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# Basoli of Lusaka Province

*A Reflection on and Re-appraisal of their  
Traditional Culture*



**P.C. Manchishi**

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this book to all the Soli people, where ever they are, especially the youth and to all those interested in cultural studies. It is my hope that they will find it valuable.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

My profound gratitude to all those who directly or indirectly contributed, in some way, to the realisation of this book.

Specifically, I would like to acknowledge all the interviewees from the four Soli Chiefdoms, some primary school teachers from Chongwe and Lufunsa districts. The information I got from them was very helpful indeed. Judge Musona E. Mukopola J. and Chifuka W. for reviewing the manuscript. Their comments were very valuable and encouraging. The manuscript was typed by Kulyambanino. C. {our Departmental Secretary}. I thank her too.

My special thanks go to my wife and children for their usual support and encouragement while I was working on this book.

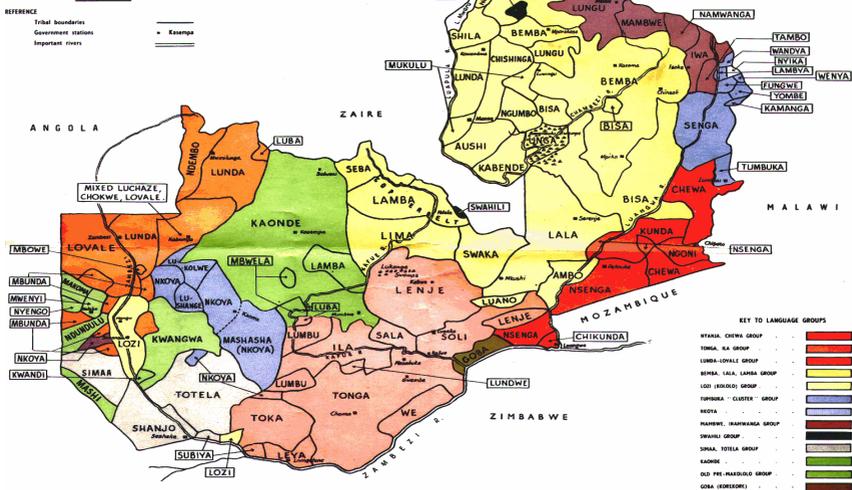
## **PREFACE**

Culture is about the practices of a community. It is the culture which makes a community different from another. A community that abandons its culture destroys its own identify. Basoli have a culture which they should at all costs promote and preserve while taking cognisance of the fact that they are part of the larger Zambian culture.

I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank Dr. P. C. Manchishi for writing this book. It is no doubt, a valuable document. It is my sincere hope that it will be valued by Basoli, other Zambian communities and those interested in cultural anthropology.

Senior Chieftainess Nkomesha  
Mukamambo II

**TRIBAL AND LINGUISTIC MAP  
OF ZAMBIA**



PRICE: K1 00

Source: <http://notru.stingaway.blogspot.co.za/2013120/archive.html>



## INTRODUCTION

It is said that a nation without a culture is as good as a dead one. The same can be said about an ethnic group.

It will be recalled that before the arrival of the Europeans in this part of Africa, the ethnic groups lived independently with their own distinct cultures in terms of language, indigenous knowledge, ceremonies, customs and material objects. What this means is that, Basoli during that era, had their own land under the chief and their own way of life (culture).

It should also be noted that culture can change, especially when a community comes into contact with another. This is exactly what happened to the ethnic groups in this country. The arrival of Europeans (Christianity and Colonial rule) brought with it, a centralised governance, and a foreign culture. This resulted into a mixed culture and western type of administration.

The change has continued to day. As I write this book (2017/2018) the *Zambian* culture is at “cross roads” in other words, it has been “infiltrated” by foreign cultures, especially the European one and as a result, we seem to be abandoning our own in preference for the foreign ones.

I do recognise that the traditional cultures of powerful nations like the United States of America, Britain, France, etcetera have to some extent changed but they have maintained their identity.

I am advocating the same for Zambia. Our identity should be promoted and preserved at all costs inspite of the inevitable cultural dynamics. The *Zambian* traditional culture is rooted in its ethnic groups (tribes). It is in this spirit that I was motivated to remember the Basoli traditional culture through writing this book.

The book contains three main sections. The first one presents Basoli. Note that there is already a book on Basoli titled "*A Brief History of the Soli people from 1500-1900*" by Manchishi P.C. and Musona E. (1990). The second section is on the concept of culture. The third section, which describes the traditional culture of Basoli, is the central part of the book. Most of the information in this section is from my personal experience (I grew up in a Soli village) enriched by supplementary information from interviewees and secondary data (from documents).

## **BASOLI**

Basoli assert that they came from “Ku Buluba”. This was Chief Mwata Yamva’s area in the present Katanga province in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). They were part of the earliest migrations comprising the Kaonde, Lala and Lamba. This was around 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. In an area where Mulembo River is located, Basoli separated from the Lala and continued southwards. Note that part of Mulembo river is found in a place known as Kanona. The late chief Matipula, one of the chiefs in the Nkomesha chiefdom, usually made reference to it. We are told (oral source) that he used to say “Kukanona Kwalula”. This is some evidence linking Ba Soli to the Lala. The Soli oral traditions also point to lalaland as where Basoli travelled from before finally settling in the present Soliland. Additionally, one interviewee had this to say “Twapita muchishi cha Balala”: {We passed through lalaland}.

From Mulembo river, area Ba Soli travelled southwards and settled east of Lusaka town. It is said that they first settled at Bwinjimfumu, just before Chongwe town, near Katende along Great East Road. Some oral source says they first settled at Lilayi.

During their journeys, they were led by Mbonshi who happened to be the first Chief Bunda Bunda. Oral tradition asserts that he was the first head of Basoli. Infact, the Colonial Local Administrative Centre was located in his chiefdom (BundaBunda) at Chinyunyu (where the Forestry Department is located). This was also where the original Chinyunyu Local Education Authority (LEA). School was located. The administrative structure was converted into a school by a young Jesuit Priest from Kasisi around 1945 to 50s when it (colonial centre) was relocated to Chongwe.

To protect themselves from enemies, some leading personalities were appointed as chiefs to occupy the surrounding areas, hence the current presence of five chiefs – Nkomesha, Bundabunda, Mumphansha, Shikabeta and Chiyaba. The original Chief Chiyaba, was a Soli. His name was Muyobe. Today Chiyaba chiefdom is under the Goba people. This means that now Basoli are under four chiefs namely; Nkomesha (Senior chief) (Soli manyika), Bunda bunda (Soli Shamifwi), Mumphahsha (Soli Futwe), Shikabeta (Soli Futwe/Luano). It should be noted, in passing, that these chiefs were in some way related to Chief Bundabunda and all belonged to the Nyangu clan except Chief Nkomesha who belonged to Beneng’ombe (Bashikulu to chief Bundabunda).

### **Location**

Basoli are mainly found in Lusaka, Chongwe, Kafue, Chilanga and Lufunsa districts in Lusaka province. Some are also found in the areas between Lusaka City and Mwembeshi river and Katuba area of Chibombo district.

### **Population**

According to the 2010 national census (the latest when I was writing this book), Zambia had a total of 12, 526, 314 people (Male 6, 117,253, Female 6, 409, 906) out of this population, 87, 684 193 were Soli (Male 42, 820 271, Female 44, 863, 477).

### **Language (Cisoli)**

Cisoli the language of Basoli, is classified under the Tonga linguistic group comprising of Batonga, Ba ila, Ba Lenje and Ba Sala. Ci Soli is closest to Ci Lenje. This is because the two ethnic groups (Ba Soli and Ba Lenje) have lived side by side for a long time in Lusaka and Chongwe districts.

### **Political Structure**

Just like other Zambian ethnic groups, Basoli are under a chief. He or She is the head of the group. There are four chiefdoms in Soliland.

The chief has around him or her advisors known as Babala. In each chiefdom, there are villages headed by a head man or woman. In the past, villages comprised of people related to each other.

The Following is the political structure for Basoli:  
Chief (Head of the ethnic group in the chiefdom)  
Babala (Advisors to the chief)  
Head man/woman (Head of a village)

### **Social Organisation**

Basoli are matrilineal. That is, descent and status are influenced by this matrilinearity factor. For example, when a chief dies, he or she is succeeded by relatives from his or her mother's side. Equally, when a man dies, his name is inherited by his nephew (one of his sister's sons.)

