

PART ONE:**TRADITIONAL AFRICA AND NEW COLONIAL SOCIETIES**

A study of education is meaningless without
constant reference to the situation in which the
education is given.

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CHAPTER I:

TRADITIONAL AFRICAN EDUCATION

Education, it is said, should be a natural and not an artificial process and should come from the working of the inborn interest and not through response to external forces. That is true; it is, in fact, life itself.

W. R. Mwendela{1}

Some aspects of African education were formal; that is to say, there was a specific program and a conscious division between teachers and pupils.

Walter Rodney{2}

This study perpetuates a popular, yet false, western assumption: that education was introduced to Africa by colonial governments and missionary groups. It does this by focusing on the development of the NWP's modern educational system which was created in Europe and North America but had far-reaching effects on African society. In the process this study also commits one serious sin of omission. It largely ignores the elaborate and indigenous educational systems that existed before the arrival of the whites and that continue to exist today though altered in form and meaning. Yet these complex traditional systems do have a pervasive significance that this study cannot ignore. As

{1} Mukanda and Makishi: Traditional Education in North-Western Zambia (Lusaka: NECZAN, 1972), p. iv.

{2} How Europe Underdeveloped Africa (Washington D.C.: Howard University Press, 1973), p. 239.

Walter Rodney has noted when speaking of Africa as a whole, these systems had "direct relevance to Africans, in sharp contrast to what was later introduced." {3}

In the pre-colonial era, the distinctive educational systems that lay at the core of all NWP societies--whether Lunda, Luvale, Luchazi, Chokwe (LLLC) or Lamba/Kaonde, or some in between group--integrated individuals into societies. This cultural integration of the individual was complex and thorough and not only had social, but also political, economic, and religious implications. {4}

Like the systems that evolved throughout pre-colonial Africa and in Old Testament Hebrew and other pre-industrial societies like colonial America, these educational systems of the NWP peoples specifically functioned to unify each group, enabling it to adapt reasonably successfully to a particular corner of the world. Each educational system not only helped to integrate all elements of society, but to assimilate new ideas into traditional patterns of

{3}Rodney, How Europe Underdeveloped Africa, p. 239. Recent works on the history of education in Africa (in English) almost all commit this 'sin of omission.' A notable example of an otherwise excellent work is Michael Anthony Samuels, Education in Angola, 1878-1914: A History of Culture Transfer and Administration (New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 1970). Although African education seems more relevant to his study than he acknowledges, he only makes passing reference in one short paragraph on page four. An exceptional study that does not commit this 'sin' is Philip Foster, Education and Social Change in Ghana (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965).

{4}As argued later, this presumes that these systems worked.

thought and to perpetuate the group. This system alone allowed societies to weave necessary changes for survival into the existing social fabric and to continue to function as stable entities.

Any broad generalizations about the different educational systems of the NWP will necessarily resemble those of John Mwanakatwe and P. D. Snelson on the whole of Zambia, of Babs Fafunwa on Nigeria, and even of Bernard Bailyn on pre-revolutionary America--though in the last, a small literate elite was trained for higher social position, something that could not occur in pre-literate societies. For example, in all these societies where labor was divided mainly by age and sex, the young learned informally, through imitation. Only certain important elements were formalized, and both adults and youths participated because the whole community considered them essential to its survival. {5}

Mukanda, practiced by the Lunda, Luvale, Luchazi, and Chokwe (LLLC) in the NWP, represents this formal and informal learning for the young that involved the whole society. Outsiders have often regarded it as a colorful, quaint circumcision ritual for males. To those who practiced it, however, mukanda has always been a central

{5} Mwanakatwe, Growth of Education in Zambia Since Independence (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 1-6; Snelson, Educational Development in Northern Rhodesia (Lusaka: NECZAM, 1974), pp. 1-4; Fafunwa, History of Education in Nigeria (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1974), pp. 15-49; Bailyn, Education in the Forming American Society: Needs and Opportunities for Study (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1972), pp. 3-49.

part of traditional educational systems. As such, it illustrates the symbiotic relationship between traditional education and the wider society. [6]

Mukanda: A Model

The following description of mukanda is timeless and generalized, applicable to all LLC societies. It highlights traditional education's colorful variety and occasional formality. Likewise, it indicates traditional education's enormously complex symbolism. Most important, it reveals how traditional education used this colorful variety, occasional formality, and complex symbolism to integrate and reinforce each society. [7]

[6] Mukanda is also practiced by some of the Mbunda "who have not been culturally absorbed by the Lozi." C. H. N. White, Elements in Luvale Beliefs and Rituals, The Rhodes-Livingstone Papers, Number Thirty-Two (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1961), p. 18. The other two major peoples in the NWP, Kaonde and Lamba, do not practice mukanda.

