-a-ma Lemba!
of Lemba. A-a-of Lemba!
- (45) *Kibedi kununika*
He who perseveres
Malenge kiekwa,
Becomes successful before
Singu diatubisa Bunzi
The curse thrown by Bunzi
ma Lemba. A-a-ma Lemba!
of Lemba. A-a-of Lemba!
- (46) *Dibe kanga diesama*
That which was a barren plot
kiekimpwaka ma Lemba. A-a-ma Lemba!
has become fertile—by *Lemba. A-a-by Lemba!*
- (47) *Ndozi bata buyakwama*
Dreams of *Lemba* Fathers
ma Lemba. A-a-ma Lemba!
when they tortured me. *A-a-of Lemba!*
- (48) *Ko-ko? Ko!*
Wanunga Lemba wanunga? E—Lemba!
Will you gain *Lemba? Yes—Lemba!*
- (49) *Tata ma Lemba nwa malamumu mankunga za Lemba.*
The *Lemba* Father drinks the wine for the *Lemba* songs.
- (50) *Nata mikole mu hembo;*
Wear the band over the shoulder;
- (51) *Mwana wabaka mbongo zalunga;*
The Child found sufficient funds;
- (52) *Dieka bobombo,*
And later he will gain
wiza wambindula.
access to *Lemba.*

- (53) *Nkundidi ku nsi,*
 I supplicated the earth,
Nkundidi ku zulu.
 I supplicated the sky.
- (54) *Wanunga Lemba wanunga?*
 Will you gain *Lemba*?
Ko-ko bwe Lemba?
 Ko-ko what is it with *Lemba*?

Tata ma Lemba vo:

The *Lemba* Father replies:

- (55) *Kubedi bunganga*
 That which was difficult
- (56) *Matondo ya ma Lemba, ma Lemba,*
 In gratitude from *Lemba*
- (57) *Weka kungwamu mutumbi mabinda*
 Has become a source of healing power, that
Nyiaka bana, ti nionzi zakula;
 Heals the children,
 makes *nionzi* fish grow big.
Bihambi yunza tolo ma Lemba.
 Those who wait get a portion in *Lemba*.
- (58) *Mboko bonga milunga ye sakumuna mio.*
 Then [the Father] takes the bracelets and blesses them.
- (59) *Lwika mimbanda mia Mwana ma Lemba mu nsoko umosi*
umosi ye hambana, bu kameni bieka Mwana ngang'andi.
 When he has consecrated his neophyte priest, he takes Child's
 wives and each receives a copper bracelet one by one.

NEOPHYTE'S FIRST PROFANEMENT

- (60) *Lumbu biankaka bu biahioka, buna watubwa kimpela kwa*
mpala mu diba, yandi Mwana ma Lemba buna ntumbu
tumisa Tata ma Lemba kiza kansonga bonso kana lomba
mbongo zanzensidi mu kimpela kwa Lemba.
 Sometime later when he goes out and another person drops
 something from a palmtree on him, the *Lemba* Child quickly

sends for his *Lemba* Father to show how he must exact the fine of profanement.

(61) *Tata ma Lemba bu kizidi, una sika ye yimbila vo:*

When the *Lemba* Father comes he drums up and sings this:

(62) *Ko-ko-ko? Ko!*

Wanunga Lemba wanunga?

E—Lemba!

Will you gain *Lemba*?

Yes—*Lemba!*

(63) *Yebedi mfwenta yeka*

He who was lazy, has become

mbukuni i mbumba

industrious—

mvamba ma Lemba!

A-a-ma Lemba!

paradox of *Lemba!*

A-a-of Lemba!

(64) *Mukonzi nasika kwandi*

The *nkonzi* drum is sounding

u-nkembo ma Lemba.

A-a-ma Lemba!

for the festival of *Lemba.*

A-a-of Lemba!

(65) *Kayika biyadi mfuba nzamba*

He has become a harvester

of the *nzamba* field,

muna nzo ami kwandi

in my house

mubuyangi.

A-a-ma Lemba!

in happiness.

A-a-ma Lemba!

(66) *Mbo una lombama malamumamunungusu Lemba kwa muntu wa ta kimpela kwa Mwan'andi ma Lemba ye ngulu ya nkonko Lemba ye buta kwa nkonko Lemba ye ngulu ya binganini bia Lemba ye ngulu ya mimbanda.*

Then [Father *Lemba*] requests the “wine of achieving *Lemba*” from the one who profaned his *Lemba* Child, and a pig for the *nkonko Lemba* drummer and elder of the *nkonko*, and a pig for the *Lemba* host, and a pig for the priestesses.

(67) *Mboko futa ngudi nzonza mu muntu vo kumi dia ngulu ye ngulu yansweki ya Tata ma Lemba buna muzita Lemba una mona ye tambudila sungama.*

Then [the debtor] pays the chief speaker a bondsperson or ten

pigs and to the *Lemba* Father a "secret pig" so that the Child's *Lemba* statue will see and respond well.

- (68) *Mboko mwana ma Lemba una sumba ngulu yina fwa mitete mitanu mu yandi mbongo yambundukila.*

And the *Lemba* child pays a pig of five *ntete* baskets of raphia cloth for his redemption.

- (69) *Bu kasumbidi ngulu tumisa Tata ma Lemba ye ngangazankaka biza bamanisa Lemba ye yokila wo kuni ngudi nkobe ye kaka nzo mu mbiekolo yazimunina mu mpandulu Lemba.*

When he has the pig ready he summons his *Lemba* Father and the other priests to come complete *Lemba*, dry the wood for the *Lemba* box, and "secure" the house for the final consecration of the *Lemba* initiation.

ASSEMBLY OF PRIESTS FOR CLOSING RITE

- (70) *Nganga zazonsono bu zizidi bana bikula vo:*

When all the priests are on hand they proclaim:

- (71) *Ko-ko-ko! Ko!*

Wanunga Lemba wanunga?

A—Lemba!

Will you gain *Lemba*?

Yes—*Lemba!*

- (72) *Dibe disu diatia*

That which was a spark in the fire

Dieka nkama ye makumi

Has become a hundred and ten

ma Lemba!

A-a-ma Lemba, wansila bo!

of *Lemba!*

A-a-ma Lemba, do it like that!

- (73) *Wahanda Lemba, sika mukonzi,*

If you would receive *Lemba*,

You must beat the *mukonzi* drum;

Wasa na mbongo ma Lemba.

A-a-ma Lemba.

And pay *Lemba*'s wealth.

A-a-its wealth.

Wangula mu yoko mbau.

Cleansed in the fire.

- (74) *Mboko Mwana ma Lemba bongidi ngulu tatu, bahondidi zankielolo.*

Then the *Lemba* Child takes three pigs and they are slaughtered.

- (75) *Mpimpa yamvimba yimbila nkunga vo:*

All night long this song is sung:

- (76) *Wahanda Lemba*

You who have received *Lemba*

Sunga tolo nge twangembo

Be alert like the bat

Muna bubu ma Lemba.

In the night of *Lemba*.

- (77) *A-a meka ngie maluboko-yongo,*

Be evasive like the night-jar,

Mbo wayene ma Lemba.

So you will see *Lemba*.

- (78) *Mukento wakikundi nakutula*

Put away your mistresses

Muniku nungu ma Lemba.

So you can keep access to *Lemba*.

- (79) *Mboko mu nsuka bana honda ngulu yina yanene ye kwanga mankonde mamingi, biobio bina lamba kwa bala babutu mu kanda diodio diaweti handa Lemba.*

Then in the morning the big pig is killed, and lots of manioc bread and plaintains are cooked by the patrifilial children of the clan receiving *Lemba*.

- (80) *Bala bu beti sala bobo, buna banganga benzi nseke nda.*

While the "children" are preparing the meal, the priests go to a distant plain.

- (81) *Bu bena kuna bana ta kwa Mwana ma Lemba vo: bu tuna vutuka mu bula, buna ngeye una leka mumbanda wa Tat'aku ma Lemba, ye yandi una leka n'kento wawaku mpe.*

As they go they say to the *Lemba* Child: When we return to the village, you shall lay with the priestess-wife of your *Lemba* Father, and he shall lay with your wife too.

- (82) *Buna mu diodio una kia meso mu lomba mbongo kwa muntu utubidi kimpela ye ta sa mina mia Lemba bonso miena mu ngolo kwa nganga.*

In doing this your eyes will be opened to ways of requesting

goods from those who profane and transgress the laws of *Lemba* that give the priest his power.

- (83) *Bu bameni kumutela bobo, mboko tota makaya mama: mumbwangu-mbwangu, mundanda-nzila, ndimba, minkwisa-mianseke, nuila-mwindu, mulolo. Momo mana kanga ha lubongo mboko vutuka.*

After this has been stated, the following plants are collected and mixed: *mumbwangu-mbwangu, mundanda-nzila, ndimba, minkwisa-mianseke, nuila-mwindu, mulolo*. These are wrapped in a raphia cloth and then they return.

- (84) *Bu bavutukidi ku nseke nda viokakana ku mpemba mu bonga mukuyu wanduka mu nkobe mu bedi bakulu bandi, buna bonga kanga (tadi dia butoto) ha bulu (zindiyama).*

On their return from the far plain they pass by a burial place to fetch a wise *n'kuyu* spirit from amongst his ancestors by taking a clod of earth from the grave; it is put in the *Lemba* box.

- (85) *Bu batukidi ku bikinda bobo, buna bana kwiza mu kaka nzo mandala ye mandala—mbwangi.*

When they have returned from the cemetery they enclose the house with many palm branch arches.

- (86) *Mboko bana ledika lukaya lumosi-lumosi mu momo matukidi mau ku nseke nda momo mandala maba, ye mboko fuka milele miamingi kunzunga ye kotisa mumbanda mia Tata ma Lemba ye mia Mwana ma Lemba.*

They take one from each plant from the plain and attach them to the palm branch arches, and wrap many cloths around the "lodge"; a wife of the *Lemba* Father and one of the *Lemba* Son are brought into the lodge.

- (87) *Batuta makaya momo matukidi ku nseke nda mu matadi.*

They then take the plants brought from the plain and mash them together on a rock.

- (88) *Bu bameni tuta makaya momo buna Tata ma Lemba ye Mwana ma Lemba ntumbu kota nganga zankaka zina sika mikonzi ye minkunga ye makinu ku mbazi.*

After the leaves are mashed Father and Son *Lemba* enter the lodge quickly while the other priests are drumming *mikonzi* and singing and dancing outside in the courtyard.

- (89) *Buna bau bole bana solana bakento baluku umosi umosi mbo lekana bo.*

The Father and Son have each chosen the most beautiful wife, and have intercourse with them.

- (90) *Bu bameni ngiela yoyo bana kubasona namanga-manga, kidi nganga zankaka zazaya vo Tata ma Lemba ye Mwana ma Lemba makiolani.*

When they have done this they make designs on the women so the other priests will know that the *Lemba* Father and Son have had coitus with them.

- (91) *Buna bana bonga bidu bilembi bala kilambu ye kwenda ku nima nzo mu kaba kio ye handa Mpolo Lemba.*

They take the food cooked by the patrifilial children—the *kilambu* meal—and go behind the house to distribute it and to compose *Mpolo Lemba* medicine.

- (92) *Buna banganga bana kaba kilambu kiokio kwa bala batuka mu kanda diodio babonsono.*

The priests distribute the *kilambu* meal amongst all the patrifilial children of the [initiate's] clan.

- (93) *Kilambu bu kilungidi, buna bana sika mukonzi ena:*

When the meal has sufficed, the “Children” drum this *mukonzi*:

- (94) *Kuka-kuka* [sound of drum]

Kibe kihemi

That which was a “stitch” pain

Lweka lukula banda manganga he.

Has become the path to the priesthood.

- (95) *A-a kiekia kimakisa*

A-a he has caused to rise

Ntangu ma Lemba.

The sun of *Lemba*.

- (96) *Kimfwila kiami kiaba*

My death has occurred

Na Tata ma Lemba

In the *Lemba* Father,

Ku mukula moyo ma Lemba.

Now there is life in *Lemba*.

- (97) *Mboko bonga makaya momo mabatutidi mu vula kia milele*

ye hesona kanga dibe ku ndiamu soba hanionso mu bulu ku nima nzo mu mamba ye malamu, mbo tula mu nsaba,

Then they take the plants pounded together in the village, take them from the raphia cloth, and take grave earth, and mix all this together with water and wine in an *nsaba* pot which is

- (98) *buna yeka Mpolo Lemba yilenda fidusu kwa wonso bwilulu kwa Lemba, ye nsaba yoyo kukangila mu lutumbu koko nima nzo ntangu zozo.*

inserted in a hole behind the house. This prepared *Mpolo Lemba* can then be sent to whoever is struck by *Lemba*.

- (99) *Diaka bana bonga nkobe ye tula kanga diodio momo buna dieka mukuyu.*

Again they take up the box and put the sack in it thus binding in the ancestor spirit.

- (100) *Tula tukula ye kolwa biamakaya mabedi ku nseke nda matuta mimbanda mu ngudi nkobe;*

Tukula red and the bundle of plants from the plain are mashed by the *Lemba* wives and put in the center of the box;

- (101) *ye mfumbu zabundwa kwa nganga zazonsono zazi: milengi, nsala zamoko ye nsalu, nkongi, mikenzi mianlele miankulu mianza muntu-muntu.*

also a package of the following from each priest: hair, fingernails and toenails, eyebrows and pieces of old cloth from each one's house.

- (102) *Mbo mimbanda mia Mwana ma Lemba mina kanga mizita mu lukongolo lwankobe mina kala dimbu kwa mulumi au vo mumbanda sumukini mu miau, buna una tala mizita kani miena bonso bumi a tudidi.*

Then the wives of the *Lemba* Child tie the statues together in the circular box as a sign to their husband. If the wives profane themselves the husband can inspect the statues to see if they are still in place.

- (103) *Kansi vo muzita watengama buna wasumunu.*

If a statue is leaning on the side, this indicates profanation.

- (104) *Mboko bana nanguna nkobe Lemba ye kwenda yo kotisa mu ngudi nzo a yulu lwa mbatu ye mbo nianika mikonzi lwandu ha mwelo nzo.*

Then the *Lemba* box is ready and is placed inside the house on a shelf; the *nkonzi* drum is placed over the door of the house.

THE POWER OF LEMBA IN HEALING

- (105) *Lulendo lwa Lemba lwena mu bakisa muntu kubela mbo mpe kumpodisa, kidi ka baka mbongo mu yandi bu kameni kuntula mu nitu.*

The power of *Lemba* manifests itself in seizing with sickness an individual, also with healing him and taking his money after it has been put into his body.

- (106) *Bilongo bina sadulwa mu mbukulu a mbwidulu a Lemba i bina kaka bibasoka mu mbungu: bieka nkumbu Mpolo Lemba.*

The medicine used in healing those struck by *Lemba* is only that which has been put in the cup: consecrated, it is called "*Mpolo Lemba*."

- (107) *Nkiangunu nganga una nianguna nsaba ye katula bina findambu ye nwika.*

Therefore the priest will open the *nsaba* pot and remove a small portion and give it to the patient to drink.

- (108) *Bu keti katula Mpolo, buna una tangumuna mpe ena:*

When he removes the *Mpolo*, he will chant this:

- (109) *Kitukidi mu ntangu*

That which comes from the sun

Kukatula ntangu;

The sun takes away;

Kitukidi mu ngonda

What comes from the moon

Kukatula ngonda.

The moon takes away.

- (110) *Tata ma Lemba*

Father *Lemba*,

Wambuta, wandela.

He gendered me, he raised me.

- (111) *Zangata mansi*

Praise the earth,

- Wazangata mayulu.*
Praise the sky.
- (112) *Kadi nayikidi*
For I am enhanced.
Nyenda nseke-nseke
I have gone far.
Nanseke watwawalula
From far I brought it back.
- (113) *Ubafimba mu ndonga*
Search in the ranks
Yabala babutu
Of the patrifilial children
Mu luvila lualu.
Of your clan.
- (114) *Ko-ko-ko? Ko!*
Wanunga Lemba, wanunga? E—Lemba!
Will you gain *Lemba*? Yes—*Lemba*!
- (115) *Yambula mumbedo waniaka,*
Let go of the sufferer so he may be healed,
Kidi wakotisa mwanzole mbongo
He will bring the goods accordingly,
Fiwansakila nabangang'aku.
Thereby offering a gift to your priests.
- (116) *Mbo kana bonga nkula ye ndimba, kusa mu usoso zameso*
ye kila mamoni mpe mu moko, kidi vumi kia kinganga
kaluta monika mu yandi.
Then he takes *nkula* and *ndimba* red and rubs it around his eyes and in lines along his arms so that the respect due the priesthood will be made manifest in him.

THE LAWS OF LEMBA

- (117) *Nga mina mia Lemba miena kwa nganga kaka ye*
mimbanda miandi.
The laws of *Lemba* apply only to the priest and his wives.
- (118) *Lemba una katuka mavumba, katuka ngolo tina ye lembo*
kala diaka.

But *Lemba* may lose its scent and lose its strength permanently.

- (119) *I mu diambu diamizita miatulwa mu lukongolo lwa nkobe bukahandu vo kiokio kina kaka dimbu kiampandila ma nitu kwa Lemba vo sumunu kwa muntu.*

The figure-statues placed in the circular box at initiation are a sign of the presence of *Lemba* in case of transgression of the laws by the person.

- (120) *Ikianguu, nganga kana sweka muntu umusumuni ye lembo mu dia mbongo ko.*

For this reason the priest cannot ignore the profanation and refuse to take the fine payment due him.

- (121) *Vo mumbanda una sweka, buna mizita mitengamani Lemba sumukina, tinini, weka kizekele, kifwa mbombo ye makutu.*

If the *Lemba* wife tries to hide a sin, the statues will indicate *Lemba's* profanation, its loss of scent, and its deafness.

- (122) *Diela dimeni mvu-mvu yikatuki mu yandi weka kifwanga.*

Its spirit will have left it forever and the one associated with it will die.

- (123) *Lemba uhandungu kwa bakala dimosi mboko bieka mimbanda miandi mu keba mina mina bakila ulumi'au mbongo mu Lemba.*

Lemba is received by a single man and his wives are consecrated to keep each of the laws so that their offspring may be preserved in *Lemba*.

- (124) *Nga yandi wabiekwa Lemba kwa ngudi a nganga bu kabwilu kwa Lemba kibeni kidikalunga mu kanda dia mase mandi mu baka mbongo nkianguu una wo zaba nsadulu ye mbukulu ye mpandusulu ye mpandulu ye bilongo kwa ngudi nganga mina tuka miomio miamionsono.*

He who is consecrated in *Lemba* by the high priest, when he is possessed by *Lemba* he will go request money in his father's clan in order to learn healing and initiating and the initiation and the medicine before the appropriate high priest, whence all this comes.

- (125) *Buna Mwana ma Lemba zebi bonso bwena nzila mu yandi Lemba.*

In this wise the *Lemba* Child will know the way of *Lemba*, and its laws.

- (126) *Nganga Lemba kana mona mpene vo yanga nkento nganga ko!*
A *Lemba* priest may not see a nude woman nor lay with the wife of another.
- (127) *Kana dia mbongo zabalembolo kuntela kimpela ko!*
He may not take fines other than those arising out of profanation.
- (128) *Mutima ngulu kana dia Tata ma Lemba bu kakidi moyo ko, kansi ufwiti kala wa Tata ma Lemba wampandisa.*
The heart of the pig may not be eaten by any *Lemba* Father, it must be the *Lemba* Father who initiated the neophyte.
- (129) *Kalenda dia ntoba mpe.*
He may not eat *ntoba* manioc stew either.
- (130) *Kalendi dia biabiomba ko.*
He may not eat anything unclean.
- (131) *Kana lomba mbongo za Lemba ye ka lembolo nganga ko.*
No one may ask for *Lemba's* goods without being a *Lemba* priest.
- (132) *Vo sumukini kina kimosi mu biobio, buna una tumisa nganga zankaka biza kaka nzo ye honda ngulu mu udiangolokolo kwa Lemba.*
If any of these laws are transgressed, then that one will call other priests to erect a lodge and kill a pig to renew *Lemba*.
- (133) *Buna nganga veedidi ye vutukidi kala bonso kana ntete waduna wakondwa bunkuta kwa Lemba diaka bu kabanza vo una hondwa.*
Thus the priest is purified and returns to the former state, not fearing the wrath of *Lemba* as before thinking he would be killed.
- (134) *Nganga Lemba ka sadilanga kinganga mu kwenda buki yonso ntangu kazolele ko, kansi ubakilanga mbongo vo bete dia malamau dinsotonini muntu wankaka, buna didi zo kwa yandi, vo titi kianguba, vo titi kia yaka, vo fikanga.*
The *Lemba* priest does not use his priestly office to go heal any time he wishes, rather he collects fines only if wine is

spilled on him by another—then he charges for it—or a peanut shell, or a bit of manioc, or some earth.

(135) *Ye wena nsisi bu keti zieta mu mavata malembolo Lemba.*
He is greatly feared as he travels in villages without *Lemba*.

(136) *Mukawa kaka kana nata ye nlunga wankwangi mu koko; nkuutu ye nkalu yansekola malam u bina natwa kwa kilezi kitalanga vo kololo ye bansumuni, buna yandi una kamba vo nanguna mamba.*

He will carry only a staff and a copper bracelet on his arm; the satchel and a calabash for tapping wine will be carried by a youth who watches that he is not made drunk or profaned, in which case a fine will be imposed.

(137) *Tata ma Lemba wena diswasani ye Mwana ma Lemba, kadi Mwana ma Lemba kaka mu diedila bantu katubukidi dio kansi Tata ma Lemba wena kundu ha ntandu a kinganga kiandi.*

The *Lemba* Father is different from the *Lemba* Child, for the *Lemba* Child can use his intelligence on people only to heal, whereas the *Lemba* Father has *kundu* power surpassing that of the Child.

(138) *Mu diodio Mwana ma Lemba una lembana kala detila ye Tata ma Lemba mu vumi.*

For this reason the *Lemba* Child will be unable to surpass his *Lemba* Father in honor.

(139) *Kadi Mwana lenda tina vo si kafukisa kanda diandi mu dia ye ngudi a nganga.*

The Child can leave his clan if it is threatened with decimation and “eat” with the high priest.

(140) *Lemba kalendi zimbakana kanda diateka kala ngang'andi ko, nkianguku kana bwila muntu vo katumbulu banzila mu hingana mu kala nganga ko, mfumu a Lemba bu kafwa.*

Lemba will not decimate a clan which already has one of its priests, and it will not possess a person who has thoughts of being a priest when a *Lemba* chief dies.

(141) *Ikuma habedi nganga Lemba, nganga una hingana hoho, kidi mbongo zasensisa Lemba mu kanda kazidi katuka mu kanda diodio ye zimbala.*

Therefore *Lemba*'s priesthood is inherited with the wealth given to *Lemba*. *Lemba* is then in that clan and it will not be extinguished.

Lemba in Indo (Among the Yaa)

Text 2

THE LEMBA PURIFICATION

- (1) *Mpila ankaka a nkwedolo i mu Lemba, mbiakolo a bakento ku nkisi a Lemba mu lembwa yanga. Mu nsi yayi mpe mwena nkisi wau nate bwabu.*

Another way of marrying is in *Lemba*, by consecrating women who wish to be pure in *nkisi Lemba*. The *nkisi* continues in this country till today.

- (2) *Buna tuka nsi ankulu, buna fu kiaki kiena mu mbiakolo yayi ya ngiobosolo kwa banganga zihendi Lemba.*

Since ancient times there is this custom to consecrate through cleansing from priests initiated to *Lemba*.

- (3) *Vo bakala dizolele, vo bwabu nkento ami ka una vutuka yanga ko, buna buketi mona beti handa Lemba bahaika ha bwala, kadi bonso zeyi Lemba diena finhandila ku mfinda, kansi mambu mamakeke, buna bakwiza mo maninga ha bwala.*

If the male wishes it, and if "now my wife desires to remain pure," then it is considered necessary to compose *Lemba* outside the village, for *Lemba* is composed partly in the forest, and partly also composed on the return to the village.

- (4) *Ikuma Lemba buditokele ha bwala. Mu handila, buna nga nkento una wawana ye banganga vo bana sukula nkento andi ye yandi beni, kidi kana vutuka yanga ko.*

Lemba is brought out first in the village. To initiate, the woman and her husband meet with priests to cleanse the woman and himself, so there is no return to adultery.

- (5) *Nsukulu yena bonso bwabu. Banganga bana kanga lukongolo (i. s. v. nkangulu yavandumuka) buna bana sukulu ye zinganga bana kota nsi a lukongolo, mboki banganga bana kubasikula mu mbwasulu (mbwangulu) anlangu mu bisafi.*

The purification is like this. The priests create a circle (themselves standing in line) for cleansing and the priests enter the circle, then they rinse them off with a water-soaked sprinkler of palm fronds.

- (6) *Tula nlangu mu longa mboki bondika safi biobio mu nlangu, mboki banda mu nitu zau, nate tesobukilungidi bahaikidi kwau.*

They put water in a basin then they dip the frond in water, and strike it on their bodies until it is sufficient, then they come out.

THE PADDLES OF PURIFICATION

- (7) *Mboki bobo basukulu, buna nganga una kuvana fibaya nkento ye bakala. Vo bakala wena ntalu a bakento baya, buna babo bafwiti sukula ye yandi, kidi bakento bandi kabana vutuka yanga ko. Wanga nganga uvana ntalu bimbaya-mbaya bonso bwena ntalu bakento. Kadi mu bimbaya-mbaya biobio momo mwena dimbu kianzaila vo bwabu nkento umeni yanga.*

When they have all been washed, the priest gives a small wooden paddle to the woman and to the man. If the man has several wives, then each one must be washed with him so they will not lapse into adultery. The priest will distribute as many of the small paddles as there are women. The meaning of these paddles is that they are a sign that the woman will no longer practice adultery.

- (8) *Lumbu kibabiekongo, vo sukulungu ikiokio, nganga ubumbikanga makasu ha kati diabaya bonso bwabu mboki vwidi nkento bu kamwani ti makasu momo masumukini ye lomba buna ntumbu zaya vo nkento yengi.*

On the day of the consecration after the washing, a priest ties a vine around the middle of the paddle  so that the owner of the woman when he sees the vine torn will know the woman has been violated.

- (9) *Buna vwidi nkento ntumbu tumisa zinganga mu kwiza mona kwa tata (i.s.v., samanuka bakala dilele yandi). Ibobu bwena bila kiabaya.*

The woman's owner will quickly call the priests to come be seen of the father (i.e., expose to the male her cloth). This is the nature of the paddle.

- (10) *Bakala diayanga nkento wabieko ku Lemba fwiti futa ntalu beni: muntu mosi ye bibulu ye mbongo kwa vwidi nkento.*

The man who has violated a woman consecrated in Lemba pays a stiff fine: one person, animals, and money to the woman's owner.

- (11) *Mboki yandi kibeni vwidu nkento fwiti vana nkombo mosi yibana dia zinganga. Mboki diodio bu dimeni buna nganga una vutuka tula vo fula diaka makasu mamona va baya.*

Then the owner himself of the woman must pay one goat kid to the priests. This is for the purpose of the priest returning to put a new vine around the paddle.

- (12) *Ibobo bwena dimbu kiabaya diakento. Nga mu baya dia-bakala, buna kadiena mu diambu diayanga ko, kansi mu kundu diandi, kidi kana kwe lokingi bantu na mpimpa ko, kadi wenda ku loka, buna fwa kaka.*

This is the nature of the woman's paddle. The man's paddle is not for indicating adultery, but on account of his mystical power, so he will not curse people in the night; for whoever is cursed, dies.

- (13) *Ikuma vo yandi kibeni bakala fwidi, buna mu baya diodio dina ta kimbang'i kadi vo bakento bandi banhondele bu bas-wekele nsamu wu balekele ye bakala diankaka, kani vo yandi yandi kibeni.*

If the man himself dies, this wooden insignium will be a witness as to whether it is his wives who killed him for hiding their affairs with other men, or whether he himself was responsible.

- (14) *Bu bameni tala mabaya moso namabakento bandi, vo nkento. Bu batedi vo mabakento mandi vo diankento ka disa-mukini ko, kansi diayandi beni disamukini ye lomba pinda, buna kabalendi vutuka kwamisa nkento ko, vo ngeye didi toko diaku, kansi buna kundi diandi dindidi.*

They then investigate the paddles of his wives, or his wife. If they see that his wives or wife did not commit profanation, but he himself profaned and called for evil, they will not come back and harass the woman alleging "you ate your man," for that would mean she had "eaten" her companion.

PROHIBITIONS OF LEMBA

- (15) *Nkento bu kameni sukulu ku Lemba, kalendi vutuka simbwa kwa babakala ko. Ulenda kunsebuna nkasi andi ye mwana nkasi buko ye tat'andi.*

A woman who has been cleansed in *Lemba*, may not be touched by men, except of course she may be near her maternal uncle, her nephew, and her father.

- (16) *Nga mu babakala bakimi, buna futa kaka mu simba kuba-simbidi.*

But when men show themselves off and they touch her, they must pay.

- (17) *Nlele andi kasimba ko, nga buna futa.*

If they touch her clothes, they pay.

- (18) *Wasumbuka nti ukadieti, futa.*

If they step over a log where she has walked, they pay.

- (19) *Kuhiole, vo kwena kini kiandi wahiokila ko, futa.*

If they linger and do not withdraw where she dances, they pay.

- (20) *Kulendi kuntela mbila ko, nga futa.*

If they stare at her for any reason, they pay.

- (21) *Kulendi kuntuba loko ko, nga buna futa.*

No injury may be spoken against her, or they will pay.

- (22) *Vo muntu weti bula (teta) nkandi kantimbudila sula futa kaka.*

If a person is breaking palm nuts and one ricochets and hits her, that person shall pay.

- (23) *Mu nsi ankulu yakwaku (Indo) buna mfutulu yaluta kala mu bantu bole bole mu futa, muntu ndiena sumuni nkento wasukulu ku Lemba. Bantu nkatu, buna futa mbongo.*

In earlier times in this region of Indo, payment of two people was the main way of handling the profanation of a woman cleansed in *Lemba*. If no person was available for payment, money was used.

THE COMPOSITION OF N'KISI LEMBA

- (24) *Mpandulu a Lemba kizeyi ko vo yena diswasana ye mpandulu ye ya Bakongo. Kadi mina miankaka, buna mpila mosi kwandi (i.s.v., ku beti handila muntu wankaka ka lendi ko kwenda, mboki mfutulu ambongo zazingi zingi, buna mpila mosi, kadi kundambu nsi eto buna difutulwa mbongo zazingi mu handa).*

I do not know whether the initiation to *Lemba* is different from that of the *Bakongo*. There are some rules that are the same (e.g., during initiation another person may not pass by, he will be taxed much money; also the same as in our country, the initiation itself costs much money).

- (25) *Mboki mu zingi, buna mpila mosi, kadi kwaku, buna zingila beni bazingulanga.*

With the ceremony, it is the same; here they simply dance around together.

- (26) *Lemba mu nsi yayi, mbaduku, buna i nsukudulu.*

Lemba in this country, initially, consisted of the cleansing.

- (27) *Mboki bukazole handa nkati handa, buna ukwendanga ku mfinda ye nganga mu handa nkati nsalu. Kadi mpandulu a Lemba yena bonso nkisi miankaka miaminene, b.v., teba longo kimosi mboki yimbila nkunga. Mboki, longuka mbukulu ye longuka ndwenga zankaka mu kiloka.*

When they want to initiate to it, they simply go to the forest and the priest does the composing. For the composition of *Lemba* is like any other large *n'kisi*: that is, teaching a rule, then singing a song. Then, learning therapeutics and techniques for saying spells.

- (28) *Kadi wonso ukwendanga ku beti handila Lemba vo muntu una kwenda koko, buna ntumbu kunhonda mu kiloka.*

Whoever strays into the area where they are composing *Lemba*, he will be killed by spells.

- (29) *Vo ka bazolele kunhonda, buna ntumbu kunsu zengi kiamionso-mionso nsamu tambudila kwandi, b.v., kina, tambudidi kwandi mu kindu, yimbila wayimbila kwandi, mboki vova monso-monso mambu.*

If they do not want to kill him, they create some special effects to acknowledge him, such as dancing, receiving him into the cemetery, singing, or speaking about any affair whatsoever.

- (30) *Mpila nkadulu yibikwangwa Mayingi, ka lauka nadede ko. Nga kifwani kialauka. Nga lenda kwenda konso-konso mpe.*

This treatment produces a state called *Mayingi*; it's not exactly madness, although it resembles it, and a person can go any which way from it.

- (31) *Nga Lemba diandambu yayi balenda dio handila kwandi ha bwala, kansi mu nkubu a nsusu bakwendanga ku mfinda mu handa.*

Lemba in this country can be composed in the village, but usually at the first cock's crow they go to the forest to compose it.

- (32) *Nga bu beti handa ha bwala, bahanda beti handa kwau;*

mboki bankaka mu dia ye nwa malafu mau ye kina kwau, kadi mpandulu a Lemba yena lumbu biankungi.

When they compose it in the village, they just do it among themselves, while others drink their wine and dance their dances, for the initiation to *Lemba* is a matter of days of festivity.

- (33) *Nga nlunga wakinganga kalendi vwikulwa ha bwala ko, ku mfinda; ye nkobe a Lemba yena bilongo ye mfusa ye betota biankaka, buna kayinde lekulwa kuhendi dio ha bwala ko, kansi ku mfinda bana dio tundila ha moko mandi.*

The bracelet of the priesthood may not be put on in the village, it must be the forest; the *Lemba* chest bearing medicines, chalk, and other assorted items are thought not to be validly composed in the village but in the forest. In the forest the bracelets are placed on [the priest's] arms.

- (34) *Mboki bateka kumbufanga beni bonso bubazolele. Mboki bu kana vutuka ku bwala, buna ku nsi a nlele kana vaikila ku bwala. Ibobo bwena mankaka mampandule a Lemba mu nsi yayi.*

They first dine mightily according to their desires. When they return to the village, they are shrouded under a cloth; they come out from under it in the village. This is how *Lemba* is composed in this country.

The Expressive Domains and Their Codes

THE SPATIAL AND TEMPORAL DISTRIBUTION OF EVENTS

This domain is quite explicit in Kwamba's account of a *Lemba* initiation. Turner and other scholars of Central African ritual have noted the participants' tendency to express their ritual actions spatially. In North Kongo the reason for this is obvious, for the village constitutes a cosmological space and an ideological unit lending symbolic structure to all rituals held in its confines.

Kwamba's *Lemba* séance begins as the priests gather at the village entrance (elsewhere it is a crossroads). Both places are auspicious sites of ritual attention, for the burial of twins, or protective medicines, the exchange of gifts, or the rendering of sacrifices. The village entrance is the main opening to the "social body," and stands in isomorphic relation to bodily openings. Thus when, in the village

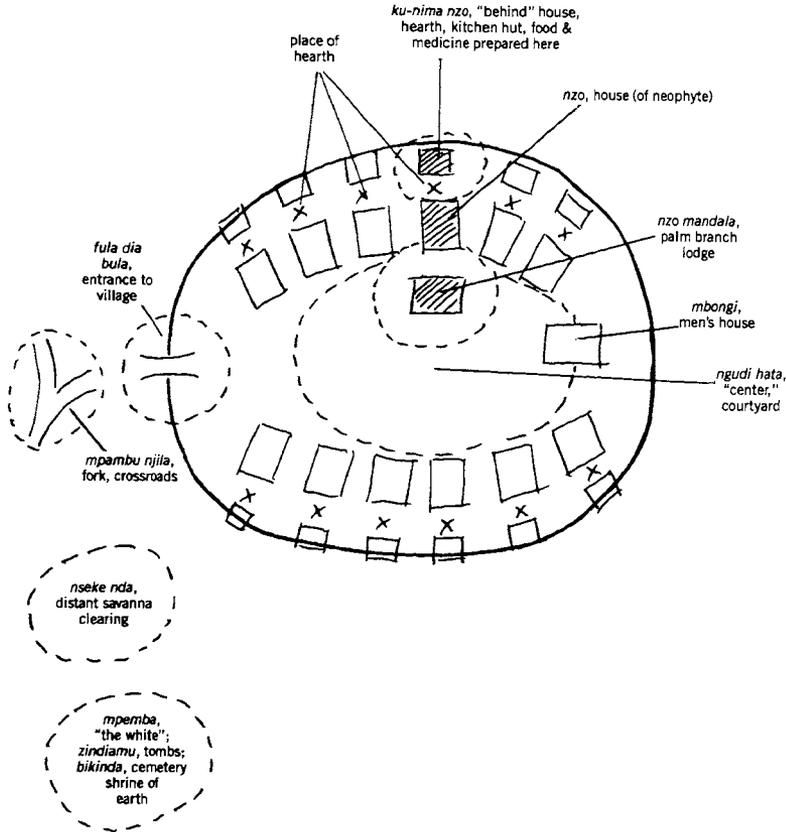
entrance (*fula dia bula*), the *Lemba* novice receives medicines of *Lemba*, "it enters his body" (Text 1.5), and after gifts are exchanged, the priests "enter the center of the village" (1.14). Sixty years later *lemba-lemba* plants used in the "opening" (*bonzo*) part of medicine in Kongo are planted at the entrance to villages, markets, and near houses associated with twins. The spatial zones demarcated in the *Lemba* rite are classificatory analogies to other aspects of the ritual cosmology such as the human body, social relationships, plants, and special words and names.

The village courtyard (*ngudi hata*, "mother," source, center; also *nkanu*, court) is the site of several key phases of the rite, such as initial instructions to the neophyte, an all-night dance, a ritual cleansing, part of the *Lemba* "marriage" as well as its "consummation." The North-Kongo village courtyard is a public place, even when a ritual event occurs there. It is also thought of as a "male" place; the men's house (*mbongi*) is found either in its center or at one end. Villages of the region usually consist of two parallel and facing rows of houses. If the village is on a ridge, as is often the case in this hilly region, the parallel rows are straight. Otherwise, they may bulge to form a circle. "Behind" the houses are cooking hearths and kitchen huts; this is "female" space. Beyond that are gardens, domestic fruit trees, trash pits, and drying racks, and then the bush or forest, considered "wild." All these zones—entrance, courtyard, house, hearth, garden, bush—become important in *Lemba* (see figures 5 and 6).

After the first large meeting in the courtyard on the first day, and the dance of the night (1.15–31), the activities move out to a distant savanna clearing (*nseke nda*). It is unlikely that Kwamba observed these activities, since he devotes only a few lines (1.32–4) to what must have taken much of the morning of the second day. Also his explanation of the purpose of the savanna phase is mostly interpretation, rather than observation. It is understandable that he should stay away, if not a *Lemba* devotee. *Lemba* rhetoric stated that a profane person who wandered near these sacred savanna or bush areas would be beaten, fined, forcibly initiated, or even killed. Other accounts suggest that what occurred within the *Lemba* group was the first instructions—as Kwamba intimates—on how to act like a *Lemba* priest. The first phase of the initiation was thus evenly divided between village and savanna clearing, a clear spatial ceremonial rhythm.

Following the priests' return from the savanna on the second day—the celebrants having stayed up all night—the neophyte couple

Figure 5
Spatial zones of *Lemba* ritual
as described in Text 1 by Kwamba



receives its copper bracelets in a ceremony in the courtyard. The neophyte or his patrons have paid the dues in pigs, which are now slaughtered, and their blood is poured in a circular trench at the door of the neophyte's house, approximately where the lodge will be built later. Sometime later priests and the neophyte couple move to the kitchen area behind the house, where more pigs are slaughtered. The couple is instructed in the ways of guarding against defilement, and the *Lemba* priestesses sing their song. The neophyte couple puts on their newly consecrated bracelets, and they, as a couple, are blessed. Pigs' blood from an *nsaba* pot is spread on the door of the house facing

Figure 6
 Spatial and temporal organization of events
 in Kwamba's account of *Lemba* inauguration.
 Numbers refer to lines in Text 1.

time	day	night	day	pause	day	night	day	
space ← village	hearth		instructions, blessing of couple, women's song (37-59)				"children" prepare feast (79) medicines mixed (87)	distribution of feast & medicines (91-104)
	court		instructions, dance, all night (30) (14-29) cutting plants (29)	washing (31)	dues paid, pigs killed, bracelets given (35-6)	charging time, constructing lodge (60-9) opening of second phase (70-3)	dance vigil (75-8)	Father/son wife exchange (88-90)
	savanna		entrance (11-13)	wearing of grass skirt, instructions (32-34)				priests collect plants (80-3)
	cemetery							priests collect tomb earth (84-5)

the hearth. The slaughter of so many animals suggests a distribution or feast at this point. The first half of the rite is now completed.

The rite has moved full cycle, from village to savanna and back to village. Within the village, the complementary opposition of courtyard and hearth has also been established, and in connection with the latter opposition, that of male and female has been made isomorphic. The "marriage" ceremony, the exchange of pigs for the bracelets, and further slaughter of pigs for the consecration of the bracelets suggest a sort of step-by-step movement through the ritual zones, a sacrifice or exchange at each crucial place. From this first phase of the rite the analyst must conclude that ritual here is anything but amorphous antistructure. If anything, it is superstructure, in which all available codes are made available for the creation of a cultural, cosmological statement. This is further in evidence when Kwamba notes that the priest, having been taught his prohibitions and consecrated, goes out for an indeterminate period of time to be "profaned" at some undetermined spot. Daily life is profane, its placement is hardly possible. Only when the neophyte priest is profaned—by a verbal assault, a drop of spilled wine, etc.—and notifies his *Lemba* father is the initiation rite reconvened at a determinate location and time.

The second phase of *Lemba*, concerned with restoring the new priest's purity and showing him how to maintain it, is in broad lines

like the first phase in that the same spatial zones of courtyard, kitchen, savanna are again covered. Several additional zones and groups are added in the second phase. The patrifilial children—the neophyte's matriclan's male members' children, collectively—occupy the site behind the house where they take charge of the feast preparations, the usual role of patrifilial children. Simultaneously, in the courtyard before the neophyte's house, a palm arch (*mandala*) lodge is erected. During this preparatory work, the *Lemba* priests march off with the neophyte priest to fetch plants from the savanna and earth from a tomb for the neophyte's shrine box (*n'kobe Lemba*). Kwamba is not explicit about which cemetery is visited, again suggesting that he was not present. However, Kongo ritual structure would allow it only to be his father's clan's cemetery, where he would be a patrifilial child "priest," where he would be mediator, and where he would receive his spiritual identity.

On the priests' return from savanna and cemetery, the front and back of the neophyte's house become sites of accentuated symbolic charging. Whereas previously these zones had been given "male" and "female" charging, they now are made the poles of a series of exchanges between the *Lemba* father and son, and the two clans they represent, as well as between the son's clan and his patrifilial children. *Lemba* presides over this double layer of patrifilial relationships centering on the new priest. First the *Lemba* father and son "exchange" wives in the lodge before the house, that is, they have coitus with them. (The symbolism of the semen of this exchange coitus becomes clear in other regional variants, especially the eastern variant dealt with in the next chapter.) The neophyte's patrifilial children, meanwhile, are preparing the feast of real human food, while the *Lemba* priests, acting a parallel role with regard to the medicines, fictive ritual "cooks" so to speak, are preparing for the neophyte couple their fictive "food," that is, their medicines. The two levels of food symbolism are striking. Ordinary human food is gotten from the perpetrator of profanement; sacred "food"-medicine is gotten from the savanna and the ancestors. Similarly, the two levels may be seen in the distribution. The medicines are prepared in the sacred "kitchen" of *Lemba*, in an *nsaba* pot in a hole in the ground somewhere in the hearth area. At the same time, the feast of human food, prepared by the neophyte's children, is distributed by *Lemba* to these same children, dependents and supporters of the neophyte's clan, and to the general public.

The spatial and temporal coordinates of the rite have shown the central role of the village/savanna, courtyard/kitchen dichotomies,

and the day/night/day temporal rhythm of the sessions. Within these ritual axes, other social and cultural signifiers such as male/female, father/son, and food/medicine are manipulated to achieve a full statement of enormous condensation and power.

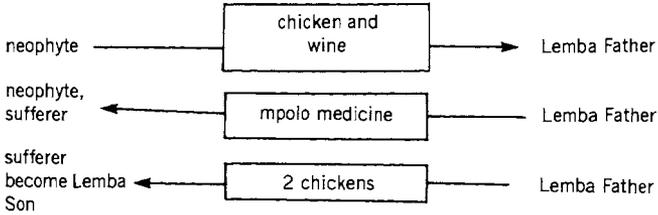
ECONOMIC AND EXCHANGE STRUCTURES IN THE RITE

The exchange of material goods such as manioc, pigs, copper bracelets, and the like—items used in the regional trade—should be considered under the same rubric as the “symbolic” exchanges such as father and son’s coitus with each others’ wives. All goods, services, and symbols exchange hands within one and the same social matrix. There are not two economies, but rather a single social structure in which numerous media get exchanged to create or maintain statements of value. In clearly orchestrated progression these media follow exchanges between *Lemba* son and father, *Lemba* and the public, the *Lemba* son and his patrilineal children, and the like (see figure 7). The first phase of the exchange, during the first meeting of a day/night/day, appears to be a fairly straightforward exchange of material goods from the neophyte-sufferer to the *Lemba* father for ceremonial goods such as medicine, instructions, baths. The second phase entails, as has just been shown, several levels of exchange of various types of “food,” including medicine as a sort of mystical food, requiring a more nuanced reading of the ceremonial economy of *Lemba*.

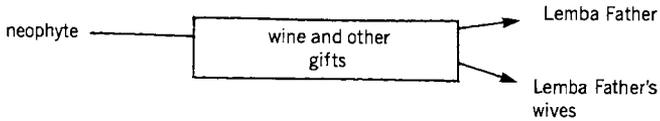
It is important to recognize that the neophyte does not pay more than a small portion of the overall amount of goods circulated and consumed, and that in the first phase in connection with receipt of the medicine and the bracelets. The greatest portion, that which opens the second phase, is paid by the “perpetrator of profanation” who comes up with at least fifteen pigs, a considerable sum indicating *Lemba*’s influence in the Mboko Nsongo region even as late as 1915. It is, furthermore, important to recognize that this sum is not consumed by *Lemba*’s priests in an exploitative fashion, but is redistributed through *Lemba*, to the neophyte priest’s patrilineal children and the general public (1.92). As important as the volume of consumption appears, in such a séance, it cannot be explained in terms of an easing of the burden of growing biomass in an ecological niche, as New Guinea “pigs for the ancestors” feasts have been explained.⁴ *Lemba* exists in an open-market situation of considerable volume in trade, as Chapter 2 has already shown. What then is the function of the profanement tax and the redistribution so clearly described in Kwamba’s account?