### **Religion**

Christianity is the main religion among Basoli. Catholics are the majority. Other churches such as the United Church of Zambia, Seventh Day Adventist, Pentecost etc. are also present in the chiefdoms. Traditional religion still does exist. Basoli do believe in God whom they call Lesa. Offerings or prayers are offered to Him through the spirits of their ancestors.

### **Economic Life**

Basoli are agriculturalists. They grow maize, sorghum, sweet potatoes, vegetables etcetera. They also rear livestock such as cattle, goats and chickens.

From the information above, about Basoli, it is clear that they are not in any way different from the other Zambian ethnic groups. They have a lot in common in terms of origin, language, political social, religious and economic life. All the Zambian ethnic groups belong to the Bantu people.

# THE CONCEPT OF CULTURE

## **Definition**

The word culture comes from a Latin word “cultura (cultivation of land) In later years, it was used to mean “cultivation of people through education. In 1871, Burnett E, used the French word “Civilisation” and the Germany word “Kultur” to come up with an anthropological definition of “culture” which I have reproduced here below:

Culture is what all human beings learn to do, to use to produce, to know and to believe as they grow to maturity and live out their lives in the social groups to which they belong. Culture is the knowledge, language, values, customs, material objects that are passed from person to person and from one generation to the other.

([www.slideshare.net/mariellameva/concept-of-culture-15500056](http://www.slideshare.net/mariellameva/concept-of-culture-15500056) Accessed 2/03/2017)

UNESCO (1982) cited in [http: www.mesacc.edu/bdille/un/hs/culture.pdf](http://www.mesacc.edu/bdille/un/hs/culture.pdf) (Accessed 06/02/2017) defined culture as follows:

The whole complex of distinctive spiritual, emotional features that characterise a society or social group. It includes not only arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs.

It can be concluded from the two definitions stated above that culture, is all about the practices of a society and it is culture which makes a society different from one another. What is important to note is that, culture can change as, it is dynamic. All the same, it can be controlled by people. In other words, a society has control over it.

## **Forms of Culture**

There are five main components (forms) of culture of a society. These are language, indigenous knowledge, ceremonies, customs and material objects.

### **(i) Language**

A language is a tool for communication or interaction among members of a society. In other words, a language is a vehicle of value systems and cultural expression which constitute a determining factor on the identity of groups and individuals. Language has on it, a wealth of literature of folklore, songs, riddles, proverbs and wise sayings. In a nutshell, a language is a store house for indigenous knowledge about a society's history. In this vein, destroying a language, means "killing" the identity of a society. "Forcing a people to lose their language is tantamount to forcing them to lose their culture. Furthermore, language death is linked to decline in biodiversity of species, since preservation of species by various cultures is carried along by their ancestral languages" {Kymlicka and Patten 2003 cited in Mbozi 2018: 14}

### **(ii) Indigenous Knowledge**

Indigenous knowledge also known as; local knowledge, folk knowledge, people's knowledge or traditional knowledge is that knowledge created by a society as opposed to scientific or modern knowledge. Indigenous knowledge is expressed through experiences and explanations relating to the environment a society lives in. For example, health care, education, conservation, etcetera (Nakashima and Prott (2000) cited in <http://www.unesco.org/education/mods/theme/modll.html> – (Accessed 17/03/2017). In short, indigenous knowledge is normally the source for decision making about life.

(iii) **Ceremonies**

Traditional ceremonies are practices executed by a society. They are ritualistic in nature. These traditional ceremonies are inherited, for example the annual Zambian ceremonies practised by some ethnic groups. The Soli practice Chakwela Makumbi, Chibwela Kumunshi, and Nkombamba Lyanga.

(iv) **Customs**

Customs are actions and behaviours of a society. In a nutshell, customs are practices. For example, how individuals in a particular society greet each other, how marriages are arranged, dressing or respect for elders, etc.

(v) **Material Objects**

Material objects are objects made by a society such as; artworks, religious paintings, musical instruments or outfits. In brief, material objects are physical in nature meaning that they contain some substance.

## **Importance of Culture**

It is said that a nation without a culture is a dead one. So it goes without saying that a community (tribe) without a culture is equally a dead one. Therefore, it is important that culture is promoted and preserved.

Culture should be preserved because it controls conduct or behaviour by prescribing what is right and what is wrong. When conduct is controlled, a community becomes organised. Culture defines who we are (identity). It is in a nutshell, a “lifelihood” of a society which is displayed or expressed in many forms (Language, indigenous knowledge, traditional ceremonies, customs and material objects). It should be noted that as children grow, they learn behaviour from the culture in which, they live. So, if they are surrounded by bad conduct, they will live by that conduct. The opposite is also true. This is known as “cultural transmission theory” or enculturation.

## THE TRADITIONAL CULTURE OF BASOLI

I will now delve into the central theme of the book. That is, the traditional culture of Basoli under five components (forms) explained in the section on the concept of culture.

### (1) **Language (Cisoli)**

Basoli have their own language known as Cisoli which they use to interact among themselves. As I have already stated, language is one of the components or forms of culture, therefore, killing a language means killing the identity of the community which owns that language.

Basoli have always protected their language through various ways. These are; by speaking it among themselves, through proverbs, songs and stories (tulabi).

From time immemorial, Basoli have continued to speak their language when communicating among themselves. This is so, even now, especially in rural areas. However, due to inter-ethnic marriages and interactions, some other Zambian languages have infiltrated Cisoli, an example being, Cinyanja. It should be noted that despite Lusaka being Soliland, Chinyanja is widely spoken in Lusaka. It is used as the language of learning, hence, its influence on Cisoli. As for Cilenje, it should be equally noted that Basoli and Balenje have lived side by side for a long time hence, the influence of the two languages on each other. As I have already stated, when an ethnic group loses its language, its identity is equally lost. The message being put across to the Solis is that, let us continue to preserve our language by speaking it among ourselves. No outsider will promote and preserve it for us. This has to be done by ourselves.

Another way Basoli preserved their language was through proverbs. These are sayings in a more or less fixed form marked by shortness sense and salt and distinguished by the popular acceptance of the truth tersely expressed in it.”

Through proverbs, the elders taught their young values, beliefs and practices. In other words, proverbs were used for instruction in order to control and maintain the Soli social organisation (Shaping the lives of the young). Mwewa (1977:129) classifies proverbs as follows; (a) proverbs on generosity (b) proverbs on cooperation of work (c) proverbs on family matters (d) proverbs on moral formation (e) proverbs on respect (f) proverbs on right to property and proverbs on negative values.

Here are some Soli proverbs:

- Proverb** : Mama mbeleke nenjame (nameyo) ninka kubleke
- Literal translation : Mother carry me on your back, I too will carry you on my back
- Meaning : The young have a duty to look after their aged parents in the same way the parents did to them.
- Usage : Used to remind the young who abandon their aged parents that they have an obligation to look after them when they are aged
- 
- Proverb** : Ale Ale, mwana nkakulu
- Literal translation : A child who is always involved in fights does not grow
- Meaning : Fighting is bad as it can lead to death
- Usage : used when advising a child to refrain from fights because in the process he or she might die before reaching adulthood
- 
- Proverb** : Chifushi nkachapita mutwi
- Literal translation : A shoulder is not above the head
- Meaning : A leader is a leader whether he or she is weak or dull
- Usage : When rebuking a person who has no respect for those in authority

- Proverb** : Munwe umo nkotene inda  
**Translation** : One finger cannot remove lice  
**Meaning** : We need each other’s contribution in order to succeed in our tasks  
**Usage** : Used to advise someone that he or she needs other people’s input in order to succeed (group work)

Basoli used songs to preserve their language. The songs were normally sang at ceremonies, funeral rituals, initiation ceremonies and cerebrations.

Here below are some songs:

**Chabayoma**

Elele chabayoma ame ndalilinga  
 Batata baliya kundaya  
 Nkhumbuleni ndemunenu .  
 Elele chabayoma ndalilinga  
 Batata baliya kundaya.....  
 .....

**Mikonkobelo**

Minkonkobelo kayilila kamfwe  
 Nkayishiye.  
 Mikonkobelo kayilila nkafwe  
 Nkayishiye,  
 Tete tete ndenkanga ndamusepela mobana bame.  
 .....  
 .....

**Nkalambe**

Nkalambe yaya nkalambe  
 Nkaba mbile ba mwami ba Nkomesha.  
 ( Babunda bunda, Ba mumphansa Bashikabeta)  
 Olile olile yaya  
 Nkaba mbile ba mwami ‘ba Nkomesha.

**Kang’ombe**

Kang’ mbe lelo o lelo  
Nkatubelele lumpyoli  
Kang’ana tuyokelele.

