

## Research Article

# Magic and its Value among the Imilangu of Kalabo and Sikongo Districts of Western Zambia

Dr Silongwa Simakando

Kwame Nkrumah University, Zambia.

## I N F O

**E-mail Id:**

ssimakando@gmail.com

**Orcid Id:**

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8458-6875>

**How to cite this article:**

Simakando S. Magic and its Value among the Imilangu of Kalabo and Sikongo Districts of Western Zambia. *J Adv Res Humani Social Sci* 2019; 6(3): 14-21.

Date of Submission: 2019-10-04

Date of Acceptance: 2019-11-08

## A B S T R A C T

This study aimed at assessing indigenous knowledge, magic to be specific, among the Imilangu of Kalabo and Sikongo Districts of Western Zambia. This study expounded some magic activities that were performed among the Imilangu and it shows how valuable they were to the people. The Imilangu were able to manipulate the powers of the world to their will using charms. Turning a village into trees or a river if it was about to be attacked by enemies, crossing a river by riding on the back of a crocodile, winning court cases even when one was wrong, causing water, instead of bullets to be discharged from the barrel of the gun when one was shot and may more were some of the magic activities the Imilangu performed. This study argues that despite being labeled as an evil activity, magic was helpful in many aspects of life, especially providing security to the people. Moreover, magic was one of the revered arts among the Imilangu. People that performed magic were respected and considered to be life preservers. They were treated like gods and whatever they said was followed. Being a valued art, magic should be reintroduced in Imilangu.

**Keywords:** Magic, Value, Imilangu, Perform, Evil, Magician, Makando, Security, Healing, Transform

## Introduction

The term magicians derives from the Old Persian *magu*, a word that applied to a form of religious functionary about which little was known. During the late fifth and early sixth centuries, this term was adopted into Ancient Greek, where it was used with negative connotations to apply to rites that were regarded as fraudulent, unconventional and dangerous. This meaning of the term was then adopted by Latin in the first century BCE. In the Western culture, the term magic has historically often had derogatory connotations. Things that were associated with magic were perceived as being socially unacceptable, primitive or foreign. Magic as a concept has been adopted by scholars, although they have come up with different definitions which

are often mutually exclusive. Most of the contemporary scholars consider the concept to be awkward such that they reject it as non-existent.

Gehman defines magic as 'an endeavor through utterance of set words or the performance of set acts or both, to control or blend the powers of the world to man's will.'<sup>1</sup> Gehman's definition of magic which portrays man as being able to blend worldly powers to his will is accurate in relation to the magical activities performed by the Imilangu. As shall be seen here, the Imilangu were able to manipulate the powers of the world to their will using charms.

Magic is an integral part of the foundation on which life in Zambia is constructed, which often surfaces in daily conversations, the national media and in local courts,

<sup>1</sup>Richard, J. Gehman, *African Traditional Religion in Biblical Perspectives* (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers Ltd., 2000), p. 67.

where accusations of witchcraft are brought to bear under Zambia's witchcraft Act.<sup>2</sup>

Gehman's point of view covers the Imilangu too. Their belief in magic was very strong such that a person who despised it could not be treated with kindness. Gehman adds that, In Zambia and probably throughout sub-Saharan ... the belief in magic and witchcraft is on par with the belief in satellite TV in the western countries. Almost everyone believes that it exists and that it can be made use of. Some use it to a greater extent than others, but very few people indeed understand how the mechanism works.<sup>3</sup>

Being of great value in the society, magical activities were common all over Africa. In short, magic was part of the everyday life of African societies despite the fact that it could not easily be explained or understood on how it worked. Despite the fact that magic could not easily be understood, it was real such that people appreciated the activities done by the magicians. Mbiti asserts, 'that this mystical power is not fiction: whatever it is, it is reality and one with which African peoples have to reckon.'<sup>4</sup> He adds that:

Every African living in a village can tell an almost endless number of such stories. To an outsider they sound more like fiction than reality. But the whole psychic atmosphere of an African village life is filled with belief in this mystical power. African peoples know that the universe has a power, force or whatever else one may call it, in addition to the items in the ontological categories. It is difficult to know exactly what it is or how it functions.<sup>5</sup>

Magic was one of the social activities that was cherished among the Imilangu in pre and post-colonial Zambia. It was upheld and loved by most, if not all, sections of the Imilangu society. For an activity to be considered magical, it had to be accepted by many people. According to Mauss, 'magic should be used to refer to those things which society considers magical and not those qualified as such by a single segment of society only.'<sup>6</sup> What was accepted as magic among the Imilangu was an act that most, if not all, people in the area approved. The saying *angi kakaamba mbango* (many people will never tell a lie) was upheld among the Imilangu to justify that an act done and believed by many people was true. If an act was done by an individual and only his family members and close friends believed it, such an act was not qualified as magic.

