

**ORGANISATIONAL AND RELIGIOUS PRACTICES OF ‘*KUOMBOKA
KWA LIKOMU*’ CEREMONY: THE CASE OF MUNYAMA AREA IN
KALABO DISTRICT, ZAMBIA**

BY

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**A dissertation submitted to the University of Zambia in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Education in Religious Studies.**

UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA

LUSAKA

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DECLARATION

I, Lungowe Sinjwala, hereby declare that the work herein is my own, and that all the works of other persons used have duly been acknowledged, and that the work has not been presented to the University of Zambia before or indeed any other institution for similar purposes.

Signature:.....

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APPROVAL

This dissertation by Lungowe Sinjwala has been approved as a partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Education in Religious Studies (MEd.RS) of the University of Zambia.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my mother and father, Mr and Mrs Kwibisa Sinjwala, without whom I would not have reached this far. I also dedicate this piece of work to my husband, Mudenda V. and our children Praise, Joy, Luyando and Blessing for their support and encouragement.

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Abstract

Kuomboka Kwa Likomu ceremony involves the relocation of herds of cattle from the flooded plains of the Zambezi River to the upper land which is normally dry. Despite having occurred for centuries, the ceremony has not been fully documented. This study aimed at shedding light on the organisation, preparations and religious practices of the ceremony as practiced by the Lozi people of Munyama Area in Kalabo district. Furthermore, the study examined the agreements made between cattle owners and temporal caretakers as well as the changes that have taken place in the ceremony over the years. Data was obtained from a representative sample of 17 purposively selected participants consisting of cattle owners, headmen, cattle herders and women participants. Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were used to collect data by way of a voice recorder while the observation checklist was used during participant observation. Data from participants was transcribed and thematic analysis was applied. In relation to organisational aspects, the study established that cattle owners took centre stage while temporal caretakers, family and community members also played vital roles in the preparation and consequently, the execution of the ceremony. The performance of numerous rituals, adherence to stringent taboos and upholding of traditional beliefs related to the ceremony, were among the religious practices prominent in the ceremony. With respect to the agreements, the study found that strict agreements, whose focus lay on the care and safety of cattle, were made between cattle owners and caretakers. Notable changes that have occurred overtime included a shift from whole village to family based relocation of cattle, involvement of temporal caretakers, use of modern musical instruments for entertainment and an all-inclusive participation of women in the ceremony, were among the notable changes. Modernity, the presence of needy Mbunda immigrants in the area as well as gradual shifts from the extended family system to a more nuclear system explained the observed changes. In conclusion, the people showed numerous anxieties and fears about the safety of their cattle as reflected in their undivided veneration of ancestors, upholding of traditional beliefs, adherence to stringent taboos, performance of rituals and the extensive use of traditional medicine to protect cattle during the ceremony. All in all, the ceremony has demonstrated that cattle are a dominant element in the culture of the people of Munyama Area. It is recommended that curriculum developers in religious studies, at different levels of the education system could enrich the curricula in the light of the current findings. Based on the finding that the ceremony carries unique glamour and splendour, it is recommended that it should be popularised in order to attract both local and international cultural exchanges that would eventually benefit the indigenous people of Munyama Area and other places where this annual ceremony is held. Future research direction is recommended.

Key words: *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu*, Organisation, Rituals, Taboos, Beliefs.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	i
APPROVAL	ii
COPYRIGHT	iii
DEDICATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
ABSTRACT	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
LIST OF FIGURES	ix
LIST OF APPENDICES	x
LIST OF DEFINITIONS OF TERMS	xi
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Overview	1
1.2 Background	1
1.3 Statement of the Problem	2
1.4 Purpose of the Study	3
1.5 Study Objectives.....	3
1.6 General Research Question.....	3
1.7 Research Questions	3
1.8 Significance of the Study	3
1.9 Delimitation of the Study	4
1.10 Limitation of the Study.....	4
CHAPTER TWO: Literature Review	8
2.1 Overview	8
2.2 Cattle in Western Province	8
2.3 Culture of the People	9
2.4 Studies on Cattle in Zambia.....	11
2.5 Studies on Cattle in Africa and beyond.....	12
2.6 Summary.....	16
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY	18
3.1 Overview	18
3.2 Research Design	18
3.3 Research Site.....	19
3.4 Study Population	19
3.5 Sample Size and Sampling Procedure	20
3.6 Sampling Techniques.....	20
3.7 Data Collection Instruments	21
3.8 Data Collection Procedure	21
3.9 Reliability and Validity	22
3.10 Data Analysis	24

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS	27
4.1 Overview	27
4.2 Organization of <i>Kuomboka Kwa Likomu</i> Ceremony.....	28
4.3 Religious Practices	36
4.4 Agreements made between Cattle owners and Temporal Caretakers	70
4.5 Changes that have taken place over the years	72
4.6 Summary.....	77
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS	78
5.1 Overview	78
5.2 Organization of <i>Kuomboka Kwa Likomu</i> Ceremony.....	78
5.3 Religious Practices in <i>Kuomboka Kwa Likomu</i> Ceremony	86
5.4 Agreements between Cattle owners and Caretakers.....	123
5.5 Changes that have taken place in <i>Kuomboka Kwa Likomu</i> Ceremony	127
CHAPTER SIX CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION	131
6.1 Overview	131
6.2 Conclusion.....	131
6.3 Recommendations	133
REFERENCES	135

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1	Cattle Transiting flooded Plains (Kuomboka <i>Kwa Likomu</i>)	17
Figure 4.1	Cattle owner at the Kraal	46
Figure 4.2	Ritual performed on the ‘lead’ ox.....	47
Figure 4.3	Cattle being counted	48
Figure 4.4	Cattle owner performing the <i>Kuambulula</i> Ritual.....	49
Figure 4.5	Cattle owner during the <i>Kulaala Nuka</i> Ritual.....	52
Figure 4.6	Ceremony Participants having a meal at Libumbu.....	53
Figure 4.7	Ceremony Participants taking rest	54
Figure 4.8	Women seeing off their cattle at the Kraal	75
Figure 4.9	<i>Namalwa</i> being played to guide the cattle	76
Figure 5.1	Community members offering support	80
Figure 5.2	Community Involvement in the Ceremony	81
Figure 5.3	Community member offering Support	82
Figure 5.5	Temporal caretaker meets family of cattle owner on arrival.....	123
Figure 5.6	Physical counting of cattle during Handover	124
Figure 5.7	Cattle Owner and Caretaker Signing an Agreement	125
Figure 5.8	Caretaker bidding farewell.....	125
Figure 5.9	Caretaker going with the cattle after Handover	126
Figure 5.10	Helpers to the cattle owner returning from their brief escort of cattle	126
Figure 5.11	<i>Namalwa</i> used in place of <i>Lipala</i>	129

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix I: Research Instruments..... 137

LIST OF DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Balimu: one's dead ancestors believed to still be influential on their living family.

Ilya: *Lozi* traditional beverage made of thick porridge and sour milk.

Kuambulula: the act of calling upon all of one's *balimu* during an important occasion, mentioning each one of them by name, and formally inviting them for the occasion.

Kupailela: asking and pleading with the ancestors to intervene on a matter.

Kuomboka: 'getting out of the water'.

Kwa mushitu: place out of the flooded plain where herds of cattle are taken until the floods recede.

Namalwa: special traditional drum played to direct cattle during *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony.

Ñolonde: movement of cattle in circles while transiting in water during the ceremony.

Ritual: a sequence of activities involving gestures, words and objects, performed according to a set sequence.

Taboo: intense forbidding of an action or behaviour based on a belief that breaking such a prohibition is offensive to society and attracts supernatural punishment.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

This chapter gives a synopsis of the background to the Organisational and Religious Practices of *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* Ceremony. It proceeds by presenting the statement of the problem, followed by the purpose of the study, study objectives and the research questions through which the objectives are realised. Further, the study presents the significance of the study, delimitation, limitations of the Study, the theoretical framework as well as the operational terms. The next section discusses the background of the study.

1.2 Background

Cattle (known as *Likomu* in Silozi) rearing is the mainstay of the Lozi people of Western Province. Historically, the Lozi people have kept cattle on the upper Zambezi floodplain from at least the mid seventeenth century when they settled in the area (Wood, 1989). The cattle population kept increasing considerably in the mid nineteenth century, when the Kololo who brought large herds of cattle from the south, subdued them. Further increases occurred during the late 19th century, when the Lozi state reached the height of its power and was able to obtain cattle from neighbouring tribes either through tributes or by raids. It is argued that the Lozi involvement with cattle is so strong that they form a core area of the culture, with related values and attitudes little altered from a century ago (Prins, 1980). Cattle is particularly important in the traditional rural economy of the province.

Since the economy of the rural population normally revolves around the number of cattle one owns, cattle is an indirect measure of economic power and hence, strengthens the social position of an individual in the Lozi society. Some of the economic undertakings enhanced by owning herds of cattle are enriching sand soils for crop farming from cattle manure and transportation of bulky items especially from the villages to Mongu town where the items (such as milk and fish) are sold to buyers from different parts of the province and Zambia at large. In addition, herds of cattle provide a form of security, help cement social and political ties, as well as fulfilling obligations such as payment of bride price (Wood, 1989). Equally, the strong extended family system among indigenous rural people has been nurtured, maintained and perpetuated around the economies of cattle. In actual sense, herds of cattle are perceived as an inter-generational resource and source of long term family security.

The large cattle population in the province requires large grazing land. However, much of the land surface of the province is the Barotse flood plain of the Zambezi River. The plain is a long rift valley formed when a very long and wide section of the earth sank millions of years ago (Brown, 1998). This floodplain, which is flooded from December to June, serves as a vast reservoir storing large volumes of the waters of the Zambezi River. The plain is also a habitat for large herds of cattle. During the flooding period, the cattle have to ‘*omboka*’, (‘getting out of water’). The herds of cattle have to *omboka* to the plateau area (*Kwa mushitu*) hence, ‘*Kuomboka kwa Likomu*’ ceremony. The celebration of the ceremony does not only signify the leaving of the cattle from the flooded area to the upper land, but it also affords an opportunity for the owners to appreciate the role these animals play in their lives. As a young person then, in 1980, the researcher witnessed unclear acts, preparations in secluded places and mysterious manoeuvres by elderly people in my village, a few days before the cattle were taken *kwa mushitu*, that are still undocumented. These acts and manoeuvres were ‘heightened’ on the actual day that the cattle were to *omboka*. This practice has continued to date. Gaps exist in our knowledge base about this ceremony. Other than the people who practice it, the outsiders know little about it.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

There has so far been no detailed work on *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony conducted by the Lozi people of Western Province. A few studies such as Gluckman (1941), Turner (1952), Brown (1998) and Paul (1996) glossed over *Kuomboka Kwa likomu* ceremony since their studies focused on *kuomboka* of the Litunga. Lubasi (2009) discussed the *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony in general but not with respect to the religious practices and beliefs embedded in it. As evidenced here, scholars have always tended to concentrate their attention on the Litunga’s *Kuomboka* perhaps because of its greater publicity. As a point of departure, this study sought to gain an in-depth understanding of how the ceremony is organised, the Lozi traditional religious practices that accompany it, the agreements rooted within it as well as how the ceremony evolved over time. If this study was not done, traditional religious practices and other forms of heritage associated with the ceremony would remain undocumented and perhaps be lost altogether. Publicity of the ceremony and related socio-economic benefits to the indigenous people of the site (and the outside world) would remain a farfetched dream. Above all, the intrinsic value of the event to the cattle itself would also remain unnoticed.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the organisation, preparations and traditional religious practices that are conducted before, during and after the *kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony of the Lozi people of Zambia's Western Province.

1.5 Study Objectives

The study was guided by the following objectives:

- a. To examine preparations made towards *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony of the Lozi people of Kalabo District.
- b. To explore religious practices conducted before, during and after the said ceremony.
- c. To establish agreements made between cattle owners and temporal caretakers of such cattle.
- d. To analyse changes that have taken place over the years regarding the ceremony.

1.6 General Research Question

What preparations and traditional religious practices are conducted before, during and after *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony of the Lozi people of Zambia's Western Province?

1.7 Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- a. How is *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony of the Lozi people of Kalabo District organised?
- b. What religious practices take place before, during and after *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony?
- c. What agreements are made between cattle owners and temporal caretakers?
- d. What changes have taken place over the years regarding *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony?

1.8 Significance of the Study

Kuomboka Kwa Likomu ceremony has not been fully documented. Therefore, the traditional religious practices and other forms of heritage associated with it may be lost. The study was important because it provided insights into the organisation, preparations and religious practices that are conducted before, during and after *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony. The transhumant event has shown how indigenous people have cared for cattle

over the years. This understanding brings a sigh of relief to various interest groups, regarding the protection provided to cattle through *Kuomboka*. Additionally, the study has added knowledge to the already existing large body of knowledge about African Traditional Religious practices. In particular, it has expanded knowledge of religious practices in the Zambian Traditional Religion. As such, the findings might be used to broaden the Religious Education curriculum offered in secondary schools in Zambia. Furthermore, scholars interested in this area of research will find this study a good basis for furthering their understanding of the ceremony. Debates, alternative points of views as well as comparative studies of the ceremony could arise because of this study hence, improving the publicity of the ceremony. Once it is publicised, it might start to attract economic benefits not only for the indigenous people in the study area, but also other Zambians and non-Zambians who might attend the ceremony.

1.9 Delimitation of the Study

The study was delimited to Munyama area in Liuwa constituency in Kalabo District of Western Province in Zambia. The study site was chosen because the people in the area are still traditional in their approach to matters pertaining to life. This claim is supported by the noticeable absence of agents of change such as churches and schools in the area. Therefore, people in this area were fully informative about the ceremony. Other than that, Munyama is a cattle rich area which floods heavily and therefore, the people practice the ceremony annually.

1.10 Limitation of the Study

Although the researcher was a participant observer, it was difficult to gain entry to some of the places where some of the rituals were performed. The researcher is female and some rituals excluded females. Additionally, some rituals, such as the *kuolela*, are strictly for family members only of which the researcher was not. It is against their tradition to allow a non- family member to participate, as the medicines involved are considered family secrets. Further, the *kuolelisa Likomu* ritual is strictly for cattle owners and their helpers. This ritual requires participants to be naked (at some point). Equally, the *kulaala* ritual performed at the river excludes women. So, the researcher's adherence to stringent taboos and respecting research ethics limited the researcher to capture the lived-experiences of the ceremony. However, it was possible for the researcher to interact with insiders to collect authentic data.

1.11 Theoretical Framework

Kombo and Tromp (2006:56) define a theoretical framework as ‘a collection of interrelated ideas based on theories’. The theories can be applied to guide a study and help to interpret its findings. In this regard therefore, a theoretical framework is an important component of a study because it attempts to clarify why things are the way they are. Structural Functionalism Theory (SFT) was used in explaining findings of the current study.

One of the forerunners of the SFT, Hebert Spencer (1820-1903), compared society to the human body and argued that just as the various organs of the body work together to keep the body functioning, the various parts of society work together to preserve society (Moffitt 2018). The SFT was used because *kuomboka kwa likomu*, a community event, is propelled by society’s active participation, the very aspect that the theory explains in terms of how society’s various parts work together to promote solidarity and stability. According to Kombo and Tromp (2006:56), ‘SFT attempts to provide an explanation on how human society is organised and what each of the various social institutions does in order for society to continue existing’. It hinges on the four main elements namely; social cohesion, social inequality, interrelatedness and interdependence as well as social equilibrium.

This theory best suits this study as it helps to explain an all-inclusive participation of community members in the ceremony. Apart from that, the ceremony’s pre-requisite is peace and reconciliation, which are essential pillars for the establishment of social cohesion. During the ceremony, various community members unite and work together regardless of any misunderstandings that may have existed among them. They forego all their differences and stick together for the proper functioning of their society and promotion of the ceremony. Therefore, social cohesion as an element of SFT was used to discuss the findings.

The second element of SFT that is applicable to this study is the concept of social equilibrium. Even when families and communities are threatened by divisions which result in the loss of community stability, social structures and moral beliefs within the ceremony strive to restore equilibrium. Some of the study findings gain meaning from this element. Mobilising community members stand out as a key requirement for the successful holding of this ceremony. This is because one person cannot drive the animals across the flooded

plain single handed. It is this interdependence which was observed in the ceremony that has kept the society cohered over the years.

Social inequality, the fourth element of the SFT, holds that inequalities exist and they are for the smooth functioning of society. This very principal is at play in *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* and the ever availability of the needy temporal caretakers. Animals are handed over to the less privileged people on the plateau. Secondly, the finding that women are side-lined in many aspects of the ceremony such as in the performance of rituals, find explanation from this element. The foregoing theory, the SFT, helped the researcher to analyse why and how the community work together to conduct various religious practices and achieve a safe movement of cattle from the flooded plain to the plateau.

1.12 Structure of the Dissertation

There are six chapters in this dissertation. Chapter One provides the general background of the study which begins by stating the overview of the chapter, background of the study, statement of the problem, research objectives and the research questions. The chapter further provides the significance, delimitations and the limitations of the study. The last part of the chapter gives the theoretical framework and ends with the operational definitions of terms.

Chapter Two presents a review of relevant literature related to the study. This includes literature on cattle in the western province of Zambia, culture of the Lozi people with regard to their traditional religious practices, related studies on cattle within Zambia as well as studies on cattle elsewhere in Africa and beyond. Chapter Three gives an outline of the methods that were employed in the collection and analysis of data. It also states the research design employed. Further, the chapter provides information on the study population, sample size, sampling procedure, sampling techniques, data collection procedure and the data collection instruments. The last part of the chapter comprises reliability and validity issues, data analysis, ethical considerations and a summary of the chapter.

Chapter Four presents the findings of the study. It constitutes data collected through interviews with the village headmen, cattle owners and women participants, the focus group discussions with cattle herders (the young men) as well as observations made by the researcher during *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony. Chapter Five discusses the findings

presented in Chapter Four according to the themes derived from the objectives. It further links the literature and theory to the discussion. Finally, Chapter Six concludes the results and provides recommendations of the study. Having outlined Chapter One of the dissertation, a review of related literature is presented in the next Chapter.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Overview

Literature review entails referring to previous researches with a view to develop knowledge and identify boundaries of the researchers. This assists in situating and justifying the research problem. The previous chapter introduced the study. This chapter discusses selected information on the literature available on cattle in Western Province. It also discusses the culture of the people, with focus on their traditional religious practices and activities. An understanding of the various endeavours might have a bearing on the understanding of *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony. Furthermore, literature on studies conducted on cattle in other cattle rearing areas in Zambia, Africa and beyond, is discussed to help develop a basis for analysing and interpreting data. This is done putting in mind the lack of studies on *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony.

2.2 Cattle in the Western Province of Zambia.

Oral tradition among the Lozi people hold that Nyambe (the Lozi God) created many wives including Mwambwa, the ancestor and queen of the true Lozi, and from whom, all members of the Lozi royal family descended. Mwambwa's daughter, Mbuywamwambwa, also became one of Nyambe's wives. It is told that she gave birth to both human babies and calves (Paul, 1996: 4), hence giving a common mythical origin for both the cow and the Lozi (Paul, 1996). Arising from this myth, cattle find a special place in the lives of the Lozi people. The myth explains the social importance attached to cattle heritage in the Lozi culture and the existence of personal names like Mwanangombe which means -cow's offspring. Furthermore, this also conveys the maternal affection associated with the cow in Lozi tradition (Paul, 1996:12).

This legend, which is still told among the Lozi people today, creates a deep emotional attachment of the people to their cattle. According to Brown (1998: 24), "they are a magical gift from God". In part, the Lozi peoples' attitude and actions towards their animals as well as the way they relate with them, has its basis in the emotional attachment resulting from the legend. It is noted that since time immemorial, the people have kept cattle and have used them to support their economic and social needs.

As early as the 1920s, documentation of cattle population had already been enforced among the Lozi people (Wood, 1989). Furthermore, Wood (1989) affirmed that Western

Province had the second largest cattle population in Zambia after Southern Province. In 1982, the population had exceeded a count of about 400,000 herds of cattle. In terms of profitability, when compared to crop sales, Wood's (1989) study showed that cattle sales were four times higher. Additionally, the study pointed out that, cattle was an important resource for the development of both the province and the nation.

In a related study, Klink (1994) considered aspects of productivity of traditionally managed Barotse cattle. The study established that cattle productivity contributed significantly to various aspects affecting human life in the province. Though the study investigated traditionally managed cattle, other management activities, traditional in nature, such as the people's traditional religious practices towards their animals, were not part of the study.

About the floodplain and cattle rearing, (Turner, 1952) held that the floodplain was one of the most productive areas for raising cattle. The availability of abundant palatable and nutritious grass that flourished on the plain enhanced the productivity of cattle. The floodplain contributed greatly to the acceleration of cattle rearing among the people. Turner (1952) acknowledged that cattle moved out of the floodplain periodically, during the floods. However, his study did not probe into the people's traditional practices accompanying the transhumance.

Recently, in 2017, the International Atomic Energy also conducted a study on cattle in the Western Province of Zambia. This study focused on reproduction and breeding of indigenous cattle compared to exotic breeds in the province. The study brought out positive practical aspects and advantages of the indigenous breeds over exotic breeds. The report concluded by highlighting the need to focus on sustaining the indigenous breeds. Although the focus was on indigenous breeds, nothing was highlighted about how the indigenous people applied their traditional religious practices to the welfare of their animals.

2.2 Culture of the people

The current study has only focused on the people's traditional religious beliefs and practices, which are only a small section of their wider culture. Before the coming of Western missionaries, the Lozi people were essentially monotheistic. God was known as *Nyambe* and was credited with creating everything. The Lozi believe in life after death as

well as in their ancestors. According to Turner (1952: 50), “the ancestors are rarely referred to as the cause of happenings”. However, through divination, good and bad luck may at times be attributed to their intervention. Among the Lozi, the dead are buried in cemeteries, which serve neighbourhoods, or at the edge of the village. Men are buried facing the east so that they would know how to get to Nyambe and that Nyambe, whose symbol is the sun, would welcome them. Women on the other hand, are buried facing the west so that they would know how to get to Nasilele (Nyambe’s wife) and that Nasilele, whose symbol is the moon, would welcome them. In this society, offerings to ancestors are made not at graves but at one of the posts of the courtyard fence known as *‘lushoko’*, around the hut by persons of either sex (Mupatu, 1959).

Additionally, the Lozi possess the concept of a special class of ‘evil spirits’ which they attempt to control by means of amulets such as bones of men or beasts. In the people’s worldview, good and bad spirits do exist. Bad spirits are believed to be the cause of calamities and are exorcised by means of charms made from bones of men and beasts among other things (Holub, 1976: 302).

Furthermore, witchcraft is another element that constitutes the worldview of the people. It is believed that the Mbunda people (Paul, 1996) introduced this phenomenon among the Lozi. The most common motives for killing other people through witchcraft is revenge, jealousy and cruelty. In order to detect witchcraft, divination had to be conducted by diviners. In some cases, poison ordeals had to be used to detect the witches (Gluckman, 1951).

Another phenomenon that was prevalent, worth noting in this study, was the practice of exorcism. Turner (1952:52) asserted that ‘Rites of exorcism are usually employed to combat disease, which is almost always thought to be occasioned by sorcery’. These rites were presided over by a witchdoctor (*ñaka*). Turner further stated that under the influence of the Mbunda and the Luvale people, who introduced fetishism among a tribe whose religion was formally limited to the worship of Nyambe and the ancestors, the *ñaka* had become more fetishist. Exorcism ceremonies were preceded by divination to ascertain the cause of disease and the kind of exorcism that should be carried out. With these rich religious ties and practices among the lozi people, the study is yet to discover the religious

practices; rituals, taboos, and beliefs that take place during the *kuomboka Kwa likomu* ceremony.

2.3 Studies on Cattle in Zambia

Extant studies conducted on the Ila people of Namwala District revealed that cattle keeping is the mainstay among the indigenous people. In the Ila traditional set up, like that of the Lozi people, cattle fulfil a number of roles and meets family needs. Among the various roles, herds of cattle are used in social functions such as traditional ceremonies, funerals, paying of dowry and weddings. Additionally, they are used for ploughing, transportation, source of dung for enriching the fields as well as in meeting financial obligations such as paying of school fees and purchasing other essential commodities (Fielder, 1973). Further, in traditional Ila society, cattle are seen as the main form of security as well as a store of wealth.

Like the Lozi people, the indigenous Ila people are cattle keepers and both practice transhumance which is compelled by pastoral needs. One prominent traditional ceremony conducted in the Ilaland associated with cattle movement is the Shimunenga ceremony. The ceremony is normally conducted during the dry season. In this ceremony, herds of cattle are driven from the dry upper land to the wetlands of the Kafue flats. During the ceremony, herds of cattle are taken to the river where they are displayed in a traditional manner. The ceremony is marked by songs, dances and spear performances as a way of honouring and praising the Shimunega ancestral spirits. Bearing in mind that traditional ceremonies have different traditional religious practices as well as significance, insights obtained from this ceremony are inadequate to fully draw traditional and religious practices conducted by the Lozi people.

Gluckman (1941) compared the Ila and the Lozi peoples' lifestyles. Additionally, he stressed their traditions regarding the keeping of cattle. In both, herds of cattle are a dearest possession. Two major differences isolated are in the finding that the Ila cattle herders leave their upper land for the wetland where they stay in small cattle-posts along the Kafue River and lagoons, while the Lozi people dwell in the floodplains and drive their animals to the upper land. However, Gluckman (1941) did not venture into exploring the religious practices conducted during these movements. To fill this gap, the current study explored

the organisational aspects and the traditional religious practices rooted in the movement of herds of cattle from the Zambezi flood plains to the upper land.

2.4 Studies on Cattle in Africa and beyond

As alluded to, this section reviews literature involving studies on cattle in other cattle rearing areas in Africa and beyond. This includes the Nuer of southern Sudan, Maasai of Kenya, Pakot of Kenya, Setswana of Botswana, Zulu of South Africa and the Hindus in India. Next, cattle among the Nuer of Southern Sudan is discussed.

2.4.1 Cattle among the Nuer of Southern Sudan

Evans Pritchard (1940) conducted a study on the Nuer people whose habitat are the floodplains along the Nile and other tributary rivers. From the findings, their lifestyle can be compared to that of the Lozi people in many aspects. Both are pastoralists (Gluckman, 1941). Additionally, Nuerland floods for six months (from June to December) when it experiences heavy rains. This is similar to the six months floods (from January to June) experienced by the lozi people living on the Zambezi floodplains. Clearly, the flooding river system has greatly influenced the peoples' lifestyles. Like the Lozi people, the Nuer are predominantly pastoralists involved in the movement of cattle between the dry and wet seasons (Gluckman, 1941). Cattle is everything to Nuer people; they enable someone to get married, to atone for crimes, help a family member set up a home as well as to settle debts. The Nuer transhumance practices are similar to those of the indigenous Lozi people of Munyama except that the Lozi have permanent homes in the flood plains and shift their cattle to the upper land where temporal caretakers are engaged to take care of them until floods recede.

Both the lozi and Nuer cultures today, as in the past, view cattle as quintessential sources and symbols of life, health, status, and prosperity. People see themselves as bound to their herds in an intimate symbiosis of survival. Whereas cattle depend on human beings for protection and care, people depend on cattle as insurance against ecological hazards and as vital sources of milk, meat, leather and dung. Another important use of cattle among the Nuer is that of sacrifice. Cattle are sacrificed in honour and appeasement of the spirits of their ancestors. For instance, they believe that the spirits of their dead can affect their current life, especially the more recently deceased. As a result, they turn to cattle for sacrifice. Many other rituals involve the use of cattle or cattle products. It is common among the Nuer that cows are dedicated to the spirits of the owner's lineage and any

personal spirits that may have possessed them at any time. The Nuer believe that they establish contact with these ancestor spirits by rubbing ashes along the backs of oxen or cows dedicated to them, through the sacrifice of cattle. No important Nuer ceremony of any kind is complete without such a sacrifice. Further, it is a usual practice among the Nuer to pray and offer sacrifices of cattle to Kowth (a god), hoping for health and well-being as well as to ward off danger or evil.

As already indicated, and according to Gluckman (1941), cattle are everything to the Nuer. They are valued above and beyond their material contribution to human survival. In Nuerland, the ever present possibility of translating human values into cattle values enhances the people's abilities to negotiate material compensation for wrongful acts such as adultery, theft and personal injury. Clearly then, cattle are used to promote social harmony among themselves. There is a well-known saying in Nuer that runs: "No [human] error exceeds the cow." When their lifestyle is looked at closely, their entire culture revolves around cattle a practice similar to that of indigenous Lozi people living in the lower Zambezi floodplain of Kalabo District where this study was conducted.

2.4.2 Cattle among the Maasai in Kenya

In Kenya, the transhumant Maasai people are one of the richest cattle owning peoples. They believe that God once lived on earth when it was still joined with the sky and when the two split, God left the earth. Upon his departure, he entrusted all the cows in the world to them for safe-keeping through the aerial roots of the sacred fig tree. Arising from this belief, cattle are given a special place of emotional attachment in their lives and ceremonial rituals center on cattle. The Maasais' entire lives revolve around livestock.

Like the Lozi people and the Nuer, cattle are everything for the Maasai. Cattle are not only used for sustenance, but they have also been a central part of their survival, economy, social structure, relationships and religion. They provide almost everything they need for their existence. For instance, cattle are offered in times of births, deaths and circumcision, symbolizing the people's bond with God. Comparable to the Lozi people, the Maasai rarely slaughter the cows except for ritual purposes. For the Maasai, if a cow was to be killed, it should be only as an offering in transitional religious ceremonies for boys when they move to manhood. Among these people, the size of a herd of cattle indicates a person's status in the community. Herd size has been a way of distinguishing the poor from the rich. Hence, accumulating them, rather than consuming, is a common practice and this is true of the Lozi people.

What seems to emerge from literature about the Lozi and Maasai people is comparable. Both groups associate cattle to some divine origin. Thus, in both groups, a strong emotional attachment to cattle exists and ritual ceremonies almost always involve cattle. However, there is no literature indicating what traditional religious practices the Maasai perform towards their animals during the transhumance.

2.4.3 Cattle among the Pakot of Kenya

There is yet another tribe in Kenya- the Pakot, who are predominantly pastoral. Comparably though, they have fewer cattle than the Maasai. However, like the Maasai and the lozi people, they fall within a description of people with a strong attachment to cattle. With respect to the Pakot, Herskovits (1926), pointed out that this attachment is frequently shown in the affection for, identification with these animals and a dislike of killing them except in rituals. Herskovits (1926) added that cattle are associated almost universally with birth, death, and marriage ceremonies. He further observed that they are the chief form of wealth, the most prominent measure of power, prestige, and status, as well as the proper animals for feasts or ceremonies. Unlike the other tribes who are able to make enormous slaughter at burial ceremonies, the Pakot cannot afford mass butchering due to limited numbers Herskovits (1926:506). Sex taboos exist in their handling of cattle and women are forbidden to have much to do with them. Among the Pakot, there are special customs and taboos relating to their milk. In Herskovits' (1926:653) words, “. . . it is the cattle that have become the dominant element in the cultures of these people”. For the Pakot, like the Hindus, killing a cow is prohibited.

Within Kenya, the importance and strong association with cattle is also observed among the kikuyu. According to Middleton (1953: 20), they have fewer cattle when compared to the Maasai but the cultural tendencies are comparable. The attachment to cattle is however, very strong, such that striking someone else's cow with a stick is a great insult to the owner. Additionally, they believe that when they die, they will be rewarded in heaven with wealth in the form of cattle, sheep, goats and their wives. This belief in the reward, with cattle beyond death, gives the traditional kikuyu people great hope at death.