.....  
.....

**Lupandapanda**

Lupandapanda ba siwelo  
Mama  
Balono mwana wakulisemena  
Siwelo nimalwa.

-----  
-----

**Busoli Mbomwayandanga**

Katwenda bwangu tobana Basoli  
Basoli baliya musalululo  
Bana busoli bwayina kwa ba Nkomesha  
Ee-- bana busoli bwayina kwa ba Nkomesha  
(kwabunda bunda kwa Mumpansha kwashika beta)  
*Source:* Busoli Bwayina volume 1 Soli Cultural  
Group Zone 18

**Chakwela Makumbi**

Chakwela makumbi cishi caba Choongo

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-----

**Ndelyo**

Ndelyo ndelyo lyesa lyuni lyuni  
Milonga lyakankasha kuseka  
Lyakankasha kuseka -----

## **Bachibinda**

Bachibinda kumwanga mulamuyasa nyinalambwe uyo mulamubono uyo mulamubono nyinalambwe-----

Lastly, Cisoli was preserved through stories (usually through what was known in Soli as tulabi). These stories were narrated to the young in the evening at a fire place. Elderly people usually grandfathers and mothers did the narration. These stories had in them a message to the young, in other words, they were meant to instil good behaviour in them .

Here are some examples of the stories: The beginning was as follows:

[Narrator] –Nkako

[listeners]- kakese

Kwali kuba mutuloba watayika mu cisuwa. Nsala ya mwikata. lende lende mpaka walacana bantu balikulima. Wabapa mitende Wapitilisha nekubasenga cakulya. Bantu basa balikulima bakana eti afwe tuliya fyakulya. Usa muntu wabashiya nekuya kumunshi kubali kwikala basa bantu balacana kabalima. Ashike pamunshi pasa, walepusha eti se basa bantu baliminga mulibala nga'anda yabo ili kupeyo? Bamulesha nga'anda. walengila mukanda nekona . Paliya kupita cindi walafwa kunsala. basa bantu bali kulima, bakomboka nekubwela kumunshi. Bese bengile mung'anda bacana usa muntu wabasenga cakulya wafwa.

kalabi aka kalayi shinga eti okona kwima cakulya muntu olo ukute kang'ana cena muyabana. ecebakute kwikala mucishi.

### **In English:**

There was a man who once got lost in the wilderness. As he wandered, he came across some people working in their field. As he was very hungry, he asked for food from them. They responded in the negative saying they did not have enough food.

The stranger proceeded to the village in which these people were staying. While there, he asked for the house of the people who were working in the field. He was shown and he went in one of them and slept on the bed. Later on he died (from hunger). When the owners of the house returned from the field (the people who refused to give him food ), they were terrified upon seeing the man they had earlier denied food dead.

The story is teaching us to share food with others . In other words, help the needy even if the food is not enough. This is how we should live in the world.

### **Nkako**

### **Kakesa**

Kendi Kwali kuba batuloba balaya kutauni eti baye basebense ne kuchanako tundalama twakulako fintu.

Pobashika kutauni, balengila nchito nekuyamba kusebensa. Aba batuloba bayamba kunwa bwalwa nekona nebatukashi. Pali kuba umo mutuloba nendi wali kasunga ndalama wakana kwinsa fibali kwinsa banendi. Cindi caku bwela kumunshi pocashika, usa mutuloba walola fintu fingi fyakuya nafyo kumunshi.

Pobashika pakati panshila, basa batuloba bapwisha ndalama shonse kubwalwa ne ba tukashi basuminishana eti ba mushine munabo usa walola fintu mulandu nabo paliya cibali kukute ca kutwala ku munshi. Pobali kumushina, kakeni kababona futi kanyumfwa fyonse fibali kwamba. Katatika ne kwi mbila lwimbo eti aba bantu bashina munabo mulandu fyabintu fyalola.

Pobamushina, bayabana fintu fyakendi. Pobashika kumunshi, babatambula cena. kwali kuba kusekelela mumunshi.

Banyina bausa wobashina balepusha eti inga munenu uli kupe?  
Bakumbula nekwamba eti ha usa nkanwaowa bwalwa ne kona  
neba tukashi. Nkatucishi kwabele.

Kakeni kasa kalesa nekuyamba kwimbila lwimbo eti  
bamushina mulandu walikukute fintu fingi fyalola fyaku leta  
ku munshi. Bama kulene mu munshi bale pushabatuloba basa  
eti nyumfwani kakeni cika lembilinga popepasa babekata  
batuloba basa nekubatwala kuli bami. Pobabepusha bami,  
basumina eti ba mushina. Basa batuloba neboyo babashina  
ekupwa kwaka labi.

Ciyisho : Bubepeshi bwayipa. aikona kubepa.  
Minyono yayipa aikona kwinsa minyono  
kuli banenu  
Song (by the bird)  
Mawini, Mawini (x2)  
Uli kupeyo kwesa tu bambe bulungu  
Mawini bulungu nefimbi fintufyashiya  
Mwanobe chinkuwewe, Mawini Mawini  
(Repeat).....

### **In English**

Once upon a time, a group of men left their village and headed for town to look for employment. They managed to get employed and started working. Except for one, the rest got involved in beer drinking and sleeping with prostitutes. The one who refused to be part of the group's behaviour saved some money.

When time came to go back home, they all prepared to live. The young man who saved money bought a lot of things to take with him home. The others had spent their money and went home empty handed. On their way, they decided to kill the young man and shared all what he had bought for his family. However in the process, a bird saw what they did and heard all that they said.

When they reached home, they were warmly welcomed. Seeing that her son was not among the men who returned, the mother of

the young man who had been killed asked where his son was. They answered that he had got involved in beer drinking and sleeping with prostitutes and that they didn't know where he was. At this moment, the bird which witnessed the killing appeared and sang a song telling the people in the village that they had actually killed him. The people in the village were astonished with the message from the bird. So the elders took the young men to the chief to explain the where about of their colleague.

They finally admitted that they had killed him. As punishment, they were also killed.

**Lesson:** Do not cheat. Cheating is not good. Do not be jealous of others.

Song (by the bird)

Mawini, Mawini (x2)

Mawini where are you, come let us arrange the beads and other goods left by your son Chinkuwewe (repeat) .....

From the above examples, it is clear that, Cisoli was promoted and preserved by speaking it and also through literary works such as proverbs, songs and stories. Basoli are, therefore being urged to do the same in order to protect it from dying.

## 2) **Indigenous Knowledge**

Basoli possessed knowledge relating to the environment in which they lived. This knowledge was created by them. The following are some examples of Soli local knowledge:

### **Agriculture and Food Security**

In agriculture, the Soli used their knowledge to make fields fertile. For example, they cut trees which they later burnt and used the ashes as fertilizer. They also changed fields from time to time because experience had taught them that a field became less fertile if one continued farming on it for a long time.

The main crops grown by the soli people were *manchebele* (Maize), *maila* (Sorghum), *bimbwale* (Sweet potatoes), *fise* (pumpkins) *makaka*, {cucumberlike} *fibimbi* {Cucumber} and *nshama* (groundnuts). Maize and Sorghum were stored in *manga* (grain stores) for continued consumption or to sustain the families. As for other foods, they were preserved in the following ways:

### **Vegetables**

To preserve vegetables as relish, the leaves were first boiled then dried and kept for future consumption (when relish was rare) Some of the vegetables preserved in this way ,included Pumpkin leaves (*muntopo*) Cow Peas (*lunyangu*).

As for *makowa* (cucumber like), they were first soaked then sliced and dried then stored for future consumption. This process was also applied to preserve wild fruits known as *imbula* (small round brown fruits). The seeds were removed then dried and stored. These are just a few examples to show that Basoli knew how to preserve food, they created this knowledge themselves.

### **Fiteka[Clothes]**

Basoli using their knowledge, were able to manufacture clothes using treebuds from a tree known as *musamba*.

### **Makumbesa (Blankets)**

Basoli also were able to make blankets most likely from tree buds.

### **Soap**

Equally Basoli made soap from a tree called *sichinsangwe*

### **Mulilo (Fire)**

Basoli also used their knowledge able to make fire using equipment made from wood [ a stick like, and a small pounding container]. Through friction, fire was produced. Alternatively, they also used stones to make fire.

## **Medicine**

Basoli were able to cure diseases using local medicine. Note that they did not have hospitals and clinics before the advent of the white people. But the Solis led healthy lives. Some of the methods they used to cure diseases were;

### (i) **Headache**

When one suffered from headache, powder processed from the roots of a tree known as *nsambalwendo* was used. The process involved making small cuts (nembo) on the sides of his face then apply the powder (the author still has these marks on the sides of his face because he went through this process).

