

Learning the Ritual Behavior before Marriage among the Bemba of Kasenga Territory in the Haut-Katanga Province

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Abstract: *The rite of initiation prepares the girl or boy for adult life. The Bemba people have always believed that adulthood is stymied by the different vital problems humanity experiences. To do this, boys as well as girls must be prepared to face this life during this adult period which is longer than any of them. The boy must be prepared to keep his future family as a caretaker and the girl to run the house. These two must be mutually prepared to handle their marriage.*

Keywords: Ritual behavior, marriage and Bemba

1. Introduction

From birth to old age, the human being goes through four phases according to ANSELME F. (1948: 3) comparable to the four seasons of a year: childhood (spring: full smiles, flowers and songs, some crying too), adolescence (summer: a period of ripening, heat and sometimes beneficial or devastating storms), adulthood (the autumn when harvests and fruits are harvested) and old age (the winters of life when ardor drops, where one withdraws in oneself to live with one's memories).

Our practical work will be much more about the life of the human being from old age (adulthood). This age spares no one, its learning is of great importance; hence even the Bemba of KASENGA territory think, too, that in spite of all the phases of life, this vital period requires a related learning.

For KYUNGU Nsenga and KASONGO Kyalwe (2012: 249), adult life has many aspects that lead to many problems that require preparation to face them.

Currently, the learning of ritual behavior before marriage among the Bemba of Kasenga territory in the Haut-Katanga province has become unusual or even non-existent. If it exists, it is done in secret whereas, formerly, it was done in public, during the night until dawn; and it was accompanied by songs with drums, dances, drinks, foods, ceremonies...

Everyone, boys and girls, had a fundamental question:

- What is the reason for this ritual ceremony?
- Why is it appropriate only for the boy and different for the girl?
- Why does it only intervene when we are approaching the age of marriage?

These are the questions which constitute the thread of our research for which we pursue the following objectives:

- Identify the reasons for organizing this ritual learning;
- State the consequences that follow when the boy or the girl is not subjected to this ritual ceremony

This study will interest the following people:

- *Boys and girls:*

They will learn the need for this learning for their future life as an adult;

- *The parents:*

They will be sensitized on the shortfall and the consequences that result when their children boys and girls are not prepared for the adult life, however longer of all stages of human life.

- *Everybody:*

Each one of us will be aware of the difference between our ancestors who had undergone this ceremony compared to the present generation who is not at all initiated to it. This situation indirectly implies the resolution of certain fundamental problems of the married couple or families that can be narrowly avoided.

Each person will be interested in rites of initiation, laws, taboos or forbidden, meanings and learning of dances, tales, ceremonies ... In short, the habits and customs of their tribe. We will draw from it what can still be used for our present adult life and to prepare the future generation to face this life with less difficulty.

Due to lack of time, we cannot exhaust all the observations made on the behavior of the adult from the beginning of time to the present day. Thus, we preferred to conduct this study during the period 1960 to the present day, during which time it is possible to find the persons who can provide us with information on the facts studied.

Being installed in several countries including Zambia and the Democratic Republic of Congo in the province of Haut-Katanga in the territories of Pweto, Kasenga, Kipushi, Sakania and Kambove, our study will only concern the Bemba of Kasenga territory where there is not enough cultural mixing.

Notional Aspects

a) *The ritual behavior:*

Notion of initiation according to LAMINE Ndiaye (2004):

In the ethnological tradition, it is customary to distinguish three categories of initiatory practices called "tribal", "religious" and "optional".

Tribal initiations have the characteristic of being obligatory and are organized in a cyclical way in order to allow young generations of the community, girls or boys, to reach adult status, according to socially established norms.

As for religious initiations, they allow their adherents to experience the divine in order to be able to mediate between human beings and the occult forces of nature. It is at the end of these initiations that the postulant becomes priest, diviner, possessed or shaman.

Regarding optional initiations, they are not imperative and depend only on the personal desire of the individual to participate to become familiar with the realities of the esoteric, privileged area of secret societies.

However, it must be recognized that these sociocultural uses at work in "traditional" societies all have the common specificity of sharing certain distinctive features. It is in this connection that they are considered, in the field of ethnology, as social phenomena prototyped rites of passage that A. Van GENNEP (1981) identified at the beginning of the twentieth century by recognizing them a tripartite dimension of separation, marginalization or waiting and aggregation.

