THE DYNAMICS OF RELIGIOUS CHANGE IN WESTERN ZAMBIA*

by

W.M.J. van BINSBERGEN

INTRODUCTION[1]

When asked for a provocative contribution to this special issue on religion in Africa, I thought it best to present some key sections from my forthcoming book, *The Dynamics of Religious Change in Western Zambia* (to appear early in 1977). To do so involves obvious risks. One is tempted to present too concentrated an argument, while space is lacking for a general ethnographic and historical introduction, for substantive case studies, and for any but the most cursory references. However, I accept these risks in view of the exploratory nature of this article (and indeed of the book). What I intend to do is to propound an integrated, but simplified and tentative model of religious change in one small and ethnographically fairly homogeneous part of Africa--the central part of Western Zambia, i.e. the present Kafue National Park (depopulated since 1933) and the surrounding area within a radius of a hundred miles.[2]

I suggest that this model, despite its obvious shortcomings, is the best-fitting one in view of our present limitations of both knowledge and insight. This leaves us with two tasks: to formulate explicitly the rather preposterous methodology and theory underlying the present attempt (something I shall do elsewhere); and to test out, and accordingly improve, the model against such other data as is already available or as may be collected in future. The study of African religion at its present stage needs primarily explicit, complex, falsifiable models as bases for synthesis and interpretation. But such models (including the one presented here) are meant to be research tools, of heuristic value mainly. They call for systematic refutation. Least of all are they installments of historical truth--despite my concern to bring to bear on the argument all published, archival, synchronic-participatory and oral-historical data yet available.

SETTING THE BASE-LINE

Defining the initial situation is a major problem in the study of change in Africa. Because of the paucity of oral or archeological data, we can do little more yet than sketch an ideal-type, based on the intuitive extrapolation of conditions recorded in better-known periods, particularly the present. Tracing back the major historical processes that occurred in the region from the 17th century A.D. onwards (enlargement of political scale, and of the social horizon in general, through growth of trade, tribute and chieftainship), and

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deducting their apparent effects from the latterday religious system, one arrives at a tentative ideal-type of the *primordial religion* of the Western-Zambian village society. Revolving around the twin concerns of ecology[3] and human suffering, this ideal-typical religious system identified the local dead (and not, for example, the otiose High God) as largely controlling man's access to nature; stipulated collective ritual to communicate with the dead; emphasized individual suffering as a communal concern; and, further reflected on the moral relation between the individual and the community by invoking supernatural sanctions over the individual who neglected his kinship obligations; and by associating high status, based mainly on individual achievement (hunter, doctor, entrepreneu, chief), with medicine procured through sorcery. This religious system had a strong communal emphasis, not so much because sacred ties of reciprocity and solidarity were all that effective in the actual social process; but rather, because other collectivist norms formed an imperfect mechanism to keep the inevitable conflicts (over limited ecological resources and authority, against the background of individual achievement aspirations) from becoming immediately disruptive to the village community.

Much of this ideal-type has persisted in the local religion until today. The religious innovations of the last few centuries were superimposed upon this old base (whose immutability we assume for the sake of the present argument only) rather than eradicating it. The contemporary religious system therefore appears as a composite of several historical layers. This paper seeks to describe and explain the appearance in time of the successive innovations. The equally complex problem of the contemporary coexistence of the resulting "layers" within one community, falls outside our present scope.

The primordial village religion was intimately related to the general socio-economic and political structure of the society in which it occurred. Changes in this overall structure therefore produced tensions calling for religious innovation. I shall first outline the main religious innovations occurring in the region over the last few centuries; then identify five main dimensions in these innovations and link them to economic and political change; and finally, show how all these innovations can be meaningfully placed in one overall historical framework.

OVERVIEW OF RELIGIOUS INNOVATIONS

The rise of *chiefly cults*, centering on chiefs' graves, shrines, medicines and paraphernalia, appears to have formed the first major religious innovation imposed upon the primordial village religion. Prototypes of chiefly cults may have been very much older, but in the area the expansion of chiefly status with elaborate ritual connotations dates from as late as the seventeenth century at earliest.[4]

There are indications from Central Africa but outside our present region that also in pre-colonial times prophetism as an institution existed in the periphery of the village religion; though by its very nature this institution would only occasionally have had actual incumbents. The region's first well-documented examples consist of a series of *Ila prophets*[5] in the first two decades of this century. They concentrated on ecological conditions: fish, game, crop pests, rain. Around this common theme, however, they each adopted innovatory elements one denounced praying to God as nonsense; others claimed themselves to be God or God's son; yet another, Chilenga, failing in his ecological endeavours, later tried his hand on eschatological messages involving a prolonged darkness, destruction of the new railway, the departure of the Europeans (colonial rule had been established about 1900) and the killing of cattle. Thus Chilenga is the only Ila prophet known to have incorporated, on second thoughts, colonial protest in his message—whereas even Mupumani, no doubt the greatest and most successful of these prophets, refrained from such protest altogether.