### (ii) **Malaria**

To cure malaria, leaves from a tree known as *mulukwe* were boiled and the patient was subjected to the steam coming out of the boiled leaves.

## **Other Diseases**

Other diseases were mainly cured using roots or leaves mixed with water which was drunk by the patient. Note that these medicines were prescribed by experts. (medicine men or women) in the Soli community, (bang'anga) the equivalent of our modern doctors in hospitals and clinics. The bang'angas are still practising up to now.

## **Education**

Basoli did not have schools as we know them today. All the same, education was delivered to the young (pupils) by the elders (teachers) at a fire place in the evenings, during initiation in confinement (chipango for girls) and kumatanda (for boys). These were classrooms and there was a curriculum (content). Therefore, this type of education was both formal and informal and was realistic in nature meant to produce useful members of the Soli community as opposed to the current schooling which is tilted towards academic excellence to the detriment of character formation.

From the foregoing, it is clear that Basoli were able to comfortably live by relating to the environment in which they lived using their knowledge which they acquired through experience, and reasoning. The author is urging universities and other research centres to document the Zambian indigenous knowledge so that it is revived and practised side by side with modern or scientific knowledge.

### **(3) Ceremonies**

Basoli people have four ceremonies in line with the four soli chiefdoms. These are; Chakwela Makumbi (Senior Chieftainess Nkomesha) Chibwela Kumunshi (Chief Bunda Bunda) Chibwela Kumunshi (chief Mumphansha) and Nkomba Lyanga (Chief Shikabeta). These shall now be described in detail separately.

### **Chakwela Makumbi of the Soli Manyika of Senior Chieftainess Nkomesha**

#### **History**

Chakwela Makumbi which means “pulling the clouds” was a ceremony performed to pray for rain. In the past, it was performed when there was prolonged drought. The ceremony was actually conducted in all the Soli chiefdoms. Currently it is restricted to the Soli Manyika of senior Chieftainess Nkomesha.

The ceremony was conducted, by family or clan members (ba shikulu) whose ancestors were perceived to have possessed mystical powers as rain makers. Prayers were usually conducted at the burial place (Kumalimbo) for the dead rain makers.

At these prayers, beer was offered to the spirits of the ancestors (rain makers). A praise song titled “Chakwela Makumbi chishi caba Choongo.....” Was sung and it was dedicated to the spirits of the rain makers.

For some years, the ceremony went into oblivion due to the influence of colonisation and Christianity. Early missionaries wrongly considered it superstitious. It was resumed by the Senior

Chieftainess Nkomesha. The ceremony has changed a lot in terms of how it is conducted. It is now centralised. As it is now held at the Mukuyu Royal Palace in Chongwe District east of Chalimbana University on the last Saturday of the month of October to pray for rain and also to launch the beginning of the planting season.

### **Pre-Ceremony Activities**

The pre-ceremony activities include, among others, the preparation of the venue (at Mukuyu Royal Palace) and financial mobilisation which are coordinated by the Soli Cultural Association(SOCA) in Senior Chieftainess Nkomesha's Chiefdom. All the Village Heads with their subjects are involved in these activities.

### **The Ceremony Day (Saturday)**

On the eve of the ceremony, some members of the Busoli Royal Establishment (Mashikulu) believed to have had ancestors perceived to have had mystical powers as rain makers, conduct prayers at the Royal burial site.

On the ceremony day, activities normally start around 10:00hrs with various dances and songs. This is followed by the arrival of invited chiefs and a government representative to the arena. Lastly, the host Chief Nkomesha, (at the time I was writing this book, it was Senior Chieftainess Nkomesha Mukambo II) is escorted by Soli elders and women (Bashikulu). Gun shots are fired to attach importance to the process. Meanwhile, the singing and dancing continues. Some of the dances performed are: *Chinsengwe*, *Bamooye*, *Mikonkobelo Kasela* etc. The next activity that follows is the delivery of speeches from the representatives of SOCA, Government and the Chief. This is followed by the main two activities performed by the Chief; the prayers to God for adequate rainfall (in the past, it was to God through the spirits of our ancestors).

The prayers are followed by the blessing of the seeds, which are normally distributed to the village heads on the following day (Sunday). The second activity involves the clearing and preparation of a field (kubunga) in readiness for planting. This is done by the Chief by burning a shrub in a nearby field and planting some seeds she has blessed. Thirdly, the Chief inspects traditional agricultural

tools and other artifacts. Then comes the occasion for gifts to the Chief as an appreciation for her good leadership and also as material support. After this, the ceremony is temporarily halted to allow for lunch break. After lunch, dances and songs continue in the afternoon and throughout the night.

### **Post-Ceremony Activities (on Sunday)**

On Sunday, not much really happens, some singing and dancing continue. The main cultural activity on this day is the distribution of the blessed seeds for planting to the village heads. It is only after this ceremony that official planting of seeds commences. After this activity, the people start returning to their homes, of course, after the closing remarks by the Chief.

### **Significance of the Ceremony**

The Chakwela Makumbi traditional ceremony brings together the Soli people including those from other ethnic groups. The issue here is unity or Soli identity being promoted and preserved. Through this ceremony, the Soli are reminded of their cultural heritage and the need for preserving it for future generations (this is very important especially for the Soli youth). Lastly, at this ceremony, hard work is emphasised in terms of farming.



*Chakwela Makumbi rainmaking ceremony of the Soli*



*Riflemen and escorts clear the royal path for the Chieftainess - Photo by Andrew Mulenga*



*Chieftainess Nkomesha on her way to the arena Photo by Andrew Mulenga*



*The chiftainess plants the symbolic first seed in the royal field - Photo 22 by Andrew Mulenga*



*The cheiftainess with her daughters in the grand stand - Photo by Andrew Mulenga*

## **Chibwela Kumunshi Ceremony of the Soli Shamifwi of Chief Bundabunda**

### **History**

“Chibwela Kumunshi: means “returning home”. Traditionally, during the farming season, the Soli moved to their fields from their villages. Whilst there, they stayed in temporal shelters known as “Musumba”. The reason for staying in the fields was to protect their crops from animals and birds. They stayed in the fields until harvest was over. Afterwards, they returned to their villages (permanent homes). Chibwela Kumunshi, in a nutshell, is a harvest ceremony practised by the Soli people of Chiefs Bunda Bunda and Mumphansha which involves giving thanks to God (Lesa) through their ancestors’ spirits. It is at this ceremony where the different crops harvested were displayed and beer was brewed using meal powder from the new crop (Sorghum and Maize).

Originally, the ceremony was conducted at village level. However, headmen were required to take samples of the new crops to the Chief for blessing (Kupailila Mishimu) in order to prevent diseases from attacking the crops. For a long time, the ceremony was abandoned, due to the influence of colonialism and Christianity. It was only revived and centralised in 1995. Since then, the ceremony is held at the Chief’s palace that is, subjects and their Village Heads celebrate the ceremony at the chief’s palace at Chinyunyu off Great East Road, about eighty kilometres east of Lusaka district. It should be noted that it was also during the Chibwela kumunshi ceremony when girls who had been in confinement (Muchipango) for about months, to undergo initiation because they became of age “graduated that is, finished the initiation training (ba mooye) and were, during the ceremony, required to perform special dances to mark the end of the initiation training period and were now ready for marriage.

### **Pre-Ceremony Activities**

The Ceremony normally takes place on the last Saturday of the month of August every year. The description that follows is about how the ceremony is now practised since 1995. All the villages

in the chieftom are required to participate in the preparations of the ceremony. Each village is apportioned what to do. The pre-ceremony activities involve construction of temporal thatched shelters and preparation of the main arena.

In addition to the physical preparations, there is also the financial and material preparations that is mobilising funds and materials for the ceremony from villages, companies and organisations. It is also during these preparations when selected dancing groups are mobilised. Another preparation involves brewing of beer for the ceremony. It is prepared by “ba Shikulu” from the maize of the new harvest at the sacred place called “khuntungu.” Part of this beer is taken to the shrine of the late Chiefs and offered as an appeasement. It is also at this time when the spirits of the late Chiefs are requested to intercede so that the ceremony goes on well. Apart from the ritual performances, the rest of the activities are co-ordinated by the “Soli Cultural Association (SOCA), Bunda Bunda branch.