2.4.4 Cattle among the Zulu of South Africa

According to Sithole (2016), in an article entitled 'Zulu culture and Cattle', a traditional Zulu kraal is in the centre, and all doors to the houses often face the kraal where the cattle spend every evening. This means cattle were often the first things every family member

saw as they emerged from their huts at dawn <https://www.southafrica.net>. Each new day would have been greeted by an encounter with the family's most prized possession. Cattle are used for marriage exchanges. Cows have historically been important within Zulu society; from linking families through marriage, legitimizing children, embodying a ruler's power and even as part of ancestral religion. A beast is slaughtered at weddings, funerals and other significant events, and this is said to bring the ancestors closer to the living. Clearly, like the Lozi, the Maasai and the Pakot, cattle hold a significant place in the lives of the Zulu people of South Africa.

2.4.5 Cattle among the Setswana in Botswana

In Botswana, according to Mabandu et al. (2016), the Setswana speaking people refer to cattle as 'God with the wet nose'. It's a crucial conflation of the cow with notions of the divine. It underscores cattle as hallowed beasts of providence. According to Phalafala, as quoted by Mabandu et al. (2016), in the Sepedi belief systems, 'the cow's function is to connect, to bridge, to invoke. Cows exist in a liminal space between the human and the divine, the physical and the spiritual, the alive and the ancestors, the worldly and the universal'. It is their location in both the ordinary and the spiritual rites that they also emerge as subjects of song, idioms and myths.

2.4.6 Cattle among the Hindus in India

A look at Cattle among Hindus show that in Hinduism, all living creatures are considered as sacred (Agoramoorthy, 2009). However, according to Ganapathi (2005), the cow is the most sacred of all the animals and therefore it is used to symbolise this respect for all creatures. The cow is considered to be a symbol of life, grace, abundance and it is not to be killed. According to Ganapathi (2005), her legs symbolize four Vedas (the oldest of the Hindu scriptures), her nipples symbolize four objectives (righteousness, material wealth, desire and salvation), her horns symbolize the gods, her face the sun and the moon while her shoulders symbolize the god of fire.

Based on the cows' sacredness as taught among Hindus, Williamson and Payne (1959:137) asserted that, 'a Hindu would rather starve to death than eat his cow'. Knight (1954:141) observed that because the Hindu religion teaches great reverence for the cow, "there existed a large number of cattle whose utility to the community did not justify economically the fodder which they consumed. This is contrary to the Lozi cattle system in which there are no religious restrictions attached as far as killing or selling is concerned.

Large herds of cattle are regularly sold in numbers in Zambia's Western Province. Clearly, the foregoing practice is in conflict with Venkatraman's (1938:706) assertion that, 'India is unique in possessing an enormous amount of cattle without making profit from its slaughter'. Chatterji (1962:120) affirmed Venkatraman's (1938:706) assertion by stating that 'A large number of cattle in India are old and dilapidated and constitute a great burden on an already impoverished land'. Further, Darling (1934: 158) claimed that, 'all Hindus object to the slaughter and even to the sale of unfit cows and keep them indefinitely.... rather than sell them to a cattle dealer who would buy only for the slaughter house, they send them to a Gowshala (homes for aged cows).

One other interesting attitude encouraged among Hindus in India is that an aged and decrepit cow must be supported like an unproductive relative until it dies a natural death. This is a major point of deviation from most African traditional cattle keepers who would either sale or offer such an animal for sacrifice, kill it for a feast or any other ceremony.

Related literature has been reviewed. In studies such as those of the Nuer and Maasai people where transhumance of cattle occur, there were no religious practices documented in the movement of cattle from one location to the other. For other studies such as those involving the Pakot, Kikuyu, Zulus, Swanas and the Hindus of India, cattle was predominantly at the centre of various rituals but no transhumant events were documented. What came out as a common element was a strong emotional attachment to cattle in all of them. This study sought to fill this gap about religious practices involved in the transhumance of cattle by exploring the organisational and religious practices of *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* as practiced by the Lozi people of Munyama area in Kalabo, Zambia.

2.5 SUMMARY

In summary, the Lozi people have practised *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* for centuries, as shown in Figure 2.1. The ceremony has however, not attracted sufficient investigations despite the people's strong attachment to their cattle. In the next chapter, research methodology is outlined.



Figure 2.1. Cattle transiting the flooded plains (*Kuomboka Kwa Likomu*). (Field Data, 2018).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview

The previous chapter reviewed literature on cattle in western province, the culture of the Lozi people with emphasis on religious practices as well as literature from other cattle rearing areas in Zambia, Africa and beyond. This chapter gives an account of the methods that were used in this study. It describes the Research Design, Research Site, Study Population as well as the Sample Size and Sampling Procedure. The chapter further gives a description of the Sampling Techniques, Data Collection Procedure, Data Collection Instruments and Data Analysis.

3.2 Research Design

A research design is a plan on how one intends to conduct a research. This qualitative research used a case study research design. Munyama Area of Kalabo District was selected as the site for the study. Qualitative data was preferred because the study involved beliefs, attitudes, an in-depth understanding of human behaviour in *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* and the reasons that preside over such behaviour, which were not easy to quantify. This approach enabled the researcher to make sense of subjective reality and attach meaning to it. Therefore, by obtaining qualitative data, a better understanding of *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony was reached.

A case study was further preferred because the design sought to describe a unit in detail, in context and holistically (Kombo and Tromp, 2006). Semi- Structured Interview Guides, Focus Group Discussion Guide and the Observation Checklist were used to collect data. Thereafter, thematic analysis was conducted on the data to develop this dissertation.

3.3 Research Site

Western Province is one of Zambia's ten provinces. It is located in the western part of the country, about 650 kilometres away from the capital city, Lusaka. The province has 33 ethnic groups whose lingua Franca is Silozi. The province has sixteen districts, one of which is Kalabo where this study was conducted. Kalabo is located to the west of the Zambezi River and the Zambezi flood plain about 70 kilometres from the border with Angola. The district is situated at 14.97 degrees south Latitude, 22.68 degrees east Longitude and 1019 meters elevation above the sea level. As of the 2010 Census, the district had a population of 128,904 people. Kalabo is the base of the Liuwa Plain National Park, which lies west of the Zambezi floodplain where Munyama Area is located.

Munyama is a large area which consists of more than thirty (30) villages with approximately 6, 000 people. The area lies within Liuwa constituency. As the practice is in Western Province, Munyama is a patriarchal society where male dominance is high. In terms of culture and economy, the people are involved in fishing and farming. They are mostly subsistence farmers. Regarding religious life, many residents of this area practice the Zambian Traditional Religion (ZTR) with a few pursuing Christianity. The study established that between January and June of each year, the muddy church buildings collapse due to flooding and the already weakened Christian gatherings cease, giving dominance to ZTR. Since this area is located within the Zambezi flood plain, rich with green grass, it supports cattle rearing and, as such, many families are involved in cattle rearing. Cattle rearing is, thus, the people's major occupation. Veterinary officers' statistics place the cattle population at approximately 7,000. This is the population of animals that is annually moved out of the flooded plain to the upper land.

3.4 Study Population

Study population refers to a group of individuals, objects or items from which samples are drawn for investigation (Kombo and Tromp, 2006). In this study, the study population consisted of all cattle owners in Munyama Area of Kalabo District.

3.5 Sampling and Sample Size

Sidhu (2013: 253) defines sampling as 'a process of selecting a sample from the population'. In this study, seventeen (17) respondents were selected to participate in the study. These were two village headmen (who are cattle owners), six cattle owners consisting of three elderly men and three elderly women, six women participants (three elderly and three middle aged women) as well as three young men (cattle herders) thereby, giving four categories of participants. Since this study was concerned with beliefs, myths, rituals, taboos and other religious aspects, the use of mature and elderly cattle owners guaranteed collection of valid and reliable data.

3.6 Sampling Techniques

The four categories of participants were purposively selected in order to obtain in-depth information about the ceremony. Purposive sampling, which is one of the methods used in non-probability sampling design has several categories. At the site, the snowball category was applied to reach the village headman who was exceptionally knowledgeable about the

religious practices associated with the ceremony. Bryman (2001: 98) defines snowball sampling as ‘a form of convenient sampling where the researcher makes initial contacts with a small group of people who are relevant to the research topic and uses them to establish contacts with others’. In this study, the researcher used a resident in Munyama who was instrumental at identifying participants with expert knowledge on the organisation of the ceremony and the religious practices involved in it.

3.7 Data Collection Procedure

Punch, (2009) defines data collection as ‘a process of finding information on research, or a process of gathering information aimed at providing solutions to the research questions’. In this study, the semi-structured interview guides were used to collect information from the headmen, cattle owners, women and the young men (cattle herders). The interviews were conducted at the participants’ convenience in terms of place, time and the date. Based on ethical requirement, permission was sought from the respondents to audio record the interviews.

Interviews and observations were made at the preparation stage of the ceremony. The researcher gathered information on how the ceremony was organised. Apart from restricted rituals, the researcher was able to get first-hand information on some unrestricted rituals, taboos and beliefs. For instance, the researcher eye-witnessed the *kufundula likomu*, *kusileleza muña mulaka*, *kuambulula* and the later parts of the *kulaala* and the *kulaala nuka* rituals. Additionally, the researcher participated in some of the roles performed by the women during the ceremony. For instance, the researcher took part in cooking traditional foods for the ceremony, in ululations and singing as well as in paddling the women- only canoe as the cattle was being driven a distance of about 15km to cross the Luanginga River, a tributary of the Zambezi River. Further, the researcher proceeded to the handover venue in kalamba area, covering a distance of about 18 kilometers. Out of these experiences and interactions with the ceremony participants and respondents, essential data was collected.

The focus group discussion guide was used to gather information from the young men (cattle herders). Clarifications about rituals and taboos were made. Equally, new information was generated from the discussions. During the discussions, the researcher

played the role of a moderator of the discussion and took down the responses from the group members. A cell phone recorder was also used to record the discussions.

3.8 Data Collection Instruments

Data collection instruments are tools used by a researcher to collect data. These include interview guides, observation checklist and focus group discussion guide (FGD). This study made use of Semi Structured Interview guides, FGD guide and the Observation Checklist. Semi Structured Interviews were more preferred in that, by using both the open and closed ended questions, in-depth information was gathered thereby, obtaining a complete and detailed understanding of the study. FGD guide was used due to the nature of the study, which dealt with attitudes, beliefs and people's opinions regarding their traditional religious practices. Focus group discussion was also useful in that it was handy at producing a lot of information regarding the various religious practices involved in the ceremony. It proved useful at identifying and exploring beliefs, ideas or opinions in the community (Kombo and Tromp, 2006). As a data collection instrument, the Observation Checklist was helpful at gathering the participants' views and knowledge about the religious practices that occurred in the ceremony.

3.8.1 Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Interviews involve the collection of data through direct verbal interactions between the interviewer and the interviewee. As a form of interviews, semi-structured interviews are based on the use of an interview guide which is basically, a list of questions or topics that need to be covered by the interview (Kombo and Tromp 2006). In the current study, these interviews consisted of structured and open ended questions that were asked in a way that led the participants to give the required information. The interviews were used to gather information from the village headmen, cattle owners and the women participants. As a data collection instrument, semi-structured interviews proved handy in obtaining in-depth information regarding the organisation and religious practices of *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony.

3.8.2 Focus Group Discussion Guide (FGD)

A focus group is a small group of individuals who share certain characteristics relevant to a study. A focus group discussion, therefore, is a data collection instrument that makes use of a guide containing open ended questions helpful in obtaining information on the

participants' beliefs and perceptions on a defined area of interest (Kombo and Tromp, 2006). In this study, the focus group composed of homogeneous members who were cattle headers and had participated in *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* for many times. The focus group discussions were good at identifying and exploring the community's traditional religious practices associated with the ceremony. The discussions were also used to clarify information that seemed unclear, controversial or lacked depth regarding the intricacies of the ceremony. The discussions brought out critical points which remained unchallenged during the semi-structured interviews.

3.8.3 Observation Checklist

The researcher was a participant observer in the ceremony though due to restrictions associated with taboos at some of the rituals, the researcher's presence was denied. However, whenever an opportunity was granted, the observation checklist was used. Observation entails seeing things purposely. It is a process of acquiring knowledge through the use of sense organs (Bryman, 1984). As a research instrument, observation provides information about actual behaviour. It is very useful as some behaviour involves habitual routines of which people are hardly aware. Equally, direct observation allowed the researcher to put behaviour of ceremony participants in context, thereby, understanding the ceremony better (Kombo and Tromp, 2006).

The researcher's participation in the ceremony helped to reduce reactivity as participants became more comfortable with the researcher. Equally, the participation gave the researcher an intuitive understanding of what was happening in the culture (Kombo and Tromp, 2006).

3.9 Reliability and Validity

In the collection of data, some form of a measuring instrument needs to be employed. In human sciences, measuring instruments refer to such instruments as questionnaires, observation schedules, interviewing schedules and psychological tests (Mouton 2012: 100). If these instruments have to produce satisfactory results, they have to meet important conditions such as reliability and validity. Khan and Best, (1989: 160) assert that reliability is 'the degree of consistence that an instrument or a procedure demonstrates'. Whatever it is measuring, it does so consistently. Further, Graziano and Raulin (2000:84), add that 'good measures give the same results each time they are used and regardless of who does the measuring'. In social sciences, reliability deals with whether a study can be repeated

and avail the same results. In this way, reliability is understood to be a measure of how stable or true a concept is, (Bryman: 2008).

In this study, efforts to attain reliability were demonstrated by a consistent use of semi-structured interviews, recording the information and transcribing it word for word in written form. Throughout the research paper, the participants' own words, narrations and descriptions were directly quoted. Several participants were asked the same questions, their responses were compared and variations were further examined. The interpretation from Silozi to English was also carefully considered so that the meaning of concepts and ideas was not lost. This called for listening to each voice recording several times and asking other specialists in the Language to tag meaning. The FGD was also used to confirm meaning of several words that were used during the interviews. Additionally, the participants were people who had been involved in preparing and executing the ceremony for many years. By taking the above measures, reliability was enhanced.

Validity, according to Khan and Best (1989: 160), 'is the quality of data gathering instrument or procedure that enables it to measure what it is supposed to measure'. It refers therefore, to the accuracy of the measure. Efforts to achieve validity were made at the piloting stage at which point, the questions were checked for correctness of meaning. The translation of the questions from the English language to Silozi was also carefully considered so that the questions could gather data for which they were intended. The interview times and space were also taken into consideration so that the participants were relaxed, free and ready to discuss the ceremony. It was also the researcher's practice to repeat the questions to the participants. Equally, the participants' responses were also repeated in their hearing, for confirmation. The foregoing measures improved the quality of data gathering instruments and procedures.

The two conditions (reliability and validity) have to be put into consideration when collecting data. It is important therefore, to note that instruments could be reliable without being valid but they cannot be valid unless they are reliable. As such, validity is not a condition for reliability whereas reliability is a condition for validity.

In the quest to satisfy both conditions, the study made use of three data collection instruments to gather data. These included the interview guide, focus group discussion guide and the observation checklist as a way of verifying the responses. The sample involved consisted of village headmen, cattle owners, women participants and the cattle herders. The use of this set of the sample in verifying the responses along with the three

instruments in the collecting of data is referred to as triangulation. This in turn helped the researcher to ensure that the instruments tested what they intended. Hence, it is hoped that the findings are valid because the responses were compared and scrutinised to arrive at the findings.

3.10 Data Analysis

Data analysis is defined as a critical examination of data for the purpose of drawing meaningful inferences with known facts (Isaac and Michael, 1971). This implies that data analysis is about making sense of the data that has been collected or giving meaning to the data. This process involves grouping responses according to the sub groups of the sample in order for the researcher to compare and contrast them. The process of data analysis began while the interviews were going on. The preliminary analysis helped the researcher in redesigning the questions and focussing on central themes.

Audio data was transcribed into written form, word for word. Several points carried comments as perceived from the voice recording and other nonverbal cues. Comments such as; ‘participant emphasized’, ‘participant showed a different view’, were made. Repeated issues through conversations and interviews were identified, paying particular attention to data that was addressing the research questions. Data sets with re-occurring patterns were listed so that meaningful parts could be gained. In some cases, data reduction was undertaken. This process involved paying particular attention to relevant issues about the ceremony, capturing key examples that were cited as well as taking note of the emerging differences and similarities on issues that were being examined. This act saw the bulky data reduced to categories. Precautions were taken so that relevant data was not lost in the process of coding. The data codes were then sorted in potential themes. However, in other cases, data complication was carried out, in which case, some aspects of data were interrogated and new perspectives were drawn.

Categorisation entails organising data according to questions (Johnson, 1994). This means that related responses for each research question were discussed under one section. The first research question was analysed under the theme- Organisation of *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu*. All responses with organisational aspects were categorised here. The second research question was analysed under the theme- Religious Practices that take place before, during and after *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony. The study attempted to provide justification for practicing such religious practices. The third research question was analysed under the theme- Agreements made between cattle owners and temporal

caretakers. Responses that described any form of agreements were categorised here. The last component to be analysed were the changes that have taken place in *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

Ethics concern what is wrong and what is right in the conduct of research. Since research is a form of human conduct, it therefore follows that such conduct has to follow generally accepted norms and values. In this regard, the researcher sought ethical clearance from the University of Zambia Ethical Committee. Adherence to taboos was observed. The names of the participants have been withheld, video recordings of sensitive and suggestive scenarios have been kept away in a safe place and some of them have been deleted. As such, the rights, interests and sensitivities of those studied have been protected (Bless and Achola, 1988). These basic rights include the right to privacy, which includes the right to refuse to participate, the right to anonymity and confidentiality, the right to full disclosure of what the research is all about (informal consent) and the right not to be harmed in any manner (Mouton, 2012: 243). In this study, the researcher ensured that participation was voluntary. Participants were told what the research was about and the importance of giving correct information was emphasised. The right not to take part if they so wished was explained and in the case where young participants were involved, consent was obtained from their parents or guardians. Further, the researcher made sure that the information that was gathered has only been used for the intended and stated purpose.

3.12 Summary

This chapter has described the methodology, which this study used in conducting the research. It has explained the qualitative research paradigm, which the researcher employed because of the complexity of the topic studied which hinges on the Religious Practices conducted by the Lozi people of Munyama area during *Kuomboka* of their cattle every year. The chapter has demonstrated how the semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. Furthermore, it has also demonstrated how the data, methods and theories were combined. The combination of data is known as triangulation. The population, which, this study target as well as the sample size, sampling techniques and procedures has been explained. The chapter has demonstrated how ethical issues were handled. For any study to be successful, there must be results thereof. For this reason, the subsequent chapter unveils the findings of this study.

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Overview

In this chapter, presentation of the findings through themes and sub-themes that emerged from the analysis of the interviews, FGD and the observation is given. Quotes emanating from the transcribed interviews have been used. In keeping with the ethical requirements, a pseudonym was used for each participant. In this way, participants could not be identified. The words used were; Headman 1 and Headman 2 for the two village headmen, cattle owner 1 to cattle owner 6 was allocated to the six cattle owners, woman 1 to woman 6 was used for the six women participants while boy 1 to boy 3 were given to the three cattle herders.

Four main themes used in this study are a reflection of the objectives of the present study. Each theme had sub-themes which emerged from the analysis of data. This was meant to substantiate each main theme. As earlier stated, the findings were guided by emerging themes from the four research questions.

The research questions for this dissertation were:

- a. How is *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* Ceremony Organised?
- b. What Religious Practices take place before, during and after *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* Ceremony?
- c. What agreements are made between cattle owners and temporal caretakers?
- d. What changes have taken place over the years regarding *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* Ceremony?

Findings to all the research questions arose from responses obtained from semi- structured interviews with headmen, cattle owners, the women, the focus group discussions with boys (cattle herders) as well as the observations made on the *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* Ceremony. Special attention was given to religious practices involved in the ceremony.

However, before addressing the research questions presented above, benefits of *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* to cattle need to be highlighted.

The importance of this transhumance event to cattle, emerged as the first aspect that was clarified to the researcher. Information from cattle owners brought out three major benefits of the ceremony to cattle. It was clear from the cattle owners that this event was essentially organised to benefit the cattle. Firstly, the presence of floods in the area caused grass and grazing land to be immersed in water, making grazing a serious challenge. They pointed out that at this point, cattle begin to lose weight, their feet become liable to diseases caused

by long exposure to moisture such as one locally known as *sinyai*, milk production reduces, which inevitably impacts negatively on the sucking calves.

Secondly, it was brought out by participants that since the ground is evidently wet, the cattle do not find comfortable resting places and so, they are kept standing for long hours. This lowers their general mobility and activeness in searching for the already limited pasture. Thus, their grazing capacity is lowered. Thirdly, it was emphasised by cattle owners that the cattle's long hours of wading in water in their search for pasture does not only make them tired, but it also exposes them to dangers of drowning, snake bites and crocodile attacks.

The foregoing reasons are fundamental and key in understanding the significance of the ceremony to cattle. Based on the foregoing, the relocation of cattle from the flooded plain is inevitable. It is not optional. Having clarified benefits of the ceremony to cattle, the study focuses on addressing the research questions. The next section presents findings regarding organisational aspects of *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony.

4.2 Organisation of *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* Ceremony

This theme had four sub-themes, which emerged from data analysis. These are cattle owner's preparation, caretaker's preparations, family members' preparations as well as preparations by neighbours. The following section presents findings on the preparations done by cattle owners.

4.2.1 Preparations by Cattle Owners

Findings gathered from one headman indicated that at the initial stage when floods start building up, cattle are moved temporarily to special holding islands known as Matongo (plural, singular: litongo). Munyama area has several of these islands (scattered across) belonging to various villages. One of these holding islands is Mutobolokwa litongo. It is estimated that it can hold up to 2000 animals for a period of three weeks beyond which overgrazing might be restrictive. Oral tradition holds that Mutobolokwa litongo is regularly used, dating back many centuries ago. It was used by (Yeta 111) king of the Lozi people, to rest, reflect and view game. It is similar to Mfuwe Lodge in present day Zambia, where modern presidents go for working holidays. The island harbours a sacred place and thus, little or no human activities, by way of taboos, are allowed on the island. When the rest of the plain gets flooded, this island remains standing for two to three weeks. On the

island is a sacred tree locally known as *Mukakani*, which is a special marker to the flooding levels. The headman further indicated that once the water reached a certain pre-marked distance on this tree, it signalled the availability of sufficient water on the plains to support the movement of cattle to upper lands. The headman added that it is at this point that preparations for *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* are intensified.

One elderly cattle owner stated that the organisation of *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony is preceded by several preparations by different stakeholders, but the cattle owner remains central in the whole ceremony. He explained that the success of this ceremony largely depended on effective organisational skills of a cattle owner. The owner communicates in good time to all the relevant stakeholders involved in the ceremony. The elderly cattle owner further narrated that these preparations usually started two weeks before the ceremony took place. The owner carries out a number of preparations aimed at giving a safe journey to both his animals and other participants involved in the ceremony. The preparation follows a pattern as handed down through generations. In addition, all the participants who took part in the study were of the view that *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* is a ceremony that started with the existence of their forefathers.

With regard to preparations undertaken by cattle owners, the participants were of the view that honouring of ancestors, collection of protective medicine, initiation of contractual agreements with temporal caretakers as well as mobilisation and engagement of community members, were among the preparations undertaken by cattle owners.

(i) **Honouring Lozi Ancestors**

With respect to honouring ancestors, the study established that a cattle owner honoured ancestors by strictly following the procedure of conducting the ceremony as left for him by the ancestors. One elderly cattle owner pointed out that part of the procedure included the initiation of a peace making process among family members, collection of traditional medicine (for protecting the cattle and people during the ceremony) from the forest, performance of rituals to help protect the cattle and ceremony participants as well as enforcing adherence to taboos.

The cattle owner's views were echoed by all the other participants. Each one of them indicated that *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* was initiated by the ancestors. Further, the participants disclosed that the ancestors (*balimu*) initiated the ceremony due to experiences related to floods in the area. Hence, they came up with this tradition to give their cattle

safety and protection from the annual floods. In stressing the point, one of the cattle owners succinctly noted that:

This is the reason why cattle owners make the necessary preparations for kuomboka of their animals. It is in honour of the ancestors and to appreciate the ancestors' gift of animals for the survival of the living family. These animals are their gifts to us. If we don't look after them properly, our ancestors can easily take them away from us and then how can we survive without cattle? (Interview with cattle owner 1: February, 2018).

Pointing to the importance of cattle as their mainstay, the cattle owner added that:

Cattle hold the life of everyone here. This is the reason why our ancestors are asked to come and help their animals travel safely to the upper land (Interview with cattle owner 1: February, 2018)

The foregoing views and beliefs regarding the honouring of ancestors were held by all the other participants. In addition, one other cattle owner indicated that in fulfilling this role, cattle owners also made demands on their family members to honour ancestors in their conduct. He added that this was meant to ensure a safe and successful transit for cattle. The cattle owner further explained that one of the ways through which family members could show their honour was by resolving their fights and quarrels before the ceremony. This pleased the ancestors whose role is to offer protection and safety to the animals and participants during the ceremony. Further, the cattle owner pointed out that if family members did not make peace with each other, the ancestors withdrew the service. He indicated that:

Balimu are really present with us. When there are misunderstandings in the family, they expect us to resolve them amicably. If the family does not take this path, water beasts such as crocodiles, hippos, snakes and other water monsters can stand in the way of the animals when crossing the Luanginga River. This is because 'balimu' who should have cleared their way from water monsters are not happy with the family and they will have withdrawn their lead (Interview with cattle owner 2: February, 2018).

The other two reasons were brought forward to explain the importance of peace making. These resonated around avoidance of confusion among a herd of cattle and prevention of effects of magic performed by bad people (witches).

The following narrative addressed the presence of confusion among a herd of cattle if peace was not made. The participant undoubtedly summed it up when he said:

The holding of grudges among family members can make a herd of cattle to be confused while crossing the Luanginga River. They lose direction. Instead of going forward, they get confused and start to move in one big circle (li eza ñolonde). This is a problem. It is dangerous. All of them want to get out of the confusion. They move on top of each other exposing themselves to the risk of drowning. It can bring

a lot of losses to a cattle owner. This is why misunderstandings have to be resolved before the ceremony commences (Interview with cattle owner 4: February, 2018).

Connected to the sentiments above, one of the headmen re-enforced the foregoing belief by adding that:

When Balimu withdraw their lead, the cattle will see water beasts in front of them and get afraid and confused. Out of panic, they start to move around in a circle ('li eza ñolonde'). Often, this may lead to a stampede. This is very dangerous as a number, if not the entire herd of cattle, can drown (Interview with Headman 1: February, 2018).

The headman added that if this pre-condition was not fulfilled, the cattle were most likely to imitate the fights as they occurred in the family. This fight among cattle would only be resolved by the owner's quick and prudent decision to resolve the impasse. This is how he put it:

The movement in circles and the fight among cattle in the water can only be broken if the owner of the animals addresses the ancestors and confesses to them about the differences in the family. He must plead for the forgiveness of the family and appeal to them to assist the animals to cross the river safely. (Interview with Headman 1: February, 2018)

All the participants sustained the above views by the headman concerning *balimu* and the cattle imitation of family fights.

The second reason that was advanced by participants for the need to make peace was that it was one way of preventing bad people (witches) from performing their magic. One cattle owner concisely noted that:

When there is no peace, bad people (witches) use this weakness to perform magic on the cattle because they know that they will not be suspected (Interview with cattle owner 6: February, 2018).

Based on the foregoing fears, all participants reiterated the importance of effective preparation for cattle owners. They emphasised that if one aspect was over-looked during preparations, the fears discussed above were going to follow. In summary, findings show that peace-making pleases ancestors and guarantees their presence in the ceremony. Further, findings show that peace-making is one way of excluding activities of bad people on cattle.

(ii) **Traditional Medicine and Charms**

There were also agreements among participants that cattle owners go to collect traditional medicine from the forest (*Kwa mushitu*). One woman participant explained the purpose for these traditional medicines and charms as follows:

These particular medicines are not meant for evil purposes but rather for the protection of both the people and the animals from various water spirits and beasts (Interview with woman 5: February, 2018).

She added that the medicines and charms are capable of chasing and rendering powerless, beasts and evil spirits found in water. Each of the participants confirmed the use of traditional medicines in the ceremony. The following narrative contains views of one of the cattle owners:

These medicines are not for killing people or to do bad to people. We use them to protect our animals from enemies found in the water. We normally get different types of roots, leaves, grass, river reeds and many other things which are used differently by the different cattle owners. Even the names of the herbs used are different. You find that someone uses this tree or herb while another person may not even use it at all. Just as the medicines differ, so are the ways of using them. Sometimes different people can use the same tree at different stages of the process. This is why the wisdom remains as a family heritage. (Interview with cattle owner 2: February, 2018).

In referring to traditional medicine, one village headman had this to say:

This job is strictly for cattle owners, but they do not perform the task single-handed. They always go with one or two helpers to perform this task (Interview with Headman 2: February, 2018).

When asked further, he explained that there are qualifications for one to be a helper. One of the qualification is that a helper has to always be a close relative. This could be a son, nephew, brother, or any other close relative. The explanation for this was that knowledge for various types of medicines can only be shared with someone who is a relative. The medicines are in fact, family secrets. Other than that, this was a person who was being mentored to take over this responsibility once the owner died or became too old to perform the task.

Further, the headman disclosed that if for some reasons, this knowledge for protective medicines was not handed down, a novice could obtain it from medicine men (*liñaka*). These are regarded as friends of society because the community seeks for their knowledge and skill. To acquire this knowledge about medicine, a novice is required to pay at least one animal whose specifications are given by a medicine man. Consequently, such knowledge obtained by paying for it so highly, was not to be shared anyhow. Once obtained, it was to benefit only family members as it is meant to only flow within a family line.

In referring to a helper, the headman added that several other things are considered about him. He indicated that:

Requirements include maturity, being respectful as well as having the ability to keep secrets. This is because the job puts heavy demand on the one handling it. An immature person cannot be entrusted with such a heavy responsibility, which boarders on giving proper honour to balimu as well as protecting the lives of both the people and the inheritance, which forms a core area of the people's, culture (Interview with Headman 2: February, 2018).

All participants interviewed confirmed that each family line has its own way of using the various things at its disposal. They disclosed that the medicines are normally prepared by soaking them in water and drying them partially, in readiness for the event.

(iii) Contractual Agreements with Caretakers

Each of the participants indicated that once a cattle owner and his family were set with preparations for departure of their animals, a temporal caretaker at the upper land was also informed. This was done to enable him have enough time to prepare adequately for the occasion as well as for the job of taking care of cattle for a period of five to six months when floods receded.

(iv) Community Mobilisation and Engagement

With regard to community mobilisation and engagement, one woman participant explained that once all the foregoing preparations were made, neighbours along with other friends and relatives in neighbouring villages are also informed about the ceremony. These people are necessary for the success of the ceremony. Without them, the ceremony cannot take place as they all have important roles to play. The participant further indicated that this category of people is informed in good time to enable them prepare themselves adequately.

She further indicated that villagers always anticipate that the cattle will have a safe passage and therefore, the success is celebrated by eating, drinking and dancing. Once everyone was informed, preparations for different types of food are made. The food includes 'buhobe' (nshima) taken with sour milk, beef, fish or any other available relish. Alcoholic beverages include the Lozi traditionally brewed beers locally known as 'sebene' and 'waine'. Ilya, a non-alcoholic beverage is also served during the ceremony. This marks the climax of the celebration.