Mupumani[6] started his prophetic career in 1913. He followed what appears to be the standard biographical pattern for Central-African religious innovators which crops up time and again in different contexts: a chronic disease or defect (Mupumani was a leper); culminating in an allegedly fatal crisis; a short "death" during which the prophet visits the sky and receives his message; resurrection; immediately followed by the now recovered patient revealing himself as a prophet and beginning to divulge the message. Mupumani's message, claimed to derive from God himself, revolved around the following. Mourning was denounced as ridiculous in the eyes of God, who holds absolute power over life and death, who "took men from earth and caused men to be reborn", without bothering about human emotions. Sorcery was likewise denounced. And, while Mupumani thus undermined the cult of the dead and sorcery beliefs as basic elements in the primordial village religion he introduced new ritual: the erection of white poles in the centre of villages, where God was to be addressed by the formula: "We are humble to the Creator of Pestilence". Mupumani met with a phenomenal response, not so much among the Ila but especially in other parts of the region and far beyond. Pre-existing regional social networks, specific pilgrimages to the prophet, the latter's extensive traveling, and particularly early labour migration provided vehicles for spread. Within months people from as far away as Angola, Mwinilunga and Serenje would come to visit him, and on their return home they would erect the white pole and pray to God.

As the message spread, Mupumani's original mystical experience had to yield to eschatological or millenarian notions more directly geared to the day-to-day life of his followers. The central theme of his heavenly vision, God's omnipotence, was popularly transformed into a belief that mythical, primordial times were about to return: plenty of game meat, prodigious harvests, the denial of death and the absence of sorcery. God would once again care directly for his

creatures, as in the beginning of the world before sorcery was invented. Apparently no active eradication of sorcery did occur in the movement. Instead, the idiom of the *popular response* took an entirely ecological form: prayer would concentrate on agriculture, hunting and the fertility of women. Mupumani saw himself forced to compromise (by accepting gifts and distributing fertility medicine) to the popular demand along these lines, in order to retain his newly-won, exalted status. The popular movement met however with a quick disillusionment. The primordial times were evidently not restored, the prophet's medicine turned out to be useless, his supernatural powers were defied by those of the district officer who committed him to prison in 1914, and the movement died down.

No single later prophet was able to instigate a religious movement of the same geographical scale in the decades to follow; yet the region, much as the rest of Central Africa, continued to seethe with religious innovation.

Christian missions first appeared in 1893. They expanded in cooperation with the colonial government. The latter looked upon this familiar and white-controlled brand of religious innovation as an important factor for order and well-contained progress, utilized the secular skills which the African converts had acquired in their association with the missions (e.g. literacy, trades), and let the missions provide the bulk of what little medical care was available to the African population.

An altogether different line formed the *cults of affliction*[7], which offered a new intepretation for physical and mental disorders. These were no longer attributed to the actions of dead or living members of the village community, but to abstract general disease principles, such as *kayongo, muba, bindele, mayimbwe*, etc. An idea common to all these cults is that one would contract such a disease from strangers, particularly in situations of trade, slavery and labour migration. Cults serve the diagnosis and treatment of these new diseases. Patients are made to acknowledge their special relation with the disease principle, become adepts of the ecstatic cult named after it, and can then start to diagnose and heal others, thus spreading the cult without any centralized organization being required. Prototypes for these cults may have existed for an indefinite period, but it is only in the early twentieth century that they proliferate both in number and in ritual elaboration, and start their phenomenal geographical expansion in a way reminiscent of the spread of epidemics or fashions.

Once these cults of affliction were firmly established as a type, secondary interpretations began to appear. The senior adepts' routine is challenged and prophets, claiming a fresh supernatural inspiration, will in their turn create new ritual and supra-local organization to deal with affliction. For our region, several of such *prophetic cults of affliction*8 have so far been described: Kamanga's Twelve Society and Chief Katota's Nzila (both dealing with *bindele*), Simbinga's and Kapata's Bituma, and Moya's Moya cult.

Different themes again were propounded by representatives of a composite movement which penetrated the region in the 1920s and particularly in the 1930s. These innovators concentrated not on physical or mental suffering but on eschatological views of a total cleansing and radical transformation of the community. As a prerequisite for the new society which was allegedly imminent. Dipping, the exposure and removal of sorcerers, the singing of hymns, and the manipulation of books were their main ritual activities. While pursuing these common themes, many explicitly claimed to be agents of Watchtower (Chitawala), others worked more independently, and appeared more as original prophets. Of these *Watchtower-type dippers and preachers*[9], many expressed adverse views with regard to the colonial government, the whites in general, and (in the western part of the region) the Lozi Paramount Chief and his indigenous administration. The political aspects of the movement were forcibly suppressed by both colonial and indigenous authorities and the Watchtower excitement was to crystallize into a number of regular congregations which continued to exist until today.

This movement temporarily intensified eschatological notions and gave them a new ritual expression, but the expectation of a radically new, final society about to be established had already existed in the region at least since Mupumani's movement. Later movements not unlike Mupumani have been recorded in the region and surrounding areas. Their idiom differed from that of the Watchtower-type innovators. Prophets arose claiming that they had visited heaven and had been sent back in order to prepare for the imminent changes. A central feature in their message was the imposition of taboos on certain crops and domestic animals. These ideas, and the distorted rumors that would proliferate from them, spread again quickly and gained sufficient momentum to disturb district officers on the look-out for subversive Watchtower activities. It was soon realized, however, that this was a different affair, not likely to threaten the status-quo, and without much interference the administration allowed these *eschatological prophets'* movements to subside.[10]

There are other indications of the local growth of eschatological expectations. Self-accused witches would seek redress before it would be too late. The introduction of new, Rhodesian money showing effigies of animals and implements familiar to the people was widely interpreted as a sign that the social order was about to change. There were excited though unfounded rumors about the advent of Afro-American missionaries. Thus the (African) Watchtower-type preachers found the soil prepared, and eclectically they adopted some of the earlier eschatological expressions, e.g. the new food taboos.