### **The Ceremony Day (Saturday)**

The ceremony normally starts around 10 00 hours with people dancing and singing. Around 11 00 hours, the Chief, arrives at the main arena with other invited chiefs escorted by elderly men and women in traditional attire singing and others rolling on the ground as a symbol of respect, Soli men utter words of praise. Others display “bows and arrows” (these were the arms used during wars).

At the Arena, the Chief and his guests (there’s also normally a government representative) take their seats.

After arriving at the arena, the Chief and his guests are entertained by dancers. Some of the dances performed are; ‘*Kasela*’, ‘*Chinsengwe*’, ‘*Chibitiko*’, ‘*Sanse*’, ‘*Ba Moye*’, and ‘*Mikonkobel*’.

During the ceremony there are also speeches from the SOCA representative, Chief’s representative and a government representative.

The entertainment is briefly halted to allow the chief to perform the principle activity of the ceremony, that of inspecting the new harvest and putting it in the ‘*Lyanga*’ (grain store). He or she also inspects artefacts and watches women pounding maize and sorghum.

After performing this act, the Chief is led to a shelter known as 'Nsaka' where he or she is invited to taste the beer brewed from the new harvest. After tasting the beer, the Chief retires to his or her seat, dances and songs resume to entertain the chief's entourage. The next activity is the presentation of gifts to the Chief as a sign of appreciation for the good leadership and also as material support. The offering of gifts marks the end of official programme on Saturday. The Chief and his entourage then return to the palace for lunch. The entertainment is briefly stopped to allow for lunch break. Later celebrations resume. Dancing and singing continues throughout the night.

### **Post Ceremony**

On Sunday not much takes place. Dances and singing continue until the official closure of the ceremony. There is, however, a meeting of heads of villages to review the ceremony [post mortem].

### **Significance of the Ceremony**

The ceremony is an occasion when people come together and interact and socialise while paying homage to their chief. The ceremony symbolises the importance of agriculture, that is hard work, and self-reliance. In other words, the need to produce adequate food and to look after it properly.

During the ceremony, various dances are performed and songs are sung. In addition, some artefacts are displayed. This is done to remind themselves (the Soli) about the traditions practised by their ancestors so that they are preserved.



*Chief returning to his seat after appreciating a dance troupe*



*Makesheft home for farmers as they watch over the fields - "Musumba"*



*Displaying of the newly harvested crops during the ceremony*



*The chief testing the beer brewed from the harvest*

# **Chibwela Kumunshi of the Soli Futwe of Chief Mumphansha**

## **History:**

Chibwela Kumunshi was practiced before the coming of the Europeans. In those days, fields (Mabala) were located a bit far from the villages. So, before the harvest, people shifted to their fields and lived there in order to protect the crops from birds and wild animals. When they harvested the crops, they returned to their villages and this was the time they held the ceremony. So the ceremony means returning home and thanking God through the ancestors' spirits for the harvest. The celebrations normally took place at village level meaning as they were not centralised as it is the case now. However, samples of the harvested crops were taken to the Chief for blessing. During the ceremony, beer was brewed using the newly harvested crop. It was also at this ceremony when the girls who had become of age and had been confined in *Chipango* graduated (ba Mooye) and they performed a special dance to mark the end of the initiation period.

The ceremony was discontinued due to the influence of the early missionaries because they believed that it was primitive. It was only revived under the reign of Raphael Kankuni {Chief Kalubangwe II} and it was centralised. It is now held annually at the Chief's palace during the second week of September.

## **Pre-Ceremony Activities**

The pre-ceremony activity involves raising funds (contributions in any form) and ensuring the structures at the venue are ready for the ceremony. All the villages in the chieftom headed by the heads, are involved.

## **The Ceremony Day (Saturday)**

Usually the ceremony starts between ten and eleven hours on Saturday. All the invited guests take their seats in the main arena before the Chief (government representatives and other invited

chiefs). Then comes the arrival of the Chief accompanied by Bashikulu. He or she takes a seat and is entertained by various dances and songs (Mbeni, Chinsengwe, Sanse, Ba mooye, Mikonkobeló etc), followed by speeches from the Chief, government representative and Soli Cultural Association (SOCA) Mumphansha branch.

Then comes the time for the main activities which include putting the harvest in the grain store, inspection of some artifacts and testing the beer brewed from the new harvest. After this, entertainments continue followed by the gifts to the Chief as a sign of respect and material support. The ceremony is then temporarily halted to allow for lunch. In the afternoon, entertainments continue but the Chief and the guests do not attend (the guests actually leave). Dancing and singing continues throughout the night.

### **Post-Ceremony (Sunday)**

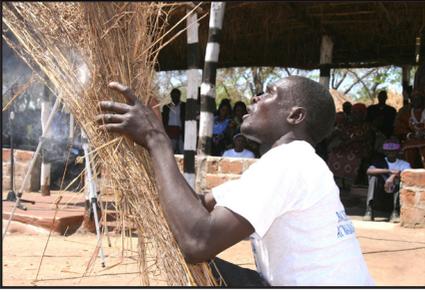
On this day, not much really happens; people will again assemble at the arena to be joined by the Chief. Entertainments continue and later the Chief officially closes the ceremony.

### **Significance of the Ceremony**

The ceremony is held as a way of preserving the Soli identity. Equally, the ceremony is an occasion when people come together and interact and socialise while paying homage to their Chief.

It also symbolises the importance of agriculture, that is hard work and self-reliance. In other words, the need to produce adequate food and look after it properly.

During the ceremony, various dances are performed and songs sung. In addition, some artifacts are displayed. This is done to remind themselves (Solis) about the traditions that were practiced by their ancestors.



*Soli men performing at the ceremony*



*The newly graduated girls (bamooye) being taken to the arena*



*Late Chief Mumpansha testing beer brewed from the harvest*



*Chieftainess Mumpansha*

# **Nkomba Lyanga of the Soli Futwe or Luano of Chief Shikabeta**

## **History**

Nkomba Lyanga means “cleaning the grain store.” In short, it means preparing the grain store so that the new harvest can be stored in it. That is, removing the old harvest. The ceremony did exist prior to colonialism but was discontinued just like the other ceremonies due to the influence of Christianity or colonisation. It was revived under Chief Chikunyekunye. In the past, the ceremony was held at the village level meaning that it was not centralised as is the case now. Usually, an animal was killed for the celebrations. There was drumming, beer drinking eating and dancing too. Bashikulu performed rituals at the ceremony.

It was also at this ceremony when the girls, who had been confined after reaching puberty (initiation), graduated and were required to display their dancing skills through special songs to mark the end of the initiation period.

## **Pre-Ceremony Activities**

The activities that are done before the ceremony are similar to the ones involved in the other ceremonies. That is, preparing the ceremony venue (structures) and mobilising resources (both financial and material). All the villages in the chiefdom have a part to play.

## **The Ceremony Day (Saturday)**

The ceremony is held annually, in July, at the chief’s palace. It normally starts at between ten and eleven hours on Saturday. People gather at the main arena and are entertained to various songs and dances (Ba mooye mikonkobel, chitelele, chinsengwe Sanse etc). Before the arrival of the Chief, invited guests and other Chiefs take their seats at the arena. When all is ready, the Chief arrives at the arena accompanied by Bashikulu.

After the chief has taken his or her seat, entertainments continue followed by speeches. The main cultural activity involves cleaning

the grain store. To preserve the crop, medicine known as *Mulota* is put in the grain store then the new crop is stored in it. Prior to the ceremony day, beer is brewed by Bashikulu and is stored in two containers known as *Nongo* which are placed in two shelters known as *Tululi* or *Tusaba*. In the two containers beer made from maize meal and the other beer made from sorghum meal is stored. The Chief is normally expected to taste this beer. The other significant activity at this ceremony is the display of how seeds were preserved in the ground in the past.

After the cultural activities, entertainments continue followed by the presentation of gifts to the Chief as a sign of respect and material support. Later, the ceremony is temporarily stopped to allow for lunch break. After lunch, entertainments continue in the afternoon and throughout the night.

### **Post Ceremony Activities (Sunday)**

On Sunday, Bashikulu dressed in white and wearing *Tunsonsolo* or *tunshimbi* and smeared with mealie meal (bunga). Performs rituals in the presence of the Chief and also drink the beer. Singing and dancing continues until the official closure of the ceremony.

### **Significance of the Ceremony**

The ceremony is held to remind the people of the Soli traditions and the need to preserve them. This is very important, especially for the future generation. Also through this ceremony, the Soli identity is maintained. Lastly, the message from the ceremony is hard work in terms of farming.