[7] Many writers have described mukanda. Some have made comparisons between mukanda in different localities, but most have described it as conducted by a particular local group or society. The most important studies for the NWP and this study are four works by Turner, White, and Mwendela. All stress its wider social function. White and Turner write as ethnographers; Mwendela writes as an educator. Willie R. Mwendela, Mukanda and Makishi. Victor W. Turner, A Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967); C. H. N. White, Elements and "Notes on the Circumcision Rites of the

Mukanda occurs when a prominent leader, who has an adolescent or pre-adolescent son or nephew, feels that enough youths are on the verge of manhood to justify the time expended on the ceremony. If he is important enough and can get other men in the vicinage to agree that a mukanda is necessary, the community begins to plan carefully because this special training ritual disrupts everyone's normal routine. {8}

Mukanda takes place in the cool months following harvest, but only if the harvest has been good and times are peaceful. The men build special camps, and the women prepare special food and beer. To attract and sustain interest in mukanda and to generate the necessary tension, they make preparations for colorful pageantry that merges entertainment and the deep seriousness of education. {9}

The candidates for mukanda do not have to be sexually mature, but they must be at least pre-adolescent and old enough to be "introduced to adult life." In other words, they must permanently leave the childhood that is

Balovale Tribes," African Studies, 12 (1953), pp. 41-56. I also had many chances to observe different aspects of mukanda between 1964 and 1968. These observations have better enabled me to draw historical inferences about this important ritual.

{8} Turner, Forest, especially pp. 156-84, describes the political and social importance of the headman who is responsible for a mukanda in a particular vicinage.

{9} White, Elements, pp. 1-3, describes typical preparations.

closely aligned with the world of women. During mukanda, the initiates pass through three distinct stages in which boys die and men are born. These follow the pattern for such ceremonies described in Arnold van Gennep's The Rites of Passage. {10}

The first stage is a brief "ritual separation," characterized by mounting excitement. Up to six different kinds of likishi, masked figures who represent ancestral spirits, create anticipation. These likishi range from the wanapwevo--the old woman who symbolizes the female world the youth are leaving--to the katetele--a fierce-looking, super macho figure bearing a large panga. They lead the people in hilarious celebration. Members of the community dance all night and, except for the boys and their guardians, enjoy the permitted social freedom. (Many sexual taboos are relaxed during this time.) After everyone rests, the events continue on the next day. The boys eat a special meal, and their bodies are painted. Then, without warning, they are carried off to the "place of death" outside the village. The women cry and wail; the drums beat frantically. On their way to the camp, the boys and their guardians observe the strict order dictated by custom. When

{10} Mwendela, Mukanda and Makishi, p. 6. White, Elements, pp. 1-2, notes that the boys themselves also had some degree of choice when the eligible candidates were decided. Arnold van Gennep, The Rites of Passage (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), p. 65.

they arrive, the boys are circumcised. {11}

After circumcision, the long transition stage begins. In the past, this stage could exceed nine months; all depended on the instructors' satisfaction with the achievement of the novices. Today the complete ritual often must be squeezed into a two to four week period. {12}

Elaborate formal and extensive informal education takes place during this transition stage. At the camp, a large especially built lodge dominates the scene. Here the boys live and the teachers teach. These instructors are adult males. During this time they replace their non-essential work in the community with camp duties. Their primary responsibility is teaching the novices. In this transition stage the boys receive five categories of training: a) general discipline; b) preservation of the secrets of the lodge; c) sexual knowledge and mores; d) other esoteric knowledge reserved for men; and e) song and

{11} For two especially useful descriptions of the first stage, see White, Elements, pp. 3-5 and Turner, Forest, pp. 187-223. Likishi is the plural for makishi. Each different makishi played a separate role in representing the ancestors. While up to twelve likishi existed historically in the whole area, six or fewer types of likishi generally appear during the mukanda in any particular vicinage. The katotele bearing a large panga chases women, uncircumcised boys, and 'foreigners', from the proximity of camps to prevent "pollution."