Finally, the *search for new medicine*[12] provided a line of response which was only marginally religious, but which is pertinent to interpretations of disease and notions concerning individual achievement. In the first decades of the twentieth century we see the search for formidable medicine through which an individual would command unequalled longevity, success and wealth, turn into something of a mass movement,

with an increasing emphasis upon types of medicine other than the usual ones notorious for their sorcery connotations. European medicine becomes much sought-after. In the same time we witness the intensive hunt for the luck-bringing *kambuma*, a small mythological animal supposed to dwell in the deep forest. Once again labor migration provided the vehicle for the spread of rumors concerning this animal. Hunts to catch it were staged from as far as Tanganyika and South Africa.

THEMES OF RELIGIOUS CHANGE: TOWARDS AN INTERPRETATIVE SYNTHESIS

Having indicated some major religious innovations in the region, I shall now outline the major dimensions along which these innovations developed, and interpret them as solutions to tensions created in the religious system by political and economic change.

Time. The annual ecological cycle, and the individual's life span, provide the invariable non-social input out of which any society can mold (in the form of historical traditions, rituals, individual aspirations and collective expectations for the future) its own cultural perception of time. In our ideal-typical village society, the dominant perception of time seems to have been that of a cyclical present. Perceived time did not stretch far either back into the past (unless to a mythical beginning of the world) or into the future, Enduring social groups were either of limited operational importance in the social process (clans, nations), or, when of central relevance, had a time-span of only a few decades (conjugal families, households, villages). Ritual was predominantly ecological, suggestive of an annual "Wiederkehr des Gleichen". And such ritual concentrated on the village dead, who thus continued to belong to the community and who in fact were considered to return after their deaths, as a younger generation inherited their names and social persons. Individual careers would largely follow a standard pattern of rise and decline, in line with the biological process.

Growth of chieftainship and trade modified this situation in two ways. For a limited number of people time would increasingly be perceived as a process of unique individual ascendance in the pursuit of a special political and entrepreneurial career. And as this process produced enduring, exalted positions and titles, legitimation for their persistence and prerogatives would be sought in historical charters. The cyclical present began to give way to a perception of the linear progress of both individual careers and political history.

Much more research and theorizing will be required before we can understand the factors and the meaning of the appearance of yet a new time perception: the eschatological conception of time as drawing to an end in the (typically near) future. The upheaval in 19th-century Central Africa caused by the apotheosis of long-distance trade and the military exploits of invading groups (Kololo, Ngoni, Ndebele, Yeke), as well as the economic and political changes

brought about by colonial rule, certainly helped to prepare the soil for eschatological expectations. But what is the mechanism by which such expectations germinated and spread? In any case, we can acknowledge the tendency even if we can not yet adequately explain it.

Ecology. With the growth of trade and of more complex political systems, an increasing segment of society would become engaged in economic fields other than ecological activities. This trend was to be reinforced by the later expansion of labor migration and the rise of new, European-introduced careers at missions, administrative centres, in modern enterprise, towns, mines and farms. While the rural population continued to rely on gardens and the forest for most of its food supply, trade goods and tax caused a need for cash causing a general participation in an economic system external to the village economy. This led to the decline of ecological concern in the religious system. Such decline can be observed in all the innovations discussed above. Christian missions may have dabbled in rain and harvest ritual, but in general such attempts appeared rather opportunistic and they would be abandoned for themes more in line with the missionaries' own spiritually (reflecting their European, industrial society of origin), as soon as the mission had attained sufficient local response. In the primary and the prophetic cults of affliction, the eschatological prophetic movements as well as among the Watchtower-type dippers and preachers, we do not encounter the slightest trace of a concern for the land and of claims of power to influence the human ecological transformations. The significance of this radical departure from what had been a central issue in the primordial religious system cannot be overestimated. If nature enters at all in these new cults, it is as something to be feared and avoided: elements of the natural world (certain crops and animals) are declared taboo.

But while the religious innovations ignore or reverse nature's economic significance, nature (particularly the deep forest) retains or develops strong symbolic qualities. It is the place from which both primary and prophetic cults of affliction procure their vegetal medicine, and where medicine-hunters try to trap the *kambuma*; and it is a place of retreat and supernatural inspiration for sufferers from affliction, for prophets, and for leaders (outside the region) of independent churches.

Supernatural entities. The village dead, so central in the primordial religious system, could not longer reasonably be held to control the large-scale society to which the village setting was giving way. Increase in scale had been a trend in Central-African history for centuries. In line with this secular change we see new cultic forms superimpose new supernatural beings upon the older ecologico-religious system of the village: the village dead, the village shrine, the surrounding land area. Cults of deceased chiefs arise and assume

both ecological (rain-calling) and political function (legitimation, integration) for larger areas than would previously be served by non-chiefly ecological cults. When in the 19th century long-distance trade reached its highest development, the religious expression is the proliferation and spread of cults of affliction, or particularly associated with foreigner groups and sometimes named directly after them.[13] These cults venerate supernatural entities that are only dimly conceptualized: often they appear as just abstract names conveying nothing more concrete than a sense of foreigness (even to the extent of not being personalized, or even anthropomorphic), whereas sometimes (when explicitly contrasted with the familiar, local dead) they are suggested to be ancestral spirits of these alien groups. Such more universalist supernatural entities correspond well with the features of high geographical mobility, displacement and increase of scale sharacteristic of 19th-century Central-African society.