There were two kinds of magic which were commonly practiced in Imilangu. These were "white" and "black magic". Of the two kinds of magic, white magic, which is also known as good magic, is of great interest in this study. This is because this form of magic was used for the benefit of individuals and even the whole society. According to Gehman, 'good magic' is primarily used for protection against the evil forces that are found everywhere.<sup>7</sup> The direct opposite of good magic is black magic or bad magic which is intended to harm people in the society. Gehman alludes to the fact that, 'in contrast to the positive benefits received from good magic, black magic is intended primarily to harm people and property. Moreover, black magic is administered during the night.'<sup>8</sup> Therefore, black magic is feared by people. 'Society opposes it. It is practiced at night and without approval.'<sup>9</sup> Mbiti adds that, 'evil magic involves the belief in and practice of tapping and using this power to do harm to human beings or their property. It is here that we find sorcery at work, in addition to other related practices.'<sup>10</sup> The use of charms, amulets, herbs, seeds, powder, skins, feathers, chanting of magical formula, cuts on the body and many other magical practices were common among people who performed magical activities, be it good or bad magic.

Among the Imilangu good magic was known as makando. Makando is both Imilangu and Silozi meaning 'fortunate'. Whoever had charms for good magic was believed to be fortunate hence the name makando. Unlike witchcraft which was commonly associated with women,<sup>11</sup> good magic was an activity done by men in Imilangu. A person who practiced magic had either a *shinjinga* or *shoo* in his bathing room (*lushoko*). A *shinjinga* was a hole dug in the ground where different charms (*maanga*) were put. The charms put in a *shinjinga* included roots, leaves, grass and barks. Fire was then put to burn the charms so as to produce smoke. As soon as the charms caught fire, the fire was put off to enable only the smoke to come out. People in the village sat next to the smoke (*kuyotela*) in the evening in order for them to be lucky in many aspects of life.

On the other hand, *ashoo* was a clay pot filled up with charms and water where all the members of the village were encouraged to be bathing in order for them to be protected from evil forces. Just like a *shinjinga*, roots, leaves, barks and

<sup>2</sup>Peter Labouchere, 'Magic, Witchcraft and Divination in Zambia: An Assessment of their Claims and of their Socioeconomic Implications' (Lusaka: Institute for African Studies, University of Zambia, May, 1993), p. 3.

<sup>3</sup>Labouchere, 'Magic, Witchcraft and Divination in Zambia', p. 3.

<sup>4</sup>John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers Ltd., 2015), p. 195.

<sup>5</sup>Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, p. 194.

<sup>6</sup>Marcel Mauss, *A General Theory of Magic* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1972), p. 18.

<sup>7</sup>Gehman, *African Traditional Religion in Biblical Perspectives*, p. 69.

<sup>8</sup>Gehman, *African Traditional Religion in Biblical Perspectives*, p. 69.

<sup>9</sup>Naboth M.J. Ngulube, *Some Aspects of Growing Up in Zambia* (Lusaka: Nalinga Consultancy Limited, 1989), p. 28.

<sup>10</sup>Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, p. 196.

<sup>11</sup>Ngulube, *Some Aspects of Growing Up in Zambia*, p. 25.

grass were the charms that were put in a shoo. If a relative arrived in the village from another village or any other area, he/she was advised to bath in the shoo for him/ her to be protected from evil forces. Unlike a shinjinga which was strictly used in the evening, people could bath in a shoo at any time of the day. Despite people being allowed to bath in a shoo at any time, the most recommended time was in the morning and evening. A morning bath in a shoo was encouraged in order to remove from one's body any evil things that could have affected someone in the night so that he/she could be clean during the day. On the other hand, an evening bath in the shoo helped people to sleep well in the night because all the evil forces that could have affected them during the day or those that would affect them in the night were removed and blocked respectively by the charms.

The ability to perform magical activities was obtained (kutambula) from a person who already had the ability to perform it. People who had magical charms were selective in terms of who to give their charms. It was not allowed to give whoever wanted to have magical powers. Only a person who was proven to be well behaved could be given magical charms. A person believed to be a thief, burglar, bandit or brigand could not be given magical charms knowing that he/she would use them to harm people. When a person wanted to acquire magical charms, he/she approached a person who had the charms he wanted. Upon being approached, the medicine man prepared all the necessary charms and went to the village of the person who wanted the charms where he (recipient) was given the charms. Before the process of giving the charms started, the recipient invited his relatives to be present in order for them to witness the process. The invited family members carried with them gifts like bangles, beads, spears, axes, food and many more which they gave to the medicine man during the process of giving medicine to their relatives. At times a medicine man would choose a girl within the village who became his helper. Such a girl could be sent to do different tasks like fetching water, washing for the medicine man and many more. If the medicine man and the girl loved each other, they could spend nights together. Through this process, some medicine men could marry such girls.

