

SHIKAUMPA TRADITIONAL CEREMONY

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Shikaumpa was born approximately in 16th century. He was a son of Chief Luubi Shikamulonga of the Ila people of Baambwe, his mother was Muule, a woman from Luubwe Village Chief Musungwa approximately 25 kilometers west of Namwala District Administration Office. Chief Luubi Shikamulonga is known to be the first chief of Ila speaking people of Baambwe and they first settled at where the Namwala district administration office is today. Their shrine was located at where the magistrate court is today.

He built his capital at a place called Kwisaka about 4 kilometres east of Namwala Boma. In those days, villages were scattered and not very well organized. When Shikaumpa grew up, he became a very strong ^{and} ambitious man and had a fighting spirit eager to challenge personal encounters for a good cause. He left the palace and built his own village where his grandparents settled, presently called Namwala District Administration Office. It is believed that the first Ila of Baambwe settled there so Shikaumpa went to build at the old village site.

Eventually he became so strong that he led a rebellion against his father Shikamulonga which ~~was~~ later failed. In this way, he went in exile to Chibunze area in the north part of Namwala Boma to continue mobilizing people for an uprising against his father, however, all efforts failed. Therefore, he approached a witch doctor that gave him some sweet potatoes associated with charms to deliver to his father and was told with the condition that his father accept the potatoes, anger and fury would automatically be neutralized and that there would be peace and harmony between the two.

Shikaumpa travelled back to his father and did exactly what he was advised by the witch doctor and it came to pass that the charm worked successfully in that he was given a warm welcome by his father. The father was so happy that he offered to share leadership with him. After a period of time Chief Luubi Shikamulonga disappeared, up-to-date no one knows how he died and Shikaumpa succeeded his father to the throne as chief with his strength and mighty he conquered the neighbouring villages and he set ablaze those villages, capturing victims of war and plundered their wealth. This earned him the name "Shikaumpa" meaning the one who burns or ^{sets} ~~setting~~ fire on homes and properties. In addition over the same fighting style that he could block weapons, he earned another name called Mukobela which used to be wrongly pronounced by the whites as Kakobela. In this way, these two names became popular but real names were Ngandu Mwanakaubwe. Eventually, his village expanded and developed into a big kingdom to the likeness of the present Baambwe. Shikaumpa is the actual owner of the name Mukobela and all the chiefs who came after him were Mukobela even to the present day.

Furthermore, Shikaumpa is called by real names (Ngandu Mwanakaubwe) during the ceremony and at times when one gets possessed with supernatural powers for praising him people say "Ngandu Mwanakaubwe olimba bachende" means who blesses. they also say "ooli choolwe" ^{meaning} ~~means~~ one who is lucky

Shikaumpa became a hero and legend who inspired his subjects. Before his death, he demanded that all his subjects remember him in a special way. Since then, the Ila speaking people of Baambwe observed Shikaumpa by holding an annual ceremony in his remembrance. After his

death, he became a diviner who foresees things to come and communicates to the people of Baambwe and advises them how to overcome the situation. Usually these warnings are about impending calamities such as the pattern of rainfall for a particular season or likely epidemic diseases outbreaks for both human beings and their livestock. He also prescribes the preventive medicines. He prophesizes at the shrine at times to his people when he gets possessed by a super natural spirit. This is the whole essence of the Shikaumpa Traditional Ceremony.

ACTIVITIES OF THE CEREMONY

Brewing of Traditional Beer.

Few days before the ceremony, selected groups of women brew traditional beer (Mukuku) and sweet beer (Chibwantu). This brewing is specially timed so that the beers are ready on the ceremony days.

When women start brewing beers young girls also gather every day at the palace premises and taught how to cook by elder women. They are also taught how to sing traditional songs and how to dance. The same girls are decorated and dressed traditionally on the first day during "bweembela",

FIRST DAY -BWEEMBELA

This is an exhibition by women and girls dressed in original traditional attire of animal skins and beads. They also wear white powder or clay on their faces and bodies with reddish clay soil smeared on their heads. These activities commence at the shrine (Malende) approximately 400 metres west of the chief's palace. They assemble in two groups, women in the front and girls behind them. They start walking from the shrines in slow motion singing special songs for the occasion towards the palace and weaving of small special battle axes called (Kabanga) to symbolize the strength of Shikaumpa during his battles. Meanwhile the men will gather at the palace awaiting the arrival of these women and girls. Upon the arrival of the two groups women and girls, one man will sound the fine tune suitable to the occasion called "yabukali" and the crowd starts jumping round and round in an orderly manner to give a token of appreciation to women and girls.