Colonial rule gave a new direction and impetus to this increase of scale, through the creation of a formal national and international administrative system along bureaucratic lines, the introduction of labor migration, and the incorporation of the village economy in a world-wide system of production and consumption. These changes not only affected the village and further reduced the relevance of the ecological-religious system; they also radically redefined chieftainship (almost beyond recognition) and greatly diminished its powers (apart from local exceptions), whilst replacing the circulation of traders, slaves, guns and tribute by a circulation of labor migrants, tax and European-manufactured products. Deceased chiefs and affliction principles - the religious response to pre-colonial increase in scale - now could be substituted by again other supernatural entities.

Even if we allow for an element of historical dependency (missionary teachings having influenced both local prophets and the Watchtower type innovators), it is most remarkable that, with the exception of medicine movements, all religious movements following the primary cults of affliction highlight the conception of an active, non-otiose High God. In the case of missicnaries and Watchtower-type preachers the High-God element evidently occupies a central place. But also the eschatological prophets lend credibility to their messages by the claim of a visit to God in the sky, and the same is true for some prophets of affliction. Several prophetic affliction cults moreover supplant the abstract affliction principle by notions synonymous with, or closely linked to, the High God: the Angel, the Holy Spirit. What is new here is not the conception of the High God, but the attempt to endow this conception with so much splendor, power and immediate relevance that it is able to eclipse all other religious entities that were previously so conspicuous Only the High God seems of sufficient calibre to serve as the credible religious counterpart of the political and economic structure of modern Central-African society.[14] And hand in hand with the propagation of the High God, iconoclastic attempts are made to actively

eradicate the other supernatural entities - primarily the village dead, whose cults and shrines come under attack from missions, Watchtower, eschatological prophets, and Mupumani alike.15

Communalism. The communal emphasis in the normative system of the village society, and the emphasis on collective ritual, far from producing, or reflecting well-integrated or stable communities served to counteract the perennial tendencies towards fission inherent in the ecology and the authority structure of this society. The extensive anthropological studies of Central-African village society have shown how the life of a village would typically go through the following stages: founding by a dissident individual or faction migrated from elsewhere: expansion under conditions of ecological plenty and cooperation; mounting of factional and generational opposition under increasing ecological pressure, still checked by collectivist norms and redressive collective ritual; fission. In this cylical process individualism would be played down as a temporary crisis; the dominant explicit social ideology would be collectivist.

But this ideology and its ritual expressions, already counteracted by aspirations of individual ascendance as built into the very structure of this society, would no longer be adequate as a situation developed where an individual would increasingly often find himself at considerable geographical distance from his close relatives, facing a situation different from theirs, and at least temporarily unable or unwilling to claim or to provide support along kinship lines. This again is not a situation newly introduced along with colonial rule: the pre-colonial trader and especially the slave or captive (forcibly displaced and unlikely ever to return) were not in a less individual-centred situation than the later labor migrant, boma messenger, evangelist, "store-boy" etc.

Under these conditions one might expect a counter-ideology of individualism to arise, finding expression in alternative ritual forms. Perhaps we must even trace this development back as far as the emergence, in an independent past, of cults of local celebrities chiefs, diviners, doctors, ironworkers. A historical sequence is then suggested where the cult of the collective village dead, namelessly represented in the one village shrine, is augmented with the "cult of personality" around particular individuals whose names may be remembered and for whom distant shrines may be erected. The associated ritual is still largely carried out by the community as a whole, and has a strong ecological emphasis. It is possible that such, postulated, communal cults for individualized celebrities contributed prototypes to the more recent cults of affliction. The latter generally revolve around one particular abstract principle after which the cult is named, but occasionally deceased celebrities do play a part in them.

The concern of these cults of affliction is not the total community, but the afflicted individual. The ritual intends to initiate, or reinforce, the individual as a member of a cultic group, which is not an operational social group in everyday activities

outside the ritual sphere, but instead cuts across existing kinship and residential groups. Communal concern is altogether absent in these cults of affliction. The individual's suffering is not attributed to adverse conditions in his social group (as is the case with suffering interpreted as inflicted by the dead or by sorcery). The affliction ritual makes no attempt to redress social relations; the individual may be brought to relieve his heart from fears and suspicions in the course of private therapeutic conversations with senior adepts, but no culprits are publicly pointed out, and the ritual focuses on healing the symptoms and not on removing any group-dynamic causes. No moral obligations are conferred upon the individual as a member of the cult. And outside the ritual situation the adepts do not look to each other for assistance in everyday matters. In certain cults the adept is encouraged to have frequent mystical communications with the affliction principle inside him, and to make very high and unusual demands from his immediate social environment. He will reject certain food, places and undertakings as dirty, will instead insist on luxury food and manufactured articles, and expects his relatives to organize expensive ecstatic sessions for him.

Modern cults of affliction are cults of egotism *par excellence*. This central feature partly explains their fashionable appeal and the creative proliferation of new and extravagant ritual elements, many of which are ridiculed or denounced as immoral by non-adepts.

Most secondary prophetic cults of affliction have retained these egotistic, a-moral and non-communal characteristics. However, when they adopt church-like features (mainly: a local and regional organization), their individualism will be mitigated by at least two factors, which apply *a foritori* to those Christian churches in the regions that do not give an important place to possession and healing. Like the primary cults of affliction, these forms of organized religion disengage the individual from his immediate kinship and residential setting and make him a member of a cultic group cutting across the community. However, in the church-type forms there is the tendency for this cultic group to become an alternative partial community, taking care also of other than immediately religious aspects of the members' lives: marriage, visiting the sick, burial, economic enterprise, recreation. Moreover, even the church-like forms that concentrate on possession and healing will propound moral teachings to the effect of relegating the adherents to other members of their society.