*The Chief watches the women dancing during the ceremony*



*Dancing troupe displaying traditional dances*



*Late Chief Shukabeta with invited Chiefs at the arena*

**Summary:**

The four Soli traditional ceremonies I have described are not different from one another as such. They have a lot in common. Firstly, they are all about the need to preserve the Soli identity, secondly, they are all about agriculture, reminding the people about the need for hard work and thirdly, they all remind Ba Soli the way their ancestors used to live (Soli culture).

However, although the intention of the ceremonies is good and should be continued at all costs they have been politicised. It is being proposed that politicians should not be officially invited to the ceremonies – they can come as any other Soli subject (no political speeches). The ceremonies have been commercialised to the point that they have become trading centers (selling of alcohol, prostitution, etc). The ceremonies have been watered down. That is, through allowing other ethnic groups to perform their dances at the same ceremonies – this trend should be stopped. I end by asking the following question to be considered by the Solis themselves. Since all the four ceremonies are about the same purpose, shouldn't we have only one ceremony? Which one? Where should it be held?

#### **(4) Customs**

##### **Greetings:**

In the Soli custom, greeting is done by shaking hands during which the following utterances are said;

##### **In the Morning**

- (a) Mulapunduku
- (b) Tulapunduku, ito amwe
- (a) tulapunduku

##### **Any Time of the Day**

- (a) Mitende, muli cena?
- (b) Tuli cena ito amwe
- (a) Tuli cena
- (a) Kung'anda kuli cena? Batwanika bali cena?
- (b) Kuli cena, bali cena

##### **Towards Evening**

- (a) Mulalibishi?
- (b) Tulalibishi, ito amwe
- (a) Tulalibishi

Note that shaking hands to greet is common to all the Zambian ethnic groups. But hugging, which has become common, is actually a foreign practice. There are however, some people who one may not shake hands with a father in law or a mother in law {ba pongoshi}. You can also not shake hands with a son in law or daughter in law (balekashi). This is because it is considered disrespectful to shake hands with in laws.

## **Respect**

Respect was something very pronounced among Basoli. The young were told to show respect to the elders, especially when greeting and talking to them, for example, the girls knelt down when taking or giving something to or from an elderly person.

## **Clan [mukowa] and Intratribal Cousinship**

There exists in the Soli community, what is known as a clan. Every Soli belongs to a clan. A clan is a distinct group of individuals within the Soli community who share the same ancestors and origin. This means that there are several clans within the Soli community and these clans have a joking relationship with other clans and this extends even to the handling of burial rituals. Some Soli clans are:

- Bene Nyangu (Beans)
- Bene Ng'ombe (Cow)
- Bene Nkalamu (Lion)
- Bene Mfula (Rain)
- Bene Mpongo (Goat)
- Ba Lembo {bene Teembo}

In terms of the joking relationship stated above, Bene Nyangu for example, joke with Bene Ng'ombe and Bene Mpongo clans, Bene Mfula with members of any clan.

It should be noted that the Basoli outside their own ethnic group, also have a joking relationship with other Zambian ethnic groups. These are the Chikunda (with whom they fought), and the Lozis, the Lundas and Luvalas (in North-Western Province) by extension of the bantu botatwe relationship. This joking relationship among the Zambian ethnic groups has greatly contributed to the peace and unity the country is enjoying.

## **Birth and Naming of a Baby**

The birth of a baby in a family brings joy to both the husband and wife in a family. Nowadays, birth usually takes place in a clinic or hospital. In the past, elderly people (Bachembebe) performed the role being performed now by nurses {midwives}.

At a later stage, the new arrival (the baby) had to be named. Usually a small ceremony was held where a few people gathered and the baby was given a name usually from his or her clan. The person naming the child performed a ritual. The name came from either the husband or wife's family.

It was common in the past for a relative to request a couple that their baby be named after his or her name. To strengthen the request, he or she was required to give the couple a white chicken.

### **Initiation Ceremony**

In the Soli custom, initiation ceremonies only applied to the girls. All those who had come of age (mature) were secluded and confined to a place known as *Muchipango*, and remained in seclusion for a period of about six months. During the confinement, they were taught by elderly selected women {ba seele} how to run a home when they were married. Some of the topics they were taught included how to care for the husband, personal hygiene and cooking just to mention a few. During their stay in *Muchipango*, they remained covered with "red soil" known as "*Nkundwe*" (it was actually applied on their bodies immediately they were confined).

As pointed out already, the girls were expected to remain in *Muchipango* for the period of about six months and only graduated after this duration. At the graduation ceremony, the "*Ba Mooye*" as they were known, were required to perform special dances and wore ceremonial dressings (bulungu). After the graduation ceremony, they were taken to a river for a bath to remove *Nkundwe* (red soil). When all was done, the girls were considered ready for marriage.

Due to schooling and other factors, the initiation ceremony is currently almost dead. Suffice to mention that the girls who went through this ceremony were better behaved as compared to the so called "modern girls" "drunk" with western customs.

Initiation ceremony was in those days some sort of a school for girls. The girls were the pupils (learners) the elderly women (grandmothers or ba Seele} were the teachers and what was taught was the curriculum (content) and *Muchipango* was the classroom. Therefore, this was a formal education although there was no writing. Teaching was done orally.

## **Marriage**

In the past, marriages were arranged by parents unlike what is happening now. A proposal for marriage was made to the parents of the girl by an elderly person from the boy's side. If the girl's side was agreeable, some payment known as "*Nsalamu*" was made to the girl's parents as a sign of commitment to the marriage. This was followed by a discussion on marriage payment (munyamusho and biko) There was no lobola among the Soli.

The marriage ceremony (Wedding) in Soli is known as "*Bwinga*". This was the day when the girl was taken to join the husband. A payment was made for the movement known as "*Munyamusho*". The wedding ceremony was known as "*Makombo*" at which feasting took place. Usually a cock and a hen were killed as part of the food. The two chickens signified husband and wife entering into marriage.

It should be noted, in passing, that what is now known as "engagement" also existed in the past. As a sign of engagement, the girl's family was given what was known as "*Nkole*" something which resembled beads (Bulungu)-The equivalent of an engagement ring.

## **Death and Burial**

Death can be said to be a "mystery of life" as no one knows what really happens when one dies. It is in this vein that the Soli people accepted it as part of life.

When a person died, the neighbouring villages were informed through gun shots. Then the neighbourhood would know that death had occurred and they all (elderly people) went to that village to mourn the dead. Crying, mainly by women, characterised the mourning.

Burial did not take place immediately but the following day. Early in the morning, young men went to dig the grave in which the dead was later buried with the head facing the east. The burial rituals were conducted by members of the clan which had a joking relationship with the deceased's clan. Then they returned to the deceased's house to continue mourning. The mourners later dispersed but the mourning period continued.

### **Assuming a Dead Person's Name (Kupyana)**

When a person died, his or her name was inherited by someone usually from his or her mother's side. *Kupyana*, therefore, means naming of someone to inherit the name of the one who died. They also inherited the deceased's responsibilities. In Soli custom, inheritance is matrilineal. In the past, inheritance rituals took place roughly a year after the burial of the dead person but now, it is simply organised a month or so after the burial. At this ceremony, beer was brewed, dancing; singing took place throughout the night. In the morning, the ritual of inheritance was performed. The successor was usually given some outward token of the dead person's identity. In the past, if a married man died, the wife was also inherited by the heir. This ritual ceremony actually, marked the end of the mourning period.

### **Death and Burial of a Chief**

When the chief died, his or her death was not immediately announced. It took some time before it was done [about one week]. The announcement was first made by bashikulu and later through gun shots and the news spread throughout the chiefdom.

As regards, the burial, Chiefs were normally buried in a sitting posture. A grave was dug thereafter a space on the side (inside the grave) was dug in which the Chief was placed. To avoid soil reaching that part of the grave, logs and reed mats (Mpasa) were put to separate the body from the main grave. It was said that "*Bami nkabafukilwa ne bulongo*" (a chief is not covered with soil). The burial rituals were conducted by Bashikulu. Note that a Soli Chief's grave was left flat. What usually happened was that, the soil dug out was put back into the grave so that the grave remained flat.

### **Succession of a Chief**

Succession of a Chief took place after he or she died. A successor usually came from the royal family tree on rotational basis. Since the Soli are matrilineal the successor came from the mother's side. Children of the deceased Chief were not heirs to the throne.

The rituals of the succession ceremony were performed by Bashikulu. Usually, there was tribulation (singing and dancing) throughout the day.

Sometimes there were some disagreements on who was to succeed the deceased Chief which resulted into fights. Nevertheless, generally, succession was peaceful. It should be noted that the selection of a successor was not done through voting. The Soli succession procedure was clear and straight forward – only members of the royal family tree became Chiefs on rotational basis.