4.2.2 Preparations Undertaken by Temporal Caretakers

During focus group discussions (FGD) held with the cattle herders, one of them stated that caretakers played a vital role in the success of the ceremony. He pointed out that in the flooded plain, cattle experience discomfort in terms of grazing and resting places. Further, one other cattle herder indicated that it is part of the contractual obligation for caretakers to provide a conducive environment for cattle throughout their stay at the upper land. He added that due to the forgoing, caretakers take it upon themselves to alleviate this suffering from cattle as soon as they are informed of their impending arrival. The participant further concluded that a caretaker's task involves taking care of the cattle from the time he receives them until the floods recede. In addition, the participants were all, of the view that due to the evident need for grazing land and conducive resting places for cattle, there was need for caretakers to prepare themselves adequately for this important task. Below was a verbatim of one of them:

Caretakers prepare themselves in many ways. The first thing is to find a reliable person to help them with the massive responsibility of looking after hundreds of herds of cattle. Often, mobilisation of manpower is targeted at their own children, relatives or any other person capable of doing the job. They have to be sure of contracting a reliable person because the job is risky and very involving. It even requires them to be sleeping at the kraal to prevent thefts. They also have to prepare two kraals; one for the big animals and the other, for the calves. When they have done all the preparations, they have to inform their friends and relatives so that they can be available to help them bring the animals safely from 'kalamba' which is their meeting place with the cattle owners (Interview with Boy 1: February, 2018).

Another cattle herder added that:

The temporary kraals are erected in their maize fields for the purpose of fertilizing the soils, and these are shifted around the field nearly every after two days. This is why they need a reliable person to avoid being over whelmed by the responsibility (Interview with Boy 3: February, 2018).

In addition, all of the cattle herders unanimously agreed that the job of a caretaker is strenuous. They further pointed out that although this was the case, there are benefits attached to it.

Benefits to Caretakers

With respect to benefits attached to being a caretaker, one of the cattle herders indicated the following:

Caretakers eagerly wait for this life opportunity which improves their income and enhance their food security. The shifting of the kraals in their fields improves soil

fertility. Consequently, crop yields improve. Further, the sale of milk does not only improve their economic activities but it also improves their household nutrition.

Further, he added that:

As a result of the economic gain caretakers enjoy, many people at the upper land look forward to being caretakers. The job is involving but the benefits outweigh the hardships that caretakers experience. (Interview with Boy 2: February, 2018).

All the other participants were equally of the view that the relocation of cattle to the upper land brought benefits to caretakers.

4.2.3 Preparations by Family Members

Though a cattle owner took an active role in the preparation of the ceremony, the study established that it is equally the responsibility of the entire family to ensure that all necessary preparations are done before the ceremony. In affirming this position, one woman participant indicated the following:

Family members are the owners of the event. They are directly involved in the organisation of the ceremony. Their first responsibility is to make peace among themselves (Interview with woman respondent 1: February, 2018).

As already alluded to, benefits of making peace are many and they all point to the successful holding of the ceremony and safety of the cattle.

In pointing out roles played by family members when making preparations for the ceremony, one woman participant disclosed that:

Some of the young men are sent to the upper land to inform the caretaker of the event while the helpers go with the head of the family to get the protective medicine from the forests. These are meant to protect both the cattle and the people during the ceremony (Interview with woman 1: February, 2018).

During FGD with cattle herders, the participants indicated that there are other responsibilities that required the input of family members. These include the preparation of the special traditional drums (*namalwa*) used during the ceremony. The participants added that the drums are prepared by young men a day before the ceremony. The reason given for this was to enable them produce a good sound throughout the ceremony.

One of the cattle herders pointed out that:

If the existing drums were not in a good condition, arrangements were made much earlier to purchase new ones. The drums were meant to help direct the cattle where to go (Interview with boy 3: February, 2018).

In addition to the foregoing roles played by family members, one woman participant added that family members are also involved in preparing the ceremony regalia. This includes making of traditional flags (*lindembela*) used during the ceremony. The participant stated that:

We usually prepare the flags using our wrappers (litenge). These are meant to add beauty to the ceremony as we sing, dance and display them in our canoes (Interview with woman 5: February, 2018).

All the other participants captured in the study agreed that women played several other important roles in the preparation of *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony. Other than making traditional flags, women are also involved in brewing local alcoholic beverages, cooking *buhobe (nshima)* and all other food stuffs needed for the ceremony. They also help to invite friends and relatives. One woman participant further noted that in order to ensure a safe passage for animals, cattle owners reminded family members of their duty to keep within the requirements of the taboos needed to be observed.

4.2.4 Preparations by Neighbours

During preparations for the ceremony, friends and neighbours are not left out. One village headman indicated that once they were informed, they suspended personal programmes and availed themselves to support their friend. He indicated that:

When animals are going to the upper land, we all prepare to support each other. We do everything possible to see the success of the ceremony. Living in the village requires helping each other. If you live as if you are an island, things will be difficult for you. Animals are not just for one person. They help everyone. So, everyone gets involved. It is a ceremony for all of us. It's one of those rare avenues that bring all of us together. It builds the spirit of community solidarity and in so doing, our relationships, as a community, are strengthened (Interview with Headman 2: February, 2018).

4.3 Religious Practices

The second research question of this study aimed at establishing the religious practices that take place before, during and after *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony. A number of sub-themes emerged upon analysis of data. These included rituals performed before the ceremony as well as those performed during the ceremony. During the process of data analysis, taboos and beliefs also emerged as sub-themes. Taboos included taboos observed before the ceremony, taboos observed during the ceremony as well as those observed after the ceremony. In the case of beliefs, sub-themes included belief in the ancestors' power to influence the ceremony, belief in the protective power of traditional medicine, belief in the

devastative effect of water beasts as well as belief in magic performed by bad people (witches). The following findings reveal the rituals in *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony.

4.3.1 Rituals in *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* Ceremony

The participants indicated that rituals are an integral part of *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony. They pointed out that they are usually performed before and during the ceremony. The following findings reveal rituals performed before the ceremony.

4.3.1.1 Rituals performed before the Ceremony

Rituals are an important segment in *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony. They are upheld as part of the tradition that was handed down from *balimu*. All the seventeen participants agreed deeply, that rituals remain a key component of the ceremony. Their views were that without rituals, the ceremony cannot even take off. One of the village headmen succinctly stated that:

Rituals are what make the ceremony what it is. Every important thing has procedures to be followed. If any of these procedures is ignored, people will experience problems. Ignoring rituals is like removing life from a person and expecting them to walk. You cannot even think of taking the animals out of the floods, without performing the necessary rituals. (Interview with Headman 1: February, 2018).

The above views by the headman were affirmed by all the other participants. Additionally, the participants were also in agreement of the fact that all rituals to do with *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony are only performed by men. In clarifying this point, one of the village headmen pointed out that:

Performing of rituals is a job for men. Even when a woman owns cattle, our tradition does not allow her to perform the rituals. It is a taboo for a woman to do that. This is why her husband takes the responsibility of being a cattle owner. He plays all the roles including the performing of rituals to enhance the safety of the cattle (Interview with Headman 2: February, 2018).

When asked who played such a role for female cattle owners who were single or widowed, the headman brought out the following:

For the single or widowed women, their sons, brothers or any other close relative takes over the responsibility. This is because everyone knows and understands that tradition should be respected (Interview with Headman 2: February, 2018).

All the participants agreed with the headman's sentiments. They pointed out that it was important for tradition to be followed if the ceremony was to succeed. One elderly female cattle owner further indicated that:

Yes, it is true. We do not perform any rituals to do with Kuomboka Kwa Likomu. It is a taboo for us to do that. Just look at me..... (Touches her grey hair), the animals in that kraal were given to me by my parents but when it comes to the ceremony, my husband does everything. That is a role of a man. We too have our own important roles in the ceremony. If for some reason a woman is not married, her son or any of her close relatives can take up that role (Interview with cattle owner 4: February, 2018).

Another female cattle owner had this to say:

These rules were left for us to follow by balimu. How can we go against their wisdom? If you decide to perform the rituals, who are you going to ask to protect the animals when you are disobeying their laid down procedure? When you try to do that, you are fighting balimu. We cannot annoy them when they are the ones who gave the rules and the animals to us (Interview with cattle owner 6: February, 2018).

With regard to rituals performed during preparations for the ceremony, it was unanimously agreed by all participants that they include the 'kupailela', 'kuolelisa likomu', 'kuolela', 'kukwalula nzila' and the 'kuambelega' rituals. The findings also showed that the 'kupailela' ritual not only took place during preparations for the ceremony, but it was also performed on the actual day of the ceremony.

(i) Kupailela (asking and pleading for ancestor intervention)

Each of the participants captured in the study indicated that one of the preparatory requirement was that cattle owners talked and pleaded with ancestors for guidance before the ceremony. The asking and pleading with ancestors (*kupailela*) was one of the rituals performed before the ceremony. One cattle owner explained that the ritual is performed to ask for ancestor intervention during the process of collecting traditional medicine from the forest (*Kwa mushitu*). The cattle owner added that once collected, the medicine is used for the *kuolelisa likomu*, *kuolela*, *kukwalula nzila*, *kuambelega*, *kufundula likomu*, *kusileleza muña mulaka*, *kulaala* as well as the *kulaala nuka* rituals. It is meant to protect both the cattle and the people during the ceremony. The cattle owner further disclosed that the *kupailela* ritual is performed the evening before going to collect the medicine. He put it this way:

The first thing we do is to ask our dead parents (balimu) for their intervention in the process of going to collect traditional medicines from the forests (Kwa

mushitu). This is the first ritual performed during preparations for the ceremony. It is known as *kupailela* (Interview with cattle owner 3: February, 2018).

When asked how the ritual was performed, he had this to say:

We squat on the ground, sip some water or fresh milk and spray out mouthfuls of it while addressing balimu. We plead with them to come and guide us in this important mission, earnestly asking them to be involved in the getting of medicines for their animals (Interview with cattle owner 3: February, 2018).

One other cattle owner added that the asking and pleading was entirely directed at seeking ancestors' guidance and intervention. He further disclosed that the process also involves appeasing them. He explained that:

We give our ancestors small bits of each of the different types of foods they enjoyed while on earth. We set this food on a white plate. This is because the colour white signifies purity. For those who used to like beer, it is given to them. This particular ritual is performed in the extension of the courtyard (Lushoko), normally used as a bathroom. Within this place, is a 'kozwana' or 'Lukutu', a smaller portion of the lushoko. It is a hidden place and it is usually situated in the corner. It is a respected part of the Lushoko, which is normally a no play zone for children. It is set aside, strictly, for the consultation and appeasement of our ancestors. This is where this ritual takes place (Interview with cattle owner 1: February, 2018).

When asked why this ritual was important, one other cattle owner stated that:

These animals belong to the ancestors hence; we have to ask for their help. When they are not consulted, the mission cannot be successful. You can easily get lost in the forest, you discover that suddenly you cannot identify any tree or you just begin to see that you are surrounded by the plain. This can go on until you call upon them. These people are very serious. They need to be respected. We have to make pleas to them so that they can open our way and that the people should come to help out during the ceremony (Interview with cattle owner 2: February, 2018).

Another cattle owner's response on the importance of performing the *kupailela* ritual before going to collect medicine from the forest was that:

Balimu have the ability to guide us to the exact locations where specific medicines are found. Consulting them therefore, is not a waste of time. They make our mission successful (Interview with cattle owner 3: February, 2018).

In emphasising the need to consult ancestors, one village headman indicated that:

If you do not ask them to open your way before hand, you may start off very well and then problems begin to happen. You can start going round a specific tree whose roots, leaves or barks you are looking for without seeing or identifying it. This can go on until you call upon them. When this is done, your eyes suddenly opens and you see what you have been looking for right in front of you. (Interview with Headman 1: February, 2018).

The foregoing demonstrates that *balimu* are an important component in *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony. Involving them in the collection of medicine brought success.

(ii) ***Kuolelisa Likomu*** (informing, appealing and protecting cattle)

One other important ritual that takes place before the ceremony is the *Kuolelisa Likomu* ritual. Before the ritual commences, a cattle owner informs his animals about the journey. One village headman explained that:

You cannot undertake such a journey without informing the cattle. Those animals are able to hear. They are like people. When you talk to them, you find that they raise their ears in response to what is being said. They even answer you by saying 'moo, moo', they also shake their bodies in response to what you are saying, they are tamed animals, they know how to relate. You cannot just take them silently without informing them (Interview with Headman 2: February, 2018).

Additionally, one of the cattle owners consolidated the above sentiments. He indicated that the cattle have to be informed about their journey. They need to know that their annual journey was about to take off. The cattle owner further indicated that the information excites them and helps to prepare them to look forward to the day of the journey. He concluded by stating what is usually said to the cattle:

We move around the kraal (mulaka) speaking the following words; "You have suffered moving in water (munyandile kuombola), there is no enough grazing grass for you (a musana bufulo bo bunde)". "Therefore, tomorrow we are going to the upper land (kamusu ki musipili, lwaya kwa ndundu, ko kuomile, lwaya kwa mubu otofota)". "Tomorrow we are on a journey (kamusu, kuenda! Kuenda! Kuenda! Lwa zamaya, kamuso ki musipili), do not go and feel out of place (musike mwayo ketuka)".

He added that:

While talking to them, we also praise them saying; "You are our great helpers (mina mu batusi ba batuna), go well and come back in the cold season (muzamae hande mi mute muyo kuta maliya)". We whistle, ululate and play the 'namalwa' while shouting, 'We are going! We are going!' (kuenda! kuenda! kamuso ki musipili)". (Interview with cattle owner 1: February, 2018).

All the participants indicated that cattle owners talked to their animals before the *kuolelisa likomu* ritual.

Furthermore, one headman captured in the study indicated that on the evening before the ceremony, the owner, with the help of his helpers (*batusi*), perform the *kuolelisa likomu* ritual at the kraal. He disclosed that the ritual is performed to primarily offer protection to cattle during the ceremony. The headman further explained that different cattle owners use different medicine types (*milale*) for this ritual. When asked how the ritual was performed, this was what he had to say:

We get the medicine which is a combination of different types of plants(likota), which constitute leaves (matali), roots (mibisi), barks (makwati), river reeds (mataka a nuka) and many other things. These are not the same for everyone. Different people use different things according to their wisdom. These are the ones used to make a fire in the middle of the kraal. A sizable hole is dug and that is where the fire is made. Others use a broken potsherd (liñetana) or a white plate for the fire. This medicine, which is meant to protect the cattle from any harm, is generally referred to as (Kota ya mezi). The fire is not allowed to produce a flame. Only the smoke is needed for the ritual. When the cattle inhale the smoke and their bodies are exposed to it, their protection is attained (Interview with Headman 2: February, 2018).

Additionally, one cattle owner further indicated that after informing the cattle of the journey, cattle owners talked to ancestors. He narrated that:

We kneel in the middle of the kraal (mulaka) and call upon balimu, telling them that, “Here we are at your kraal. We have come to prepare your animals for the journey”. “We ask you to come and take part in this work, come and help us to do the right thing for your cattle, come and protect them so that they will have a safe journey tomorrow (Interview with cattle owner 3: February, 2018).

The cattle owner explained that once ancestors were called by their names and talked to, fire for the ritual was made. He disclosed that the fire is not collected from any other fire place (*mulilo hau yakiwi*). It has to be new fire. He explained that this was so because it is believed that if an old fire is collected, it might be contaminated and that can nullify the effectiveness of the medicine. Thus, to avoid this, matchsticks are used to make fresh fire right at the kraal. One-woman participant added that:

Strict guard is made against the bringing of fire from other fire places (maiso). This is necessary as witches can use or put something that counteracts the effectiveness of the medicine. If this happened, then, the intended outcome of carrying out the ritual will have failed and the family would experience massive deaths of the cattle (Interview with woman respondent 3: February, 2018).

The foregoing views regarding fire for the *kuolelisa likomu* ritual were held by all the other participants. During Focus Group Discussions with cattle herders, the participants pointed out that it is a taboo for fire to be collected from any other fire place. They explained that the restriction was so serious that even fire from a cattle owner’s home was not allowed.

(iii) *Kuolela* (protecting family members)

Unlike the *Kuolelisa Likomu*, the *Kuolela* ritual is meant for family members. One of the village headmen pointed out that in some families, it is performed the evening before the ceremony while in others, it is performed very early in the morning on the actual day of

the ceremony. When asked how the ritual was performed, one village headman narrated that:

This ritual takes place at the Lushoko. The owner, together with his helpers spearhead the process. The same medicine type used during the kuolelisa likomu ritual is used and similar requirements in making the ritual fire are followed. The same medicine is used because the purpose is to protect both the people and the cattle. The only difference is noted in the use of an unbroken potsherd (liñetana) with a sizable mouth to accommodate the making of fire in it. Throughout this process, participants are only dressed from the waist downwards. The essence for this is to allow the medicine smoke to penetrate the skin properly. All family members including babies participate in this ritual. This is meant to offer protection to everyone (Interview with Headman 1: February, 2018).

When asked the role of the participants during the ritual, he stated that:

During the Kuolela ritual, participants either sit with legs folded (kuboola), or squat (ku shungumana). These postures are taken while facing the east (mapazulelo). The east is believed to be where good things come from because that is where the sun rises. This posture is therefore, meant to anticipate the receiving of good things from balimu which in this case, is protection from water beasts and magic performed by bad people. During the whole process of the ritual, there is no talking. The only one who can talk is a cattle owner through the giving of instructions. Silence signifies respect to balimu. It also promotes concentration on what is taking place. When the ritual is over, participants leave the lushoko without looking back and no one takes a bath because that can disturb the effectiveness of the medicine (Interview with Headman 1: February, 2018).

Regarding the aspect of looking back, one-woman participant put it this way:

No one should look back. This symbolises the moving forward of the cattle once the journey starts. If one were to look back, the cattle would imitate that family member's action. Instead of moving forward, the cattle would start turning back. This can be very dangerous especially on the river as it can cause confusion leading to drowning (Interview with woman respondent 4: February, 2018).

Additionally, one cattle owner disclosed that due to the different medicine types (*milale*) used by cattle owners, slight variations existed in the manner in which certain observances were conducted. He explained that for some families, there is an additional activity that takes place during the *kuolela* ritual. This involves the eating of ritual *nshima* (*kahobe ka mulyani*). This activity marks the final process of the ritual. When asked how the ritual *nshima* was prepared, he explained that:

The nshima is cooked using cassava meal mixed with the ashes that remain from the kuolela ritual. It is cooked by a small girl right in the lushoko. When it's ready, everyone picks a small portion and eats it without chewing (Interview with cattle owner 3: February, 2018).

All the participants attested to the fact that slight variations in the manner in which some observances were conducted existed. They attributed this to the different medicine types (*milale*) used by cattle owners.

On the consumption of ritual *nshima*, two explanations were availed. One-woman participant said:

I prepared this nshima in my father's house many years ago. The nshima may be eaten without any relish. What matters most is the medicinal ashes added to it. This is added to protect the people as they move across the floods (Interview with woman 6: February, 2018).

Yet, however, another woman participant disclosed that:

We eat the ritual nshima with partially cooked fish, (mezi a pili). The usual cooking is not necessary as it would waste a lot of time and require old people to do the cooking (Interview with woman 3: February, 2018).

Further, a female participant explained that once the ritual *nshima* was cooked, small *nshima* balls are made and put on a white plate. The white plate is used because the colour white symbolised purity. She added that after the ritual, participants do not take a bath because bathing neutralised the effect of the medicine hence, exposing people to dangerous attacks by water beasts.

In addition to the foregoing views by the women regarding the *kuolela* ritual, one cattle owner explained that the ritual can also take place very early on the actual day of the ceremony. Afterwards, people can eat the ritual *nshima* as an additional form of protection from various water beasts.

When asked whether there was another ritual performed after the *kuolela* ritual, one elderly cattle owner disclosed that as soon as the ritual was over, cattle owners and their helpers prepared themselves for the sounding of the *namalwa* (special traditional drum). This was how he put it:

We play the namalwa for a few minutes and then we speak a few words in a loud voice saying, 'Friends, honour the good inspirations the ancestors have impressed on your hearts, tomorrow is the journey (lwa zamaya balikani, kamuso ki musipili)'. 'Wherever you are, in the north, south, east and west, come forth and help us (Komuinzi kaufela, mwa makona a mane, a mutahe muto luapa mwa nzila, ibe ye kenile)'. 'Let all bad luck go far from us, tomorrow we are on a journey (kamuso ki nzila balikani, sañole kaufela siye kwahula)'. 'The journey has no owner, when we come together, we help each other (musipili hauna muñi, alukopani kaufela lwa tusana)'. At this point, family members join to ululate and enjoy the playing of the drums. Ululations are also heard from other homes in

response to the exciting news about the ceremony (Interview with cattle owner 1: February, 2018).

In addition, the cattle owner indicated that this ceremonial drum is sounded to give a final notification of the ceremony to the community. He added that normally, it is played in the evening while people are still awake.

All the other participants agreed with the cattle owner's views concerning the *namalwa*. Additionally, one cattle owner indicated that for some families, there was yet another ritual that took place very early on the day of departure. This is the *kukwalula nzila* ritual. He clarified that for the families that conducted the *kuolela* ritual on the actual day of the ceremony, the *kukwalula nzila* ritual preceded the *kuolela* ritual.

(iv) *Kukwalula nzila* (clearing the way)

In giving his views on the ritual, one cattle owner explained that the *kukwalula nzila* ritual is meant to clear the way for cattle. He indicated that:

The owner of the cattle performs it at the kraal. He wakes up very early to avoid people because the ritual is conducted naked apart from an underwear. This happens on the actual day of the ceremony. He goes to the kraal with a piece of white cloth on a white plate. The selection of the white colour is to symbolise the water in which the animals will be passing. It also symbolises the owner's desire for his animals to be able to swim throughout their journey. The white colour also symbolises a clear path; a path free of obstacles as the cattle swim. The whole essence is that as they move, they just see whiteness and purity (Interview with woman respondent 3: February, 2018).

When asked how the ritual was performed, the cattle owner explained that:

When he reaches the kraal, he stands at the doorway, talks to his balimu and blows air unto the piece of white cloth placed on a white plate. This is done while facing the animals. He asks balimu to open the path for the cattle and make their way as clear as the cloth. He appeals to the cattle to see a clear path as they move. From the outside of the kraal, he then repeats this procedure at all corners of the kraal. ..Once he has done this at all the corners, he enters the kraal and repeats the procedure in the middle of the kraal while turning around to allow the blown air spread to all parts of the kraal. (Interview with cattle owner 2: February, 2018).

One other cattle owner echoed the significance of the white piece of cloth in the ritual. He explained that the cloth was so important that it even has to be handled and stored with a lot of care until the ceremony was over. He narrated the following:

After performing the ritual, the cloth is put somewhere on top in the bedroom. The cloth is kept in that position until a cattle owner comes back from handing over the cattle to the caretaker (Interview with cattle owner 3: February, 2018).

(v) *Kuambelela* (rain scattering ritual)

On the day of the ceremony, cattle owners get concerned when they see heavy clouds forming. The presence of rain is not a blessing on this day. When asked why the appearance of rain was not a blessing on the day of the ceremony, one female cattle owner said:

Rain disadvantages both the people and the animals. People do not celebrate accordingly and their work of assisting the cattle to 'omboka' proves to be very difficult. This is because both their vision and that of the animals is greatly hampered by the presence of the rains. This calls for doubling of their efforts in assisting the cattle to move and swim as expected. This is why the rain scattering ritual (kuambelela) is performed to scatter every cloud and make the skies clear until the cattle have reached the upper land (Interview with cattle owner 5: February, 2018).

The cattle owner further added that although this was the case, not every cattle owner has the ability to scatter rain. She added that for those having the ability, they conduct the ritual and throughout the ceremony, there would be no rain, not even a drop. She assuredly explained what happens as follows:

A cattle owner performs this ritual. He does it in the house together with his helpers (batusi). Clothes are removed leaving only an underwear. He gets different medicines and puts them on the potsherd (liñetana). After putting the medicines, he starts talking to his 'balimu'. He asks them to scatter the clouds to allow their animals move and swim under clear skies. After talking to the 'balimu', he starts to order the medicines to scatter the clouds and clear the skies. He tells it to go in all corners of the earth; the east (upa), the west (wiiko), the north (mutulo) as well as the south (mboela), to scatter every cloud and make the skies clear until the animals have reached Kwa mushitu. Then he gets fresh grass and uses it to tie a knot (linungo). This knot is put on the medicine and then he talks to the rain saying, 'We are not denying you from falling to make our crops grow, we are asking you not to rain until our animals reach where they are going'. After saying this, he gets all the medicine and the knot (linungo), puts them on a white plate and places them somewhere on top in the house. He puts them in the direction where rain usually comes from. This means that rain has been tied, it cannot rain. The people will move well without any disruption (Interview with cattle owner 4: February, 2018).

One of the headmen who equally indicated that there are men who possess powers and knowledge of medicine to manipulate rain, added that a combination of medicines is required to perform this ritual. The headman also indicated that the declarations that are made to order the medicine to scatter rain clouds as well as the order given to rain not to fall, is what is referred to as 'kuambelela'. 'The making of 'linungo' is symbolic. It shows that the rain is tied', he concluded.

4.3.1.2 Rituals Performed during the Ceremony

All the participants indicated that rituals performed during the ceremony include the *Kufundula likomu*, *Kusileleza muña mulaka*, '*Kuambulula*', *Kulaala* and the *Kulaala nuka* rituals.

(i) ***Kufundula likomu*** (send-off ritual)

All the participants were in agreement that the *kufundula likomu* ritual is performed in three different ways. One elderly cattle owner attributed the differences to the different medicine types (*milale*) used by cattle owners. He however, pointed out that in all the versions, the purpose is to ask for the ancestors' protection and to give a befitting send off to the people's dearest possession. The cattle owner further explained that all cattle owners performed the ritual at a kraal as shown in Figure 4.1.



Figure 4.1. Cattle owner during the *Kufundula likomu* ritual. (Field Data, 2018)

In the first version, the cattle owner indicated that:

In the morning, we perform this ritual. We talk to balimu, asking them to come and send off their animals and protect them from all dangers. We get part of the milk from the cows with older calves (mabisi a mankomwana), and not from the tender ones (mankomwani nyana). These are our parents and they are the ones from whom the cattle originated. We have to offer them thick and quality milk. We put the fresh milk (muzilili) in a white cup and go in the middle of the kraal. Then we sip some of the milk (ku pumata mabisi) and spray mouthfuls of it on the cattle. This goes on until all the milk in the cup is finished. While this is going on, we talk to balimu, saying, 'you have been with us, now today we are here with your animals, today they are on a journey, protect them, send them off, move with them' (Interview with cattle owner 2 : February, 2018).

In explaining how the second version of *kufundula likomu* is conducted, one other cattle owner pointed out that part of the fresh milk for that particular day is mixed with the ashes that remained from the *kuolelisa likomu* ritual held previously. The mixture is then used to sprinkle on the animals while declaring good words of sending them off.

When asked some of the words spoken to send the cattle off, this was how he put it:

'Friends, today our journey is ready, we are going to the upper land (kacenu lwa zamaya balikani, lwaya Kwa mushitu)'. 'We ask you to go well (muzamae hande)'. 'Swim well (mukanduke), the path is familiar (ki mwa nzila yaluna)'. 'Go well and come back in the cold season (muzamae hande, mi mute muyo kuta maliya), do not go and feel lonely (musike mwa yo ketuka), you will be in safe hands (ki komuyanga kamita)' (Interview with cattle owner 3: February, 2018).

In the third version, the cattle owner explained that nothing, other than water and farewell words was used to perform the ritual. Cattle owners and their helpers bid farewell to their cattle by wishing them well and arguing them to come back in good health. He added that this is done in the morning before the milking is done. When asked how this version of the *kufundula likomu* ritual was performed, the cattle owner indicated that:

The cattle owner enters the kraal with water in a white cup, he stands in the middle of the kraal and talks to his balimu. He asks them to come and escort their animals and protect them throughout the journey. While talking to balimu, he moves around, sips water from the cup and sprays mouthfuls on the cattle. After petitioning his balimu, he moves around the kraal and addresses the cattle saying; 'Today we are going to the upper land, (kacenu ki musipili balikani, lwaya ko luyanga munda kamita)'. 'Go well, swim well, (akuna ku ikandingele Kwa mahutu, muhate momu hata, mutape momu tapa, lwa zamaya balikani)'. 'Go well and come back to us in the cold season (muzamae hande, Muyoina hande mi muyo lukutela maliya)'. When he finishes, his helpers also speak to the animals, wishing them well and arguing them to come back in good health (Interview with cattle owner 3: February, 2018).

(ii) *Kusileleza Muña mulaka* ('Lead' ox ritual)

The *Kusileleza muña mulaka* ritual is performed as shown in Figure 4.2.



Figure 4.2. Ritual performed on the 'Lead' ox. (Field Data, 2018)

An identified lead ox is normally taken through a ritual. Specifically, it is given special African religious practices instruction to take lead, to be courageous and to defend the rest. A special concoction of traditional medicines mainly made of medicinal ashes from the *kuolelisa likomu* ritual is given to it alongside many praises and reassurances of success to lead the entire herd to safety. One cattle owner had this to say:

The traditional medicine that is administered to a 'lead' ox enables it to see 'things' such as magical traps. The power within itself nullifies such traps and where it can't, it stops running and stands still and the entire herd follows suit. At this point, a cattle owner detects the problem and handles it accordingly. Other abilities enhanced are the ability to run faster and to approach obstacles with courage than others. It is capable of fighting beasts in its quest to defend the entire herd (Interview with cattle owner 1: February, 2018)

Yet another cattle owner had this to add:

You cannot overlook the role of such an ox. This is why it is called 'Muña mulaka' (owner of the kraal). Only under special circumstances is this ox used to meet labour needs such as ploughing and transportation of bulk materials (Interview with cattle owner 2: February, 2018)

After the 'lead' ox ritual, the cattle are released out of the kraal, one by one to ease the counting. This was how one cattle owner put:

*After the lead' ox ritual, we then count the cattle before they are grouped in one place outside the kraal. We need to know the actual number we are taking. This is in readiness for the *kuambulula* ritual which is usually the last ritual conducted before the animals set off for the upper land (Interview with cattle owner 1: February, 2018).*

Figure 4.3 depicts women involvement in the counting of cattle.



Figure 4.3. Cattle being counted. (Field Data, 2018)

Once the counting was done, the ancestors are again petitioned to be present on the journey through performance of the *Kuambulula* ritual.

(iii) ***Kuambulula*** (Petitioning the ancestors)

The findings were that after the cattle were counted, a cattle owner performed this ritual. In his narration, he said:

The essence of this ritual is to, once again, talk, and plead with balimu for help and intervention on the way. They are asked to go before their animals and grant them safety. All the balimu are called upon, mentioning their names and asking for their intervention in their animals' long journey (Interview with cattle owner 1: February, 2018).

The cattle owner continued to give more insights by adding the following:

We ask the balimu to go before their animals and grant them safety. All the balimu are called upon, mentioning their names and asking for their intervention in their animals' long journey. While calling upon balimu, a cattle owner moves around the cattle. There are no specific words meant for this occasion. What is important is to primarily speak to our parents genuinely and asking for their forgiveness (Interview with cattle owner 1: February, 2018).

Figure 4.4 showing a cattle owner performing the *kuambulula* ritual.



Figure 4.4. Cattle owner performing the *Kuambulula* ritual. (Field Data, 2018)

When asked to mention some of the words used for this occasion, this is what he had to say:

Here we are our parents, we are ready and your animals are here, they are going, we are on a journey, give them a safe passage, protect them from all bad things, we want peace, let them swim properly..... (Interview with cattle owner 1: February, 2018).