Cults of affliction appeared in Central Africa prior to healing churches and other forms of organized Christianity, and now seem to be losing ground to the latter. This sequence suggests that the formers' extreme individualism was merely a passing stage in a more general process: *the reformation (religiously and otherwise) of community*. The same re-appearance of communal concern can be seen in the eschatological prophets (whose messages of imminent changes and new taboos applied to the total community and not to singled-out

individuals), and particularly the Watchtower-type preachers, who urged a total transformation of the entire community by means of collective baptism and the eradication of sorcery. However, eschatological prophets and Watchtower-type preachers still accepted the existing rural communities as their frame of reference and point of departure; even though these communities, because of incorporation in the power structure of the remote political and economic "centre", were increasingly insignificant among the factors that shape the lives of the rural peasantry. The eschatological prophetic movements died down soon, not only because their prophecies did not come true immediately, but also because they did not actively undertake the reshaping of community in a structural fashion. The Watchtower-type approach, despite its powerful cultic and conceptual apparatus, proved equally unable to transform the existing communities completely and permanently (at least in the region). Watchtower could only live on by virtue of a process of separation between persisting converts and renegades. In fact, Watchtower became just another cross-cutting cultic group, which, however, would acquire far-reaching non-religious functions because of the tendency among Watchtower members to concentrate in exclusive villages. Thus, at the village level a permanent (but on the supra-local level impotent) transformation of community was often achieved.

Sorcery and the problem of Evil. The social and economic principles underlying the system of sorcery in Central African societies include: insufficient ideological justification of high status; the fact that a person's advancement--based on a redistribution of commodities present *within* the village community, including persons eligible to become spouses or slaves--would often be at the expense of his neighbor; and the structural propensity to inter-generational and inter-factional conflict, coupled to the absence of effective judicial means to quench such conflicts.

It has been suggested that sorcery beliefs date from a very early time and form a particularly archaic layer in Central African religion.[16] However this may have been, the growth of long-distance trade and chieftainship is likely to have had a direct bearing on sorcery beliefs and practice. Trade provided opportunities for entrepreneurs to rise to unprecedented power and wealth, secure local monopolies and establish themselves as chiefs. The development of chiefly paraphernalia and prerogatives, the emergence of strict and formal rules of succession, and the creation of chiefly cults, were attempts to legitimize and safeguard this exalted status; not only against rivals (who favored a change of personnel while accepting the structural status-quo of inequality), but also against popular, egalitarian dissidence. Gluckman's thesis of rebellion by rivals (as opposed to structural revolution) as the characteristic, cyclical crisis of Central and South African political systems seems too well taken. Several Central African peoples trace their origins as a distinct group to an episode of upsurge against chiefly arrogance.[17]

The notion that chieftainship was sustained by fundamental and unchallenged political and religious values increasingly appears a myth, as Apthorpe pointed out before.[1] The fact that chiefs often resorted to open, physical violence and surrounded themselves with mystical terror could well be interpreted as a response to continuous and strong popular counter-currents against chiefly legitimacy. One aspect of this was then that chieftainship took on a connotation of sorcery which the chief could not shake off even if he went so far as to attempt to monopolize the right to identify and prosecute sorcerers (e.g. by means by of the poison ordeal).

When in the last century the slave trade expanded in the region, structural social conflicts seem to have been aggravated both by the opportunity of profitably disposing of opponents, and by the constant fear of thus being disposed of. If sorcery is essentially the reckless manipulation of human material for strictly individual purposes, we can expect that in this period sorcery and slavery (and trade in general) became closely associated.[19]

Yet, about the same time, cults of affliction begin to develop which ignore malice and guilt as causes of human suffering and instead advance the idea of accidental exposure to non-human, to harmful, but profitable, affliction principles. The pattern of diffusion of these cults and their association with alienness suggests that traders had a direct hand in their proliferation and spread. If this is indeed the case, then part of their inspiration may have derived from the need of entrepreneurs to adopt and develop such a new conception of suffering as could free themselves from the evil connotations with which they used to be surrounded.

With the introduction, in the colonial period, of cash and labor migration, many individuals came to participate directly in a world-wide economic system. Whatever advancement an individual might achieve by his work elsewhere, would be largely defined within and derived from this external economy, independent from the limited good of the village, and no longer perceptibly and directly at the expense of his fellow-members of the same rural community. If he had at all injured his neighbors it was not by actively manipulating them for evil, but only negatively, by temporarily withdrawing his labor force and other forms of participation from the village. The successful migrant who had returned to the village, was structurally not a sorcerer. However, this would hardly prevent him from being called one, and certainly did he invited sorcery from his less fortunate neighbors. Moreover, anyone pursuing successfully a modern career whether he would directly draw from the village economy (shopkeeper, publican), or would be paid by an outside agency (messenger, game guard, evangelist, teacher).

It was particularly the labor migrants and those who had pursued modern careers who initiated and acted as agents for the sorcery-eradication movements in Central Africa from the 1920s onward.[20]

Thus we find at various stages of socio-economic change a specific limited category of individuals, endowed with more than average opportunities and resources (chiefs, traders, modern achievers), who have a direct interest in altering sorcery beliefs, since these beliefs are associated with individual success and challenge the legitimacy of their newly acquired status and wealth. They propounded alternatives to sorcery beliefs not because they had so much to fear from sorcerers threatening their position (although this remains a partial explanation, from chiefs abusing the poison ordeal to get rid of opponents to modern, dynamic young achievers[21] enacting a generation conflict in the idiom of sorcery eradication) - but also, and perhaps largely, because they risked to be considered sorcerers themselves. Of course they did not deliberately revise sorcery beliefs in order to avoid being implicated in them. It is more likely that the predisposition towards innovation along these lines among the achieving individuals sprang from the personal, semi-conscious tensions between the incompatible values of, on the one hand, achievement as evil egoism and, on the other, achievement as rendering to life its ultimate meaning and redemption. This is indeed a fundamental, and perhaps universal, theme. For instance, in an entirely different setting but facing much the same predicament, similar categories of achieving individuals developed the religious systems of Calvinism and urban Islam.