{12} White states that in the past the Luvale continued mukanda "for as long as a year," "Circumcision Rites," p. 42. Considering the intensity of the education, the knowledge conveyed and the total impact on the child far exceeds that for a similar time period in the new educational system.

dance. They receive both theoretical and experimental instruction to transform them into adults possessing appropriate knowledge and beliefs. If one boy violates the strict discipline of the camp, all are punished. For example, if a boy forgets or disobeys the regulations, his food and that of his fellow novices is destroyed. The men believe that after a day of hunger each novice will be more apt to remember and obey and also more likely to see that his peers do the same. {13}

Respected instructors control the formal education. A personal guardian attends to the needs of each novice and teaches him to learn and obey the proper rules and accompanying rituals. Besides these guardians, special instructors come "from all parts of the locality. [Together with] other subjects, instruction [is] given in dancing, singing, folklore, handicrafts and sexual life." The purpose of instruction in the past was especially clear.

This period of seclusion gave the youths theoretical knowledge about adult life, how he should behave in society and what society expects of its members. . . . Thus the various subjects [gave] the young man comprehensive preparation for adult life. {14}

Once the youths master the essential skills they can re-enter society in their new roles. The second stage ends and the third stage of 'reincarnation' or rebirth begins.

{13} Ibid., pp. 54-6; see also: White, Elements, pp. 6-7 and Turner, Forest, p. 237.

{14} Mwendela, Mukanda and Makishi, pp. 9-11.

Like the first stage it is short and intense. First women are allowed to see the new men from afar. Then the youths ritually bathe. Finally the likishi lead all the members of the local vicinage in singing and dancing as these ex-boys rejoin society as new men. With this final celebration, the society establishes a new unity. Some form of ritualized sexual intercourse takes place after the celebrations end, because the youths are now considered mature adults and the propagation of society is not only desirable but essential. [15]

From its beginning until this ritual conclusion, nykanda continually strengthens local society. First it stresses the rules for individuals within each segment of society, segments that remain distinct and necessary but interdependent. By focusing on distinctions between insiders and outsiders and on age and sex divisions, it also emphasizes shared, mutual values and goals that bind all

[15] For the most useful description of the last stage, see White, "Elements," pp. 12-4; Turner, Forest, p. 254; and Max Gluckman, "The Role of the Sexes in Wiko Circumcision Ceremonies," in Social Structure--Studies Presented to A. R. Radcliffe, ed. M. Fortes (New York: Russell and Russell Inc., 1953), p. 159. For an elaborate description of the girls' puberty ceremonies, which differed from the boys in that each girl went through it alone, see Victor W. Turner, Drums of Affliction: A Study of Religious Processes among the Ndenbu of Zambia (Oxford: Clarendon Press and the International African Institute, 1968), pp. 198-268. Although Kaonde and Lamba boys were not circumcised, girls in these societies had a similar ceremony to that for LLC women. See Frank H. Melland, In Witchbound Africa: An Account of the Primitive Kaonde Tribe and Their Beliefs, (London: Seeley, Service and Co., Ltd., 1923), pp. 76-8 and Clement M. Doke, The Lambas of Northern Rhodesia: A Study of Their Customs and Beliefs, (London: C. Harrup and Co., 1931), pp. 148-58.

participants. By reaffirming clear and basic rules at a time when new social adjustments are made, it reinforces society's essential unity. In addition, at this time of change, it reminds people that continuity exists with the ancestors and the past and that this continuity must be perpetuated into the future.

Furthermore, while the society changes at this level, so do individuals within it. In mukanda, as boys become men, mothers "lose" sons and adult males gain new comrades. Thus, individuals maintain an appropriate identity for their age and sex. In short, mukanda is a joint LLLC Bar Mitzvah, a Mardi Gras, and an Easter sunrise service.