Additionally, the cattle owner explained that while talking to *balimu*, honest was encouraged. Nothing was to be hidden if forgiveness and success of the ceremony was to be achieved. He added that cattle owners mentioned all known family differences and asked for forgiveness from their fore fathers, knowing very well that they had power to forgive them if they asked sincerely. They pleaded with them saying:

Wherever smoke comes out, there is fire, wherever people are, there are differences. Please forgive us, do not hold anything against us. We ask that all wickedness may be removed from each one's heart so that everyone is released from any grudges (Interview with cattle owner 1: February, 2018).

Another cattle owner indicated that soon after pleading with *balimu*, a cattle owner, together with his family members, speak to the cattle. The basis for talking to cattle lay in the belief that doing so, freed cattle from the family quarrels and fights. The cattle owner recited the following words used when addressing cattle:

'The differences are over and as such, you should feel free and released to move and swim freely (kufapana kaufela kufelile, mulukuluwe, mutape hande)'. 'Whatever fights and quarrels you saw and heard among us, are now over (lifapano kaufela zeneli mwahala Luna lifelile)'. 'Our hearts have been freed from all of them (lipilu zaluna kaufela li lukuluhile)'. 'Therefore, you too must be free (kona kuli nimina kaufela mulukuluhe)'. 'Swim freely, let your legs be light as you

take this journey (mutape ka ku lukuluha, musike mwaeza bukiti kwa mahutu)'. 'Everything is over (bumaswe kaufela bufelile), swim peacefully (mutape ka kozo)' (Interview with cattle owner 2: February, 2018).

The cattle owner added that:

Once the ritual was over, a cattle owner shouted in a loud voice saying, 'kuenda! Kuenda! Kuenda! Aliyeni balikani! (Let's go! Let's go! Let's go friends!)', then the people will know that it is now time to go. At this point, shouts and ululations are heard everywhere and the boys playing the namalwa run ahead of the cattle. The long journey has started (Interview with cattle owner 2: February, 2018).

(iv) Kulaala (boundary marking ritual)

'Kulaala' literally means marking boundaries in the water. The ritual takes place along the way when the cattle reach a deep swamp. Cattle owners perform the ritual. One headman who took part in the study narrated as follows:

Swamps are known to be habitats for dangerous snakes and crocodiles. During Kuomboka Kwa Likomu, jealousy people often use these water bodies as sites for practising magic. Failure to perform this ritual would therefore, result in loss of a huge herd of cattle through drowning, snakebites and even being picked by crocodiles some of which would be magical (Interview with headman 1: February, 2018).

When asked how the ritual was performed, one cattle owner indicated that:

After marking the boundary of where the cattle will pass when crossing the swamp, a cattle owner disembarks from his canoe and stands in the water right at the entry point where the cattle will make entry into the water. In one hand, he holds his medicinal paddling stick (Silabo sa mulyani) while in the other, he has two reeds earlier collected at the beginning and at the end of the swamp. While in this position, he calls for the cattle to come and cross.

The cattle owner added that:

As the cattle approach the swamp, he speaks in a loud voice saying, 'Come, I am here, (amutahe balikani, kina yo), let's go, let's go friends, (aliyeni balikani)'. 'There is no problem, this is the path we always use (akuna butata, ki mo lufitanga kamita)'. 'Our ancestors who gave you to us are here too, do not be afraid friends (balimu baluna bateni, musike mwa saba balikani)'. 'No matter how long and deep the swamp is, you will swim across, you will swim safely, let us go' (a liyeni balikani, muka kanduka). As the cattle cross, he keeps encouraging and uses the two reeds to sprinkle milk on them (Interview with cattle owner 2: February, 2018).

In addition, one cattle owner added that because of the different medicine types (*milale*) used by cattle owners, a few variations existed in the manner in which the ritual is performed. He explained that other cattle owners do not use the animals' milk to perform the ritual. Instead, they use water from the same swamp to sprinkle on the cattle as they

cross. He added that once all the cattle have crossed safely, shouts of joy and ululations are usually heard from participants in celebration of the ancestors’ victory.

(v) ***Kulaala Nuka*** (boundary marking ritual at the river)

Boundary marking ritual (*kulaala nuka* or *kufundela fa nuka*) takes place at the Luanginga River. Though it might differ from family to family, two commonly practiced ways were given by one of the village headmen. Like the boundary marking at the swamps, the ritual was performed by cattle owners although there were a few minor differences. In describing the process, he disclosed that:

The process starts from one side of the river, just where the animals would start crossing from. Alone in his canoe, the cattle owner paddles to the other side of the river while talking to his ‘balimu’. Like in the ritual conducted at the swamps, he asks them to intervene and give their animals safety from all water beasts. While on the other side of the river, he collects one river reed having a tassel and comes back to the side where the animals would start crossing. He picks another reed having a tassel and comes out of the canoe. He holds his special paddling stick and the two reeds in the left hand while using the right hand to get water from the river, for use in the kupaila process. After having formed a rectangular shape in marking the boundary where the cattle would cross from, he sips water in the mouth and sprays mouthfuls in the river while facing the direction where the cattle make entry to the river. In doing this, he further asks balimu for their protection of both the people and the animals. As the animals are about to be let into the river, the owner further sips water and sprays mouthfuls into the river. At this point, he throws the reeds alongside other protective medicines into the river. The animals are then allowed to cross (Interview with Headman 1: February, 2018).

Figure 4.5 shows a cattle owner with a raised paddling stick as part of the ritual requirement.



Figure 4.5 Cattle owner during the *Kulaala nuka* ritual. (Field Data, 2018)

When asked about the special paddling stick for cattle owners, the headman noted that all cattle owner have special paddling sticks just for use during the ceremony.

In giving his views on the spraying of water in the river, one cattle owner explained that the act of spraying mouthfuls of water from the mouth into the river was meant to appease (*kupailela*) the ancestors. In doing this, it is believed that the ancestors will help and safeguard the animals to cross safely. Additionally, the cattle owner explained that it is also believed that the tassels from the river reeds together with the charms thrown in the river exorcised the water spirits, broke the magic powers set by evil people and caused water beasts and snakes to be powerless.

Further, the cattle owner disclosed that the methods for performing the various rituals may differ but the purpose for performing those rituals remained the same. Concerning the fore mentioned ritual, he explained that other cattle owners performed it differently. This was how he put it:

Upon reaching the river, a cattle owner pushes root charms in the sand, at the point where the cattle will make entry into the river. This is what is called (kufundela fa nuka). It is to make the place safe for both the people and the animals. While doing all this, a cattle owner invokes his balimu, asking them to enable the cattle cross without difficulties. He further paddles his canoe to the middle part of the river where he pushes another root of medicine in the water. From this point, he goes and does the same at the point of exit. He paddles back to the first point, disembarks from the canoe and calls for the cattle. The cattle find him standing in the water where he keeps talking to them, instructing them to move on to the other side of the river (Interview with cattle owner 3: February, 2018).

When asked the significance of pushing the root charms in the sand, he explicitly stated that:

Like in the earlier version where the tassels and charms are thrown into the river just when the cattle are about to start crossing, the root charms pushed in the sand protects the animals, exorcizes the evil spirits and nullifies the magic intended to bring calamity to the livestock. The petitions made to balimu through incantations, move them to protect their animals (Interview with cattle owner 3: February, 2018).

One other cattle owner added that:

Once the cattle have crossed the Luanginga River, we are free to eat and drink Ilya while having a brief rest at Libumbu Island. At this point, the cattle can also graze briefly before we set off for Nakasinde Area (Interview with cattle owner 2: February, 2018).

Figure 4.6 showing ceremony participants having their first meal after crossing the river. This is in accordance with the taboo on food.



Figure 4.6. Ceremony participants having a meal at Libumbu Island. (Field Data, 2018)

One other female participant added that:

We do not eat until our cattle have crossed this river. It is a taboo to eat or drink anything before reaching here. Our ancestors do not allow us. (Interview with woman 6: February, 2018).

Figure 4.6 showing part of the ceremony participants resting briefly after their first meal at Libumbu Island.



Figure 4.7. Ceremony participants taking rest. (Field Data, 2018)

When asked whether women had any roles to play at the Luanginga River, one female cattle owner stated that women did not have any roles to play because tradition required them to adhere to certain observances while the cattle crossed the river.

(vi) Women Observances

A female participant indicated that tradition held that when animals are crossing the Luanginga river, women should sit down with either both legs folded backwards on the left side of one's body (*kuboola*), on the sand (*lishabati*) or sit with both their legs carefully neat together and stretched in front of them (*kunaama*). It is a quiet moment and every one of them faces the east. When asked why this was essential, the participant had this to say:

Sitting positions in the lozi culture have meaning. Kuboola indicates the respect. So, when we sit in this position, we are showing our respect and gratitude to our ancestors for the safety they have rendered to us so far and the safety we are to see as the cattle cross the river. However, kunaama is symbolic of the desire to have the cattle swim straight without any difficulties, just in the same way as the women's legs are stretched. Quietness is a sign of respect and reverence to balimu who are helping their animals to cross safely. Also, we do not want to confuse the cattle, they need to hear what their master (cattle owner) is saying to them, as he instructs and encourages them to move on. They also need to hear the sound of the ceremonial drums (namalwa) as they guide them where to go. The eastern (mapazulelo) direction is associated with good things from balimu. When we face the east, we are anticipating to receive the much needed wisdom for the men as they help the cattle on the river (Interview with woman 5: February, 2018).

With regard to the quietness observed when cattle are crossing the Luanginga River, one other woman participant added that:

That is a moment of reverence when everyone wants to see balimu helping their cattle. Even the men don't make unnecessary utterances. They can only talk when it is very necessary, like instructing each other if any of the animals need help (Interview with woman 1: February, 2018).

Another female participant indicated the following:

Immediately after the last animal crosses the river, women break the silence with joyful loud ululations symbolic of the victory of the ancestors against all odds of dangers. At this point, women can either go back or cross the river to join the men in the celebrations on an island called 'libumbu'. At this island, both the people and the cattle take some rest. The animals are allowed to graze a bit while the people eat part of the prepared food. Apparently, this island is also used as a resting place for paddlers during the Kuomboka ceremony of the Lozi female chief based at Libonda palace in Kalabo District. For those who did not cross the river, this is where they would return since the difficult part of the journey is over (Interview with woman 4: February, 2018).

Furthermore, the participant disclosed that there are no other rituals performed after the *kulaala nuka* ritual. All the other participants captured in the study were in agreement with the woman's views. One cattle owner explained that after the Luanginga River, there was no any other river to be crossed hence, there was no need for the performance of any river rituals. The cattle owner equally pointed out that there were no deep swamps that could pose danger to both the people and the animals.

When asked whether there were rituals performed after the ceremony, the participants indicated that there were no rituals performed after *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony. In emphasising this point, one cattle owner categorically stated that:

Rituals that are performed before the ceremony are primarily meant to formally invite balimu for the ceremony and ask for their intervention in terms of a safe passage for the cattle and protection for the people throughout the ceremony. As for the ones performed during the ceremony, they are meant to make a final appeal to balimu to come and lead their animals throughout their long journey to the upper land (Interview with cattle owner 1: February, 2018).

The cattle owner further explained that in essence, rituals were meant to call upon *balimu* to intervene in the shifting of their cattle and once the cattle had gone and reached safely, there was no need to call them to intervene again because then, they would have done and finished their important work. The cattle owner however, indicated that the ceremony was associated with taboos observed before, during and after the ceremony.

In Summary, this section has pointed out various rituals and observances conducted before and during *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony. The ceremony relies heavily on petitioning and appeasing ancestors for the safeguarding of animals as they journeyed across the perilous floods. This connection of the people's lives and their activities with the ancestors, the spirits and the spiritual world, the efforts to ensure purity of their families as they approach the ceremony, as well as the beliefs about power to communicate with their cattle, unearths how deeply rooted African traditional religious beliefs are.

4.3.2 Taboos Related to *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony

With regard to taboos, the participants were all in agreement that *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* was associated with numerous taboos observed before, during and after the ceremony. The following findings reveal taboos observed before the ceremony.

4.3.2.1 Taboos observed before the Ceremony

During preparations for the ceremony, there are several taboos observed by cattle owners, their families and the entire community. All the participants indicated that several taboos are observed during the preparatory stage of the ceremony. These include taboos that bordered on; sexual intercourse, family quarrels and disputes, fetching water in narrow 'mouthed' plastic containers, mentioning the name crocodile, washing pots at water bodies, failure to cover food, eating before collecting the traditional medicine, eating cassava leaves as well as eating fish with teeth and fish without scales. One village headman further explained that there are slight variations in the taboos observed by cattle owners and their families. However, the headman clarified that there are also general taboos observed by all the people in the community.

(i) Sexual intercourse

The observance of the sexual intercourse taboo caters across the entire community. The participants indicated that the taboo is observed by everyone participating in the ceremony. One woman cattle owner explained that on the night before the ceremony, all ceremony participants abstain from sexual intercourse. She added that lack of adherence to this taboo has grave consequences that can lead to the death of cattle on the day of the ceremony. One married woman participant expressed her sentiments about the importance of observing the taboo in the following except:

When we know our friend's animals are going, we usually sleep on separate beds. It is a taboo (mwiila) to meet with your husband sexually when animals are going to the upper land (Kwa mushitu). You can cause a problem. A bull or indeed an ox will perform a sexual act with a cow as they wade across the floods in confirmation of a broken taboo. This act is not just embarrassing to the community, but it presents a great deal of the danger of drowning to the animals involved. Now how can you feel to see your friend's possessions die like that? That's why we observe this taboo (Interview with woman 1: February, 2018).

Her colleague, who shared the same sentiments during an interview, substantiated her perception concerning the importance of observing the sex taboo. She stated that:

You can imagine the entire village watching the animals having sex, it's like they are seeing you and your husband and so, by all means, we abstain. It is very embarrassing. This is why we follow this taboo strictly. We do not want to be embarrassed. (Interview with woman 3: February, 2018).

All the participants reiterated the importance of adhering to the sex taboo if the safety of the cattle was to be assured. The following was gathered from one female cattle owner during the interview:

If for whatever reasons one failed to adhere to this taboo, our tradition teaches that they should restrain themselves from moving and running in front of the cattle. Instead, they should be moving and running behind the animals and not ahead of them. If this is not followed, the cattle will be seeing them in a sexual act they engaged in the previous night and start to imitate them (Interview with cattle owner 6: February, 2018).

A slight variation to the above explanation emerged with another female cattle owner. She said:

The presence of a person who had sex, in front of the cattle, prevents the cattle from seeing their way. When a man and woman sleep together, those things which come out make the cattle not to see their way clearly. When swimming, they will see as if there is fog (buseta seta) in their way. This makes them to be confused. It can even lead to drowning and so, it is encouraged that such persons escort the animals from behind (Interview with cattle owner 4: February, 2018).

Another male cattle owner had this to say:

Due to the gravity of its consequences, it is a common practice among men to opt to sleep at the kraal the night before the ceremony. This is in fear of breaking the taboo. This is a sure way of keeping with the demands of our tradition (Interview with cattle owner 1: February, 2018).

One elderly cattle owner also indicated that even on the night before going to the forest to collect protective medicine for cattle and participants, cattle owners and their helpers adhered to the sex taboo. He added that failure to observe the taboo can cause their mission to be unsuccessful as sexual fluids released in the night could obscure their vision. This in turn, can result into failure to collect the required medicines. He concluded that, ‘for this reason, sexual intercourse is avoided at all costs’.

It was acknowledged that to collect protective medicines was a tradition left by the ancestors. The following were the sentiments made by a male cattle owner:

It is required of us by our tradition that a night before setting off to collect medicines in the bush, we do not meet our wives. It is a taboo for us to do that. The consequences are plain and straightforward, one would fail to see the herbs and trees from which they need to extract the medicines. This makes our journey unsuccessful. We would have to find another day to do this assignment again. If the journey is aborted due to failure to abstain, the ancestors are grievously upset. It is believed that they can strike the family harshly. This is why people follow this taboo quite strictly (Interview with cattle owner 1: February, 2018).

Furthermore, one village headman who took part in the study added that abstaining from sex the night before going to collect medicines from the forest was also a way of showing respect to *balimu* who handed over the animal responsibility to the present cattle owners. The following was his narration:

When you are given the trust to take over the responsibility of being in charge of this family possession, you are told what to do and shown how to do it. If you want things to go well with you, you need to respect and obey the instructions given to you. Balimu expect you to do everything accordingly. When you do things your way, they get angry and they can strike the family very badly. This is why this taboo has to be obeyed. It is to follow their instructions and show them respect as our parents (Interview with Headman 1: February, 2018).

All the participants agreed deeply with the headman's views. In addition, one cattle owner explained that at the sound of the *namalwa* (a special traditional drum) the night before the ceremony, older members of society take responsibility to remind the young to adhere to this important taboo. Another cattle owner indicated that the taboo is observed because of the people's love for cattle and their responsibility and duty towards their neighbours. The understanding is that cattle are helpful not only to the owners, but also the entire community.

(ii) **Family quarrels and disputes**

As cattle owners and family members prepare for the departure of their cattle, they do everything in their power to avoid fighting and quarrelling among themselves. The participants indicated that it is a taboo for family members to quarrel and fight throughout the preparation period up to the day of the ceremony. One woman participant said:

We strive to adhere to peace as a family to prevent the cattle from imitating the same behaviour along the way. Such an action can be very dangerous for them since their journey takes place in water (Interview with woman 2: February, 2018).

One cattle owner disclosed that:

The cattle usually imitate what human beings do. They see what happens and it causes them to turn against each other to imitate the fights and quarrels in the family (Interview with cattle owner 4: February, 2018).

The participants emphasized that during the preparation period, misunderstandings have to be avoided. They pointed out that failure to make peace with each other affected the cattle.

In support of the observance of this peace and reconciliation taboo, one village headman said that:

The unresolved quarrels and fights among family members angers the ancestors and causes them to withdraw their services of protecting and leading the cattle throughout the journey. Their withdrawal exposes the cattle to dangerous water beasts such as crocodiles, snakes and other acts of magic (Interview with headman 1: February, 2018).

One-woman cattle owner observed that:

This situation does not only result in the loss of the cattle. It equally affects human beings involved in offering help. The absence of the much-needed protection from the ancestors makes the people vulnerable as well. Water beasts attack them and at times, lives are even lost (Interview with cattle owner 5: February, 2018).

(iii) Fetching water in narrow ‘mouthed’ Plastic Containers

Among taboos observed during the preparatory period is a taboo to do with the manner in which water for home use is fetched. One-woman participant disclosed that throughout the preparation period, water is fetched using open ‘mouthed’ buckets and not narrow ‘mouthed’ plastic containers. It is a taboo to use narrow ‘mouthed’ plastic containers to draw water. The participant explained that:

By pushing or forcing of a narrow ‘mouthed’ plastic container downwards to fill it with water, one is symbolically pushing or drowning the cattle on the ceremony day. It means that they are intentionally chasing away their riches (cattle). In a similar manner that a container disappears from the surface when immersed in water, that is the manner in which the cattle would disappear in the water, on the day of the ceremony (Interview with woman 5: February, 2018).

Additionally, one cattle owner disclosed another reason for the need to observe the taboo relating to the use of narrow ‘mouthed’ containers. He explained that:

When you push the container down to collect water, it produces the ‘bubbling’ like sounds. That sound is believed to be calling harmful water spirits and beasts to come near the crossing points to await the cattle on the day of their transit. That is dangerous (Interview with cattle owner 3: February, 2018).

(iv) Mentioning the name *kwena* (crocodile)

The participants indicated that during preparations for the ceremony, the word crocodile (*kwena*) is not mentioned. It was explained that it is a taboo to mention the word crocodile (*kwena*, as it is locally called). During focus group discussions (FGD) with cattle herders, one of the participants had this to say:

We don’t mention its name – kwena, but rather, we use a more moderate name such as water lizards (mikolozwani ya mezi or imashamba). If you mention the name kwena (a grabber), you are provoking its family to grab your cattle as they cross the swamps and river (Interview with boy 1: February, 2018).

Agreeing with these sentiments, two other FGD participants revealed that due to fear of losing their cattle, people adhere to this taboo whole-heartedly.

(v) Washing pots at a water body

Washing pots (*lipoto*) at any water body is a taboo. One-woman participant indicated that during the preparation period, pots are prohibited from reaching the rivers, lakes, swamps or any other water body in the community. All participants agreed that it is a taboo to wash pots at any of the water bodies. One female cattle owner added that instead of washing the pots at the water bodies, people washed them from their homes. In echoing her views regarding this taboo, another female cattle owner gave the following narration in her explanation:

When cooking using firewood, pots get the black colour (misili) due to smoke. That blackness is what is not needed at any water body (likamba). The soot obscures the vision of the cattle and that can endanger their lives. It is required that the water remains clear to enhance the animals' vision and ensure the success of the journey. Additionally, black colour on water is indicative of bad luck. We do not want any bad luck on our cattle, this is why we adhere to this taboo with passion (Interview with cattle owner 5: February, 2018).

An addition on the taboo regarding the washing of pots at a water body got more clarity when one other female cattle owner disclosed that:

The same way that a pot sinks when put in any water body, is the similar way that the cattle would sink during the ceremony if the taboo is disregarded. To prevent this from happening, we adhere to this taboo (Interview with cattle owner 6: February, 2018).

(vi) Failure to cover food

Failure to cover food is one of the practices guarded against. The participants indicated that during the preparatory period of the ceremony, family members are required to cover all the food taken to the people at a kraal. The participants explained that it is a taboo to take uncovered food to a kraal. One woman participant disclosed that the restriction was enforced to prevent bad people from using such a situation to cause harm to the cattle. She indicated that:

When bad people see a person carrying uncovered food to a kraal, they perform magic to cause the cattle to die in numbers during the ceremony. The magic is performed in the path used by cattle during the ceremony. They look for a place which has grass that is closely grown to each other (litindi) - a thick grass cover. Bad people make use of these areas that are seemingly thickly covered with grass

on top and, yet underneath them, there are deep waters such that once the animals are stuck in there, they will be trapped and drown to death. As the cattle move along these areas, the illusions make them to see as though that is where the path is, thus, they get stuck and die (Interview with woman 3: February, 2018).

(vii) Eating before Collecting the Traditional Medicine (herbs)

Kuomboka Kwa Likomu ceremony puts more demand on food taboos. All the participants were in agreement that on the day of going to collect protective medicine from the forest, cattle owners do not eat until they are back. One female cattle owner indicated that it is a taboo for cattle owners and their helpers to eat anything before the completion of their mission. Further, the cattle owner added that abstaining from food on that day was symbolic of what would happen to the cattle on the day of the ceremony. The following record of words was obtained during the interview:

These animals copy exactly what we do. When you follow this instruction, you will find that on that day, the animals also do the same. You cannot start eating before you finish that big work. Even after finishing that work, you cannot eat on the way. What you do is what the cattle will do on that day. If they start eating, when can the ceremony start? And if they eat on the way, how will they concentrate on the journey? And again, what time will they reach at kalamba? We want the cattle to move nicely without problems and hesitation. That is why this observance is critical for us (Interview with cattle owner 6: February, 2018).

Another cattle owner added his sentiments in the following excerpt:

If you do not adhere to this taboo, the cattle will be hesitant to move. They will concentrate on grazing and this can cause a lot of difficulties on the way (Interview with cattle owner 1: February, 2018).

(viii) Eating Cassava Leaves.

During FGD with cattle herders, the participants explained that despite the fact that cassava leaves (*shombo*) were among vegetables eaten by many people in the area, it was a taboo for cattle owners to eat the vegetable. The participants disclosed that the restriction is connected with the protection of cattle. All the other participants who took part in the study attested to this fact. One elderly cattle owner revealed that adhering to this taboo was a requirement for every cattle owner. The following was his narration:

Shombo (cassava leaves) is neither eaten nor allowed to even enter our homes. It is a taboo even to allow anyone to bring it in the house. The taboo is connected with lightening (lihalimu). Disregarding this taboo attracts lightening to strike the cattle any time even on the day of the ceremony. It is therefore, a serious taboo (Interview with cattle owner 2: February, 2018).

. One FGD participant indicated that:

Even a plate that was used for shombo is not supposed to enter the house of a cattle owner, as doing so has serious consequences on the cattle and the owner (Interview with boy 3: February, 2018).

(ix) **Eating Fish with Teeth and Fish without Scales**

With regard to the types of fish that have teeth as well as those that do not have scales, one cattle owner revealed that it was forbidden for cattle owners to eat those types of fish. Fish without scales include those fish with local names such as 'ndombe', 'singongi', 'lubango', 'mbundu' and 'linyonga'. These fish types are said to be symbolic of the hippo, snakes and other water creatures. The cattle owner said:

If you eat any of these fish types, you are inviting these water creatures to attack your cattle. Eating such fish also renders the protective medicines ineffective. Once this happens, you become vulnerable to all attacks (Interview with cattle owner 5: February, 2018).

During FGD with cattle herders, one of the participants indicated that the types of fish that have both the scales and the teeth are also not eaten. He disclosed that they include fish that are locally known as 'ngweshi', 'milumesi' and 'ñwelele'. The participant added that:

Fish with teeth is symbolic of the dangerous water beasts such as crocodiles (likwena). If a cattle owner eats any of them, he invites crocodiles to merciless attack his cattle (Interview with boy 2: February, 2018).

4.3.2.2 Taboos Observed during the Ceremony

Findings gathered from all participants indicated that taboos observed during the ceremony include the taboo on; pregnancy, doing house chores on the morning of the ceremony, touching or crossing a cattle owner's paddling stick, touching a cattle owner's medicinal necklace, shaking of hands as well as looking back or returning to the house once the ceremony was signalled.

(i) **Pregnancy Taboo**

This particular taboo applies to all pregnant women. All women participants attested to the fact that the restriction applied to all pregnant women regardless of the stage at which the pregnancy was. One female cattle owner disclosed that it is a taboo for women in such a condition to stand or move in front of cattle during the ceremony. Further, the cattle owner added that the taboo also applied to men. She explained that men who are responsible for a pregnancy whether in marriage or outside marriage are not allowed to move in front of cattle during the ceremony. In an interview, another female cattle owner said that:

If a man responsible for a pregnancy walks or runs in front of the cattle, the animals will experience discomfort and heaviness in a similar manner that a pregnant woman experiences discomfort and heaviness. This can be very dangerous for the cattle since much of their journey is in the water. They can fail to swim properly and this can result in drowning (Interview with cattle owner 6: February, 2018).

In making comments on the pregnancy taboo, one of the women participants explained that the pregnancy taboo also applied to the young men who play the *namalwa* (special ceremonial drum) during the ceremony. She pointed out that:

*Even if they had observed the sex taboo in the night, they cannot move in front of the cattle to play the *namalwa* if they have impregnated a girl. If they do that, the cattle will have the same inability to swim. As such, they too are prohibited from playing the *namalwa* or running in front of the cattle during the ceremony (Interview with woman 1: February, 2018).*

(ii) Doing House Chores on the Morning of the Ceremony

On the morning of the ceremony, it is a taboo to do any house chores. People do not do any work until the cattle are handed over to caretakers. The participants were all of the view that this particular act was in accordance with the principles of observing the day. On this day, cattle owners do not sweep inside or outside their houses. This also applies to their neighbours in the village. They too are required to observe this taboo. One woman cattle owner put it this way:

The pushing away of the dirt when sweeping symbolises the chasing away of the riches (cattle). We do not want to chase our precious possession away. When we are sweeping, we always heap the dirt in one place, doing that on this day is dangerous. The animals will do the same. They will heap themselves together on the river. That is very dangerous, it can lead to a number of them drowning. When people sweep, they always throw away the dirt. Doing that on this day symbolises the throwing away of the cattle. No one wants to do that. These animals help us in many things. So, we follow the taboo because we love our cattle (Interview with cattle owner 4: February, 2018).

In her support of the observance of this taboo, another female cattle owner emphasised the need to adhere to the taboo strictly. During the interview, she explained that:

When animals are going, we do not sweep. We do not want to sweep our possessions. But even more importantly, the dust that is raised during the sweeping makes the cattle not to see clearly when moving. They begin to move in circles in the water. When this happens, some can even die. This is not good for them. That is why we observe this instruction (Interview with cattle owner 5: February, 2018).

Another woman participant observed that adhering to the taboo of not sweeping was important for the safety of cattle. She added that failure to do so had bad consequences on the animals:

When you sweep, you are sweeping them on their backs. You cause them to fail to swim properly. The same way that a grass broom shakes when you are sweeping is the same way that the cattle will be shaking as they cross the river. They will fail to swim properly and to cross the river. No one wants to see that on this day (Interview with woman 3: February, 2018).

Other house chores that are not performed on the day of the ceremony include the spreading of beds, washing of dishes, digging, weeding or doing any other work at the fields. During FGD with cattle herders, the participants indicated that on this day, it is a taboo to perform any of these chores. They added that people performed these chores after the return of the cattle owners from *Kalamba* where they hand over cattle to the temporal caretakers. The cattle herders further disclosed that in the case of family members, taking a bath is also prohibited until the animals were handed over. One of the participants put it as follows:

When you are spreading your bed, you start by heaping beddings in one place. The heaping of beddings together in one place is symbolic of what can happen to the cattle. They heap themselves together at the river, restricting their movement hence, increasing the possibility of drowning (Interview with boy 3: February, 2018).

One of the village headmen also added his views on the need to adhere to this taboo. He observed that as long as one participated in the ceremony, they were part of the taboo. They were expected to adhere to it completely. He pointed out that on this day, no one picks a hoe to go and dig at a field. It is a taboo to do so. He gave his sentiments in the following excerpt:

When you lift a hoe to dig, it is symbolic of hitting a cow. On that day, it is dangerous for cattle. We don't want to do anything that would endanger them. We have to follow all instructions. No one gets a hoe to go to the field in the village. If you do that, you will be taken to be a witch because only witches want to bring harm to others. When you do that, bad things happen to the animals. They get attacked by dangerous creatures resulting in their death (Interview with Headman 2: February, 2018).

(iii) Touching or Crossing a Cattle Owner's Paddling Stick

Furthermore, there is another taboo regarding the special paddling stick (*Silabo sa mulyani*) which a cattle owner uses to paddle during the *kulaala* rituals both at the river

and big swamps. One female cattle owner disclosed that it is a taboo for women to touch the paddling stick. She added that:

We are forbidden to touch the paddling stick due to the uncleanness emanating from experiences of our menses (monthly periods). It does not matter whether you are a wife or daughter to the cattle owner. The taboo is for all women (Interview with cattle owner 4: February, 2018).

Another cattle owner further indicated that:

It is a taboo for that silabo to be touched by any other person other than the cattle owner and his helpers (batusi), who have been given the privilege of having knowledge of the type of medicine being used (mulyani wa liñetana). Even male relatives or other cattle owners are tabooed to do so (Interview with cattle owner 1: February, 2018).

Further, the cattle owner pointed out that male relatives could only be freed from this taboo if they became helpers (*batusi*) and went through the process of acquiring knowledge of the particular medicine type (*mulyani wa liñetana*) used.

One elderly cattle owner reiterated that:

If touched, its effectiveness during the ceremony is compromised as the 'kuolela' medicine added to it during the kuolela ritual the night before the ceremony, is rendered ineffective. The paddling stick (silabo) is made to undergo the ritual for it to have the same protective power as the medicinal necklace (Interview with cattle owner 2: February, 2018).