When all was set, the medicine man demanded for a cow as charge for giving magical charms to the person who had invited him. As soon as an animal was given to him, he told the person who was to receive the charms to sit down. The medicine man then applied some charms on his body. On top of applying charms on his body, he hit him with some charms (kukasha shombo) on his body. He was finally exposed to the steam from a boiling pot of charms

while covered in a blanket so that he inhales the charmed steam (kuyukwela). After this process repeated for about three or four times, he was given some charms to drink. While this was taking place, the relatives to the person being given the charms gave the medicine man the gifts they had brought for him. When this process was done, the medicine man did not go back home there and then. He stayed in the village of the person who was given the medicine for some weeks or even a month observing his student and continued giving him some needed charms. When the observation was done, the medicine man went back to his home. However, he could go back once in a while to visit his student.

### Magical Activities performed in Imilangu

Just like other ethnic groups in Barotseland, the Imilangu performed different magical activities. One of the magical activities practised by the Imilangu was lycanthropy. Lycanthropy is defined as the supernatural transformation of a person into a wolf. Lycanthropy was one of the commonest activities done by the Imilangu. Kangende supports this view by outlining that:

In rural communities of Zambia, people live in mortal fear of 'human animals' such that they resort to magic in order to protect themselves against fatal attacks. For instance, among the Lozi, there are some specialised doctors called sitondo who are allegedly able to control wild animals. It is believed that in controlling wild animals, they are also capable of turning themselves into the animals that they control.<sup>12</sup>

Of all the wolves that the magicians in Imilangu converted themselves into, the lion was the commonest. According to Kangende, 'the animals commonly associated with lycanthropy are lions, crocodiles and hyenas. The specialist doctors who control such animals are called ng'aka wa litau (doctor of lions); ng'aka wa likwena (doctor of crocodiles); ng'aka wa litongwani (doctor of hyenas).'<sup>13</sup> However, no records of people with magic charms for hyenas in Imilangu were found during this research. This could be attributed to the scarcity of hyenas in the area. A person who turned himself into an animal or snake was called mukushitu. Magical charms for people turning into lions were the most common in all parts of Imilangu. This was so because the area had a lot of lions. According to Ngulube, 'those around swamps, lakes and dambos use such animals and reptiles common in those areas.'<sup>14</sup> Other than turning into lions, some people had charms which enabled them to heal people who were injured by lions. Such people could also protect villages and cattle from being terrorised by lions.

Mukuku from Ushanjo area was an example of a person

<sup>12</sup>K. Kangende, *Zambia Myths and Legends of the Wild* (Lusaka: Minta Publishers, 2001), p. 181.

<sup>13</sup>Kangende, *Zambia Myths and Legends of the Wild*, p. 181.

<sup>14</sup>Ngulube, *Some Aspects of Growing Up in Zambia*, p. 29.

who had magic charms for lions in Imilangu. He could be invited by people from different parts of Kalabo and Sikongo Districts to protect their cattle from lions. After he finished protecting the cattle from lions, he told the people in the village where he was invited to protect the animals from lions to transport his luggage from their village to the next one. Since Mukuku was famous in Imilangu because of his magic charms for lions, people in each village where his luggage was delivered made sure that it was not kept there for more than a night. Each village made sure that the luggage was taken to the next village until it reached Mukuku's village. After giving such an instruction, he left and went to his village knowing that his luggage would follow him behind. If there was any village that decided to keep his luggage for more than a night, such a village would be terrorised by lions the whole night. Not until people in that particular village took Mukuku's luggage to the next village would they have peace in their village. For this reason, people ensured that his luggage was not kept in their village for more than a night.