Figure 7
 Exchange structure of *Lemba* séance:
 goods, services, symbols, persons

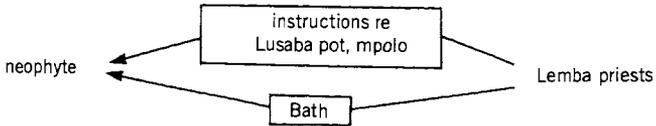
Receiving Lemba Cure



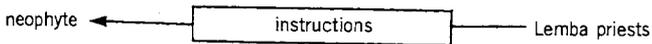
Entrance of Lemba Priests into Neophyte's Courtyard



Father's Entrance, All-night Dance, Instructions, Ritual Washing



Gathering of Lemba on Savanna Hilltop



Dues Presented, Instructions, Dedication of Bracelets

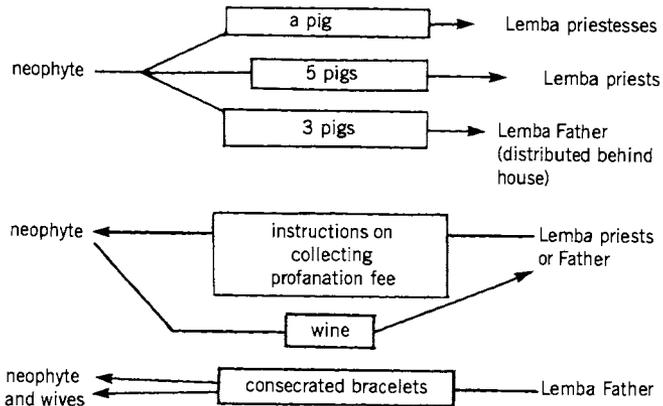
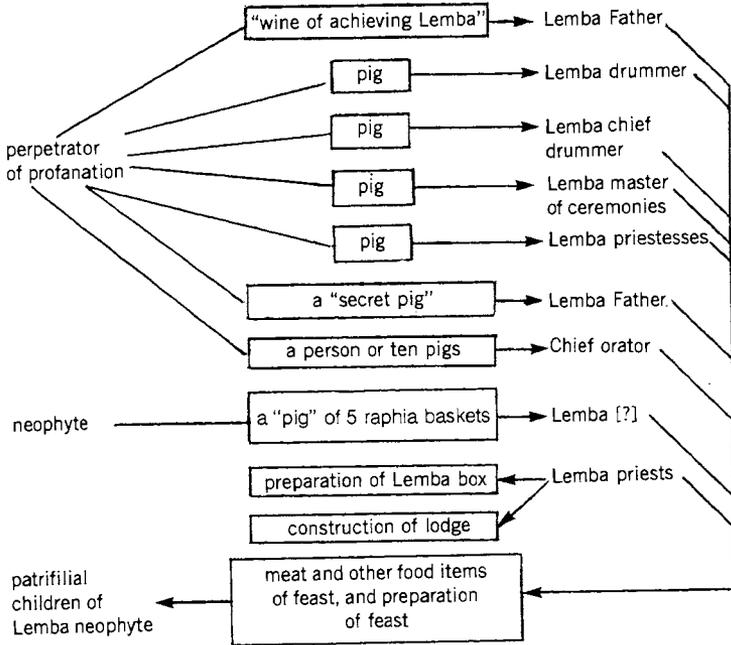
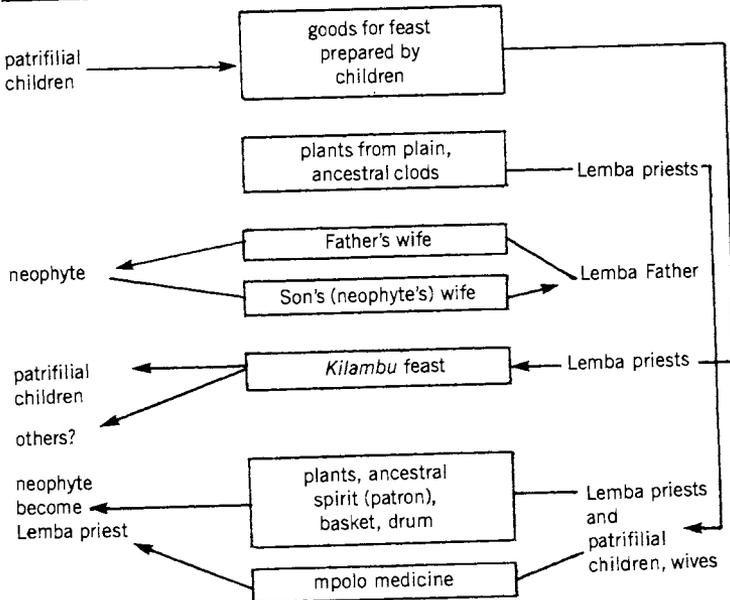


Figure 7 (cont'd)

First Profanation, Preparation for Conclusion to Séance



Closing Events of Séance



Lemba's economic function here would be the stimulation of the exchange structure over a local, perhaps "market," area, and the generation or renewal of authority symbols within that context. The exchange network brought into play in this account is the same as exists in a major marriage, funeral, or chiefly inauguration, with the difference that *Lemba's* priestly couples from a wider area participate. From a local region, perhaps a market area or two, these prominent couples, themselves linking key clans, function as a local elite network; therefore their ties as couples, and as a collective elite, are renewed. The neophyte and his spouses are brought into this collectivity during the ceremony. Of equal importance is the group of the neophyte's patrifilial children. As a collectivity they represent dozens of localized groups, clans, who have potential reciprocal relations to him and to *Lemba*. The patrifilial children of the neophyte represent a redundant set of ties already present to a degree in *Lemba*. Thus the fabric of regional alliances is charged, and given special merit.

Where there is exchange, there is social cohesion. Distribution generates authority. Thus the connection of the feast to the neophyte's medicines is not hard to understand. The medicine, his *nkobe* as symbol of authority, is a paraphrase of the exchange and the cluster of obligations it establishes with the patrifilial children. In stimulating distribution to the children, who represent, it must be emphasized, dozens of neighboring clans, *Lemba* is merely using conventional alliance-building mechanisms available in North-Kongo society. But this alliance network is activated by the levying of a fine from some profaner "out there." Thus *Lemba's* authority is made to extend over the profane world, creating a fan of wider legitimacy than merely those of marriage and patrifilial children. *Lemba* broadens the scope of gifts a "father" can use for the beneficence of his "children," who are also his supporters and allies.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION: *LEMBA'S* CEREMONIAL KINSHIP

Since the overall social structural setting of *Lemba* has been discussed in Chapter 2, what may be emphasized here are the unique characteristics of the present variant. Little is said of the organization of *Lemba* as a translocal entity, although it may be assumed that someone was the master of ceremonies, the convener, and the manager. Other variants develop these features. Kwamba's account is most insightful in explaining how conventional kinship ties of father

to child and husband to wife were specifically shifted by *Lemba* to maximize their translocal political integration.

The Father/Son (*se/mwana*) dyad in *Lemba* is defined as a mystical hierarchy. The *Lemba* Father has greater *kundu* power than his *Lemba* Son (1.137), and, reciprocally, the Son must give his Father greater respect (*yumi*) (1.138). The son may heal, once he is inaugurated, whereas the father may heal and govern, destroy witches, and use his *kundu* mystical power to destroy individuals for the well-being of a collectivity. But this hierarchy is a relative or situational matter, since every son is also a father, as is the *Lemba* neophyte to his patrifilial children. In certain conditions two individuals and clans will be reciprocally patrifilial, to each other “father” and “son,” a situation that elicits much good humor and the ambiguity out of which profound African rituals are made. It is, in the *Lemba* séance as described by Kwamba, the structural logic behind the convergence of ritual roles in the kitchen: the neophyte’s children prepare the feast; the *Lemba* priests, the medicines for the neophyte couple. To understand the social structural possibility of this mutual patrifiliality of two clans, closer attention must be paid to the *Lemba* marriage, and its unique qualities.

Kwamba and other writers on *Lemba* all emphasize the extreme morality of the *Lemba* household. Deleval in the Kavati-Mayombe, Bastian in Loango, Lunungu among the Bayaka to the north, all contrast the *Lemba* household’s enduring permanence to the instability of other types of households. The rules binding the *Lemba* couple to a rigid code of purity, in Kwamba’s account, are striking. *Lemba*’s laws apply specifically to priests and priestesses (1.117), not to just anyone. A *Lemba* priest may not see a nude woman or commit adultery (1.126). The figurines placed in the *n’kobe* are a sign of *Lemba*’s power in the case of profanation (1.111). Further, the stated purpose of receiving *Lemba* is so their offspring may be “preserved in *Lemba*” (1.123). According to this set of prohibitions and qualifiers, the *Lemba* marriage is a secondary, “super” marriage singling out certain alliances between clans for special attention. A clue as to which alliances so qualify for attention, which have this high priority, is given in the presence of the two-tiered set of father/child dyads in the *Lemba* séance: The *Lemba* Son and his initiatory relationship to his *Lemba* Father, and this same son’s relationship as father to his patrifilial children. There is here a concern for the maintenance of an unending patrifilial chain such as exists in the permanent and enduring alliance between two clans in which every

generation's son marries back into father's clan, or in which there is the mutual patrilineality spoken of above. The emphasis on the patrilineal chain is present in the convergence of roles in the kitchen, where *Lemba* representatives and the patrilineal children of the neophyte each "cook": the latter, feasts; and the former, medicines. Elsewhere we will see these two categories of preparations blending together even more. But the kingpin of the system, as it were, is the singling out from the neophyte's polygynous household one wife for special attention—one who is "separated" (1.59)—presumably one who has the right alliance for *Lemba*'s emphasis and the ritual exchange of wives between the *Lemba* father and son (1.89). This exaggerated act—*Lemba*'s form of "royal incest"—highlights the great preference in the *Lemba* worldview for patrilineal exchange, colloquially known as "blood reciprocity." The specific form of marriage that most effectively embodies this preference is the patrilineal cross-cousin marriage, already described in Chapter 2. Linking isolated villages and markets, reinforcing the patrilineal chain across more than two generations, it establishes a permanent relationship of complimentary reciprocity between exogamous groups. The father/son wife exchange commemorates the convergence of the two classes of relationships that allow a segmentary society to function effectively: (1) the father/son tie as the model of hierarchic relations; and (2) the extension of this relationship to the corporate level in which two exogamous groups of equal status exchange women, that is the husband/wife relationship.

SACRED MEDICINES

The *Lemba* medicines, called *min'kisi* because they are consecrated, consist of the bracelets worn by the priest and priestess(es), the drum or drums that are used in the couple's inauguration to *Lemba* and kept on their house wall, perhaps as an identifier, and the large *n'kobe*, a cylindrical bark box approximately forty centimeters tall, within which is kept a variety of symbolic substances collected during the initiation ceremony and used later either for purification or for the *Lemba* priest's own future healing activities. The ingredients of these "medicines" are collected in much the same way as the exchange items discussed above—food, livestock, drink—and passed along the same social channels. The two sets of objects are distinguished by the fact that the one—the exchange items—is assembled, distributed and consumed, whereas the other—the medicines—is assembled and kept, as a sacred "documentation" of the ceremony. Exchange items

are for the most part in the charge of the patrifilial children, resulting in a huge feast; the medicines are in the charge of priests, following a course roughly epiphenomenal of the exchange. Both, therefore, stand for human relationships. The food brings people together, the medicines remind them of their common lot in roles and groups.

The difficulty with the analysis of the medicine objects is that their meaning at the time of ritual use was filled with multiple connotations. By contrast, verbal accounts of 1915 may be approximately understood in light of current KiKongo usage, which has not changed beyond recognition. Social structure and exchange patterns, similarly, have remained quite constant. But the medicines of the early twentieth century have gone out of fashion, and few if any individuals can give reliable exegetical account of their use sixty years ago. Thus, although Kwamba faithfully relates the collection of ingredients for the medicines of *Lemba* in 1915, he hardly hints at their meaning to the initiands.

The analytic strategy to be employed on the medicines of *Lemba* will be to compare slightly diverging accounts with the help of what exegetical and contextual meaning can be gotten. As in the other expressive domains, additional variants will allow insight into the cultural structure that gave rise to the particular cases. Kwamba's account of *Lemba* medicine will be given only a contextual examination here; further interpretation will be possible in light of other variants examined later in the work, especially in Chapter 7 on the western variant.

The basic *Lemba* medicine is the *mpolo-Lemba*, a small pot of chalk used by the *Lemba* priest to treat or purify the *Lemba* sufferer. When the treatment is considered effective, a father/child relationship is opened that becomes the *Lemba* patrifilial relationship. One of the ingredients of the *n'kobe Lemba* box is the neophyte's own *mpolo* medicine. It should be noted that *Lemba* healing or initiatory séances are accompanied by drumming (for example, 1.11) or singing and dancing. As in most Kongo ceremony, these expressions transport the ritual action to another plane: drums are the voice of ancestors; the songs articulate the medicine's significance (for instance, Kwamba's *mpolo* song 1.108–15).

The copper bracelets, mentioned repeatedly in songs early in the ceremony's first phase (1.18, 33), are given to the neophyte couple at the end of the first phase (1.58). These bracelets, made everywhere especially for the individual priests and priestesses, when donned give them their first public insignia of their new rank. The bracelets seem to

be the culminating symbol of the first phase of the initiation, and ceremonies leading up to the actual blessing and donning of the copper arm rings mention them as the artifact for either showing moral purity (1.32–4, 1.135–6) or of exercising authority in collecting fines. The bracelets are also used to differentiate the *Lemba* wife or wives from other wives, in a polygynous household (1.59). The copper bracelets constructed of red ore from Mboko Nsongo and Mindouli are not only beautiful in color, but also their resonant tone, when striking other metals, contributes much to the aesthetic appeal they had and to the collective dances reported everywhere in *Lemba*. A dancing group of *Lemba* priests and priestesses would have sounded like a chorus of voices combining soft chimes and small double-tone drums. At some point early in the initiatory séance—Kwamba does not specify it—the neophyte couple receives its small *nkonzi* drum. This too is an object of prestige and beauty; it is displayed over the door of their house.

However the major part of *Lemba* medicine is the *n'kobe* box and its ingredients. The ingredients are collected throughout the second phase of the ceremony, that is after the neophyte has been “profaned” and is being led into full membership. Five sorts of savanna plants and earth from an ancestor’s tomb are brought into the ritual events of phase two of the rite. In a raphia cloth bag they are hung on the lodge during the “wife exchange,” then they are taken to the “kitchen” beyond the house, prepared with mortar and pestle, and mixed in a pot (1.83, 86, 87, 97) with other ingredients such as *tukula* red (100). The apparent contextual meaning of these plants is their movement through or across all the zones of *Lemba* ritual attention: savanna, courtyard, hearth. In much North-Kongo ritual plant use, however, significance is lent the particular plant through a pun on its name, such that a verb fitting its name gives it an action appropriate to the ritual situation. Thus *mundanda nzila*, “path follower,” might be used because the symbolism of paths is appropriate. But unfortunately, Kwamba’s text is silent about such plant-name meanings, and they cannot usually be reconstructed because they are not pancultural in Kongo territory. They are like proverbs which have an opaque meaning until the particular intention is known or explained. The meaning of tomb earth and *tukula* bark powder in this context is not as likely to vary from the conventional understanding. Tomb earth, *tobe* (when mixed with wine), conveys purity and spiritual continuity. *Tukula*, a red ochre, conveys transition and mediation with the beyond or across social roles. Water, palmwine, tomb earth, and *tukula* go into the neophyte’s new *mpolo* medicine pot, stored in the

n'kobe. The satchel of plants as well enters the *n'kobe*, perhaps as a memento of the ceremony of initiation. Another satchel filled with hair, eyebrows, nail parings, and old clothing rags of the *Lemba* brotherhood and sisterhood also enters the *n'kobe* (1.101), perhaps as a sign of collective identity in which the neophyte couple shares. Finally, the statues of the wives, bound together and inserted also into the *n'kobe*, are given the significance of a sort of moral watch or reflector (1.102). The bundle if upright denotes purity, if toppled over denotes profanement. These bear some relationship to the prohibitions binding on the *Lemba* wives not to commit adultery.

Much is left unsaid in Kwamba's treatment of the medicines. Later chapters will deal more fully with this part of *Lemba*.

VERBAL CATEGORIES OF RITUAL ACTION

The two texts reveal a clear and consistent language of ritual action, both defining in standard Kongo cultural vocabulary the manner of charging and using symbols, as well as indicating the structure of ritual space which results from the manipulation of charged ritual symbols. This vocabulary varies somewhat from account to account, and region to region, but, as in the verbal punning on plants, the significance of patterns remains consistent.

The key verbal category of ritual action in *Lemba* is *handa*, meaning variously to initiate, to compose, or to identify a person with the consecrated medicine designated by his treatment or by the diviner's judgment. *Handa* appears in phrases such as "*handa Lemba*" (1.1; 2.2-3), that is to "compose *Lemba*," as well as in the form of initiating someone to *Lemba*, *handisa* (1.9). This distinction of composing the medicine and initiating the neophyte also is carried over into the nominative forms of *mpandulu* (1.69, 1.124; 2.24) and *mpandusulu* (1.124). Another major category of ritual action which appears in the first two texts is *bieka*, to consecrate, as applied to either persons taking up special commissions or ritual objects being activated (1.69, 1.106, 1.123; 2.1-2). Another well-known category of ritual action appearing in these accounts is that of *loka*, the utterance of power words, spells, curses, and the like, for both beneficial and malevolent purposes (2.12, 2.27-8). Less well-known categories of ritual action include the following: "securing, protecting the house with palm frond arches," *kaka nzo ye mandala* (1.69, 1.132); "tying a knot," either in a literal sense around the ritual object representing the purity of the *Lemba* priestesses (*bumba makasu*,

tula makasu, 2.8), or in a less direct sense of appropriating power to obtain something for *Lemba* (*sila nkasu*, 1.40), or even in the abstract sense of the *Lemba* community surrounding the neophyte couple during their ritual bath to “absorb” them into their purity (*kanga lukongolo*, 2.5). A comparable ritual action is the process of “opening the eyes” of the neophyte to give him greater effectiveness in his mission (*kia meso*, 1.82).

These general ritual acts, labelled by standard phrases, may be called acts of effecting *Lemba*'s—and Kongo ritual's—more nuanced states of being, again both positive and negative. In the course of the descriptions of *Lemba* by Kwamba and Lunungu, terms are used to identify the positive ritual actions of *purification* the end goal of which is the achievement of *power*. Alternatively, through *profanement* power may be lost, as well as through the violation of clearly-defined *prohibitions*. This structure of ritual space, made of both actions and states, permits a host of particular incidents and experiences to be given meaning under one rubric: *Lemba* control of reality.

Positive ritual action clusters around the healing and purifying of the neophyte and his wife or wives. The initial *mpolo* medicine “sucks out” (*hola*, 1.5, 1.105) impurities, the dirt of his disease, from his body, and “heals” (*mbukulu*, 1.124) the neophyte. Throughout North Kongo the cupping horn, *n'kisi mposti*, exercises this function in a less collective manner. Later in the initiation the neophyte and his wife or wives are “bathed” (*swaka*, 1.30; *sukula*, 2.4–6, 2.15; *ngiobosolo*, from *yobila*, 2.2), another ritual practice with widespread therapeutic connotations in Kongo medicine. Later when the neophyte couple experiences profanement, payment of the fine renders them “redeemed” (*bundikila*, 1.68). the experimental profanation and the related repurification described by Kwamba, brings the neophyte again to the purity of his original initiation (1.133). This striving after the ideal of purity (*vedisa*, 1.133) implies a state of the pure (*veela*, 1.133). The *Lemba* priest is taught how to seek the contrast between purity and its opposite; purity opens the path to power, whereas profanation is the loss of power.

Profanement terms are numerous in these *Lemba* accounts, beginning with the general term *sumukini*, or *samukini* (1.34; 2.14) which Christian missionaries translated as “sin” (*masumu*). For the *Lemba* wife profanement is defined in terms of sexual congress with other men, or their inclinations to approach her with sexual or flirtatious insinuations (*yanga n'kento wabiaka ku Lemba*, 2.10, literally, “have congress with a *Lemba*-consecrated woman”). The wife's

profanation is believed to be signalled by the “loosening” of the vine tied around the “purity paddle” (2.8) or by the upsetting or undoing of the statues in the *n’kobe* shrine representing the wives or the couple (1.102–3, 1.119). The husband’s profanation is more inclined to come as a result of the misuse of his ritual powers for private gain (1.127) or of his mystical powers to harm others (*lomba pinda*, 2.10, literally, “call up darkness”; *lokinga bantu na mpimpa*, 2.12, literally, “curse people in the night”), whether intentionally or unintentionally through his superior mystical powers (*kundu*, 2.12). Profanement is not something the priest can ignore or disregard. It may strike him unawares and destroy his relationship to his wives and their clans (1.122) or even kill them (1.22; 2.13), and, in any case, unless it is attended to through propitiatory sacrifices and payments, it diminishes the *Lemba* couple’s power (1.118; 2.13). Similarly, the priest and priestess must continually be on guard against inadvertent profanement by those around them who “throw at them something or speak foul of them” (*ta kimpela*, 1.60, 1.134, 1.13). Their life is described as a struggle to maintain purity in the face of profaning situations; their goal is to strive for ascetic power released through purity.

Explicit rules binding on the *Lemba* couple articulate the boundaries of the moral-legal and ethical code, just as the visible mementos—purity paddles, statues in the shrine—express profanement. Such concrete embodiments are necessary where the thing expressed is as abstract as purity and profanement. The figures “by their life” indicate the extent of profanement of the priestly couple; so the rules (*mina*, 1.117–31; 2.15–23, also prohibitions, laws, codes) sketch ethical constraints governing numerous public relationships in the *Lemba* order and across the society at large. Numerous rules govern male-female relationships, the backbone of the *Lemba*-buttressed network of the region (1.126; 2.15–22). Others regulate the governing or “taxing” function of *Lemba*, forbidding anyone other than an authorized *Lemba* priest to take *Lemba* fines (1.131) and conversely forbidding the *Lemba* priest from taking money other than that associated with his *Lemba* prerogatives (1.127). Some rules govern strictly internal *Lemba* relationships and postures, such as those forbidding the eating of unclean food (1.129–30), and those, again often articulated by food prescriptions, defining the father-son relationship (1.128). The purpose of the rules, suggests Kwamba, is to give the priest and priestess their power, to define their prerogative in society.

The power-terms in *Lemba* theory are perhaps more abstract than the other sectors of the ritual structure. They are not embedded in concrete action, but used to spell out a quality, an idea, or a state that links the subject to mystical sources. Thus, in delineating laws *Lemba's* power (here *ngolo*, 1.82) shows a social referent. In affliction and healing (here *lulendo*, 1.105) it has a mystical and physical referent. In the use of cosmetic decorations such as red earth color it takes on an aesthetic referent, making manifest the priest's "glory and prestige" (*vumi*, 1.116). Redness also shows an element of the mystical in that it refers to the threshold between the visible world and the other world of invisible spiritual powers. Finally, the power of *Lemba* is defined in distinguishing the mystical authority (*kundu*, 1.37;2.12) and the prestige (*vumi*, 1.138) of the *Lemba* Father and Son, the former always possessing more than the latter, in the unending chain that makes every Son a Father, with his own neophyte-Son.

The verbal categories enunciated here portray the social nature of power in *Lemba*, and by extension much of the Congo Basin. The terms are dynamically related so that a transformational process is apparent, moving the subject. Purification and power are positive; profanement and prohibition, negative. Purification and profanement are categories of action, whereas power and prohibition are attributes or qualities, states. The rites of purification remove the neophyte from the ranks of the common, profane, and "open" him and his wife to initiation. Purity is the ritual action requisite to power. The right to levy fines, learned in conjunction with the "experimental" profanation, tests the neophyte's ability to seek purity. But the power is concretized best in the prohibitions. Violation of prohibitions put the priest(ess) into contact with the polluted, profane world, weakening the priest(ess) and making it necessary to go through purification rituals again to regain strength and power.

THE LYRICAL AND ITS MESSAGE

The "lyrical" combines verbal narrative with musical performance. Nowhere better than in its songs does *Lemba's* style or sense of special reality emerge more effectively than in the initiatory séances. Kwamba's account gives songs by the *Lemba* Father to several initiatory groups, by the wives of *Lemba* Father and Son, by the *Lemba* priests, by the patrifilial children on the day of the feast, and by the neophyte *Lemba* priest after he begins his practice. The lyrical domain has a strikingly consistent structure, which facilitates

analysis. Each song is announced or "framed" by being "drummed up" with the small hand-held, two-tone drum (*n'konko*, *n'konzi*): the call "Ko-ko-ko!" (sound of drum), which is answered by "ko." A phrase call such as "Will you gain *Lemba*?", and the reply, "E-*Lemba*!" introduces the lyrics proper and closes them. The body of the song consists of a series of couplets that may be repeated in sets of two or three for hours on end. Kwamba's version gives these songs only once, but in performance they must have been repeated each twenty to thirty times over. For example, the song sung "all night" is only two phrases long. There appear not to have been set *Lemba* songs across the entire region; rather, local variants develop comparable themes such as the neophyte's illness, his progress through the initiation, *Lemba*'s strength, the joy of the patrifilial children, and so on. Common images and symbols such as the bracelets, the role of certain natural objects used in the medicines, recur throughout the area.

The lyrical couplets which are developed between the opening and closing frames invariably combine images in one of several ways. One common association creates the substitutable referent in an action setting, as in this phrase:

What *Lemba* gives, *Lemba* takes away.
What the sun gives, the sun takes away. (1.17)

Lemba's action is defined by substituting the sun in its place. The sun's action of rising and setting, perhaps emitting or controlling light and heat, is made comparable to *Lemba*'s action, perhaps that of creating and controlling power. The couplet may also state a sort of "transitive" association, in which the substitution of terms suggests a fusion or identity of the two objects, as in this phrase:

The neophyte dreamed of ancestors,
The neophyte dreamed of copper bracelets. (1.16)

Ancestors and copper bracelets are brought into a relationship of identity, or identity representation. A third type of lyrical combination may focus upon some process or observation in nature suggesting a transformation, as in this phrase:

That which was the fawn,
Has become the grown antelope. (1.21)

The transformation of fawn to grown antelope refers here to some process within *Lemba*.

As already suggested in the introduction to this part of the book, these lyrics may be studied both as symbol and metaphor. Symbols are seen in the nouns—neophyte, ancestor, bracelet, sun, fawn/antelope—as well as in the verbal actions—dreamed, give/take. Symbols are distinguished as perceptible to the senses at one level, and at another level conceptually or ideologically charged. In the *Lemba* lyrics natural and human objects, things, are repeatedly associated with ideological and moral assertions, values, and expressions. Lyrical metaphors emerge then in the associations made within and across expressive domains. It is possible to speak of both verbal and nonverbal metaphors, and of multimedia metaphors. Ritual symbols are always polysemic, with multiple, necessarily contradictory, meanings. For example, the cluster of terms, objects, and connotations surrounding “*Lemba*” are understood both as sickness and health, both bane and blessing. Multiple and contradictory semantic structures such as this serve the purpose of allowing movement, or the possibility of movement. Structures of metaphoric relations identify members of a class, they link similars and oppose differences, and they range units on scales of ascending value. Perhaps the most common metaphoric structure in *Lemba* expression is that which takes elements from the hierarchically arranged series of beings “animal/human/supernatural,” and associates with these elements a contrastive set of “human type A” and “human type B.” A series of allusions or expressive metaphors links the two series, establishing a matrix of movement, most often of the neophyte and his household.

Some analysts of narrative genres have insisted that reality-defining lyrics such as these in *Lemba* be called “myth.” In the *Lemba* setting I would reserve this term for tales told about the heroes and their relationship to humans. The distinction of such tales and lyrics is made by *Lemba* adherents. Whereas the lyrics are an important part of the ceremony, in concert with drumming, the tales are not told in the *Lemba* setting. However, as shall become clear in subsequent chapters, heroes and human figures mentioned in the ceremonial lyrics of *Lemba* may also be the figures of the tales. Therefore, an analytic method is required which can move from the one “genre” to the other.

The present analysis, which covers both lyrics and tales, can benefit from a simple rewriting procedure which identifies the principal nouns, verbs, and objects of narrative sentences—the elements of verbal metaphors—and arranges them so as to facilitate the recognition of “movement,” such as transitive, causative,

reflexive, or gradual, long-term, and permanent syntagmatic transformation of a figure, be it the legendary hero or the human neophyte.⁵

The *Lemba* Father's opening song in the courtyard may be rewritten in the following manner to sketch metaphoric relationships.

	NOUN	VERB	OBJECT
(1.17)	{ <i>Lemba</i> } {sun}	{gives} {takes}	<i>X</i>
(1.18)	neophyte	dreamed of	{ancestors {copper bracelets}}
(1.19)	[payment of] pigs	supports	<i>X</i> 's falling into water

The first couplet, as already suggested above, associates *Lemba* and the sun with the verbs giving and taking. The KiKongo phrase indicates that an object is involved whose identity is not clear in the context of the couplet alone. The broader context of the *Lemba* initiation hints that the object (*X*) is the force or spirit in *Lemba*, the attacking, harassing illness, the malaise. Later songs will show that this "hidden referent" is being "moved." The third phrase of the song (1.19) states the condition of this movement. If the *Lemba* child pays or sacrifices pigs, *X* may be neutralized or removed into water. Other Kongo *n'kisi* phrase the hold of an illness upon the sufferer in this way. Thus here the first couplet defines the general context of *Lemba*'s order by relating it to the sun, and both to a hidden object. The neophyte's dreams are acknowledged, in which ancestors are represented in copper bracelets. The conditions of release and fulfillment are stated in clear causal terms: pay pigs, *X* will disappear.

In his second song, which is sung through the night of the first phase of the ceremony (see figure 13 below), the *Lemba* Father introduces further images of movement, both those drawn from nature—the fawn which becomes the grown antelope—and from his own initiation.

(1.21)	fawn	becomes	grown antelope
(1.22)	<i>Lemba</i>	causes	difficulties
(1.23)	{ <i>X</i> which dies} dogs	laugh(s) at	neophyte?
(1.24)	<i>X</i>	{guards}	{ <i>Lemba</i> "clan" children property novices}
(1.25)		{protects}	

(1.26)	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \\ Lemba\text{ Father} \\ \\ \end{array} \right\}$	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{applies} \\ \\ \text{takes} \\ \\ \text{becomes} \end{array} \right\}$	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} lusaba\text{ pot,} \\ \\ \text{palm arches} \\ \\ \text{copper} \\ \\ \text{bracelets} \\ \\ Lemba\text{ priest} \end{array} \right\}$
(1.27)			
(1.28)			

At least three levels of movement are suggested in this song. The fawn becoming a grown antelope is the most obvious natural symbol on which all else is hung. From lines 22–25 *Lemba* or the hidden referent *X* moves from causer of difficulties to protector and guardian of *Lemba*-associated clans, children, property, and novices. Dogs have an interesting relationship to the spirit world, in that they are able to see invisible spirits, and dogs are often taken as signs of mediators, pointers to the beyond, as their role in hunting hidden animals strongly suggests. A third movement occurs in lines 26–28 where the *Lemba* Father recalls his own progression as a novice and the pertinent ritual objects—the *lusaba* pot's medicine (*mpolo*), the arches of the lodge, the bracelets—thereby sketching for his own *Lemba* Son the movement anticipated in the latter's ceremony. This song, especially lines 22–25, and part of the previous song, especially line 17, introduce a pattern in the way *Lemba* expression handles ambiguity and contrast. The passages speak of a given force or power causing both positive and negative effects: giving and taking away, causing difficulty and protecting. They thus demonstrate the concern with shifting the force of *X* from threat to beneficial ally. In the song of the *Lemba* priestesses—the *mimbanda Lemba*—sung behind the house in the kitchen hearth area at the end of the first phase as the bracelets are consecrated and the *Lemba* couple blessed, this hidden referent is identified as Bunzi.

The song of the priestesses is more a rejoicing over father and son's perseverance in their quest than an agonized introspection of the son-neophyte's dreams.

(1.44)	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{father} \\ \\ \text{son} \end{array} \right\}$	will succeed	in <i>Lemba</i>
(1.45)	he who	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{perseveres against} \\ \\ \text{is successful with} \end{array} \right\}$	Bunzi's curse
(1.46)	field	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{was} \\ \\ \text{is} \end{array} \right\}$	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{barren} \\ \\ \text{fertile} \end{array} \right\}$

(1.47)	dreams about <i>Lemba</i> Fathers	persisted	
(1.50)	child	wears	shoulder strap [of <i>Lemba</i> <i>n'kobe</i>]
(1.51-2)	child	{ found } { will gain }	{ money } { access to } { <i>Lemba</i> }
(1.53)		supplicate	{ earth } { sky }

In accordance with the interpretation introduced above about the tight juxtaposition of ambiguity with spiritual force, here Bunzi, earth deity, *simbi* spirit or land, territory, and water spirit, is related to barrenness and fertility. The overriding theme of the song however is not Bunzi but the beauty of the patrifilial continuity of father and son, and unending dreams by sons or children about fathers in *Lemba*. The neophyte has gained access to *Lemba*. He is already pictured as wearing the *n'kobe*.

The presiding *Lemba* father replies, while consecrating bracelets and blessing the couple, in lines that define the *Lemba* transformation in yet more ways.

(1.55-57a)		{ was } { has become }	{ difficult } { source of healing } { power }
	<i>Lemba</i>	{ heals } { causes to grow }	{ children } { nionzi fish }
(1.57b)	those who wait	get	portion of <i>Lemba</i>

Here, as in other songs above, the *Lemba* Father spells out virtues of *Lemba* members. *Lemba's* power helps the novice to heal, to cause growth and prosperity. Essential personal virtues of the *Lemba* priest and priestess are patience, perseverance, persistence, clarity.

The power of *Lemba* and the virtues of the novice-priest are lauded in even more spectacular terms when the test profanement has occurred and *Lemba* priests and priestesses reconvene for the second phase of the initiation. The *Lemba* Father opens the sence (1.63 ff) and the priests and priestesses reiterate, in an evening and all night celebration (1.70 ff), the virtues and characteristics of *Lemba* adherents.

(1.63)	the lazy one	has become	{ industrious harvester in "nzamba" field }
(1.65)			
(1.64)	<i>nkonzi</i> drum	assembles	festival of <i>Lemba</i>

The *Lemba* Father praises his Son for industriousness. The "harvest" undoubtedly has reference to the amount of tax in ceremonial goods levied on the perpetrator of the profanement. *Nzamba* may refer to a type of harvest net or a type of grass of which the net or basket is made, but this "field" is almost certainly allegorical, referring to the operations of the *Lemba* priest in society, his ability to rule and levy morality fines, to be a noble person and an effective one. In later texts (8.3) references criticizing laziness and lauding industriousness and work will appear in similar rubrics.

The *Lemba* brotherhood's evening and night songs define the virtues of the *Lemba* adherent in more exotic ways. The mood of the following songs is clearly festive:

(1.72)	spark	has become	"a hundred and ten" (a raging fire)
(1.73)	receiving <i>Lemba</i>	requires	{ beating <i>mukonzi</i> paying money cleansing in fire }
(1.76)	<i>Lemba</i> recipients (like) bats	are	alert
(1.77)	(like) night-jar	(can "see")	evasive (insightful)
(1.78)			"faithful" (no mistresses)

Lemba witnesses with whom I spoke told of huge fires at these final *Lemba* initiatory festivals. To define the quality of *Lemba* productivity as a “spark” is quite natural, one which jumps from “one” to “hundred and ten.” The image is a powerful one suggesting offspring, political effectiveness, enrichment, and the like. As insightful are the further character traits of *Lemba* recipients, alertness, evasiveness, insightfulness, faithfulness. Creatures of the “night of *Lemba*” are drawn into the metaphor-making process. No analysis can recreate the expressive content of these verbal terms. An entire night of singing and dancing around a fire, in the company of regional leaders, with the promise of effective recruitment to leadership and a banquet on the following day, hints at the background of these song texts. The bat is lightning fast, able to veer and dart instantly. The night-jar, another nocturnal creature, is able to catch insects on the wing by darting about rapidly. These character traits of prowess in the midst of social and political life define the *Lemba* adherent. Then, they are summed up as “seeing” in the dark of life just as the nocturnal bat and bird “see” in the night. Such virtues of the public realm are combined with marital fidelity.

Kwamba gives no songs for the morning afterwards. It is very likely that an esoteric *Lemba* lyrical tradition existed for the portions of the ritual in the savanna clearing and even in the long walk to the cemetery to collect tomb earth. The song of the patrifilial children of the neophyte (1.94–96) is brief but poignant. It is sung in connection with the combined feast distribution and preparation of medicines in the kitchen area. It reflects the “movement” of the other songs in its acknowledgment of the neophyte’s early obstacle-ridden status outside of *Lemba*, and his new status as successful priestly mediator.

(1.94)	X	{ was has become }	{ “stitch” of pain path to the priesthood }
(1.95)	X	caused	dawn of sun of <i>Lemba</i>
(1.96)	novice	{ died rose to life }	{ in <i>Lemba</i> Father in <i>Lemba</i> }

Several powerful classes of metaphors are combined here to chart the ritual movement of the neophyte. Once more the ambivalence of a domain—pain/priesthood, life/death—is in juxtaposition with the hidden or unnamed referent. This power is transformed. In the most

characteristic symbolism for an African drum of affliction, the force of the pain becomes the force of priesthood. Allusions to the “sun of *Lemba*” combine outer cosmic references, where the sun circles the earth, with the inner cosmology in which the individual is born and dies. Thus, a multiple metaphor of cosmological proportions emerges such that pain-becoming-priesthood is like the sun’s rising, which in turn alludes to the metaphysical rebirth of the *Lemba* neophyte through death in his patron-father. The patrifilial children in *Lemba* would be analogous to the chorus of a Greek drama, defining the cosmic connections and proportions of the protagonist’s life course. These motifs reappear in other variants even more forcefully.

A final lyric in Kwamba’s account is the new priest’s chant used in his own healing séances (1.109–115). It brings *Lemba*’s ritual full circle, demonstrating sufferer turned healer, his analysis of himself as sufferer now projected upon a new sufferer. It opens with the creation of a ritualized context in the natural and social universe, following which the force causing the suffering is addressed.

(1.109)	{ Sun } { Moon }	{ grants } { takes away }	
(1.110)	<i>Lemba</i> Father	{ bore } { gendered } { raised }	me
(1.111)		Praise	{ earth } { sky }
(1.112)	I	{ am enhanced } { have gone far }	
(1.113)		Search	{ patrifilial } { children’s } { ranks }
(1.115)	<i>X</i> { Sufferer } { Priests }	release { will bring } { will receive }	sufferer gift

The ritual function of the songs is to encourage the sufferer-neophyte through the tortuous path from illness to health, from conflict to clarity of purpose, from being victim of an attacking spirit to its beneficiary. Each song suggests at least one type of encouragement, from a variety of sources—his *Lemba* Father, the priests and priestesses together, the *Lemba* wives, the patrifilial children—

moving him from negative to positive ritual status. The father is concerned with the terms of the movement from harassed sufferer to one who is protected by *Lemba*, in touch with its powers. The priests reflect this in their song, but emphasize the character traits of the complete *Lemba* adherent. The *Lemba* wives mention the transition from barrenness to fertility as a result of effective patrifilial continuity. The patrifilial children of the neophyte recognize movement from illness to the priesthood, from "death" in the *Lemba* Father to "life" in *Lemba*. A host of specific natural symbols are related to these ritual conditions, symbols such as the fawn becoming a grown antelope, the sun and moon's setting and rising, dogs laughing, fish growing, harvest, fire sparking, fire purifying, bats being evasive, night-jars being alert, and the like. By "rooting" the mystical themes in these very familiar and concrete natural movements, the deeper truths of *Lemba* emerge, easy to understand, sharp and plain. Most difficult of all seems to be the articulation of the invisible mystical force behind the ambiguity of the sufferer's condition. Mostly hidden, or buried, the unnamed referent crops up most frequently when the descriptive signifiers in the lyrics are contradictory and contrasting. This may be an attempt to clarify ambiguity through sharper contrast, even exaggerated contrast. Or the contradictions of life are stated clearly so as to push the neophyte toward the positive pole of ritual experience, helping him to control his own reality more effectively. In Kwamba's account the mystical referent varies from the vague unnamed "X", to simply "*Lemba*," to the "curse of Bunzi" identified by *Lemba* priestesses. In variants to follow pre-existing figures are used much more frequently.

The metaphoric structure of lyrical expressiveness may be followed in two other directions, into the ritual objects such as bracelets and medicines, or into the structure of social-role relations lived in by the *Lemba* Father, Son, wives, patrifilial children, the clans, and *Lemba* itself. Further chapters shall explore these possibilities.

Chapter 5

The Eastern (Lari) Variant of *Lemba*

“Their women gather to beat drums and clang bracelets in great celebration.”—Kimbembe, Text 3.25

Introduction to the Sources

Lemba's eastern variant is represented by four extensive accounts and several different types of commentary, ranging from a turn-of-the-century catechist's observations to the work of several missionary ethnographers and an account and analysis by a modern Brazzaville African writer of the region.

Kimbembe, the catechist, offers a description of a *Lemba* séance dating from about 1915. It will be given in full and used as the point of reference for the Lari variants of *Lemba*.¹ Kimbembe's description concentrates on the public portion of *Lemba*.

Stenström's account (1969) is a synoptic reconstruction based on several sources gathered in 1929 in the Madzia region.² The esoteric portion of the séance is better represented here but since it is not interpreted to any degree it presents serious problems for use.

Andersson's account (1953) is based on information given by a hunter at Madzia and catechists at Musana in about 1930–31.³ Like the account by Stenström, this is a synoptic reconstruction, collating several disparate versions. Madzia in Lari country is fifty kilometers distant from Musana in Nsundi and Kongo country. Internal analysis is required to identify regional sources in the data.

Malonga's account of *Lemba* (1958) is also synoptic in that it speaks for the entire “Lari” region and people, all of *Lemba* and, indeed, the whole ancestral past, which is regrettably being drowned out by Western European influences according to the author.⁴ Malonga's description is internally coherent, however, reflecting a

skillful synthesis of the main lines of emphasis, gleaned from one locality or related localities. In apologetic style, Malonga calls *Lemba* not only the “biggest *n’kisi* of the past,” an assertion made once by Fulbert Youlou, but also “one of the most important sociopolitical organizations of the Lari.” In his essay he endeavors to articulate the ideas and customs of this major institution, insofar as this is possible given *Lemba*’s extremely effective policy of secrecy over esoteric aspects of the rite.

Malonga’s lucid analysis of *Lemba* as a conscious political institution of the traditional elite (*bitomi*), who understood the manipulation of symbols of healing, contrasts markedly with the Europeans’ focus on the mythic origins of *Lemba*. Questions of how *Lemba*’s adherents understood their role will be taken up here and in Chapter 10.

The Lemba Séance at Madzia (Among the Lari)

Text 3

TAKING BONZO MEDICINE

- (1) *Lemba diyokidi mikisi miakaka mu bunene ye mu ntalu.*
Lemba is bigger and costlier than all other *mikisi*.
- (2) *Kadi nti muntu bakidi yuku-yuku diankokila lumbu kasidi lumbu buna bana kwenda kwa tata dia Lemba mu nwana bonzo.*

When a person catches evening fever a day is set to approach a *Lemba* Father to drink the *bonzo* medicine.

- (3) *Bu kemusila bonzo tala yasidi buna basidi laki nti diankoyi bemusana (buka).*

When the *bonzo* has been given then they need to set a time to complete the healing.

THE FIRST DAY OF INITIATION

- (4) *Lumbu cina bucitula buna bankwezi zandi bana twala malavu.*

On the day it is done [the initiates’] in-laws bring wine.

- (5) *Bantu bana bakila nkuni zazingi zazingi.*
Other folks bring lots and lots of firewood.
- (6) *Tata dia Lemba yandi katuvila monika vata, ka ku fula kana yakala nate ye mwana ma Lemba una tambika nsusu zole kwa matwala malemba (wele landa nganga).*
The *Lemba* Father may not see the village; he will stay at the entrance till the *Lemba* Child brings two chickens to the masters of ceremonies who fetch the priests.
- (7) *Matwala bu kakwe twadi biabio buna tata dia lemba kulumukini ku vata.*
When the masters of ceremonies have arranged all then the *Lemba* Father descends to the village.
- (8) *Basabo nitizabizi yidika nabanganga nandi.*
They are told what will happen; the priests may begin.
- (9) *Bu meni yidika tiya nibikula bekabikula nti*
When the fire is going the call goes out;
- (10) *Widi* *Widi*
Do you hear? We hear!
Tala *Tala*
Look. Look.
Mona *Mona*
Do you see? We see!
Kia nunga? *Lemba!*
What will he earn? *Lemba!*
Banganga *Ko! Ko! Ko!*
Priests. [sound of drums, bracelets]
- (11) *Widi?* *Widi!*
Do you hear? We hear!
E lutundulu nui'n'wandi
The *lutundulu* ant, his mouth
Kadila wele kindula.
Devours the sweet fruit ravenously.
- (12) *Widi?* *Widi!*
Do you hear? We hear!
E nsibisiulu,
O the *nsibizi* rat,

Mudimba kadila wele kindula.

In the low places he roots ravenously.

- (13) *Widi?* *Widi!*
Do you hear? We hear!

E nsibisiulu

O the *nsibizi* rat,

Mudimba kadila wele sengola.

He devours the very land that is his grainery.

- (14) *Widi?* *Widi!*
Do you hear? We hear!

Yoka vindumuki kwaku

Go! Rout out here.

Kani vakanga sina kubwanina.

I'll find you on a termite mound.

- (15) *Widi?* *Widi!*
Do you hear? We hear!

Mwini Malamu mu mukonzi

Sir Malamu in the *nkonzi* drum

Tata bwanga wa nyieni mo

Father is drumming, he leads me with it

Yenda lundi mafunda

To go store up treasures

Tata bwanga wa kidi moyo!

Father drums, he is alive!

Na nso kuzimbakana Buna bamubikudidi.

What was forgotten, Shall be remembered.

- (16) *Widi?* *Widi!*
Do you hear? We hear!

Mwikwa wamukazi

The pubes of the *mukazi* wife,

Kadi kasidi sonyia.

It causes embarrassment.

- (17) *Bu bamana sa bo, mimukunga una wantete, ubabadikilaka babatikidi nti: tata na mwana bakina kwau—E yaya e-e!*
When they have sung the opening song, Father and Child dance together—O yeah!

SORTING THE MEDICINES

- (18) *Bu basa bo bakielolo na teye mbazi padi bu baso dia ngulu zole benzi kwau, kadi biau bio ni bilongo kwau bizi mu tangisa ye ngudi a Lemba ku nkula (ntwala) biakidi.*

When they have done this, they wait till the cock's crow at dawn, when they eat two pigs. For it is their medicine which they count out into the core of *Lemba* where they put *nkula* red.

- (19) *Masuku bu mavioka basidi malaki (bilumbu) nti ta nwatu masuku makemana (makaminisa) Lemba matudidi (lweke).*

When the leaves have been brought out into the festive place then *Lemba* has been assembled (has arrived).