Another cattle owner indicated that:

Because a particular type of medicine (mulyani wa liñetana) is added to this 'silabo' in preparation for the ceremony, it is therefore, not lent or shared among cattle owners. Doing so would result into the mixing of the different medicines. Such mixing of medicines result in disaster on cattle because medicine powers would fight each other during the ceremony (Interview with cattle owner 3: February, 2018)

In his views on the special paddling stick, one village headman indicated that:

For fear of exposure and being used by unauthorised persons, this silabo is usually hidden and it is only re-surfaced for use during the ceremony. No one borrows it for use on any purpose. The paddling stick (silabo) is very special in that even the owner cannot use it for any other purpose (Interview with headman 1: February, 2018)

(iv) **Touching the Medicinal Necklace**

The study learnt that it is a taboo for women to touch the medicinal necklace (*sifaha sa mulyani* or the *maango a mulyani*). All women participants attested to the fact that this is mainly due to their experiences of the menses (monthly periods). One of the women said that:

It is a taboo for us (women) to touch these articles. Touching them would render the medicine used on them ineffective. It means that some rituals like the kulaala nuka ritual would not be performed. The medicine is so important to the cattle owners that they would not allow anything to limit its effectiveness. As such, they always keep these things safe by hiding them properly (Interview with woman 3: February, 2018).

(v) Shaking of hands is prohibited

One other taboo observed during *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony concerns the shaking of hands when greeting people. One female cattle owner explained that on the day of the ceremony, it is a taboo for a cattle owner to greet anyone by shaking hands. She added that cattle owners gave and received greetings only through the word of mouth. It is a taboo to shake anyone's hand. One elderly cattle owner, (with the agreement of three others), said:

Bad people often use the shaking of hands to cause harm to the cattle through the magical transfer of medicine from their hand to that of a cattle owner during the process of shaking hands. The act results into making a cattle owner's protective medicines ineffective. This would in turn, result into problems leading to massive deaths of cattle (Interview with cattle owner 2: February, 2018).

(vi) Looking back or returning to the house once the ceremony is signalled

All participants emphasised the fact that it is a taboo for cattle owners to look back or return to the house once they had started off from the village. One FGD participant indicated that once a cattle owner sets off in his canoe on the day of the ceremony, it is a taboo for him to look back or return home (*kukutela fahali*) for whichever reason. He further explained that even if he forgot something important, he could not turn to go and get it. The participant added that the only thing a cattle owner could do is to ask someone among his family members to get the item for him.

One of the male cattle owners put it in this way:

If you look back, the cattle will also be looking back once they set off. If you turn to go back home for any reason, the animals will imitate your actions in the water. When the cattle begin to look behind and return where they are coming from, it becomes dangerous as they expose themselves to numerous dangers including stampede and failure to avoid obstacles in the water. This can even cause drowning. Hence, the taboo is adhered to in order to prevent cattle from imitating the act (Interview with cattle owner 3: February, 2018).

4.3.2.3 Taboos Observed after the Ceremony

All participants were in agreement of the fact that after the ceremony, there are taboos observed by cattle owners and the community. One female cattle owner indicated that the taboos were meant to continue safeguarding the lives of the cattle. Further, the cattle owner

added that in the case of cattle owners, taboos related to food continued to be in effect. They abstained from such foods in an effort to continue safeguarding their animals from water beasts and magical acts of the bad people.

One other female participant disclosed that apart from the general taboos observed by all cattle owners, cattle owners also observed specific taboos in line with the type of medicine they use during the ceremony. She explained that the measure was taken to enhance the safety and protection of their cattle. The participant further indicated that community members also adhered to a few taboos such as the avoidance of washing pots at any water body. Another woman participant added that the taboo was in effect throughout the year. As already alluded to, all taboos were observed for the interest of the cattle.

The taboo of women not passing in front of cattle is also observed throughout the year. One female participant explained that this was for the same effect of their menses (monthly periods). She added that women also avoided touching the medicinal paddling stick (*silabo*) as well as the medicinal necklaces even if they were married to a cattle owner. They maintained the taboo for the safety of the cattle.

4.3.3 Beliefs associated with *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* Ceremony

Kuomboka Kwa likomu is associated with beliefs too numerous to mention. Among them, four prominent ones have been highlighted. These include belief in ancestors' power to influence the ceremony, belief in the powerful effect of the protective medicine, belief in the devastating effect of water beasts as well as the belief in magic performed by bad people. All participants attested to the existence of numerous beliefs connected with the ceremony.

4.3.3.1 Belief in Ancestors' power to influence the Ceremony

Belief in ancestors' power to influence the ceremony exists among the people. The participants indicated that ancestors (*balimu*) have power to influence the ceremony positively or negatively. One village headman pointed out that the belief was so strong that it compelled the people to earnestly seek the ancestors' intervention throughout the ceremony. The headman explained that:

Balimu have the ability to cause people to be willing to help us during the ceremony. When you honour them by asking them to come and participate in the ceremony, you will find that everything will go on very well from the preparation

period up to the actual day of the ceremony. People will come in numbers to help you. That way, the movement of cattle becomes much easier.

He added that:

Other than persuading the people's hearts to practice the principles of community living, balimu also play the protective role to the people and cattle during the ceremony. If they are not honoured accordingly, they withdraw their protection and this makes the people and cattle vulnerable to merciless attacks by crocodiles and other water beasts (Interview with Headman 2: February, 2018).

Another cattle owner added that:

If you have not honoured them, you will not even be able to collect the medicine. We only manage to collect those medicines with their help. And when the medicine is not there, how can the rituals be performed? Balimu are really important in the success of this ceremony. You cannot successfully move the cattle to the upper land without their involvement (Interview with cattle owner 2: February, 2018).

All the other participants shared the above sentiments. They pointed out that ancestors have power to influence the success of the ceremony. One cattle owner indicated that:

If you do not ask them to intervene in the ceremony, you will find that people will give a lot of excuses. Their hearts will not be moved to come and help you. This is because you have not honoured your parents (balimu). Asking balimu to come and intervene at the start of the preparations brings with it, a lot of success. On the other hand, failure to recognise their importance in the preparation and consequently, the execution of the ceremony, repels the people's willingness to help and creates confusion (Interview with cattle owner 3: February, 2018).

One female cattle owner added her voice on the importance of involving *balimu* in the preparation and execution of *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu*. She disclosed that:

When balimu withdraw their protection, confusion erupts. There can be a heavy downfall, making it difficult for the cattle and the people to see. Other than that, some of the cattle can be swept away by strong currents while others can just drown and disappear mysteriously (Interview with cattle owner 5: February, 2018).

The foregoing views were echoed by all the participants.

4.3.3.2 Belief in the power of protective Medicine

Among the people of Munyama community, there is a strong belief in the power of protective medicines obtained from the forests. The participants indicated that the medicine (charms) was associated and handed down to the living by *balimu*, thereby consolidating indisputable beliefs in their power during the ceremony. People believe that in the absence of these medicines, there can be no ceremony as the medicine is an integral part of it. The participants claimed that all cattle owners in the area make use of these

medicines as they are meant to protect both the people and cattle during the ceremony. They pointed out that in the absence of these medicines, the lives of the people and cattle would be in danger, as they can be exposed to dangerous water beasts and other works of evil people.

One cattle owner explained that since the medicine knowledge originated from their ancestors, the people hold the medicines in high esteem. They attribute the power of their effectiveness to ancestors. All cattle owners indicated that the medicines gave them courage and authority to perform various activities throughout the ceremony. One of the cattle owners put it this way:

I cannot imagine going into the dangerous swamps and river without these medicines on me. These medicines repel water beasts and exorcize evil spirits in the water. When I have my medicinal necklace (maango a mulyani), then I know that am safe (Interview with cattle owner 3: February, 2018).

The participants further attributed the effectiveness of the medicines to a total adherence to taboos related to the ceremony.

The participants disclosed that the protective medicine comprises of different herbs, river reeds and grass. One cattle owner explained that local names of the normally used plants include ‘*isunde*’, ‘*mushakashela*’, ‘*musheshe*’, ‘*mumbwengelenge*’, ‘*situndu banga*’, ‘*mwaha*’, ‘*mama benyalia*’, ‘*lyango momo* and many others. They are, however, mixed in different proportions alongside different incantations as handed down by ancestors. He added that the medicine could be applied on bodies, worn as necklaces, put around the wrist, chewed or just put under the tongue and so on.

4.3.3.3 Belief in devastating effects of Water Beasts

There is a very strong belief in the presence of not only the natural, but also magical water beasts during *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony. One village headman explained that the beasts are very disruptive to the ceremony proceedings and hence, precautions are taken by use of protective medicines. All the participants disclosed that these beasts, which include crocodiles, hippos, snakes and many others aquatic organisms can interfere during the ceremony.

One other village headman indicated that because the beasts reside in water, they attack every foreign object that goes into their territory. He disclosed that this is why cattle has to undergo the *kuolelisa likomu* ritual a night before the ceremony. Further, the headman

added that the medicine used in the ritual has the ability to protect cattle from attacks by water beasts. He concluded that without this protection, the cattle are at great risk.

However, caution was given and one participant said:

People who play magic may use magical water beasts to terrorise cattle and the participants. This is why we do all the protective procedures during this ceremony (Interview with cattle owner 3: February, 2018).

Another cattle owner added that the job to protect people from danger during the ceremony was every cattle owner's responsibility. If people are not protected, they begin to fear to offer help. The following was his verbatim:

If you do not protect your cattle and the people who come to help you, you are just inviting problems to yourself. When crocodiles kill people during 'kuomboka' of your cattle, others will start fearing to come and help you. If people don't come to help you, how will you manage to do all that job alone? This is why we need to protect them because we cannot do that job without the help from others (Interview with cattle owner 1: February, 2018).

4.3.3.4 Belief in Magic Performed by Bad People

Among the people of this community, there is a very strong belief regarding magic performed by bad people. These people live within the community and their acts are dispersed and hated by the larger community. One cattle owner disclosed that their acts cause a lot of fear among the people. He explained that the fear of losing animals through merciless acts of bad people compels cattle owners to pursue various means of protecting themselves and their animals. Further, the cattle owner disclosed that the magic also targeted human beings. He pointed out that:

Once such magic is not neutralised, water beasts such as crocodiles, snakes and the invisible water spirits can attack and kill people during the ceremony. This is why the kuolela ritual is necessary (Interview with cattle owner 3: February, 2018).

One village headman further claimed that the motivation to cause harm to others was as a result of the jealousy and hatred harboured in people's hearts. He added that people who performed such acts take pleasure in seeing others in pain. This was how he put it:

We have people in our community who do not take pleasure in seeing development in other people's lives and households. At times, it is not the poor people but people with many animals. They always feel that others are competing against them. They become jealousy and the only thing they do is to hurt others. Therefore, to counter such attacks, a number of rituals have to be conducted and various protective medicines have to be used (Interview with Headman 2: February, 2018).

In summary, the study has established that bad magic is feared amongst the lozi people of Munyama area and hence, many rituals and charms are conducted and worn respectively, in an effort to defeat it.

4.4 Agreements made between Cattle Owners and Temporal Caretakers

During *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony, agreements are made between cattle owners and temporal caretakers. The agreements precede the handover of cattle. All the participants pointed out that the said agreements centred on the welfare of cattle throughout their stay at the upper land (*Kwa mushitu*). They added that cattle owners take centre stage in explaining issues regarding the general welfare of the animals, which among them, care topped the list. One cattle owner explained the agreements this way:

We agree that extensive care and security of the cattle is foremost. The conditions and regulations for milking the cows are clearly spelt out, specific animals requiring special attention are identified and the remedies given to the caretakers. As for those cows that are breastfeeding two calves, they are individually handed over and finally, the total number of the entire herd of cattle forms part of the handover and agreement (Interview with cattle owner 1: February, 2018).

All the participants stressed that care was the underlying principle that cattle owners looked out for in any caretaker. In emphasising this factor, one cattle owner gave his sentiments in the following except:

We all want a caretaker who can take care of cattle nicely. If you are not sure that he can take care of them nicely, you go there many times to visit and see how the animals are doing (Interview with cattle owner 2: February, 2018).

A cattle owner, whose points of view were generally agreed upon by other cattle owners said:

In the case of novice caretakers, we normally teach them the various types of medicines used for different diseases; we instruct them on how to give injections and the correct quantities for the different age groups, how to detect sick animals as well as how to help a cow having trouble during delivery (Interview with cattle owner 3: February, 2018).

Additionally, all the participants disclosed that to ensure safety for the cattle, cattle owners normally demanded that caretakers slept at a *kraal*. Strict rules are also given to order caretakers never to release any of the cattle to anyone on pretext that such a one had been authorised by the owner. In discussing this aspect, one village headman who was also a cattle owner, expressed his views regarding the security of cattle as follows:

Nowadays with the availability of a wider market, theft cases are on the rise. People, including your own family members can use trickery to steal animals because there is an open and available market. If a caretaker has to release an

animal, there has to be a letter from the owner. In the old days, we used to show a caretaker special marks that will be on the letter if the letter is to be authentic. However, with the coming of the phones, they have made it easy (Interview with Headman 1: February, 2018).

Agreements between cattle owners and caretakers usually ended with the counting of cattle. The participants were in agreement that before the animals are handed over to a caretaker, they are counted. This was to verify whether the number corresponded with the one obtained at the kraal (*mulaka*) before leaving for *kalamba* (the meeting place with the caretakers). One elderly cattle owner added that:

In the old days, cattle owners and caretakers used to break two sets of sticks, each of the cattle was represented by a stick and each one of the parties carried a set. Pregnant cows had their own sticks, which were doubled. At the time of collecting the cattle from the caretakers, the sticks were used to recount the animals (Interview with cattle owner 2: February, 2018).

Further, the cattle owner added that:

However, nowadays we count the cattle together with the caretakers during the hand over and once we have agreed, the cattle owner writes the number of the big animals and the small ones. The total is written down and the owner signs first and then a caretaker also signs (Interview with cattle owner 2: February, 2018).

When asked what else was written in the book during the handover, all cattle pointed out that the date of the ceremony was normally written down and it was followed by a statement indicating whose cattle they were. The place where the animals were coming from was written, the caretaker's name and residence as well as the total number of the cattle received were all written down. One cattle owner added that there was also a provision for the names and signatures of both the cattle owner and the caretaker. He further disclosed that for some families, they also put a provision for two witnesses signing for a cattle owner and a caretaker respectively.

4.5 Changes that have taken place over the years

All the participants who took part in the study were of the view that *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony has undergone several changes over the years. They indicated that among the noticeable changes was the; diminishing of communal *kuomboka Kwa Likomu*, caretaker involvement, women presence in the ceremony, abandonment of the traditional flutes as well as the use of modern musical instruments.

(i) Communal *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu*

Over the years, a number of changes have taken place in *Kuomboka Kwa likomu* ceremony. All the participants captured in the study were of the view that in the past, cattle belonging to the same village used to ‘*omboka*’ together on the same day. When asked how this used to happen, one village headman pointed out that:

As the trend is, in the area, members of the same village are related to each other because of having been descended from the same ancestor. A village just used to have one kraal for a parent and all his children in that particular village (Interview with Headman 1: February, 2018).

The other headman said:

The gradual move away from an extended family system to a nuclear family system has had an impact over time (Interview with Headman 2: February, 2018).

Further, the headman added that:

*This particular parent used to be a father figure for everyone in the village and he had undisputable authority, which gained him respect from all the members. The father figure was in charge of all the affairs of the village including the *kuomboka Kwa likomu* ceremony. Under his supervision, the daily taking care of the cattle was the responsibility of the men and the boys of the village (Interview with headman 2: February, 2018).*

Additionally, the two village headmen were in agreement that the father of the village had a responsibility to teach and transfer the knowledge and wisdom to his children. In so doing, he appointed one of them to perform the task each year while he observed to see if everything was being done accordingly. The headmen stated that this was in an effort to equip each one of them with the knowledge, skill and wisdom related with the ceremony.

Furthermore, all the cattle owners pointed out that because there was only one kraal for cattle, a village used to have only one type of protective medicine for use during the ceremony. One elderly cattle owner added that every member of the village used to participate in the *kuolela* ritual from the village shrine, using the same protective medicine on the same day unlike now, when animals from the same village no longer ‘*omboka*’ together. The cattle owner further explained that one of the major changes that has taken place over the years was that currently, all cattle owners set their own date for *kuomboka* of their cattle. He added that:

Nowadays, cattle owners perform the required rituals individually and use their own medicines in their individual shrines. Major activities involving the ceremony are done more at individual level and the types of medicines and charms used are kept more secret. This knowledge and wisdom flows more within family lines and

the rituals are now personalised within one's lushoko, unlike in the past, where a village would have a communal place for a shrine where rituals used to take place and a common alter where offerings would be made to balimu (Interview with cattle owner 1: February, 2018).

(ii) Caretaker Involvement

One village headman disclosed that one other change that has taken place in the ceremony concerns the involvement of other people (temporal caretakers) to take care of cattle during their stay at the upper land. He explained that:

In the far past when a village used to have one communal kraal and one Kuomboka kwa Likomu ceremony, some of the family members used to 'omboka' together with the cattle while the rest of the family remained briefly to harvest the crops and complete other family responsibilities. Those that remained took part in the ceremony until the animals reached the upper land. They returned to the plain after a day or two to complete other responsibilities. There was no involvement of temporal caretakers in the taking care of the cattle throughout their stay at the upper land. The responsibility to look after the welfare of the cattle remained for the men of the village while the boys took turns to herd the cattle (Interview with Headman 1: February, 2018.)

Furthermore, the headman explained that with the steady increase in both the human and cattle populations, a gradual shift from the extended family system to the nuclear family system began to be noticeable. He added that this was evidenced by situations where those who owned cattle began to erect their own kraals and conduct *Kuomboka* of their own cattle. Further, the headman pointed out that with this state of affairs, communal kraals became uncommon and the conducting of communal *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* gave way to the current individual holding of the ceremony.

In adding his views on the matter, one elderly cattle owner agreed with the headman's views and added that in the early stages of this development, temporal caretakers were still not involved. He elucidated that their involvement came much later.

In clarifying how the temporal caretakers got involved in taking care of cattle at the upper land, one other village headman noted that:

When the individual erecting of kraals as well as the individual holding of Kuomboka Kwa Likomu were fully fledged, cattle owners began to be overwhelmed by the heavy responsibility of taking care of their cattle throughout the year. The responsibility became too much compared to when the larger family was involved. This resulted in the involvement of other people (temporal caretakers) to help give relief to the cattle owners (Interview with Headman 2: February, 2018).

One other village headman added that:

Two other aspects were at play in the incorporation of the caretakers in the ceremony. The first was the economic demand emanating from the educational needs of the families. Secondly, the availability of plenty of man power at the upper land also played an important role. (Interview with Headman 1: February, 2018).

(iii) Women presence in the Ceremony

With regard to the changes involving women participation in the ceremony, one of the village headmen revealed that the presence of women in the ceremony was one of the changes that had taken place over the years. He disclosed that in the past, women never used to escort cattle up to the Luanginga River or 'kalamba' as the case may be now. His explanation was that:

In the far past, women never even used to reach at a kraal on the day of the ceremony. It was a taboo for them to do that. They just used to shout for joy and ululate at the edge of a village (Kwa Mandamino) when the boys and the men left for the kraal (mulaka) in the canoes. It was unheard off for a woman to go to a kraal or accompany the cattle to kalamba (Interview with Headman 2: February, 2018).

Figure 4.8 showing women involvement in the ceremony.



Figure 4.8. Women seeing off their cattle at the kraal. (Field Data, 2018)

The headman added that:

However, with the gradual shift from the communal system of looking after cattle to a more individualised system where each family took care of their own cattle, women stated reaching at a kraal to see their cattle off, for the upper land. This development helped to add more beauty to the ceremony as the women joyfully celebrated the animals' skill to run and swim. However, in the initial stages of this

new development, the women's role ended at the kraal when the cattle finally left for the upper land (Interview with Headman 2: February, 2018).

When asked how the women's participation extended to the Luanginga River as well as at Kalamba (meeting place with caretakers), the headman had this to say:

With the passing of time, the women's presence in the ceremony extended to the Luanginga River where they would witness the animals crossing river. In their celebrations, they made joyful ululations, praised the men and boys for their skills in helping the cattle and they also sang praises in honour of cattle owners. Later, the women started going as far as kalamba if they so wished. Nothing restricted them (Interview with Headman 2: February, 2018).

In giving her views on the women's presence in the ceremony, one female cattle owner explained that currently there was no restriction preventing women from reaching as far as the handover site. She pointed out that:

Currently, there is no restriction on the women, they can go as far as they desire as long as they are able to paddle their own canoes. There is no taboo restricting them from fully participating in the ceremony. The taboos observed on the day of the ceremony only regulate their conduct towards balimu and the animals. They now freely take part in the celebrations. The only thing they cannot do is to perform the ceremony rituals. That responsibility is strictly for the men (Interview with cattle owner 5: February, 2018)

(iv) Abandonment of the Traditional Flutes (*lipala*)

One of the village headmen interviewed disclosed that one of the changes that has occurred in the ceremony over the years concerns the abandonment of the use of traditional flutes (*lipala*). The participants confirmed that the traditional flutes were no longer in use during *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony.

Figure 4.9 shows a canoe carrying Namalwa players (playing the Namalwa)



Figure: 4.9. Namalwa being played to guide the cattle. (Field Data, 2018)

One of the headmen pointed out that:

In the past, the special traditional drum (namalwa) and the modern sports whistles being used in the ceremony today, were not used. Instead, the 'vuvuzela like' flutes, which were made of wood, were used to direct the cattle where to go. They were called 'lipala'. These 'whistle like' musical instruments, were used during preparations and on the ceremony day. Cattle owners played them to communicate the departure of the cattle to the upper land. With the passing of time, people began to use the namalwa as well as the modern sports whistles in place of lipala (Interview with Headman 1: February, 2018).

(v) The use of Modern Musical Instruments

Kuomboka Kwa Likomu ceremony has undergone a lot of changes over the years. The participants affirmed that over the years, the ceremony has seen the incorporation of the modern day musical instruments, which were unheard of in the past. One of the cattle owners explained that:

In the past, people only made use of the traditional means of entertaining themselves throughout the ceremony. They entertained themselves through the making of joyful noises, ululations and singing throughout the ceremony. When they returned from kalamba, they entertained themselves using traditional xylophones 'lilimba' and drums 'milupa'. Celebrations were characterised by traditional dances and the singing of traditional songs. This is no longer the case. A number of changes have taken place. Many of the people have stopped using 'lilimba' and 'milupa' to entertain themselves during this ceremony. Instead, many of the people have resorted to using radios with speaker systems loud enough to be heard at a distance (Interview with cattle owner 1: February, 2018).

Another cattle owner added that one other change concerns the carrying and playing of the musical equipment in the canoes throughout the journey. He disclosed that:

This is a new trend. In the past, the xylophones (lilimba) and the traditional drums (milupa) were not carried in canoes during the ceremony. They were only used at the village when people came back from kalamba. Today, radios and speakers are carried along in the canoes and modern Silozi songs, which are common in the province, are played. Flash discs, solar panels and inventors that were not known in the past, are the ones being used to provide the people's favourite music (Interview with cattle owner 2: February, 2018).

In addition to the changes relating to the instruments used for entertainment during the ceremony, the participants indicated that there has also been a change regarding the beverages prepared during the ceremony. One female cattle owner explained that:

In the past, there was only one type of beverage that was carried and drank along the way. This was the (ilya). Beer was not carried along in the canoes. It was drank at the village after the completion of the mission of taking the cattle to kalamba, but today, beer is carried along in the canoes. The only good thing is that just like any other food, it is only drank after the cattle have crossed the Luanginga River. (Interview with cattle owner 6: February, 2018).

Regarding the types of beer provided, one woman participant indicated that:

There has also been changes in the types of beer provided during the ceremony. The locally made (sebene) was the only type of beer provided during the ceremony in the past. With the passing of time, the locally made wine, which is commonly known as 'waine' was also introduced (Interview with woman 4: February, 2018).

4.5 Summary

This chapter presented findings of the study, which aimed at examining the Organisational and Religious Practices of *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* Ceremony. The findings revealed, among other things, that the organisation of the ceremony involves not only cattle owners and their immediate families, but also the community at large. The findings also revealed that many religious practices take place before, during and after the ceremony. Other findings showed that there were agreements made between cattle owners and the temporal caretakers. The findings further indicated that the ceremony had undergone changes over the years. In the next chapter, the findings are discussed in relation with other scholars' works.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Overview

The previous chapter presented findings to the study. This chapter discusses the findings of the study in relation to works by other scholars. The purpose of this study was to examine the Organisational and Religious Practices of *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* Ceremony. To ensure that there was coherence in the way the findings were discussed; four themes that are a reflection of the objectives were followed. These included Organisation of *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu*, Religious Practices in *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu*, Agreements made between Cattle owners and temporal Caretakers as well as Changes that have taken place over the years.

The revelations of the current study seemed to indicate that perceptions concerning *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony were similar. Although all the four categories of participants had their own way of putting it, they seemed to have one thing in common that *balimu* are the key players in the ceremony, and that its organisation involved participation of the entire community. While there were four categories of participants used in this research, the findings of the study were not discussed separately. Instead, they were mixed in order to have a comprehensive as well as a holistic report. By mixing the findings, the triangulation technique was used to enhance credibility and legitimacy of the findings. The next section discusses the theme on how *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony is organised.

5.2 Organisation of *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* Ceremony

The study established that the ancestors (*balimu*) were key players in the organisation and successful holding of *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony because without their involvement, the ceremony could not take place. This is not unusual as Parrinder (1962:24) affirmed that, 'All Africans believe in the ancestors, as ever-living and watchful'. Furthermore, Parrinder (1962) stated that the departed are not far away, and they are believed to be watching over their families like a 'cloud of witnesses'. He further adds that everything that concerns the family are of interest to them since they are its elders. Even Mbiti (1969:25) showed that the people do all they can to avoid forgetting the ancestors because it is feared that doing so brings misfortune to them. Idowu (1973) also endorsed the belief that the ancestors are regarded still as heads and part of the families or communities to which they belonged while they were living human beings. This strong

connection of the living to the ancestors was observed during the preparation of *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony.

Various findings in the study were underpinned by the Structural Functionalism Theory (SFT), as outlined in the theoretical framework. The theory hinges on four main elements namely; social cohesion, social inequality, interrelatedness and interdependence as well as social equilibrium. In the current study, these elements helped to explain the study findings.

The study showed that the living depends largely on ancestors for the success of the ceremony, and that the ancestors require that the living keep the ancestral relationships alive and harmonious. According to Parrinder (1962), it is an essential task of the living to keep ancestors in good humour. The concept of interdependence, as exemplified in the SFT, is clearly meant for mutual benefit. Throughout the ceremony organisation and consequently its execution, interdependence took a centre stage. It was found that interdependence not only occurred between the living and ancestors, but also between men to men.

As a result of the interdependence highlighted above, and the inclination people hold towards the ancestors' involvement in their families, three deep rooted beliefs regarding their involvement in the ceremony were isolated from the study. Firstly, the people believe that without the involvement of ancestors, the task of collecting traditional medicine would fail. This agrees with Bourdillon (1990) who pointed out that if the wishes of ancestors were flouted, the descendants' well-being was at risk. In this case, it would be impossible for a cattle owner to locate the medicine in the forest and yet, the success of the ceremony relied heavily on its use in securing protection of both the cattle and people during the ceremony.

Secondly, if the ancestors were side-lined, mobilisation of community members would be difficult to achieve. The ancestors are believed to have both a persuasive and a dissuasive effect on the people. So, if they are ignored, their dissuasive effect results into the peoples' unwillingness to participate in the ceremony. As the findings of the study showed, a cattle owner undertakes an intercessory ritual (*Kupailela*) in which he appeals to ancestors to intervene in all aspects, including the persuading of community members to participate in the ceremony. The foregoing actions are in line with Magesa's (1997:67) findings that the ancestors were believed to be very much active in the universe under various forms,

effecting good or bad experiences that are dependent on the behaviour of the living. The intercessory ritual was then followed by an announcement by a cattle owner, which concerned the impending movement of cattle to the upper land. This took place the night before the ceremony. The focus, here again, was to remind the people to honour the ancestors' inspiration towards attending the ceremony. Clearly, this belief placed ancestors in an indispensable position of not just community mobilisation, but also in overseeing the success of the ceremony.

Based on the foregoing, the study witnessed a large number of friends and neighbours from both near and far off areas, putting aside their personal assignments in order to offer support and solidarity. In this respect, the ceremony promoted co-operation and unity of purpose among community members. The figure below shows community members offering support.

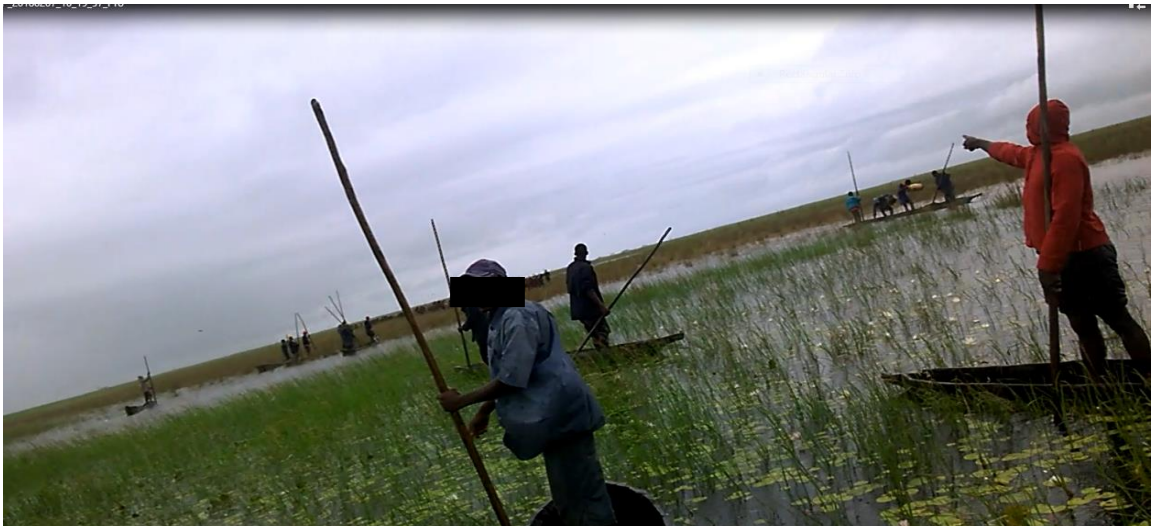


Figure 5.1. Community members offering support. (Field Data, 2018)

Mbiti (1969: 106) gathered what characterises the African view of man living in a traditional society, and he noted that in traditional life, the individual does not and cannot exist alone except corporately, and that he owes his existence to other people, for he is simply part of the whole. He further observed that because of the foregoing, the individual can only say 'I am, because we are, and since we are, therefore I am'.

From the findings, Figure 5.2 shows part of the community that came to offer support. It extends the illustrations offered in figure 5.1. The figure provides a pictorial view about how community members position themselves in risky floods, at a given instance, to aid in the driving of cattle. This lining up strategy could not be attained without community participation. Like Mbiti acknowledged, the community members displayed the attitude

of working together. Such an attitude would clearly point to the truth of the saying that, the individual does not and cannot exist alone except corporately, and that he owes his existence to other people. Additionally, it was clear from the interview responses, that the high turnout of the community members was credited to their ancestors and the people's longing to honour them. It is believed that it was an honour to the ancestors, for someone to be part and parcel of the ceremony, which they started and gave to their descendants for continuity.



Figure 5.2. Community involvement in the ceremony. (Field Data, 2018)

As already alluded to, a variety of community support was offered. In Figure 5.3 below, another form of community support was provided during the ceremony. For instance, newly born calves and sick cattle, were carried in canoes to the upper land due to the strenuous nature of the journey.