Another prominent man who had magic charms for lions was Mulilo Litoya from Tusheshe village. Mulilo could turn into a lion at any time when he wanted to. Whenever he became annoyed, he begun growing nails and hairs like those of a lion. It had to take his daughter Simasiku Mulilo or his niece Ma Tom Namuyawa to plead (*kuambelela*) with him to get back to a normal human being. Other than turning into a lion when he was annoyed, Mulilo was able to send any of his daughters when they were below twenty years old to travel long distances in the bush. To ensure that his daughter he sent was safe from any form of danger, he sent a lion to escort her as she travelled in the bush. An oral informant aged eight seven years outlined that:

My dad Mulilo used to send me when I was still a young girl to travel long distances alone from Tusheshe Village to other villages. To encourage me not to get scared when he sent me, he told me that I was going to be escorted by a fellow woman. When I asked him to tell me who that fellow woman was, he told me to just go. True to his word, as I walked in the bush, I could hear some foot steps of an animal (lion) that walked beside me in the bush. When I approached the village where he sent me, the footsteps subsided. The same happened on my way back.<sup>15</sup>

Apart from having magic charms that safeguarded people and animals from lions, some people within Imilangu had charms that enabled them to heal people that had been injured by lions. According to Kangende, 'apart from their protective role of protecting the community from the

beasts, the sitondo are able to cure the wounds that the victims may sustain.'<sup>16</sup> An example of a person who had magic charms to cure people beaten by lions was Sitengu, nicknamed Shiwi, from Mabuwa area in Imilangu. In the early 1940s Nawiko from Siondo Village was seriously injured on the arm by a lion while he was sleeping in his ngulu.<sup>17</sup> After he was injured, Sitengu was called to go and administer charms which saw the victim healed within a week.

The other aspect of magic to do with lions enabled some people to communicate with lions. Mulilo Litoya is again an example of a person who could communicate with lions. For example, when he heard a lion roaring coming towards his village, he was able to communicate with it. To know if it was sent by someone or it was an ordinary one, he shouted saying, "nji wahaenda ya ng'ole onitambule, nji wakuendela waka nitambula" (lit. if your mission is an evil one, answer me, if it is a peaceful one, don't answer me). After he had said these words, if the lion was sent by someone, it was heard roaring. However, if it kept quiet and then roared after it bypassed his village, everyone in the village was able to know that it was sent by someone. Headman Muhongo added that, 'no lion could attack an animal or a human being as long as Mulilo ordered it not to do so.'<sup>18</sup>

After his death, Mulilo was buried in Lisito village and White Simushi was tasked to care of his grave by sweeping around it whenever it was dirty. Simushi made sure that the grave was ever clean to safeguard it from fire. Simushi however could find some lions' footprints on the grave. It was believed by most of the people in Lisito Village that the availability of lions' footprints on Mulilo's grave meant that the lions used to guard their fellow lion (Mulilo) who was in the grave. Finally, one day Simushi found a very big hole (*ndengelwa*) on Mulilo's grave which was interpreted by people in the village that Mulilo had resurrected and transformed into a lion (*mukushitu*). According to Simasiku Mulilo, 'the same night Mulilo resurrected, he passed through the kraal he had left and killed one big oxen. This was believed to mark Mulilo's end and then he went to live in the bush as a lion.'<sup>19</sup>

Apart from magic charms to do with lions, the other common magic charm in Imilangu was for crocodiles. Just as it was with lions, the availability of crocodiles in Imilangu justified why many magicians had charms for crocodiles in the area. Among the famous people in the area that had charms for crocodiles were Kaputu, Mutelo and Mayungano (Headman Namawa) from Siondo, Sishosho and Nalihokwe villages

Interview with Simasiku Mulilo in Itezhi-tezhi on 19th April, 2017. Simasiku was the second born daughter to Mulilo Litoya. Kangende, Zambia Myths and Legends of the Wild, p. 182.

Ngulu was a simple structure built by tying grass around some poles planted in a circle.

Interview with Moses Mutuso (Headman Muhongo) in Sihendo Village on 30th November, 2016. Headman Muhongo is aged 92 years.

Interview with Simasiku Mulilo in Itezhi-tezhi on 19th April, 2017.



respectively. Others included Metaha and Mushawa both from Nalihokwe Village. Charms for crocodiles were used in various ways. Firstly, some people could turn themselves into a crocodile at any time when they wanted to. Secondly, other people were able to command crocodiles to do whatever they wanted them to do. For instance, in 1944 while Maluyanga, with her son Sichachani on the back, was crossing a river in the morning was caught by a crocodile. The same day in the afternoon a man who knew medicine for crocodiles was told of Maluyanga's death. Immediately he commanded the crocodile to bring back Maluyanga and her son. According to Tick Namaya, 'as soon as the medicine man did his magic, Maluyanga and his son were brought back still alive despite having stayed in the water for many hours.'<sup>20</sup> After that incident, Maluyanga and his son lived for many years before they died.