PRESENTING THE PATRIFILIAL CHILDREN AND LEMBA WIVES

- (20) *Buna suku (lumbu) dina buditudidi nkwezi malu matatu ye mupata.*

When day breaks, the in-laws [of the neophyte] give three palm wine portions and 15 francs (5 mupata).

- (21) *Nkumbu biaubio biabionso bibakutanga bibikwanga mpunza za Lemba.*

Collectively, the name of all these bringing something is "*Mpunza za Lemba*"—the paternal gift of *Lemba*.

- (22) *Basidi bo bena mu ndambu yo bizi kina kwau ye kielolo bwisi bwamvimba.*

Those who are there dance by themselves and wait for the others.

- (23) *Banganga bubizidi bana yidika tiya ku fula, mboko matwala malemba una nata nsusu nana ye mutete wabikwanga ye malu matanu.*

When the priests have come they build a fire in the entrance; the masters of ceremonies bring nine chickens and five baskets of manioc bread.

- (24) *Bu bameni zo dia ku fula, buna bana kwiza ku bula.*

When they have eaten in the entrance, they move into the village.

- (25) *Bakento bau bana kubabwana ye sika mikonzi ye betisa mulunga mu nkembo wawingi.*

Their women gather and beat drums and clang the bracelets in much celebrating.

- (26) *Buna bau bubasa bo bizi vwanda muntu mankulu andi zakala.*
When they are through, the old people sit down.
- (27) *Bu bani yidika tiya, buna bantu bantete bana tekila kina.*
When they have lit the fire, the first people begin to dance.
- (28) *Tata Malemba mboko mwana malemba ye bakaka mbo sibalanda mwe kina.*
The *Lemba* Father, then the *Lemba* Child, and all the others follow in dancing.
- (29) *Kukina na mukento andi bu ke bonga kito kiansusu umudikidi, buna yandi wo vwendu.*
Each dances out with his wife holding a chicken which he then extends to the one who receives it.
- (30) *Nsusu yantete buyikuba basididi bala bamfumbu ye basodidi mpe bambanda.*
The first chicken is extended to the representative of the patrilineal children (*bala bamfumbu*); the neophyte's chosen wives are also there.
- (31) *Bala ye mimbanda bu bameni solobo, buna mwini wamvimba kuseva pele, nga nsusu kana futa kwa bangudi zanganga.*
When the children and the *Lemba* wives have been presented, all day they dare not laugh, or else a chicken is paid to the high priests.

CONSTRUCTING THE PALM-ARCH LODGE;
THE "DEATH" AND "RESURRECTION" OF LEMBA NEOPHYTE

- (32) *Ntangu nsinza buyitula buna bayidikidi bala bamfumbu, mwana nzo wamandala kunima nzo ye bambanda ku mwela nzo.*
In the afternoon the patrilineal children construct for the Child a palm-frond arch lodge behind [his] house and for his wives one before the house.
- (33) *Ntangu malengola beteka mamba ye tedika mfumba ye bu betedika zo, konso kinzu kiteka bila batedi mulolo ye balundidi zo nate ye fuku diakaka.*
At the appropriate time they fetch water and boil the big kettles; every pot is filled so they cook for everyone; the portions are stored till the next morning.

- (34) *Fuku dio bu dibwidi, buna bakubudi yandi una vanda Lemba, ye banganga bavovanga nti fwidi-fwidi.*
When morning falls, then they strike the one initiating to *Lemba*, and the priests speak about that he has died.
- (35) *Bu basa bo, nifula (fwekisa) beka kubafula, ye bubafulukidi nimilolo beka ta ye kubula mfula.*
Then, they blow [in his ear] with wind, and when they have resurrected him they raise a shout of joy and fire a gun salute.

THE KILAMBU MEAL AND THE DONNING OF BRACELETS

- (36) *Buna badidi kilambu ye bwisi bubukia beso vonda ngulu iya.*
Then they eat the *Kilambu* meal, and have four pigs slaughtered.
- (37) *Ye bu bekoma mimbanda milunga benzi kwau ka tata malemba una sala lumbu kimosi nate ye beso dia ngulu yamivambanu ye mwana malemba, mbo bavambani.*
And when they then have fitted the wives' bracelets the *Lemba* Father remains another day to eat the pork and then he takes leave of his *Lemba* Child.

The Expressive Domains and their Codes

THE SPATIAL AND TEMPORAL DISTRIBUTION OF EVENTS

All four accounts of the eastern (Lari) variant indicate it lasts three days at least and two nights (figures 8–11). Kimbembe and Malonga describe it as if there is a pause sometime after the taking of the initial *bonzo* medicine, during which resources are collected for the full ceremony, and the neophyte receives intensive instruction. Malonga says this may take six months to a year; Stenström's account also suggests such a time lapse. Only where the neophyte and his supporters dispose of all necessary resources at the outset may the séance occur in one staging, as Andersson's account suggests.

All four accounts suggest, further, the common feature of a rhythm between ceremonial location in the village and outside the village, in the savanna or near a stream. As was clear in Kwamba's account of the northern variant, the rhythm is indicative of the relationship of *Lemba*'s public and esoteric worlds. The eastern variant under consideration is especially clear in demonstrating how these two

Figure 8
 Spatial and temporal distribution of events
 in Kimbembe's account of eastern *Lemba* inauguration.
 Numbers refer to lines in Text 2.

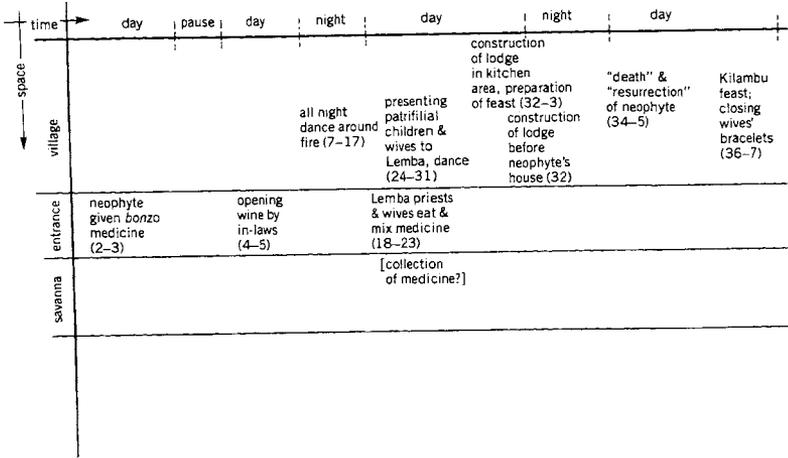


Figure 9
 Spatial and temporal distribution of events
 in Stenström's account of eastern *Lemba* inauguration
 (Stenström, 1969)

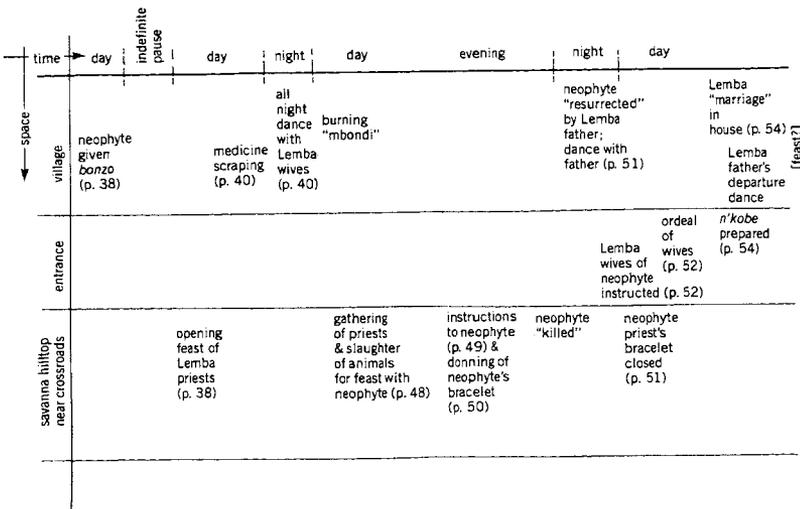


Figure 10
 Spatial and temporal distribution of events
 in Malonga's account of eastern *Leмба* inauguration
 (Malonga, 1958)

time	day	night	interlude: six months to year	afternoon	night	(cock's crow)	day	evening	
space									
village		public dance, neophyte presents "children" & wives (pp. 57-8)		meeting of regional Leмба adherents & public, dance and recitation of Leмба wisdom by neophyte; ordeal of neophyte's wives (p. 59)			consummation of Leмба marriage in lodge; "death" & "resurrection" of neophyte (p. 60)	preparing of <i>n'kobe</i> Leмба & contents (p. 60)	public feast & distribution by Leмба (p. 60)
entrance	<i>nsandzou</i> preliminary consecration (p. 57) [<i>bonzo</i> ?]							secret ritual meal of Leмба (p. 60)	
savanna hilltop							[collection of medicines?]		
stream						purificatory bath, shaving of public hair (p. 60)			

Figure 11
 Spatial and temporal distribution of events
 in Andersson's account of eastern *Leмба* inauguration
 (Andersson, 1953)

time	day	night	day	night	day	
space						
village		opening dances		"resurrection" of neophyte, bracelet donned	"marriage" in house or lodge, instructions, <i>n'kobe</i> prepared	[feast?] dance of neophyte priest & separation with father
entrance & crossroad	anointment of neophyte [<i>bonzo</i> ?]		ritual meal, animals slaughtered			
savanna hilltop		ritual slaughter of animals, meal		"death" of neophyte	instructions to neophyte's wives [collection of medicines?]	

spheres—public/esoteric, village/nonvillage—come to be inverted near the close of the initiation, so that the public space around the neophyte's house, hitherto the scene of conventional dances and feasting, becomes the location for the *Lemba* marriage and its special ritual qualities. Of the four accounts, only Malonga's has the clear spatial-temporal organization and rhythm present in Kwamba's account in the foregoing chapter, with the ceremony divided into two phases, each touching savanna and village, and within the village dividing activities clearly between courtyard and kitchen.

The effect of such rhythmic integration of public and esoteric spheres, so common in Equatorial and Central-African ritual organization, is to charge or load symbols by juxtaposing contrasting poles of meaning: savanna/village, day/night, courtyard/hearth, and so on. The accounts show the movement of the ceremony, for example, from the entrance or hilltop area at the outset into the village square for a public dance, corresponding as well with the contextual movement from daytime to night, light to darkness. Also, in the ritual "death" and "resurrection," Andersson and Stenström describe this process moving from the esoteric setting of the savanna hilltop to the public setting of the village square. Several of the accounts also recognize the court/kitchen opposition in the marriage, as was the case in Kwamba's northern variant. Kwamba indicated that the conventional meaning of court was its public, male significance, and that of the kitchen its semiprivate, female significance, but that this was inverted when the courtyard lodge became the site of the "wife exchange," and the kitchen the site of the preparation of medicines. In several of the eastern variants, this same inversion occurs: the court becoming the site of consummation of the *Lemba* marriage, the kitchen the site where *Lemba's* ritual food, or medicine, is prepared. To understand the implications of this spatial rhythm and the inversion of conventional spatial and sex-role definitions, we must examine other expressive domains.

ECONOMIC AND EXCHANGE STRUCTURES

Only Kimbembe and Stenström offer systematic information on the nature and quantity of exchange goods in the eastern variant of *Lemba's* inauguration. A glance at figure 12, which summarizes this information, suggests that these quantities are only a fourth of those reported by Kwamba in the Mboko Nsongo region: six pigs are consumed, instead of the twenty-six in Kwamba's account. The final grand Kilambu feast, emphasized by Kwamba, and Malonga in

Figure 12
Exchange structures of eastern *Lemba* séance

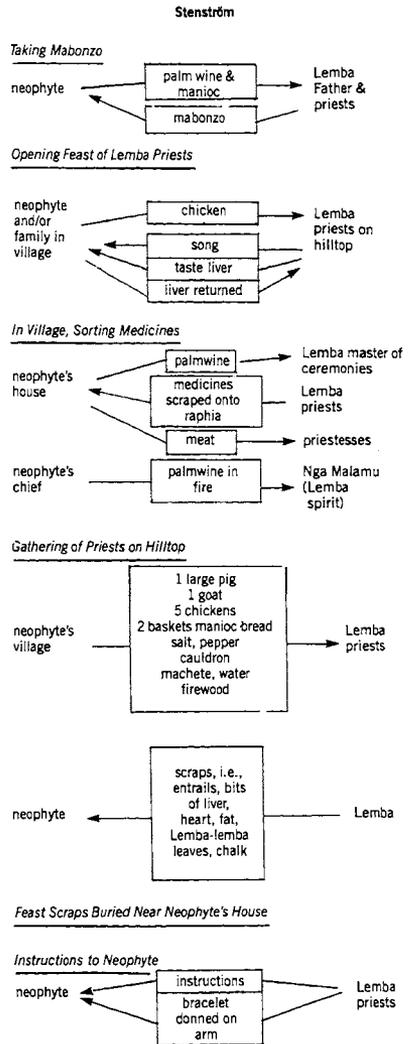
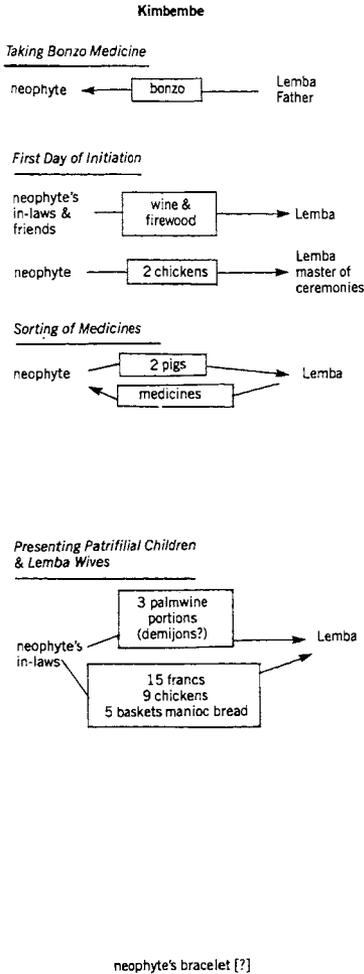
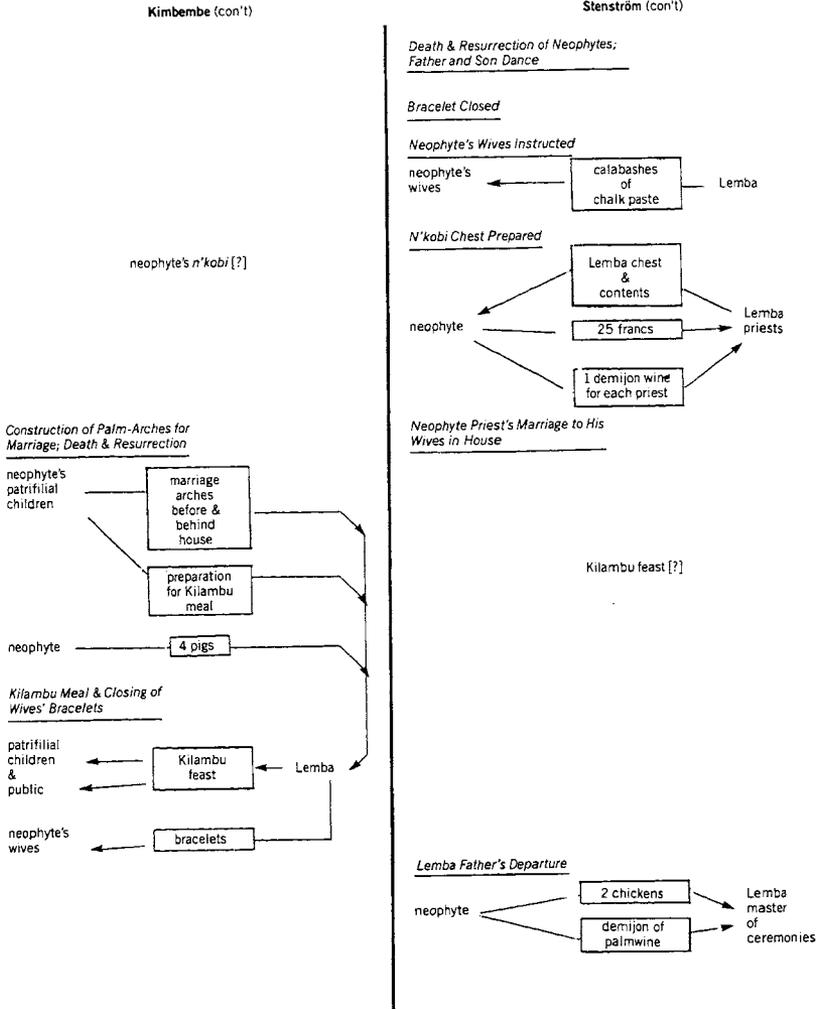


Figure 12 (cont'd)



eastern reports, is totally missing from Stenström's account. Although this might be an ethnographic oversight, it might also indicate hard times, the absence of a ceremonial fund in the early colonial period due to heavy taxation, the decline or absence of trade goods or other sources of local wealth. There is no question in the four accounts of *Lemba's* high status in the Lari region, thus ceremonial funds would not have gone to another *n'kisi*. The proximity of the Lari region to the colonial capital of Brazzaville suggests that by 1915-30, the time of the reports under consideration, *Lemba* was at the very final stages of existence as a public institution, still highly esteemed but economically being choked out of existence. By 1930, suggests Stenström, *Lemba* was decreed illegal by French colonial powers because it was consuming too many resources.

The overall structure of exchange is comparable to the northern account of *Lemba's* inauguration. The sufferer approaches a *Lemba* priest seeking a "cure," and when the *bonzo* has been administered, the priest becomes the sufferer's *Lemba* Father. After the *Lemba* Son has assembled the requisite goods and patronage, he and his kinsmen—of his own clan and village, as well as his wives' clansmen—then the regional *Lemba* adherents are notified. Numerous exchanges occur between *Lemba* and these groups identified with the neophyte, with *Lemba* presenting the *n'kobe* box and the bracelets, drums, and other paraphernalia he and his wife or wives will keep. At the close of the séance the neophyte's lineage's patrilineal children prepare the Kilambu feast, which is distributed to the local public in attendance. *Lemba's* secrets, wisdom, and medicinal mementos are given the neophyte's household. One important difference in the exchange pattern here is the absence of a massive infusion of goods from a "profanation" tax.

KINSHIP AND SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

Throughout the accounts a clear status opposition is seen between the neophyte, called "sufferer," "sick man," "deacon being initiated," "*Lemba* child," and the "healer," "senior priest," and "*Lemba* Father." There is some disagreement on the exact nature of the tie between these two figures. Malonga states that an individual prefers to be initiated to *Lemba* by his true father, or if his father is deceased, by his father's brother, his *parrain naturel*. A man is thus encouraged: "Initiate yourself to *Lemba* while your father is still alive, oh rich one, so that you won't lament him when he is no longer there."⁵ Indicative of the emphasis on patrilineality was the phrase, *mouana kou mbouti*

ko, kou ntombolé mpemba'ko, "if the child is not engendered by me, he does not receive the white chalk," that is, the blessing. Or, from the son's view, *mpemba tata mpéni moyo*, "whiteness given by the father, gave me life."⁶

Cognatic ties, on the other hand, were recognized in the *Lemba* system only in the combination of groups in the public part of the ceremony: the neophyte's matrilineage, the matrilineages of his wives (his *affines*), and the fragments of matrilineages present in his own clan's patrilineal children. Some of these groups played special roles in the *Lemba* ceremony. For example, the neophyte's clan's patrilineal children (the *bala bamfumbu*) became the pages, cooks, and partial priests for the inauguration. His in-laws, collectively called the *punza dia Lemba*, or the clans behind the co-wives in the *Lemba* household, brought wine and firewood, according to one account. The *Lemba* inauguration or renewal brought together these many descent groups, stimulating interlineage and village exchanges.

The idea of marriage, which links these various descent groups into an extensive network and maintains it over time, is then at the heart of *Lemba* as an institution. *Lemba's* marriage code, reflecting the importance of the affinal and patrilineal ties to extensive networks, is spelled out in rules given the neophyte priest and his wife or wives. He is warned that if he commits adultery he will be stricken by *Lemba's* illness. He must live in accord with his wives, preferably eating with them—a custom not common in Central Africa. The *Lemba* wife or wives are instructed not to have extramarital affairs and to resist the advances of other men as strongly as they resist insults during initiation (Andersson, Stenström's account) at the hands of established *Lemba* wives.⁷ During the height of the *Lemba* "marriage" the wives' faithfulness is tested.

The neophyte priest and his favorite wife are brought to the palm-branch lodge before his house. There, under the eyes of the patrilineal children, the *Lemba* marriage is "consummated." At the instant Malonga terms "psychologically right" the neophyte's genitalia are struck so that he momentarily loses consciousness. *Lemba* theory has it that the quicker he revives, the more faithful are his wives. If he fails to revive quickly, his wives will be called to confess their infidelity. During his unconsciousness sperm is taken and mixed with the wife or wives' pubic hair for a preparation of a powerful symbol in the memento, the *mizita* figurines.⁸

The quality of the *Lemba* marital relationship is also suggested by the structure of participation of the *punza dia Lemba* group, the

cowives of *Lemba*, in exchanges. Their payment to the *Lemba* ceremony constitutes a sort of reverse bride payment—perhaps a ritual dowry—uncommon in conventional Central-African exchange, which tends to equalize obligations between the neophyte's and his wives' clans, making the *punza* copartners in the *Lemba* household.

The patrifilial children (*bala bamfumbu*) like the descent groups of cowives (*punza dia Lemba*) constituted a network of several communities supporting the neophyte. Those present at the inauguration, at least in eastern accounts, appear to be selected representatives of the entire group of the neophyte's clan's patrifilial children. As in general Kongo ceremonial life to the present, the patrifilial children presided over the kitchen behind the neophyte's house, served in the dance, and acted as priest during the "death" and "resurrection" of the neophyte, as they preside over all transitions between the two worlds of the living and the dead in their fathers' clan.

In an important sense the patrifilial children are the source of their fathers' power. As has been seen in the northern variant and to a degree in the eastern account (see figures 7 and 12), the patrifilial children receive and redistribute the final feast as the neophyte receives, from *Lemba* priests, the symbols of authority and power. The patrifilial children offer their loyalty and support, thus becoming the continuation of the line that *Lemba* father and son have established. The three-tiered polity that results is mirrored in the eastern *Lemba* etiology myth in which Nga Malamu, Kuba, and Magungu are the succession of priests to have originated the idea of continuous *Lemba* insight. The final section on lyrics in this chapter returns to this matter.

The patrifilial alliance, extending a political network over space and continuity over time, broke the isolation of landed matrilineages as effectively as some of the chiefly traditions of the Lower Zaire. Malonga's, of the four eastern accounts of *Lemba*, gives extensive insight into just how *Lemba* governed on a day-to-day basis. *Lemba* was holder of truth, the source of laws. Its *matwala*, like major ministers of the regional séances, initiations, and renewals, were responsible for the maintenance of *Lemba*'s control of regional resources, both the materials that flowed through the markets, as well as the knowledge held by the various specialists, such as smiths and healers. The *matwala* often went out under disguise to collect formulas and techniques, both beneficent and malific, from magicians. *Lemba* appropriated all knowledge in the society to itself; only in this manner was it able to presume to combat witchcraft, that is, antisocial

powers and persons. The neophyte's socialization into the deep understanding of society occurred during the six months of the year after his initial medicine, and before his inauguration.⁹

In order to maintain such a monopoly of resources *Lemba* needed to assure the recruitment of the "brightest and best" men and women to its ranks, those who constituted a natural basis of power in society. Reluctant leaders were harassed through mystical threats or promised great wealth and power. Despite the persistent rhetoric of illness and healing, there was no specific "*Lemba* illness," states Malonga. The idiom of illness was used to speak about social disorder, and specific episodes of suffering were used to advantage to extend *Lemba's* network among the qualified. Malonga makes it very clear that *Lemba* maintained a highly conscious public image, manipulated behind a front held in common secrecy by priests and priestesses. The regional *Lemba* elder, the *munkukunyungu*, held the "high priesthood" as a sort of senior, honorary title. The chief treasurer and minister, the *matwala*, was a position of power. He, along with the other *banganga Lemba* and their *mimbanda* wives, constituted the local elite of every region. They were the links in the continuous network of market trade and peace-keeping.

The explicit ideology which used the idiom of illness and healing to maintain public order was in the eastern variant embodied in the role dichotomy of the *bitomi*, the pure and initiated, and the *bihinga*, the profane. (*Tomi* derives from *toma*, to excel, be superior or pure; *hinga* from to beg, supplicate.) It is important to understand this rhetoric of purity in *Lemba* not as an entrenched power of a continuous elite but as a mode of ritual in a segmentary society. All sources emphasize that *Lemba* membership could not flow within the matrilineage. Offices could only be perpetuated by extending the patrilineal link, which in turn stimulated exchange. Priests and priestesses were buried, when they died, with their bracelets and paraphernalia. Everywhere *Lemba's* wealth returned to the localized village supporters in the form of the lavish feast distributed by the patrilineal children of the neophyte. *Lemba* was thus a stimulation of exchange between exogamous groups, rather than a hoarding association within an endogamous, hereditary elite.

MEDICINE OF LEMBA

It should be apparent that the expressive domain "medicine" is the nonverbal articulation of social structure, the exchange of goods and gestures, words and songs. The clay, hair, fingernails, plants, and bits

of wood designated as “medicine” (*bilongo*, contained in the *n’kisi*) contain little intrinsic meaning, but they are imbued with meaning through words or songs uttered in their collection, mixing, and the social context in which they are used. A type of verbal punning is widespread in Kongo cultures whereby words spoken in the séance correspond to the plants received by the sufferer—thus, for example, “*lemba, lemba*” (peace, peace), describes the action of the plant *lemba-lemba* (*Brillantaisia patula* T. Anders) given in the oral potion. As I have argued elsewhere, this type of verbal composition principle need not exclude an understanding of the chemotherapeutic effect of plants, especially where such medicines are taken orally or applied to the skin.¹⁰ Nor should the possibility be excluded that a few of the ingredients, particularly the bodily fluids and exuvia—hair, semen, feces, blood, fingernails—carry a powerful connotational, even iconic, impact. But even here the precise meaning of the bodily object is given in word, song, or social context. This is very well illustrated in the eastern variant’s exchange between “food” and “medicine,” already hinted at in the analysis of the northern variant.

At the outset of the ceremony the neophyte and his supporters give food and drink (chicken, wine) to *Lemba* in exchange for *bonzo* medicine (chalk, etc.). At the second stage, food is again offered the *Lemba* priesthood by the neophyte, and medicines are sent back in exchange. At a later stage the *Lemba* priests are presented with an even larger quantity of food, a lavish feast, for which the neophyte receives medicine, but this time mixed with scraps of food from the priests’ meal, specifically the chicken “giblets” of heart and liver. The bracelets for the neophyte and his spouse(s) are prepared during the episode of death and resurrection, and further medicines are developed as the bracelets are consecrated. During the consummation of the *Lemba* marriage, the groom’s semen and the bride’s shaven pubic hair are mixed into a medicine. The final stage constitutes a complete inversion of the opening, in terms of the exchange of food and medicine. *Lemba*, through the beneficence of the patrifilial children of the neophyte, distributes the Kilambu feast to a general public. The *Lemba* priests and priestesses, now including the neophyte and his wives, partake of a medicinal “feast,” made up of food bits from the Kilambu, but heavily enriched with “medicine” such as semen and pubic hair from the marriage ceremony and dried excrements of *Lemba* adherents.

Commenting on this final meal of the *Lemba* pure, Malonga notes that “the symbol of this rite, revolting to the profane, is a key to the indissolubility of the *Lemba* order. It consecrates that feeling of

fraternity uniting all the pure (*bitomi*). They must consider themselves as constituting one body whose trust they may not betray."¹¹ In terms of the code that is followed, this exchange and mixing of medicine and food is expressive of an abstract view on purity and profanity. *Lemba's* purity is defined by its exposure to the neophyte's impure social context, his "illness." Profane filth collected around the neophyte is first absorbed by mixing chalk (*luvemba*, whiteness) and *lemba-lemba* herbs (calmness) with it, then by having the *Lemba* priests and priestesses eat the neophyte couple's sexuality, impurity, dirt, excrements, and the like. As Mary Douglas has so correctly observed, ritual power is generated by the absorption to the sacred of dirt, the ambiguous, death, sin, and the impure.¹²

All this, and more, is borne in the permanent "documentary" symbolism of the *n'kobe* and its contents and in the drum and bracelets, which, taken together, are expected to conserve the values of exchange, well-being, purity, peace, and political loyalty lauded in songs, speeches, rules, and instructions. In the eastern variant, as in the others, *Lemba's* permanent medicine is composed in two phases: the first in connection with the initial *bonzo* (elsewhere called *mpolo*), the second in connection with the novice priest's own *n'kobe*. Each will be dealt with briefly here. Chapter 7 will consider medicines in fuller, and comparative detail.

Stenström's account offers the ingredients of the *Lemba* high priest's *bonzo* (pl. *mabonzo*), or opening medicine, intended to clear the way for the new status which is to follow.

Lemba-[lemba] herb

Nsangu dia dinkondo (seeds) (*Ocimum basilicum*), with pungent odor or aroma

Makala manzo mbongi (*sic*), "charcoal from the hearth of menstruating woman's house" [This cannot be correct, for *mbongi* is the "men's house."]

Mpemba, white chalk

Lutundu, herb with red fruit

Mansunsu (*Ocimum arborences*), an aromatic plant

Nkukidila niamba, leaves, twigs, silt, etc., thrown onto river bank during flood

Muyitu, ashes of herbs and leaves from sweat bath

Ngasi zasombo, small palm nuts cracked by teeth

Nsala zankuka, feathers of the *nkuka* bird (*Turacus persa*.)

Nsangi, a small fish¹³

These items are recorded to suggest that they are wrapped in the skins of two antelopes, the small red *kinkululu* and the *mbambi* water antelope. However, it is not clear which ingredients are associated with which skin, nor what the verbal definers are of the articles in the context used. It cannot be assumed that the meaning of such items is consistent in northern Kongo cultures, thus an interpretation or dictionary meaning given in one setting cannot be carried over to another. Stenström has conflated several informants' lists of ingredients, and it is impossible to analyze them effectively. Some of the same ingredients appear in the second phase of medicinal composition for the *n'kobe*, in which context their lyrical definition is fortunately given (see figure 13).

N'kobe ingredients begin to be collected in the "scraping" ceremony at the time the *Lemba* couple and their pages and patrilineal children are presented to *Lemba* officiants early in the first phase (see Stenström's account, figure 9; Kimbembe, figure 8, Text 3.18–19). These ingredients, in Stenström's account, are placed onto two skins, of the *nkumbi* rat and the *musimba* wildcat respectively, and after they are tied shut they are hung temporarily on the neophyte's house until the end of the initiation. As they are scraped, the plants or substances are "charged" with verbal meaning by the priest. For example, the *nsangi* fish is cut up to the singing of the following phrase:

Nsangi, nsangi mu mbanda e ké é
Nsangi fish, *nsangi* fish, be mixed—cause to
 jump, dance—the *mbanda* wife, eh, eh.

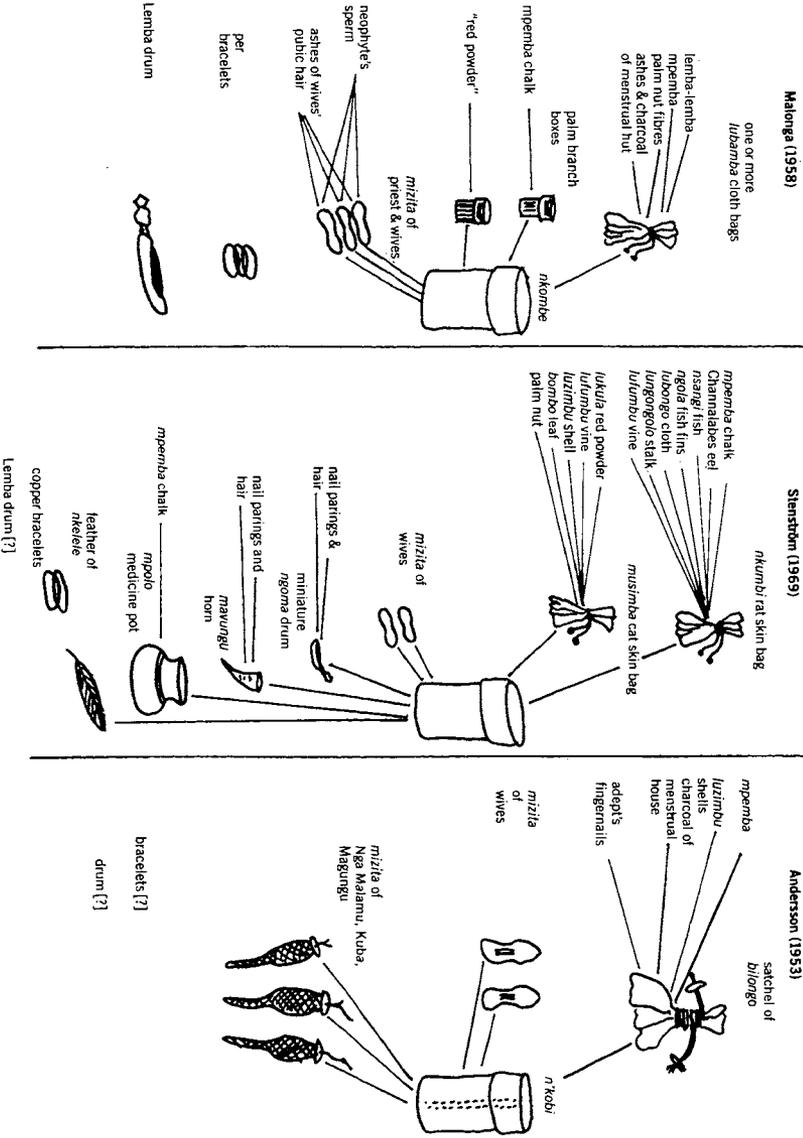
As the *lufumbu* vine is scraped, the priest sings:

A muti ambumbu, tata walembo kina, ka ulamo ko¹⁴
 Oh *mbumbu* tree, father doesn't dance, he won't dance.

The objects are so to speak given life and meaning in the context of the performance. This situational attribution of meaning may vary greatly from one locale or initiation to another, and from one set of medicines to the next, for all but a few of the classic Kongo or Central-African ritual symbols, which seem consistently to retain their underlying meaning from context to context, region to region, even decade to decade.

Thus, *mpemba* chalk, present in all *bonzo* openings, symbolizes "whiteness" and is a sign of purity, correctness, loyalty, innocence, and truth, synonymous virtues in *Lemba*. *Lemba's* cure, as many

Figure 13
Eastern *Lemba tukobe* and ingredients



others, contains *mpemba* chalk because of the ready contrast it offers with states of sickness and impurity.¹⁵ Thus, in a rather predictable interpretation as they add chalk to the medicines, the *Lemba* priest sings

mpemba batata mpedi moyo e é
 With *mpemba* the fathers gave me life;
mpemba tata mpedi moyo e é
mpemba, father gave me life.¹⁶

Another pervasive classic ingredient is *lukula* or *tukula*, red powder of the *tukula* tree (*Pterocarpus cabrae* [*elsoyauxii*]), which is usually used in conjunction with *mpemba* chalk to designate contrasting but related qualities. In the eastern *Lemba* accounts, *mpemba* in the *n'kobe* denotes life or power in the neophyte priest's life, and it is kept in the skin of an *nkumbi* rat (see figure 14, Stenström and Malonga). *Tukula* red, kept in the skin of the *musimba* wildcat, signifies the benediction of the ancestors upon the *Lemba* couple.¹⁷ The juxtaposition of *mpemba* and *tukula* in nearly all *Lemba tukobe*, in connection with virtues of the *Lemba* priest and priestess respectively, suggests that there is here a basic metaphor. Indeed, it reappears in all regional accounts of *Lemba* from the Teke-influenced Lari in the eastern variant, to the Mayombe and coastal accounts. The elements of the metaphor are drawn from what is known to be widespread in Equatorial-African cosmology and thus characteristic of a widespread ritualization process. The sex roles of the *Lemba* male and female are first of all defined by whiteness and redness, the first denoting purity, contact with ancestors, virtue, the second denoting power, fusion or mediation, sometimes danger. The sense of these substance and color symbols is made crystal clear by their containers in the *n'kobe*. The male "whiteness" is placed in the skin of the *nkumbi* rat, a striped rodent whose underground burrowing skills are widely lauded. He stands for contact with the underground domain of *mpemba*, the land of the dead. Female "redness" is contained, in Stenström's account, in the spotted skin of the *musimba* cat, a tree animal, whose characteristics thus suggest skilled human interaction, especially in the realm of relations between the sexes and in fertility. The fragment of the *Lemba* metaphor might be sketched as in figure 14.

Malonga's exegesis of other *n'kobe* ingredients explicates some of the other common ritual items found in *Lemba*. The fibers of the palm nut—variation may be palm nut, palm branch—convey the wealth of

Figure 14
Sketch of *Lemba's* dominant metaphor,
based on eastern variant

sexual roles and identities	substance and color	animal order	cosmological space
male	whiteness <i>mpemba</i>	<i>n'kumbi</i> rat	burrows underground
female	redness <i>tukula</i>	<i>musimba</i> cat	runs on ground, climbs trees

the palm in Kongo societies: oil, wine, cloth (= money) are all derived from it. Inclusion of a bit of the palm draws the neophyte into association with the productive realm of society.¹⁸ Ashes are the symbol of the hearth that every respected man must possess. The *Lemba* priest has a sacred obligation not to become isolated, without hearth or household, wives and children. Charcoal is the "allegory of discretion," denoting that what is hidden in obscurity is difficult to uncover. Discretion is a virtue of every *Lemba* person, every *butomi*. Charcoal is a sign of the ability of magicians to render invisible from profane eyes and minds their intentions and methods.¹⁹ Menstrual blood associates *Lemba* with the moment of a woman's greatest fertility and reproductive potential. Menstrual symbolism complements the male element in *Lemba*, advocating multiplication and productivity, life.

These medicinal ingredients (*bilongo*) are attached, by words and connotations, to the active norms and ideals of the *Lemba* couple and *Lemba* as a wider social institution. Some of them also gain their meaning out of the functional context in which they are used in productive life. Others, as suggested earlier, may have a direct iconic derivation having to do with the body of the initiate or of the corporate body of *Lemba*. Bodily clippings, exuvia, fluids, and parts find their use in expressive efforts to represent unity of individuals. Thus the *mizita* figurines present in all accounts (see figure 13) contain ashes of the wives' pubic hair and the husband's semen, mementos of the transcendent "moment of truth" in the consummation of the marriage when the groom is knocked unconscious ("dead") so he may be raised ("resurrected") to the new unity in *Lemba*. The *mizita* may have

individually colored beads to represent each wife, but their contents denote permanent transcendence of individuality in the new life of *Lemba*.

The unity of the larger corporate body of *Lemba* is represented in the nail-parings and hair (elsewhere, rags from old clothes) clipped from each priest and priestess and placed into the miniature *ngoma* drum or *mavungu* horn (figure 13) that are inserted into the *n'kobe*. Whether these drums are called *ngoma*, *nkonzi*, or *nkonko*, they are called the voice of the ancestors or spirits, representing the corporate collectivity. Thus in one song (Text 3.15), *Lemba's* legendary founder Nga Malamu is addressed:

Mwini Malamu mu mukonzi
Sir Malamu, in the *n'konzi* drum

Tata bwanga wa nyieni mo
Father is drumming, he leads me by it.

In another, Kuba:

The *ngoma* goes *mbwe!* *mbwe!*
Don't you hear it?
Oh Kuba!
I move to it!²⁰

No less than the bones or hairs of martyred heroes of Western Christianity inspire the church in shrines, or ancestral chiefs' bones are revered in the ancestor baskets of clans in Central Africa, these bundles of fingernails, hairs, etc., of the *Lemba* community iconize the disparate individuals into one communal body, joined with distant heroic ancestors. But *Lemba's* icon, it must be recalled, is not hereditary but must be renewed by initiation of new couples.

THE LYRICAL

The lyric sense was already present in the previous section, defining or sharpening the meaning of inchoate medicinal ingredients or other ritual objects. In this section I want to illustrate the full form of the lyrical in one important song and the etiological myth of Nga Malamu, Kuba, and Magungu present in a fragmentary way in most of the eastern variants of *Lemba*. It is now apparent that the ritual objects such as clanging bracelets, throbbing drums, burrowing rodents, semen and pubic hair ashes, food and the like lend social interaction a

sensory immediacy of great power. On these objects, as we have seen with such cases as the miniature drums, the bracelets, and other articles, metaphors of esoteric reality are constructed that embody less tangible but no less real statements about the human and supernatural world. In the *Lemba* setting, social relations are often linked with the realm of spirits and deities, and both are concretized in ceremonial objects.

This type of linkage of the human, material, and spiritual realms is evident in a favorite eastern *Lemba* song type about two types of animals, one of whom is an effective, the other an ineffective burrower for food. Kimbembe (Text 3.1 1-16) and Malonga²¹ offer comparable texts.

KIMBEMBE

*E lutundulu nuinwandi,
Kadila wele kindula.*
O the *lutundulu* ant, his mouth
devours the sweet fruit.

*E nsibisiulu, mudimba kadila
wele kindula.*
But oh the *nsibizi* rat, in the
deep places he devours with
ravenous appetite.

*E nsibisiulu, mudimba kadila
wele sengola.*
Oh the *nsibizi*, he even devours
his own granary!

MALONGA

*A! Lou nkouma-nkouma tat'e,
lou na loua koumini ngoudi
a nganga.*

Oh, my son, the truth resides in
the words of the chief priest.

*Ma tondélé nkoumbi, na
mayelo ma tembéle.*
Whatever causes *nkoumbi* rat to
rejoice, makes his
moustache dance (twitch).

*A! ntsibizi zoba, dimba ka dila
meni sengola.*
But the stupid *ntsibizi*, he
burrows up the ground that
is his granary!

*Yoka vindumuki kwaku
kani vakanga si na ku
bwanina*
Go! Roll up! I'll catch you
on a termite mound.

*Mwini Malamu mu mukonzi
Tata bwanga wa nyieni mo.*
Sir Malamu in the *nkonzi*
drum,
Father beckons, he leads me
by it.

*Yenda lundi mafunda
Tata bwanga wa kidi moyo.*
Go, store up treasures
Father beckons, he lives!

*Na nso kuzimbakana
Buna bamubikudidi!*
What was hidden,
Shall be revealed!

*Mwikwa wamukazi
Kadi kasidi sonyia.*
The *Lemba* wife's pubes,
Cause embarrassment.

*E! Yenda, vindoumouki
kou'akou!*
*Kani ghakanga tsia na ku
bouanina.*
Go! Roll up! I'll catch you
on a termite mound.

*A! Bou kouenda bou kouenda,
yenda yenda na nkouma na
ngou'andi a diambou.*
On your journeys, see that you
are accompanied by the
"word of truth" (proverb and
message).

*Taba dia nkazi
Ka sidi bèmba.*
Il s'est certainement frotté à la
'garniture' de sa femme eu
venant.

*Didi nkoukou hou koukoum'
anga.*
Il a mangé le coucou qui bégaie.

The texts characterize sets of natural creatures: Kimbembe, the *lutundulu* ant and the *nsibizi* rodent; Malonga, the *nkumbi* rat and the *nsibizi*. All are burrowing, digging, or wiggling creatures. As suggested earlier, *nkumbi*, with striped skin and joyful twitching whiskers, appears in many *Lemba* contexts, his burrowing highly

lauded, his skin taken as a container for the white chalk symbolizing the *Lemba* neophyte's mystical and rhetorical abilities.

The songs also speak of the *Lemba* Father and Son, the high priest, *Lemba's* founder Nga Malamu, and the *mukazi Lemba* wife. The *Lemba* Father is depicted as an animator, reviver of the Son, who puts him in touch with the powers, secrets, and wealth of *Lemba*. Not only are mystical links intended here but also the power of words, skillfully used as an access to power. Thus, Sir Malamu speaks to the *Lemba* Child through father's drumming on *n'konzi*. Similarly, the neophyte priest is told to take with him on his journeys the essence of truth, "the word"—probably special proverbs or oratorical techniques. The songs move from the natural object concretizing truth, to the less tangible qualities defining access to *Lemba's* powers.

There is in these songs, as in many of the couplets studied in the northern variant, a sense of the hidden referent, probably given in the *Lemba* context some esoteric meaning. Here, as in the songs of the previous chapter, the hidden referent—"that which was hidden, shall be revealed" (Kimbembe)—occurs in the face of a contradictory or dichotomous situation. At one level this contradiction is visible in the set of creatures, one of whom is successful, or skilled, the other of whom is unsuccessful, stupid. In the first song by Kimbembe, *lutundulu* reaches his sweet fruit, whereas *nsibizi* destroys his food source and gets caught. In the second song, *nkumbi* is successful, *nsibizi* stupid. *Nsibizi* is caught on a termite hill, itself full of pores and tunnels, as he rolls himself up in a ball, thinking he has protection. The successful creatures are the *Lemba* priests who can reveal secrets, know and use rhetorical words to great effect. They can handle truth. The unsuccessful "diggers" are the profane, lacking truth and power.

There seems to be a further sexual-political signification in the songs relating the burrowing animals to the *nkazi*-wife. The "successful" digger understands fertility, the secrets of reproduction, and replenishment of the earth, whereas the "unsuccessful" digger destroys, like the metaphoric *nsibizi*, the very source of his food. Instead of children and followers, he effects destruction and loss of human resources. He is politically inept.

The movement of the *Lemba* neophyte and his wives into touch with these truths appears to have not only a practical consequence in their political and economic effectiveness, but a metaphysical connotation, formulated in the eastern region by the idea of a succession

of *Lemba's* spiritual substance (*kitswa*) from one generation to the next. Many of the references in the songs and incantations, as well as the *mizita* figures and the *mavungu* horn in the *Lemba* chest (figure 13), refer to Text 4, the eastern etiological myth of *Lemba*, which follows.

Text 4

According to the version from Madzia, the creator of *Lemba* was a man called Nga Malamu—Nga designating the status of chief. As a man, Nga Malamu composed the first *n'kisi Lemba* with the inspiration of a protecting spirit (*kitswa*) of a deceased kinsman. When, in his turn, he died, he became the patron spirit (*kitswa*) of *Lemba*. Now Nga Malamu is considered to be a supernatural being, according to his name, immortal, one who endures, who is and subsists. Nga Malamu it is who gives force to *Lemba*. Kuba, who followed him, fell ill. Nga Malamu healed him, and he became the first priest of Nga Malamu. The third founder and protector of *Lemba* is Magungu. These three personages act in *Lemba* and by *Lemba*. *Lemba* is so old that generations have been born and have died without anyone recalling a time when *Lemba* did not exist. According to some, the founder may have been Yaya Mwaya.²²

The figures of Nga Malamu, Kuba, and Magungu occur repeatedly in the ceremony in songs, alongside the creatures and ritual objects such as *nkumbi* rat and whiteness. Their characteristics thus come to be defined more exactly. A few examples suffice to convey this integration of etiological heroes, medicinal objects, and social roles of *Lemba*. Thus, in one account of the savanna ceremony early in the first phase, the priests and priestesses sing “Tremble before Mavungu.”²³

Mbokidi makondo
 Kneel, spy
Ka mbakidi akina ko
 I have been unable to dance
Wauleno Mavungu
 Tremble before Mavungu.