Figure 5.3 Calf being carried in a canoe during the ceremony. (Field Data, 2018)

This was one other area of support that was found to be very demanding on the part of the paddlers. Equally, it explained the intensity of community mobilisation that was observed in the preparation stage of the ceremony. Magesa's (1997: 77) assertion that 'To be a human being, to be a moral, ethical person, it is not possible to live in isolation', found real life application in this ceremony. Based on its many demands, it was clear, therefore, that *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony will remain a strong unifying factor among the people of Munyama Area.

From their self-willed actions and the ease with which the community members distributed themselves to different roles, it was clear that they shared the same belief system, moral values and the traditions surrounding the ceremony. Clearly, the focus of the ceremony participants was to attain a successful movement of cattle across the flooded plains. Like the Structural Functionalism Theory (SFT) equates a human society to a human body whose various organs work together to keep the body functioning, various members of the community worked together in the organisation and consequently, the successful holding of the ceremony. The two are deeply comparable. The levels of community participation and the efficacy with which the ceremony participants carried out the various roles, point to the values they share, of promoting solidarity and stability of their society. The foregoing discussion brings to the fore, the concept of social cohesion, as held by the SFT. With this practice then, the people of Munyama Area will continue to experience the much aspired for, collaborative life.

Another aspect of interest the study found was the ceremony's demand on family members to achieve peace before the ceremony occurred. One of the few areas that a cattle owner revisited the night before they set off for the upper land, was a confirmation of the attainment of peace in the family. This deep concern about attaining peace is indicative of how peace is believed to be paramount in the success of the ceremony. Peace is seen as a pre-requisite to pleasing the ancestors, avoidance of confusion among a herd of cattle as well as in the prevention of effects of magic performed by bad people (witches). Peace, according to Bourdillon (1990:40), was regarded as an important value which contributed to the wellbeing of a community. He pointed out that it included the removal of grudges and all that might result in conflict. The study established that there is a belief that, in the absence of peace, the cattle is able to see hostilities in the people involved, and will equally turn against each other whilst wading through the floods. Inevitably, as it is held among the people of Munyama, if such a thing was to happen, death of cattle would occur. To some extent, this belief, along with the fears of what might happen, promotes peace seeking among family members.

In Figure 5.4 below, the picture shows four of the cattle that were involved in moving in circles, at the same point. From the video recording, the act took close to three minutes, a time span sufficient to cause drowning.



Figure 5.4. A critical incident of cattle moving in circles. (Field Data, 2018)

Traditionally, and in line with beliefs held in this ceremony, the study participants pointed the occurrence to a possibility of the presence of unresolved family issues. This incident strengthened the belief that peace making before embarking on the journey was indispensable for the safety of the cattle. However, no drowning or death of cattle occurred at this particular incident, as the cattle owner acted swiftly to address the situation. Interestingly, the cattle owner made a swift plea to ancestors, in which he acknowledged flouting of the ancestors' wishes and asked them to pardon the family. Furthermore, he addressed and urged the cattle to forge ahead as all the issues were resolved. Thereafter, it was observed that the herd of cattle in question, kept close to each other without a repeat of the earlier incident.

The scenario discussed above and the cattle owner's response seems to be in line with Magesa's (1997:78) assertion that 'the ancestors make their will known by visiting calamities on their descendants, catching their attention, and forcing them to make an appropriate reply. This reply is usually made through prayers and rituals meant to restore human and cosmic solidarity'. The cattle owners' immediate plea to ancestors about the situation, fitted very well into Magesa's assertion. Equally, the non-occurrence of any calamity after the plea, was evidence enough to suggest that, it is in the nature of the ancestors to pardon, guide and do the best for their descendants.

Away from the discussion on the critical incident above, the study's findings regarding the anticipated loss of cattle, arising from failure to secure peace, linked closely with what Mbiti (1969:81) referred to, when he asserted that failure to please the ancestors was ultimately an offence against them, since they act as the invisible police of the family. Equally, Magesa (1997:80) hold that, 'To strain the descendant-ancestor relationship was to threaten life at its very core'. He adds that if the ancestors are unhappy about the attitude of their descendants, they make this known and often employ painful means against those who misbehave (p80). Like in Magesa's (1997:80) findings, cattle owners feared that the ancestors could mete out several calamities which included the death of cattle, confusion in the movement of both the people and cattle, the presence of heavy rains, community shunning of the ceremony as well as water beasts attacks on cattle and ceremony participants.

The foregoing demand for peace before commencement of the ceremony is not peculiar to this ceremony alone, but a common practice among African traditional societies. Bourdillon (1990:40) asserted that, 'many religious rituals include attempts to restore

peaceful and harmonious relations in a divided community'. He adds that it is a common feature of religious rituals that squabbles should be formally put aside before the rites can effectively be performed. Further, Bourdillon (1990) cited an example of the Taita of Kenya (pg.41), who believe that angry hearts, secret grudges harboured and fostered, were dangerous to their well-being and caused illness and affliction. He added that other members of the Taita community believe that the anger goes to the spirits of the dead, who punish those who cause the anger. In the current study, participants pointed out that dire consequences were anticipated if peace was not pursued. Therefore, the concept of peace seeking as a pre-requisite to the successful holding of traditional ceremonies runs across various African traditional communities.

The foregoing is one way in which communities strive to achieve equilibrium as outlined by the SFT. The theory views society as constantly striving to be in a state of equilibrium (<https://en.m.wikibooks.org>). As observed in the findings, efforts to attain peace and strides made during the organisation of *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony, were as a result of the shared values and beliefs held regarding the ceremony. Arising from this, the community enjoyed an appreciable degree of stability.

The third deep rooted belief about what would occur if the ancestors are not involved, revolves around failure for herds of cattle to swim across the flooded plain. This is because the ancestors would not be there to guide the cattle and they would have relinquished their protective role. Once this contrary action was taken, benefits outlined by Magesa (1997), that the ancestors are the protectors of the society and society's possessions, would be lost. Because of the foregoing, the cattle would be extremely vulnerable to attacks and killings by water beasts as well as death from other unforeseeable circumstances.

Prioritizing engagement with ancestors in the organisation of the ceremony was in itself, a clear manifestation of the people's inability to do anything without the help of the departed. The inclinations towards consulting ancestors and the seriousness their guidance was accorded, showed that they are considered as elders of the society. This study's findings agree with Kopytoff, as quoted by Magesa (1997), that:

Ancestors are perceived in the same way as the living elders of the society as far as the experience of kinship and communion is concerned (Magesa, 1997:78).

Equally, success of the ceremony was attributed to the power of their influence on situations. Earlier, Parrinder (1962:57) made similar findings. He asserted that consultations are made to ancestors on the concerns of the living. In the preparation of the

ceremony, the organisers acknowledged standing higher chances of failure if they did not give priority to seeking blessings and guidance of the ancestors. As Mbiti (1969:104) acknowledged, the ceremony organisers' dependence on ancestors was based on their understanding that as surviving members, they must not forget the departed, as doing so would invite misfortune to strike them. The confidence of finding help that cattle owners showed lied in their belief and understanding, as Parrinder (1962:57) puts it, that ancestors find interest in the affairs of the living and they keep a close watch on their lives.

This section has seen that the steps taken in the organisation of the ceremony pointed to the participants' belief that departed family members, who die as parents, continue their earthly functions as parents and elders of families. Their actions are in line with Idowu's (1973: 184) idea that, 'Ancestors remain, therefore, spiritual super-intendants of family affairs and continue to bear their titles of relationship like 'father' or 'mother'. As it has been demonstrated in the findings, the ancestors are the principle foundation without which, the ceremony cannot take place. The study concludes, then, that the ancestors continue to influence *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony. The study now turns to the religious practices namely rituals, taboos and beliefs.

5.3 Religious practices in *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony

The study found that the entire ceremony is punctuated with the performance of ten rituals, observance of more than 17 taboos and upholding of four major beliefs. The rituals are discussed first, followed by taboos and finally beliefs.

5.3.1 Rituals

The study found that five rituals namely; *kupailela, kuolelisa likomu, kuolela, kukwalula nzila and kuambelela* are performed during preparations for the ceremony while five others which include; the *kufundula likomu, kusileleza muña mulaka, kuambulula, kulaala* as well as the *kulaala nuka* are performed during the ceremony. The frequency and number of rituals performed, shows their significance in *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony. Indirectly, the frequency and number of rituals performed in this ceremony suggests the presence of many dangers to both people and cattle. This view is supported by Bleak and Frederick (1998), who assert that rituals occur primarily under conditions of perceived importance, uncertainty or where there is an element of chance. In this ceremony, as already alluded to, families are filled with anxieties, fears, and uncertainties about the safety of their cattle, with which they have deep emotional attachment.

Each of the seventeen participants agreed that rituals remain a key component of the ceremony. They pointed out that rituals made the ceremony to be what it is. Furthermore, views gathered from the village headman alluded to the fact that without rituals, the ceremony could not even take place.

It should be highlighted here that, a ritual is a set form of carrying out a religious action or ceremony (Mbiti, 1991). Aylward Shorter as quoted by Magesa (1997: 79), described a religious ritual as an appeal to spiritual beings that have the power to influence events. This seemed to have been understood by the study participants, considering the finding in which the village headman declared that:

'Every important thing has procedures to be followed.... If any of these procedures is ignored, people will experience problems.'

When the foregoing declaration from the headmen was analysed, it tended to fit into Mbiti's (1991:131) way of seeing a ritual, as a set form of carrying out a religious action or ceremony. The importance attached to the ceremony was visible in the peoples' insistence to follow the ritual procedures. Furthermore, omitting ritual procedures attracted painful experiences. To prevent ritual performers and attendants from breaking these procedures, strong taboos are attached to the rituals. In this way, rituals were used as deterrents, as means to maintain the existing, good *status quo* that society or an individual may be enjoying.

The study findings gathered from the headman compared the unavoidable nature of rituals to life, and pointed to the fact that ignoring them, was like removing life from a person and expecting them to walk. In other words, if rituals were abandoned, the ceremony would cease to exist. The foregoing findings are in conformity with Mbiti's (1991:131) assertion that 'Rituals are significant in that they generate a sense of certainty and familiarity'. It is clear that rituals are heavily upheld in this ceremony. They are part of the tradition whose continuity was encouraged. The foregoing belief agrees with Mbiti's (1991) view that rituals are seen as a way of providing continuity and unity among those who perform or attend them. Mbiti (1991) further asserted that through the ritual action and word, people feel able to exercise a certain amount of control over the invisible world and forces of nature. From the SFT stand point, rituals contribute to accelerating social cohesion and hence, the attainment of social stability (equilibrium).

As observed from the importance attached to the rituals, their place and significance in the ceremony was indisputable. Firstly, rituals satisfied the desire for the living to

communicate with their ancestors. From Mbiti's (1991:131) position, rituals resonates around the need of communicating something of religious significance, through word, symbol and action to the ancestors, which if it was not done, it was taken to be a dishonouring act. The belief that the ancestors would inflict painful circumstances if they were not communicated to, gave rise to strong sentiments such as:

'You cannot even think of taking the cattle out of the floods, without performing the necessary rituals'.

Basically, the foregoing sentiments hinged on the belief which Magesa (1997:67) appropriately raised when he stated that, 'ancestors were very much active in the universe under various forms, effecting good or bad experiences that were dependent on the behaviour of the living'. In addition to the aforementioned, Magesa (1997:211) pointed out that ancestral rituals act not only to 'repair' wrongs that have been committed and that call down calamities and afflictions, but they also go beyond the needs of the living to restore the *status quo ante*.

This discussion takes us to look at each of the rituals as gathered from the study, starting with those which are performed before the actual day of the ceremony. Firstly, the *kupaillela* ritual was discussed.

(i) *Kupaillela* Ritual

Kupaillela, which literally means pleading for the ancestors' intervention, was the first ritual performed at the start of preparations for the ceremony. Cattle owners asked and pleaded with ancestors for guidance and all manner of intervention in the ceremony. As earlier noted from Magesa's (1997) assertion that the ancestors are active in the universe to effect experiences which depend on the behaviour of the living, in recognition of this, cattle owners made serious efforts to recognise them first, at the start of the preparation. In doing that, the ancestors were being honoured. An extract from a cattle owner's narrative read:

The first thing we do is to ask our dead parents (balimu) ...

This first step taken by cattle owners is not surprising considering the fact that ancestors, according to Idowu's (1973: 184), are regarded still as heads and part of the families or communities to which they belonged while they were living human beings. Secondly, Mbiti's (1969: 25) findings that, 'African religious activities are chiefly focused upon the relationship between human beings and the departed...' may have been in effect. Similarly, Idowu (1973:184) showed that the ancestors' help grows infinitely enhanced

and continues to be actively effective. Even Parrinder (1962:57) hinted on the African's view of ancestors when he said that for Africans, life from moment to moment has no meaning at all, apart from ancestral presence and ancestral power. The act of turning to the ancestors first, at the start of preparations, may well be explained by the foregoing aspects. In the second part of the narrative, the participant shared information about the ancestors' intervention in the tasks that lay ahead, by saying:

...asked... for their intervention in the process of going to collect traditional medicines from the forest.

The findings gathered from cattle owners showed that ancestors had the ability to give guidance to the exact locations where specific medicinal herbs and trees were found. Consulting them therefore, gave success to the people's mission. The medicine collected with the ancestors' assistance, was used in the performance of subsequent rituals such as the *Kuolelisa Likomu*, *Kuolela*, *Kuambelela*, *Kusileleza muña mulaka*, and the *Kulaala nuka rituals*.

The belief in the use of traditional medicine was that, its power would counteract the intended evil and keep the people and cattle safe. It is acknowledged that the use of traditional medicine runs across traditional religious practices. Mbiti (1969: 198) states that the use of charms, amulets, medicines drunk or rubbed into the body, articles on the roof, knots and many other visible and invisible precautions are used in all communities for seriously religious intentions, to secure a feeling of safety, protection and assurance. Even Idowu (1973: 200) showed that the invocation of ancestors in connection with the practice of traditional medicine was a common feature in many parts of Africa. *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu's* heavy reliance on traditional medicine just confirms both Mbiti and Idowu's findings.

Like many other rituals, the *kupailela* ritual has some procedures, characteristics and observances that identifies it. The response gathered from a cattle owner in giving an explanation of how the ritual was performed, brought the details below:

We give our ancestors small bits of each of the different types of food they enjoyed while on earth.

This part of the ritual compares very well with Mbiti's (1969:105) reference of the Africans' practice of pouring libation and offering foodstuffs to their dead. He pointed out that these actions were tokens of the fellowship, communion, remembrance, respect, and hospitality extended to ancestors who are the immediate pillars or roots of the family.

The foregoing, is similar to what Magesa (1997:78) found about descendants, regarding the offering of food to their ancestors. With regards to the offering of food, a peculiar practice was shared by a participant who added that:

We set this food on a white plate.

With respect to white utensils, the study noted that they were used in several other rituals. For instance, a white cup was used for milk during the *Kufundula likomu* ritual at the kraal, a white piece of cloth and a white plate were used during the *Kuambelela* ritual, a white plate was used during the *Kupaiela* ritual, and a traditional necklace with white beads was used during the *Kulaala* and *Kulaala nuka* rituals. With regards to colours, Mbiti (1991: 146) discussed the use and symbolic nature of colours. He showed that among Africans, the colour white symbolised peace, purity, goodness and good luck. Others believe that white can add to security, protection and guidance. White is also used for summoning blessings. So, the use of white in this ritual may have been just in conformity with the widely held beliefs on the colour white, among Africans.

It is commonplace that rituals take place in specified places. According to the information gathered from participants, the *Kupaiela* ritual is performed in the *Kozwana*, a smaller portion of the extension of the courtyard (*Lushoko*). Just like any other ritual, the family shrine symbolised a meeting point between the visible and the invisible world and hence, it carried aspects of sacredness. As a result, it was extremely exclusive to not only the children, but also the adults who were not family members. Just like any other ritual place, it should be understood that such a practice was in conformity with what Mbiti (1991:147) pointed out with regards to African religious places. The study equally found that this place was not just utilized during the *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony, but it was also used regularly for other invocations and appeasements to ancestors. The description about this place, which the cattle owners shared in the current study, was in an exact way that Mbiti (1991: 149) described the family shrines. It must be appreciated that the entire ritual was performed to petition the ancestors to come and provide guidance in the collection of the traditional medicine.

This far, then, the *Kupaiela* ritual has shown that it was basically an ancestor honouring ritual, in which a cattle owner besought ancestors to provide guidance in the collection of traditional medicine. The position traditional medicine occupied in the ceremony was indispensable.

The discussion now turns to the second ritual performed before the actual day of the ceremony, the *kuolelisa likomu* ritual.

(ii) *Kuolelisa Likomu* ritual (informing, appealing and protecting cattle)

Chronologically, the *Kuolelisa Likomu* ritual was placed second. It was established that the ritual takes place the evening before the ceremony. Like the first ritual, this ritual was presided by a cattle owner and his appointed helpers. A lot of secrecy surrounded the ritual. It was found that during the ritual, a cattle owner informed the cattle about the impending journey. This was based on a belief that the cattle were capable of hearing everything the cattle owner uttered. Furthermore, the views gathered from the headman stressed the point that a cattle owner could not take the cattle to the upper land without informing them.

The foregoing raises another aspect regarding the people's emotional attachment to their cattle. The 'talk' with cattle implicitly confirms Mbiti's (1969:49) position that Africans in general have a sacred attitude towards cattle. For the case under study, there was an added dimension that the Lozi peoples' ancestor, Mwanamwambwa, gave birth to both human babies and calves (Paul 1996:4). This extended belief gives a common mythical origin for both the cow and the Lozi. Arising from this myth, cattle find a special place in the lives of the Lozi people. Actually, it was common to hear a cattle owner addressing cattle as *balikani* (literally meaning friends). With this in mind, it becomes clear that talking to cattle may have roots in the aforementioned myth.

Using SFT as a lens, there is an interrelatedness between the people and cattle, which makes the community to function well. On the other hand, interdependence, as described in the SFT, was noticeable since the peoples' livelihoods revolved around the rearing of cattle. Similarly, safety, care and general welfare of cattle depended on the people. To some extent, the information gathered from participants reflected the position that, this interdependence was an essential factor influencing the ceremony.

Furthermore, it was established that the ritual did not just end at talking to cattle, but that the cattle were subjected to various traditional medicines to counteract any harm that may have been targeted at them. In fact, the current study findings concur with Mbiti's (1991:171) findings. He established that traditional African medicine was used for many purposes one of which, was to put things right, to counter the forces of mystical evil and to protect a person or his property from being harmed.

The information gathered from cattle owners addressed questions of how this part of the ritual was performed. It was learnt that the concoction of herbs and other plant parts were used to make the ritual fire. Only the smoke was required for the ritual. A herd of cattle was then exposed to the smoke as a way of securing their protection. Mbiti's (1991: 171) findings expressed a related idea that the use of traditional medicine builds a sense of confidence and security. Equally, Parrinder (1962:114) asserted that men do not invent medicine for the fun of the thing, but to meet some real need.

The ritual fire requires further clarification. Certain adherences about the making and use of the fire were to be observed. Firstly, it had to be a freshly made fire; it did not need to be collected from any other fire places. It was believed that if an old fire was collected from any other source, it would contaminate and nullify the effectiveness of the medicine. The study participants' most dreaded repercussion was that massive deaths of cattle would occur if such a fire was brought for the ritual. Thus, to avoid this, matchsticks were used to make fresh fire right at the kraal (*mulaka*). Throughout the process, the cattle were made to keep moving around so that they could all be exposed to the medicinal smoke. It was learnt that the purpose for doing that was to enhance their protection.

The information gathered from the views of cattle owners were that once the cattle were fully exposed to the medicine, a cattle owner and his helpers equally went through the same ritual. The study found that they undressed, leaving only an underwear. The significance of this act was to allow the medicine to penetrate their bodies, a practice equally pointed out by Mbiti (1969: 194).

According to the information gathered from participants, the ash generated from this ritual was useful for other rituals related to the ceremony. Four alternative uses were described. In one practice, the ash was kept for the *kufundula likomu* ritual, which was to be performed at the kraal the following morning. The second alternative use involved the spreading of the ash on the backs of the cattle. The study learnt that the spreading of the medicinal ash on the backs did not just protect them, but also symbolized a cattle owner's earnest desire that, just as the ash was on the backs (top), so the cattle should remain afloat during transit. From the responses gathered, it emerged that the act of spreading ash on the backs of cattle was a way of completing the ritual process. The third alternative use involved safeguarding the ash for the *kusileleza muña mulaka* ritual that was to be performed at a kraal on the morning of the ceremony. The last alternative use, involved leaving the ash in the kraal. It is believed that as the cattle keep stepping on it, their

protection is enhanced. The enhancement came about, by the repulsive effect of the medicine (at feet) on water beasts. The findings showed that the people's belief in the effect and help obtained from the traditional medicine, was in line with what Fields, as quoted by Idowu (1973: 199), said when he conclusively asserted that for Africans, 'There is no activity in life that cannot be assisted by medicine'.

Kuolelisa Likomu ritual has provided an opportunity to trace how part of the traditional medicine that is collected under the guidance of the ancestors, is put to use. Herds of cattle are the main targets for performing the ritual. We now turn to the third ritual, the *Kuolela* ritual.

(iii) ***Kuolela* Ritual** (protecting family members)

Unlike the *Kuolelisa Likomu* ritual which is believed to protect cattle, a cattle owner and his helpers, the *Kuolela* ritual is performed to protect family members. The findings showed that some families conducted the ritual in the evening before the ceremony, while in other families, it was performed very early in the morning, on the day of departure. Further, it was learnt that the ritual took place in the *Lushoko*, an extension of the courtyard normally used for performing family rituals. Mbiti's (1991:148) description of family shrines relates closely to the study findings. With respect to how it was conducted, views gathered from cattle owners showed that the ritual was spearheaded by a cattle owner and his helpers.

This disclosure from cattle owners was in conformity with Mbiti's (1991:140) categorisation of rituals. He affirmed that there were rituals of every kind. In this ritual, the cattle owner and his helpers were perceived as ritual elders whose purpose was to ensure that a high professional standard was maintained and that good order and harmony were observed. Evidently, when this kind of harmony and order were achieved, social cohesion and hence, social equilibrium was likely to be attained. All these aspects work towards the success of the ceremony. It was established that the same medicine type used during the *kuolelisa likomu* ritual was used and that similar requirements in making the ritual fire were followed. This ritual aimed at providing protection to the family.

Further, conversations with the women participants established that throughout the ritual proceedings, all family members sat around the ritual fire, dressed only from the waist, downwards. The bottom line to all these activities was to achieve what Mbiti (1969) identified as maximizing the absorption of medicine in the body, for the effective neutralisation of the evil mystical power.

Another interesting aspect of this ritual is in the manner in which the ritual participants sat, and the direction they faced during the ceremony. The ritual demanded a squatting position while facing the eastern direction. In African societies, various prescriptions, taboos and pre-conditions on rituals and ceremonies occur. These are aimed at enhancing the attainment of the objectives of performing the ritual at hand. Mbiti (1991) suggests that restrictions laid in a ritual were intended for attaining good order and harmony. The squatting position signified two important things. Firstly, it symbolised offering respect to the ancestors who were believed to be overseeing the ritual activities. Secondly, it signified the alertness and urgency with which the ceremony was to be handled. The foregoing information was built from views gathered from the headmen and cattle owners. The entire ceremony demanded that participants remained alert in their driving of cattle across the floods and that they should act with urgency when need arose.

With regard to facing the east, Parrinder (1962: 58) posits that many Africans think that their ancestors originated from the east and that it was believed to be the land of sunrise. This belief may give insights on why the participants were required to face the eastern direction. The foregoing information is sufficient to suggest that there was an anticipation of receiving good things from the ancestors, which in this case, point towards the much needed guidance and protection from natural and magical beasts. Additionally, the participants' views associated the east and sunrise, to the source of good things. They believed that as surely as the sun rose, so were their breakthroughs coming forth. Their gaze towards the east symbolized receiving their share of good things. It was clear that the sitting position and the facing of the eastern direction remained key pre-requisites to the success of the ritual.

The restriction on talking was one other prohibition that the ritual emphasized. Mbiti (1991: 141) asserted that, 'In rituals there are many taboos concerned with what people may not do, what they may not eat, touch, how they should behave at certain times'. In this ritual, it was a taboo to talk when the ritual was underway. The only person that was allowed to talk was the cattle owner and this was only limited to the giving of instructions. No other conversations were allowed as silence symbolised respect to the ancestors.

Further, it was found that when the ritual was over, the participants were required to leave the shrine without looking back. This restriction symbolised an intended action, that, the cattle would never look back once the journey had started. It was held that, if anyone disobeyed the taboo, a herd of cattle would imitate that family member's action. It implied

that as the cattle waded through the floods, they would, time and again, look back. This would place them in great danger of interlocking their horns and consequently, drowning. In line with the foregoing, Magesa (1997:139) claimed that ... the breach of taboos endangered the health and well-being of society.

It was equally a taboo for a ritual participant to take a bath afterwards. The only time the restriction regarding taking a bath was lifted, was when a cattle owner returned from handing over the cattle. From the information gathered, it was established that if someone took a bath before the ceremony was over, the counteractive effect of the medicine would be nullified. Two consequences were bound to follow. Firstly, the individual was highly vulnerable to mysterious attacks, and secondly, the co-operate protection that was imparted through participating in the ritual was believed to be unrealised by such an act. As a consequence of this, the entire group of ceremony participants would be at greater risk of attacks by water beasts. It was against these fears that each participant took a watchman's role in guarding each other's conduct. This position was reflected in the information gathered from the cattle owners.

Furthermore, the views gathered from cattle owners pointed to the practice of cooking and eating a family meal (*kahobe ka mulyani*), as the last observance of the ritual. The *kahobe* was prepared by a young girl, right in the shrine (*Lushoko*). It was established that its ingredients included cassava meal mixed with ashes from the *kuolela* ritual. When it was ready, it was served on a white plate and each ritual participant picked a small lump, which was swallowed without chewing. The family was expected to consume it completely as leaving any lump was considered to be a taboo.

The practice of finishing the ritual or sacrificial meal was not peculiar to the people of this community. Parrinder (1962) showed that among the Bamangwato people in South Africa, a similar requirement was demanded on the people when consuming the sacrificial meal. Like the occurrence in the Bamangwato rain sacrifice, in which it was required that every scrap of the sacramental food was to be consumed on the spot, the exact practice was obtaining in the *Kuolela* eating of the ritual meal. The eating of the *kahobe* containing medicinal ashes affirms Mbiti's (1969: 194) position that, 'there is mystical power among African societies... and for that reason... they eat 'medicines'...to counteract the evil effects of this power'.

Furthermore the views gathered from women participants indicated that the girl who was selected to prepare the *kahobe* was one who had not yet reached puberty. The belief held

that such a one was free from menstrual fluid or contamination of seminal fluids. It was within their belief system that menses blood contaminated the ritual meal and compromised the effectiveness of the ritual.

All these precautions were to ensure the success of the ritual and safety for both the people and cattle. During its preparation, family members remained silent in the *kuboola* sitting position. The participants pointed out that silence was associated with the respect accorded to the ancestors, who were being petitioned to intervene in the ceremony. Equally, the study participants claimed that specifications guiding the selection of a suitable girl were handed over to them by their ancestors. The more they worked towards attaining them, the more they honoured them.

So far, the observation about the use and dependence on traditional medicine throughout the entire ceremony, and in this ritual in particular, agrees with Parrinder's (1962:116) claims that, 'men do not invent medicines for the funny of things but to meet real needs'. As already alluded to, the use of traditional medicine during *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony raises a feeling of safety, protection and assurance.

When the *kuolela* ritual was over, a cattle owner and his helpers sounded a special traditional drum (*Namalwa*) to inform community members about the impending journey. The appeal indirectly strengthened cohesion and the attitude of working together within the community.

Kuolela ritual has provided an opportunity to see what family members go through to secure protection from every harm, both natural and magical. On the actual day of the ceremony, the findings showed that some families conducted yet another ritual, the *Kukwalula nzila* ritual. We now turn to it.

(iv) *Kukwalula nzila* Ritual (opening the way)

This ritual, whose effect was believed to clear the way for cattle, was conducted exclusively by a cattle owner at a kraal. Strictly, the ritual was conducted in the early hours of the morning of departure, as it required a cattle owner to be half naked. From the findings, a cattle owner stands at the doorway of his kraal and invokes the ancestors to clear the way for the cattle. This approach to the ritual finds support from Idowu's (1973) claim that among Africans, the ancestors are regarded still as heads and part of the families or communities to which they belonged while they were living human beings. Therefore, it appears that invoking them at the beginning of the ritual was a way of honouring them.

Equally, the aspect that Magesa (1997:51), raised about ancestors being viewed as protectors of society and everything that society owns, supports the practice.

After the invocation of ancestors, the participant outlined various steps they undertook in the ritual. Firstly, a cattle owner stood at the doorway and blew air onto a piece of white cloth placed on a white plate. This was done while facing the cattle. As he did that, he appealed to the cattle to see a clear path as they moved. From the outside of the kraal, he repeated this procedure at all corners of the kraal. Once he had done that at all the corners, he entered the kraal and repeated the procedure in the middle of the kraal while turning around to allow the blown air spread to all parts of the kraal. The white colour has already been discussed and according to Mbiti (1991:146), it is symbolic of purity and sacredness. Based on the explanation from this ritual performer, white symbolised a clear path, a path free of both natural and magical obstacles.

The study also established that after the ritual performance, the white cloth was put away at a highest point of the roof in the bedroom. The act served two purposes. Firstly, it was reflecting the family's continued appeal to the ancestors to keep the cattle afloat, just as the white cloth was placed far on top. The white cloth was one way in which the people held their assurance that the ancestors would clear the way for the cattle. In other words, it kept the family's anticipation that the entire herd of cattle would successfully swim their way to the destination. Secondly, the white cloth was to be inaccessible as a safety measure because if anyone brought it down, the cattle would drown mysteriously. This was why it was removed only by a cattle owner after having handed over the cattle.

The place and significance of the *Kukwalula nzila* ritual in *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony cannot be overemphasized. The findings have provided an opportunity to see what a cattle owner goes through to secure protection and a successful passage for his animals. We now turn to the fifth ritual, the *Kuambelela* (a rain scattering) ritual.

(v) ***Kuambelela* Ritual** (rain scattering)

On the day of the ceremony, rain was seen as a hindrance to the successful holding of the long awaited *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu*. A lot of fears arose which included, but not limited to, poor visibility for cattle and the people as well as general difficulties in driving the cattle through the floods. The foregoing accounted for the need to perform the *Kuambelela* ritual in the morning, before departure. However, the ritual was performed only when the

rain clouds were forming. In addition to this, the study found that not all cattle owners had the special powers and wisdom to scatter rain.

Rain controlling rituals and the wisdom that go with the practice are not peculiar occurrences to *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony. Parrinder (1962:82) admits that the belief in rain-making and rain-stopping was widespread. On the same aspect of rain, Mbiti (1991:134) affirms that there are rituals that are performed to reduce or stop the rains if so much was falling. Furthermore, Magesa (1997: 142) holds that, 'Though rain emanates from God, it can be controlled by human agency through the medium of ancestral spirits....' The views gathered from the cattle owner indicated that the ritual was performed by a cattle owner with his helpers. The ritual was performed inside the house and it was a requirement that both the cattle owner and the helpers remained half naked while performing the ritual.

The aspect of half nakedness has kept repeating itself. It was explained that being half naked was expected of them by their ancestors. The participants associated the act of being half naked to a show of humility and honour to ancestors and that, this state brought them very close to their ancestors. Ultimately, the participants claimed that in that half naked state, they were endowed with special powers to enable them to perform the ritual.