Moreover, Mutelo, commonly known as Ndate Namaloya (Namaloya's father), from Sishosho village, could call a crocodile to get out of the water. As soon as it came out, he put his hand into its mouth to get saliva (lwenge) which he later used to treat people for them never to be attacked by crocodiles. Mutelo could also call a crocodile and sit on its back to cross a river. According to Headman Ndelwa, 'Mutelo once commanded two crocodiles to aid a calf cross the river by placing it on the middle as they sail across the river.'<sup>21</sup> In addition, Headman Muhongo stated that, 'Kaputu from Siondo and Mayungano and Metaha from Nalihokwe Villages could cross a river while riding on the back of a crocodile.'<sup>22</sup>

Although some people argue that magical activities did not take place, many are the accounts within Imilangu and even outside of people who manipulated crocodiles to their desire. Kangende supports this view by giving a scenario which happened in Zambia by outlines that:

In the late 1980s, more than 2000 villagers rose against a chief in Zambezi District in the North Western Province. They called for his resignation and uprooted all his maize crop and damaged his groundnut fields. They claimed that their chief through magic turned into a crocodile and created some which had claimed the lives of ten women.<sup>23</sup>

The other aspect of magic performed by the Imilangu was locally known as makando amayoka (lucky charms for snakes). Just as it was in Serenje in 1984 where a woman turned herself into a snake,<sup>24</sup> there were people in Imilangu who could manipulate snakes to their desire. A person who had charms for snakes was locally known as

Shamayoka. Shilimaluwa from Muyabuko Village was one of the famous Shamayokas who used to move with a bag full of snakes of different types. For instance, cobras, pythons, black mambas and many more were some of the species of snakes found in his bag. Shilimaluwa used to move with his bag of snakes whenever he visited other villages.

Magic charms for snakes were very cardinal in Imilangu. For instance, Shilimaluwa was able to earn a living through his magic charms by charging those who wanted to protect their property from thieves through snakes. Shilimaluwa could stop thieves from stealing in people's homes, fields and many more. As long as a house or field was protected (kulandekiwa) with snakes, three things happened if a thief went there to steal. Firstly, the thief saw snakes moving around the house or field to stop him/ her from stealing. Secondly, snakes wrapped themselves around the thief's body such that he/ she could not manage to move out of the field or house. If he/ she decided to leave the house or field, the snakes that had wrapped themselves around his body threatened to bit him/ her. By so doing, he was kept in the field until the owner of the field came and found him/ her. Finally, the third thing that happened was that the snakes bit the thief. Therefore, magic charms for snakes stopped people from being involved in theft activities knowing that if they did they were going to easily be exposed. Moreover, such charms helped those with such charms to earn a living by charging those who needed protection against thieves.

Furthermore, magic charms for snakes were very helpful in Imilangu because people who were beaten by snakes could be cured by those with charms. If a snake bit someone, Shilimaluwa was quickly invited to go and cure the victim. As soon as he arrived at the place where he was invited, Shilimaluwa demanded to be taken to the point where the person was beaten from. When he reached the point, he shouted with a loud voice calling the snake to go to him. Immediately it submitted to his call, he caught it, removed its teeth and then put it in his bag. By so doing, many people were treated from snake bites. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, Shilimaluwa also earned a living by treating people who were bitten by snakes. In addition, those who wanted to acquire charms for snakes paid him enabling him to earn a living.

Due to the value attached to magic charms, a white Father called Canot from Sihole Mission got charms for snakes from Shamayoka. Father Canot was prompted to acquire charms for snakes because Sihole mission where he was based had a lot of snakes that terrorised people. Commonly among

<sup>20</sup>Interview with Tick Namaya in Sitete Village on 5th December, 2016. Tick Namaya is aged 77 years and he is the Village Headman for Sishosho Village.

<sup>21</sup>Interview with Nyambe Susiku in Sishosho Village on 30th November, 2016. Nyambe Susiku is aged 80 years.

<sup>22</sup>Interview with Moses Mutuso (Headman Muhongo) in Sihendo Village on 30th November, 2016.

<sup>23</sup>Kangende, Zambia Myths and Legends of the Wild, p. 179.

<sup>24</sup>Kangende, Zambia Myths and Legends of the Wild, p. 179.

the snakes in the mission station was a big black mamba (noka) that was repeatedly found around the station. Due to the phobia induced in the people by the black mamba that was found in the mission station, Shamayoka was invited in 1947 to kill it. Immediately Shamayoka arrived at the station, he called the black mamba to go where he was. As soon as it went down, he caught it, removed its teeth and put it in his bag. Upon seeing this incidence, Father Canot was motivated such that he acquired some charms from Shamayoka that enabled him to be touching and playing with snakes. From that point onwards, father Canot could put snakes around his neck or in his pockets.