Later, during the scraping of medicines ceremony in the village square, the song “Nzambi-God passes” is sung.²⁴

Widi, widi
Hear, Hear
Mpemba tata mpedi moyo
Mpemba chalk, father gave me life
Lembolo mpemba, kadi nganga ko
Without chalk, one isn't a priest
Mpemba nkima yikwenda nami
Chalk is what accompanies me
Bandama kwaku
So bow down
Wadi Nzambi kayoka
For God is passing
Nzambi watele vunguteno
God has said: murmur hum, hum
Nsunsu ka kuba ngumbi kwa kudi
Chicken to Kuba, partridge
Nkonso kidi ngolo
Whoever would be strong
Kidi ntedi Kuba diamwana Lemba.
Then Kuba became the *Lemba* Child.

This song recalls the transfer of the *kitswa* protecting spirit from Nga Malamu to Kuba, the second priest. Ritual substances such as white chalk and auspicious sacrifice objects such as chickens and partridges are mentioned. Nzambi's passing is an indicator of awesome sacred power. A little later in the all-night dance the participants sing “Kuba in Ngoma Drum,” already cited above. Following a song of gratitude to the *nkumbi* rodent, successful striped burrower with joyful quivering whiskers, another song is sung on the savanna hilltop lauding *Lemba* with its unique humming tone: “God has said Hum.”²⁵

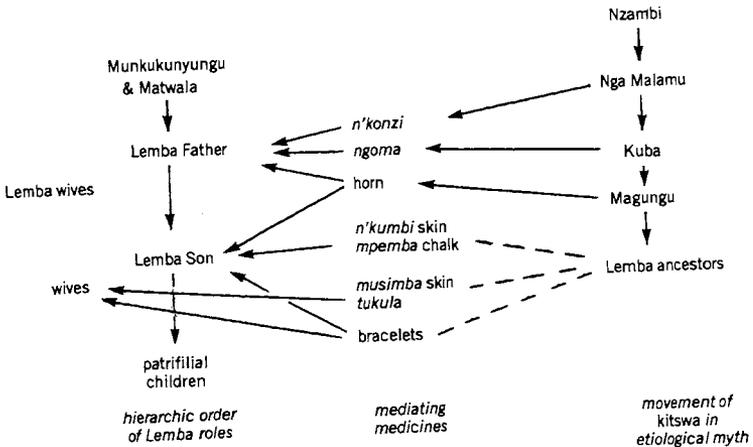
Tuidi bamintiobo
We are like worms
Ga tutambukila kweto
Here we will burst
Nzambi wasidi, vunguteno
God has said, hum, hum

Tuidi bambwetete
 We are like the stars
Ka tuwaka lutangu ko
 We are without number
Wauleno Magungu!
 Glory to Magungu.

At once an alliteration of the peculiar *Lemba* low humming “grumble” and the name of the third *kitswa* of *Lemba*, the song expresses satisfaction with the banquet of pork, in terms befitting a well-fed *Lemba* priest.

The foregoing textual evidence from diverse sources can be brought together in a single metaphoric structure to depict the movement present in the eastern variant of *Lemba*. Social roles, medicines, and supernatural heroes or deities are joined to create a semantic fabric within which direction is apparent. Frequently it is the descriptive traits of the medicines—*nkumbi* rats, white chalk, lembe-lembe plants—that do the defining, with the help of short couplets or phrases uttered during their use. The effect of this ritual action is however to move the power of the *Lemba* Father into the *Lemba* Son and on to his wives and patrifilial children, in the same terms as *kitswa*, the spiritual substance in the etiological myth, moves from Nzambi to Nga Malamu, to Kuba, and to Mavungu (figure 15).

Figure 15
 Metaphoric association of domains
 as depicted in eastern variant of *Lemba*



Chapter 6

The South-Central (Nsundi, Bwende) Variant of *Lemba*

The Lemba Séance in Nseke-Mbanza

The south-central variant of *Lemba*'s inauguration ceremony is based on an account by Fukiau, recognized MuKongo writer and educator. Because this account, representative of much of the Manianga region, has been published in Fukiau's Kongo cosmogony (*Nza Kongo*),¹ I need not offer it here but shall proceed with an analysis of the expressive domains related in it. A few introductory comments are in order about Fukiau's *Lemba* account and the conditions of its compilation, because it has come under serious attack by a fellow Maniangan author, Batsikama ba Mampuya.² Batsikama charges Fukiau with having invented a personalistic view of Kongo cosmology and perpetrated it for self-aggrandizement. It should be noted that Batsikama originates not far from where Fukiau is at home, and there is more to this attack than its scholarly content. Without wishing to join in or rehash the debate, I might note that Fukiau could have averted such charges by acknowledging his considerable debt to *Lemba* priest Katula of Nseke Mbanza. Later in this chapter I shall return to a few of Batsikama's specific criticisms. Here I should clarify the conditions under which Katula's account of *Lemba* was gathered.

Early in my fieldwork in 1965, Fukiau and I spent an entire day with Katula. Katula was well aware of the stringency with which some *Lemba* priests kept the secrets of *Lemba* decades after its demise as an active institution. Although he shared with them a great admiration for it, he believed the secrets deserved to be told for posterity. As an educator (see Chapter 3), he frequently spoke of the ancestral past to his students. As speaker (*nzonzi*) for his clan, the Kikwimba of Nseke-Mbanza, he utilized his remarkable oratorical skills in a way that reflected his *Lemba* training. When Fukiau and I suggested a thorough coverage of *Lemba*, Katula willingly consented to meet with us.

The “interview” was held, at Katula’s request, out in the high savanna bush and at the outskirts of Nseke-Mbanza where the last séance of the region had occurred in 1919. Although Katula felt unsure speaking about *Lemba* in general, he related with ease and remarkable memory the séance of 1919. Fukiau’s account reflects this specificity. My own KiKongo was quite rudimentary at that time, those parts of the interview pertaining to esoteric features of *Lemba* songs and symbols passed me by, but Fukiau took extensive notes of them all, as his published account shows. Answers to some of my questions also appear in Fukiau’s account. Fukiau’s published account of the Nseke-Mbanza *Lemba* inauguration may thus well be the most exact and authentic account on all of *Lemba*. What errors exist in the account are distortions having to do with extraordinary detail of some aspects alongside mere hastily-covered generalities of others.

The spatial-temporal distribution of events in the séance is accurate because of Katula’s *in situ* presence where the 1919 event occurred. The logic of the stages, presented by Fukiau with KiKongo glosses, reflects this precision. Similarly, the visual details of ritual space are exact. Katula sketched for us the precise details of various *Lemba* altars, symbols, dances and ceremonious actions as carried out in 1919. He told us what had been esoteric knowledge, beyond the range of observation by the uninitiated (*bihinga*). The significance to our analysis of some of these details will become apparent in Chapter 8 on *Lemba* in Haiti, where they reappear, slightly altered, in the séance reported in the thirties of this century by Price-Mars.

Fukiau’s account of *Lemba* gives mythic hero Mahungu a central position, not only in the *Lemba* etiology legend, but in the “Kongo cosmogony.” The role of Mahungu in relation to *Lemba* varies from region to region, just as Mahungu’s identity is variable, around the persistent motif of duality. In the foregoing chapter, Mahungu was third priest of *Lemba*, represented in a hunting horn. In Fukiau’s (Katula’s) account of *Lemba*, Mahungu becomes the central androgynous deity, source of *Lemba*. The present chapter examines at length this figure Mahungu, hero of complementarity, both as represented in *Lemba* etiologies and beyond *Lemba*. What in foregoing chapters was analyzed as a “hidden referent” of *Lemba* causation, in this chapter becomes the study, at closer range, of the composition of a deity. In addition to the Mahungu text provided by Fukiau (Text 4), three further Mahungu tales from a Nsundi enclave in Cabinda, told

by Nitu (Texts 5, 6, 7), offer materials for this analysis of a mythic hero reaching across *Lemba* territory from east to west.³

Detailed materials on the figure of Mahungu make up for gaps in information on *Lemba*'s social and economic context, material already studied in the northern and eastern variants.

The Expressive Domains of Lemba

SPATIAL-TEMPORAL DISTRIBUTION OF EVENTS

Fukiau distinguishes the sites of stages of the *Lemba* initiation that dealt with the neophyte as still profane (*bihinga*) from those sites and stages that saw him either partially initiated or fully initiated.⁴ The first phase, the "tying of knees" (*mbundulu a makoto*), refers to the neophyte's attachment to a *Lemba* priest, his first consecration. It takes place at a crossroads (*mpambu a nzila*), an auspicious location suggestive of the change occurring in the life of the neophyte. As elsewhere, the reasons for entering *Lemba* that are given by Fukiau are diverse. The neophyte may be afflicted, or there may be a *Lemba* position in a clan that needs to be filled. After sacrificing a chicken and some wine, over a fire, the *Lemba* Father "jumps" (*dumunā*) the child three times in a common form of blessing, and he is consecrated (*biekwa*).

When the neophyte has acquired a pig, the local *Lemba* adherents are contacted, and the next phase of the initiation may occur. It is called *ku sinda*, or the "rubbing of the bracelets" (*kusa n'lunga*) and the "holding up to the sky of the staffs" of the priests, signs which suggest that the *Lemba* brotherhood is cohesive and together, that the new priest will join their ranks. The pig is slaughtered and eaten in a festive setting, not far from the savanna lodge site.

The initiation moves directly into the next phase of instructions at the lodge of *Lemba* (*ku londe*) in a clearing in the bush. Here the neophyte priest is given the laws of *Lemba*, such as prohibitions against pollution, through eating, acting, or being demeaned in specific ways. The consecration and instruction of the neophyte's wife or wives is described separately by Fukiau. It appears to have occurred parallel to the neophyte priest's consecration and instruction.

Fukiau's account suggests the scheduling of the *Lemba* inauguration in two major phases, separated by a pause of indeterminate length

(see figure 16.) This corresponds to the broad lines of the inaugural reported by other observers in foregoing chapters. One eyewitness of *Lemba* in the north Manianga suggested that the entire *Lemba* initiation took up about two four-day weeks after the neophyte had been given the initial blessings. Nkila and Nkoyi, according to this witness, were “*Lemba days*” and auspicious points of beginning for the first full cycle. One may speculate that the two day/night/day cycles comprising the inauguration each opened on the same day of the week, Nkila or Nkoyi, leading the first time into a limited-scale event with only *Lemba*’s priests and priestesses present, and moving from there into a full-scale cycle with all affines and patrilineal children present.

In any event, the second cycle opens with double sets of feasts. At the savanna hilltop lodge, a banquet is served the *Lemba* priests (and priestesses?), whereas the neophytes receive crude “unsalted” (lacking in meat) “feasts,” as a type of ordeal to test their patience. Meanwhile, in the village, another feast has opened with dancing and eating. This double feast suggests the food dualism of other accounts, in which conventional food is mixed at times with medicinal food or has a closely structured relationship to it. While the village festival is under way, the priests take the neophyte(s) to the confrontation with the *Lemba* ancestors down at a stream, via other phases of this mystical penetration at the savanna lodge (*londe*). This corresponds to the ritual “death” of the neophyte in other accounts, as well as to the visit to the cemetery to fetch earth from a tomb. This process of direct encounter with the forces of *mpemba*, the beyond or the dead, was the terrible high point of the initiation, surrounded by much awe and fright. The neophyte needed to be especially consecrated at the savanna lodge prior to the “descent to *Lemba*” (*nkulumukunu a Lemba*).

The “descent to *Lemba*” is situated in Fukiau’s account within the terms of his Kongo cosmology. In this view, the village and the beyond are opposing poles of a cosmic opposition, the former being the realm of humans, the latter the realm of ancestors, spirits, and Nzambi-God. The former is symbolized by the color “black” and is represented with charcoal; the latter is “white” (*ku-mpemba*) and is represented with *luvemba*-chalk. This Kongo world is shaped like two inverted disks, suggesting a type of terrestrial knoll floating on a cosmic water called *Kalunga*, within or beyond which is the realm of *mpemba*. To establish contact with this source of power, a human being must know the role of the priest. The priest, in turn, must know how to relate to the

ancestors who are in turn in contact with God (Nzambi), ultimate and unitary power. The gradual initiation moves from mundane blackness, through red transition, to terrifying *mpemba*-brilliance. Prior to their encounter with the white the neophytes are consecrated. After their encounter they must take an oath and again consecrate themselves at the altar of *Lemba* (*dikenge, yowa*). Finally, their *nkobe* and bracelet and drum represent mementos of their encounter.

Fukiau's description of the neophytes' encounter with *mpemba* and the following events merits closer examination because he offers exact drawings—given by Katula—of the ritual spaces, the choreography, of these events. In the “encounter with the white” the neophytes find themselves face to face with a masked figure on a pole, decorated in white, red, and black. Surrounding them are the *Lemba* priests, now wearing similar masks. The priests are playing their instruments—probably *nkonzi* drums, the “ancestors' voices”—and singing such lyrics as the following:⁵

O! Tala!
O, Look!
Tala matebo!
Look at the shades!
O n'kuyu!
O demon!
E Mpungu-tulendo!
God Almighty!
Banganga, ka tuswama ko e?
The priests won't be afraid.
Bakulu ku mpemba!
Ancestors in the White!

At the propitious moment loud salvos are fired from guns nearby and a priest in the outside circle pulls a string animating the masked central figure, all of which has the effect on the psychologically-prepared neophytes of terrorizing them so that they want to flee.

Trembling with fright, they are brought to a nearby site called *Konzi dia Lemba* (the “drum” of *Lemba*) where they are told what has just befallen them. It is a classic initiation sequence of mystery and fright followed by clarification. A *Lemba* song they have heard before, in earlier stages of the ceremony, is sung to explain the episode:⁶

Ntondele kwami
 In gratitude
Na mayedo ma nkumbi
 The whiskers of *nkumbi* rat
Me'tèmbil'e
 Wiggle, twitch
Wanga mbil'e
 Be attentive to the call
Mahungu e
 Of Mahungu
Wanga
 Be attentive.

Further clarifications are given, how this experience is like the life of the *Lemba* priest and that he can expect situations like that which he has been through. Then he swears an oath of loyalty to *Lemba* and its secrets.

Priests and neophytes now move to the savanna hilltop lodge of *Lemba*, but before they enter it they circle it thrice, symbolizing the "life of man" (*luzingu lua muntu, zingu* = circle), singing the song comparing the endless circle of life to this circle. The Kongo cosmology is expressed clearly in this: the path of the sun around the earth being analogous to the path of life from birth to death and then to rebirth. One might note that this episode is situated in the same moment of the inauguration as the "death" and "resurrection" events in other accounts.

At the lodge a ritual space is prepared, called *dikenga* or *diyowa*, which replicates the dichotomy this world/the beyond with that of neophyte/priest. The term *dikenga* suggests a place of circling, the center of a circling motion, or the hill around which one circles, here representing the life-cycle process referred to above. *Diyowa* suggests *yoba*, to bathe or anoint, and is here as in other Kongo ritual definitions indicative of the boundary between this world and "the white." The cosmogram suggested in the combined features of *dikenga*, place of the life cycle, and *diyowa*, place of anointment to the beyond, commemorates the encounter with the terrifying mask in a more serene and detached manner. The encounter at the stream was the genuine confrontation with power, now the neophytes are shown how to relate ceremonially to the abstract reality of power and the beyond. The priests enter the *dikenga* circle on one side, the neophyte

on the other. On the priests' side is planted the "tree of life," and alongside the central pit or cross-like trench at the circle's intersection are further symbols of mediation with the beyond, a small jar or pot of palm wine and a sack (or sacks) of *mpemba* chalk and *tukula* red.

The procession of *Lemba* now divides into three groups. The *Lemba* Father presiding over the séance enters the cosmogram on the side of the tree; the neophyte(s) on the opposite side; all other adherents surround the cosmogram in a circle. Father and son face each other across the cross-like trench, the son holding his staff with two hands, the father with one, over the *diyowa*, sign of swearing. The father, before the witnesses surrounding him, swears to his son that if he has any doubts about the uprightness of his father-teacher, that *Lemba* may punish him. The father puts together a packet of nine sticks (*vua*) constituting "men," and nine more representing "women" (*mizita*)—the *Lemba* wife will receive these later as well. Now the *Lemba* Son recites a similar oath to his father before the surrounding witnesses, as the father pours wine into the *diyowa*, and passes the knife thrice under the neophyte's throat. With the two packets of sticks in his hand, the neophyte swears:⁷

Nge' tata

My father

Va lukongolo

Before this circle

Tutelamane

We stand

Ngatu yakuwila

If I hear

Maniungu-niungu

Rumors, gossip

Ngatu n'samu wambi

or evil reports

Vo lufwa

May death come.

The neophyte now kneels and rubs his mouth in the *kitoba* mud of palm wine and dirt in the cross trench and passes the knife thrice under his throat. After another affirmation or call of the *Lemba* Father to the twitching whiskers of Nkumbi and the completeness of Mahungu, the neophyte is marked with white clay and red powder. Then the

group eats and drinks at *nkonzi* and returns to the village. There, in connection with the final feast that Fukiau mentions but does not describe, the bracelets and the *nkobe Lemba* are given the neophyte *Lemba* couple(s).

MEDICINE, MEANING, AND THE CATEGORIES OF RITUAL ACTION

The Fukiau/Katula account of *Lemba's* inaugural in the north-Manianga region does not give specific ethnographic data on the exchange of goods and symbols in the rite, nor does it delineate very well the social roles of all participating in the rite. Since these features have been dealt with in previous variants, it is appropriate here to analyze in more careful detail the medicines of *Lemba* and the implications of their composition in ritual acts. Ritual has appropriately been defined as the manipulation of symbols. In the *Lemba* ceremony depicted by Fukiau, the ritual symbols that are used in the séance reappear in the ingredients of the *nkobe*, as synecdochic representations of the processes out of which they arose. Fukiau tends to explain this process in terms of the "Kongo cosmogony" which constitutes perhaps the dominant metaphor of ritual action. That figure, the opposition of the profane human world to the sacred world of the beyond (*mpemba*) and its powers, offers a generally correct explanation of the rite. The neophyte is introduced to the priesthood of controlling powers in society. He learns, in *Lemba*, to manipulate the signs of power, and understands its effects in rhetoric, ritual, and political and economic action. Some of the supporting significations need to be amplified, however, because they suggest a rich and nuanced symbolic understanding in north-bank Kongo culture.

Fukiau's list of ingredients in the *Lemba nkobe* is based on Katula's own *nkobe*, as he related it to us. In most instances these ingredients define both the ritual actions of *Lemba* as well as the ideal characteristics of the *Lemba* priest and priestess.

The small pot of *mpolo* medicine included in the *nkobe* was usually a mixture of whitish ash from the hearth and *luvemba* chalk. It constituted a type of lime which retained qualities of cohesiveness and stuck to the body in ritual settings, and it also had uses as a substitute for salt. In *Lemba* the *mpolo* medicine was used as an initial purification, and at the end it entered the neophyte's *nkobe* for his own treating. It was thus representative of his own status transformation. It symbolized power (*wisa*, *lulendo*), sanctity (*n'longo*), and clarity

(*kia*). Whenever the *Lemba* priest appeared wearing or using *luvemba* or *mpolo* medicine, he was understood as a bringer and wielder of justice, consecration, and victory over obscurity and confusion.

The use of *tukula* red powder, and its representation in the *nkobe* in a small satchel, set forth a cluster of qualities comparable to, yet contrasting with, those in "whiteness." Whereas whiteness represented absolute sanctity, redness was seen as another type of sanctity which people feared. The *Lemba* priest had powers of life and death, and he was a judge who could perceive the inner nature of things and events. In many ritual settings both white and red were used, suggestive of the duality of power in society: its legitimacy on the one hand, its fearfulness on the other.

Salt was included in the *nkobe* as a practical preservative. But as such it also signified the *Lemba* priest's use of "righteous indignation" (*sinsu kia nganzi*) at the right moment. Indiscriminate anger is seen as destructive in society. Precise, well-aimed anger is a valuable rhetorical tool in the conservation of society. Salt is contrasted, in rhetorical theory, to oil, a substance for smoothing over.

Nsaku-nsaku leaves and bark (*Cyperus articulatus* L. = *Cyperaceae*) when mashed produce a pleasant incense-like aroma. The *Lemba* priest, in like manner, should be pleasant, agreeable, a person desirous of peaceful relations with others.

As in many Central-African rituals, Fukiau's *Lemba* séance has further plant symbols. There is the "tree of *Lemba*" planted within the circle of *n'konzi*. This tree is a banana sapling which represents the renewal of life, the rebirth of the neophyte, and the source of human multiplication. Perhaps the most important in terms of its inclusion in the *nkobe* is the palm tree (*ba*—*Elaeis guineensis*). Throughout the ceremony palm wine is present as an offering, as a drink both refreshing and slightly intoxicating when turned, and as a symbol of transcendence. Called *nsamba*, from *samba*, to "cross over," "transcend," another derivation of which is *sambila*, prayer, palm wine is used in the *n'konzi* ceremony to prepare the *toba* mud in the cross-like trench for the oath of *Lemba* before the ancestors. Palm wine is the pan-Congo liquid of prayer and sacrifice. The palm is a central feature in several of the etiological myths later in this chapter. Several parts of the palm enter the *nkobe* to signify this all-purpose resource of the land.

The palm nut (*sombo*) in the *nkobe* represents the multiple attractions of people to one with resources. At one level there is the recognition that palm trees are resources vital to the survival of humans.

The fibers give cloth; the wine is refreshing and nourishing; the clusters of nuts give oil; the nuts may—by the time of *Lemba*'s political zenith—be traded for goods and money. At another level, the palm nut is recognized because it attracts ants and termites. Thus, in Fukiau's interpretation, it represents healing among men, the opposite of illness which destroys human association.

For related reasons, the palm fiber, raphia, is also included in the *nkobe*. It symbolizes the *Lemba* priest's authority to travel across local territories others might find hostile and dangerous. A frond of raphia tied to the staff was supposed to indicate the *Lemba* priest's power, his legitimate right to trade and travel. It must be recalled that throughout the history of the coastal trade the raphia cloth or *pièce* constituted the main currency (*mbongo* = money).

The cowrie shell (*lusungwa*) was either inserted in the *nkobe*, or mounted atop the *nkobe*'s lid (see plate 5), or engraved upon a copper *Lemba* bracelet (plate 7). Fukiau suggests that its significance was that of reminding the *Lemba* leaders of the importance of people, individuals, and the origin of all persons in childhood. Thus the prominent should not abuse the weak and the infant.

A final essential ingredient of the *n'kobe* was the double statue of Mahungu, whose male facet, Lumbu, was tied to or joined with the female facet, Nzita. In other variants the figurines of the wives are called *mizita*. Sometimes they are combined with figures or emblems of the etiological deities such as Kuba or Nga Malamu. Here the representation of mystical origin and femaleness are joined into one object, Mahungu, whom Fukiau interprets as primarily a representation of the complementarity of opposing forces in the universe—male/female, strong/weak, violent/peaceful, and so on—required to maintain an effective, stable social order.

Although all the foregoing objects are by their presence in the *nkobe* given a symbolic prominence and cohesiveness, it is possible in the lyrics of the ritual to identify a dynamic metaphoric movement behind their composition. That is, they are not just isolated symbols with a given meaning but moving elements in a coherent universe of domains, like that which was identified in other variants already examined (see figure 15).

Songs introduced in the opening stages of the "Binding of Knees" (the first anointment or medicine) and repeated throughout the subsequent stages of the ceremony amplify this universe of domains. The first song outlines a relationship between humans, ancestors, and Mahungu.⁸

Kubèle bakulu
 In the time of the ancestors
Kubèle bantu
 In the time of humans
Nsôngo na nsôngo
 Scores of copper bracelets
Se zibètana
 Chimed
Tuaniungut'èno kwèto
 So let us do our humming
 (distinctive *Lemba* hum)
Kubèle bakulu
 In the time of ancestors
Kubèle bantu
 In the time of humans
E Mahungu e!
 Oh Mahungu!
Nge' bahungila'
 You preserved them
Badianga
 So they could eat.

The structure of the song is one of double couplets in which an initial phrase is repeated in each couplet and followed by different actions: copper bracelets chiming and Mahungu preserving life. As already suggested in the analysis of the songs of the northern variant, such substitutable referents constitute the shifting or moving action in a metaphor. We could then rewrite the song in the following manner.

$$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{bracelets} \\ \text{Mahungu} \end{array} \right\} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{chimed} \\ \text{preserved} \end{array} \right\} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{in time of} \\ \text{life of} \end{array} \right\} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{ancestors} \\ \text{humans} \end{array} \right\}$$

Bracelets chiming would stand in a relationship of metaphoric movement to the action of Mahungu preserving the society of humans. The verb *hungila*, describing the action of Mahungu, suggests verbal punning. The verb designating the unique low throaty hum of *Lemba* singing—*nunga* or *hunga*—ties the pun and the metaphor together another way. It is likely that *Lemba* priests had developed other esoteric meanings for these suggestive formations.

The opening rite contains two further songs, one defining Mahungu in relation to the *nkumbi* rat, the other seeming to link the entire ritual to the “passing of God.” The text of the first song follows:⁹

Ntondele kwami
 I am grateful
Na mayedo ma nkumbi
 That *nkumbi*'s whiskers
Mè tèmbil'e
 twitch
Wânga mbil'e
 Listen to the call of
Mahûngu e
 Mahungu
Kuwânga ko / buna bwasisa bakulu beto
 Don't you hear, what our ancestors left us?
Kuwânga ko e
 Don't you hear?
Wânga mbil'e
 Listen to the call of
Mahungu e!
 Mahungu
Wânga
 Listen.

This song could be rewritten as follows:

<i>nkumbi</i> 's	twitch
whiskers	
(<i>Lemba</i>)	rejoices
ancestors	have told us
Mahungu	calls

The implied meaning would be that *nkumbi*'s whiskers stand to *Lemba* in the same relationship as the ancestors to Mahungu, perhaps suggesting that *nkumbi* is a sign or referent of the spiritual power of the ancestors and Mahungu. The opening episode ends with the other song “God passes.”¹⁰

Bândama
 Bow down

Nzambi kayoka

God passes

Nima na môyo

On the back as the abdomen

Luse na môyo

On the face as the abdomen.

Fukiau's interpretation of this song, chanted as the neophyte is smeared with *luvemba* white and *tukula* red, is that God is consecrating the neophyte, but that God is so almighty that no ordinary mortal can see Him with his own eyes. To "see" the power of God, the neophyte must bow down and cover himself "with fear" lest he die.

A metaphoric statement emerges like that in the eastern (Lari) variant (figure 15). A hierarchy of powers ascends from humans to ancestors, to Mahungu, and to God. Within the human world a clear dichotomy is made between the *Lemba* priests and priestesses on the one hand, and the neophyte couple on the other. Mediating ritual objects such as masks, the *nkumbi* rat and its twitching whiskers, the objects of the *nkobe* such as *luvemba* chalk and *tukula* red, and the bracelets are poised between the two (figure 17).

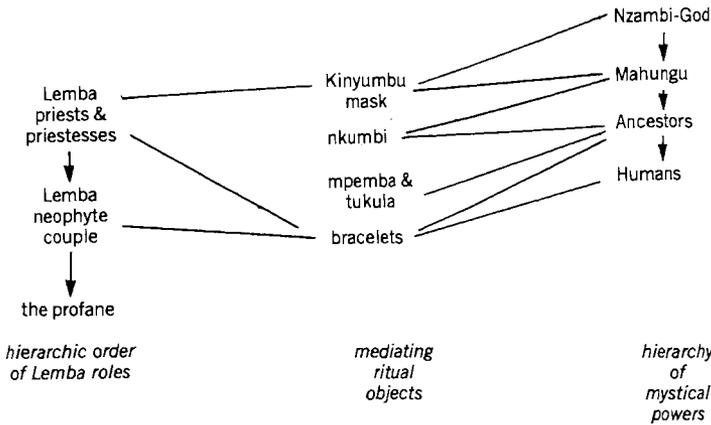
These songs and ritual objects tell us which powers *Lemba* sought to organize and control. In the next section the myth-making process itself is examined, in terms of a number of Mahungu texts, the first used by Katula to explain the origin of *Lemba*; the others from a non-*Lemba* source which clarifies the nature of Mahungu as mythic figure in the region with which we are concerned.

THE LYRICAL: THE MANY DUAL FACES OF MAHUNGU

In ritual representations, lyrics, and myths throughout the *Lemba* region Mahungu's identity varies from that of third priest of *Lemba* represented in a hunting horn *n'kisi* (eastern variant), to a set of hunter-brothers, to the hunter and the hunted, to healer and sufferer, to androgyne (Fukiau's account), husband and wife, and father and son. Whatever else this mythic figure may be, it is definitely a creature embodying duality and complementarity.

Efforts to identify Mahungu through etymological exercises have not been very successful. First of all, across the region the presence of the varying /h/, /g/, /v/, /b/ phoneme creates enormous problems of a purely formal sort. Furthermore, in the lyrical context of word use new meanings are constantly being created, as is clear from the songs

Figure 17
Metaphoric association of domains
in south-central variant of *Lemba*



just analyzed. Thus, Mahungu is said, in Fukiau’s account of the *Lemba* ritual, to preserve (*hungila*) the *Lemba* order, while a pun or rhyme is made in the same song on the murmuring hum of the priests (*tuaniungut’eno*).¹¹ Phonological analysis has usually followed the same method in order to ascribe a word’s meaning as the method native speakers and singers use to invent new meanings. But such analysis can at best lead to circularity and confusion. Thus, to explain Mahungu, Laman uses the verb *hungula*, an exchange which sets in motion a ritual or relation, bringing two persons or groups together. But there is, for Laman, another derivation, *vunga* (syn. *wunga*), which may mean to blow or cause noise, as air blowing through trees.¹² It is this latter understanding on which Fukiau has focused, in which terms Mahungu becomes the double being whose spirit either “blows softly” as a creative force or “blows violently” as a destructive force. Mahungu, he concludes, is a being who thus embodies contradictory and opposing forces.¹³ Batsikama invokes the term *hungu* (syn. *wungu* or *vungu*), force or power, thus Mahungu is he who holds force or power. For Batsikama, Mahungu (Mavungu) is the ancient priest who consecrated the rulers of the kingdom of Vungu which once held hegemony over north-bank societies.¹⁴

In ritual, lyrical, and mythical contexts, all of the foregoing meanings of Mahungu appear, therefore it is this contextual usage which must be further analyzed. First, Fukiau’s *Lemba*-related

Mahungu text¹⁵ will be studied; then, three somewhat less closely linked to *Lemba* will be examined.

Text 5

- (1) *Ntangu yayo yavioka, Mahungu wakala mu kiese kialunga.*
In times past, Mahungu was in complete happiness.
- (2) *Kakala ye mpasi nkutu ko; wakondwa mpisulu mu keto; wakondwa nadede mpisulu mu nzinunu; wakala walunga mu mamonso.*
He had no pain; he knew no jealousy; he had no knowledge of hatred; he was complete in every respect.
- (3) *Wakondwa konso banza mu luzingu; wakondwa banza mu nsatu zazo zena zakangama mu kimuntu.*
His life caused him no cares ("thoughts"); he had no concerns for the needs in life known to man.
- (4) *Mu kinzungidila kiakundwa kwa Mahungu mwamena n'ti wabikwa vo "mutie-mpungu" vo "ba-dia-Nzambi".*
In the surroundings where Mahungu lived there grew a tree called Mpungu's tree or God's palm.
- (5) *Nti wau wajaka wabsusu beni mu nsemono ya muntu; mu wau mwavaika mpila ngolo zakala ye lendo beni ye zalenda vambisa nsemono ya muntu eto wantete.*
This tree was greatly feared in the human creatures; from it there emanated a special force; it had special power in the division of our first created man.
- (6) *Lukufi ye n'ti wowo ka vafinama konso lekwa kiamoyo nkutu ko, kadi buna i nsisi kwa kiau.*
Close to this tree no living thing dared to approach; for it was an awful thing for them.
- (7) *Mu kuma kia mpeve yalebakana (ya nkento) yena mu muntu, muntu wazina moyo mu finama ye n'ti wowo, "ba-dia-Nzambi," mu mona ye bakula mankaka mu wau.*
Compelled by the feebler spirit (female) in man, man desired to approach this tree, God's palm, in order to see and understand more of it.

- (8) *Mahungu wasindusulwa kwa ngindu zozo zalebakana mu zungana kinzungidila ye n'ti.*

Mahungu was driven by these weaker thoughts to circle around the tree.

- (9) *Kansi mboki, bu kameni lungisa nzunga yantete ya n'ti wam'vimba, wapamuka kadi wamona vo kasidi diaka mosi ko, kansi bole mu mbonokono zole zanswaswani: nkento ye bakala.*

When he had made the first full circle of the tree he was horrified, for he saw that he was no longer one, but two beings of different natures: female and male.

- (10) *Wonga ye kiadi kiababwila bu kabalendi kala diaka se umosi ko.*

Fear and sorrow came over them when they could no longer be one.

- (11) *Batalasana nappi, bayindalala.*

They regarded one another pensively, and reflected.

- (12) *Lumbu (bakala) wakitala ye banzila ndambu andi ya kikento yatina ye bobo Muzita (n'kento) wakisuna mpe ye tomba ndambu andi ya kibakala yatina mu yandi.*

Lumbu (male) saw and thought about his female half that had left him and Muzita (female) longed also and sought her male half that had left her.

- (13) *Bu bameni yindula, bavovasana mu zungulula ba-dia-Nzambi mu lusunga litalane ye lwantete.*

After reflecting on this they decided to return around God's tree in the opposite direction.

- (14) *Nzunga yoyo bu yimeni, basikila bole kaka bonso bateka kala: n'kento ye bakala.*

This circle completed, they remained two beings: female and male.

- (15) *Tuka ntangu yoyo bau bole batombasana: n'kento watomba bakala kad'i ndambu andi; ye, bakala n'kento.*

Since that time woman and man seek each other; woman seeks man because he is half of her, and man seeks woman.

- (16) *Nzinunu zakota mu muntu, mu ntombasani yoyo, mpasi vo bana vutuka kala va mosi se umosi, mu nkadulu au yantete yan'longo.*

In this original mutual longing for each other, they tried to return to be one, the being they had first been in purity.

- (17) *Muntu wakitula mu lufimpu lwanene mu solula mvutu yifwanene kwa n'samu wowo wa mvambununu a muntu wantete mu bantu bole banswaswani.*

Man set out on a great search to find an adequate reply to this puzzle of the division of the first man into two different persons.

- (18) *Muntu wayenda kwanda ye mabanza mandi ye, va zimunina, wabwa mu banza dia nkwedolo: bundana landila ngwawani a tuzolo tole tuanswaswani.*

Man sought far in his thoughts, and finally came up with the solution of marriage: the union of two separate beings in mutual trust.

- (19) *Landila nkabununu a Mahungu mu nsemono zole zaswasana, n'kento ye bakala, n'kento ye bakala bayika kinsona mpe.*

Following the separation of Mahungu into two creatures of distinct natures, man and woman felt alone.

- (20) *Yenge ye luvuvamu biatina mu bau.*

Joy and hope had eluded them.

- (21) *Bau bole batombasana ye bavwa n'kinzi a nsalasani va kati kwau.*

The two sought each other and had need of mutual help between them.

- (22) *Bakala, mu kibakala kiandi, wakivanga kesa ye kinwani va kati kwa semwa biabio; n'kento wayalwa kwa wonga ye lebakana.*

The man, in his "maleness" was inclined toward violence and aggressiveness amongst all things created; the woman was overcome by fear and weakness.

- (23) *Ndieu, n'kento, wavwa n'kinzi a lusanusu lwa bakala bu ka kalenda zinga mu kinsona ko va kati kwa mavanga mansisi ma nsemono yayonsono.*

Thus the woman had need of the man to be able to live without fear amidst the terrifying acts of all creatures.

- (24) *Wanama mu tamba bia bakala mu kum'vana lwaka lusadusu; bau bole bakunda va kimosi: bakwelasana.*

It is a trait of the man to give her this help; the two lived together: they married.

- (25) *Mu kuma kia tezo kia lusadusu lwanata muntu-muntu mu mbundani yoyo.*

This is the measure of help each brought the other in their union.

- (26) *N'kento wayika n'sadisi kaka kwa bakala diandi.*

The woman became the helper of her man.

- (27) *Mu kuma kia nsemono au yakala diswasani, bau bole bazayana ye mboki, n'kento wayaka (wabaka ntunda) ye buta.*

Because of their creation according to difference, the two knew each other and the woman conceived and gave birth.

- (28) *Mu bila kiokio, n'kento wabika bakala diandi, n'lumi ye bakala wabika n'kento andi m'buti, kadi yand'i "m'buti-a-m'fuma, ye mindimba" (mbuti a bakento ye babakala).*

For this reason the woman called her husband genitor and the man called his wife genitrix, for she is the "mother of the *mfuma* and *mindimba* trees" (females and males).

- (29) *Mu nkalasani yayi, nkwedolo, muntu wamona nkièvo vo watungulula nkadulu andi yantete yan'longo yavila tuka nzungununu a ba-dia-Nzambi vo mutie-Mpungu ye, mu yau, nkwedolo, muntu wasolula nzila yanayaki-yaki mu niekisa n'kun'andi mpe.*

In the state of marriage, it was as if man had recreated the original sacred condition that he had lost in the encirclement of God's palm or the Mpungu tree; in marriage, man discovered the easiest way to multiply his family.

- (30) *Muntu wavisa vo nkwedolo i nzila yaluta mbote mu niekisa kanda diandi.*

Man understood that marriage is the best way to multiply the numbers of his clan.

- (31) *I mu bila kiokio, mu n'kunga miandi, wabadika sevila nza ya bibulu yikondolo nkwedolo.*

For this reason, in his song, man began to mock the world of animals lacking marriage.

- (32) *Ya nsusu na kakwela? / kakwela ko / Muntu na muntu / kwela kwandi / kakwela ko.*
Does the Chicken marry? No, it doesn't marry, each the other.
Does it marry? No, it doesn't.
- (33) *Ya mbulu na wan'kwela? / Kakwelwa ko / wonso ka wonso / kakwelwa / kakwelwa kwandi / kakwelwa ko.*
Does the jackal marry? No, it doesn't marry. Anyone can marry it, it doesn't marry, it doesn't marry.
- (34) *Na-nsinsi na'wan'sompa? Kasompwa ko / konso ka konso / sompa kwandi / kasompwa ko.*
The wildcat, who married it? It doesn't marry, anyone, yes anyone can marry it, it doesn't marry.
- (35) *Na-nsesi na'wan'yula? / Kayulwa ko / wonso ka wonso / kayula kwandi / kayulwa ko.*
The little red antelope, who asked for it? It hasn't been asked.
Anyone, yes anyone can ask it, it never gets asked.

Although Fukiau uses this text to explain the origin of man and human society, its immediate referent in the *Lemba* ceremony is the *n'konzi* oath enactment during which *Lemba* "sons" follow their "fathers" around the tree to seal their initiation to the mysteries. A comparable rite is held for the neophyte wives. In addition, the bound figurines of Lumbu and N'zita depict the male and female parts of Mahungu, and the complementarity of sexes in the *Lemba* marriage.

The myth introduces an important further dimension into the relationship of father to children, and male to female, that of the unfolding of complementarity from androgyny. As most Kongo myths, this one is constructed in three stages: (1) an original condition of homogeneous authority, self-sufficiency, purity; (2) a lapse of time, passage over space, or some differentiation such as the dispersal of clans or here, "dispersal" of the sexes; and (3) an actual contemporaneous condition, human awareness of present flaws in view of past perfection, some attempt at solution. Fukiau argues that the aim of the myth's representation by two bound figures in the *nkobe* is to seize the moment of greatest tension and dynamic strength in their relationship, the moment of greatest complementary opposition between male and female, strength and weakness, creativity and destruction. At this moment the "powers are bound" (*ngolo zabunduswā*), synthetically restoring the vision of Stage 1, the original perfection, of the myth.

In ritual contexts, these principles are clearly expressed in the rotational pattern of dancing. There is no agreement over the direction of Stages 1, 2, or 3, but if clockwise dancing is used to depict the separation of powers or qualities from an original unity, then counterclockwise dancing will indicate the attempt to reintegrate these powers or qualities. In contemporary Kongo ritual both directions are used. Healing prophets dance around their sufferers one way to “undo the illness,” then the other way to restore health. Funerary ceremonies dance one way in the village, then the opposite way in the cemetery.

Dance directions and stages in narrative have the identical purpose of articulating the relationship of unity to diversity, the processes of endogeny (“within one”) to exogeny (“between two”), and in *Lemba* this was seen with regard to marriage. But at a philosophical level the problem was more general, addressed to the relationship of the one to the many, of peace to violence, of strength to weakness, of social order to disorder, and similar issues. This approach to cosmogony is characteristically Bantu. Unitary power must somehow be related to, and preserved in, diversity and multiplicity. In the next Mahungu text, the problem of endogeny and exogeny is depicted with reference to the culture of food: who eats whom, and what this has to do with social order.

I have already suggested that Mahungu, an important north-Kongo deity of duality, existed in local cosmologies across the entire *Lemba* area. Three texts from eastern Cabinda represent this wider corpus.

Text 6

- (1) *Va kala muntu evo bantu bwadi; kifu kiau kwe vondanga bantu bangana badi muntsi.*

There was once a man or two people whose custom it was to kill other inhabitants of the land.

- (2) *Bu bameni ku vonda, ku sasa muntu wowo; batunga bianga biodi.*

When they had killed someone, they cut him into pieces, and divided

- (3) *Bu batunga bianga bibiodi, bu ba meni kubasa muntu kukaba kutula kikuku va kianga kinka dedi.*

the meat into the two baskets they had made, and dried it over the hearth fire.

- (4) *Buna babasalanga pila yoyo bayolukanga bayolukanga: "nanie? nanie? wo? nani e?"*

As they would be treating their victims thusly, passers-by would call: "Who is there? Who?"

- (5) *"O mi Mavungu é Manga nsitu, muna m'manga diambu ngie kuviokila mu dikubu."*

"Ah, it is Mavungu the ogre of the forest. To avoid trouble pass by in the trees beside the road."

- (6) *Batu Banka "é é yisa, nkwenda kwama ko yayu."*

Some would say, "I'll not go to the side."

- (7) *Yuwa ti mi Mavungu ukituka buyoba kumanga kwaku, ku viokila mu dikubu.*

The answer would come, "Listen, it is Mavungu; you're crazy to come here, pass by the side."

- (8) *Mi yisa nkwenda kwama ko, evo mi yisa ku kwenda kwama ko.*

And again they would say, "I'll not bother to go to the side."

- (9) *Di bakala be dio dibeki diela bu vioki tsi kwandi. Ba sala pila yoyo.*

Wise men would pass by to the side. And so it continued.

- (10) *Buna muntu nka bwesa vioka. Bu bayolukanga kuna "Nani nkolukanga kokwé?"*

Then another person came along, and he too called out as he approached: "To whom am I calling out there?"

- (11) *Ti o mi Mavungu.*

It is Mavungu.

- (12) *Titika biyobwé. Nkwe yendanga kuna.*

He was foolish, and went there.

- (13) *Nkwe sa basika vana, ka bianga bibiodi, bisa nsimbidila.*

When he arrived there, he saw two baskets; he was grabbed,

- (14) *Kwitsa va kala va befu yinu bonso.*

and told: "come stay with us here together." (He did)

- (15) *Buna bavingila fwati ni kilumbu ki sa kwila ko. Muntu waka vana.*

- They waited a little and one day they saw another person arriving.
- (16) *Bembi mu ntubanga vo “O mi Mavungu, utitika biyoba manga diambu vioka mu kubu.*
 And they said, “we are Mavungu, do not be foolish. To avoid trouble, pass by the side.
- (17) *Buna befu tu kedi kwitu vavé nandi befu yau é. Tu nvondanga bantu babé.*
 We are ourselves here, we are who we are. We kill people.
- (18) *Buna kiange kiki kiame kiangé kiki kiandi.*
 This is my basket, that is his.”
- (19) *Buna bianga bibiodi ngie nzitu ti é yimweni; a buna nandi ti tidi kwenda ti é é tubantu vava.*
 Then they saw that their two baskets were empty; and he said they would need to get some more people.
- (20) *Befu yinu ti befu tu nvondanga bangana, buti ngie wa n’anguka kwaku wa nkwenda ku bwala; mi yibesa ku kamba kwaku ko ti mi Mavungu ukituka buyoba viokila mu dikubwé.*
 We will go by ourselves to kill some more, you may go to the village [for other food], but don’t tell about us, that here is Mavungu who warns people to pass by the side.
- (21) *Buna bakala vana babakanga bababwadi.*
 [When they heard] they went and seized them both.
- (22) *Ah! Befu na kubalanga ti bantu banvinha ko be mu nvondanga bantu.*
 Ah—we are not madmen to have lived here killing other people.
- (23) *Bababwila babanata bababwadi bayenda peleso.*
 They fell upon them, and carried them both to prison.
- (24) *Pila mweka. Pila mweka befu yinu bana ba Nzambi ba nka.*
 And so it happened. So it is with us children of God on earth.

The violent antisocial side of Mahungu, merely alluded to in Texts 4 and 5, here¹⁶ becomes the focus of the tale. BaKongo storytellers frequently generate such antiheroes to illustrate a social norm of which the negative figure is the inversion. Not having heard of

Levi-Strauss's concept of the "symmetrical and inverse" possibility of myth, they call these antiheroes "*diabolos*," referring to the apt metaphor of the photographic negative, which reveals the mirror image inverted in every way. Real witches, less comfortable to speak about, have the same qualities. The tale of Mavungu the ogre of the forest was undoubtedly meant to entertain as well as teach, and to frighten just a bit. Nitu's narration has numerous ellipses in it, as if everyone present knew the story well enough to fit the pieces together around the gaps.

There is no historical evidence that BaKongo were cannibalistic; however such tales as this confused missionaries and travelers. BaKongo did, and still do, use the figure of speech "eating" to speak about consumption of all kinds, whether it be food, medicine, money, or another's physical and psychic energy. An overabundant consumption, or an inappropriate consumption, is defined as witchcraft. In terms of this very abstract understanding of "eating," the present tale defines propriety by illustrating its negative inversion. Mavungu lives in the forest; human beings live in villages. Mavungu eats the flesh of his own kind, and only that; humans eat flesh of animals and a variety of other foods. It is not clear from the text whether there is one or two Mavungus, and if the latter, whether the traveler who joins Mavungu perhaps becomes the second. It is evident, however, that this traveling middle figure mediates the civilized inhabitants of the village and the cannibalistic ogre of the forest.