INKANZO

This is an exhibition by women sitting in a circle on the ground. They sing and hit sticks on dry wooden poles supported by the fine tune of the drum. A woman at a time will usher a song to the melody. When this gains momentum, other people will join in with a token of appreciation, which is given to the one who started the song for her dancing style. This could be in form of money or any other gift. Some men get excited with the dance and join in singing their own songs to the delight of women. All these are done in remembrance of Shikaumpa because Inkanzo was staged during the funeral.

MANGOMA

This is another exhibition by women and some men who wish to join dancing in a circle ^{as} the sound of the drum and the drum stick echo to the amusement of the dancing troop. Normally the drummers are positioned in the centre of the circle. Special songs are sung praising the chief and the chieftaincy then the stream of troop^s moves to the palace while dancing. At that point, the chief is also expected to join the troop which delights everyone who reacts by joining.

MUCHINKO

This is an exhibition by the dancing troop of women who stand in a semicircle singing and dancing in pairs. They twist their bodies as they dance in a slow motion jumping in a stylish fashion while bending slightly in front as they move away from the choir and then make a turn to join the group. Another pair will dance exactly in the same fashion until everyone has a turn.

SECOND DAY

Exhibitions of cattle among peers, age groups and friends and it starts around 7:00 hours. There is spontaneous drumming and movement of cattle to and from homes of colleagues as a show off of wealth and to also challenge those who may not have. There is heavy drumming, ululation, sounding of bells, whistling and singing. The whole event takes two hours.

KUPOZHA INGOMBE KUMABWABWA NA KUMALENDE.

This event takes place around 09:30hrs. His Royal Highness Chief Mukobela and members of the royal family armed with spears and well decorated in warriors attire and draped in the leopard's skins, lion manes and colourful scarves drive their cattle to the shrine west of the palace. The cattle are driven through the passage between the two huts at the shrine in a slow movement. In the same manner, headmen and their subjects will move past in the order of their clans, also dressed in warrior colours with the cattle men.

SHIFUNDWE.

This is an exhibition of the guerrilla warfare in a single file a technique used by the Ila warriors during raids and ambushes of enemies as well as in tactical defence and protection of their families, cattle and other properties. In English language the word shifundwe means pelican. The tactic is derived from the manner a flock of pelicans flies as they migrate. The Ila warriors used this tactic during battles.

KUKWENZHA

This is an exhibition of the warriors in warfare during the Ila battles. The warriors are dressed in war attire and armed with spears. The warriors jump and duck in various styles and fashion in the direction of the enemy territory fiercely with fury. As they draw nearer, they approach in an extended line while those in the rear squeeze in to find space in the front role. The drum is sounded to give them more impetus. They strike their spears producing excessive sounds to scare the enemy. Raids and invasions were conducted in this manner. This warfare tactic is still common at funerals among the Ila speaking people to date.

KWALIZHA MUNYAMA (LION)

This is an exhibition to show how the Ila hunters attacked a lion when it terrorized or threatened the safety of their livestock. Lions at times terrorize people and the Ila warriors would organize themselves with their spears and go after them. The lion once provoked would charge and possibly bite one or more of its attackers. "Kwalizha Munyama" means fighting an animal usually Munyama in Ila refers to a lion. The Ila people shy to call the lion by its proper name.

There are some other plays organized during the ceremony these are just a few of them.

All these events took place during the funeral of Shikaumpa. The second day mainly presents the last day of Shikaumpa's funeral. During that day herds and herds of cattle starting from the royal family of Mukobela to all clans from villages within and outside of Mukobela Chiefdom were brought and some slaughtered. To date funerals are still conducted in the same way.

NB: once the brewing of beers for the ceremony starts anyone who dies the funeral cannot be disposed off until after the ceremony because the ceremony is considered as a funeral of the most senior person who is a chief.

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Sign:

Chief Mukobela