In the ritual process, different medicines were put on a potsherd (*liñetana*) as the invocations to the ancestors went on. The ancestors were invoked to scatter the clouds so that their cattle (the ancestors' cattle) could move under clear skies. Furthermore, the views gathered from the cattle owners indicated that the fresh grass was then tied to form a knot (*linungo*). This knot was then put on the medicine as a cattle owner addressed the rains in many words such as these below.

We are not denying you from falling to make our crops grow, but for today, we are asking you not to rain until our cattle reach where they are going'.

Among many interesting aspects of the narration above, was the use of a knot (*linungo*). A knot is symbolic of 'stopping' or 'binding'. Mbiti (1969: 198) affirms that, '... knots ... and many other visible and invisible precautions are used in all communities for seriously religious intentions, to secure a feeling of safety, protection and assurance'. In this ritual, the use of a knot symbolised a serious intention of stopping the rains momentarily, for safety and easy passage of the cattle and people during the ceremony.

The final aspects of the ritual were that the medicine and the knot were put on a white plate and placed far high inside the house, in the direction where rain normally came from. According to the participants, rain was tied and it could not rain.

Important to take note, was the putting of the knot on a white plate at a height that was not easily accessible. These actions are similar to those observed in the former ritual (*kukwalula nzila*). The beliefs and precautionary measures are similar. It was learnt that if anyone untied the knot, a heavy storm would be experienced. As a consequence of the failure to follow this taboo, the cattle would drown. This was in line with Magesa (1997:76) who holds that, ‘Taboos are in a sense their own explanation: breaking them causes otherwise inexplicable calamity, and calamity happens if they are (whether knowingly or unknowingly) transgressed’.

The *Kuambelela* was the last ritual performed during the preparatory stage. Once the rains were ‘tied’, the people were ready to set off. This led to the performance of yet another ritual, the *Kufundula Likomu* (*send-off*) ritual. The other four rituals performed during the procession of the ceremony were the *kusileleza muña mulaka*, *kuambulula*, *kulaala* as well as the *kulaala nuka* rituals. The findings showed that various circumstances and obstacles stood on the way of cattle, thereby raising the need to perform the various rituals. The rituals enabled cattle owners to communicate with the spirit world for the sake of their cattle and themselves.

Firstly, we will proceed by discussing the *Kufundula Likomu* ritual under rituals performed during the ceremony. After the rain scattering ritual which was performed in the house, the cattle owner, his helpers, family members and the rest of the community members leave for the kraal where the *Kufundula likomu* (Send-off) ritual was performed.

(i) ***Kufundula Likomu* Ritual** (send- off)

The study found that the ritual was carried out in three slightly different ways. However, each of the versions gave a cattle owner an opportunity to speak words of blessings to the cattle as well as releasing them to the land far off. One common practice in all the versions was the call made to the ancestors to watch over the cattle jealously. This was not a misplaced call upon ancestors, as Mbiti (1969: 81) indicated that, ‘They are the guardians of family affairs, traditions, ethics and activities’. Similarly, Parrinder (1962:24) affirmed that, ‘All Africans believe in the ancestors, as ever-living and watchful’. The call was even

more intense, according to Parrinder (1962), when the lives of the people and their property were being threatened.

In the first version, after the cows were milked, milk from older calves was set apart for this ritual. A portion of it was put in a white cup. With this cup, a cattle owner went to the centre of a kraal where the ritual was performed. He took a mouthful of the milk and then sprayed it onto the cattle. The action was repeated and each spray was followed by invocations and proclamations to the ancestors. The words below were transcribed word for word from a cattle owner who was performing the ritual:

'You have been with us, now today, we are here with your cattle, today they are on a journey, protect them, send them off, move with them'.

An analysis of the words above pointed to an admission of the presence and works of ancestors in the lives of the people. The herds of cattle were 'surrendered' to the ancestors as co-owners in saying, *'now today we are here with your cattle'*. The action is befitting since in this case, the people believe that the herds of cattle were handed over to them by their ancestors. It's a common stance in African traditional beliefs, according to Idowu (1973:184), that 'the ancestors are regarded still as heads and parts of the families or communities to which they belonged while they were living human beings'. He adds that the ancestors remain, therefore, spiritual superintendents of family affairs and continue to bear their titles of relationship like 'fathers' or 'mother'.

The second version involved mixing a portion of the fresh milk with ashes from the *kuolelisa likomu* ritual held previously. The mixture was then used to sprinkle on the animals while declaring good words of send-off. From the findings, the following excerpt would help us point out key things.

'Friends, today our journey is ready, we are going to the upper land ... go well, swim well, and the path is familiar. Do not go there and feel lonely.'

Two peculiar things that stand out in this narration require to be highlighted. Firstly, the cattle owner engaged the cattle as special individuals. He displayed a mutual relationship with the cattle. He addressed them as 'friends' and this could be due to an old held belief that the cow and the Lozi, according to Paul (1996), share a common mythical origin. Secondly, the cattle owner's conviction that the cattle were hearing what was being said is amazing. It appears that talking to the cattle was done in appreciation of the key social and economic purposes they met in the people's lives. This act was not peculiar to this

ceremony. Mbiti (1991: 136) showed that it was a common practice for people to talk to their livestock.

In the third version, the study found that a cattle owner just used water and re-assuring words to perform the ritual. With water in a white cup, he entered the kraal and petitioned the ancestors to protect the cattle throughout the journey. While pleading with the ancestors, a cattle owner got a mouthful of water from a white cup which he then sprayed on the cattle. The process was repeated several times. At the end of this process, he went round the kraal speaking re-assuring words to the cattle. When he was through, his helpers were also given time to reassure the cattle of safety.

So far, three versions of the *kufundula likomu* ritual have been discussed. In all the three versions, the ancestors are called upon to oversee the ceremony. The confidence that cattle owners placed in the ancestors was not surprising, because according to Mbiti (1969:81), 'Africans in general, still consider their ancestors to be 'people' who do not just know their needs, but that they equally work out the solutions'.

The study now turns to the *Kusileleza Muña mulaka* ritual which was the second ritual performed during the ceremony.

(ii) ***Kusileleza 'Muña mulaka'*** ('Lead' ox ritual)

The study found that an ox was identified by its influential characteristics such as strength, speed and bravery. It was set apart for this task which it performed annually. Normally, this ox was exempted from several labour related activities such in ploughing, pulling of sleigh, farm cart and so on. To some extent, this ox carried some aspects of sacredness. It was not sold unless under difficult circumstances. If it were to fall sick, it received special care. This is what Mbiti (1991:137) called, infinite care. The foregoing attitude was similar, according to Marvin (1978), with the Hindus over their cows. Unlike findings in the current study where the people are under no restriction that forbids them from consuming it if it died, Hindu religious practices forbid them. Actually, Williamson and Payne (1959:137) assert that, 'the Hindu would rather starve to death than eat his cow'. Equally, according to Marvin (1978), when a cow dies, an untouchable member of one of the lowest ranking castes in India, is summoned to haul away the carcass and throw it. The higher castes, according to Marvin (1978), consider the body of a dead cow polluting. If they do handle it, they must go through a rite of purification. The practice of sacredness of a cow in the Hindu community, is not just an ignorant belief that stands in the way of

progress, so is the ‘sacred’ treatment of the lead ox. It is for special religious reasons that it (lead ox) carries.

It was established in the current study that wizards and other ‘bad’ people laid magical traps on the path used by herds of cattle during the ceremony. This belief appears to be anchored on Mbiti’s (1969: 194) assertion that, ‘There is mystical power among African societies..... power to change into animals (lycanthropy), power to make inanimate objects turn into biological living creatures... He adds that this mystical power is not fiction: it is a reality with which African people have to reckon’. Therefore, to counteract the evil effects of this power, the lead ox has to go through the ritual.

The lead ox was normally taken through a ritual. Specifically, it was given special instructions to take lead, to be courageous and to defend the rest. The ox was made to drink a special concoction of traditional medicine as shown in figure 4.2 under findings. It was believed that the medicine enabled it to see mystical things such as magical traps. The power within it nullified such traps and it was believed to have power to repel water beasts.

Furthermore, the findings showed that the concoction of medicine it was made to drink enhanced its ability to run faster and to approach obstacles with more courage than others. During the ritual, the ox was showered with many praises and reassurances of success to lead the entire herd to safety. Once the ‘lead’ ox ritual was performed, the ancestors were again petitioned to be present on the journey.

Having discussed the ‘lead’ Ox ritual, the next ritual to be discussed is the *Kuambulula* ritual in which ancestors are further petitioned to intervene all the way.

(iii) ***Kuambulula* Ritual** (Petitioning ancestors)

This ritual was preceded by physical counting of the cattle, as they moved out of the kraal, as shown in figure 4.3 under findings. In time past, cattle owners used a bunch of small ‘counting sticks’, which were later compared. Currently, however, with improved numeracy, the study found that family members counted without the use of concrete objects such as sticks. A record was kept securely for purposes of hand over. The younger calves were recorded separately from the rest.

Once counting was done, a herd of cattle was detained outside a kraal for the *kuambulula* ritual. The study found that this ritual was the last one to be performed before setting off for the upper land. Three main purposes were achieved through this ritual. Firstly, a cattle owner used the ritual to once again plead with the ancestors for help. The ancestors were

each called by name, while making a special plea to them to be present throughout the journey. They were also petitioned to offer the much required protection. The following words were picked word for word during the ritual:

Here we are our parents, we are ready and your cattle are here, they are going, we are on a journey, give them a safe passage, protect us from all bad things...

The second thing that stands out from the ritual its use in seeking family forgiveness from the ancestors. It must be recalled that the family members had met, the previous night, to rid themselves of any outstanding family differences. However, at this point, a cattle owner addressed the ancestors and made it public that differences may have existed in the family but that efforts were made to have them resolved. In addition, he sought forgiveness for any other hidden wrongs that caused displeasure to the ancestors.

The pleas were made with an understanding that the ancestors, according to Magesa (1997:67), are very much active in the universe under various forms, effecting good or bad experiences that are dependent on the behaviour of the living. They were capable of striking if the descendants were dishonouring them by living in disharmony. In the foregoing utterances made during the performance of the ritual, it was observed that the ritual provided an opportunity for family members to be reconciled with their ancestors. The reconciliatory power of the ritual ultimately works to benefit family and societal cohesion.

The third point is that a cattle owner and his family members use the ritual to assure their cattle that all the family differences that may have existed, were sorted out. From the findings, the following excerpt aided the discussion.

The differences are over and as such, you should feel free and be released to move and swim freely.... Whatever fights and quarrels you saw and heard among us, are over...

The foregoing words of confession arose from a belief that cattle observed and sensed differences within the family members. Inevitably, they would also grossly differ while wading through the water, resulting in some, drowning. Up to this point, the ceremony and its rituals stimulated a great degree of abiding to moral values. Indirectly, they reinforced family cohesion.

The study now turns to the kulaala (boundary marking) ritual. It was found that it was the first ritual performed on the way to the upper land.

(iv) ***Kulaala* Ritual** (Boundary marking)

'*Kulaala*' literally means marking out boundaries in the water, at a deep swamp or river. The ritual was performed by a cattle owner to exorcise any snakes, crocodiles and any other living creatures that may have been placed by bad people in their acts of magic against the cattle or the people involved in the ceremony.

The study found that a herd of cattle was usually halted afar off a deep swamp or river, to give a cattle owner time to conduct the ritual. Five aspects that gave a cattle owner confidence and courage to venture into the swamp or river were identified. Firstly, the belief that the ancestors were present to offer guidance and protection was paramount. Secondly, the belief in the positive effects of the *kuolelisa likomu* and the *kuolela* rituals that were performed previously.

Thirdly, the authority was also gained from the presence and use of a white beaded traditional medicine necklace (*sifaha sa mulyani*). According to the cattle owners, it was established that the necklace was made from the 'mother' of all the traditional medicines. It was held, among the cattle owners that mystical powers that worked against cattle were all driven to far away distances in its presence. Equally, it is believed that its use made the water beasts to get a feeling of numbness on their teeth, such that they lost their power to bite.

The fourth point of strength for the cattle owner laid in the power of his special paddling stick (*Silabo sa mulyani*), which underwent the *kuolela* ritual together with the family members. This paddling stick was never lent to anyone. It's a taboo for any person, other than a cattle owner and his helpers, to touch it. Normally, it is not used for any other purpose other than *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony. Figure 4.5 shows a cattle owner standing in water with a raised special paddling stick.

The fifth source of strength was in the belief of the positive effect of the *kulaala* ritual that was about to be performed. The combination of all these beliefs helped a cattle owner to undertake the risky venture.

Based on the foregoing, it can be asserted that rituals had constructive influence on the ritual performers' behaviour and the confidence of the entire community of ceremony participants. This is contrary to Jahoda's (2007) research findings suggesting that superstitions and rituals are irrational. However, the findings in this study agree with Norton et al.'s (2014) findings, which showed that rituals can help people feel better when

they are facing a situation in which they objectively do not have control. The findings are in line with literature that suggests that rituals bring about psychological relief (Mbiti (1969:81), similar to what Pennebaker (1997) claims that, expressing emotion itself can reduce negative emotion.

Based on the feeling and assurance of protection from the foregoing beliefs, a cattle owner paddled from the entry point of the swamp to the exit point where he picked one river reed having a tassel. Secondly, he paddled across to form a rectangular shape that connects to the starting point. At the starting point, he then picked the second reed having a tassel. It was found that throughout this period of paddling and picking the reeds, a cattle owner invoked the ancestors and asked for their help saying:

We are here, your cattle have reached this far. Help us, and do not allow the plans of the bad people to cause harm to your cattle.

After this was done, a cattle owner disembarked from his canoe and stood in the water. In one hand, he held his paddling stick, while in the other, he held the two reeds. Whilst in this position, he called for the cattle to cross. As they swam within the boundaries of the marked rectangle, he sprinkled fresh milk (obtained before departure) on them using the two reeds while encouraging them to move on.

According to Mbiti (1991: 131), ‘rituals embody what people believe, what they value and what they wish to apply in daily life’. In this ritual, the belief in the presence of the ancestors, the people’s faith in the ability of the traditional medicine to overcome any evil forces as well as the value they place on cattle, has been demonstrated.

Next is the *kulaala nuka* ritual.

(v) ***Kulaala nuka* Ritual** (Boundary marking Ritual at the River)

The boundary marking (*Kulaala nuka*) ritual performed at the Luanginga River was similar to the *kulaala* ritual performed at the swamps, except for a few differences that the study will highlight. It was the last ritual performed during the ceremony. The boundary marking and the formation of the rectangle observed in the *kulaala* ritual at the swamps was repeated. Two variations occurred.

In the first variation, a cattle owner gets a mouthful of water and sprays it in the river while facing the direction where cattle make entry to the river. It is believed that the act of spraying water from the mouth into the river, was meant to appease (*kupailela*) the ancestors. Like in the former ritual, a cattle owner appealed to the ancestors to continue

offering protection to the cattle. When the cattle are about to be let into the river, the owner further sips water and sprays mouthfuls into the river. At this point, he throws the reeds alongside other protective medicines into the river. The medicine is believed to exorcise water spirits, break the magic powers set by evil people and cause water beasts and snakes to be powerless.

In the second version, there was no marking of the boundary. Instead, a cattle owner pushed traditional medicine (charms) in the sand, at the point where the cattle were to make entry into the river. This medicine is believed to clear the place of any possible causes of harm. While doing all that, a cattle owner recited words of praise to the ancestors as well as asking them to enable the cattle cross without difficulties. He further paddles his canoe to the middle part of the river where he pushes another traditional medicine (charms) in the water. From this point, he went and did the same at the point of exit. Finally he paddled back to the starting point where he disembarked from the canoe and called for the cattle. It is held that the traditional medicine (charms) pushed in the sand protected the cattle, exorcized the evil spirits and nullified the magic intended to bring calamity to the livestock. Traditionally, this act is known as *kufundela fa nuka*.

Overall then, the study saw ten rituals performed in *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony. The frequency with which these rituals were being performed was indicative of the people's connection and dependence on their ancestors. Throughout the ceremony preparations until the handover of cattle, the rituals enabled the participants to communicate with the spirit world for the sake of their well-being and that of their cattle.

In addition, rituals that were performed demanded upon the participants, first and foremost, an expression of moral values. Therefore, they were key at reinforcing social unity. The pre-requisite demands for the ceremony as well as of some rituals, such as in the removal of any grudges within the family, accelerated cohesion at not just family, but societal level. The study showed that family frictions were brought to the fore and efforts to settle them were noticeable.

The performance of the rituals in the ceremony played key roles at attaining psychological therapy. Grudges, lack of forgiveness as well as hatred, offer psychological torture to both the hating and the offender. However, like Mbiti (1969:81) indicates, men experience a sense of psychological relief when they pour out their heart's troubles to their ancestors. So in short and generally, rituals in an African sense, give meaning to life and help people to cope with the problems of existence.

The next section looks at taboos that are associated with *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony.

5.3.2 Taboos in *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* Ceremony

According to Hutton Webster, as quoted by Magesa (1997:75), taboos may be described as systems of prohibitions with regard to certain persons, things, acts or situations. Taboos exist to make sure that the moral structure or the universe remains undisturbed for the good of humanity. In other words, taboos play a significant role in the ethical duty of transmitting and preserving life, and the breach endangers the health and well-being of society. According to Magesa (1987:81), taboos were received from the founding ancestors of the clan, lineage or ethnic group, and are handed down from generation to generation.

The study findings show that *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony placed a lot of demand on adherence of taboos before, during and after the ceremony. Although some of the taboos differ as a result of the cattle owners using different traditional medicines (*milale*), there are general taboos observed by all the people in the community.

The following list of taboos was found enforced in the ceremony; sexual intercourse, family quarrels and disputes, fetching water in a narrow ‘mouthed’ container, mentioning the name *Kwena* (crocodile), washing pots at a water body, failure to cover food, eating before collecting the traditional medicine, eating cassava leaves, eating fish with teeth and fish without scales, pregnancy ,doing chores on the morning of the ceremony, touching or crossing a cattle owner’s paddling stick, touching the medicinal necklace, shaking of hands by a cattle owner and the act of looking back or returning to the house once the ceremony is signalled.

The discussion looked at each of these and explored why each one of them is enforced in the ceremony, and the implications for disobeying them. Firstly, we turn to the taboos observed before the ceremony.

5.3.2.1 Taboos observed before the Ceremony

The study showed that taboos observed before the ceremony included the taboo on; sexual intercourse, family quarrels and disputes, fetching water in narrow ‘mouthed’ plastic containers, mentioning the name crocodile, washing pots at water bodies, failure to cover food, eating before collecting the traditional medicines, eating cassava leaves as well as eating fish with teeth and fish without scales. It must be emphasised that these taboos were

meant to regulate the people's conduct during the preparatory stage of the ceremony. Equally, the regulation arose from a strongly held belief that failure to regulate the peoples' conduct attracted mysterious deaths of both the people and cattle during the ceremony. We now turn to the taboo on sexual intercourse.

(i) Sexual intercourse

The cattle owner and his helpers observed this taboo at two points. Firstly, the taboo was observed the night before going to collect the traditional medicine, and secondly, it was observed the night before the ceremony, during which, the taboo applied to all immediate family members and all those who intended to attend the ceremony.

With respect to the sexual intercourse taboo, a cattle owner and his helpers needed to adhere to it the night before going to the forest to collect traditional medicine for use in the ceremony. The views shared by participants showed that failure to adhere to the taboo resulted in the failure to collect the medicine. This arises from two causes. Firstly, it was believed that non-adherence to the taboo displeased the ancestors who in turn, withdrew their guidance during the mission. This agreed with Mbiti (1991:41) who affirms that, 'Any breach of morals is an offence against the departed members of the family'. Secondly, it was held that the seminal fluids would cloud their sight like a white mist hindering them from identifying the medicine.

In the second case of observance of the taboo, the call for adherence was compulsory to all immediate family members including friends and neighbours intending to participate in the ceremony. One cattle owner shared his views that when the sound of the special traditional drum (*Namalwa*) was heard the night before the ceremony, older members of the community took the responsibility to remind the young men to adhere to the sexual intercourse taboo. Practically, this was critical because they were the key players in the ceremony. Additionally, the embarrassment of missing the ceremony due to failure to observe such taboos was in itself a motivation to adhere. Another cattle owner acknowledged that the taboo was observed because of the people's love for cattle and their responsibility and duty towards their neighbours. The understanding was that the cattle were helpful not only to their owner, but to the entire community.

From the narrations given by the participants, it was clear that if this taboo was not adhered to, and the non-adherent (culprit) moved to the front or took a leading role, the bull or an ox will openly imitate the sexual act he performed in the night. It was believed that the

cattle had the ability to see what was happening in secrecy. A participant's own words, about the imitation stated:

This act is not just embarrassing to the community, but it presents a great deal of the danger of drowning to the cattle.

From the narration, it is clear that lack of adhering to the taboo resulted not only in the embarrassment to the on-lookers and family members, but also the death of the cattle resulting from stampede. The stampede may be arising from bull to bull fights over the cows mating opportunities or it could be due to bull to cow mounting. Another belief is that if a person who failed to adhere to the sex taboo led the cattle, a heavy fog (representing semen) forms in front of them. This prevents the cattle from seeing their way and it may cause difficulties in driving them across the floods. In some cases, drowning may occur.

It is clear that the indecent exposure by the bulls does not represent the community values which, according to Magesa (1997: 142), treat sex and sexual intercourse as sacred. Magesa further indicates that if the taboos governing sexual intercourse and its use are disregarded or broken, it diminishes life. Therefore, taboos on sexual intercourse are intended to preserve life.

Due to the seriousness of the consequences discussed above, the study found that it was a common practice among married men to opt to sleep at a kraal, the night before the ceremony. This was one sure way of keeping with the demands of the ceremony on this taboo. It was also a common practice that when the *Namalwa* was sounded to give official notification of the ceremony, the older members of the community reminded the young to adhere to the taboo. This is because the young people are the ones who play the *Namalwa* in front of cattle during the ceremony. The adherence is emphasized because another taboo exists, that bars non-adherents to touch or play the *Namalwa*.

However, it was also found that if a ceremony participant failed to adhere to the sexual intercourse taboo, such an individual should never run ahead of a herd of cattle. Such participants were to take a low profile during the procession. Normally, they (the transgressors of the taboo) are expected to follow the event from behind. By taking the spectator position, the individual was publicly announcing that he breached the sexual intercourse taboo. The aforementioned does not just raise stigmatization of the individual involved, but it also gave them a bad label of being defiant and uncooperative. In some cases where the transgressor owned cattle, his absence or passivity during the ceremony

impacted negatively, on the community's involvement when his time came. In addition to the fear of what the taboo comes with, the foregoing aspects tend to re-enforce the taboo.

Societal cohesion, as opposed to isolation, was the aim of the community. It has already been mentioned here, according to Mbiti (1969:106), that the individual does not and cannot exist alone except corporately, and that he owed his existence to the other people, for he was simply part of the whole. Mbiti (1969), further observed that because of the foregoing, the individual can only say 'I am, because we are, and since we are, therefore I am'. In addition, and based on Magesa (1997: 77), it was said that the African way of living discourages isolation. Actually, he further added that, 'To be a human being, to be a moral, ethical person, it is not possible to live in isolation'.

The study now turns to family quarrels and disputes as being a taboo. Here, the family implied the people whose cattle were moving out of the floods, to the upper land.

(ii) Family quarrels and disputes

The study found that it was tabooed for family members to be engaged in quarrels and /or disputes. It was expected that the members purged themselves of grudges and any known ill intentions on any member of the family. It was learnt that the adherence of the taboo was emphasized from the early stage of preparation for the ceremony. This was because of the dire consequences that came with it when it was not adhered to. Consequences are worthy highlighting.

First, if the taboo was not adhered to, it was believed that the cattle would imitate the family quarrels and fights. The belief about the imitation was based on the people's conviction that the cattle were part of the family and that they see and hear what happens. The imitated behaviour, it is believed, would end up into difficulties in holding and driving the cattle in the required direction. Worse still, some of the cattle would be engaged in physical fighting as they wade through the floods. These actions exposed them to a lot of dangers, including death. In the current study, figure 5.4 showed a critical incident of this nature. As already discussed, the four cattle kept going in circles, locking each other and so on, a scenario that was attributed to failure to completely rid the family members of grudges.

Secondly, Magesa (1997: 51) posited that, 'The ancestors are the direct watchdogs of the moral behaviour of the individuals, family, clan and the entire society with which they are associated'. Therefore, disharmony cannot escape their gaze, and thus, if this taboo was

not adhered to, the ancestors were angered and as such, they withdrew their spiritual superintendence over the people. In the context of this study, the ancestors' withdrawal exposed both the cattle and people to dangerous water beasts such as crocodiles, snakes of various kinds and other acts of magic. The forgoing was in total agreement with Magesa's (1997:139) claims that, '... the breach of taboos endangers the health and well-being of society'.

This taboo whose need to adhere, was emphasized throughout the ceremony preparation, and impacts the attainment of social justice, societal cohesion as well as societal equilibrium, positively. The foregoing tenets cannot be achieved amidst family disputes, in-fighting and all the evil that go with human trespasses, such as witchcraft. This agrees with Magesa (1997) who advances that taboos existed to make sure that the moral structure or the universe remains undisturbed for the good of humanity'.

(iii) Fetching water in narrow 'mouthed' plastic containers

Throughout the preparation period until the herds of cattle are handed over to the caretakers on the upper land, the adherence to fetching water using open 'mouthed' buckets was emphasised, as opposed to the use of narrow 'mouthed' containers. It is believed that by pushing a narrow 'mouthed' container downwards to fill it with water, one was symbolically pushing or drowning the cattle on the day of the ceremony. It was held that as surely as the narrow 'mouthed' container disappears from the surface as it was filling with water, so will the cattle disappear as they wade across the floods. The second belief anchors on the bubbling sound that is produced as the container fills. It was held that such an act symbolised the calling of the harmful water spirits and beasts, to points where the cattle normally crossed the water bodies. Transgressing the taboo meant that the transgressor was laying a trap on the cattle, and this angered the ancestors.

Considering the assumed repercussions that followed if the taboo was transgressed, both men and women in the community, did not just adhere to it, but they also worked together to re-enforce it. This teamwork generated in seeking to attain the good of their community, was an important sign of attaining societal equilibrium.

(iv) Mentioning the name *Kwena* (crocodile)

Another interesting finding held that it was a taboo to mention the word 'crocodile', locally called *Kwena*. Like many other taboos, this taboo holds underlying beliefs that if the word *Kwena* was mentioned, the act provoked the entire population of crocodiles in that locality.

The ultimate effect would be to mercilessly attack the cattle as they crossed the swamps and rivers. The attack would even be extended to the ceremony participants. In fear of the possible consequences of losing their herds of cattle, people adhered to this taboo wholeheartedly.

(v) Washing pots at a water body

Washing pots at a water body such as a river, swamp or lake, was deemed as a taboo. The study learnt that pots are prohibited from reaching the rivers, lakes, swamps or any other water body in the community. They must be washed right at home. Three beliefs were given to explain the need for this taboo. First, it was believed that if the pots are washed at water bodies, the black soot being washed off into the water would obscure the cattle's vision. The poor visibilities endanger the cattle's lives. The second explanation lies in the colour black, which the people hold as a colour of bad luck. Thirdly, the act of pushing the pots into the water, as they are being washed, symbolized the way the cattle would be pulled by water beasts and other mysterious forces into the water during the ceremony if the taboo was disregarded. The fear of the foregoing repercussions on the family, inspired individuals to adhere to the taboo.

(vi) Failure to cover food

The study found that taking uncovered food to the cattle herders was a taboo. It is believed that bad people obtain easy access to play magic on the cattle, if the food is not covered. The magic is performed in the path used by cattle during the ceremony. The study learnt that the magic makes the cattle to see illusions of thick grass cover (food) and yet, beneath it, lies a deep water point. This magic has the potential to drown a large number of cattle. Like any other taboo, this taboo is instituted to uphold the lives of cattle.

(vii) Eating before Collecting the Traditional Medicine

The findings show that traditional medicine played a key role in the successful holding of many rituals as well as in the making of several artefacts for the ceremony. A cattle owner and his helpers collected the medicine from the Kalamba forest, with the help of the ancestors. The findings show that a cattle owner and his helpers are prohibited from eating until they had returned. It was a taboo for them to eat anything on that day before the mission of finding the medicine was accomplished. It was symbolic of cattle denied grazing time on the day of the ceremony. If the taboo was not adhered to, the cattle would

also imitate the cattle owner' action. Consequently, there will be a shift in focus, from the necessity of the journey to the other unimportant issues. This action was feared to induce, in cattle, the hesitance to move to the upper land.

(viii) Eating Cassava Leaves.

Cassava leaves (*shombo*) are the commonest vegetables eaten by many people in the area. However, the findings showed that it was tabooed for cattle owners to eat the vegetable. It was not even allowed to be cooked or brought in the house of a cattle owner. Additionally, not even the cooking utensils and plates that had contact with *shombo* were allowed into the house of a cattle owner. There was a very strong belief that *Shombo* attracted lightning. Unlike some of the taboos that become effective only at certain stages of the ceremony, this taboo was to be observed for life. It was believed that if the taboo was breached, lightning would strike either the cattle or the owner. The study participants shared views that, this taboo was one of the most strictly observed taboos.

(ix) Fish with Teeth and Fish without Scales

Various fish types are eaten in this area but the study findings showed that it was a taboo for a cattle owner to eat fish with teeth such as tiger fish (*'ngweshi'*) and other various types locally known as *milumesi* and *ñwelele*. It was also a taboo for a cattle owner to eat fish types without scales such as bubble fish (*ndombe*), *singongi*, *mabango*, *Mbundu* and *linyonga*. It is held that all these fish types were symbolic of crocodiles, snakes and other dangerous water creatures. If the taboo was not adhered to, crocodiles, snakes and other dangerous water creatures were invited to vicious attack the cattle. Furthermore, it was believed that if the taboo was broken, the protective powers of the traditional medicine would be nullified. A cattle owner was afraid to remain without powers to counteract evil targeted at him or his cattle. Next, we turn to taboos observed during the ceremony.

5.3.2.2 Taboos observed during the Ceremony

Findings of the study showed that the taboo on; pregnancy, doing house chores, touching or crossing a cattle owner's paddling stick, touching the medicinal necklaces, shaking of hands as well as looking back or returning to the house once the procession had begun, were among taboos observed during the ceremony. These taboos were primarily observed for the continued safety of the people and cattle as well as promoting the successful holding of the ceremony. Next, is the pregnancy taboo.

(i) Pregnancy Taboo

This taboo was observed on the day of the ceremony. The taboo was applied to both male and female. For females, the study found that it was a taboo for pregnant women regardless of the stage of the pregnancy, to stand or move in front of cattle during the ceremony. It is believed that as soon as the cattle looked at her, they would mysteriously experience discomfort and heaviness in a similar manner that pregnant women do. This can be very dangerous for cattle since much of their journey is in the water. They can fail to swim properly and this can result in drowning. Although there was no credible explanation given, the intention of this observance agrees with Magesa (1997:76) that, ‘taboos play a significant role in the ethical duty of transmitting and preserving life, and the breach endangers the health and well-being of society’. The taboo was logical in that the entire procession is characterised by running. Other than being discomforting for a pregnant woman, running (at a very fast pace) in pregnancy especially in the late stage, could result in miscarriage or other maternal related complications.