In this text, as in the foregoing, the two Mavungus (Mahungus) who are otherwise so dissimilar have in common their initial endogyny—in sexual identity, in "eating" their own kind—and the way they are transformed into figures of exogyny—sexual differentiation and marriage, and prohibited cannibalism, the tacit enactment of which would be eating other species and foods. In the next myth text,¹⁷ even more complex dualities will be heaped upon Mahungu.

Text 7

- (1) *Ba tunga bwala. Bu ba tunga bwala ba buta bana, bau badi vo bwala.*

They built a village, and when they had built their village, they had children.

- (2) *Buna bu ba buta bana, unka u kamba a mwayi:*

Then, a certain one said to his fellow:

- (3) *“Bwabu mi buta bwisi mbote ko, pana dionga diaku pasi ye lotsa bibulu du nsitu buna unvana dionga diandi.”*
“My weapon is inadequate, give me your spear to go hunt wild animals in the fields.”
- (4) *Bu ka uenda u mona zinzau beti dia; ubonga dionga ubanda mu nzau.*
He went out and saw some elephants eating. He took the spear, and hit one.
- (5) *Nzau unata dionga.*
The elephant carried away the spear (lodged in its side.)
- (6) *Kunlanda menga kulanda menga, we bwa mu nlangu u n’neni wenzi kwandi.*
He followed the trail of blood until it disappeared in a large river.
- (7) *Ah! Pila kiadi dionga di mwayi di ma zimbala.*
Oh, what sadness, the spear of his fellow was lost.
- (8) *Buna uyitsa kwidi nzadiandi: “Mwayi, dionga dicimbidi; ti tala mwayi ti dionga diama disi mbakana kwe?”*
Then he returned and told the owner, “brother, the spear is lost! How will I find it?”
- (9) *“Diambu vé komb’aku yi yi kwela ngie ku kwela komb’ami, mi ku kwela kombaku.”*
“Do not worry. I’ll take your sister in marriage [as payment], and you will marry my sister, and we shall be intermarried.”
- (10) *“Ka diambu vé komb’aku yiyi kwela, ki lendi kuwa ko!”*
“I cannot hear of marrying your sister!”
- (11) *“Ka diambu evo ku botuka, ka botuka kwandi naté mi yi m’mona dionga diama.”*
“Either that, or I shall leave, unless my spear is found.”
- (12) *Buna kiadi kibwa kwidi nzadai’ndi nandi nzadi’ama ma tsutika mu dionga, ulambalala mu bwilu.*
Then great sadness came over his brother, the one who had lost the spear, and he went to sleep for the night.
- (13) *Buna ulotu ndosi.*
He dreamed of a voice saying,

- (14) *Baka ngenge yoyo kileko kiyolukanga kio buna kwenda mu nzila kuvulanga ngenge bantanguninanga kuvulanga kileko, "Yayi nzila yenda kwami?" Buna m'mona na kanvwena "swi, swi" wakayenda.*
 "Take this hunting bell *ngenge* and go on a journey asking it to answer questions: "Shall I take this road?" And if you see that it says 'swi, swi' do not take the road.
- (15) *Kansi buna m'mona kunkuvula, "Yayi nzila be mi yenda kwami e?" buna nandi si ka tuba "nge, nge, nge, nge" yenda mu nzila yoyo.*
 But if you ask 'shall I take this road?' and it speaks 'nge, nge, nge, nge' then take the road.
- (16) *Buna bu ka yenda nzila yoyo utumamana bonso bu nkamba ndosi.*
 If you follow these instructions, you will see your dream fulfilled."
- (17) *Buna bu ka yenda mu nzila umona divambu.*
 Then he took to the path, and soon came to a fork.
- (18) *"A ngenge, yayi nzila yenda kwami e?" "Nge, nge, nge, nge, nge, nge."*
 "Oh *ngenge*, shall I take this path here?" "Nge, nge, nge."
- (19) *Buna ka diata, ka diata kwe sadilanga pila yoyo zinzila ziazio uvuka kwandi.*
 Then he walked and walked, approaching all paths he came to in this wise.
- (20) *We bata nlangu un'neni bwatu bwidi vovo, "A a ngenge, yi kandama mu bwatwe?" "Nge, nge, nge, nge."*
 At long last he came to the great river, and saw a boat. "Oh *ngenge* shall I launch out in the boat?" "Nge, nge, nge."
- (21) *"A ngenge yenda ku mongo nlangwe?" "Swi, swi, swi."*
 "Oh *ngenge* shall I go upstream?" "Swi, swi, swi."
- (22) *"A ngenge, kwidi yenda? A ngenge yenda ku wanda nlangwe?" "Nge, nge, nge, nge."*
 "Oh *ngenge*, which way? Shall I go downstream?" "Nge, nge, nge."
- (23) *Buna nandi bu ka yenda, buna ubonga nti evo dilemo uvwila. Buna uyimbilanga "Mavungu palabanda, é Mavungwe palabanda, é Mavungu palabanda, é Mavungu palabanda, é Mavungu palabanda."*

Then he took the oar as he departed, singing "Mavungu going downstream, Mavungu going downstream, downstream, downstream. . . ."

- (24) *Buna bwatu bweti diata ngolo buna bu ka diata, ubaka va kielo kinka batu bapwedi bisanzu bidi vana.*

Then he was moving along rapidly in the boat, when he came upon a dilapidated house with many people in it.

- (25) "Mavungu!" Mavungu "nhinga!" "O witsa mu diyamba yitsa kwaku yitsa tapuka. Kanga bwatu, witsa mwa kwaku diyamba."

"Mavungu" he heard. "What?" "Come over here to smoke some hemp with us. Tie up your boat and come smoke hemp."

- (26) "Vé minu a, a ngenge yenda ye nwa diyambé?" "Swi, swi, swi."

"Oh ngenge, he asked, shall I stop to smoke hemp?" "Swi, swi, swi."

- (27) "Yenda ku wanda nlangu?" "Nge, nge, nge, nge, nge."
"Then shall I continue downstream?" "Nge, nge, nge."

- (28) *Buna udiata usala pila yoyo. Buna udiata, uyimbila lwimbu lwandi "Mavungu palabanda."*

Then he continued in this manner, singing as he moved along his song "Mavungu going downstream."

- (29) *Buna udiata ke basika va dikabu di ba kieto bandumba, buna "ti una vioka vava kulendi baka ndumba evo nkietu u ulenda sakana yaku ko?"*

Presently, as he moved along, he came upon a band of young women who called out, "can't you cross over here and take one of us to amuse yourself?"

- (30) *Buna nandi uyuvula ngenga. "Yenda kwama kuné?" Swi, swi, swi.*

Then he asked ngenge, "Shall I go over there?" "Swi, swi, swi."

- (31) *A ngenge, "Yenda ku wanda nlangu?" "Nge, nge, nge, nge."*
And again, "Shall I continue downstream?" "Nge, nge, nge."

- (32) "Té u manga mu mavanga mamoma ma bantonta u manga."
"Not until you reject everything offered you."

- (33) *Buna uyenda umona va tapukila nzau na menga.*

Finally he saw, as he went, the place where the elephant trailing drops of blood had gone ashore.

- (34) “*A ngenga yi tapuka vavava?*” “*Nge, nge, nge, nge.*” *Buna u yenda vana.*

“Oh *ngenge*, shall I go ashore here?” “*Nge, nge.*” So he pulled ashore.

- (35) *Ngenge yandi u yolukanga “nge, nge,” pasi ba zaba ti nandi nganga: “nge, nge” “a mboti tata, mboti, mboti, mboti.”*

There *ngenge* sounded ahead of them so that others should think him to be a healer. “*Nge, nge.*” “Oh, greetings, sir, greetings.”

- (36) “*A ngie widi nganga?*” “*Nhinga a ko.*” “*Kwidi bedi ko yi bedi, katsi mi nganga yineni beni yidi.*”

“Oh, are you a healer?” “Yes indeed. A very famous one, a very famous healer indeed.”

- (37) *Buna ó fefu fumu bwala baka bazebi ko muntu wowo vo nandi u ba na dionga diandi. Uba na dionga di ka tsuma nzau ka banzei kwau ko, buna “befwé mutu widi vava boba yenzi ku ku dié banvengi pasi kuné.*

The village chief did not know that this was the man attached to the spear that had injured the elephant and so he told him, “With us here is a person who was injured and he is in great pain.”

- (38) *Buna ti ngie widi nganga ti ulenda botula nsongu wou, beju si tu ku futa.*

“If you are a healer you could remove his suffering. We would pay you.”

- (39) *Ye nandi mboti kwandi. A ngenga, “yi lenda kwami buka nsongu wou?” Ngenge, “Nge, nge,*

“All right,” he accepted. Asking *ngenge*, “May I help this sufferer?” *Ngenge* said, “*nge, nge.*”

- (40) “*Ti mu kwa nkisi ama bu ka ntubanga ti ó a benu bwabu mi ya mbuka nsongu wou.*”

“In listening to my instrument, I can tell you that I shall heal this sufferer.”

- (41) *Buna a ngenga, “ti bapeni bi dia yi lenda dia kwami e? Pasi yi buka nsongu?” “Nge, nge, nge, nge.”*

Then he asked *ngenge*, “What they pay me for healing, may I take it for myself?” “*Nge, nge, nge.*”

- (42) *U yoluka. Buna landila diodio nandi u yenda mu nzo u tala nsongo wou ti "é benwé bonso mwa ku u lu weti sia?" "Ah! E mamé é mamé, kadi kwica, kadi kwitsa. Ti lwitsitsi si ka fwa.* Then he entered the house to look at the patient, asking "Which one of you in there is the sufferer?" "O mamé, O mamé, come, come quickly, or I shall die," he heard.
- (43) *E a tata sala kwaku. Buna nandi uyenda u ye kota ku nzo. Na nzau yoyo u mona va kotila dionga u bonga bilongo bonso (datolo) ou (nganga) u tula vana pasi dionga di lebila. Buna ubwata pila yayi ngolo.* To the father he said "wait," and he entered the house. There he saw the elephant injured by the spear; he took medicine and like a healer put it on the spear wound to diminish the pain, and he pulled hard on the spear.
- (44) *"E mamé, é mamé, é mamé" dionga di vodikanga divodikanga. Buna nandi u tuba a beno pananu kwala bwabubu mambu mameni.* "O mamé mamé," he cried as the spear slowly came out. "Now," he said, "find a wrapping for the wound, the case will be over."
- (45) *We twala kwala ka luzibula twala vava divudu ka, luzibula. Buna nandi banvana kwala kuna nzo u zinga pasi u zinga dionga dio diaka monika kwidi bantu.* And they brought him a wrapping which he wrapped around the wound, instructing them not to open it. He also wrapped the spear so it would not be seen by the people.
- (46) *A a "ngenga zibika mesu mau." Buna ngenga u zibika mesu ma babo. Buna nandi u nata dionga diodio kwe sweka kuna tsomo ku ka yizila muna bwatu kwe tula, buna u vutuka.* "Ngenge close their eyes," he said. Then *ngenge* closed their eyes, and he secretly carried the spear over to the boat and laid it there, then he returned to them.
- (47) *"Bwabu mue futi" "E befu twa kufuté. Bonga tsanga kitebi be yo.* "Now you can pay me." "Yes, we will pay you. Take this banana sapling.
- (48) *Kwe vata ya muna kilumbu bonga tsanga kite be yo kwe vata ya muna kilumbu ku mena muna kilumbu kubuta."* On the same day as it is planted, it will bear fruit, on the very same day."

- (49) *Buna banvana mikailu minkaka u yitsa kwandi. Buna ka mana ku lwaka vovo u vuka pe pila mosi. Bantumisa mu ndambu na ka zola kwenda ko.*

They gave him other gifts also to honor him. Then he returned in the same manner as he had come, but he had been so honored he hardly wanted to leave.

- (50) *Buna ulwaka kwidi nzadi'andi, a a polo ti ndamba mwayi, "nzadi, twala dionga diama."*

When he arrived at the place of his brother to whom he had a debt, this one asked "brother, where's my spear?"

- (51) *"Ti dionga disiko di sa bakana ko." do, "ka tuna tuban zipolo ko."*

"I didn't bring the spear" he feigned. "We cannot discuss the debt," the other replied.

- (52) *Buna nadi "mwayi bonga dionga diaku." Buna u tuma nkietu'andi twala di kieta, vata tsanga yoyo.*

So he said, "brother, take your spear." He also sent his wife to bring kola nuts and the banana sapling.

- (53) *Tsanga yo ba tsimbukulu yi ma kumbu mena yima buta. "Ah! ah!"*

They planted the sapling, and in one day it produced ripe bananas.

- (54) *Nzadi, "siala mboti mi yima kwenda ku diangala ku ku kangala. Siala mboti u keba bwala. Keba na ci komba ciaku mi yi ma kwenda ki diangala."*

"Brother," said the one, "I am taking a walk to the forest. Farewell, guard the village, and watch over your sister, I'm off to the forest."

- (55) *Buna nandi bu kayenda ku diangala, mwana mamatoto kite kio kibenga: "mamatoto, mamatoto!" udila, udila, udila.*

So when he had left for the forest, a child in the village began to cry for banana stew: "Banana stew, banana stew!"

- (56) *A ukamba n'nuni'andi ye bongila mwana toto. Mwana wandilanga ngwandi katsi nandi unata kitebi*

The man instructed the baby's guardian to bring it banana stew. The child cried for its mother but was brought bananas.

- (57) *Nandi dibakala dio u bitala kulubuka bonga ngie veka é ngie dibakala bemweni tidi kwaku kuvonda mwana bonga toto, buna uyenda.*

He looked at the bananas before him, but she scolded him, "You alone are aiming to harm the child by taking those bananas."

- (58) *"E ka diambu ko, totu eyi kite ki nzadi'ami, kizi ko mambu." Buna udokula toto.*

"It doesn't matter," he said, "these bananas belong to my brother," and he tore one off.

- (59) *Bu kamana kudokula toto mwana udia, bu kamana kudia toto batsimbukula kitebi vie vie, ki ma tina.*

When he had done so, the child ate of it. But as the child ate, the banana bunch disappeared completely.

- (60) *Bu kitina nandi ku diangala kukayenda utuba. A bwau bwabu a yi tidi kwenda. Diambu dia kavana bwala mwayi nzadi u yi bikici diambu diaka vana.*

When this happened he went to the forest to tell the owner, who, upon hearing of the disappearance of the bananas, quickly returned.

- (61) *Buna uyitsa. Bu ka yitsa, utala kite mwayi: "kamba kitebi konso ku ki yenzi. Tiwitsa kamba ko a mwayi pila kiadi mu kite kiama Kamba kite kiama konso ku ki yenzi."*

And he came. When he arrived, he looked at his brother, "show me the banana tree, and tell me how the bunch disappeared. Oh what sadness over my lost bananas."

- (62) *E a mwayi, ndenvukila minu, mwan'aku ka zie nandi ubedila lukufi ku fwa. Buna mi yi lokuni toto yiveni mwan'aku kazi mi yisa yi dia kwama ko ve, vangi mwana. Kansi nandi udidi. Buna minu bu yiveni udidi buna kite kitinitsi.*

"Believe me, brother, your child was in agony, and close to dying of hunger. So I took the bananas and gave him some. I myself ate none, he alone. So truly, when I gave him the bananas, and he ate, the entire bunch disappeared."

- (63) *Mwayi, diambu pe tu ntuba va kite kiama yitidi. Twala kite kiama ka diambu ko mwan'aku evo mwan'ami kansi kite kiama yitidi.*

"Brother, it does us no good to discuss the bananas, just bring me the missing bunch. No matter if it was your child or mine, just return the bunch."

- (64) *Buna ununguka kiambu diodio diyitsa kwidi nandi. "A Mavungu, yi Mavungu, a Mavungu é." Bwabu ngie makiekulu mu kitebi." "NHINGA."*

Then he slept on the matter and someone spoke to him "Mavungu," "I Mavungu?" "You Mavungu. Now you shall find your bananas." "Yes."

- (65) *"Bonga ngenga ye vatakana, ye vanga bonso buvanga nzad'aku. Buna uyenda utakana bwatu bobwau. Uyuvula kwandi keti va nzila. Uyuvula ngenga "yenda mu ndambu yo? Swi, swi" bokwa bwau.*

"Take *ngenge* and do as your brother did." So he went out toward the boat. He asked which path to take. He asked *ngenge* "shall I go this way?" "Swi, swi," reject it.

- (66) *Ye tula mu bwatu a ngenga "Yi kandama mu bwatu?" "Nge, nge, nge." Ka kandama mu bwatu lumbu lo kwa lwau, "E Mavungo é palabanda, E Mavungwé palabanda." Buna uyenda.*

Shall I take this way in the boat?" And *ngenge*, "Nge, nge, nge." So he took off in the boat singing "Mavungu going downstream, going downstream." He heard a voice:

- (67) *"A Mavungu, Mavungu é yiza nwa dyamba." Buna utapuka uye nwa dyamba. Bu kamana kunwa dyamba usia nkaka ubasisa mwisi.*

"Mavungu, Mavungu, come over here to smoke hemp." And he crossed over to smoke hemp, soon to be obscured in a haze of smoke.

- (68) *Kansi kazimbukulu we kavana bwala, vana bwala bu ka fuma.*

He lost his way, and before he realized what had happened, he was in the place from whence he had come. In the village they shouted,

- (69) *"O mwayi ma kwiza!" "Ti é é nkieto é nandi kadi nata kitebi." "Mwayi ma kwiza é é"; "kitebi kiami?" "A mwayi, yi sa ki baka ko!"*

"Oh, brother is back. Woman, come carry the bananas." "Brother has come!" "What, my banana bunch?" "Oh, brother, I didn't find them."

- (70) *Ulembakana mu diambu bakutumisa mu mavanga mapwedi na kwe tapukanga. Buna ulembakana kubaka kitebi kiokio mu diambu di buvulu bwandi ki bila nkisi wowo ulenda vanga kwidi wonso-wonso ukuntumamanga.*

He failed because he let himself be distracted by the many seductions along the way; because of his own foolishness; and

because he did not follow the magic of *ngenge* which could have guided him wherever he needed it.

- (71) *Kansi nandi bu ka manga tumamana nkisi wowo ye mpila yoyo buna té bafundana na veka dikanda kiandi. Ba kana kivika kwidi mutu wowo.*

Because he refused to be guided by this magic, they accused him even within his own clan, and they abandoned him to slavery.

Of the several substructures that are woven into the foregoing Mahungu myth, the following will be examined in detail: (1) the relationship between two brothers, who are Mavungu's two sides; (2) the opposition of hunting and cultivation; (3) the interaction of the human and the nonhuman (animal) realms; and (4) the distinction between successful and failed mediation.

Relationships between the two brothers are initially couched in terms of equality and familiarity; the one calls the other *mwayi*, fellow, brother, confidant, kin (7.2). As their relationship becomes one of greater distance, they become *nzadi* to each other, a term which while still denoting "brother" can also refer to in-law, or someone of a collateral group, of the other part of a settlement or social unit (7.8). By the end, this relationship has been transformed into one of status differentiation, the one having become a successful healer and mediator, the other a slave, *muntu mu kivika* (7.71). The myth directly addresses the issue of social unity and difference, the one and the many.

Loss of a spear (7.6) is the narrative element introduced to discuss the differentiation in society that results from ambiguous relations of technique, subsistence, and ownership. If the spear cannot be returned to a brother, what is its equivalent. The original spear owner proposes that a sister given in marriage would suffice. The spear loser rejects the proposition as "unthinkable," whereupon the first brother threatens to leave the village—to segment. The reason for the refusal of a sister exchange on the part of the spear loser is not made explicit, but the lines of the dilemma are sufficiently like real life in Kongo society that it may be inferred. To accept a sister in exchange for a lost spear would confuse the lines of descent, ownership, and marriage. At one level it would be incestuous since the social unit of shared and borrowed tools is the descent group, the matrilineage, within which marriage is prohibited. The classic Kongo social-structural question

is raised, of how an undivided, descent community of goods, can be divided. The well-known ritual of sacrificing a pig to “kill the descent of one blood” (*vonda ngulu a luvila*) is often invoked as the solution to the problem. In actual practice, it is rarely resorted to, but is said to have been used in the past where dominant single-lineage communities like the Nsundi invaders needed to set up polities of their own kind. A minimal exchange duality could be created in this wise. In the myth, the spear loser is thus faced with several options, each with clear consequences. If he finds and returns the spear, he maintains descent ties with his brother, or if he ignores the spear and exchanges a sister, he must break descent ties. The metaphor of goods and blood is clear, and may be graphically presented:

return	:	maintain	::	give sister	:	break descent
spear	:	descent ties	::	in marriage	:	(blood) ties

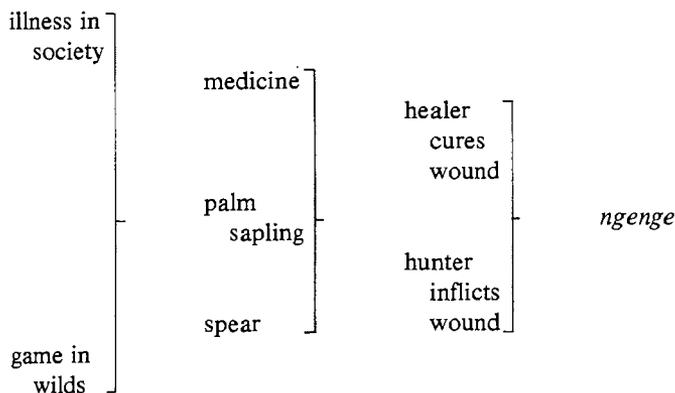
The group whose members borrow from one another—the matrilineage—seeks its spouses beyond its own confines, but to make this the group of marriage exchange (by severing blood ties) would render the unit of exogamous alliance very limiting. The rejection by Mavungu (the spear loser) of the tight exchange model is an implicit affirmation of the wider exchange model. This appears to entail another consequence in his actions. Having rejected alliance with his brother, yet not wishing this latter to segment, he resorts to a mystical solution to solve his problem: find the spear and establish contact with “the world beyond.” Although there is no evidence that this myth was related to *Lemba*, structurally it does so relate by negating the isolated endogamous community, and establishing a preference for effective mystical mediation. It is at this point that hunting symbolism becomes significant.

Mavungu (the spear loser) is cast as a hunter and successful mystical mediator; the other Mavungu, whom we may call the banana bunch loser, is put into the role of the cultivator and the ineffectual mediator. One specific object relates hunting to effective mystical mediation. *Ngenge*, the bell hung under the belly of the hunting dog, leads the hunter through tall grass and forest to the game. African dogs do not bark. Their bells announce their presence to the hunter while not frightening away the game. This perception of the bell that smells out game is lifted and used as a metaphor for the effective diviner and mystical mediator. In the present myth *ngenge* is thus the near-living instrument of effective magic. Metaphors pile up

in short order as Mavungu, spear loser but effective mediator, sets out on his journey to track the elephant. At one level the quest is a simple hunter's pursuit of a wounded animal. But the "path" of this pursuit is a wide river, suggesting a mystical journey. At another level the quest is indeed a dream, in which *ngenge* the hunting bell, by deft analogy, takes the figure of Mavungu (spear loser) on a mystical course to a correct solution of his problem with his brother back home.

There are two conclusions to the myth: one having to do with the consequences of effective mystical mediation, the other having to do with the outcome of relations between the brothers Mavungu. In the first, Mavungu (spear loser), as successful mediator, becomes a renowned healer with an ability to "hear" magical messages. *Ngenge* leads him to his goal, the "wounded elephant," who, transported to a mystical plain, becomes a human sufferer whom he cures. Hunting is a wide-spread metaphor for healing in Kongo culture, in which the hunter relates to animals (the hunted) approximately as the healer relates not to the sufferer but to the illness. The healer seeks out the affliction and finds it, in order to eradicate it. The healer is like the hunter in another sense. He goes out into the wilds of nature and brings back the plants with which he treats, just as the hunter goes out to bring back food for humans. In Kongo thinking, wildness possesses power and is the source of man's strength. Thus it is understood that Mavungu (spear loser turned healer) brings the banana tree back from the wild for his home and for his brother. Hunter and healer straddle two sides of the continuum from domestic to wild. The hunter begins in the village, but his field of action is in the wild. The healer's origin is outside in the wilds, but his field of operation is domestic society. In the present myth, the hunter chases the animal from the domestic field back into the wild, whereas the healer brings back plants from the wild. The two domains, the domestic and the wild, inversions one of the other, are mediated by *ngenge*. Again, although there is no mention of this text as *Lemba*-related, the central ritual function of a small bell is appropriate for *Lemba*. Numerous references from Dapper's 1668 account, several from the western variant, and that from Haiti describe such a bell. In the present text, this central mediating role may be sketched in the manner on page 222. In structuralist analysis, there are several columns of oppositions which are mediated by a middle operator, or which operate upon each other. *Ngenge*, the magical voice of the bell which moves between the village and the wilds, transforms the hunter into the healer, who heals the wound he has inflicted. His spear is transformed into an object of

medicinal attention, for which he is rewarded a palm sapling. Finally, he is given power over mediation, the power of treating illness in society and ruling. That such a structure or set of procedures exists in Kongo thinking, is clear from examining the herbaria of *banganga*. There is, for example, “corpse hunter” (*munkula mvumbi*), a small tree growing at the edge of the forest, used to treat side pain and cramps. As the hunter goes into the wilds to kill in order to live, so the healer, with his origin outside of society and his mystical roots elsewhere, chases death from the domestic scene.



It is of course the different attitude of the two brothers Mavungu toward *ngenge* that determines their relationship to each other, and their status in society. Mavungu (spear loser turned healer) becomes the model of the priest, faithful to his “voice,” and the recipient of high status. Mavungu (banana bunch loser) is depicted as the least disciplined person around, who is seduced away from the “straight and narrow” for a shallow “high” of hemp smoking. There may be a commentary here on some tendencies in *Lemba*. In the artifactual record of *Lemba*’s western variant there are numerous pipes identified either as “*Lemba* pipes” or “hemp pipes,” some nicely carved, others large water-filled gourd pipes.

The composite picture of Mavungu in this text suggests something of the culture hero, bringer of messages from the beyond and of the banana tree to man. The dualistic play on two sides to every issue or question dominates. The text is set up as a double confrontation with the same challenge: to find the lost item—spear or banana tree—received from the other. The fact that both protagonists carry the same name, Mavungu, emphatically drives across this point of minimal

differences in similarity, that is complementarity. Even the conclusion is suggestive of this: whereas Mavungu (spear loser turned healer) is lauded, Mavungu (banana bunch loser) is ridiculed and made a slave.

In the next text,¹⁸ Mavungu is again a two-in-one figure, father/son, for whom the complementarity of two-within-one becomes a tragic dilemma.

Text 8

- (1) *Mwana unka dizina diandi Mavungo ma. Mavungu kadi sala; bana be, kadi salanga.*

There was once a child named Mavungu. Of all the children, he worked the least.

- (2) *A pila mwana, be u ngie kadi sala; nandi kadi sala kisalu kiandi kuvola kitimba kalendi sala ko.*

Oh! What a manner of child that he would not work. His only work was to suck on his pipe. Regular work he would not do.

- (3) *Ngundi ye disia baluta kuzola bana bobo basalanga buna nandi ukalanga kwandi va bwala.*

Mother and Father loved the children who worked, but Mavungu was usually alone in the village.

- (4) *Buna mu kilumbu kinka ukota ku nzo ununguka, bu ka nunguka: umona nkieto u kitoko beni uyitsa kwidi nandi.*

One day when Mavungu went into the house to sleep he dreamed: In his dream he saw a beautiful woman speaking to him.

- (5) *"A ngie Mavungo, yuwa mayintuba, minu kivana meni."*

"Oh Mavungu, listen to what I tell you."

- (6) *"Kubonga mbedi, kulengula mani; buna nkwitsa va tsitsi nti nhoka yo bantanguninanga ti mboma umweni. Mboma kutin'ani boma ko. Kupasula mboma yoyo si umona diambu dilenda kukusadisa, dilenda kukuvana moyo, vo mutu unvwama."*

"Take a knife and sharpen it. Then come to the foot of the tree indicated and you will see a python. Do not run from it in fear. Cut open the python and you will see something which can help you, give you life, and make you rich."

- (7) *Buna bu kakotuka yimeni, Mavungu ubonga mwa mbedi ulengula, bantu bayituka beni! "O Mavungu, ti ka salanga ko. A bu bwidi kanlengudila mbedi?"*

So Mavungu took a knife; the people were greatly surprised. "Oh, Mavungu the one who never works! How will he sharpen a knife?"

- (8) *Ulengula, ulengula, uyenda ku diala ku nsitu wo unkamba ndozi. Uyenda va tsitsi nti, umona mboma uyilama vana.*

He sharpened and sharpened, and went to the forest shown in the dream, and to the field indicated, where he saw at the foot of a tree a python.

- (9) *Ukimba monho, usimba mboma, upasuna, ka zimbukula nkietu O be kwe nkamba ndozi ma kitoko beni.*

He seized the python, and cut it open as instructed. There he uncovered the very beautiful woman who had spoken in the dream.

- (10) *"A Mavungo, ngie ngie mbadi, mbakidi kibwa kimbote ti O yizebi nduko kuna."*

"O Mavungu, partner, I've a good place, come with me there," she said.

- (11) *Buna bu bayenda kuna nkieto wowo uyimbila: "Ye ditete a Mavungo minu bu ngina vanga monso mangina vanga mu ngieu."*

Then he followed her there, and as they went she sang: "You cannot believe what I can do for you.

- (12) *Bidi, bidi té lufwa lwaku, siaku bonso bwa kwitsa bela pila disia diaku kumona (na) pe befu evo be yandi, kina kilumbu mbo mu m'monana be yandi é kianvutuka, Mavungu Ma Kata Mbamba, bonso bu u teka kala va mwelo nzo siaku. Yu wutswé?"*

Only you must promise that until your death, your father will not see you, and you will not see him. On the day that you should meet with him, you will return to your prior state, MaKata Mbamba, a nobody, as you were before. Understand?"

- (13) *"Ti yuwutsu kwama."*

"I understand."

- (14) *Buna bu bayenda va kibwa kiokio kimboti beni kikinini kimula uyimbila: "Mavungu makuvu utomba lwangu"*

lukubia-dila; lwangu mbi ka mbiadila lwalu.” *Buna katsimbukulu beti sola.*

As they proceeded to the village the woman sang to conjure up water to reside by: “Mavungu wants to live by the water, let there be water.” And they found what they sought.

- (15) *Uyimbila mu lumbu lolo ka zimbukula tsi nzo. Uyimbila mu lumbu lolo, katsimbukula va kakibanga kitoko beni kia kavana. Buna Mavungu umona n’henzi.*

She then sang a song, and they discovered a vast piece of land. She sang a song for every beautiful thing they came upon, and Mavungu was very happy.

- (16) *Buna kayimbila lumbu waka ku nlangu makumbi ye bisalu binkaka bikwizilanga mu tangu mindela binkwiza mo dikumbi kwiza kota ku nzo unvwika, zisapatu uvula miwvatu miandi mi kabelu mu zipasi evo mu kiadi unvwika miwvatu mikitoko.*

Then she sang another song and steamers appeared on the water in great hosts, with white men in them; one came near the house and they entered the house, giving him new shoes and replacing his old clothes with new beautiful clothes.

- (17) *Buna Mavungu uyangalala beni ye di nka buvulu buwombo bu bayandi zingindu.*

Then Mavungu rejoiced greatly at his own good fortune, imagining his own folks’ great awe in knowing of it.

- (18) *Buna zingulu zio ziyendanga ku bwala bu ta’andi kwe dianga mayaka mangana. Buna siandi utuba, “a ngie n’tela, yenda we tala zingulu ziozio zindianga mayaka.”*

One day Mavungu’s pigs strayed to his father’s village where they ate much manioc out of the field. His father spoke to a hunter, “go and find these pigs that are eating all the manioc.”

- (19) *Buna n’tela wowo uyenda u bakuka bakuka. Uyenda, ubasika va bwala bubuneni.*

And the hunter found where they had rutted the field. He pursued them on and on until he discovered a large town.

- (20) *Ubaka boma. “A pila kiadi minu, n’tela yinkwitsanga tangu katsio mu nsitu wau, buna bwala bubunene kwe bu basikidi?”*

He was seized with fright. “How curious! A hunter comes into this forest regularly, yet suddenly there is a vast town here.

How has that come about?"

- (21) *Kansi nandi n'tela utuba, "A a mi ka kina tina kileko ko, ki yi kambu monanga mu meso ko."*

But the hunter thought, "I cannot flee from something just because I haven't seen it before."

- (22) *Uyenda kuna bwala beni uyuvula, "Nani beka bwala bubu?" "O Mavungu." "Mavungu mbi?" "O Mavungu Ma Kata Mbamba." "A mwana tata uzimbala tama kotso nandi makwitsa vanga ma pila yiyi."*

So he went into the village and asked "Whose town is this?" "Why Mavungu's." "Which Mavungu?" "Mavungu Ma Kata Mbamba." "Then this is the child that father lost long ago. How has he come to this present position?"

- (23) *Buna u ye basika kwidi nandi unata nandi bu ka ye mona siandi uvana kio.*

Then Mavungu brought gifts to send to his father in the hunter's hands.

- (24) *"Kedika Kedika Mavungu mweni." Ti nandi, "Yi mweni, tata, yimweni tata, yi m'mweni mu mesu mami."*

"Truly, truly I saw Mavungu. I saw him, father, I saw him father with my own eyes."

- (25) *Buna landila Mavungu ukubika nzila mu kwe mona mwan'andi naveka ubonga ndusi.*

Then Mavungu (the elder) prepared to journey to see his child whom he called "Ndusi" (homonym).

- (26) *Bu kayenda mu nzila buna nkietu wo utala a Mavungu: "Kadi kwenda kwidi siaku, kansi kwenda buna nkietu wo ukubika binuanunu. Uvanga bobo.*

As he was going the woman warned Mavungu (the younger), "When your father comes, do not meet him. Stay with me, for I am preparing the weapons to battle against him." She did this.

- (27) *Mu kilumbu kinka, Mavungu uyindula: "A bwe tulendi simbidila nsamu wo ko bwabubu miyaka kisina yibeki. Bileko bipwedi, tata kalendi kubimona ko?"*

Mavungu thought to himself on that day, "How can this be handled? I have received many riches. But is my father not even allowed to see them?"

- (28) *A mi didi "Mboti Tata!" kamona ku sa ntsibikila ku nzo utola nzo mu ngolo ziandi.*

When he arrived and greeted them the woman closed up the house with all her strength to keep Mavungu inside.

- (29) *Nkieto uyenda kukunuana kadi zaba ti n'nuni'ama widi mu kwiza.*

She went out to fight with him knowing it was his father coming.

- (30) *Buna uyenda "a u tata?" "Ti a u Mavungu?" "A mboti tata, mboti!" Nkietu waka mu kudila mu diambu di muina ukavana.*

But he came and greeted his father, and his father greeted him. The woman began to weep on account of the prohibition she had given.

- (31) *Buna bu kadila pila yoyo wa vutuka. A Mavungu, buna nandi nkieto wowo uzola kikwezi kiadi beni, yi unkanina.*

When he heard her cry thus, Mavungu returned to her. He thought, "if she feels this way, and likes her father-in-law, I might compromise her rule."

- (32) *Ubanza vo bika yivana ndambu lusadusu pasi kasadila mu fitangu-tangu. Kasi evo kadi yizebi kwa ti bisalu bia ntina.*

He thought, "let me go ahead and give some of my wealth to my father," thinking it would not disappear.

- (33) *Buna uvana siandi ndambu lusadusu; basimbana mu mioko: "O yonso tangu kwiza pasi tumonana."*

Then he gave his father some gifts, and they embraced: "Any time you may come so we may see each other."

- (34) *Ye bu basiala kumbusa a dibakala bu mengi kwa mambu mami: "Si uvutuka, Mavungu ma Kata Mbamba, si uvutuka va lukalu lwaku lu uteka ba."*

When this happened, the wife disapproved in these words: "Mavungu ma Kata Mbamba, you will revert to what you were before."

- (35) *Dibakala diodio udila, udila, udila. Kalendi kunlenukila ko. Buna samba bo bwau Mavungu makalu wutomba lwangu lukabiala biabio bi bavana bwala bimana kutina.*

The man (Mavungu) wept and wept, but she would not forgive him. All the wealth he had sought as well as the town suddenly disappeared.

- (36) *Mavungu udila udila. Bu kadila kazimbukula nsitu uma boe kwelakana bo bwau bu ubela.*

Mavungu cried and cried. As he wept he found himself suddenly in the field where they had "married."

- (37) *Buna nkietu mpe waka mu kudila mu diambu dikiadi buketi bundimina. Buna udila pila yoyo.*

The woman was also now sorrowful because of the impossibility of their union.

- (38) *Udedakana Mavungu uyesingama va nti va katwama singamanga.*

Her farewells were as fond as his by the tree where they had met.

- (39) *Buna zimbamba zivutakana bana mbi yayo yikala mu nandi yivutakana mu nandi.*

And all of the misery of his former state returned to Mavungu.

- (40) *Buna mu kiadi ki pila yoyo, Mavungu ukituka bonso bu kateka kala. Buna mu kiadi ki pila yoyo ufwila vana.*

And with such sadness, Mavungu changed back to what he had formerly been, and in sorrow there he died.

The prohibition imposed on Mavungu (the younger) that he must reject forever his father to have a good life with a wife, creates a tragic dilemma for him. He must choose between accepting his father, at the cost of remaining politically impotent, or going with the woman to have material rewards but without being able to exchange them with his father. In this conceptualization of Kongo society the central juridical corporate institution, the matrilineage, is left unmentioned. Rather, the society is conceived in terms of the relationships an individual may voluntarily emphasize: patrilineality and alliance. This text, like the preceding, seems to exaggerate the mutual exclusivity of the alternatives, and in so doing actually demonstrates the importance of integrating the two in a workable view of human society. It would appear that one of the main characteristics of these Mavungu myths is their internal analysis of society's various complementarities: male and female, age-different siblings, modes of subsistence, different aspects of kinship such as patrilineality and alliance.

Every case of exaggerated or disjunctive complementarity contains its own solution, its unique form of mediation. Above I formulated this in terms of endogenous and exogenous process, or attempted solutions within one and achieved solutions between two. In the *Lemba* origin myth about Mahungu (Text 5), endogyny was expressed in the primal androgynous state of the hero, and exogyny was created by

first exaggerating sexual difference, then by resolving it in the complementarity of marriage. In Text 6 about Mavungu the forest ogre, endogyny was expressed in the character of a radically antisocial hero who lived in the forest and ate only human flesh, and exogeny was emphasized in the arrest of the cannibalistic (“species endogastronomic”) Mavungu and his incorporation into a noncannibalistic (“species exogastronomic”), law-abiding community. Text 7 about Mavungu (spear loser turned healer) and Mavungu (banana bunch loser turned slave) demonstrated several themes of endogyny becoming exogeny. The two brothers were initially of one status. With the loss of the spear, internal exchange of wives (sisters) and segmentation were proposed, but rejected. Original endogynous solutions to property, alliance, and descent were shown to be unacceptable. Exogenous solutions stated in the outcomes of the myth were status differentiation between the two brothers, and the differential access to mystical mediation resulting from differential subsistence roles of hunting, cultivation, and healing. Also, the desirability was underlined of mediation between the human and the “other-human” world of animals and spirits.

In Text 8, about Mavungu father/son, the exogenous solution is left unmentioned, or one might say it is mentioned by the exaggeration of endogenous alternatives—remaining with father and being weak and lazy, or leaving the identity of father and benefiting from the rewards of an alliance with the “other”: in this case, trade at the oceanside and great political success, as seen in the grand city. The implicit exogenous solution is not hard to uncover. If Mavungu’s “death” is due to the mutual exclusivity of patrilineality and alliance, then “life” results from the complementarity of these two types of relations. This latter is, of course, the *Lemba* solution to the excessive endogyny of isolated settlements, marrying internally, thereby weakening trade and peace networks across the countryside. Any marriage “out,” but particularly a “return blood” marriage such as the patrilateral cross-cousin marriage, accomplishes the feat of structuring patrilineal continuity together with alliance.

Numerous literary works have taken up this problem. Malonga’s novel *M’pfoumou ma Mazono* is the story of a woman who is forced to flee her husband, a prominent chief and her cousin, after an illicit affair with her husband’s slave.¹⁹ In a vision her maternal grandmother tells her that the child she carries is her husband’s. This comforts her greatly, but she dares not yet return and becomes a renegade, taking up life in the wild. There her son is born, and with his

mother grows up in a cave by a lake. He teaches himself all the arts of human survival, especially hunting. This life in the depths of the wild is interrupted by two hunters from the husband-father's community, who as runaway slaves find the cave. The son, meanwhile, has become a strong and capable youth and invites them to join the forest settlement. This "wild" society of renegades grows into a vast city based on principles of egalitarian democracy instead of status differentiation, including slavery. Ultimately the healer-magician of the group, himself a runaway slave, divines the necessity to re-establish contact with civil society. Under the leadership of the youthful son, they move their mysterious community into the midst of other villages and establish a market to trade with them. At first threatened to the point of challenging war to regain lost slaves, the established society selects as its negotiator the husband-father. Father and son recognize one another, which of course permits father and mother to be reconciled as well, restoring peace to the region. Father conveys upon son a legitimate political office in the form of an inauguration to a ritual order (*Lemba?*). Each now has his own independent community, and they continue as allies in trade and war, closely intermarried.

The theme of the wilderness settlement recurs in mythology and lore, as well as ritual. Sometimes the inhabitants of such a settlement are ghost and spirits (*matembo*, *minkuyu*, *bisimbi*), at other times they represent a type of human community, different from but potentially related to the human community as a whole. Invariably these wilderness settlements are sources of contrast and of renewal, and powerful sources of wealth and danger, simultaneously. They embody peripherality and marginality, the power that comes from liminality and contrast. Often the mystery community represents an inversion of human society (Mavungu as the forest ogre) or an exaggeration of contradictions within the human society (Mavungu's city of wealth by the sea, Text 8). There is thus the theme of mediation achieved or mediation failed which runs through all accounts. One of the techniques of mediation in myth, ritual, and institution-building is to devise mediatory symbols such as *ngenge*, rivers, journeys, burrowing *nkumbi* rats, *tukula* red, and *mpemba* white, as well as composite mythic-religious figures such as Mahungu and the python-woman in the tree. These mediatory symbols and figures vary from the more-or-less human to the more-or-less natural (nonhuman). Sometimes, as in the case of the python-woman, this variance occurs in the midst of the text. The tendency to disguise or convert a hero into a natural or animal object, to remove him/her from the human realm,

seems to correspond to the degree to which a social contradiction is consciously acknowledged. Thus, in Text 7 (Mavungu as the two brothers) and Text 8 (Mavungu father/son) the hunter is a significant mediator who stands in close relation to the natural world. Moving across the human/nature opposition, he is able to illustrate the differences as well as the interdependencies of the two realms. Mahungu as hero of complementary opposition often expresses contradictions in political and social life. The most interesting case of mediation failed is that in which the wife is couched in the form of a python (Text 8). Mediation achieved is portrayed in Text 5, and to a certain extent in Texts 6 and 7.

Insofar, then, as renewal, restoration, or regeneration of society is achieved the mediating symbols are of a humanizing quality in the myths. But insofar as these harmonious states are not achieved, the mediatory symbols tend to become naturalized. The importance of this issue for theories of myth analysis is great. It moves analysis beyond the point where all myth functions as a "logical model capable of overcoming a contradiction"²⁰ to the realization that societies are able to perceive the tragic dimensions of these contradictions and to understand that they cannot be overcome. Or, if they can be overcome, just what institutional alternatives must be followed, and which must be avoided because their consequences are tragic. These issues will be taken up in subsequent chapters, as will be that of how recognition of social contradiction relates to the medicines of healing in *Lemba*.

Chapter 7

The Western (Yombe, Woyo, Vili) Variant of *Lemba*

Introduction to the Sources

The western variant of *Lemba* is based on a great quantity and a wide diversity of sources because of centuries of coastal contact with Europeans. However, despite the extensive work by such ethnographers as Bittremieux and the Loango expedition, only the Laman catechists have described in any detail *Lemba*'s rites in this region. The two texts which follow, from eastern Mayombe, describe respectively the modes of recruitment to *Lemba* through "dream, curse or possession" (Text 9)¹ and the initiatory séance (Text 10).² An etiological myth from the forest region of the Mayombe near Kangu (text 11) features Kongo trickster Tsimona-Mambu as culture hero, bringer of *Lemba*, providing a basis for the analysis of the lyrical domain in the western variant. Trickster myths from outside *Lemba* (Text 12) offer contrastive material of the same range as that presented on Mahungu in the previous chapter.

The western variant demonstrates major points of differentiation between the Yombe forest and the coastal kingdoms and peoples. Although the eastern Yombe versions of *Lemba* resemble areas already studied, the coastal accounts change in an important sense. Art-historical expressions of *Lemba*—bracelets, drums, shrines—become more ornate. Among the coastal Vili, and possibly inland among some Yombe, Bembe, and Kunyi, the portable *nkobe* disappears in favor of a fixed shrine-house in the back yard "pantheon." Charm-jewelry appears in the form of miniature drums, figurines, shrine doors, necklaces, and elaborate bracelets in cast or engraved copper and brass. These objects permit a fuller analysis of the expressive domain of consecrated medicine.

*The Lemba Séance in Eastern Mayombe**Text 9*

RECRUITMENT TO LEMBA

- (1) *Lemba i nkisi wena mu nkonko yifwanene bonso nlunga.*
Lemba is an nkisi in the form of an nkonko drum or a bracelet.
- (2) *Nkisi wowo ubanzwa vo wambaki mbongo zazingi zikalenda tudulwa kwa bakulu.*
It is thought of this *nkisi* that it requires greath wealth to get the ancestors to bestow it.
- (3) *Yandi wavangulwa mu ntinta yampemba isokwanga mu mpandulu andi.*
It is enacted with white chalk, given during its consecration.
- (4) *Mboki, longo (bongo?) biandi biambukila biena muna mpe.*
Also, a marriage ceremony constitutes part of it.
- (5) *Yandi Lemba ulotuswa ndozi mu bakulu.*
Lemba itself is presented in a dream from the ancestors.
- (6) *Yandi ubikwanga vo nkisi a bakulu. Yandi ukwendanga ku mpemba ye ku bwala.*
It is called an *nkisi* of the ancestors; it mediates the land of the dead and the village.
- (7) *Ikuma kakomwanga mu ndotolo a ndozi ye mu mpinunu a mafina ye mu mbwanunu a minkuyu.*
Thus it is activated by dreaming, by nightmares of suffocating by a curse, or through spirit possession.
- (8) *Mboki mpandulu vo nkebolo a Lemba zena zazingi beni.*
For this reason initiations and initiands to *Lemba* are many.
- (9) *Bankaka bakebanga Lemba mu nlunga a koko.*
Some keep *Lemba* in the bracelet on their arm.
- (10) *Nlunga una mpe sadulwanga mbatu bonso nkonko a Lemba.*
A bracelet is sometimes used like the *nkonko Lemba* drum.
- (11) *Vo bakondolo nkonko, buna i nlunga balenda komina nloko mwankaka.*
If they lack the drum, they use the bracelet to strike certain spells.