### **Cleansing of Widows and Widowers**

Basoli, just like any other ethnic Zambian groups, do cleanse widows or widowers. Some of the reasons for doing so are:

- (1) To signify the end of marriage because one partner is no longer;
- (2) To allow the widow or widower to interact freely with other persons. Mixing with other people before being cleansed is usually forbidden; and
- (3) To exorcise the widow or widower so that he or she is free from any evil spirits.

There are some variations regarding cleansing methods among the Zambian ethnic groups. In the past, Basoli practiced sexual cleansing, which is the widow or widower had sex with one of the closest relatives (brother or sister). This practice is no longer done due to diseases which can easily be passed on to any of the two involved in the sexual cleansing ritual (eg. HIV and AIDS). What is commonly practiced now is, the anointment of mealie-meal on the forehead of the widow or widower. In Soli, the process of cleansing is known as “*Kukuba bunga*” (cleansing using mealie-meal). When the widow or widower is cleansed, he or she is freed to interact with other women or men as the case may be and may even remarry.

### **Curse and Reconciliation (Kulapana and Kulapulula)**

Basoli are very good and hospitable people. They always wish to lead a peaceful life but sometimes due to situations beyond their control, they get entangled in serious disagreements or quarrels among themselves which may lead to cursing each other. That is, not to have anything to do with each other. These curses were believed to have consequences e.g sickness, misfortune or even death. So to avoid them, the Soli did perform the rite of reconciliation rituals (kulapulula) at which the two warring parties were brought together for them to reconcile and start a new life again. In some way, this can be called forgiving each other. The rituals were performed using the following gadgets; water in a clay pot (chikaye), salt (muchele) dry grass (mwila wayuma), a piece of chitenge cloth (chikwisa) and herbal medicine (mutondo). The rituals were normally conducted at the cross-roads by an elderly person and witnessed by on lookers. At the end, the person who had conducted the rituals told the two parties to go and live in peace and love each other and not to repeat what they had done (cursing) (Mutakachibweshapo kayi).

### **Mafutwa**

*Mafutwa* was practiced by boys and girls in the villages. The girls assumed the role of wives while the boys that of husbands. So, in pairs, they pretended they were married and simulated the activities which were done in real marriages among the adults such as cooking, drawing water by the girls, fetching fire wood, construction of a shelter by boys. Others assumed the role of children.

In a way, this role play regarding marriages was a preparation to adulthood. It should be emphasised in passing that sex was not permitted among the “couples”. The practice was simply an opportunity for the young to prove that they had the ability or were ready to assume responsibilities of a married life.

### **Kumuloba**

In the past, when a boy child became of age, he was expected to join other boys in a communal sleeping place known as “*Kumuloba*”. This was a place where boys could share secrets including those

that were sexual in nature. This was also a place where the medicine to do with sex issues prescribed by their grand fathers were taken. Things discussed in *Kumuloba* remained there. That is, they were not to be revealed to those who were not sleeping there. There was also a common sleeping place for girls.

### **Kumatanda [Nsaka] (Men's Meeting Place)**

“*Kumatanda*” was in the past, a place usually located in the middle of a village where men and young men met to share information (information dissemination). This was a place where issues affecting the general welfare of the village were discussed. In addition, this was a training place for the young males (youth) for adult life. Some of the lessons given to the young were proverbs or wise sayings, respect for elders or parents and how to conduct oneself in life or in marriage life. In fact, food was consumed commonly at this centre. Each house hold took food there. The author actually had a feel of this type of living among men in a village. In short, *Kumatanda* was also a school for the boys where they were taught male responsibilities.

### **Kutondela (Respect for Norms and Values)**

*Kutondela* simply means observing cultural norms and values. In the past, this was strictly adhered to, some of the norms and values which were observed were;

- (a) When a woman was giving birth, only elderly women were allowed to assume the role of mid-wife (Bachembele). The young women were forbidden to be present at the occasion. It was forbidden to have sexual intercourse with a person whose husband or wife had passed on because one was likely to contract a disease (misako). Equally, it was forbidden to have sex with another man or woman during pregnancy in a family as this may culminate into “*inchilu*” (complication during delivery).

- (b) Tradition did not allow sex with a woman who just had a miscarriage because this could lead to a disease on the part of the man who had sex with such a woman (kafunga)
- (c) Women who were menstruating, were not allowed to prepare meals or to put salt in relish for other people to eat because this would lead to a disease (Kutyokoka muchali) {source Bauleni 2006 unpublished manuscript}.

The observance of norms and values was meant to regulate the community in terms of behaviour or conduct. Unlike nowadays when people can do all sorts of things, some of them are not in tandem with normal human conduct.

### **Religion**

Basoli believed in a supernatural being they called “Lesa” (God) and prayed to him through the spirits of their dead ancestors through rituals and ceremonies, for example, when there was drought, they gathered at a burial place of ancestors to pray for rain. Usually prayers were in the form of offerings e.g., beer.

It is a pity that the early missionaries discouraged the traditional religion. There was nothing superstitious about it as they wrongly believed. Basoli, as stated above, indeed believed in God (Lesa). Is praying to God through the spirits of ancestors not the same as praying to God through saints?

### **Gender Responsibilities**

In the Soli community the husband and wife had their responsibilities well spelt out. Some of these were/are:

#### **Husband**

Head of the family

#### **Wife**

Cooking (kuteleka)

- Fending for the family
  - Drawing water (kuteka menshi)
  - Collecting firewood (kutema nkuni)
  - Although women could fetch firewood, it was mainly the role of men.
  - Looking after children (kulela bana)
  - Pounding soghum or maize

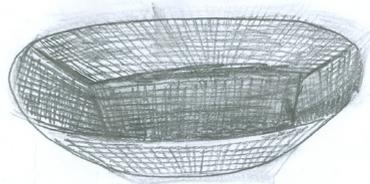
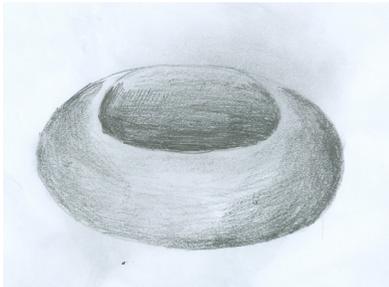
**(5) Material Object (Material Culture)**

Basoli possessed material objects, which they themselves made, and were used for various functions for which they were made. The objects were made from sources such as, mud[soil], treebuds, reeds, and iron smelting [manyumbi-iron works] Some of the objects they made are listed here after.

***Home Material Objects***

**Nongo:** was made out of clay soil and was used for drawing and storing water.

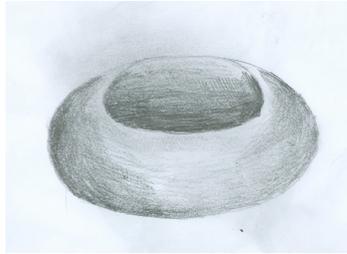
**Lubango:** was made out of reeds and was used to separate (seeds from unwanted particles)



**Muselo:** was made out of clay soil and was used as a plate for relish.



**Ntalo/Mupika:** [pot] was made out of clay soil and was used for preparing nshima [thick porridge orbuchisa [relish].

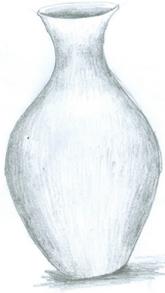


**Chipe:** Was made out of ntele and used as a container for example, storing mealie meal.

**Mbakilo:** was made out of tree bucks and was used to share food



**Chinkuli:** was grown in the fields and used for storing water



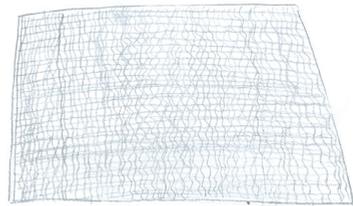
**Chifulu** Was grown in the fields and used for drinking water.