There were also some people that had magic charms locally known as kawiwi or shimbundu. This was a kind of a charm that allowed medicine men to hide themselves or their villages from people whom they did not want to see them. For example, if a village was about to be attacked by enemies, kawiwi charms made the village to turn into trees, a plain or a river such that the enemies couldn't see it. As soon as the enemies bypassed the village, they could hear voices from behind but they could neither see the village nor the people in it. Prominent among people who could hide themselves or their villages through kawiwi were Mulilo Mukungu, Lubinda Shiliki and Kawana Silongwa from Lisito, Misiki and Lulang'unyi villages respectively. For instance, one day some messengers from the boma went to Lisito village to arrest people who had not paid their tax obligations. Immediately they arrived in Lisito plain, Mulilo saw them as he was on his way from catching fish. As soon as he realised that the people he saw were messengers, Mulilo climbed a tree that was in the plain living his fish basket down because he was scared that they would arrest him for not paying taxes. Having seen a person going towards the tree, the messengers went to the tree. Upon arriving at the point where the tree was, the messengers were only able to see the fish basket and not the owner of the fish basket. The messengers moved and checked around and even on top of the tree but they could not see anyone. Having failed to find the owner of the fishing basket, they lit a fire on which they roasted some fish from Mulilo's fishing basket. When they were done with roasting and eating fish, they left and then proceeded to Lisito Village leaving the "invisible" Mulilo on top of the tree. After they left, Mulilo came down and picked his fishing basket and then went home.

The other important aspect of magic performed in Imilangu enabled people to win court cases even when they were wrong. Lubinda Shiliki and Kawana Silongwa of Misiki

and Lulang'unyi respectively were famous in terms of charms that enabled them and others they gave their charms to win court cases. For example, in 1956 Shiliki and Rice Mwiya of Naka shot dead Kalonga of Naka. After she was killed, she was buried in Naka village. To destroy the evidence, Shiliki and Mwiya exhumed Kalonga and then took her body to bury it in Shashimba near Lulang'unyi. The relatives to Kalonga reported Shiliki and Mwiya to the District Commissioner called Brown, who was nicknamed Kamilatu,<sup>25</sup> who sent police officers to arrest the two. Due to Shiliki's charms, the two were acquitted in Livingstone despite the courts having adequate evidence that they were the ones that had killed Kalonga. An innocent man called Mwanamuke was instead arrested and killed in their place.

Some magic activities performed in Imilangu were done to entertain people. For instance, Mulilo could put maize and water in a clay pot and then put it on top of the roof of a grass thatched house. Having done his charms, the pot could be seen boiling on the roof without any fire. Confirming Mulilo's magical powers, Simasiku stated that,

I personally saw dad put maize and water in a clay pot which he later put on top of a grass thatched roof. After boiling for some time, he gave us to eat the maize and when we tasted it we were shocked that it was fully cooked.<sup>26</sup>

Mulilo could also go to the river or well to draw water using a fish basket (liyongo). A lot of people got shocked when they saw him reaching home with water in a fishing basket. Mulilo therefore, entertained people in the village such that whenever he started his magical activities everybody in the village drew closer to see what he was going to do. By so doing, there was no boredom in the village.

### The value of Magic

Despite the fact that good magic is no longer performed and even known by most of the younger people in Imilangu, it was a very valuable form of social activity in the social life of the Imilangu and other ethnic groupings in and outside Barotseland. Labouchere outlines that:

the use of good magic is accepted and esteemed by society. It is chiefly the specialists and particularly the medicine man, diviner and rain maker, who uses their knowledge and manipulation of this mystical power for the welfare of their community.<sup>27</sup>

When asked if magic was important in Imilangu Headman Muhongo stated that, 'given chance to reintroduce magic my village, I can be the first one to recommend for its reintroduction because some of the problems we are facing

<sup>25</sup>Kamilatu is Silozi which means fault finder. Mr Brown was nicknamed fault finder because he was good at punishing offenders in Kalabo District.

<sup>26</sup>Interview with Simasiku Mulilo on 26th April, 2017.