But this model of mukanda, which stresses education's complexity and ability to continually reunify society, is inadequate because it is timeless. Mukanda, like the wider systems of which it forms a part, has changed enormously. And only history can show how societies experience subtle, but profound changes to avoid collapsing in the face of enormous outside challenges. History also accounts for two forms of essential education, 'traditional' and 'modern', that children receive today. This historical description partially parallels the historical analysis in the later chapters, except that it focuses on African societies and their traditional education, especially mukanda.

Adaptation Under the World System

An all-encompassing world system both challenged and transcended the unique, insular and regional societies in the NWP. Its roots lay in technological innovations that occurred in two successive stages during the previous five hundred years. Its initial innovations took place, largely in Western Europe, between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries and laid the foundation for the industrial revolution. At that time, some European countries also accumulated unprecedented amounts of capital and the modern middle class emerged with a strong work ethic. From these European roots, peripheral subservient economic areas developed. The system expanded faster and further, not only spanning the globe, but also entering into its remotest corners. [16]

Since these multiple changes originally occurred in the West, almost unlimited powers fell into the hands of a few nations, especially the United Kingdom. Principally during the 1880s, these nations used their new powers to subjugate large segments of Africa, including all societies in the area then dubbed 'the heart of Darkest Africa'. With the advent of this modern imperialism, the West shoved the traditional societies of the NWP into a new political, economic, and social order. In fact, the age of modern co-

[16] For the origins, see Immanuel Wallerstein, The Modern World-System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century (New York: Academic Press, 1974). Also, in 1980-1981 lectures by Alan K. Smith were helpful.

lonialism began as Europe thrust Africa into the new order, powerless. {17}

In the wake of this enormous European power, new colonial societies emerged. Occupying the peak of the new social hierarchies, a colonial elite then consciously patterned these societies after the imperial motherlands. This group ruled the societies, organized their economies, and shepherded them religiously. Race, either officially or unofficially, became the basic criterion for entry into the group. The privileged Europeans, who had direct access to the world's increasingly sophisticated technology, also controlled the training needed to understand and use it.

The colonial elite regarded all African culture and education as primitive or quaint, if not savage or sinful. African ways seemed irrelevant or even anathema to 'civilization'. This elite never considered the possibility that traditional African education might be important enough to integrate into the training required for the modern technological world. In fact, many white colonials doubted that Africans had the intelligence to acquire new skills or, if

{17} 'Power' and 'powerless' are used as rather general, amorphous concepts in this thesis and in this paragraph are deliberately counterpoised in the colonial context. As indicated in the preface, and as scholars of Africa well know, Africans in some parts of the continent stoically resisted. But all resistance, however noble, ultimately failed. The number of works written on the "New Imperialism" of the late nineteenth century is vast. I especially like the brief collection of readings by Robin W. Winks (ed.), British Imperialism: Gold, God and Glory (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963). Also, see Chap. III, especially the last section.

they had, should have access to them. These people preferred Africans to remain unskilled laborers. [18]

In this negative social environment, two things happened with regard to education. First, very inadequate educational systems with European roots began. Second, traditional educational systems and African societies adapted and reintegrated themselves into the dominant order. In the first case, the new systems slowly began resembling other systems of education around the world. Despite grave weaknesses, they were increasingly based on scientific and industrial technology, European middle class principles of hard work and thrift, and a wider political, religious and social identity that transcended all local, traditional societies.

The new developed alongside the old, but interaction between them remained minimal. Officially sanctioned by the new elite, all segments of the colonial society increasingly accepted the new system as 'education', acknowledging the traditional systems only as 'tribal customs'. Colonial societies also deliberately frustrated African attempts to unify the old and the new. Consequently, an almost insurmountable dichotomy developed between them. In this way,

[18] The educability of Africans was an important historical issue. For two exceptionally useful studies, see Charles H. Lyons, *To Wash an Aethiopian White: British Ideas About Black African Educability, 1530-1960* (New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 1975) and Barbara A. Yates, "White Views of Black Minds: Schooling in King Leopold's Congo," *History of Education Quarterly*, 20 (Spring 1980): 27-50.