**Chinu** Made of wood used for pounding {kutwa}



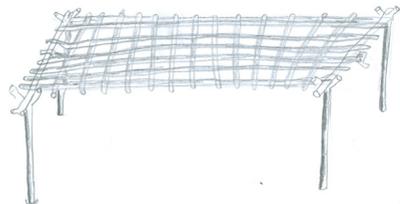
**Mpasa:** was made using reeds and used for sleeping on or drying something e.g., mealie-meal maize/sorghum seeds



**Mpelo** Made of stone used to grind {kupela}



**Butanti:** was made using tree blocks and was used as a bed, mpasa (mat) was placed on it.



***Agriculture Material Objects***

**Likasu:** was made from the iron smelting process and was used for farming/tilling land.



**Kembe:** was made from the iron smelting process and was used for cutting trees.



***Hunting/War/Fighting Material Objects***

**Lifumo:** was made from the iron smelting process and was used when fighting or hunting animals.

**Mifwi:** were made from the iron smelting process and were used when fighting during wars.



**Nfuti:** was made from iron smelting process and tree bucks and was used for hunting animals.



***Decoration Material Objects***

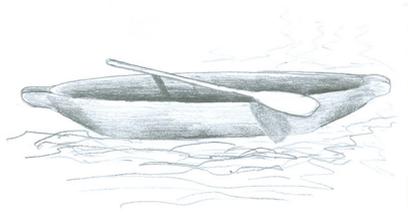
**Bwansa or Makosa:** was made from iron smelting process and was used for decoration.



***Transport***

**Chikwepe/bwato[Canoe]**

Used to cross a river



***Fishing Material Objects***

**Mono** Made out of reeds and used to trap fish.

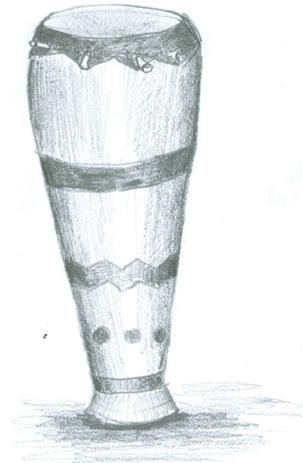


**Indobo** Used to catch fish [a reed, string and hook]



***Music***

**Ngoma** Used for drumming [dancing singing] was made of wood and animal skin.



## **Buntuism (Interdependence)**

Communal life was key among Basoli. There was no individualism. A person was at the centre of all activities. This type of life was not only common among Basoli but among all the Bantu people. Basoli helped each other in many ways. The following are some examples of Ubuntuism among Basoli;

- (i) A family which did not possess cattle would go to a relative who had some to ask for a cow and bull. When these multiplied, the cow and bull which had been borrowed were returned to the owner.
- (ii) When a family was hit by starvation (hunger), the head of such a family would simply go to a relative who had adequate food and ask for some and he or she was given. This was known as Kupumpa.
- (iii) A family which needed help to weed its field would prepare beer and people in that village would go to the family's field and remove the weeds. At the end of the work, they were refreshed with beer brewed by the family which sought help as a way of thanking them.
- (iv) When parents in a family died, the children were adopted by relatives. The extended family was very strong in those days. There were no orphanages or homes for old people because they were taken care of by members of the extended family (relatives). These are just a few examples that show the kind of life Basoli led. A communal way of life in which aid was extended to the needy, unlike nowadays where individualism has become deep rooted.

In a nutshell, Buntuism had the following principles (Murithi 2009);

- (a) What it means to be a human;
- (b) Communal life;
- (c) Unity and interdependence; and
- (d) Positive relations within the society.

The four principles stated above can be summarised by the following quotations (Murithi 2009:229) “I am because we are” “A person being a person through other people”.

## **Conclusion**

“En guise de conclusion” Basoli traditional culture can be summarised as follows;

Firstly, Basoli’s way of life was communal in which there was interdependence among the individuals. Secondly, the extended family system was very strong. In this structure, there was no room for orphans or neglected aged people. Thirdly, Basoli had respect for human life. Fourthly, Basoli believed in God (Lesa) and they did this through the spirits of their ancestors.

I do acknowledge that Basoli traditional culture might have had some demerits., For me, this is normal in any culture. There is no culture which is free from demerits {which is perfect}. All cultures have both merits and demerits.

I end by emphasising that Zambia needs to preserve its identity by including Zambian traditional culture in the school curriculum so that the young are made aware of where we are coming from in terms of our traditional culture. This is what stimulated me to write this book.

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(Accessed on 2/03/2017)
- <http://www.mesace.edu/abdille/un/hs/culture.pdf> (Accessed on 26/02/2017)

**The Photograph in this Publication were accessed from the following Sites:**

1. <http://andrewmulenga.blogspot.com/2013/07/pulling-down-clouds.htm>
2. <https://www.daily-mail.co.zm/tradional-ceremonies-create-sense-belonging-kapata/>
3. <https://www.musicinafrica.net/directory/chibwela-kumushi-tribal-ceremony>
4. Zambia National Information Services(ZANIS) Lusaka Province.

**Songs**

Soli Cultural Group Zone 18 {2010} Busoli Bwayina Volume 1 {CD}

**Oral Sources**

(a) **Interviewees**

**Date Interviewed**

- John Mukupola Mumpansha Mumpansha  
13/05/2017
- Gibson Kuyeli  
13/05/2017
- Francis Kapola  
14/10/2017
- Andrew Mapulanga  
15/10/2017
- Basho Nyeleti  
19/10/2017
- Magret Sakala  
31/10/2017
- Enelesi Sakala  
31/10/2017
- Mr Patrick Malaya  
23/06/2018
- Mrs Malaya  
23/06/2018

(b) Personal experience

## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1

#### **Some Soli Names**

- Chilatebe
- Mawini
- Kamufisa
- Chinkuwewe
- Chomba
- Nsungwe
- Malita
- Mubamba
- Kayuni
- Luputa
- Nkausu
- Kapola
- Mangalita
- Mwaliteta
- Kuyeli
- Mukopola
- Malampi
- Weleki
- Kayitisha
- Mwachindalo
- Mulando
- Mupwaya
- Mateyo
- Malubila
- Matafwali
- Chipungu
- Lisabeti
- Kanyeti

### **Some Soli Village Names**

- Nkomesha
- Shipanuka
- Chamankamba
- Chapinduka
- Mwachilele
- Mwabilwa
- Mulelema
- Chikoloma
- Mwakankomba
- Shapola
- Mwalumina
- Mulalika
- Chishiko
- Shinjela
- Limbusha
- Mwamolo
- Mwanshelela
- Mutanuka

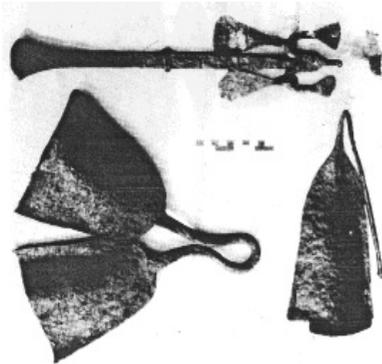
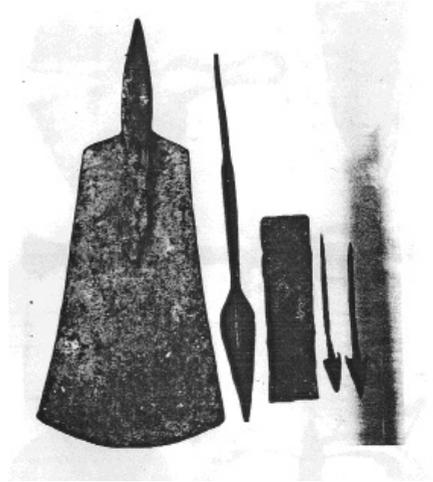
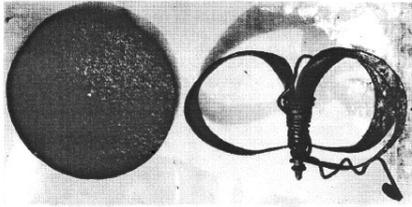
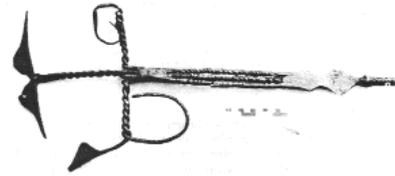
### **Some Names of Places in Soliland**

- Makuyu
- Chinyunyu
- Lwimba
- Mulalika
- Kapete
- Kasenga
- Kanakantapa
- Katende
- Bwinjimfumu
- Nkalamabwe
- Kanyongoloka
- Chimusanya

- Chitemalesa
- Chamulimba
- Nyamanongo
- Nyangwena
- Mwalumina
- Chiyota
- Lubalashi
- Mulamba
- Lukwipa
- Shinjela
- Lukoshi
- Mvacilele
- Chipekete
- Lilayi
- Mvacilele
- Citemalesa

Appendix 2

**Other examples of tools made from iron works**



*Source : Munchishi and Musona(990)*

*Appendix 3*

**Pictures of some scenes from the Traditional Ceremonies**