In the case of the modern achievers the predicament was particularly severe. They originated in the village but pursued new European defined careers outside. While the village ideology played down individualism and was supicious of achievement, the value system of modern industrial European society as introduced into Central Africa hinged on an atomistic conception of man, and on individual achievement and success as the ultimate goal in life. The latter value orientation, fundamental for a capitalist economy and an administrative bureacracy also pervaded Christianity (despite its moral teachings) in its emphasis on an individual relation with God and on personal salvation. Thus the modern achiever was caught between the values he had internalized in childhood, and which made him feel "bad" and the values both of the small in-group of his emergent African middle-class, and of the new European-introduced society at large, which made him pursue individual achievement as a dominant compulsive norm. It was impossible to desist the achievement-oriented value system: this was the basis of the modern achiever's income, and especially of his newly-won prestige and self-esteem. Moreover, this value system had often been internalized religiously, later in life, through a dramatic process of conversion to Christianity (in the missionary and Watchtower variants). The logical way out was to attack the old value system, particularly in its conception of achievement and evil, and to induce as many people as possible to pass (religiously, if not yet socio-economically) into the new way of being that the modern achievers were already given to.

This implies that sorcery eradication in 20th century Central Africa was directed not so much against individual sorcerers (with

whom the modern sorcery--eradicators had so much in common) but *against sorcery as a frame of reference and an institution.* This is also suggested by the fact that in most cases the accused were offered a rather simple and harmless method to become cleansed - seldom were they killed or seriously injured.[22] Sorcery was still a mental reality. So if (in response to socio-economic change) a new community had to come about with new conceptions of suffering and achievement, then the tangible exponents of the old sorcery idea had to be disposed of. But while this seems to have been the rationale of the movement, in popular practice the eschatological aspects were often eclipsed and the exercise adulterated to become just a set of novel techniques for the age-old work of "witchfinding", thereby taking for granted, and implicitly reinforcing (instead of eradicating) the concept and institutions of sorcery.

CONCLUSION: THE OVERALL PROCESS OF RELIGIOUS CHANGE

I have thus identified five dimensions (time, ecology, supernatural entities, communalism and sorcery) along with the ideal-typical primordial village religion of Western Zambia was changed through a series of innovations over the past few centuries. The crucial importance of these five dimensions, and the profound interrelations between the various innovations, can best be demonstrated by mapping out all these movements in one chart. Table 1 represents the result of such an exercise.

For each of the five dimensions three scale values are specified: the zero (o) state of the primordial village religion, and intermediate (-) state in which alternatives are being formulated, and a final (+) state which represents, within the region and period we are dealing with here, the paroxysm of religious innovation along that dimension. The description of these states for each variable is given in the legend to the table. For each innovation its approximate first appearance in time is indicated.

The entires were accounted for in the course of my argument. Some, however, need a brief comment. I consider the formulation of alternatives to sorcery in the interpretation of suffering and achievement as a more advanced state than active sorcery eradication. My reasons for this are largely intutitive, and the opposite view could be advocated. Chiefly cults, cults of affliction of the search for new medicine are scored as having a mixed cyclical/linear time perception. These innovations begin to emphasize an individual career against the general background of village life. In the search for new medicine ecology is eclipsed, since, although the medicine derives mostly from the forest, it is not employed for ecological purposes (rain, harvest, hunting) but for individual entrepreneurial success. Christian missions represent an ecological-taboo aspect in their objection to beer drinking (a crucial item in the region's culture) and smoking; Roman Catholic missions in the region, alternatively, imposed fasting on certain days. Finally, while Christian missions actively undertook the eradication of sorcery as a belief system, they also provided alternatives both in the abstract form of the Christian theology of suffering, and in the concrete form of propa-

gating modern, European medicine. (For many local people, therefore, Christianity in its combination of evangelism and medical work appears a new and powerful cult of affliction!)

The unmistakable crudity of the classification, as well as the limitations of our knowledge, are manifested by the tendency to enter mixed values for many scores. Even so, the approach might be stretched to yield summary numerical indexes of overall innovation for each of the movements considered. The procedure to arrive at these indexes is likewise stipulated in the legend, and the index values are given as right-hand column entries.

The fact that the various religious innovations, over several centuries, persistently show tendencies towards innovations along the same few lines, and that the level of such innovations (as very tentatively measured by the numerical index) keeps pace with historical time, strongly suggests that what we witness here is in fact *one overall process of religious change*. In the course of a dialectical process successive movements were triggered by the ideological predicament of sections of the population who (particularly because they were more than other members of society involved in economic and political change) were forced to lend a religious expression to these infrastructural changes. Later movements never took into account *all* the innovations attained by previous movements-nevertheless the overall direction of the process, as indicated by section 4 and diagram 1, is amazingly consistent.

However far-fetched and unfounded parts of the preceding argument may sound, this conclusion seems fairly solid and may provide a powerful stimulus to further research. My argument links and interprets what hitherto were studied as independent and interconnected religious movements. It moreover implies that major accepted notions concerning religious change in Central Africa are increasingly untenable: colonial rule, cash economy and missionary Christianity no doubt accelerated innovation and imposed constraints upon the direction of the process but they did not set it into motion; and did (at least in the religious sphere) not constitute anything like the sharp break one has so often taken for granted.