Thus, he explains indirectly the complexity of the rituals of change of social status, "secondary categories" which, he admits, "are not equally developed in the same population or in the same ceremonial ensemble". He goes on to say: "Rites of separation are more so in funerary ceremonies, rites of aggregation in those of marriage; as for the rites of margin, they can constitute an important section, for example in the pregnancy, the engagement, the initiation, or to be reduced to a minimum in the adoption, the second delivery, the remarriage, the passage of the 2nd to 3rd age class, etc. ".

b) *Marriage*

It is a solemn act by which a man and a woman establish between them a union whose conditions, effects and dissolution are governed by the legal provisions in their country, by religious laws or by custom (2012: 659) . It is for us, a conjugal union between a man and a woman eager to live together.

c) *Bemba*

According to the website [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Bemba_\(people\)&oldid=91111111](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Bemba_(people)&oldid=91111111) The Bemba (or BaBemba) are a Bantu people living in southern Africa, in the region from Eastern Katanga (DRC) to Zambia. Some communities are also established in Angola. They speak the homonymous language.

Bazelas, Batabwas (or Tabwa), Balambas, Kaondes, etc. are only subdivisions of the Bemba ethnic group.

The Bemba ethnic group is composed of tribes (Bemba, Lamba, Tabwa, etc.) and each tribe is subdivided into a clan called "mukowa" (Bena nsoka, Bena bowa, Bena bwali, etc.).

The passage of power among the Bembas follows a matrilineal line, from the maternal uncle to the nephew.

The Bembas and Bazelas have been mining copper since time immemorial in Katanga. Copper craftsmen called themselves "copper eaters". The exploitation of copper was linked to magico-religious beliefs: Copper was, for Mubemba, sacred and its exploitation followed rites and abstinence (sexual abstinence for 24 hours before the descent into the mines).

2. Methodological Aspect

Our field of investigation is the territory of Kasenga, in the province of Haut-Katanga in the Democratic Republic of Congo, DRC in acronym.

Our sample is random and occasional, especially since we interviewed only adults and some of the customary chiefs we met. We interviewed 73 adults of both sexes and 3 customary chiefs.

We proceeded by the survey method defined by CHAUCHAT H., quoted by Anne-Marie LAVARDE (2008, p.147), as "the whole of the research procedure that goes from the theoretical models to the analysis and the interpretation of the data ". The latter is assisted by the guided interview technique, which is the one in which "an interview guide is pre-established, including the questions according to a certain order, and the researcher uses them while facilitating the interviewee's understanding of the questions beyond the comprehension of this one from the point of view language, vocabulary, context etc. (KUNDA Kapwata, 2018) but also, and above all, by the technique of indirect observation, which is the observation of facts, phenomena to be studied via an interlocutor who can, in turn, transmit them to the researcher.

For this technique to retain its value, the researcher must rely more on facts and phenomena with a high frequency of appearances according to the report of several interlocutors (KUNDA Kapwata, 2018).

Being incomplete, this technique has been supplemented by the technique of direct observation, which is the one in which the researcher finds, by means of his own senses, the facts and phenomena he studies (KUNDA Kapwata, 2018).

In addition, we read various authors having written on this theme such as KYUNGU Nsenga, VAN Gennep, Anne-Marie DAUPHIN-TINTURIER etc.

The answers from all the processes mentioned above allowed us to describe the ritual behaviors learned by the bemba of Kasenga territory in the province of Haut-Katanga in the DRC that we present in the following lines as results of our research.

3. Results

3.1. Learning ritual behavior

Learning ritual behavior before marriage remains a very important practice and value in adult life. Here, the importance is to teach young future adults to access the various initiation rites before entering the marital life.

Being in this process and evolution towards marriage, we realize that from birth to death, humans have a major concern for their well-being.

Despite their multiple needs, their means remain limited. That's why work remains and remains their daily search.

Wherever we live, we are supposed to behave as a symbol of our life. Good as it is, the behavior is the sign or the answer to this or that other concern.

In fact, this people also knows that the life of man, from birth to death, undergoes different stages; and of all these stages, the most interesting is that of adult life where sex is the object or the central subject.

This statement was raised by eminent Professor RADJA bin Said (2017: 25) in these terms: "a lot of research on female sex life has been done by men". He adds that "the research done by men can be tainted or not sex bias."

Ritual behavior in Kasenga bemba:

It should be pointed out that this people living in the Kasenga territory of which we have the honor to present in terms of adult life is singularly about learning ritual behavior before marriage.