<sup>27</sup>Labouchere, 'Magic, Witchcraft and Divination in Zambia', p. 25.

today were not there when magic was still performed in Imilangu.<sup>28</sup> Having analysed the value of magic to the majority of Africans, Mwizenge suggests that, 'magic should be used to achieve positive ends.'<sup>29</sup>

To start with, magic was helpful in the sense that it provided security to the community. As observed in the magic activities performed in Imilangu, magicians used their mystical powers to protect homesteads, families, fields, cattle and other properties from evil forces and other bad habits in the community. For example, a field that was protected with magic charms could not be entered by a thief. If a thief went to steal in a field that was protected, he would be exposed by either being blocked by snakes from leaving the field, being beaten by snakes or any other complication as directed by the magician would happen to him/her. Commenting on how magic curbed theft in the area, Nalishuwa Namushi stated that, 'cases of theft were not common when there were people that had medicines to stop thieves from stealing. Anyone who attempted to steal could easily be exposed. Therefore, cases of theft were not as rampant as they are today.'<sup>30</sup>

Apart from providing security to property, magic protected people from evil forces. Having no way of counteracting threatening situations, the Imilangu reverted to substitute activities like magic. According to Mulonga, 'resorting to magic gave people courage, relief, hope and tenacity to face the contradictions.'<sup>31</sup> Therefore, the availability of magicians in the area was of great value to the community as magicians curbed theft activities and gave people hope amidst evil forces. O'dea expounds that magic supplements man's practical abilities and thereby enhances his confidence. Magic was used in counteracting misfortunes and in destroying evil 'power' or witchcraft. Therefore, magic was valuable because it enhanced man's faith in the victory of hope over fear.

Kalyata and shangebe grew up in Angola but they later came to settle in Lulang'unyi, Imilangu. Their father was an Angolan whereas their mother was Namangolwa wa Atanga, an Imilangu from Lulang'unyi. The two had charms that protected them from being shot by a gun. If anyone shot a gun at anyone of them, water came out of the barrel of the gun. Moreover, the two could not be axed or stabbed with a spear. In some incidences where the two were annoyed at each other and they decided to fight by stabbing or axing each other, the spear or axe used bent

without injuring the one stabbed or axed. Such kind of magic was therefore very important as it protected people from being killed or injured through guns, spears, axes or any other tool that one would wish to use against them.

Apart from providing security, magic was also necessary for healing of different ailments. In his support of magic as a source of healing, Mwizenge expounds that, 'the argument is that some elements of the witchdoctor practices and rituals should be incorporated into modern treatment and diagnosis of diseases among Africans.'<sup>32</sup> Mwizenge's argument is valid in the sense that there were diseases that could be healed at the hospital whereas others needed the attention of a medicine man. Diseases that could not be healed at the hospitals could easily be attended to by medicine men. According to Mwizenge, 'the witchdoctor heals those who are thought to have been bewitched by others.'<sup>33</sup> Any disease that was caused by bewitchment could not in any way be healed by modern medicines. The only solution to such problems was traditional medicine which could only be provided by a medicine man. Therefore, magic was of great value in Imilangu because of its healing aspect.

The provision of good lucky was another valuable aspect of magic. This was the reason it was called makando (good lucky) in Imilangu. Makando (magic) made people to be lucky in many areas of life. The most common makando enabled people to win cases in or outside courts of law even when they had committed an offense. Many people used this type of magic to win cases. If a person had a case in court, he/she was advised to bath in a shoo for him/her to win the case. Early in the morning he rubbed the magic potion on his hands and swallowed some medicine while saying these words, "I take this medicine so that I can win the case that I stand charged with in the court." When he approached the court, he rubbed the medicine on his face. As soon as he had done this, he was assured of winning his case in the court even if he was wrong. The case of Lubinda Shiliki and Kawana Silongwa of Misiki and Lulang'unyi areas respectively is a practical example of magic charms done to enable people to win cases in courts. Despite having killed Kalonga of Naka Village, the two were acquitted in Livingstone court and an innocent person known as Mwanamuke was killed in their place. In the absence of lawyers to stand for someone in the courts of law, magic was very helpful because an offender could easily win a case despite him/her being wrong.

<sup>29</sup> Tembo, S. Mwizenge, 'The Witchdoctors are not Wrong: The Future Role and Impact of African Psychology on Individual Well-being'. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association held in Boston, December 4-7, 1993, p. 6.

<sup>30</sup> Interview with Nalishuwa Namushi (Former Chief Namulimbwa) on 28th November, 2016 in Malundu Village. Nalishuwa Namushi is aged 84 years.

<sup>31</sup> Hanka, A. Mulonga, 'Sorcery among the Chewa of Eastern Province in the Light of Anthropological Theories' (Lusaka: Institute for African Studies, University of Zambia, May, 1989), p. 4. Mwizenge, The Witchdoctors are not Wrong, p. 10.

<sup>32</sup> Mwizenge, The Witchdoctors are not Wrong, p. 6.