- (12) *Balutidi sadila nlunga wanzongo mu tula mu koko.*
Copper bracelets are mostly used, worn on the arm.
- (13) *Mboki nlunga wowo ukalanga na nganga Lemba; vo fwidi mpe ka ulendi katulwa ko.*
So the bracelet of the priest remains with him; if he dies it may not be removed.
- (14) *Mboki kansimbi muntu wankaka ko walembwa dio vanda.*
Thus [*Lemba*] will not seize another person if it is not transmitted to another initiand.
- (15) *Nga vo una simba mu diba, buna fwanane mu futa vo nsusu mosi kwa nganga Lemba.*
Even if one is seized, it suffices to pay a chicken to a *Lemba* priest.
- (16) *Ndiena wavanda Lemba diandi usanga vuvu vo bakulu bandi babana bana fwa ku mpemba balenda kwiza kuntudila mbongo.*
The one who composes his own *Lemba*, hopes that his ancestors in Mpemba will provide him with funds [for the initiation].
- (17) *Yandi Lemba lenda heha mbongo zena kwa bakulu ye zena kwa bamoyo mu diambu dialenda kiandi kiena kwandi mu twadisa mbongo kwa mfumu andi kadi bu batombulanga wo, buna bahehanga mu mafula makwizila mbongo mpasi bantu bakaka mambu Lemba basinduka mo mana bakamana mbongo za Lemba.*
Lemba is capable of exchanging wealth of the ancestors with the living so that it may be at their disposal, providing wealth to a person's lord so he may receive it; thus they exchange in the entrances whence comes wealth, and those who are in *Lemba* with their problems receive *Lemba's* wealth.
- (18) *Nkisi una mpe wena ye nkazi a Lemba.*
The *nkisi* also has a *Lemba* wife.
- (19) *Ukotanga wo yandi i kundi ku nima nkisi wowo.*
She enters it to be the "friend" behind the *nkisi*.
- (20) *Vo muntu una bwana nkuyu kansi ndinga yuzikamani buna nganga Lemba una bonga lutete lwansudia vo lwa tende.*
If a person is possessed by a spirit but his speech is blocked, the *Lemba* priest will take a lutete gourd seed.

- (21) *Vo yandi mbevo una lo tota, buna ngudi a nganga una kunkamba vo: "Yoya, monso mamweni, samuna."*
If the sufferer cracks it open [with his teeth], the chief priest tells him: "Whatever you see, tell it."
- (22) *Buna mbevo i ntumbu badika vova vo kakedi vova ko, buna yandi una samuna makamweni.*
Then the sufferer immediately begins to speak if he has not already and tells all he has seen.
- (23) *Vo nkuyu kamweni vo unkembi mambu, buna yandi una ntumbu samuna ye zaikisa yayonsono.*
If a spirit has appeared or spoken, he will reveal it and make all known.
- (24) *Bobo i salu bia Lemba.*
This then is *Lemba's* purpose.
- (25) *Mboki nkisi wowo ukembwanga mu nkela.*
This *nkisi* is kept in a box.
- (26) *Nkela yoyo ka ilendi talu wankaka mu ngudi ko.*
No one [beside the owner] may look into it.
- (27) *Mboki nkisi wowo ukebwanga ku vinga kia mu ngudi a nzo, kuna vinga kiokio ka kikoti muntu ko.*
It is guarded in a special room in the interior of the house where no one may enter.
- (28) *Buna una kubwa, nga vo ka bwa ko, buna una tekwa mu mbongo za Lemba.*
Should someone do this, he would be sold for the benefit of *Lemba*.
- (29) *Fisidi Lemba nga diena mwamu. Konso diodio disaduwanga kwa babingi.*
Perhaps this is all about *Lemba*. Many use it in this way.
- (30) *Ka diafwidi ko nate ye bwabu.*
It has not died out till this day.

Text 10

PRESENTING MWEMO-A-LEMBA MEDICINE

- (21) *Fu kia zinganga za Lemba, vo bamweni muntu wena kimvwama, buna i ntumbu kunkamba vo nwa mwemo a Lemba, i. s. v., makaya ma Lemba-lemba.*

It is a custom of *Lemba* priests, when they see a person of means, to tell him he must drink *Mwemo-a-Lemba*, that is, leaves of the *lemba-lemba* plant.

- (22) *Kansi vo muntu vumbidi vumu, buna si bavela munsumbi ye si bavela wa mu nkumba a Lemba.*

But if a person has a swollen stomach, they give him *munsumbi* leaves.

LEMBA CHILD BARGAINS FEE FOR COMPOSING NKISI

- (23) *Mwana nganga i ntumbu bonga mpata ye kwe bwanisa ngudi nganga kuna fula.*

The neophyte priest next gives his high priest five francs at the village entrance.

- (24) *Zinganga zazonsono zavanda Lemba mu tini kiansi kiokio, bu buwilu nsamu vo Lemba si dwandusu ku kingandi, buna bana kwina, kidi babaka zimbongo mu mpandusulu au.*

All priests who have been consecrated to *Lemba* in the surrounding area, when they hear of the *Lemba* affair, they make their way hither in order to enrich themselves by their initiatory expertise.

- (25) *Ngudi a nganga si katambula kumi evo kumi ye mpata tanu.*

The chief priest will receive 50–75 francs (10–15 *mpata*).

- (26) *Mboki zinganga zankaka zazono kani 30 vo 40 si zasola mwala (nzonzi) au mu kwe kubalombila zimbongo.*

Thirty or forty other priests will send their representatives forward to request payments of money.

- (27) *Buna mwala si kateka tambula kani mpata mole vo tatu.*

The representatives will receive 10–15 francs (2–3 *mpata*) each.

- (28) *Mboki si katangunanga nganga vo: ndieu ebu kadilanga, mboki mwana nganga si kavana ndiana ntalu yayi katabulanga ye yandi i ntumbu futa bonso buvovele nzonzi nate ye babonsono bameni futa.*

The priests will be told: the one who has requested *Lemba*, as *Lemba* child will be told the fee for receiving it, and he will pay whatever the spokesman says, until all have been paid.

- (29) *Mboki i ntumbu vandisa nkisi.*

Then his *nkisi* will be composed.

- (30) *Nkama Lemba ufutwanga ngulu ye mpata tatu, minkwala zole, mpidi zole zambongo.*

The chief priest's wife is paid a pig and fifteen francs, two *nkwala* mats, and two *mpidi* baskets full of raphia cloth.

COMPOSING NKISI LEMBA

- (1) *Lemba i nkisi watudulwa mu mwila a tola.*
Lemba is an *nkisi* which is put in a cylinder.
- (2) *Mu ngudi a mwila wowo mwasokwa mafutu mole mamin-kanda miabulu, nkumbu a futu diabakala: "Nsasa Lemba."*
 Inside it are placed two sacks of animal skin, the name of the male bag being: "*Nsasa Lemba.*"
- (3) *Va diau vatulwa bilongo.*
 [In] On it are placed medicines.
- (4) *Singa kiakala mu mbu ye mpemba biau biatoma kangwa va futu diankanda mbala.*
 String is wound tightly around it to better contain the *mpemba* chalk in this bag of *mbala* antelope skin.
- (5) *Futu diankaka dia nkanda nkumbi divwilu kwa nkama Lemba; va diau vena bilongo: n'nanga ye tukula.*
 The other sack, made of the *nkumbi* [rat's?] skin, is the *Lemba* wife's; on [in] are put medicines: cauries and *tukula* red.
- (6) *Futu diodio dibikwanga nkumbu "Mpemba Lemba."*
 This sack is called "Mpemba Lemba."
- (7) *Lemba biekwa ku Nsona.*
Lemba is consecrated on Nsona day.
- (8) *Nsuka lumbu mpaikulu au kumbazi, bakala si kateka bonga Nsasa Lemba ye bonga mpemba ye teka tula mampemba mandi va futu diodio; mboki sonika mpemba mu mpenga ye mu mvamba miamoko.*
 Next morning they go to the square; the male [initiand] first takes the *Nsasa Lemba* bag and puts chalk onto the bag's skin; then he inscribes chalk on his temples and his hands.
- (9) *Mboki nkento mpe si kakutula funda ye sonika tukula mu mpenga ye mu moko.*

- Then the woman [initiand] also removes *tukula* red from her bag and inscribes it upon her temples and hands.
- (10) *Mboki bau bole ntumbu vaika.*
Then the two of them come out.
- (11) . . . *buna kabalenda zieta vo sala mu lumbu kiokio ko, kansi si bavundila kio kaka.*
. . . they may not walk or work on this day but must sit the day out quietly.
- (12) *Lembama kiokio, bau bana baka kimbevo vo kifwa.*
Failing to obey this, they may take sick or die.
- (13) *Mafutu matulwa mu nti.*
The bags are hung in a tree.
- (14) *Bilongo biankaka batudulwa mu ngudi a mwilu: dingongo, makayi kwa Lembe.*
Other medicines are placed into the cylinder: *dingongo* nuts and *Lemba* herbs [calmants?].
- (15) *Lekwa kiokio i nsuki zatebwa ku ntu a ndieu wavanda Lemba ye zakangwa va nsi a nkanda nsesi ye nkaka ye nkanda a kubu, wakangwa mpe zinsuki zamwana nganga ye za ngudi a nganga.*
[Another] thing is hair from the head of he who has composed *Lemba*; it is tied into skins of *nsesi* antelope, pangolin, and *kubu* antelope; also in it are hair of the neophyte priest and the chief priest.
- (16) *Nkanda wowo batambulanga wo mu lumbu kina kiteki mana vanda nkisi wowo.*
This skin [?] is brought along on the day when they have completed composing the *nkisi*.
- (17) *Mafunda momo miatatu miabikwa "minkunda."*
These three bags are called "the abode."
- (18) *Batulanga mpe bikengi.*
Bikengi water plants are also put in it.
- (19) *Nkisi wowo wena mpe ye funda dibikwanga "kikundu dia Lemba": va diau batulwa bilongo biampila mu mpila—mwebwa, ntutu, cizika, munsumbi-nsumbi, nkuku-nona, ye nionzo ye makaya manlolo.*

The *nkisi* also has a satchel called “*Lemba power*” into which is put a variety of medicines—*mweba*, *ntutu* bark, *cizika*, *munsumbi-nsumbi*, *nkuku-nona*, *nionzo* and *nlolo* leaves.

- (20) *Nkisi wowo wasadulwa mu mayela ma mpila i.s.v., vumu, ntima, ntu, lubanzi.*

This *nkisi* is used for a variety of illnesses such as those affecting abdomen, heart, head, side.

THE MARRIAGE CEREMONY BEHIND THE HOUSE

- (31) [illegible] . . . *buna i ntumbu kunata ku mbusa nzo ye nkento andi.*

[the initiand and rite objects] are carried behind the house with his wife.

- (32) *Ngeye n'nuni Lemba, keba nkazi aku Lemba bwambote; si bakamba mpe kwa nkento, ngeye nkama Lemba, keba n'nuni aku Lemba bwambote.*

[The priest intones] “You *Lemba* husband, guard your *Lemba* wife well”; they advise the wife, “You *Lemba* wife, keep your *Lemba* husband well.”

- (33) *Mu nzo a Lemba ka mulendi kota muntu wankaka ko.*
“No other person may enter the *Lemba* house.

- (34) *Vo umweni muntu dieti nkwalu yiwena, buna kamba nuni aku evo umweni mpe muntu viokele mpe evo diata mu lwi nkulu lwa nzo aku, buna kamba nuni aku.*

If you see another person do so, tell your husband; or if you see someone leaving or walking near your house, tell your husband.”

WHEN THE PROFANATION OCCURS

- (35) *Buna vo muntu si kasumuna mina miomio dia Lemba, buna si ka futa mvika; kansi mu ntangu yayi lenda futa kani mpata 4 evo bonso buzolele nganga.*

When a person violates the prescriptions of *Lemba*, he must pay a fine; however nowadays [ca. 1915] it may be 20 francs or whatever the priest decides.

- (36) *Bu beti wo vandisa, buna nganga ye nkento andi mboki mwana ngo ye nkento andi mpe; buna babakala si bateka vwanda vo ntandu a buku biole bianti.*

When it is composed, the priest and his wife, then the "leopard child" and his wife [are present]; the men first sit on the bark of two trees.

- (37) *Mboki bankaka bana kubafuta ku nsi a vunga napi ye zinganga zankaka zeti sika zinkonko e zindungu ye beti zimbila nkunga wau:*

The others come to pay them remain silently beneath a blanket while other priests beat *nkonko* and *ndungu* drums, singing this song:

- (38) *Wavanda lemba, kusuka kwamoyo.*

He consecrates to *Lemba*, let him cleanse his life.

- (39) *Lemba diami dia bumpati bwa nganga*

My *Lemba* enclosure is the glory of the priesthood.

Mayamona mu Lemba ndiadi

Behold this *Lemba*!

Sukula ko!

Cleanse it!

- (40) *Bu bameni didio, i ntumbu vaika ye bakento ntumbu kwe vinganga ye diatasana minlembo ye simbasana moko ku nsi a vunga ye minkunga ye zinkonko mina tamana bonso busilulu babakala nate ye kani lokula biole, mboki vaika.*

When they have done this, [the priests] leave and the women present "walk" over one another with fingers and hold hands under the blanket while singing and drumming the *nkonko* drum like the men did it, until the two are cleansed, then they come out.

FINAL RITE IN THE FOREST

- (41) *Landila bilumbu biole tata nganga kunata mwana nganga ku mfinda.*

Two days later the *Lemba* father takes the *Lemba* child to the forest.

- (42) *Kuna mfinda bavwandila va mfuma ye makuku, bisoma mole va nsi bau biekanga—i.s.v., Mpemba Lemba ye Nsasa Lemba.*

There in the forest they sit upon an *mfuma* cotton tree and a set of termite mounds respectively, the ground beneath them consecrated as “*Mpemba Lemba*” and “*Nsasa Lemba*.”

- (43) *Mbangudulu a mambu momo i vo bakala evo nkento andi wena sita buna si kabuta mu diambu diakameni vanda nkisi ko.*

The meaning of this is: if the male or the female is sterile, they may give birth because they composed this *nkisi*.

- (44) *Mbangudulu a makuku i vo bana sibutwa.*

The meaning of the termite mounds is that children will be born.

- (45) *Bu si bakola nyo a nonia ye kuntentika yo va mbata a ntu andi, binonia biobio bu beti kunzanzala ye kuntatika ku ntu, buna kalendi yaula vo nikuka nkutu ko.*

When they take one with termites in it and place it atop the head when the termites begin to crawl out and bite the head, they must not cry out or squirm.

- (46) *Nga vo si kanikuka vo kubula binonia, buna i mabuta kakubudi, si bana kumbika vo ndoki.*

If they squirm or slap the termites their own offspring are struck and they will be called witches.

- (47) *Bonso bwena ntalu a binzulu biobio bieti kunzanzala, i bobo buna kala ntalu a nkun'andi mpe.*

As is the number of these termites [ants] so shall be the number of their offspring.

- (48) *Mwana wantete vo bana buta vo wankento, una bikwa “Mpemba Lemba;” vo bakala, “Nsasa Lemba” bonso bwabiekwa bisama biabirole zinkumbu.*

If the first child born is a girl, it will be called “*Mpemba Lemba*”; if a male, “*Nsasa Lemba*” corresponding to the names of the consecrated signs.

- (49) *Landila diodio, si banika ngunzi ye mpemba mboki kwe biosonikingi mu nitu mwana nganga yamvimba matona-matona mampembe ye mambwaki.*

Following this, they grind a mixture of *ngunzi*-red and *mpemba*-chalk and trace the whole body of the neophyte priest with white and red spots.

The Expressive Domains

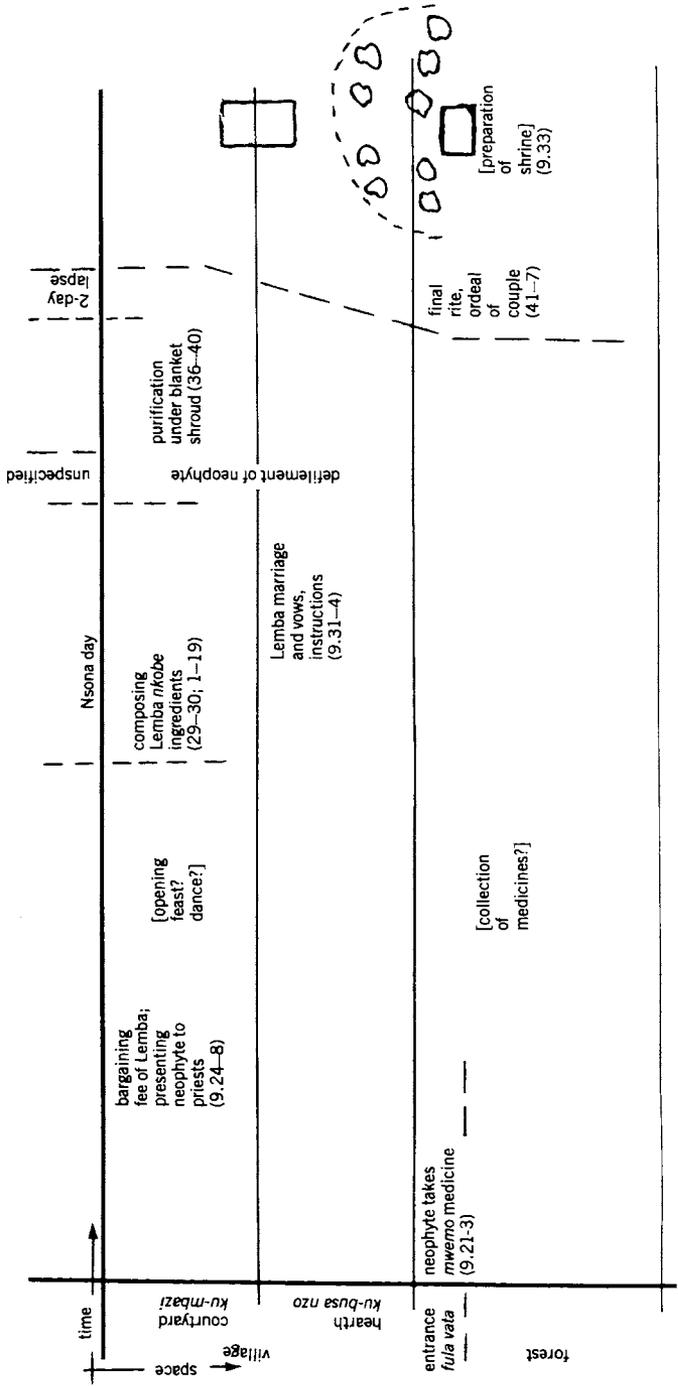
SPACE AND TIME: FROM PORTABLE TO FIXED RITUAL SYMBOLISM

Most characteristic of the western variant's spatial-temporal domain is the transformation of the symbolism of ceremonial ritual into the symbolism of permanent architecture and garden (figure 18). The richness of both rite and *n'kobe* diminish. The rite described by Babutidi (Text 10) lacks the elaborate rhythmic flow between village, savanna, forest, and stream of the northern and south-central variants. The western-Kongo landscape is largely forested, and villages and towns and fields cut and burned out of the forest constitute the only clearings. *Lemba's* ceremonial rhythm spans this simple dichotomy of forest and village clearing. Across the Mayombe, *n'kobe* and reference to a "house"-shrine are both present in varying degrees of elaboration. In Babutidi's account, for example, from the far eastern Mayombe, the *n'kobe* is as complete as farther east and north, although one of the satchels within it is called the *Lemba* "house" (*minkunda*, 10.17), and although there is this reference to a "house" (10.33), the final ceremonies are held in the forest. Farther west, on the coast and in Loango especially, the *n'kobe* disappears entirely. The *Lemba* shrine becomes a fixed installation at the intersection of the forest and village, an elaborate "kitchen" behind the hearth, a garden grove of trees, filled with other objects.

Ethnographies from the Mayombe and Loango describe this *Lemba* "house" and details of the fixed installation. In the Kangu area of Mayombe, Bittremieux described the *Lemba* couple's yard as a wooded grove (*bikulu bia Lemba*) of wild shrubs and trees transplanted to the domestic area between house and shrine, and surrounded by a fence. The trees included the *mfuma* cotton tree (*Eriodendron anfractuosum*), *nkumbi* (*Lannea Welwitshii*), *lubota* (*Milletia*), *kuaku* (*Oncoba* sp.), *nsanga-nsanga* (*Ricinodendron africanum*); smaller plants included *lolo kitseke* (*Annona Senegalensis*), *mvuila tseke* (planted together, perhaps suggesting their association with the human world (= savanna, *tseke*) in contrast to the ancestral world (= forest), *ditambi-tambi* (in association with the *lubota* tree). By themselves in a small enclosure behind the shrine house were *mutsanga-lavu* and *dilemba-lemba* (*Brillantaisia alata*). The whole arrangement suggests a floral cosmogram fixed to a spatial location much as the *n'kobe* eastward contains a miniaturized cosmogram of plants collected from the zones of savanna, forest,

Figure 18

Spatial and temporal organization of events in Babutidi's account of *Lemba* inauguration. Numbers refer to lines in Text 9. Outline of *Lemba* shrine based on allusion by Babutidi (9.33) to "*Lemba* house," and on fuller indications by Bittremieux, 1925; Bastian 1874, pp. 170-3; Güssfeldt, 1879, p. 71.



village, water, and cemetery. The purpose of bringing all these plants from the wild to be represented in the shrine grove, states Bittremieux, is to assure that the *Lemba* couple will be genuinely "other," truly changed (*baluka*),³ permanently liminal.

The *Lemba* shrine-house is described by several writers. In the Mayombe Bittremieux reports that on its gable there is a sculpture made of woven *nsoni* grass of the *ndimba* snake (*Psammophis sibilans*, or *Leptodira Duchesnii*),⁴ and a representation of the *lolo* and *mvuila* plants. Loango coast expedition writers report that the *Lemba* house in that area is situated in the forest well away from the houses, surrounded by a papyrus fence, and is used as a treasure house by the *Lemba* couple, secluded, locked with fanciful door locks.⁵ Its décor is such that only the wealthy can afford it. Between the two front doors, one for the *Lemba* husband, the other for the *Lemba* wife, are planted respectively a *baobab* tree and a *mfuma* silk cotton tree.⁶ Surprisingly little of this fixed architecture has survived, either in museum holdings of sculpture or in photographs and drawings.

More is known of the shrine context of the *Lemba* house. *Lemba*, where it appeared, was evidently the major shrine installation in a pantheon of *n'kisi* figures and objects. In the back-yard shrine-garden of Yombe chief Ngambula, whose life and *Lemba* priesthood was depicted in Chapter 3, *Lemba's* shrine was flanked by other *min'kisi*, including: *Simbu*, in an *nzungu* pot, deity of time; a small *ndubi* statue with a mirror in its stomach (*kundu*); a *lukatu* statue in a pot, also with a mirror in its midsection; *Mbudila*, an *n'kisi* figure related to time and to the reign of the Mamboma chief; and a variety of others called *Mambinda*, *Maluangu*, *Mangaka*, and *Nzola*, either represented by a pot, a statue, or another object.⁷

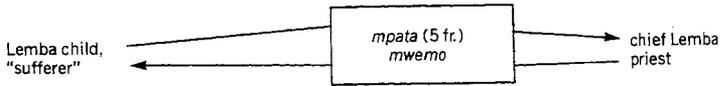
The transformation of *Lemba's* symbolism in the western region corresponds, then, to a general shift from moveable to fixed estates; from hunting and shifting cultivation to fixed landed domains; from segmentary polities to kingdoms and chiefdoms; from caravans traversing vast stretches over trails to endpoints, ports, and commerce at the coast.

ECONOMIC AND EXCHANGE STRUCTURES

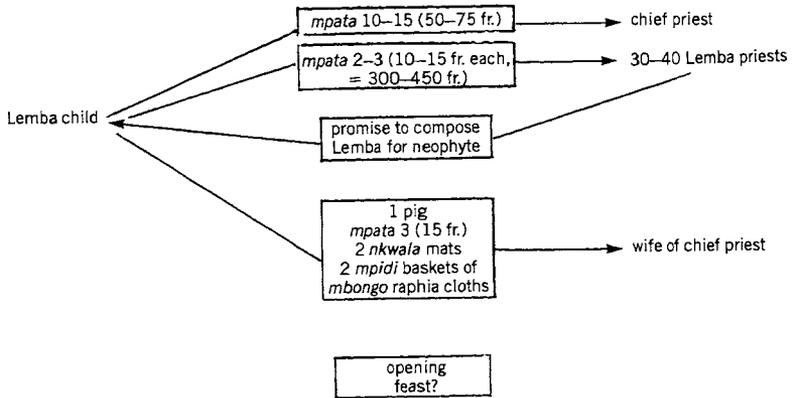
A brief perusal of the exchanges in Babutidi's account (Text 10, figure 19) suggests an important difference from exchanges in other accounts already examined. Here the main payments are made in the currency of the late Free State and early Belgian colony. Only pay-

Figure 19
Exchange structure of *Lemba* account,
after Babutidi (Text 10)

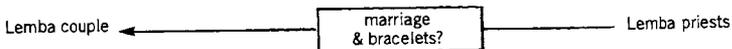
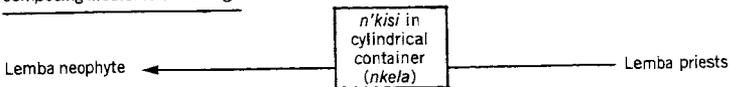
Neophyte Takes Mwemo Medicine



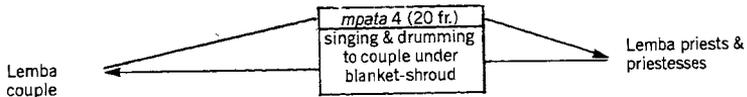
Bargaining the Fee, Presenting Neophyte



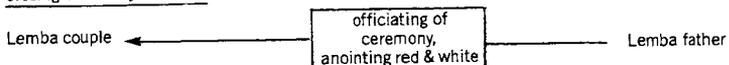
Composing Medicine & Marriage



Purification Ceremony



Closing Ceremony in Forest



ments to the chief priest's wife are in the traditional currency of mats, *mbongo* raphia cloth, and pigs.

Following the Free State's introduction of brass wires in the eighties to compete with indigenous copper wire, the *mpata* (=five Belgian francs, ten United States cents) was introduced in 1910 by the Belgian Congo concurrently with the imposition of the head tax in this currency. With the creation of railroads on the south bank of the Congo River and in the Mayombe forests, European commercial interests were more effectively able to reach the sizeable Lower-Congo, north-bank productive resources. The old ability to mount caravans was revived briefly as individuals, lineages, and local chiefs portered palm nuts, ground nuts, beans, tobacco, even sheep and pigs, to these commercial outposts in exchange for colonial money and manufactured goods. Direct equivalences are not easy to establish between pigs, francs, raphia, and *Lemba*, as Chapter 2 has already suggested. It may be noted, however, that Babutidi's account compiles about 580 francs, one pig, and two baskets of raphia cloth as hard items of cost. In terms of trade figures of ca. 1928, this would have required bringing something like fifty to seventy man-loads of palm nuts to the nearest purchasing station, at thirty kilograms per person. Or, in terms of workers' incomes in the towns in 1925-30, about forty months of rations for one person (at ten to twenty francs per month), and two years salary (forty to sixty francs per month).⁸ In other words, only someone who possessed the patronage of his lineage or who was a merchant of means could afford *Lemba*'s initiation. It is surprising that anyone could still afford this type of ceremonial expenditure in an era of the head tax, *corvée* labor, and the emergence of wage labor and the exchange of wages for manufactured goods.

The level of expenditure, and the involvement of thirty or forty *Lemba* priests in the initiation, plus their wives, suggest something of the commitment to the institution in the 1910-15 era in eastern Mayombe, and the extent of *Lemba*'s authority even this late in the colonial era.

VERBAL CATEGORIES, RITUAL ACTION, AND *LEMBA* NAMES

There is something eternal about Kongo ritual. It is continually extracting from the events of daily life and human society the salient features which pertain to lasting perspectives, values, and categories of Kongo culture. This process is far more enduring than a particular individual, chiefdom, lineage, kingdom, drum of affliction or religious movement. But these latter are situated in terms of the enduring. In the

western coastal region there are schemas in the historical record which relate the various kingdoms and ritual associations, and individuals within them. Thus, in the Loango of 1875, according to Bastian, someone suggested that Loango, Kakongo, and Ngoyo were like husband (*n'nuni*), wife (*n'kazi*), and priestly mediator (*itomwa*=one who is sent) to each other: a complementarity of roles. Ngoyo was the home territory of the prestigious Bunzi shrine, not only the ritual basis of the Ngoyo kingdom but also that of Kakongo and Loango as well. In actual practice this meant little more than that the northern kingdoms sent emissaries to Bunzi during important decisions and transitions, to consult Bunzi's oracle.⁹ Throughout the region another principle of spiritual "rooting" existed in the notion of the *xina* or *zina* "name" that flowed from a person's father to himself or herself, and back again to the father's lineage in the next generation. In noble marriages this principle was very important, and a person's status depended on his having a "father" and a "name" (*zina*). Names and role terms, therefore, reflected a classificatory scheme deriving either from the values of kinship, class, or polity. *Lemba* was no exception, and its relationship to other social processes and schemes is the subject of this section.

Konda and Babutidi, like Kwamba in his description of the northern variant, offer very clearly labeled categories of ritual action in *Lemba*, and the names received during the inaugurals by *Lemba* priests reflect these categories closely. The ritual process is described in terms of a few central concepts, beginning with the term *koma*, "to strike, augment, obligate, assemble, or constrain." The term has achieved some notoriety in Kongo studies from its use in connection with nail or wedge charms and the driving in of the wedges (*koma nsonso*, *koma m'funyia*). Konda uses it in a broader sense to refer to the awakening of a force which may be either negative and injurious, or positive and redemptive. *Lemba* is "aroused" (*komwa*) through dreaming of a *Lemba* ancestor, having a nightmare that one is suffocating (being bewitched), or being possessed by a spirit (9.7). A person may also have his "speech blocked" (9.20). All are symptoms whose etiology may lead to the recommendation that the afflicted should take the *Lemba* medicine and be considered for initiation. Both Konda and Babutidi speak of the priest in *Lemba* experiencing further negative ritual action in his defilement (*sumuna Lemba*, 9.27; *sumuna mina dia Lemba*, 10.28).

Positive ritual action to overcome these negative states includes the expected prescriptions to drink the *Lemba* medicine (*nwa mwemo a*

Lemba, 10.21), consecrate *Lemba* (10.7), and initiate to the *n'kisi* (*vanda*, 10.19, 23, 32). There are also idiomatic terms of positive ritual action such as “cracking the *lutete* seed,” done by the presiding priest as a sign to the “afflicted” that he may now loosen his words and tell all he has seen in his dream or nightmare, in particular the identity of the person or spirit afflicting him. The basic term of ritual action, *koma*, is used with the verb *loka*, to speak or cast a spell; thus *koma nloko*. Whereas many *Lemba* priests and couples use their *nkonko* drum to create a spell, some do this by rubbing or spitting palm wine on their copper *Lemba* bracelets (Konda, text 9.9–12).

Possibly the most indicative phrase in the western variant depicting *Lemba*'s ritual action is this: “*Lemba* is capable of exchanging wealth of the ancestors with that of the living so it may be at the latter's disposal . . . so they exchange in the entrances whence wealth comes, and those who are involved with *Lemba* with their problems receive *Lemba*'s wealth” (*Yandi Lemba lenda heha mbongo zena kwa bakulu ye zena kwa bamoyo mu diambu dialenda kiandi kiena kwandi mu twadisa mbongo . . . buna bahehanga mu mafula makwizila mbongo mpasi bantu bakaka mambu Lemba basinduka mo mana bakamana mbongo za Lemba*, 9.17). The key terms here are *heha* and *fula*. The first, also *veva* or *veeva*, means to blow, clean, softly vibrate in the breeze, flutter, as well as to be bewitched or have a spell cast over one. In its substantive form the term becomes *mpeve*, which Bible translators took to express spirit, whence *mpeve a nlongo*, Holy Spirit. The second term, *fula*, denotes to blow, spit, or channel a substance, or a path, route, and the wind following these paths. One may *fudila n'kisi*, arouse an *n'kisi* by spitting on it, or *fula nzonza*, arouse a quarrel (*zonza*, rhetoric, speaking). *Mafula* are entrances to villages, markets, cemeteries. The verb *fula* is used in the eastern variant, as well as in other accounts of *Lemba* in the Mayombe, to refer to the ritual resurrection of the neophyte. The adept, having “died” (*fwa ngambu*) and seen spirits, is awakened (*fulukidi*) and given to drink from the *tsasa* pot by the *Lemba* priestess. In the east, the priests sing the song “Resurrect the Child” (*kimfula, fudila mwana*) as an invocation to Nga Malamu while one of the priests blows into the neophyte's ear. Related to the same cognate is *mbondo fula*, the broom of justice and oratory, depicted on some *Lemba* bracelets (plate 12). The text (9.17) suggests that *Lemba* is able to arouse the ancestors in a type of sacrificial trade so as to enhance the wealth of the living. This process occurs most auspiciously in the “entrances” (*mafula*) which is, indeed, where

much of the actual exchanging is done in markets (see plate 3). It is this term *fula*, to raise, blow, bring into being, to "spiritize," which becomes the key word in Konda's concept of "spirit of mercantilism" or "capitalism" (*heha mbongo*, arouse the spirit of wealth; or *hehanga mu mafula makwizila mbongo*, arouse the spirit in the entrances whence comes wealth).

The names of *Lemba* priests reflect preoccupations with the range of ritual actions already suggested: oratorical skill, grasping or seeing mystical power, enjoying full ritual purity, and increasing offspring as well as wealth. The names are chosen to characterize the new person, resurrected to *Lemba* and its prevailing values. But they also uncannily portray persons grappling with personal problems. Bittremieux cites the following.¹⁰ Mvuza, "jabberer," is the name of one whose words now flow freely, recalling the affliction of the *Lemba* sufferer with "blocked words" (9.20). Makunduku, "he masters powers," suggests a preoccupation with the problem of power. The full name is drawn from the phrase *makunduku va mbata vwa*, "on our death God alone is almighty," recognizing human mortality. Ngambula (cf. Chapter 3) means "washer-off", from *menga ma tsusu, simba: kwambula*, "the blood of chickens; hold it: release it," that is, one who is not afraid to penetrate to the core of a serious social issue, and deal with it, but who then is able to extract himself from it. Nyambivana, "God-gives," is used for someone who has accumulated the requisite wealth to enter *Lemba* while still a youth.

Thus far these names reflect serene spiritual *Lemba* values. Others reflect economic values of acquisitiveness. Mvu, "year," is the name of a priest who says "a whole year I have slaved to be able to afford *Lemba's* inauguration." Yindindi, "thinking," refers to one who was always thinking how he might make his fortunes cover *Lemba's* costs. Valata, "scraping and scrounging," referred to one who considered himself having to scrape, scrounge, and struggle to afford a *Lemba* marriage. Phila-mose, "same-as," is the name of one who says to himself, "Now I stand on the same footing as the old men who had to collect the necessary sum over many years." Mueba is the name of the chief priest, after the *mueba* tree (*Irvingia Barteri*), referring to the notion that "everyone gets his just desserts—that is, fruits." Sabu, "crossing-over," refers to one who *tsabukidi Lemba*, crossed over into *Lemba*, one who "had his money working." Or Vandu-vandu, "charm-activator," from *Dilemba diedi kuiza vandulu zimbongo*, "my *Lemba*, when it's turned on will enrich me (in the funds and children)." These names bring out the variety of

values emphasized in *Lemba*, and their rooting in broader categories of ritual action.

It remains, however, to explain the link between this spirit of acquisitiveness and mercantilism so prevalent in the foregoing names and ritual acts, and the symptomatology and etiology of the *Lemba* affliction. Konda suggests that the affliction is brought on by something the sufferer may have seen in a dream, a nightmare, or possession by a spirit (9.20–22). Babutidi speaks of it as something that may affect abdomen, heart, head, and side (10.20). Further consideration of this issue will be deferred till Chapters 9 and 10. It is clear, however, that this *Lemba* “spirit of mercantilism” provoked considerable antagonism in a society in which the ethic of redistribution is deeply engrained.

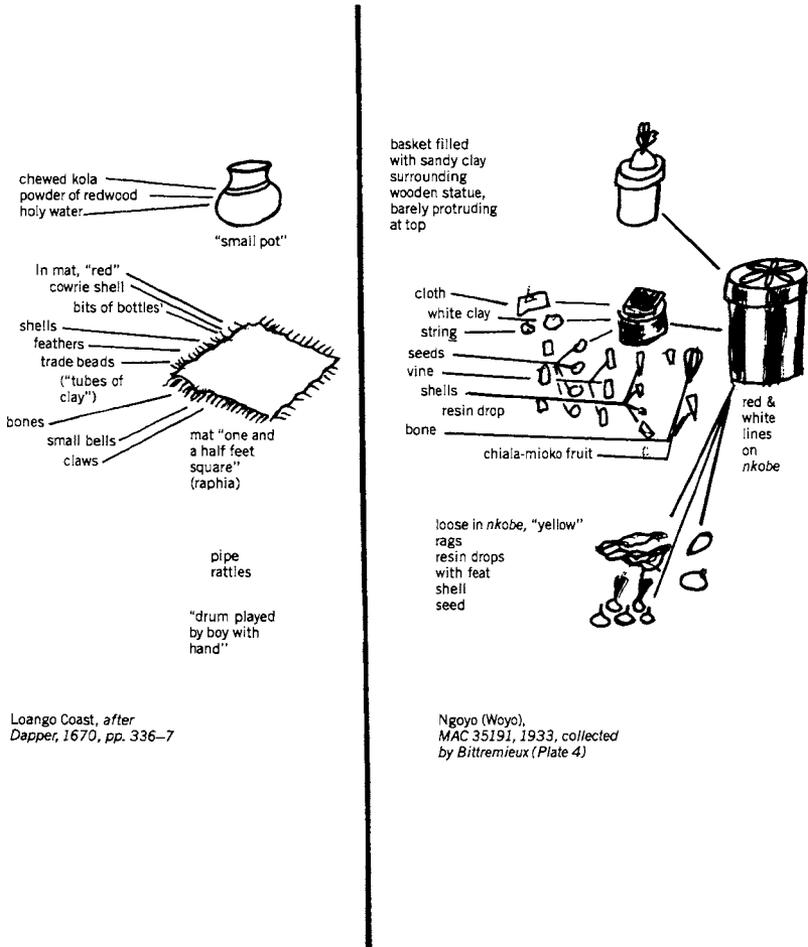
MEDICINE AND ART

In previous sections on *Lemba* medicine the contents of the *n'kobe* have been examined in terms of their function. Here an interpretation will be undertaken of all material objects created specifically under the rubric of *Lemba* medicine: the *n'kobe* (or western equivalents), the fixed shrine, the bracelet, the drum, the rattle or bell, pipes, and statues. In each of these mediums, individual objects—wood, plants, metal—are shaped, named, and brought together in associative categories. They are thus given a signification. Sometimes these objects may contain bodily elements of persons involved—the neophyte's semen, hair, nails—and thus have an added, iconic signification. In other cases they may bring together statements of symbolism known in the world of conventional meaning, such as the relationship of men to women with their characteristics. A complex ritual system such as *Lemba*, however, takes these iconic and symbolic statements and reshapes or reassociates them for its own purposes. This process, which has been shown to use and construct metaphor, can be analyzed to gain special understanding of the institution's major concepts and values. The metaphoric process uses parallel series of expressions to make a composite statement about society and the universe, about the relationship of resources to power, and about the living to the ancestors from whom all power flows. Because *Lemba* expressiveness reaches out to make statements of these social, natural, cosmic wholes, aesthetic criteria are implied. That is, elements are abstracted from the whole in order to represent it. For example, the western *Lemba* bracelets depict a man and a woman joined by a flower-petal

motif or a cowrie shell (plates 8–12). Miniature drums worn on necklaces or sculpted on pottery lids depict the drums of *Lemba*. In many cases these miniatures are worn as jewelry and used as charms (see plates 15, 16, 18). Mythic heroes, represented in the *n'kobe* as shakers or rattles, are often hung from the priests' belts during dances dedicated to the deity or hero.

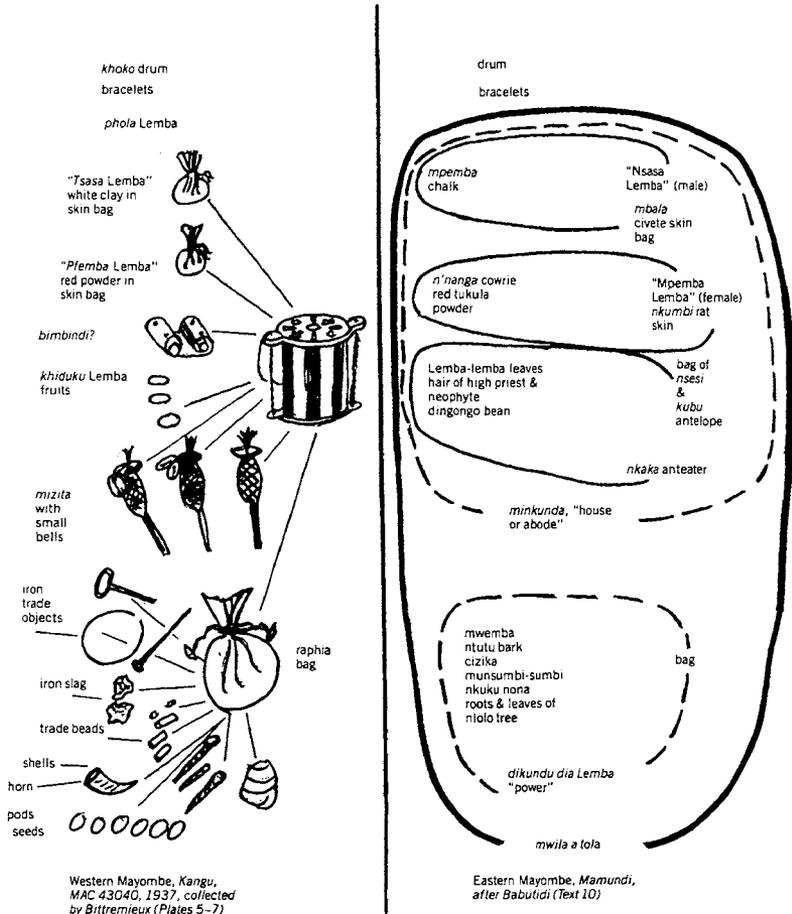
The most common statement of signification in the *Lemba n'kobe*

Figure 20
Tukobe of the Western *Lemba* region:
 Loango and Ngoyo (Cabinda)



and shrine is the relationship between male and female. This relationship refers not only to the reproductive process in which children are born, but also it takes the male-female union as a model for all complementarity between social groups, for example, neighboring lineages. In the Yombe variants of the *Lemba n'kobe* (figure 21), male and female complementarity is couched in a number of metaphoric contrasts summed up in the names *Tsasa-Lemba* and *Pfemba-Lemba* respectively.

Figure 21
Tukobe of the Western *Lemba* region:
 Mayombe



The iconography of *Tsasa* and *Pfemba* is rather complex and needs further clarification. Firstly, *Pfemba* is not the same as *mpemba* (chalk, whiteness, clarity), despite Babutidi's use of the term (10.6; 10.42; 10.48) and scholarly attempts to explain the apparent contradiction of "red" symbolism being named "white."¹¹ *Pfemba*, the "female" satchel, is indeed "red," as Bittremieux's research into the Mayombe *nkobe* he collected (figure 21) indicates.¹² The *Pfemba* packet in *Lemba* is closely associated with the well-known *Pfemba* (also *Phemba*) maternity figures of the Mayombe and the coast, figures which reveal often a reddish hue of *tukula* anointment. These figures, which attracted collectors' attention in the last century and are therefore widespread in European museums, are in turn related to an *n'kisi* cult which had to do with women's problems in general and midwifery in particular. Bastian and Pechuel-Loesch, who visited a *Pfemba* center in the 1870's, recorded a legend about the well-known midwife who founded the movement.¹³

Ethnographic research by Lehuard has identified the pose of these children in arms and laps of *Pfemba* maternity figures as dead children being mourned by their mothers.¹⁴ One possible interpretation of this puzzling posture, one which I propose, is that these children are immaculate-conception, spirit children akin to *simbi* children "taken" by the spirits. In this way they reconcile, or mediate at an abstract level, the domestic role of childbearing with the notion of female rulership. In Chapter 2, I suggested that one could find many variations on the theme of fertility—augmenting local kin groups—and leadership transcending kinship to create an overarching political order. Ancient Loango and Sonyo noble marriages served a purely political purpose, as was seen in Chapter 2, and were commonly not even consummated. In *Lemba*, where fertility of the local clan section was combined with political alliances, *Pfemba* "redness" in the "female" section of the *n'kobe* offered a unique alternative resolution of this problem of fertility and leadership, of the exclusivity of local kinship and the need to create broader alliances.

This male-female relationship as articulated in whiteness and redness, respectively, is extended further by the relationship of the tree-climbing *mbala* civet cat to the burrowing rodent *nkumbi*, in whose skins *Tsasa-Lemba* and *Pfemba-Lemba* are kept. This metaphor is nearly identical to that of the eastern variant (Chapter 5) except that there the *nkumbi* skin contained the male "white" ingredients, and the *musimba*, another tree-climbing cat, contained the female element. However, eastern sources are not reliable enough to make anything of this symbolic inversion.

The third satchel in Babutidi's depiction of the *n'kobe* (figure 21) extends several domains of the above metaphor—social roles and small animals—to the patrifilial line of *Lemba*. Hair from the heads of the *Lemba* chief priest, from the presiding *Lemba* father, and the neophyte, along with leaves of *lemba-lemba* and *dingongo* beans, are placed in a container of the skins of *nsezi* and *kubu* antelopes and *nkaka*, the pangolin. The correlation of these skins to the three roles is not given; however, their stereotypes are suggestive. *Nsezi* is slight and clever, swift and evasive, and is depicted in fables as able to outwit larger animals. *Kubu* is a marsh antelope. Pangolin is recognized not only for its anomalous character, its scales and its mammalian features such as suckling its young, but also for its long tongue which can penetrate any cavity in a termite mound. Indications are that the metaphor linking *Tsasa* and *Pfemba* to *mbala* and *nkumbi* skins also relates the three figures of patrifilial continuity—from mystical purity to profanity—to the three animals whose characteristics extend from water to land, from inner to outer qualities. Combined, the three satchels in animal skin situate the key social roles of *Lemba* through marriage and patrifiliality in terms of natural attributes, animal and cosmological, as shown in figure 22. The cosmological “coordinates” appear to be plotted on two axes: one vertical, linking trees to underground burrows, the other linking the water, sign of mystical communion, with land and the outside with the inside of an anthill or termite mound.