For centuries, Central African religious change has followed a consistent logic, closely related to economic and political change. The results of recent research now begin to hint the outlines of this process. Subsequent research and theorizing may enable us to draw these outlines more clearly and with greater confidence.

Table 1. Formal properties of religious innovations in Western Zambia

Legend: I. *Time*: o cyclical present; - linear progress + eschatological
II. *Ecology*: o central concern; -taboos; + ecology eclipsed.
III. *Supernatural entities*: o village dead central; - alternative formulated; + High God central.
IV. *Communalism:* o communal emphasis; - individual emphasis; + transformed community.
V. *Sorcery*: o its frame of reference accepted; - eradication; + alternative interpretation of suffering and achievement.
Numerical values: o=0; - =1; + = 2; summation of the numerical values for each religious innovation yields its index of innovation.
(?) = information lacking or classification difficult

	I Time	II Eco.	III Sup.	IV Com.	V Sorc.	First Appearance in time	Index
1. Primordial village religion	o	o	o	o	o	(?)Before 17th cent.	0
2. Chiefly cults	o/-	o/-	o/-	o	o	(?)Main expansion from 17th century	1.5
3. Ila prophets	o/+	o	o/+	o	o?	(?)First records early 20th cent.	2 ?
4. Mupumani (original vision	o	o/+	+	o	-/+	1913	4.5
5. Mupumani (popular response)	+	o	+	o	-/+?	1913	5.5?
6. Cults of affliction	o/-	-/+	-	-	+	(?) Main spread from early 20th	6
7. Eschatological prophets	+	-	+	o	o/+?	1920(?)	6?
8. Search for new medicines	o/-	+	-	-	+	(?)First records 1920s	6.5
9. Prophetic cults of affliction	-/+	-/+	-/+	-/+	+	1930s	8
10. Watchtower type dippers and preachers	+	-/+	+	+	-	1920s	8.5
11. Christian missions	-/+	-/+	+	+	-/+	1893	8.5

NOTES

1. This paper is based on fieldwork and archival research carried out in Zambia, 1972-74. In addition to my informants and the Zambian authorities, I am indebted to the following persons and institutions Denes Shiyowe for excellent research assistance: Henny van Rijn, my wife, for sharing the fieldwork; the University of Zambia, the latter's Institute for African Studies,/the Netherlands, the Zambia National Archives, and Foundation for the Advancement of Tropical Research, for research facilities and financial support; Terence Ranger, Maud Muntemba, and Bob Papstein for discussions on parts of the argument. As a full reference apparatus will appear in the book from which this article is an exerpt, I have kept references to a bare minimum here. File numbers refer to the Zambia National Archives.

2. Works on the region include:
Chibanza, S.J., Kaonde history, in: Apthorpe, R., *Central Bantu historical texts I*, Lusaka 1961; Clay, G.C.R., *History of the Mankoya district*, Lusaka 1945; Ikacana, N.S., *Litaba za Makwanga*, Lusaka 1952, Holy, L., ed., *Emil Holub's travels north of the Zambezi*, Manchester 1975; Jaspan, M., *The Ila-Tonga peoples of Rhodesia*, London 1953; McCulloch, M., *The southern Lunda and related peoples*, London 1951; Melland, F.H., *In witchbound Africa*, London 1923; Smith, E.W., and Dale, A.M., *The Ila-speaking peoples of N. Rhodesia*, London 1921; Smith, E.W., Inzuiziki, in: *Africa 8* (1935); Brelsford, W.V., History and customs of the Basala, in: *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 65 (1935); Anonymous, *Muhumpu wa byambo bya mwaka-Nkoya*, n.d., n.p.
Van Binsbergen, W.M.J., Bituma, paper read at CHCARS (Conference on the History of Central-African Religious Systems) Lusaka 1972; - "Ritual, class and urban-rural relations", in: *Cultures et developpements* 1976, 2; -,"Law in the context of Nkoya society", in: Roberts, S.A., ed., *New Directions in African family law*, The Hague/Paris 1976; -,"Regional cults and society in North and Central Africa," in: Werbner, R., and Garbett, K., eds., *Regional cults*, London 1977; Van Binsbergen, W.M.J., and Van Velsen, J., Labour migration and the generation conflict; in: *Cultures et developpements*, 1976, 4.

3. By ecology I mean all activities (and the accompanying cognitive processes) by which Man acts upon, structures and transforms his natural, non-human environment, so as to create for himself the material basis of human society.

4. Vansina, J., *Kingdoms of the Savanna*, Madison 1966; Van Binsbergen, W.M.J.,"Explorations into the sociology and history of shrine cults in Zambia", in: Schoffeleers, J.M., ed., *Guardians of the Land*, Gwelo 1976; Smith and Dale, o.c.: ii, 181f; Brelsford, o.c.; Melland, o.c.:36f; Chibanza, o.:43f.

5. Smith and Dale, o.c. ii:140f; Schlosser, K., *Propheten in Afrika*, Braunschweig 1949; KSF 2/1/I, p. 209; KTJ 2/1; ZA 1/10vol. 3 no. 4.

6. Smith and Dale, o.c. ii:147f; Fielder, R.,"Social change among the Ila-speaking peoples of N. Rhodesia,"M.A. thesis Manchester 1965, p.294f; *Livingstone Mail* 1914; Chibanza o.c.:78f; ZA 7/1/5; Harris, E.A.M.,"A harvest to be reaped,"in: S.A.G.M. Pioneer 37, 1914.