<sup>33</sup> Labouchere, 'Magic, Witchcraft and Divination in Zambia', p. 11.

Apart from being lucky in terms of winning court cases, magic helped people to have favours in other aspects of life like finding job and being loved by other people. Having visited the medicine man provided the client with love magic by which the love and favour of a woman/man or employer respectively could be won. The medicine man provides a kind of love potion. If a man desired very much to marry or sleep with a woman, he bought this love medicine and used to be loved by the woman he wanted. Upon getting the medicine, the man said, "you, so and so, wherever you are today, as soon as I use this medicine, let your heart fall for me." Having done this, within a few days signs of love would be seen from the woman for the man who had used the medicine. Magic was therefore valuable as it helped the Imilangu to find favours in life.

Some types of magic performed by some individuals was meant to entertain people in the communities. For instance, some magic activities performed by Mulilo where he could cook maize without any fire was meant to entertain people. Moreover, as observed earlier, Mulilo could draw water in a basket made out of sticks. Such amazing activities were made to entertain the people. Whenever entertaining magic activities were performed, people rushed from wherever they were to see what was taking place. Therefore, the inadequacy of entertainment activities in Imilangu was supplemented by magical activities that were performed for entertainment purposes.

Magic was also a source of fame and wealthy for the medicine men. People that performed magic activities or those who were related to people that had magic charms were highly regarded in the society. People with magical charms were considered to be life preservers for everyone in the society. Such people were considered just like kings or gods. Due to the respect they commanded, whatever they said had to be followed. Moreover, whatever they asked for they had to be given as long as what they needed was available. For instance, if a hunter had killed an animal, people that performed magic were given the biggest piece. To show how respected magicians were, the proverb, *omukulu olye okwelo, eikwela yabula* – meaning an adult should eat the thigh of an animal because there are many things that despise him. In this proverb, the word 'adult' referred to someone who performed magic. According to Labouchere, 'the prestige, fear and respect gained by a reputation for proficiency in magic can motivate an individual to make false claims as confessions to enhance his/her reputation as a magician.'<sup>34</sup>

## Conclusion

The paper examined magic and its value among the Imilangu of Kalabo and Sikongo districts of western Zambia. It has

been observed that despite not being practiced in the recent days, magic was one of the common social activities in Imilangu. Magicians in the area performed magical activities like which enabled them to transform into crocodiles and lions. The same magicians that transformed into crocodiles and lions were able to heal people that were injured by crocodiles and lions. They were also able to safeguard people and animals from crocodiles and lions. Moreover, some people had magic charms that enabled them to hide themselves and their villages from danger. It has also been discussed that some magicians in Imilangu had lucky charms such that they could win a job, lover or a court case without any problem. The paper has been concluded with an examination on the value of magic. It has clearly come out that magic was very valuable in Imilangu as it provided security, healing, good lucky, entertainment and recognition.

## References

1. Interview with Mutuso Moses (Headman Muhongo) in Sihendo Village on 4<sup>th</sup> June, 2018.
2. Interview with Namaya Tick in Sitete Village on 5<sup>th</sup> December, 2016.
3. Interview with Namushi Nalishuwa (Former Chief Namulimbwa), 2016.
4. Interview with Mulilo Simasiku in Itzhi-tezhi on 19<sup>th</sup> April, 2017.
5. Interview with Susiku Nyambe in Sishosho Village on 30<sup>th</sup> November, 2016.
6. Gehman J. Richard, *African Traditional Religion in Biblical Perspectives*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers Ltd, 2000.
7. Mulonga A. Hanka, 'Sorcery among the Chewa of Eastern Province in the Light of Anthropological Theories'. Lusaka: Institute for African Studies, University of Zambia, May, 1989.
8. Kangende K, *Zambia Myths and Legends of the Wild*. Lusaka: Minta Publishers, 2001.
9. Peter L. Magic, *Witchcraft and Divination in Zambia: An Assessment of their Claims and of their Socioeconomic Implications*. Lusaka: Institute for African Studies, University of Zambia, May, 1993.
10. Marcel M. A *General Theory of Magic*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, 1972.
11. Mbiti, S. John, *African Religions and Philosophy*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers Ltd, 2015.
12. Ngulube MJ. Naboth, *Some Aspects of Growing Up in Zambia*. Lusaka: Nalinga Consultancy Limited, 1989.
13. Mwizenge S. Tembo, 'The Witchdoctors are not wrong: The Future Role and Impact of African Psychology on Individual Well-being'. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association held in Boston, December 4<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup>, 1993.

<sup>34</sup>Labouchere, 'Magic, Witchcraft and Divination in Zambia', p. 11.