The column of plants links the above-mentioned three satchels, known as the “domestic abode of *Lemba*,” to the fourth satchel in the *n'kobe*, known as the “power of *Lemba*.” Whereas “abode” is contained in wild animals' skins, “power” is contained in a domestic plant, raphia. Whereas “abode's” plants are semidomesticated, wild plants growing in the village, “power's” plants, many in number, grow wild. Subtle contrastive principles of inversion appear to be at work here. Whereas the cosmological spacing and character traits of the animals explained their use in defining social roles in *Lemba*, the use of raphia, and the contents of the satchel called “power,” define another attribute in *Lemba*, its adherent's skill or ability in capturing the extensive, outside, wild, and public forces. The plants listed in Babutidi's “power” satchel are like those collected in Kwamba's northern variant during the priests' final trek onto the savanna and to the cemetery. In Fukiau's account raphia is included because it stands for the *Lemba* priest's ability to journey far without being interrupted. The cognate satchel in another Mayombe *n'kobe* (see figure 21, collected by Bittremieux) contains many trade goods, including iron slag,

Figure 22
 Dominant metaphor of correspondences,
 Western variant of *Lemba*

author's analytic category	name	sexual roles and social identities	substance and color	animal order	cosmologic space	plants
domestic abode	"Tsasa"	male	white "clear" <i>mpemba</i>	<i>mbala</i> cat	aboveground, tree-level	
	"P'emba"	female	red <i>tukula</i>	<i>n'kumbi</i> rat	burrows underground	
		high priest		<i>kubu</i> antelope	water	lemba- lemba
		Lemba Father		<i>n'kaka</i> pangolin	termite mound	di- ngongo bean
		Lemba child		<i>nseji</i> antelope	forest	
public power					savanna	raphia palm

a nail, a key, a ring, trade beads, and shells. Dapper's account of *Lemba* from seventeenth-century Loango has European goods (trade beads, a bottle, a bell) and shells bespeaking the coast laid upon a "mat," surely a raphia mat. Running throughout the contents of the *tukobe* is this theme, then, of the power that comes from knowing and controlling the outside, the realm beyond the domestic.

In most *tukobe* this concept "beyond the domestic" is linked to the ancestors, either in the form of a cultic hero's effigy in the *nkobe* in the form of a small "nzita" figure used on a dance rattle, or as an *mbinda* figure hung on the belt, or as a piece of *ntobe* tomb earth. The inclusion of savanna or forest plants in this concept's representation, as in the satchel "power of *Lemba*" above, would be consonant with a broader, cosmological statement linking ancestral and natural powers.

The *Lemba* drums, bracelets, rattles, and statues are the instruments with which this power is captured and used. Numerous texts speak of the ancestors or mythic heroes being "in" the drums, or of them "speaking" through the drums, or of *Lemba* being "drummed up" by the *Lemba* father or chief priest. The drum of *Lemba*—whether *nkonzi*, *nkonko*, or *ngoma*—was frequently copied in miniature, the cavity being filled with plant substance (the "powers" above) to retain or conjure a spell (*ndokolo*). Such a process of representing a representation, or metaphorizing a metaphor, may

permissibly be termed fetishization. The miniature drums of *Lemba* were either hung on statues, or carried about on one's body as a charm (see plates 13–16). On Woyo pot-lids illustrating proverbs, *Lemba* was represented by the drum motif.¹⁵

Bracelets, like drums, contained the power of *Lemba*. The *Lemba* bracelets were sometimes wrapped in raphia fronds to capture the palm fiber's connotation of movement beyond the domestic realm.¹⁶ Elsewhere the bracelets were regarded as substitutes for the drums, for, as Konda suggests (9.9–11), the wearer could spit palm wine on the bracelet, rub it, or simply wear it in public to demonstrate his real social status and power. Motifs appearing on *Lemba* bracelets indicate specific applications of power. In the western variant, male and female images representing the *Lemba* household are very common. The male figure, usually seated, is accompanied by one, two, or three female figures. The male figure is holding a staff, whereas the female figures occasionally have in their hands what appears to be a pestle or pipe. Between the figures, and on bracelets without human figures, other motifs make their appearance.

One of the most common of these decorative motifs on the bracelets is the cowrie shell. It may also appear atop the *n'kobe*, or atop one of the interior containers of the *n'kobe*, or within a satchel. Its general meaning is that of cherished continuity in the populace, that is the precious quality of children, and the importance of fertility. It thus defines, on the bracelets, the relationship of the male to female figures also represented there.

In a cognate position to the cowrie, many bracelets display a flower or "spider-web" motif, with four, six, eight, or ten "threads." The exact meaning of this motif remains unclear. It resembles Cameroon spider masks which have the same motif atop the human head. The spider occurs as mystical mediator in Kongo legends, including the trickster *Lemba* origin myth to be examined shortly. The motif may also represent the *diyowa* of *Lemba*, the place of purification and clarity in the face of the powers of the beyond. On one bracelet the motif is presented as a four-petaled flower or wheel and as a cross. Other bracelets juxtapose the flower/wheel "cosmogram" with a motif resembling a bow tie, but which is the rhetorician's charm *mbondo fula*, worn or held during intensive palaver sessions by the professional advocate (*nzonzi*) (plate 12). *Mbondo fula* appears on pot-lid proverbs along with the *Lemba* drum and other musical instruments, to acclaim the virtues of authority in the household and of persuasiveness in public life.¹⁷ In light of the importance of rhe-



Plate 5. Lemba medicine chest lid from Mayombe, with evidence of pointed *zinga* shells, cowrie shell stand (center), and smith's bellow motif. Collected by L. Bitremieux prior to 1937. (MRAC 43040.) Contents depicted in Figure 21.

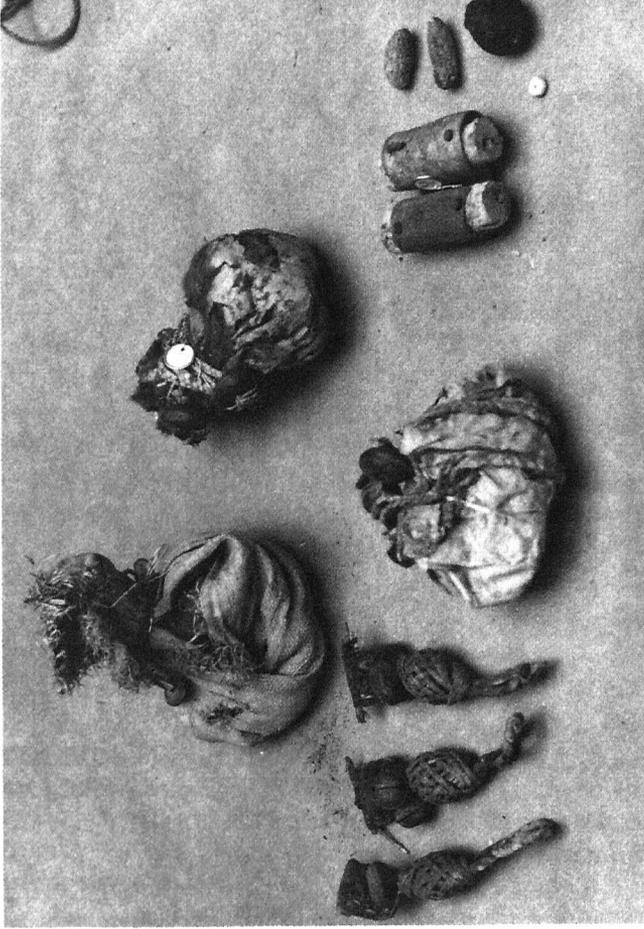


Plate 6. Contents of Lemba chest (in Plate 5), identified further in Figure 21.



Plate 7. “Powers of Lemba” raphia bag contents from Lemba chest (Plates 5 and 6), including ironworking articles, locally manufactured and traded; trade beads, shells, horns, and seed pods. (MRAC 43040.) See Figure 21.

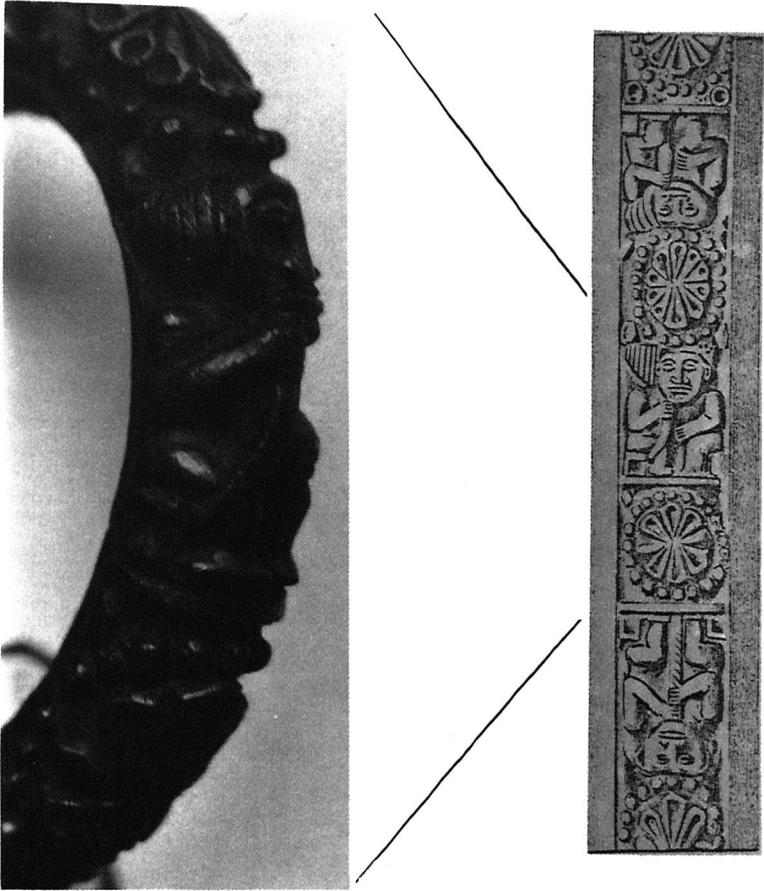


Plate 8. Detail of cast copper *Lemba* bracelet from Loango coast, collected by Adolph Bastian, ca. 1870. Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin-Dahlem III C 347. Drawing of full bracelet with three figures and multi-petal motif from A. Bastian, *Deutsche Expedition an der Loango Küste*, Jena, 1874. Inside cover plate.



Plate 9. Brass bracelet with cowrie motif, often denoting fertility, possibly in this case in connection with *Lemba*, Kunya. (Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin-Dahlem, III C 6524. Donated by Robert Visser, 1896.)



Plate 10. Wooden model for *Lemba* bracelet imprint in casting sand or clay, with multi-petal motif over human figure; Vili. (Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin-Dahlem, III C 8136. Donated by Robert Visser, n.d. [1890's].)



Plate 11. Cowrie motif on opposite side of wooden bracelet model pictured in Plate 10. (Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin-Dahlem, III C 8136. Donated by Robert Visser.)



Plate 12. Copper Lemba bracelet with floral motif (top) and orator's charm *mbondo-fula* (bottom). (MRAC 24985, collected by J. Renkin, 1909.)



Plate 13. Brass Lemba bracelet with four human figures. (MRAC 54.60.2, collector unknown.)

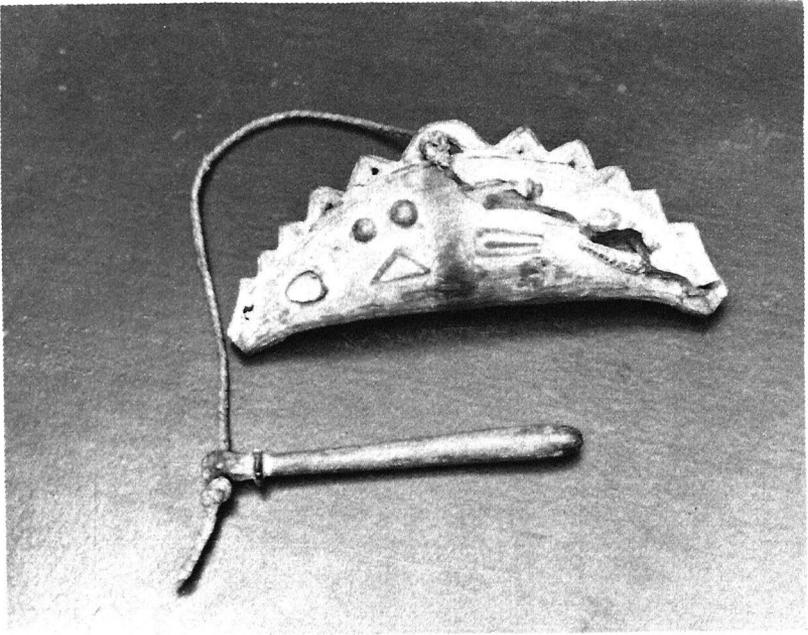


Plate 14. *Ngoma-Lemba* drum, Mayombe. (MRAC 34778, donated by L. Bittremieux, n.d.)

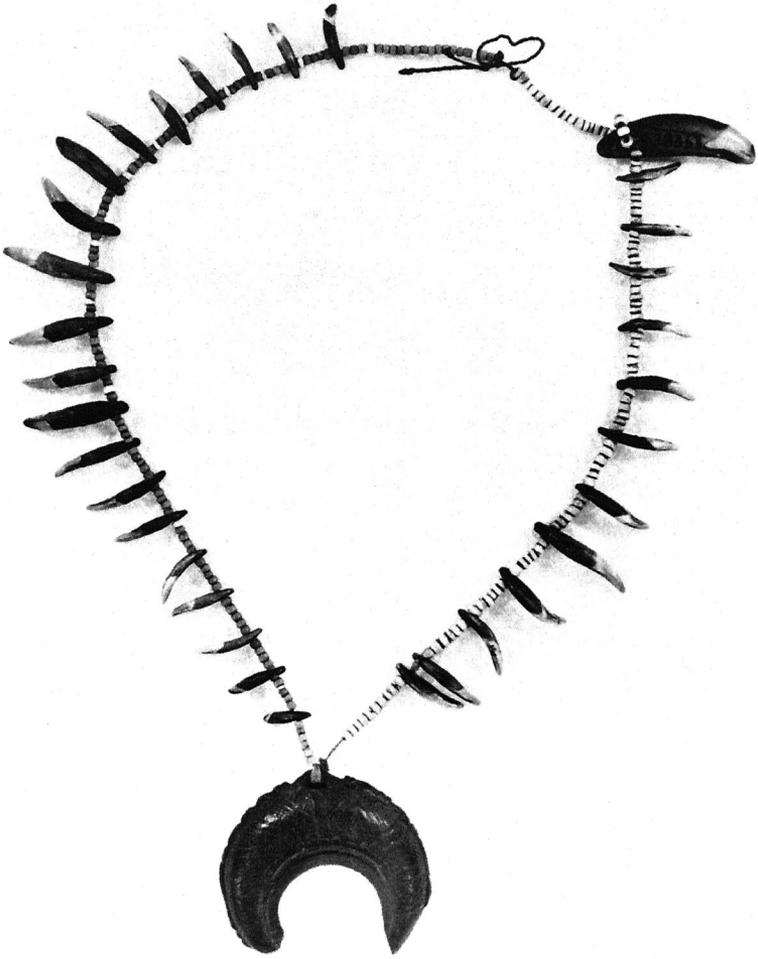


Plate 15. Miniature charm *Leмба* drum necklace, probably Loango coast.
(Linden Museum, Stuttgart, 38363, donated by Robert Visser, 1905.)

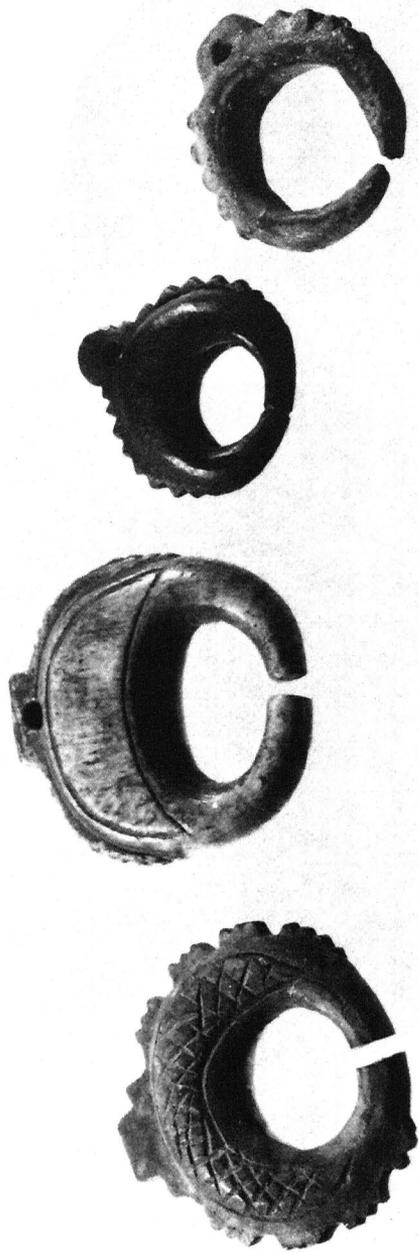


Plate 16. Miniature Lemba drum charm pendants; left to right, in wood (MRAC 35342), bone (MRAC 43695), wood (MRAC 69, 59, 498 from Mayumba, collected by M.J. Schaa), metal (MRAC 53.74.1323 from Kangu Lufu, Mayombe, collected 1953 by A. Maesen).

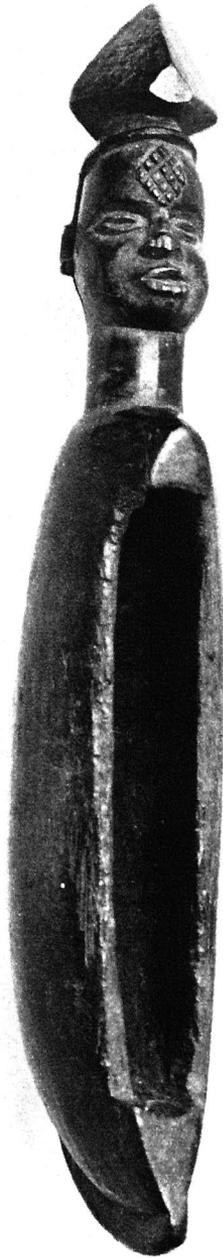


Plate 17. *Mukonzi a Lemba* drum, Mayombe. (Statens Etnografiska Museum, Stockholm, 1919.1.437, donated by Karl Laman.)



Plate 18. Couple seated on trunk (in wood, 14 cm.), Landana, Cabinda. (Afrika Museum Berg en Dal, 177, n.d.) That this is a depiction of a *Lemba* couple is suggested by the figures' matching bracelets, female figure's miniature drum necklace pendant, the posture of closeness, and the caps with characteristic "multi-petal" motif on male's cap (see Plate 19).



Plate 19. Couple seated on trunk, Landana, Cabinda (rear view). (Afrika Museum Berg en Dal, 177, n.d.) Multi-petal motif on top of cap of male figure contains spiral recalling similar motifs on bracelets—above heads—and on *Lemba* chest lids. Although obscure, this design is thought by some to denote idea of “navel of head,” i.e., the fontanelle, or “fount of wisdom” from beyond. This would explain why many *Lemba* figures, like contemporary Kongo prophets, wear caps, or protect hair.

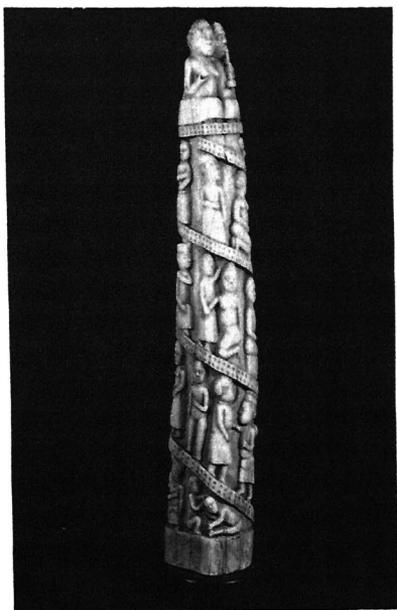
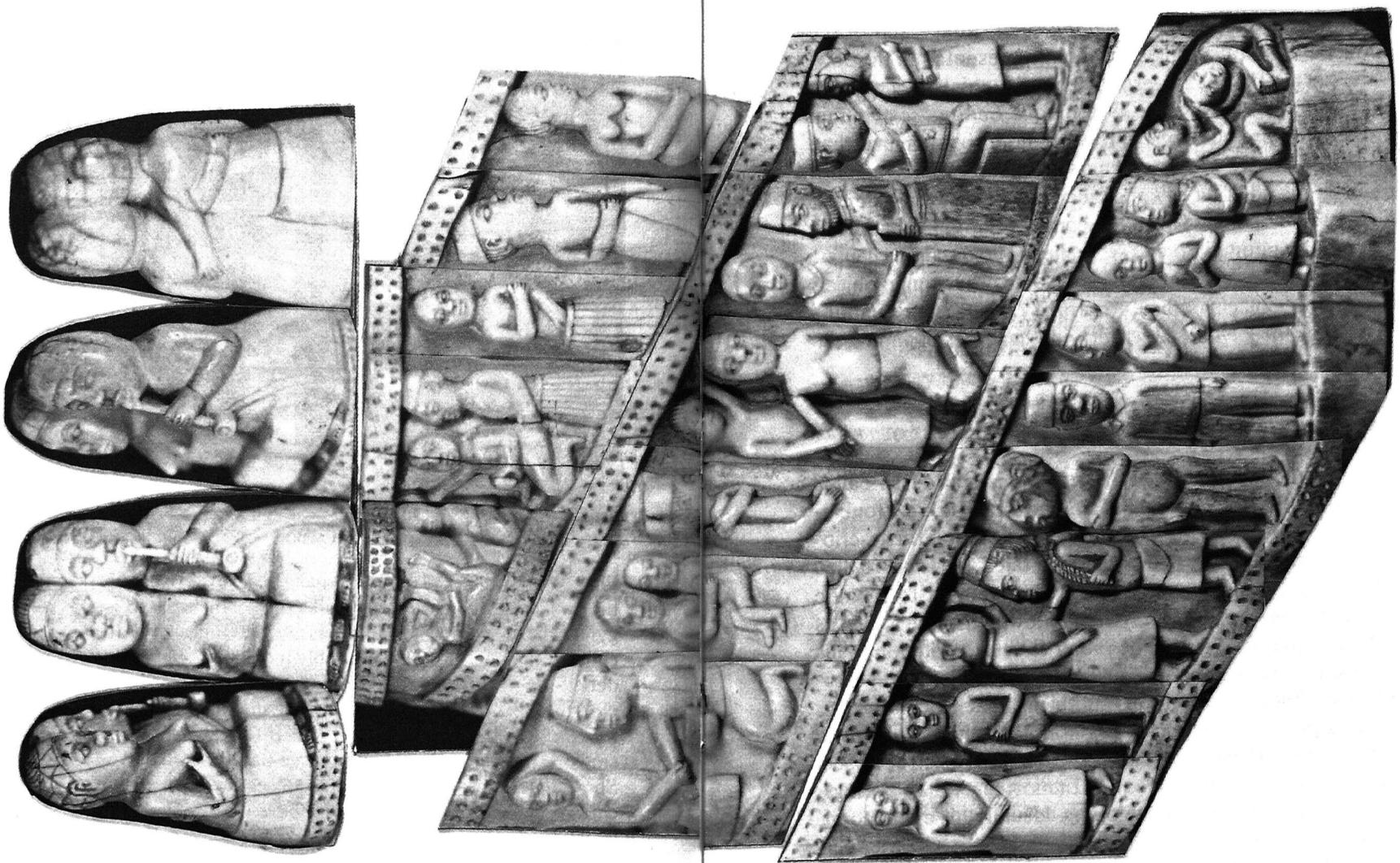


Plate 20. This undated (40 cm.) Loango ivory ((A) front view, (B) rear view) from the Julian and Grace Rymar collection depicts a series of couples and polygynous household groups in poses and costumes characteristic of a nineteenth-century Loango gathering, possibly including *Lemba* séances. As shown in the detailed view on the next 2 pages, the top couple, arms embracing, suggests the closeness of a *Lemba* couple. He is smoking a pipe, recalling references to *Lemba* pipes (B-D III C 13873 and B-D Katalog No. 372, Appendix) and to smoking in the *Lemba* ceremony (see Brazil *Lemba* song, Chapter 8, opening). She is holding her breast in a Kongo gesture of benediction. The tops of their caps bear spiral designs similar to those of the couple depicted in Plates 19 and 20. Other figures and scenes in the panels of the ivory are less clear, but depict possible ceremonial meaning as well. The top scene, which suggests defloration, childbirth, and an emphasis on fertility, stands in interesting inverse relationship to the bottom scene, in which the accent is the top of the head. Presumably the top figure is female, the bottom male. The two depictions match the iconic duality in *Lemba* symbolism on the integral complementarity of fertility, symbolized often by the cowrie shell on bracelets and the medicine chest, and on power or clairvoyance, symbolized by the multi-petal motif on bracelets, the medicine chest, and atop caps. However, a fuller interpretation of this rich piece awaits the systematic study of several centuries of Loango ivory carving and related art.



torical skill in public elsewhere in *Lemba's* self-image and of the equal importance of a flourishing household represented in the cowrie, it is likely that the flower/spider/wheel motif, which in one or two cases is a "cross" of four spokes, is a unique *Lemba* cosmogram embodying the complex values of *Lemba* at a more abstract level than is given in any of the texts at my disposal. In the Ngoyo region it appears in red on the lid of the *n'kobe* (see plate 4). Another *Lemba n'kobe* lid (figure 21, plate 5) restates comparable values with the arrangement of four-pointed, long *zinga* shells surrounded a center, interspersed with blacksmith's bellows and some other round object. Again, these are the objects of the "powers of *Lemba*" in Babutidi's account, which link the *Lemba* adherent with the forces of nature, the beyond, trade, and public politics.

THE LYRICAL: MONI-MAMBU TRICKSTER AND THE ORIGINS OF *LEMBA*

Trickster, represented across Kongo society, is variously called "Seer of troubles" (Moni-Mambu, Tsimona-Mambu), "Troublemaker" (Mumboni-a-Mpasi), quarreller, or some other term describing his problem-making nature in most secular tales. He is also called visionary and healer where legends of him are related to a cultic context, as in the *Lemba* etiology myth to follow, where he is cast as the culture hero who goes to God the father to seek a solution to his wives' troubles, encounters many difficulties and trials, but eventually receives his father's recognition, and brings back *Lemba*.

If Mahungu's principal characteristic was the inherent dualistic nature of a social role, Moni-Mambu's is the lack of a sense of what is right at the right time in social discourse. In most legendary settings, his character is in the process of developing. Usually his civil, moral, and even physical sensibilities are incomplete. In episode after episode he is caught up in social intricacies and ambiguities he does not understand, confused by semantic nuances too subtle for his experience. It is as if he has learned the phonemes of human interaction but has not heard of syntax. He is like Mahungu in one sense. In some narratives Moni-Mambu develops into a figure of mediation and wisdom, yet in other narratives he is parodied as unsuccessful mediator, indeed, as a tragic figure who gets caught on the dilemmas of his own tricks. Whereas both tendencies are developed in a single Mahungu narrative, they are separate in the trickster narratives. In the first of the following texts, trickster brings *Lemba*.

Text 11

- (1) There once was a man with two wives, each with a food prohibition: one could eat no lizard, the other no partridge. Their husband brought home the prohibited meat and, after discussing whether they should eat it, they gave in to temptation and prepared the food, not knowing what would be their due. They ate and suffered swollen stomachs and cramps.
- (2) To find a cure for his wives the man went to Fly. He told Fly of his wives' food prohibitions, and asked him to "smell out" the cause of the swelling. Fly "smelled" and danced about, but could not divine the cause. The man, dissatisfied, got his money back. Then he went to another *nganga* diviner, Night-Swallow, who researched the cause and told him he would need to go see God the Father with his problem.

THE JOURNEY

- (3) Taking his *nkutu* travel sack, the man set out to see God the Father. Just outside his village he stubbed his toe on a small stump which spoke out at him, "Go on, Tsimona-Mambu, pay attention, this is a mysterious *n'kisi* affair."
- (4) Tsimona-Mambu walked on until he came to an abandoned village with only one house left in it. As he approached, the keyhole in the door spoke out at him, "Go on but pay attention, for this is a mysterious *n'kisi* affair."
- (5) He met a woman working her groundnut patch. She inquired where he was going, and he replied, "To God the Father, with the blessing of the *nganga*." She invited him to eat a snack, offering him potatoes with her child, who was resting under a shelter. Meanwhile she returned to her work. After a time she called to ask how he liked the potatoes—and where was her child? He had eaten it, he retorted, as she had told him to do. "Tsimona-Mambu has eaten my child! The murderer! Come and seize and bind him," she called out to the menfolk. Tsimona-Mambu was taken before the judge, but because he had not been aware of what he was doing, he was freed.
- (6) Again free, Tsimona-Mambu walked on until he came to a stream, surprised to see the water flowing upstream. Disbelieving, he exclaimed, "That can't be! You will run dry!" The

stream answered, "Don't worry, and go on. This is a mysterious *n'kisi* affair."

- (7) Tsimona-Mambu next saw a young man tapping palm. To his amazement, the man had left his bones on the ground and was climbing the tree flesh only. When Tsimona-Mambu asked him the meaning of all this, he retorted, "Go on, it's a mysterious *n'kisi* affair."
- (8) He walked on again and encountered a man with a gun across his shoulder. "Where are you going?" the man greeted him. Tsimona-Mambu explained about his wives and the doctor's blessing. The man interrupted him, "Can you shoot?" Tsimona-Mambu replied that he could. "Take my gun then and go hunt monkeys." Tsimona-Mambu returned to the palm, where the youth told him to "stay hidden, for the monkeys will soon come for nuts." As soon as there was a rustle Tsimona-Mambu shot out, dropping the game to the ground. He made a net of palm fronds, and dragged his catch to the nearest village. Curious people gathered. Alas, it was their headman. In anger the people seized Tsimona-Mambu and brought him to the judge. But because he had not known better, and because he had used the hunter's gun, Tsimona-Mambu was freed.

ASSEMBLING THE SACHEL CONTENTS

- (9) Tsimona-Mambu encountered a wood-borer working on a log. He called out, "Tsimona-Mambu, where are you going?" He told him "To see God the Father." The beetle requested to be taken along, so Tsimona-Mambu put him in his *nkutu* bag.
- (10) They came to another village with only an old cripple at home. "Where are you going?" this latter asked. "To God the Father" was the reply. The cripple asked to be taken along, but Tsimona-Mambu refused because of his many sores, and left. Before long the path thinned and became a wild animal track. Returning, he asked the cripple where the road could be found. The old man ribbed him, saying "Aren't you sorry you didn't take me along?" So Tsimona-Mambu packed him into his bag, and was off, the cripple directing.
- (11) They walked a while until they came to a giant spider spinning her house. "Good-day, Tsimona-Mambu" she spoke out. "Where are you going?" He told of his two wives and how he was going to see God the Father. "Can I come along?" the

spider requested. Reluctantly, because of her big crooked legs, he put her in his bag and continued.

- (12) A big wasp flew down to meet them. "Where are you going?" it inquired. "Can I come along?" He told her where he was going, but refused at first to let her come along because he felt she would make an angry nuisance of herself. But she insisted, so he put her in his bag and moved on.
- (13) Shortly they came upon the summer wind, which blows in the hottest month of the year. "Yeka, yeka, yeka" it was singing. "Tsimona-Mambu, where are you going? I can reward you for letting me come along by drying up everything." Tsimona-Mambu replied, "You who scorches the whole earth, how can I take you?" "In your bag, of course." So he packed up the hot wind and moved on.
- (14) As soon as he had gone from there he was met by another gust of wind. "Brrrrr, Tsimona-Mambu," it blustered, "where are you going?" "The wives are sick and I am going to God the Father," answered Tsimona-Mambu. The wind wanted along. "What? A storm in a satchel?" But in the end Tsimona-Mambu packed it too in his bag and went on.
- (15) Soon he came across a big *kumbi* bush rat who greeted him with "Where to Tsimona-Mambu?" "Why to God the Father." "Can I come along?" Tsimona-Mambu agreed, put the *kumbi* rat in his satchel, and walked on.
- (16) Eventually he came to a village and encountered the headman in the square. "Ho, Tsimona-Mambu, what's new?" And Tsimona-Mambu again told his story about the two wives, how they were sick, and that he was going to God the Father. "Can you shoot well?" interrupted the headman. "Of course," said Tsimona-Mambu. So the headman gave Tsimona-Mambu his gun and told him to go stand guard at the banana grove overnight and shoot the first creature which would come along to steal bananas. Early the next day along came the headman's wife to get her supply of bananas. Tsimona-Mambu, believing her to be a beast out to steal bananas, shot her. Making a quick holder of banana leaves, he laid his prey in it and came to the headman proudly showing it off. People gathered. Shocked, the headman exclaimed, "Why, you've killed my first wife, my beloved MaMbanda!" He called the young men to bind Tsimona-Mambu hand and foot, but to leave his mouth free.

Then he took him to the judge. When he had told his story, how the headman had given him the gun, he was declared innocent and released.

- (17) Then Tsimona-Mambu came to the edge of the Loango River, and hesitated. How would he get from the river bank to God? An idea came to him. *Tsik'utuk'utu*, he said to his satchel, "Are you still there?" "Yes," it answered. "Say, is the spider still along?" "Certainly." "Well then, bring her out." And in one-two-three she had spun a thread across the river, a bridge from earth to heaven.
- (18) Tsimona-Mambu mounted the bridge, higher and ever higher, until he walked right into heaven. As soon as they had arrived there, the small cripple gave him these instructions. "When we come to the middle of a village, you will see a big man sitting on a stool. Don't greet him. But you'll see another, sitting on a mat on the ground. That is God the Father, whom you will greet." Tsimona-Mambu did just as told, and passed the big man and came before God the Father. With three hand-claps—*mue-mue-mue*—he greeted God and began to tell Him his problems.

THE TRIALS OF FATHER'S RECOGNITION

- (19) "O Father God! I have two wives. One is not supposed to eat lizard, the other no partridge. Both have eaten what is forbidden, and have swollen stomachs. I went to the doctors for advice, and was told to come to You. That's why I've come."
- (20) God spoke no word. Tsimona-Mambu implored him, "O God Father, hear my problem, for I am your son." But God denied this, saying "I shall believe that you are my son if green banana stems carry ripe bananas, and if black palm nuts turn red. Only then shall I know that I bore you."
- (21) Fortunately Tsimona-Mambu's bag knew what to do, and suggested in a whisper to him that everyone should first sleep. The bananas and palm nuts would be ripe by morning. God agreed. During the night Wasp went out to sting up the banana stems so that the bananas ripened hurriedly, and the palm nuts similarly so they would color.
- (22) Then next morning Tsimona-Mambu told God's overseer to go and inspect the bananas and palms. To his amazement they

were ripe. He notified God and asked, "Do you believe now that Tsimona-Mambu is your son?" God did not yet believe it, demanding that before he would recognize him, Tsimona-Mambu would need to gather a large package of the strongest forest vines in one night. Again Tsimona-Mambu consulted his bag, and through it, advised all to first sleep. When morning came the bag called the gust of wind which blew the vines together. The overseer saw this and implored God to recognize his son, but God refused to recognize Tsimona-Mambu.

- (23) To recognize him as His son, Tsimona-Mambu would have to burn down the moist wood in the just-cleared field. Only then would God acknowledge that he had engendered him. Once again the satchel advised that all should sleep before the test. In the morning God's overseer took Tsimona-Mambu out to the field and invited him to prove himself by setting fire to and burning the decaying vegetation. Tsimona-Mambu called into his satchel for the hot summer wind; it came, blasted and withered the clearing—*yaya, yaya, yeka, yeka, yeka*—and all dried up so Tsimona-Mambu could easily burn it down to the ground.
- (24) The overseer implored God to consider TsimonaMambu's problem so that he might return home, but the great Lord insisted, "I engendered him not!" Tsimona-Mambu must first drink a calabash of palm wine while hanging from the palm tree on the back slope. So with God's overseer Tsimona-Mambu found the tree. He climbed it, found the calabash, and began to drink. As he drank the wine—*na kiu, klukkluk*—the overseer addressed the tree, "fly up—*kuna tsala kayeka*—into the highest heights so that Tsimona-Mambu dies from it." And the palm tree jerked itself loose and sprouted higher and higher into the sky with Tsimona-Mambu hanging on his life belt from the tree's crown. High up in the air Tsimona-Mambu asked his bag what he should do, certain he would die. The bag said, "pronounce the spell that the overseer sinks into the ground so far that he too dies." So as Tsimona-Mambu spoke the overseer began to sink into the ground, deeper and deeper to his neck. "Help, Father God!" he cried. And to Tsimona-Mambu he said, "Surely you are God's son." As he spoke the palm tree settled down to where it had been before. And Tsimona-Mambu permitted the overseer to crawl up out of the ground,

saying to him, "Let's go together because we are equal in supernatural strength."

- (25) Again they were before God the Father. Again the overseer implored God to consider Tsimona-Mambu's affair and acknowledge him as His son. But still God refused, stating he would only recognize Tsimona-Mambu if he would first show himself capable of felling the *mfuma* cottonwood tree growing on the back slope with one blow of the axe. Only then would he recognize Tsimona-Mambu as his son.
- (26) Tsimona-Mambu asked the bag what to do now, and received the word that everyone must first sleep. This they did, including God. Then Tsimona-Mambu called the wood-borer out of the bag and told him to go to the *mfuma* tree and hollow out the inside so that only a thin ring remained. When morning dawned Tsimona-Mambu asked the overseer to show him the tree. The wood-borer had left a mark on the tree to show him where to let the axe fall. Tsimona-Mambu took the axe and with one blow brought the tree crashing down.
- (27) The overseer once more implored God to "Take up the affair of Tsimona-Mambu so he can return home. Admit that you are his Father." And God finally showed his pity, saying "Go set him something to eat in the house; he has worked hard." Tsimona-Mambu entered, sat down on the bed, and ate what had been put before him. But after he was in the house God told his overseer to lock the door so that Tsimona-Mambu could not leave, and would surely die inside.
- (28) When Tsimona-Mambu realized that the door had been locked, he consulted his bag. He was told to have the *kumbi* rat dig a tunnel under the wall of the house. Several days passed and Tsimona-Mambu became hungry. He instructed the rat to bring him food by dragging it under the wall through the tunnel. In this way he got a fat she-goat, a wild beast, and another goat.
- (29) After a long time God ordered the overseer to open the house and remove Tsimona-Mambu's body. When the overseer opened the door, and Tsimona-Mambu jumped out alive, the overseer ran back to God saying that Tsimona-Mambu was alive. He implored God, "Can't you see that he's your son? Take up his affair now." And thus Tsimona-Mambu at last won his audience before God the Father.

THE LEMBA MEDICINE REVEALED AND TAKEN HOME

- (30) God spoke to Tsimona-Mambu: "Bring me a small pot covered with a palm *kete-kete* leaf. Also bring the two copper rings that are in the house. The one ring you are to put on your wife's arm, the other on your own. These are the arm-rings of *DiLemba*.
- (31) Tsimona-Mambu brought all the things God had instructed and then God questioned him: "Do you have the fruit of the eggplant and the *dilemba-lemba* plant in the region where you live?" Tsimona-Mambu said he did. "Then," said God, "take all these things and use them to heal your wives. At the outskirts of the village, pick some egg-plant fruit and *dilemba-lemba*. Crush them in your hand into a pulp. Take the leaves from the pot, and squeeze the juice of the two plants into it and give the juice to both wives to drink. Their bellies will surely go down and they will be cured and will be able to recount what they have seen with their own eyes. With the two bracelets, you shall do as I said: Put one on the arm of your wife, and the other on your own arm. Go in Peace, and do as I have told you."
- (32) As soon as Tsimona-Mambu came to the edge of God's village he instructed the giant spider to crawl out of the satchel and spin a web down to earth. On his way back he set off all the creatures he had brought along. When all had been let off, he came near to his village and went immediately to see his wives. Their stomachs were still swollen—*dio yukuku! dio yila yila!*—up to their necks. He went to the village outskirts and picked the *lemba-lemba* leaves and the egg-plant fruit, and prepared the medicine in the small pot as God had instructed. When the wives had drunk it, both stood up and were healed.
- (33) To one of his wives he gave the copper bracelet and placed it on her arm, calling her his *Nankazi Lemba*. The other ring he put on his own arm. Then he told his wives everything he had heard from God the Father. They were amazed, saying that this is indeed an important enough cure that people the whole world over ought to be inaugurated to it, for it came directly from God the Father.
- (34) Since then, people in this land are initiated to *Lemba*.¹⁸

The manner in which an array of objects, personalities, and situations confronts the hero on his journey suggests that if he is careful order will emerge from the confusion of mundane life, as the divina-

tion suggested. He encounters warnings, traps, and offers of assistance. The dichotomy of fly, the unsuccessful daytime seer, and night-swallow, the successful nighttime seer, indicates the type of cosmological order that will emerge if he follows the right path. This initial divination scene (11.2) picks up the same imagery as songs elsewhere in *Lemba's* initiation of the "sight" of the night-jar and the bat (1.76-7).

The warnings about dabbling with mystical powers come from auspicious objects and characters. Keyholes are passages, and abandoned villages are cemeteries inhabited by transitory ancestor-type figures. Streams, especially those that run the wrong way, are mystical paths, and palm wine is the embodiment of communion with invisible agents, and palmwine tappers their mediators. These warnings are a prelude to the true mediation that will follow; they, therefore, suggest the first "true speech" the hero can trust.

The traps come in the form of encounters with conventional human beings making perfectly reasonable requests of the hero. However, in each case the hero takes the instruction wrongly—in fact, literally—thereby ignoring the more important moral order. So, Moni-Mambu, asked to "eat groundnuts with the child," eats groundnuts and the child (11.5). Asked to shoot the monkey robbing palmnuts, he shoots the headman instead (11.8). Asked to guard the banana tree in the village, he shoots the chief's favorite wife (11.16). In each case he has heard only the shallow meaning of the instruction, and in carrying out the instruction literally he has violated basic moral precepts which also happen to be *Lemba*-related precepts: the respect for offspring, strong moral authority that controls collection of palm tree products (recall the palm symbolism in the powers of the outside), and order within the village under the tutelage of a first (*Lemba*) wife.

The offers of assistance increase as he moves along, and in due course he has assembled in his satchel a host of helpers, the *bilongo* ingredients, for his *n'kisi* bag. These helpers are, of course, those symbols of mediation that assist him in gaining recognition of God the father. The woodborer, the first to be placed in the satchel and next to the last to be used, relates the vertical, untouched tree to the fallen, horizontal tree, used in domestic arts and crafts. The cripple, found in an abandoned village, shows Moni-Mambu the "path" to God his father, just as later, when he is drawn from the satchel, he shows the hero his true father. The spider's web from "this shore to that," from earth to heaven, links the visible and invisible worlds. A common symbol of mediation, the spider or the spider's web may be repre-

sented in the “flower/wheel” motif discussed above (see figure 20; plates 4, 8, 10, 12). Wasp’s sting mediates raw (black) palmnuts and ripe (red) palmnuts. Hot wind of the dry season allows the fields and savannas to be burned, preparing the way for the fertile growth of crops to follow. The whirlwind brings a bundle of forest vines out and makes them accessible for human cultural order. Finally, *kumbi* rat, predictably, opens up the closed and choked, permitting the flow of food, patrifilial recognition, and life itself.

The ingredients of the satchel thus mediate a series of oppositions or rhythms ranging from the seasons, to the processes of human culture, to the intricacies of human interaction, especially patrifiliality and husband/wife alliance. It is also apparent that the processes of differentiation and mediation are being worked out. In society one must learn to differentiate between people and animals, between major and secondary wives, and so on. As well, there must be effective mediation of differences, as the satchel’s contents point out. In the case of Moni-Mambu the ambiguity of social life—its traps—is overcome by learning to differentiate and then to mediate. In the next text, failure to learn life’s underlying true categories is illustrated by the same trickster. Although Moni-Mambu discovers the rules of life and interaction, he uses them to destroy instead of to construct.

Text 12

- (1) Eleven women went fishing and paired off two by two, leaving one out. She was joined by a stranger (a *ntebo* spirit), with whom she fished ten pools. When they had finished, they began dividing the fish under a palm tree, atop of which was a man. Every time the fish were counted, they had a different number. The stranger called fellow spirits to witness the count, and eventually many spirits had congregated. These spirits became very hostile to the woman, and would have killed her, but the palmwine tapper atop the tree dropped his calabash on the chief spirit’s head and frightened them away. He descended, married the woman, and one of their many children was Moni-Mambu.
- (2) On his way home from market one day Moni-Mambu came through a village of two brothers, sons of the same mother, who had never quarrelled. Moni-Mambu bathed in the river nearby and saw the nets of younger brother, a fisherman. At night he

- exchanged the nets with the calabashes of the older brother on a palm tree. In the morning each blamed the other, cursing, "your mother!" Moni-Mambu mocked them and left.
- (3) Moni-Mambu was offered "some peanuts with the children" by a woman harvesting a field. He made a fire, and roasted her children until their heads burst. Accused before the court, he was vindicated because the woman had told him to "eat peanuts with the children."
 - (4) Moni-Mambu arrived in a new village, saw no one, but heard pestles pounding mortars. The women at the outskirts of the village called him over to "pound them their mortars." He accepted, went and struck two dead with the pestle. A third escaped, seeking help. Moni-Mambu, bound and brought before the court, was accused but vindicated because he obeyed the women's instructions.
 - (5) A chief decided to hunt a savanna using fire. After clearing the air of witchcraft and activating his medicines, the men slept. Next morning arms and powder were distributed. Moni-Mambu was given a gun and told to shoot "anything that moves." When the hunt began he followed his instructions, killing snakes, lizards, one small girl, four hunting dogs, fifteen hunters, and the chief's wife. The chief threatened to kill him on the spot, but Moni-Mambu begged to be drowned in a river, not killed in a village. On route to the river he escaped.
 - (6) During a rainstorm Moni-Mambu found shelter in a cavity of a large tree, and discovered it was a leopard's den. The leopard arrived with a goat for her young to eat, whereupon Moni-Mambu attached a wooden hunting bell to the animal's tail. Believing herself hunted, the leopard fled and died of fright. Moni-Mambu killed her cub and took the goat for himself.
 - (7) The chief arranged for Moni-Mambu, who had little motivation, to be married. After having been married a while, his wife complained that she needed more than just manioc to feed him and sent him hunting. He shot an antelope which, as he grabbed it, fled leaving its skin in his hands. He pursued it to a river, but it escaped upstream while he went downstream. After a time he reached the village of his parents-in-law, who gave him to eat. His nose was dripping into the food, so he took it off and laid it down on a leaf, assuring it that he would pick it up later. A dog came along and stole it. He threw a firebrand at the dog, which

hit his in-laws' house, burning it to the ground. Going to the riverside to cut logs with which to build a new house, Moni-Mambu lost the axe in the water on the second tree. Diving into the water to fetch the axe, he was seized by a crocodile. Hawk (Na Yimbi), curious as to the identity of Crocodile's victim, asked to see it. Thrice Crocodile opened its mouth so the bird could see Moni-Mambu's face, and the third time the bird seized Moni-Mambu thus rescuing him.