the new European-based, world-oriented system became the official system of education. {19}

The traditional educational systems creatively adapted and continued, but their original functions changed. C. M. N. White closely observed Luvale adaptations in the face of the new challenges. His comments relate their general social "adaptation and reintegration" to their more specific mukanda-rituals:

Luvale society has undergone quite extensive changes in the last half century. . . . [but] far from disintegrating disastrously in the process, it has undergone successful adaptation and reintegration through the easy acceptance of certain western cultural values. Hence modern Luvale society exhibits a certain amount of dualism combining western and traditional elements in an almost creole fashion.

Part of the continuing survival of the male puberty rites must be ascribed not to any continuing acceptance of . . . symbolic values but to the fact that these are public rituals involving much that is picturesque and colorful and capable of a considerable degree of secularization, as well as symbolizing the unity of all Luvale. [They] express in ceremony certain Luvale cultural values. {20}

This commentary on Luvale adaptation applies equally to all NWP societies. Because of dynamic educational

{19} When interviewing people, I discovered that most thought "education" only included the official school system and its historical development. For example, see the long quotation by Silas Sameta in Chap. VII. Only the most educated and politically aware believed otherwise. Generally, when a lead question was interjected about "traditional education," the conversation changed, sometimes disastrously when individuals became, politically self-conscious. More often, however, extremely interesting reflections and discussions ensued on the acculturation of children and youths.

{20} White, Elements, pp. 74 and 26.

systems, none either disintegrated or merged fully into any wider territorial or international society.

These traditional societies specialized as they adapted and in the process, changed or permuted in significant ways. For example through its school system, the foreign-dominated colonial society increasingly selected the very brightest, most energetic and tenacious young people for favorable jobs in its new wage economy. This selection continually dichotomized traditional societies until traditional education assumed a new function, to prevent these divisions from irreconcilably splitting and destroying society. Traditional education did this by providing a cultural identity that transcended the new divisions. As other economic, political and religious functions withered, this special cultural unification became increasingly important. {21}

Mukanda provides an example of traditional education's new specialized role. During it, the new literate/illiterate dichotomy disappears. As White observes, "The occasions upon which the ritual is performed not only reiterate and reaffirm [Luvale] values, but serve to

{21} Mwendela, Mukanda and Makishi, rather strangely states "the circumcision tradition had no religious significance" (p. 6). This total denial of its obvious historical significance, detailed by White and others, is probably important. Mwendela is a second generation Christian himself, and by NWP standards received an exceptionally good mission education. Thus he seems to be directly manipulating traditions into what he regards as acceptable modern molds. Unfortunately, when interviewing his brother, I neglected to ask about this statement.

integrate society in its traditional form. Acceptance and performance of the ritual is to reject any anti-social or deviationist tendencies." All men become simply men, as opposed to women, children, and outsiders. All submit to the demands of its rituals and in turn possess a role within. No one is excluded because of ability, social class, or wealth. And as mukanda reintegrates everyone, the entire group identity is reaffirmed. Consequently, mukanda becomes a soothing balm for both individuals and society in the face of potentially destructive pressures. {22}

In forcing traditional society to specialize, the omnipotent colonial society generated another kind of invisible metamorphosis. It transformed the nature of the local society into which the individual was integrated and from which he received his identity. In the precolonial era, local identity developed out of a rather amorphous and fluid combination of clans joined by matrilineal kinship, spatial proximity, and language. In the colonial period, this local social identity slowly expanded, assuming a wider and frequently more rigid form that outsiders often labeled as "tribes" or "tribal clusters" or "ethnicities." {23}

More simply, an LLLC ethnic grouping emerged and evolved. The identity of this new type of LLLC group increasingly resembled that of all other ethnic groups world-

{22} White, Elements, p. 26.

{23} In Chap. III, the colonial origins and significance of "tribes" is discussed.

wide. In each, individuals became part of a distinct sub-culture that was part of a wider, more comprehensive society. The difference between a unique culture in the nineteenth century and a distinct sub-culture in the twentieth century is, by definition subtle but profound.