Like the pregnant woman, the man responsible for a pregnancy, whether in or outside marriage, was also subjected to a similar taboo. In this respect, the male was not allowed to play the special procession drum (*Namalwa*), which is played in front of cattle. The same belief explains the taboo for men. That is, his presence would cause the cattle to experience extreme difficulties as they wade through the floods, in a similar way that a pregnant woman would cause them.

(ii) Doing House Chores on the Morning of the Ceremony

On the morning of the ceremony, it was a taboo to do any house chores. People did not do any work until the cattle were handed over to the caretakers. For instance, no one was expected to sweep outside or inside the house. Bed making was not allowed, the washing of plates, digging, weeding, drawing water or doing any other work at the fields, were all prohibited. This also applied to neighbours in the village. Different chores had different symbolism but they all pointed to the safety of the cattle. Here are a few examples.

With regards to sweeping, it was believed and it is symbolic that, just as sweeping gathers the dirt together and requires that it is thrown away, so would be the gathering and throwing away of the cattle through mysterious deaths as the procession went on. Additionally, since dust normally hampered clear vision, it was believed that, so would the vision of the cattle be hampered as they waded through the floods. It was believed that the cattle would as a result, start to move in circles. Thirdly, it was believed that sweeping was

symbolic of sweeping along the backs of the cattle. In the same way that the grass broom shakes when sweeping, the cattle would also be shaking as they cross the Luanginga River. They would fail to swim properly and to cross the river.

With respect to bed making, the act of heaping the linen on one side as the bed was being spread, was symbolic of the cattle heaping themselves together at the river, an act that would restrict their movement. This act would increase the possibility of drowning.

Digging was another house chore prohibited. It was believed that when one digs, it was symbolically representing digging on the backs of the cattle. This makes the cattle to get tired easily and consequently, fail to keep up with the demands of the journey. Similarly, it was also believed that digging symbolically signified ‘digging’ them on their backs, an act which was believed to symbolise killing the cattle. It was learnt that this would result in their mysterious deaths.

(iii) Touching or Crossing a Cattle Owner’s Paddling Stick

The study has already made mention of the special paddling stick (*Silabo sa mulyani*). The stick was used in performing the *kulaala* and *kulaala nuka* rituals. However, strong taboos related to it, existed. It was a taboo for anyone to touch the paddling stick. Traditionally, women are considered unclean due to their experiences of menses. It was held among the people, that menses blood is associated with uncleanliness, pain and death. Therefore, the women’s touching of the paddling stick, made it to lose its powers. The consequence of breaching this taboo was the death of cattle and people during the ceremony.

For the young men, the taboo arose from their non- initiation into the wisdom of the types of the traditional medicine (*milale*) that are used to craft the powers imparted on it. The findings further showed that the male family members could only be released from this taboo if they became helpers (*batusi*) and went through the process of acquiring the knowledge of the particular medicine type (*mulyani wa liñetana*) used by a cattle owner. In the case of the other cattle owners, their touching of the paddling stick could result in the ‘conflict of powers’ of the medicines. This was in the long run going to cause reduced effectiveness of the paddling stick when performing the rituals. All in all, if the taboo was trespassed, the effectiveness of the stick at providing safety, such as in countering the evil forces, would be compromised. Hence, deaths of both the people and cattle would occur.

(iv) Touching the Medicinal Necklace

The study found the presence and use of the medicinal necklaces (*sifaha sa mulyani* or *maango a mulyani*) in the ceremony. However, it was a taboo to touch any of them. Like the paddling stick, both women and men are prohibited from touching the items. The beliefs that explain the taboo on the paddling stick are exactly the same for the medicinal Necklaces. Like in the case of the paddling stick, if it was to be touched by a prohibited person, then, there would be a loss in its mystical powers. The implication is that the *kulaala* and *kulaala nuka* rituals would not be performed.

(v) Shaking of hands

The findings have shown that it was a taboo for a cattle owner to shake hands with anyone during the ceremony. It is believed that bad people often use the act of shaking hands to counteract the intended good of the medicine on the cattle owners' body and the other artefacts. Alternatively, it is also believed that a witch would, through magic, transfer bad medicines and magical powers from his hand to a cattle owner's hand. It is those bad medicines and evil powers that have the potential to wipe out the cattle mysteriously.

(vi) Looking back or returning to the House

Another taboo that a cattle owner adhered to, was that of not looking back or returning to the house once the procession had started. The cattle owner was not allowed to return to his house for whatever reasons because it was believed that once this happens, a herd of cattle would also imitate him by returning to the kraal at one point, during the ceremony. If this happened, it would be extremely difficult to bring them under control and the probability of stampede would be high.

Furthermore, it should be appreciated that since a cattle owner was in charge of all the secretive procedures at critical points, his absence would halt the entire ceremony. This was therefore, a well-intended taboo. Next, the discussion turns to taboos observed after the ceremony.

5.3.2.3 Taboos Observed after the Ceremony

Even when the cattle have been handed over, it was found that some taboos were still observed. All taboos related to food consumption such as the non-scaled fish, teathed fish and cassava leaves, remain into effect. Other taboos that were observed even after the ceremony were the taboo on a cattle owner's paddling stick, the medicinal necklace as

well as the washing of pots at the streams, lakes or rivers. The taboos were observed in an effort to continue safeguarding the cattle from water beasts and magical acts of bad people.

In summary then, according to Mbiti (1969), by spelling out what may not be done and the consequences of doing so, taboos have safeguarded the welfares of communities. It has been observed that all taboos set for this ceremony are targeted, ultimately, at the safe transit of the herds of cattle to the upper land. Several taboos are placed on food and other artefacts such as the medicinal necklace, but they all work together at contributing to orderliness in the execution of various tasks of the ceremony. Furthermore, taboos, as discussed in this dissertation, have shown some usefulness at raising family and community keenness to remain cohered amidst aspects that threaten community life. This is in line with Magesa's (1997: 142) claim that, 'taboos are an essential feature of the moral perception of African religion'. Further, he adds that beyond this, taboos also indicate the relationship between humanity and the ancestors, who are life's immediate mediators.

According to Bourdillon (1990), taboos maintain the established order, and a breach of any of them threatens to overthrow order. Order was one aspect that was required in ceremonies of the magnitude and nature of *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu*, where hundreds of cattle are involved, with participants paddling for over six hours to cover a distance of over thirty kilometres. Without the imposition of the wisdom of taboos, it may have been extremely difficult to guarantee a successful transit of cattle. For instance, it was a taboo to eat and to drink any alcoholic or non-alcoholic beverages before the cattle crossed the Luanginga River. Suppose this taboo was not in place, alcohol, which was normally taken after the crossing of the river, would have been terribly abused, thereby, putting the lives of the people at great risk. Several other taboos may find such similar applications.

It must be emphasized that taboos carry more advantages than our pen and paper rules and regulations, in that, the danger which should have been explained was, in many cases, not explained, but it was believed to be there. However, when they are breached, sooner or later, the consequences of transgression invariably bounced back upon the transgressor. It is for this reason that taboos have great moral authority. This is why their authority is considered to be 'unmatched' by that of any other prohibition. With this in mind, *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* plays a significant role towards attaining social equilibrium.

The next section addresses beliefs that are peculiar to *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony.

5.3.3 Beliefs associated with *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* Ceremony

Evidently, the findings show that there were numerous ancestral invocation activities dotted across the ceremony. Basically, this inclination is a proof about the people's strong belief that ancestors, as Magesa (1997: 52) puts it, were not separate from the family, lineage or clan from which they come. Most of the activities that the participants were involved in, had their foundation in the belief that the ancestors are, like Magesa (1997:51) calls them, the protectors of the society. The foregoing belief runs across different African traditional societies. In this study, the discussion is centred on four beliefs peculiar to *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony namely; belief in ancestors' power to influence the ceremony, belief in the powerful effect of protective medicines, belief in devastating effects of water beasts as well as the belief in magic performed by bad people.

5.3.3.1 Belief in Ancestors' power to influence the Ceremony

From the findings, there was a belief in ancestors' power to influence the ceremony either positively or negatively. One of the major worries that haunt a cattle owner during preparation and on the actual day of the ceremony is whether or not, the ceremony will be successful. This was observed in the way cattle owners, family members and the participants in general, regularly turned to the ancestors to seek intervention. For instance, whether or not, the community will respond in considerable numbers to assist in driving the cattle across the flooded plains, depended, according to the findings, on the ancestors. Even the willingness of the people to attend the ceremony and to remain adhered to some taboos, were all regular pleas to the ancestors.

It was clear from the narratives in the findings that ancestors do not just influence the people, but they also play the protective role on both the people and cattle in transit. Additionally, if they were not honoured, they are believed to withdraw from the ceremony, an action which no cattle owner would want to imagine. It was believed that if they withdrew, the people and cattle were going to be extremely vulnerable to merciless attacks by crocodiles and other water beasts. This was a widely held belief about the protective role of the ancestors because according to Magesa (1997: 51), 'The ancestors are the protectors of the society'.

The belief in the ancestors does not just end with the aspects outlined above, but they add the aspect that its either they will guide a cattle owner successfully to the various traditional medicines, or they will not. If they were displeased, the initial step of collecting traditional

medicine would fail. If this happened, the initial rituals such as the *kuolelisa Likomu* and the *kuolela* would not be performed, hence, the ceremony would be delayed until amends were made. Other aspects that the ancestors are capable of influencing, if they were displeased, are to do with causing a heavy downfall at any point of the event. Numerous other sources of confusion that would obstruct the successful holding of the ceremony, may erupt before or during the ceremony. The belief in the Ancestors' power to influence the ceremony is so strongly held, that the first step taken is usually that of asking them to intervene right from the start of the preparations.

5.3.3.2 Belief in the power of protective Medicine

Mbiti (1969) observed that among African societies, there is mystical power to change into animals (lycanthropy), power to make inanimate objects turn into biological living creatures and so on. He claims that African people know this, and for that reason, they wear charms, eat 'medicines' or get them rubbed into their bodies to counteract the evil effects of this power or to obtain powerfully 'charged' objects containing the same power. He states that this mystical power is not fiction, but a reality with which African people have to reckon. According to him, the medicine may be applied on the bodies, worn as necklaces, put around the wrist, chewed or just put under the tongue and so on.

Mbiti's description above fits the description of the undertakings in *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony. The findings show that the people hold strong beliefs in the power of the protective medicine. Their confidence on these medicines can be seen in the many rituals that were performed, in which traditional medicines were at the centre stage. There was also a belief that these medicines were handed down to them by the ancestors, and that their effectiveness at achieving the desirable goals, was credited to the power of the ancestors. Actually, according to Idowu (1973: 200), 'The invocation of ancestors, in connection with the practice of traditional medicine is a common feature in many parts of Africa'.

Additionally, the people equally associated the power of the medicine, to their full adherence to the set taboos. Two other aspects regarding traditional medicine kept resurfacing from different interviewees. Firstly, the fact that the medicine gave them courage and authority to perform the various activities throughout the ceremony, and secondly, that fact that the medicine nullified the attacks by dangerous water beasts and traps of evil people.

From the participants' shared views, it was held that traditional medicine carried with it, the ability to repel water beasts and exorcize 'evil' water spirits. This was an important belief about traditional medicine, as it helped cattle owners and ceremony participants to overcome fears attributed to dangers of working in water. Like Mbiti (1969) put it, they wear charms, eat 'medicines' or get them rubbed onto their bodies to counteract the evil effects of contrary powers. From the findings, a cattle owner was 'decorated' with powerfully 'charged' objects that included a medicinal necklace and a special paddling stick believed to have power to counteract the intended evil, and to keep the people and cattle safe.

5.3.3.3 Belief in devastating effects of Water Beasts

There was a very strong belief in the presence of magical beasts such as crocodiles, hippos, snakes and any other manifestations that bad people can think of making. It was believed that these beasts can cause havoc to a herd of cattle and the people participating in the ceremony. The participants observed that these beasts were very disruptive to the ceremony proceedings. Actually, the foregoing belief is a reflection of Mbiti's (1969: 194) findings about the presence of mystical powers among African societies. He noted that there were mystical powers, among Africans, to make inanimate objects turn into biological living creatures. This belief, like other beliefs discussed so far, is not taken for granted. Because of this entrenched belief, as people at the centre of the ceremony preparations, cattle owners ensured that counteractive measures were put in place. As already observed, some rituals such as the *kuolelisa likomu*, *kulaala* and *kulaala nuka* are performed specifically to counteract, among other things, the devastating works of magical beasts. Additionally, the use of protective traditional medicine is widespread.

5.3.3.4 Belief in Magic Performed by Bad People

Although this belief in magic performed by bad people has indirectly been discussed under the belief people hold in the devastating effects of water beasts, it was still important to allow it stand alone. The findings show that throughout the ceremony, precautions were taken to prevent magic from being played on the people and cattle. According to Parrinder (1962: 116), 'black' magic is feared. In this ceremony, fears were expressed about the possible magical attacks and loss of cattle. As a result of this belief, cattle owners were compelled to pursue various means of preventing it from happening or strategizing on counteractive measures that would protect their animals as well as themselves.

The beliefs that are associated with this ceremony have been discussed. Their entrenchments in the lives of the people have played a key role in preserving the rich details of the ceremony, and how people conduct themselves.

5.4 Agreements between Cattle Owners and Caretakers

The study found that the arrival of cattle at a caretaker's home brought a lot of joy, ululations and a sigh of relief to a caretaker. It was learnt, through the study that a caretaker could fall out of favour if he did not discharge his duties and responsibilities diligently in the previous engagements. Thus, the selection to the post of caretaker was competitive, and it was not taken for granted.

The Figure 5.5 shows a caretaker and cattle owner preparing for the handover processes, which include physical counting of cattle and signing of the agreement.



Figure 5. 5. Temporal caretaker meets the family of a cattle owner on arrival. (Field Data, 2018)

It is however, important to understand who these caretakers are, where they are drawn from, and why probably, this long time standing practice has continued to this day.

Brief Description of Caretakers

The study found that caretakers were drawn, mainly from the Mbunda speaking people. Paul (1996: 5) states that, 'Tribal migrations resulting from the ethnic conflicts and internal dissensions brought large numbers of Mbunda people from Angola'. They sought the refugee status in Barotseland. According to Turner (1952: 13), they were welcomed, and settled on the east margin of the plain. Historically, around the 1800, King Mulambwa Santulu of the lozi people welcomed them. They became a subject ethnic group to the Lozi and they got involved in herding cattle as slaves of their lozi masters.

Caretakers and Social Inequality

The structural functionalism theory which underpins this study emphasises social inequality as one of the characteristics present in human societies. This aspect refers to scenarios in which individuals in a society do not have equal social status. Social inequality is an important characteristic for this theory because of an assumption that, since social inequality exists, there needs to be a certain level of inequality in order for a society to operate. This foregoing description fits very well, in the inequalities between the cattle rich Lozi people in the flood plains and the under privileged Mbundas on the upper land. The presence of the inequality has perpetuated the concept of caretakers to the present time. However, the relationship should be seen as being symbiotic.

Handovers

It has already been noted that herds of cattle leave the flooded plain around end of January and are handed over to the caretakers who take over their responsibility until mid-June. The handover normally specifies numbers of calves and the rest of the cattle. Figure 5.6 shows cattle being counted by both parties as part of the handover requirement.



Figure 5.6. Physical counting of cattle during handover. (Field Data, 2018)

After both the owner and caretaker are satisfied with the numbers, the document is signed by both parties. At this point, a cattle owner gets a copy and gives the other copy to the caretaker. It is after this point that the other specific agreements are entered into. As Figure 5.7 shows, signing of the agreement is only done after the counting of cattle.



Figure 5.7. A cattle owner and caretaker signing the agreement. (Field Data, 2018)

Agreements

Several agreements are made between cattle owners and caretakers. It must be noted that some cattle owners may have long standing contractual agreements with their selected caretakers, which run from year to year. In some cases, however, new caretakers are engaged. In both cases, prior agreements would have already been made, at the preparation stage. However, when the cattle are received, the agreements are reviewed and revised if need arises.

When the handovers are completed, the caretaker takes full responsibility of the cattle. It is a mutual relationship and they bid farewell to each other as shown in Figure 5.8.



Figure 5.8. Caretaker bidding farewell. (Field Data, 2018)

After bidding farewell, a caretaker, his family and friends drive cattle to the interiors of the upper land as shown in Figure 5.9.



Figure 5.9. Caretaker going with the cattle after handover. (Field Data, 2018)

Figure 5.10 shows helpers and part of the community members returning from their brief escort of cattle within the Kalamba Area.



Figure 5.10. Helpers to the cattle owner returning from their brief escort of cattle within the Kalamba area. (Field Data, 2018)

The study found that the agreements were centred on the general welfare of cattle while in the custody of a caretaker. An extensive care and security of the animals was dominant. It was under the agreement that those cows with small calves, those with malnourished calves, those breastfeeding two calves (*ye putulezwi*) as well as those that would deliver at the upper land, were not allowed to be milked. It appeared therefore, that the prohibition was meant to safeguard the lives of the calves, as the absence of such a measure could result in the calves being malnourished and consequently, dying from malnutrition. In many cases, the impact of the restriction on the caretakers' welfare is very minimal.

In exchange for the care of the cattle, the caretaker's benefits are spelt out. Prominent among these, is the freedom to milk the cows placed under his custody. It was observed during agreement negotiations, that they had the right to even sell the milk. This offers a great benefit both at personal nutritional level, and improvement at household financial level. Other reciprocal benefits laid in the making of their crop fields fertile.

It was also found that in some instances, a cattle owner would include giving a caretaker a calf as a token of appreciation. This only took place after long years of provable loyalty to the task. It must be noted that cattle owners are not compelled to do this. Those who do it, do so out of their own personal conviction, to extend hospitality to their fellow human being. This act therefore, appears uncommon among cattle owners. This could probably

be because of the need to maintain some social inequality which ultimately, promotes interdependence of communities. Ultimately, the status quo may keep driving the communities into appreciable levels of societal cohesion and equilibrium.

The section that follows addresses the question about changes that have occurred over time in *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony.

5.5 Changes that have taken place in *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* Ceremony

The study showed that *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony has undergone several changes over the years.

(i) From communal to family- based

The current study established that over the years, the ceremony has transformed from being whole village (community) event, to a family based occasion. It is reported that cattle belonging to the same village would leave the flooded plains on the same day as one company. The village had a father figure for everyone and he handled all the roles that facilitated the smooth holding of the ceremony. He paid all observances to the ancestors at a village shrine, in similar ways we have observed in the current study. However, due to various factors, some of which are beyond the scope of this study, the gradual move away from an extended family system to a nuclear family system has occurred. Factors such as population increase in both the people and the cattle, jealous and quarrels among relatives and other factors are alleged to have impacted the communal *kuomboka* negatively. This being the case, proliferation of the individualised or family - based ceremonies has continued to be on the increase. The current study was based on a family based ceremony in which a cattle owner performed the required rituals individually at a family shrine.

Having witnessed the activities that go into the ceremony, and considering the frequency with which the community was required to attend the family- based ceremonies, one would opt for the communal event. If there were twenty families in one's proximity, it means that approximately twenty days of out of other productive ventures would go to 'waste'. However, if it is looked at from the point of view of recreation, the arrangement is a lot more profitable.

(ii) Caretaker Involvement

The concept of caretakers has been discussed. However, it is a new development. It is reported that in the ancient days, cattle owners used to shift along with their cattle to the

upper land. This worked very well in the extended family system, but it has shrunk under the nuclear family system. Many reasons can explain this, including the families' enlightenment about their children's need for schooling. Secondly, the availability of abundant labour among the Mbundas has equally, contributed to the shift in practice. The third reason behind the shift is the seemingly booming fish business which cattle owners and their families engage themselves in, once the cattle were taken to the upper land.

(iii) Women presence in the Ceremony

In the past, according to the headmen who participated in the study, women never used to accompany men as they drove the cattle to the Luanginga River or '*kalamba*' as the case is, currently. It is on record that in the past, women were not even allowed to reach the kraal. Though stringent taboos continue to exist towards women, it is reported that in the past, taboos that barred them from attending the ceremony altogether, existed. Other than mere marginalisation, it was alleged that they were unclean due to their experiences of monthly period. According to the beliefs held, uncleanliness arising from menses, was feared to have the ability to make the medicine less or none effective altogether.

So, the shift towards allowing women to participate fully in the ceremony, growing flexibility in culture, an improved acceptability of women as partners in development, the realisation that the women's involvement added colour to the ceremony, and many other factors, has triggered increased levels of women participating in the event. Currently, with the foregoing factors at play, women join the men in the procession, right from the kraal to the handover point.

(iv) Abandonment of the Traditional Flutes (*lipala*)

The study established that a long time ago, the traditional flutes (*lipala*) were played to communicate the departure of cattle to the upper land. On the day of the ceremony, the *lipala* were played to guide and excite the cattle. Furthermore, they were played to entertain the participants. However, it has become clear that traditional flutes are no longer obtainable. It was reported that the current generation of middle aged adults have no idea of the *lipala*. Their disappearance is being associated with the high level of skill required in making them.

Figure 5.11 depicts the use of the *Namalwa* in place of the *lipala* used in the past.



Figure 5:11. *Namalwa* used in place of *lipala*. (Field Data, 2018)

As a replacement, the special traditional drum (*Namalwa*) and the modern sports whistles are being used. This has marked a great shift over the years.

(v) Mode of Community Celebration

In the past, the traditional lozi beverage, *Ilya* (a thick porridge mixed with sour milk), was the only beverage carried and served after the cattle had crossed the Luanginga River. However, currently, alcoholic drinks are carried in the canoes alongside *Ilya*. It is still a taboo, however, to eat or drink anything before the cattle finally crossed the river. Another recent modification is in the carrying of music systems and playing them throughout the ceremony, as opposed to the past practices of playing the xylophones (*lilimba*) and traditional drums (*milupa*) after the handover. Normally, in those days, local and traditional songs, with a display of traditional dances, were prominent. This, however, is no longer the case.

The foregoing discussion focussed on the organisation, rituals, taboos, beliefs, agreements and changes that have occurred in *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony over the years. The bottom line is that the ceremony is strengthened by the numerous beliefs in the presence and ever watchfulness of the ancestors. Furthermore, the taboos that surround the ceremony and the unexplained repercussions on breaching them, have kept the ceremony to stand the test of time.

The discussion further looked at the socio-economic inequalities that exist between the cattle owners (Lozi people) and caretakers (Mbundas), as a catalyst for engagement of caretakers. The interrelatedness and interdependence among the Lozi in Munyama area as well as between the Lozi people of Munyama and the Mbundas on the upper land, has promoted intra and extra societal cohesion and hence, fostering social equilibrium.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Overview

The foregoing chapter discussed findings of the study. This section draws the conclusion and recommendations of the study on the Organisational and Religious Practices of *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony, the case of Munyama area in Kalabo District. The study has endeavoured to establish the organisational aspects, religious practices performed and adhered to, agreements drawn between cattle owners and temporal caretakers as well as the changes that have occurred in the ceremony over the years.

6.2 Conclusion

The study on *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony has brought to the fore, interesting organisational aspects, uncovered rituals performed, taboos adhered to, and beliefs upheld, with regard to the ceremony. Further, the study has brought out agreements made between cattle owners and temporal caretakers as well as changes that have occurred in the ceremony over the years. In line with the objectives of the current study, conclusions are that:

Organisationally, a cattle owner takes a centre stage though his immediate family and community members often assist in meeting specific ceremony tasks. The preparation and actualisation of the ceremony saw ten rituals being performed by a cattle owner, numerous taboos set out for adherence and several beliefs upheld for the successful holding of the ceremony. The rituals' demand for peace and reconciliation on the family hosting the ceremony has promoted social cohesion which is a key pre-requisites for societal equilibrium. Additionally, the recognition and invocation of ancestors at every point of the ceremony, such as in the search, extraction, the mixing and use of the traditional medicine as well as in the performance of rituals, will keep alive, the rich traditional religious practices embedded in the ceremony.

It needs to be emphasized here that, the findings and discussion of the study indicated that the ceremony is a unifying factor. The entire community; the men, women and the children, gathered to celebrate the annual transit of cattle to the upper land. Each person had a role to play, in the like manner that the different body parts work together for the proper functioning of the body. Interestingly, the community unreservedly offered their time, expertise and care for cattle as they drove them through the floods. This interrelatedness and interdependence required by the ceremony, promotes cohesion and stability within the community.

Several religious practices, some of which have been discussed above, have fostered orderliness in the way people conduct their lives. As long as the rituals continue to demand for peace in the family and community, taboos keep re-enforcing the acceptable behaviour, and beliefs continue to be upheld, the moral structure of the Lozi people of Munyama area will remain undisturbed for the good of humanity.

Although it is acknowledged that adherents of African traditional religion lived their religion, for the people of Munyama, attending and participating in the ceremony, revived and revitalized their commitment to the Lozi traditional religion. The reconnection with ancestors exhibited in the ceremony, will foster continuity of *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony in the future.

With respect to agreements, the findings and discussion have shown that both cattle owners and caretakers benefited mutually. Though the cattle deprived Mbundas (caretakers) had the demanding responsibility of taking care of the cattle, the benefits tend to outweigh the demand. They have the right to sale the milk, manure their crop fields for increased crop yields, and use the oxen for ploughing and transportation of items. As a result of the foregoing benefits, their social life, nutritional levels, and their economy in general, improves greatly. This interdependence inevitably reduces gaps in social inequalities. On the other hand, cattle owners are relieved of the heavy responsibility of taking care of cattle. This in turn, gives them an opportunity to venture into other economic activities such as fishing and farming. The mutual benefits enjoyed by both parties, will keep promoting the continuity and flourishing of *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony in the future.

In addressing changes that have occurred with the passing of time, the findings identified four main areas. Firstly, there is a relaxation on the exclusion of women participation in the ceremony. In time past, it was a taboo for women to even reach at a kraal on the day of the ceremony. Although women are still barred from attending some of the rituals, areas of inclusion have widened. The second major change lies in the ceremony being conducted more at a family level, as opposed to the initial arrangement where it was held jointly. Being a community activity, reducing it to a family level has made it to be a lot more demanding and fatiguing. This has, to some extent, lowered the levels of participation across villages, an aspect that cohered different communities. The third aspect is in the

adherence of taboos. Some of the taboos that were previously imposed on certain sections of the society are no longer emphasized. For instance, it was a taboo for women to reach the kraal, river or handover venue. This is no longer the case.

Equally, other relaxed taboos include the carrying along of alcohol and modern musical systems for entertainment, during the ceremony. Other changes that had come by, are in the type of drums being used to guide the cattle during the ceremony, and the types of songs and dances used for entertainment after the handover. Obviously, some of these are evolutionary changes aimed at conforming to modernity. Yet other changes, are as a result of the socioeconomic and family dynamics of the Lozi people of Munyama Area.

6.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Cattle owners in *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony perform several secretive rituals that need to be passed to the young generation. In the absence of initiating or explaining to the young, key aspects of culture as related to the ceremony will be lost. Therefore, it is recommended that elderly people or cattle owners pass the correct information to the young generation if the ceremony has to survive the pressures of modernity.
- ii. Some taboos have been used to strive towards orderliness during the ceremony and hence, are useful in the preservation of life. It is recommended that the use of taboos could be extended to various other areas of people's lives that are deemed to be disintegrating.
- iii. The ceremony elders and cultural officers should put their efforts together to popularise the ceremony in order to attract both local and international cultural exchanges, which would eventually benefit the indigenous people. This is in view of the finding that the ceremony was highly entertaining.
- iv. Cattle owner-temporal caretaker (Mbundas) agreements are seen as economic means of empowering caretakers. It is therefore, recommended that the government works out mechanisms with cattle owners to make poverty eradication a reality among poverty stricken indigenous Mbundas.

Recommendations for Further Research

- i. The findings and discussions were based on a case study on the people of Munyama. For further research, a study could also be conducted to establish the impact of the ceremony on the young people in the area.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: Research Instruments

Interview Guide for the Headmen

Researcher introduces herself and talks about the research being under-taken and its relevance.

Questions

1. When did *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony begin in this area?
2. When the animals leave this place due to the floods, where exactly are they taken? Explain.
3. Is there something that is done to the animals before the actual day of their departure?
4. How about the cattle owners, what specific activities do they undertake in readiness for their animals' departure? Explain.
5. How important are the activities that take place before the animals leave?
6. Are there any special activities involving cattle owners on the actual day that their animals leave? Explain.
7. What is the significance of the activities that take place on the actual day of *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony?
8. Are there agreements made between the cattle owners and the temporal caretakers? Explain.
9. Has there been any major changes that have taken place over the years in the way the ceremony is held?
10. What could be the causes for the changes?
11. How important is this ceremony to the cattle owners, the care takers and the community as a whole?
12. Is there anything new that you would like to see in this ceremony? Explain.

Thank you for sparing your time.

Interview Guide for Cattle Owners

Researcher introduces herself and talks about the research being under-taken and its relevance.

Questions

1. Kindly introduce yourself.
2. What is *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu*?
3. Who are the key players in this ceremony?
4. How do you get yourself ready for the departure of your animals?
5. What specific things do you do in readiness for the animals' departure?
6. Are there any myths surrounding the cattle movement to the dry land? Explain.
7. What beliefs do people hold concerning the animals and *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony?
8. Are there any specific activities done to the animals before the day of their movement? Explain.
9. How about human beings, do they engage in any activities specifically meant for this occasion?
10. On the actual day of the ceremony, what procedures do people follow to support the *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony?
11. What role do you play as the owner of the animals?
12. What is the significance of under-taking the various activities before, during and after the ceremony?
13. Do you make any agreements with the caretakers concerning the animals? Explain.
14. What taboos are associated with this ceremony?
15. Has there been any changes in the way the ceremony is held? If so, what are the changes?
16. Is there anything new that you would like to see in this ceremony? Explain.

Thank you for according me this opportunity

Interview Guide for the women

Researcher introduces herself and talks about the research being under-taken and its relevance.

Questions

Kindly introduce yourself

1. What is *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu*?
2. Are there any myths regarding the animals and their movement to the dry land?
3. What beliefs do people hold for the cattle and *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu*?
4. Are there any taboos observed concerning the *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony?
Explain.
5. What do you think is the significance of observing taboos during this ceremony?
6. Do women have a role to play in this ceremony? Explain.
7. Are there any activities done to the animals before their departure? Explain.
8. What is the significance of conducting such activities?
9. Explain to me how *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony takes place.
10. Have there been any changes in the way this ceremony is conducted?
11. What could have been the causes of the changes, if any?
12. How important is this ceremony to this community?
13. Is there anything new that you would like to see in this ceremony? Explain.

Thank you for sparing your precious time.

Interview Guide for the Focus Group Discussion for the Boys

Researcher introduces herself and talks about the research being under-taken and its relevance

The discussants are requested to introduce themselves.

Questions

1. What is *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu*?
2. What activities precede the departure of the animals to the dry land?
3. Who are the key players in this ceremony?
4. What role do you play in this ceremony?
5. What is the order of events on the day of the ceremony?
6. What beliefs do the people hold concerning the cattle and their movement to the dry land?
7. What taboos do you observe in relation to this ceremony?
8. Are there any myths associated with the *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony?
9. Are there any agreements made between the cattle owners and the temporal caretakers? Explain.
10. Have there been any changes in the way the ceremony is carried out?
11. Is there anything new that you would like to see in this ceremony? Explain.

Thank the participants for their active participation.

Observation Checklist

Want to look for:

1. The preparations that will be made for *Kuomboka Kwa Likomu* ceremony.
2. The religious practices that will take place before, during and after the ceremony.
3. Agreements that will be made between cattle owners and caretakers.
4. Activities that will take place at the hand over venue where the cattle will be handed over to the caretakers.