7. Carter, M.,"Origin and diffusion of Central-African cults of affliction," CHCARS, Lusaka 1972; Van Binsbergen, Bituma, Ritual, Regional cults; Turner, V.W., *The Lozi peoples of N.W. Rhodesia*, London 1952:52f; White, C.M.N., Stratification and modern changes in an ancestral cult, in: *Africa* 19, 1949; -, *Elements in Luvale beliefs and rituals*, Manchester 1961; McCulloch, o.c.:92f.

8. Reynolds B., *Magic, divination and witchcraft among the Barotse of N. Rhodesia*, London 1963 :134f; Muntemba, M., Zambia Nzila sect and Christian churches in the Livingstone area, CHCARS, Lusaka 1972; Van Binsbergen, Bituma, Ritual, Regional cults, Ikacana, o.c.: 33.

9. Ranger, T.O., Mcape, CHCARS, Lusaka 1972; Hooker, J.R.,"Witnesses and Watchtower in the Rhodesias and Nyasaland,"in: *Journal of African History* 6, 1965: sources for Watchtower-type activities in central Western Zambia include: KDD1/4/1; ZA 1/9/181 (3); KDD 1/2/1; KDE 8/1/18; KSX 1/1/1; ZA 7/1/16/3; ZA 7/1/17/5; SEC/NAT/ 66A; ZA 1/15/M/2; ZA 1/9/62/1/6; ZA 1/15/M/1.

10. The only case from central western Zambia so far documented is the prophet Rubumba, to whom I hope to devote a separate study; he was active as an eschatological prophet in Namwala about 1950. Other examples are from Kalabo, 1926 (ZA 1/10/file no. 62) and Mwinilunga, 1931-32 (SEC/NAT/393; ZA 1/15/M/1; KDD 1/4/1; ZA 1/9/181/(3).

11. ZA 1/9/181/(3); SEC/NAT/66A.

12. ZA 1/9/44(3); ZA 1/5/1-8; ZA 1/9/98.

13. In the region, such major cults of affliction as *maimbwe, liyala, macoba, kayongo, muba* are considered to be peculiar each to one particular people (respectively Nkoya, Lozi, Kaonde, Luvale and Lenje/Totela), and to have spread only recently to other peoples. The *songo* affliction is named directly after the Songo people of Eastern Angola. The widespread *bindele* affliction features "white people"; similar white people appear as dream symbols in the Bituma prophetic cult of affliction. They are strangers clad in white cloth (historically a major trade commodity) but not necessarily Europeans; cf. the myths concerning the "white doctor" Luchele throughout Central Africa. Finally several modern cults of affliction feature such European-introduced symbols of alienness and novelty as *guitar, airplane (ndeke), and steamer*. Cf. Colson, E., Spirit possession among the Tonga of Zambia, in: Beattie, J., and Middleton, J., eds., *Spirit possession and society in Africa*, London 1969, p. 79f; Turner

o.c.:51; White, Stratification, p. 329f; -, Elements, p. 49f; Reynolds, o.c.:133f; Muntemba, o.c.:1f; Hall, R., *Zambia*, London (4) 1968, p. 11f; Roberts, A.D., *A History of the Bemba*, London 1973.

14. A similar argument, with emphasis on West Africa, in: Horton, R., African conversion, in: *Africa* 41 (1971).

15. The missionary position is well-known; e.g., *Proceedings of the General Missionary Conference of Northern Rhodesia*, n.p., 1927, p. 169. Watchtower in the Mankoya (now Kaoma) district advocated the demolition of village shrines - as it did elsewhere outside the region (ZA 1/10/vol. 3, no. 4). As part of an eschatological prophetic movement, people in Mwinilunga uprooted their village shrines (cf. note 10). Mupumani's attack on the cult of the dead is implied in his denouncement of mourning, cf. Chibanza, o.c.: 79f.

16. Melland, o.c.: 131; Werner, D., The coming of the "iron age" to the Southern Lake Tanganyika region, seminar paper, University of Zambia, 1973, p. 23. Myths circulating in the present region and beyond place the invention of sorcery at the beginning of human society, e.g. Munday, J.T., Kankomba, in: Apthorpe, o.c.: 1f.

17. E.g. the Kwanga (Ikacana o.c.:3f) and the Luvale (R.J. Papstein, personal communication); other examples in: Vansina, o.c.:216, 234f, 242.

18. Apthorpe, R.,"Mythical African political structures,"in: Dubb, A., *Myth in Modern Africa*, Lusaka 1960.

19. Melland, o.c.: 214f; BS1/93;KTJ 1/1; some interesting Zairese parallels in: Bentley, W.H., *Life on the Congo*, London 1887, p.70f.

20. SEC/NAT/393; KDD1/4/1; ZA 1/9/62/1/6; ZA 1/15/M 1; ZA 1/10/vol. 3 file 4; ZA 1/15/M/2.

21. Van Binsbergen and Van Velsen, o.c.; for an East-African parallel, cf. Parkin, D.,"Medicines and men of influence,"*Man* 3 (1968).

22. The cases from our present region (cf. note 9) were mainly of the peaceful type, although occasional violence did occur; for the classic example of violent dipping, see: Ranger, T.O., Mwana Lesa, in: -, ed., *Themes in the Christian History of Central Africa*, London 1974.

DR. W.M.J. van BINSBERGEN is Acting Professor of African Sociology in the Institute for Cultural Anthropology (Third World) at the State University at Leyden in the Netherlands.