Colonial society transformed the individual's social identity in two ways, each of which had an economic base. First, it forced extended rituals to be abridged even in the rural homelands of LLC societies. Second, it relocated many LLC adults in the new heterogeneous urban areas. The transformation of mukanda indicates how this metamorphosis occurred.

With its economic roles excised and its political and religious roles partly voided, mukanda failed to justify the long periods of time hitherto devoted to it. Extended instruction in esoteric, localized knowledge became less meaningful to both adolescent and adult males. Increasing numbers of the former attended the new mission and government schools. Local elders had to squeeze mukanda into school holidays. Increasing numbers of the latter migrated to towns and worked in wage earning jobs to get money for taxes, food, and clothing. As the ratio of men to women decreased in local rural society, mukanda was often postponed until enough males returned home from the towns to conduct it. Even a good local harvest became less important as a prerequisite. Sponsors more frequently bought the food and presents that it required.

As they migrated to new economic centers, LLLC men came into contact not only with new European cultures but also with totally alien African cultures. In Northern Rhodesia, most of these 'foreigners', just like the Lamba and Kaonde in the NWP, did not practice circumcision. They failed to appreciate the rich symbolism associated with mukanda. Hence, these outsiders often scorned both mukanda and the act of circumcision, which for LLLC men had been the very symbol of manhood. In the face of this total disbelief and opposition, internal cultural differences that seemed significant in the rural homelands faded away.

This new social identity led slowly to cultural confrontations with other peoples who were unknown or irrelevant in precolonial times. Although the following incident occurred in the post-colonial era, it highlights the new and wider form of identity that the LLLC peoples assumed.

RITUALIST ATTACK

Villagers at Kasongo, 12 miles from Ndola on the Kitwe road, have forcibly circumcised a man. The man is said to have asked a group of Luvale-Lunda circumcision ritualists for directions But because the man had "intruded" by appearing at the "Mukanda" ritual hut--the place of circumcision--the ritualists attacked him. Police have made an arrest. {24}

In the aftermath of this incident, several LLLC men were convicted and sentenced for assault. Prominent LLLC

{24} Times of Zambia, 6 July 1967(?), p. 1. (Unfortunately, when this clipping was made, the year was omitted. Nonetheless, it makes the point.)

leaders in the Zambian Government considered the conviction a collective attack on and insult to their traditions. Emotions became so strong that President Kaunda intervened and issued a pardon. In turn, LLLC leaders promised that mukanda camps would be clearly demarcated. [25]

This dramatic episode, which united all LLLC men against perceived cultural insults and threats from outsiders, is unique, but the wider issues are not. It illustrates that traditional education remained vital and valid. More subtly, it also reveals the permutation that traditional education underwent in successfully fulfilling its only possible positive role in colonial society.

Visual and structural similarities notwithstanding, the educational function of this mukanda was extremely different from celebrations of by-gone days. Even the location of the camp, in the midst of the Zambian Copperbelt's extremely heterogeneous population, implies fundamental change. Mukanda was no longer the exciting summit and ending of a complete, largely unconscious education prescribed by an almost inviolate customary code handed down by the ancestors. Rather at this mukanda, these "circumcision ritualists" consciously, and in a relatively short time, provided the youths with a much needed cultural identity to face a competitive and bewildering colonial

[25] This is all based on my memory of events. Unfortunately, I did not record them in my diary, so my memory may be telescoping these controversial events.

society. Individuals still had to contest with each other and with other children in the new educational system in order to gain comfortable places in the new society.

Mukanda had become part of the LLC peoples 'informal' education. As such, it resembled the 'informal' education of all other ethnic groups throughout the world. Through it, the group established a child's identity within a sub-culture of a more heterogeneous society and also prepared the child for the 'formal' education that he had to gain through the new society's school system. In the latter individuals had to compete for high marks since this became the only way to gain comfortable places in the colonial society.

Despite their importance, traditional African educational systems failed to give, or at least failed to connote, power in the new society. Consequently these traditional educational systems are neither the problem nor the focus of this work. The new 'formal' education of the colonial society is the subject. It became a wonderful symbol of promise, part of which included sharing, if not regaining, the power that Europeans had taken away from Africans.