- (8) After Moni-Mambu left the village of his parents-in-law, he met a young girl bathing in a side channel of a river, repeatedly dipping her head into the water. She told Moni-Mambu that bathing like this caused her no shame, even if he were her father-in-law. Hearing this, he cut off her head and put it in his bag. Presently he encountered a second girl eating some viands with pepper. He asked her to share them, but she retorted that she had none left. So he asked her to go fetch more. While she was away he ate the meat in the bowl and put in its stead the head of the first girl. When the second girl returned and saw the head in her bowl, she screamed in horror. Men came running with their weapons, Moni-Mambu told them how the ancients had eaten human heads. They believed him, and killed the girl.
- (9) Moni-Mambu, walking through an abandoned village, saw a human head drying on a pole and asked it how it had died. Its reply: "sickness and what not all else." When he came home and related the men in the men's hut this, they called him a liar. He challenged them to examine the head for themselves. If his story were false, they could kill him. They went, but when they asked the head the cause of its death, it remained silent. Returning, they threatened to kill Moni-Mambu immediately. The chief calmed them and convened a court. Moni-Mambu was charged as guilty and condemned to death. When he asked for water "to calm his heart" the chief refused, saying he had no heart; he was ordered speared to death. The dogs licked his blood and his corpse was thrown out on the savanna where witches are thrown. The people rejoiced the death of Moni-Mambu.¹⁹

The present text differs quite remarkably from the foregoing one in the character of the mediations enacted. Tsimona-Mambu bringer of *Lemba* medicine initially committed a number of errors, but then went on to become an effective mediator in not only cosmological but also human oppositions such as his relation to his father, his relation

to his wives, and theirs to each other. In the present text, Moni-Mambu, the cynical farceur, commits errors, is initially forgiven, but ultimately judged guilty of having willfully designed situations of misunderstanding, conflict, and violence, and he is condemned to the death of a witch.

In both texts generous use is made of the incongruous, the ambiguous, and the outright contradictory to stage episodes in which the hero may be cast as either an effective or ineffective mediator. In both texts episodes are related of the trickster's misunderstanding of an instruction: he understands a phrase literally without understanding its underlying intention. He is invited to "eat groundnuts [alternately potatoes, 11.5] with the children" (12.3), and he eats the children too. He is invited to join women working with mortars and pestles, to "strike them their mortars" (12.4), and he kills two women. He is invited to watch for a monkey in a palm tree, and he shoots the chief (11.8). He is invited to stand guard of a banana tree, and he shoots the chief's wife (11.16). He is invited to join a hunt and to "shoot everything that moves" (12.5), whereupon he shoots dogs, hunters, children, and so on. These passages of "rhetorical ambiguity" obviously make for excellent and anticipated storytelling devices to bring an audience into a responsive mood. They belong to the genre of the African dilemma tale represented across the entire continent.²⁰ Their incorporation in the trickster tale has the effect, however, of probing under the fabric of harmonious daily life to the difficulties of social discourse.

At the level of actions, as differentiated from words, the trickster figure commits deeds that are in sharp violation of the moral code of the society. He kills esteemed figures such as chiefs, first wives, headmen. But he also hunts the hunters, kills innocent children, confuses species when it comes to eating meats, approaches girls and women while they are bathing, and so on. Moni-Mambu thus not only ignores the moral codes of society, he exposes their vulnerable points. Every imaginable kind of scandal erupts in connection with the trickster of Text 12: brothers who had never quarreled are led to curse each other; his parents-in-law's house is burned down; he falsely induces a charge of cannibalism upon a poor girl, causing her death; in another episode not related in Text 12 (but see note 19), he causes an inter-village feud, in which an entire village is burned to the ground.

Resolution of rhetorical and structural ambiguity in these texts may follow one of several paths. The dilemma may be left to follow its own course, with wildly unpredictable consequences—for example, the

hunter being hunted, seized by an animal (12.7). This is good for laughs, and a talented storyteller can go on and on with this type of narrative. At a more serious level, ambiguity and contradiction may be resolved in a number of ways. Structural interpretations may be offered of solutions to the difficulty. Thus, the ambiguity of status-equal brothers or wives will be resolved by establishing a priority of one over the other; failure to meet one's father will be resolved by reconciliation with the father; and, as in some Mahungu texts, "endogenous" social structures that are conducive to incest, matrilineage isolation, and warfare are transformed into "exogenous" structures through appropriate alliances, emphases on trade, and brotherhoods such as *Lemba*. As is clear, these conjunctive myths are favorites for use in cult-related circumstances. Disjunctive or "tragic" myths such as Mavungu with python-woman-in-tree (Text 8) and Moni-Mambu trickster-turned-witch (Text 12) suggest a third type of resolution, already mentioned in the conclusion of the previous chapter.

Such disjunctive myths hinge on the hero's conscious decision, at some point midway through the narrative, to embark on a particular course of action regardless of the consequences. In Mavungu and the python-woman-in-tree the hero follows the woman and riches knowing that this will negatively condition his future relations with his father. In Moni-Mambu trickster-turned-witch the hero is held responsible for having consciously plotted to kill, deceive, and destroy. In other words, these narratives are studies of the implications and consequences of consciously-made decisions in the context of alternative choices. They focus on those decisions which lead to the hero's tragic death, and by implication the alternative choices which might lead to life.

Studies of trickster cycles have depicted their heroes as moving in the development of the cycle from a primordial or aboriginal phase, lacking conscience, morality, and intelligence, to a stage of full conscience, morality, intelligence, and civility. Radin's Winnebago trickster very clearly portrays these developmental features, and much of the hero's activity is cast midway between these poles. He can assemble or disassemble culture, integrate and disintegrate, transcend or particularize, depending on the intent of the narrator.²¹ Makarius' writing on the relationship of mythological trickster figures to clowns emphasizes the characteristic of "inverseness" as especially germane to tricksters. Even more evident than their representation of nonconscious, primordial, puppet-like movement in society's

conventions is their contrariness, their violation of rules and prohibitions. The purpose of this, she argues, is to call attention to the importance of the very rules being violated. The trickster is usually alone in his behavior, he is an outcast. By committing the forbidden—incest, cannibalism, wrong speech—he is taking on an expiatory role. “It is necessary that he should be conceived as ‘the other,’ in opposition to the group, even though he acts on their behalf.”²²

Certainly Kongo mythic heroes accessible to *Lemba* practitioners utilized both traits of the trickster *Moni-Mambu*: his development toward consciousness and effective mediation with which they identified themselves, and the negativeness of wrong choices in the anti-trickster who meets death. Other characteristics that have elsewhere been given the trickster, such as the embodiment of opposites (male-female, elder-junior, father-son) are in north-Kongo myths given to *Mahungu*, who, like the trickster, expresses both conjunctive as well as disjunctive narrative possibilities. The implications of these two modes of resolution will be explored in Part III of the book after examining *Lemba* in the New World.

Chapter 8

Lemba in the New World

“It is undeniable that the survivals outnumber the variations.”
—R. Bastide, *African Religions of Brazil* (1978)

“The term *petro* is not used in the north and northwest of Haiti where these spirits go under the name *Lemba*.”—A. Métraux, *Voodoo in Haiti* (1959)

Introduction

It has been abundantly established that the massive Atlantic slave trade over several centuries transplanted many features of north-bank Kongo society into Brazil, Haiti, Jamaica, Cuba, the United States, and elsewhere in the New World. Priorities given to the study of *Lemba* in its African setting permit only a cursory review of the general historical and cultural framework of this cultural migration. This chapter's chief aim is to present and evaluate evidence at hand on *Lemba* and related ritual features in the New World.

Scholarly awareness of *Lemba*'s presence in the New World has been scanty. A few examples suffice to show the sketchy or marginal status attributed to it and to related Kongo or Bantu elements. Brazilian historian Arthur Ramos published in 1934¹ a number of songs to Bantu deities, including this:

Lemba, O Lemba.

Lembá de canaburà

*Zambiapongo no
coporolá*

*Lembá Lembá de lei ô
salei*

Sinhô Lembá enganga

Já furamo sé sé

*Lembá enganga já fumo
Carolé.*

Lemba of the law, law

Senõr *Lemba* priest

Already we have dug the
hole

Lemba's priest has
already smoked.

The song's meaning is enigmatic without any contextual explanation. In any event, Ramos used it to illustrate the presence of *Zambiapongo*, the Bantu high God, rather than *Lemba*. Drawn from a Candomblé in Bahia, Brazil, this song and others including those to *Zambi*, *Kalunga*, *Kalundu*, and other Bantu cult or deity names illustrated the persistence of elements, however poorly understood, of Bantu religion.²

Herskovits, who worked in West Africa and in the New World, spoke of the dearth of understanding of Congo, or Bantu, influence in the New World.

Despite the multitude of designations for the great numbers of gods that must have been worshiped by the various tribes from which came the slave population, few deities except those from the central region have present-day devotees on this side of the Atlantic. *Zambi*, *Simbi*, *Bumba*, *Lemba*, who are worshiped in the Congo, are exceptions to this rule . . . yet we know enough about the gods of peoples outside this "core" to be struck by the paucity of correspondences to them found in the New World, especially when this is compared to the wealth of carry-overs of Ashanti, Dahomean, and Yoruban supernatural beings.³

Herskovits acknowledged that further research might reveal survivals or connections between elements hitherto unrecognized in a Bantu, or Congo, complex comparable to those from West Africa. Individual features of this Congo complex in New-World African religion are at times so little recognized, however, that they are lumped in with West-African materials. Thus Bastide, in his otherwise remarkable work, places *Lemba*, in passing, in the Dahomean pantheon,⁴ not recognizing it as the same entity listed, misspelled, in another reference to work by Brazilian colleague Carniero on Bantu influences in Brazilian religion.⁵

Despite these occasional errors, Bantu and Congo influence is widely acknowledged in the New-World African religion and culture, as a category comparable to influences from Yoruba (*Nagô*), Dahomey (*Gêgê*), and Ashanti. In Brazilian scholarship Yoruban and Dahomean influences are commonly distinguished from Congo and Angola influences. In Haiti, Dahomean and Congo (or Guinea) are recognized as distinct influences. Commonly West-African influences are seen by scholars as dominant—Yoruba in Brazil, Dahomey in Haiti—whereas the Congo or Bantu influence is seen as having adapted to, or subordinated itself within, the West-African system of

ritual symbols and deities. However there is reason to suspect the finality of such scholarly judgment, since Congo and Bantu influences have not until recently been the subject of thorough scholarly inquiry to match the extensive fieldwork of a Herskovits in the Old and the New World on Dahomey,⁶ or the in-depth reconstruction of a single tradition in the New World comparable to Bastide's work on Yoruba (Nagô) in Brazil.⁷ Thompson's current work comparing art and dance styles in Kongo with those of the Kongo-influenced portions of the New World,⁸ replicating similar work on the Yoruba,⁹ is an important step toward understanding the Atlantic continuity of Kongo artistic culture, including *Lemba*.

In Brazil scholars such as Carniero and Bastide have, however, identified correspondences between Bantu and West-African ritual systems in order to establish the path by which a dominant symbolic system might absorb, or supplant, a subordinate one. If, as Bastide suggests, the Nagô (Yoruba) rites exercised a sort of hegemony over those from other African "nationalities," and the Catholic deities and saints over all African ritual symbols, then it is possible to identify distinctive Bantu and Congo elements in their appropriate places. In other words, assimilation has not been haphazard, but has followed rules of correspondence (figure 23). These correspondences between Congo (Kongo) and Angola *inkisses*, Dahomean (Gêgê) *voduns*, Yoruba (Nagô) *orixás*, and Catholic saints and deities, are drawn largely from court registers of African cults in Brazilian cities of Recife, Pernambuco, and Bahia. They suggest that, as Bastide says, Bantu deities retain their existence in ecstatic "language" songs in which they are named *Zambi*, *Bumba*, *Lemba*, and so on, while the rites are basically the same across the nationalities. Even so, there has been a tendency for *inkisses* and *voduns* to be submerged in *orixás*, and these in Catholic deities and saints. Cultic movements such as *Candomblé*, *Macumba*, and most recently *Umbanda* which cut across these nationalities have a tendency to rearrange and submerge autonomous elements even further.

The list of Congo deities or *inkisses* in figure 23 bears a certain resemblance to comparable inventories of *inkisses* from the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Congo, in particular that given by Dapper (see Chapter 2), for the Loango coast. *Zambi* is not mentioned by Dapper but is widespread in other early references. However, correspondences between *Pongo* and *Zambiapongo*, *Malemba* or *Lemba* and *Lomba* (sp?), *Bomba* or *Bombo* and *Bombongira*, *Kossi* and *Incôssi*, *Makongo* and *Quincongo*, and

Figure 23

Correspondences of African and Catholic deities and saints in Brazil, based on Bastide, pp. 195, 264–7, in cities of Bahia and Recife

Congo <i>inkisses</i>	Angola <i>inkisses</i>	Gêgê [Dahomey] <i>voduns</i>	Nagô [Yoruba] <i>orisha</i>	Catholic <i>deities & saints</i>
Zambiapongo	Zambi	Olissassá	Olorun	St. Anne; N.S. of Bomfim; Christ Child; Holy Spirit; Eternal Father; Trinity
Lomba [Lemba]	Lombarengenga, Cassunbenca	Elegba, Legba	Oxalá	The Devil; St. Bartholomew; St. Gabriel; The Rebel Angel
Bombongira	Aluvasi	Gun	Oxóssi	St. Anthony; St. Jerome; St. George; St. Paul; St. John
Incóssi Mucumbé	Roche Mucumbé	Odé, Agué	Omolú	St. George; Archangel Michael; St. Expedit; St. Anthony
Mutacalombo	Mutalombo	Ayoani, Sakpata	Shangó	St. Benedict; St. Roch; St. Lazarus; St. Sebastian
Quincongo	Gongonbira Cajanja	Sobo (Sogbo), Bade	Yansan	St. Barbara, St. Jerome, St. Peter; St. John as a Child; St. John Baptist, St. Anthony
Kambaranguanje	Zaze, Kibuco, Kiessubangango	Oia	Yemanjá	St. Barbara
Nunvurucomabuva	Matamba			Virgin Mary; O.L. of Rosary; O.L. of Compassion; O.L. of Immaculate Conception of Beach; O.L. of Lourdes & Candlemas; O.L. of Sorrows
Pandá	Dandalunda Kaiala	Obéssem Loko	Oxun-mare Ossain [Iroko- Loko]	St. Bartholomew
Angoroméa	Angoro	Aziri	Oxun	St. Francis; St. Sebastian; St. Lawrence; St. Gaetano; O.L. of Navigators; St. John
	Agué, Catende			Mary Magdalene; O.L. of Pleasures; O.L. of Carmel; O.L. of the Immaculate Conception

possibly *Pansa* and *Panda* suggest on the basis of name similarity alone an important source of continuity from early Congo and later Brazilian ritual culture.¹⁰ As important as these similarities are, the names of spirits or medicines (*min'kisi*) in the Dapper list include several which do not appear in Brazil, nor anywhere else in the New World. Of these we know that *Thirico*, *Kikokoo*, *Injami*, and *Bunzi* were local or regional earth shrines, and as a set they do not appear to have been reconstituted in the New World. Further evidence may be noted of the continuity of a Congo system. *Zambi* and Olorun, the Nagô high god, do not become transformed into a particular Catholic deity or saint, and generally *Zambi* is not made the object of a particular cult, nor does it become a possessing deity (true in Haiti as well). This suggests a transfer of the Bantu idea of a distant or ungraspable ultimate power. The Christian God the Father is rather equated with Oxala, Olissassá, and *Lemba*, and He appears in the context of a dyadic relationship with his son Jesus, or in the Trinity, or in the Holy Family of Joseph, the Virgin Mary, and the Christ child. This equation of *Lemba* with Oxala [Orisanlá] the Nagô (Yoruba) god of the sky and deity of procreation and creativity, and with the cluster of Christian features of the Trinity, the Holy Family, and the God (Father)-Christ (Son) relationship—all features characteristic of *Lemba* in preceding Kongo variants—indicates another important conceptual carry-over to New-World Bantu religion.

In Haiti the African cultural and religious influences were, as already noted, similarly divided into West-African and Bantu cycles of worship. Both in ritual observance and in scholarship the dominant West-African influence is acknowledged to be that of Dahomey, as witnessed by the cultic vocabulary of spirits (*loa*), cult complexes (*voudou*), cult leadership (*houngan*, *mambo*), cult locations (*hounsi*), and so on, although even here there is the possibility of Kongo influence (for example, *mambo* from Moni-Mambu, or *mambuk*, healer). Dahomean deities are collectively known as Rada (from the slaving port town Arada, itself named after Allada), whereas those of Congo and Bantu origins have recently been identified as strongly reappearing in the Péto cycle of deities.¹¹ This dichotomy needs to be seen, in Haiti, against the backdrop of Haitian history.

Haitian history is a running record of impulses for independence on the part of black immigrants to the island, who by 1600 had inherited an agricultural economy from the by then extinct Taino Indians.¹² Spain gradually ceded its dominance of the island to the French, who by the eighteenth century had developed a plantation economy

around sugar, which required massive regular injections of slave labor. During this century 15,000 slaves a year were being shipped from the ports of Cabinda, Malemba, and Loango. Slaving ships would run a triangular route: to Africa for slaves, then to Santo Domingo where these were traded for sugar which was shipped to Bordeaux and Nantes. In the late eighteenth century this society based upon slaves, sugar and slave-owners was hit with undercurrents of the French Revolution, which did not leave the blacks untouched. The oppression of the slave plantations combined with exclusion from any participation in the emancipation offered by revolutionary ideas touched off a massive slave revolt in 1791 that turned into a decade-long war of liberation. Legendary history recounts how one Boukman, a giant of a man and a religious priest, led the partisans in the taking of an oath near Mourne Rouge, and how an old Negress sacrificed a black pig, catching the blood in a gourd and passing it around for each to drink as they swore loyalty to Boukman. The plantations were set to the torch and the oppressors killed.¹³ Warfare continued until all Europeans had been driven out, and in 1804 Haiti was pronounced an independent republic. Toussaint L'Ouverture became its founder, and Dessalines, Christophe, and Pétion, his lieutenants in the revolt, became his ministers, and his successors.

Although Haiti was now independent, its early governments were hardly less repressive than had been the colonial predecessor. Dessalines created a type of serfdom and was assassinated. Christophe followed with similar laws to the effect that cultivators had to stay rooted to the soil—the plantations—where they worked, while a titled aristocracy was allowed to emerge. Pétion, however, instituted some liberalization, such as individual peasant holdings. He is also known for the construction of the Citadel, a fortress of Old-World castle proportions, as a beleaguered free black state's last defense from its potential enemies. It was never used. These founding fathers remain legendary heroes in Haitian public and religious rituals, including as will be seen *Lemba-Péto*.

This link of early Haitian history to *Lemba* is tenuous, but what historical details are known are very suggestive, principally put in perspective through Jean Price-Mars' reading of the work of Moreau de Saint-Méry, a late eighteenth-century French writer.¹⁴ Saint-Méry collected his observations in the late colonial era and published in 1797, before Haitian independence. Already then, at the beginning of the rebellion, the distinction was apparent between Voodoo and *Péto* (or Pédro) complexes in African-Haitian dance. The origin of

the "Don Pedro" dance, according to Saint-Méry, went back to 1768 when a Spanish black from Petit-Goâve, by the name of Don Pedro, introduced a dance analogous to the Voodoo rites but of a far greater rapidity and level of excitation. To reach even greater levels of excitement and pitch, devotees of "Don Pedro" spiked their rum with gunpowder. The effect, in Price-Mars' summary of Saint-Méry's observations, was "electrifying," producing a "convulsive drunkenness" which, heightened by the singing and the rhythm of the drums, evoked a collective crisis.¹⁵ Writing again in 1803, explicitly about Haitian dance, Saint-Méry reiterated the stylistic contrast of "Don Pedro" to "Voodoo," noting that the former frequently touched off public disorder. This and the banning of the dance by authorities, however ineffective in their efforts, suggest that the Don Pedro dance may have had an important role in sustaining resistance to French authority.¹⁶

The grounds for equating this historic Don Pedro dance with today's *Péto* complex of rites, and by inference the Congo influence in Haitian religion and culture, are several, according to Price-Mars. First, there is its contrast to Voodoo in Saint-Méry's eighteenth- and nineteenth-century account, and there is the linguistic transformation from the Spanish Don Pedro to the Haitian-French Creole "Jean Péto." Second, Price-Mars notes the concentration of the *Péto* complex of dances in the west and south of Haiti, corresponding to Saint-Méry's reference to the Don Pedro dance in the west of Saint Dominique. And a third indication of this dance's continuity is the recurrent harassment it has received from government, both colonial and independent. Indeed, Dessalines, when he was Toussaint L'Ouverture's Inspector of Culture, is known to have had fifty worshippers of a religious dance bayoneted in the Plain of Cul-de-Sac, the general region where Don Pedro was concentrated.¹⁷

The *Péto* complex of deities (*loa*) in Haitian religion, acknowledged to be a reflection of the Congo-Guinea influence, is held apart from the unique *Lemba-Péto* rite witnessed by Price-Mars in the Cul-de-Sac valley in the 1930's. Of all Haitian rites *Lemba-Péto* is the only one, in Price-Mars' words, which is celebrated secretly, deep in the forest, rather than in the village or town near the *hounfor* Voodoo temple. Price-Mars goes so far as to state that *Péto* and *Lemba* are synonymous, and that the ancient Don Pedro was probably some version of the African rite of *Lemba*.¹⁸ However, this is not very illuminating, since his only source on *Lemba* in Africa is Chatelain's brief reference to a household fertility medicine in

Angola.¹⁹ Métraux, who calls *Lemba* an African “tribe,” suggests that it takes the place of *Péto* in the north and northwest of Haiti as a category of divinities and rites equal to and identical with the *Péto* complex.²⁰ Thompson is the first to identify *Lemba*’s rightful source in connection with Haitian religion as the north-Kongo healing cult by that same name.²¹

Before describing the autonomous *Lemba-Péto* rite of Haiti, it is appropriate to describe the more commonly known *Péto* segment of *loa* gods and services in well-known Voodoo settings.

The Péto Complex of Deities in a Voodoo Lao Service

In the valley adjoining the Cul-de-Sac where the *Lemba-Péto* rite was reported, near the town of Mirebalais, Herskovits in the 1930’s carefully documented a *loa* service he believed to be typical for the region.²² This section will identify features in this rite that are important in the comparison of Voodoo with Congo, especially *Lemba*, ritual structure and intent.

Resemblance of the *loa* service to *Lemba*, in strictly choreographic—spatial and temporal—ordering, is striking. The Haitian rite is constructed around two major phases, separated by an interval. The first such day/night/day phase is devoted to the *Péto* rite, the second to the Rada rite and its deities (see figure 24).

The family putting on the service had experienced numerous deaths and illnesses and, as customary, it had to celebrate once in a decade or so a major ceremony for the *loa* spirits. The first phase was observed around three altars: the first, a table called the “*trône*,” which is covered with white cloth and a canopy, holds a variety of plant offerings, crucifixes, holy water, candles, oil, and other food offerings, as well as chromolithographic *images* of saints; the second, a table devoted to the *loa* named *Simbi*, bears various cooked and uncooked foods; the third, and most important, is a table devoted to the *loa* Bosu, bearing food and drink, nearby which are tied offerings of sacrificial animals including a large black boar, two small black pigs, a black goat, a black turkey, a guinea hen, two white pigeons, and several chickens.

In the early evening the family putting on the service, and the officiants, held the “*action de grâce*,” a Catholic-like ritual led by the *pret savanne*. Holding a candle in his hand, the leader directed the family in “desultory” singing from time to time pouring water from a

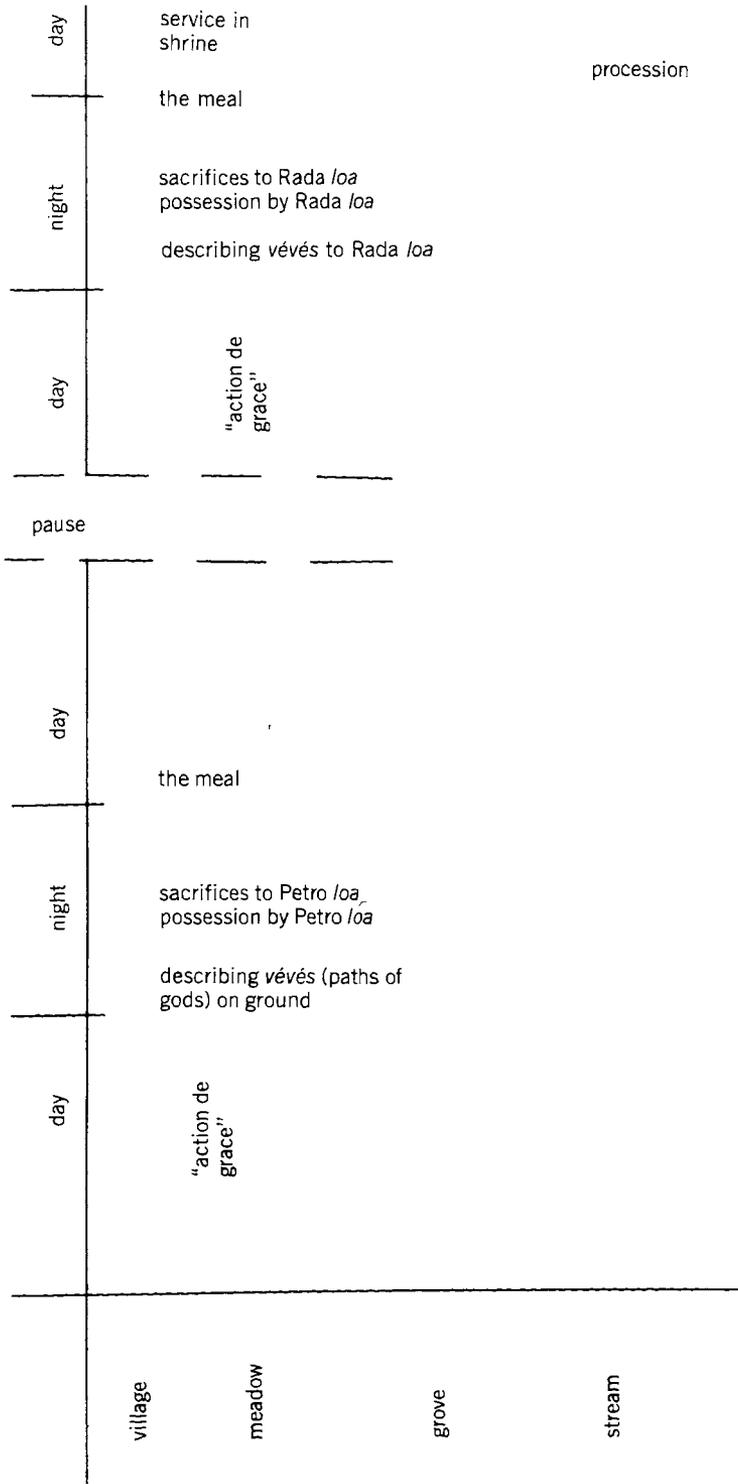


Figure 24
 Temporal and spatial structure of the Haitian loa service; after Herskovits, 1937

container on the *trône* into a small depression directly before the altar. All knelt for the Pater Noster, the Credo, the Ave Maria, and for a long adoration and benediction.

The European music of the *action de grâce* gave way then to African rhythm and drumming, at which time the *hungan* took over the officiating from the *pret' savanne*. The *hungan* ordered each family member to tell the *loa* spirits which troubles had befallen them and what favors were desired. His assistant then took six candles and proceeded, in a counterclockwise direction, to trace in the meadow near the village a large circle, fixing four candles at cardinal points representing the four corners of the earth. In addition, one was for the *Mait' 'Bitation* (Master of the Habitation) and another for *Mait' Source* (Master of the Stream). The family members, holding candles, placed their individual candles near those already emplanté in the meadow, forming several clusters in the overall shape of a cosmogram, dotting the hillside in the deepening dusk.

After all had returned to the altar, the *hungan* began to "trace *ververs*" on the ground. (*Ververs*—usually called *vévés*—are lines or paths for the spirits to follow, often in the Port-au-Prince area drawn in highly decorative patterns with flour or other powders.) Initially he traced a white line in corn meal from the first table for Bosu to the second table and tree for Simbi, on to the *trône* where subsidiary motifs were added in gray and black. The *vévé* paths anticipated the coming of the gods up to the human world where they would be recognized, fed, placated, and then "restrained" or put away" for another decade.

At this point in the ritual, sacrificial animals and birds were brought to their respective altars for washing and presenting to the gods. The *hungan* became possessed by *Simbi*, announced his "fee" for performing the rite, and began a long invocation to the various *Péto loa*, while the participants waited for the animals to "recognize," that is begin eating, their appropriate food. Thus, the red and black cock was offered grains for Legba, the black fowl grain for Gede, the red fowl grains for Ogun, the white pigeon grains for Damballa, the fowl with ruffled plumage grains for Congo Zandor, the small pigs grains for 'Ti Kita Démembré, the boar grain for Bosu, the goat leaves from the sacred tree for Erzilie Gé Rouge, and so on. The animals, later to be sacrificed to their appropriate *loa*, were to take to their food in the same way as the *loa* were to possess members of the family and receive their sacrificial meals. members of the family were "crossed" with animals by the *hungan* to encourage the gods to come to them. This action was repeated before the Bosu altar.

As the singing became louder and more rhythmical, with the drums leading the pace, the deities finally responded to the calls, "mounting," possessing, the family members one by one, each enacting the characteristic ecstatic behaviors, for example, jumping into the fire for Legba. Herskovits notes that the devotees moved back and forth between the three altars—the Catholic *trône*, the altar to Bosu, and that to Simbi—as the *loa* possessed family members before each appropriate altar, thus pattern and structure were evident despite the appearance of utter chaos in the outcries and diverse agitated behaviors of possession. One of the several songs sung during the possession service lists and to some extent characterized the deities who appeared during this *Pétro* phase.

Bosu found something on the ground,
Do not pick it up.
Bosu goes about,
He found something on the ground,
Do not pick it up.
You will come to harm.
If you pick it up,
You will anger Bosu.
Simbi en Deux Eaux,
I do for you,
Do for me;
Help, O Congo,
Congo Zandor.
Simbi Kita Kita, work for us,
Today for us,
Tomorrow for others.
Erzilie, O Lemba,
I ask, where is Erzilie,
The food is ready.
Gedenibo, behind the cross, Gede.
Before Baron, Gede,
Behind the cross, Gede,
Today I am troubled,
Gedebi, call Gede, this Gede,
Today I am troubled.
Cease to sweep, sprinkle, hoe.
I am troubled, Baron Samedi.²³

At about midnight, when all the animals to be offered had been washed and prepared, and all possession had ceased, the time had come for the sacrifices. The *hungan*, with knife in hand, decapitated or punctured the jugular vein of the appropriate animal for each *loa*, while an assistant collected some of the blood in a small calabash. Thus killed, the offerings were taken elsewhere for dressing and cooking. The *loa* which had been troubling the family were then "sent away," that is, buried symbolically with an offering of meat. Thus handled were Erzilie Gé Rouge (Red Eyes), Bosu Trois Cornes (Three Horns), Ti Kita Dèmembré, and 'Ti Jean Pié Sèche. Those "restrained" were *Lemba* and Simbi djo (*de l'eau*, of the water), *Lemba* under the mango tree where the altar to Bosu had been, Simbi djo where the *trône* had stood. Each was buried with its offering and an iron cross or other object to "preoccupy it" for a period from seven to seventeen years. The *loa* sent away were told to go back to Guinea or Africa and not bother the family. Those restrained were dealt with more favorably, the family needing their help. The idea was clearly conveyed that these *Péto* deities were responsible for the family's misfortunes, and that they should stay away now that they had been placated. The feast was intended for them, at least rhetorically, although the human community finished that which the gods had left. Gods' leftovers are human sustenance. This meal persisted into daylight, with final ceremonies.

The Rada phase was held a few days later, and approximated the same structure, opening with the *action de grâce*, and continuing with the tracing of *vèvés*, possession by Rada *loa* such as Damballah Wedo, Legba, Ogun, Ashade, and so on, the sacrifice at midnight, and the meal.

The issue of to what extent Haitian *loa* services reflect African continuities may be discussed in terms of similarities of structure which reveal underlying patterns or motifs, and similarities of content which reveal direct terminological or semantic continuities. Although the dominant Dahomean influence is evident in the vocabulary of Haitian Voodoo, the role names of officiants, and many liturgical symbols, the resemblance of the temporal structure with Old-World *Lemba* variants suggests that Congo-Bantu continuities must be given serious consideration. In addition, the tracing of ritual spaces in the *Péto* phase of the Mirebalais *loa* service offers some striking resemblances to several *Lemba* variants and other Kongo rituals (for example, the *diyowa* in N'khimba, Munkukusa). In the staking out of

the cardinal points with candles, the *hungan* used a common, perhaps world-wide, motif. However, in circling this space in a counterclockwise direction and then dividing it into two, one half representing the domestic realm (governed by "lord of the house," Mait' 'Habitation), the other half the realm of the wilds, the deep, of water (governed by "lord of the deep," Mait' Source), he was tracing a cosmogram the way it is done in many Kongo contexts. The opposition of the human realm and that of the beyond (whether the world of spirits, wild nature, or trade routes) serves as the paradigm for ritual action wherever one must come to terms with the interaction of the visible and experiential with the invisible and intangible. The cyclic movement turns this opposition into a statement about time in the life of man and society, denoting rhythmic cycles such as life and death, coming and going, and perhaps, as in this *loa* service, the awakening of the gods and the return of the same to their appropriate resting places.

Going beyond the general to particular continuities of the Kongo-Haiti axis is more difficult; however, some interpretations seem warranted. The two altars erected to "*Péto*" deities, Bosu and Simbi, suggest this opposition of the domestic and the beyond so common in *Lemba* and other Kongo ritual settings. Simbi spirits are well known in Kongo to indwell water courses, pools, springs, rocks, forests, ravines, and other passages to the nether world of mystical power, a characteristic which makes them suited for the elaboration of public authority symbols. Kita, also present in the *Péto* cluster of *loa* spirits, is a type of Kongo simbi. Bosu represents a problem in interpretation, not the least of which is because of his well-known origin in the Fongbe (Dahomean) pantheon as a three-horned, hunch-backed monster. Despite this clear origin, corroborated both by historical research and in Haitian folk thought, Bosu is "put" into the *Péto*, that is *Lemba* and Kongo, class of *loa*, to represent forces at work in the domestic, human society, realm.²⁴

The two deities who are "restrained," namely *Lemba* and Simbi djo, appear to replicate this complementarity between the realm of the wilds and that of the community. Both oppositions span the tensions inherent in the life of Haitian peasants, on the one hand uniting and yet on the other dividing the human world and the supernatural, the New World and ancestral Africa, as well as the older span between the trade routes, markets, and home. These fundamental tensions, ritually integrated into one system of rhythms and contrasts, regenerate the community.

Lemba-Péto in the Cul-de-Sac Valley, Haiti

The *Péto* complex, in general, has much in common with Kongo religion, and its structure is shared with *Lemba*. To find specific elements and meanings which correspond to *Lemba*, however, it is necessary to look at *Lemba-Péto*, the secretive rite which Price-Mars witnessed, in part, in the Cul-de-Sac Valley in the 1930's.²⁵ He strayed onto the service one afternoon while on a hunting expedition, and because he was recognized by the celebrants as their physician he was invited to stay. The service was already under way, deep in the protective forests.

At the foot of a tree Price-Mars noted two altars. The first was a table upon which had been erected a bamboo elevation with a niche in it. In this niche there were painted figures representing the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Infant Jesus, the Holy Virgin, St. Joseph, and images of other Catholic saints. This partial list suggests correspondences to *Lemba* similar to those in Brazil. On the table were placed a bell, a castor oil lamp, a jug, a bottle of kola, and several plates of candy and cake. Under the table, extended on the ground, was a white towel, on which had been placed four forged iron crosses, plates of grilled corn, bread, small cakes, almond sugar, and two bottles of kola.

The second altar was a table covered with red and blue cloth. Before it had been dug a large, deep hole, in which had been placed two carved pieces of mahogany wood about a meter long, each wrapped in the middle with a band of Thai silk, and that wrapped with crimson cloth.

The officiating *hungan* took one piece of wood, looked at it for a time, turned it and held it in his hands, then chanted these words:

Bordé, bordé
coci, manga
va atiloca sorci
macorni, au, vati.

Then he took a hammer and nails and drove the nails into the two pieces of wood in rhythmic alternation to the points of this chant sung by the participants:

Ko! M'tendé ko!
M'apé cloué bois!
Ko! M'tendé Ko!
M'apé cloué bois!

Then the *hungan* took a ball of strong cord and measured out five meters, twice. Each piece of string was taken by a robust man at each end and held taut with the two crossing each other. Then, with the help of assistants, the *hungan* tied the pieces of mahogany wood, clothed in crimson, with nails in them, onto the cross-like form of cord. As each knot was tied with great force, he intoned this refrain:²⁶

Assuré! Assuré!

N'ap'assuré point lá!

Hi! Hi!

Nou pralé maré loa

Pétro!

Hi! Hi!

Jean Pétro! Chainne qui

chainne

Li cassé li

Qui dirait corde!

Hi! Hi!

N'ap maré n'ap maré

Loa Pétro

Hi! Hi!

We are going to tie down
the *petro loa*, Hi! Hi!

Jean-Petro, chain which
is a chain; he has
broken it as if it were a
rope.

Hi! Hi!

This continued until the cords were entirely knotted around the pieces of wood. This package together with another carved mahogany cross and two crosses forged of iron were placed at the bottom of the hole, at the foot of the altar. They were then buried with a deep layer of earth. (This ceremony probably represented the restraining of the *loa* Jean Pétro, within the *Lemba* framework.²⁷ Price-Mars remains silent as to its meaning.)

Meanwhile darkness had fallen. The *hungan* sounded his bell and the congregation formed two rows and walked a distance westward along a path until they came to another site where another deep pit had been dug. The *hungan* asked for complete silence. Raising his index finger over the pit, he spoke this prayer:

Earth, holy earth,

We are a few of your children

among the best in these parts

gathered to ask forgiveness

for offenses to you, which

we may have involuntarily committed.

Especially in the name of
all the members of the family,
present or absent,
I implore their absolution
from all errors committed toward you.
In their name
I offer you drink and food.
Deign to accept these humble offerings.
We wanted to bring you
lavish presents; however,
our means are less and less adequate.
We are but poor folk
who beg your mercy.
O Earth, our mother and patron!
Jean Pétro, Toussaint-L'Ouverture,
Rigaud, Dessalines, Christophe, Pétion,
You know that we are not of this land.
Our ancestors, to all of us come from Africa,
Be favorable to our requests to you.
Jean Pétro, we have done all to please you.
Save us from the calamities which beset us.
Save us from fever, smallpox, leprosy,
Tuberculosis, automobile accidents.
Accept these libations which we make
In your name. Amen.

And the participants replied, "amen." Then the *hungan* took five female animals, a goat, a chicken, a guinea fowl, a turkey hen, and a dove, which he decapitated one after another and held over the pit so their blood flowed copiously into it, after which he threw their bodies into the pit as well. Then, with the help of an assistant, he poured water into a basin and from that into the pit, asking each member of the family to repeat this gesture after him. From another container he also took liquid, and did the same, again asking the family to repeat it after him. The same action followed with a bowl of diverse grains which were thrown into the large pit in honor of the earth and the ancestors.

As the *hungan* pronounced final incantations—inaudible to Price-Mars—and prepared to return to the initial ritual site, a man in the congregation suddenly let out a loud cry and began gesticulating about with such petulance that the assistants cleared the area around.

Possessed by a *Péto* god—Price-Mars does not say which—he cried:

<i>Brisé!</i>	Broken!
<i>Je suis brisé!</i>	I am broken!
<i>C'est moi brisé!</i>	It is I, broken!

This flood of words, the agitation, rage and convulsiveness, according to Price-Mars, indicated the *Péto* god's recognition, in possessing a member of the family, of their penitence over violation of its ordinances. The *hungan* failed to calm the man by speaking to him and finally tied his hands with a cord, whereupon he quieted down some but continued to tremble and plaintively mutter "*Je suis brisé*" as the congregation, again in two rows, filed back to the initial ritual site following the *hungan* who was murmuring pronouncements of forgiveness.

Having returned to the site of the two altars, the *hungan* untied the man who had been possessed, and proceeded with the next phase of the rite, the final sacrifice. A sow, the last animal at the site, was brought to the foot of the altar, and held fast by the assistants. The *hungan*, while phrasing a mostly unintelligible (to Price-Mars) incantation to "criminal *Péto*" deftly stuck his knife into the sow's jugular vein, catching the blood as it throbbed out in a white vase. The vase of blood was placed on the altar and mixed with another beverage. Then, continuing to chant, the *hungan* gathered the family group of men, women, and children, now dressed in white and wearing red bracelets, around the altar in a half-circle. Taking the vase, he dipped two fingers of his right hand into the blood and spread it onto the lips of each person around him, continuing the chant about "*Péto* criminal." Price-Mars observes that during this "blood communion" numerous participants shivered, momentarily losing their composure in brief attacks of ecstasy or deep sighs of emotion, witness of their "collective agony."

With this, the main part of the rite was over, and Price-Mars left the scene. It was now after midnight. The devotees would continue with a nocturnal meal.

It is apparent that Price-Mars has not witnessed the entire *Lemba-Péto* ritual. For example, no action is described before the altar bearing Catholic images. What occurred there may have been comparable to the *action de grâce* in the *loa* service recounted earlier; it may, however, relate more directly to a *Lemba* perception of familial roles as seen in correspondences of Bantu divinities to Catholic saints

and gods. The symbolism of food for the gods relates it, as well as all of Haitian Voodoo, to African ritual. The theme is highly developed in *Lemba*, for example in the eastern variant, where the priests receive food offerings from the neophyte, in exchange for medicines. As the rite progresses, the return medicine gift contains increasing doses of food. By the close, *Lemba* is issuing banquets to the general public, and the neophyte priestly couple, with senior priests, are receiving and eating banquets of symbols and sacred "dirt." It is as if the gods, whose food is medicine, and those who mediate the relationship between gods and men, participate in negotiation: offering tokens to the gods who ultimately return generosity and well-being to the human community. To be sure, this feature is not unique to *Lemba*, but the imagery of "priming the pump" of well-being, of the earth's fertility and the ancestors' beneficence, is prominent in *Lemba*, both in the Old and the New World. It is perhaps more prominent in the Haitian *Lemba-Péto* rite, subordinated in the African variants by the commercial motif.

A further theme that is prominent in Kongo religion, which was noted in the *loa* service and present in *Lemba-Péto* as well, is the complementarity of powers. The wrapped mahogany sticks and the cords which are used in "binding" *Péto* recall not only the tracing of the cosmogram of Kongo ritual, but also a specific feature of *Lemba* in which similar sticks are brought together to represent the creative complementarity of male and female. In the south-central variant, as the neophyte stands before the cruciform *diyowa* trench preparatory to the oath-taking, each priest (*vua*) and priestess (*mizita*) is represented in such a stick. These are held together by the neophyte as he swears his oath of loyalty to his *Lemba* father and to *Lemba*. Later the sticks are bound in "couples," as in the Haitian séance, and placed in the *n'kobe*. Male and female together represent Mahungu, the androgynous demigod of complementarity. It is as if the *diyowa* cruciform trench of Kongo ritual combines the idea of a hole in the ground with the cross-form represented momentarily by the cord and the sticks. The oath that is sworn, in the south-central variant, by the neophyte who submerges his face in the ancestral mud of the trench while holding the sticks is, in the Haitian variant, projected into the binding up of the two sticks of mahogany.

The language of the Haitian rite, the resounding "*ko!*" of the nails being driven into hard wood, makes it clearly Kongo in origin. This "strike word" is, of course, an abbreviation of *koma*, a term which denotes the act of driving nails or wedges into a ritual object, or of

spitting on a bracelet. It also is used to describe the abstract idea of awakening in a person the mystical force of the spirits. Konda, for example, uses it to speak of the effect on the *Lemba* neophyte of a dream of ancestors, or a nightmare (Text 8.7). The burial of *Péto*, thus “bound,” before the altar, may be a unique Haitian procedure, picked up from Voodoo rites. However, it may, in the *Lemba-Péto* context, indicate the survival of a form of activating and “recharging” a mystical force that is older than *Lemba*’s adoption of the moveable shrine-*n’kobe*, most certainly related to long-distance commerce.

Lemba’s continuity is perfectly clear in the final ritual episode recounted by Price-Mars, in which the sow is sacrificed and the bracelet-bearing congregants gather around in a half-circle for the final “communion.” It is a greatly simplified rendering of the elaborate rite of the northern (Kamba) variant in which the *Lemba* priest receives many pigs for the instruction of the neophyte’s profanation (1.35–59). The pigs’ blood is collected in an *nsaba* pot and taken behind the house to the ceremonial “kitchen,” where the *Lemba* neophyte couple is given its code of behavior and blessed by the *Lemba* father as the bracelets are issued. The blood is spread on the doorposts of their house.

How can one speak of continuity, though, when there is, in the Haitian rite, no village with courtyard and hearth, no house with doorposts? *Lemba-Péto* has totally adapted the ritual rhythm of the African rite—the movement from courtyard to hearth, from the village to the beyond—to the hidden forest setting, befitting its status since the eighteenth century as a persecuted sect. Amazingly, however, the rhythm of spatial movement has been retained; thus, the site of the two altars is the village, by analogy. The two altars may serve the courtyard/hearth opposition, although details are missing. The sacrifice of birds before the large earth pit, the site of possession by *Péto*, replicates the esoteric phase of the African variants. What is important is that the significance of the ritual rhythm has survived, over several centuries in two traditions diverging from a common point, in mutually intelligible ritual gestures.

Retentions and continuity alone do not assure vitality. Perhaps the opposite. Thus some variations are as indicative of *Lemba*’s survival as are the continuities. In the African variations *Lemba* adherents invoked a variety of gods, appropriate according to regional mythological systems and structures of authority. In the east, a Teke-related chief spirit, Nga Malamu, was addressed; elsewhere it was Kuba, Mahungu, or Moni-Mambu; on the coast and some inland

regions it was earth god Bunzi. What could be more fitting, in Haiti, than to address Jean Pétro, the “criminal” of the dominant system, and to build on that beginning with Haiti’s founding heroes Toussaint L’Ouverture, Rigaud, Desslaines, Christophe, and Pétion.