Moreover, this people also think that marital, sexual life is sociological and economic function in everyday life. To this end, it concerns not only young people but also adults who are initiators and guides of these ritual learning.

It is in adulthood where all these learning and rites are mastered and it is here also that the man begins to become useful by the social life which becomes still a delicate problem to him.

The various transitions in human life go on with many learning and this people believe that adult life poses multiple problems for the survival and stability of man.

a) Life of the girl:

The report is alarming for the girl because her situation worries the entire community by its position as guardian and protector of ancestral values. "If the little hippopotamus knows how to dive into the water, it was his mother who told him." Because his birth is at the beach and not in the water".

b) Boy's life:

For the boy, the danger is less and tolerable because of its inherited character and especially its bio-psychophysical status than its human nature.

(c) Women's education:

For this people, they know that "women's education is the foundation of the future of an entire nation". That is why in this culture, practices, habits and mores protect the girl who takes her considerable position in the way in which she cares for children. This is justified by the famous saying is not the rooster that keeps the chicks but rather the chicken. " Therefore according to this tribe, the children belong to the woman; to say that power is matrilineal".

The rites of puberty in traditional societies according to Marie-Christine Girard:

The circumcision ritual takes place every three years for boys between 12 and 16 years (sometimes 20 years / age of marriage). Mothers are responsible for the upbringing of children until adolescence, then with initiation, the young passes under the responsibility of men. It is above all a ritual of separation between teenagers and mothers, supervised by men ripe, and giving access to adult status.

-Process

The day before, we shave the head of the circumcised who thus become again symbolically "baby"; at the end of the ceremony, they will be reborn as adults. On the day of initiation, at nightfall, the women, mothers, stay in their family courts away from the eyes of men and sing to bless their children while the men pass by procession on the edge of the village and respond with shouts and ritual insults.

When the night is set, the women return to their home. This is how the border between the masculine and the feminine materializes. The procession of men then progresses to the rock canopy, located in the cliff overlooking the village: this place is strictly forbidden to the uninitiated that is to say to women and children. It is in this sacred place of worship and sacrifice that the circumcised await.

Circumcision symbolizes a rebirth, access to knowledge that entails responsibilities, but also suffering, efforts and prohibitions for the life to come. At the same time, through the sacrifice imposed by circumcision and the blood it causes to flow, invisible forces are attracted; they represent a huge energy that must be turned into the positive.

This ceremony is an opportunity to bring good (rain) and chase the bad. The sacrifice of the novices is an offering to the subtle world, and allows again harmonization ... At each initiation is repeated something mythical, essential and therefore dangerous. The circumcised never reveal to the uncircumcised or women the secrets of their initiation.

Moreover they will keep from this moment a very strong link between them. The next day, at the end of the day, the men descend from the cliff to the village, parading their place with old men and women. At night, the same thing happens for the circumcised who go down to the big box of the initiates where they will sleep until the end of their initiation. They are supported by the music and songs of women who came to bless their children and celebrate their courage.

The third day is a competition for the biggest feast where the whole village is present as well as the surrounding villages.

The prestige of the village is played there, associated with courage and to the potential of young people.

After circumcision follow other tests: solitary experience in the bush without water, food or blankets to end hunger, thirst, cold. To bear the suffering to be worthy to be a man. "The man who has not learned of suffering cannot do anything good. Say the Dogon.

Initiation of girls

Female circumcision takes place around the age of 3 or 4 by women in a family of excisers. Then at puberty the girl is taken care of by her mother who introduces her to sexuality, women's secrets and their roles in relation to the founding myths about women.

In a general way, the ritual of transition from child to adult implies a notion of sacrifice of a part of oneself, and a symbolic death. It also introduces to sexuality, and it is in this sense that we must understand circumcision as a removal of the female part of the boy and excision as that of the male part in the girl.

The child thus becomes an adult and learns that he is made to suffer and die; But the ceremony also founds a social cement, solidarity, a cohesion between generations and families.

A boy becomes a man and a woman only after going through the trials of initiation. This refers to the first initiation that took place during the Dreamtime.

Initiation involves obstacles, struggles, suffering (asceticism, circumcision, tearing or cutting of teeth, mutilation).

At the onset of first menstruation, girls are taught by grandmothers (older women) about cycles and rites related to sexuality, the role of women, childbirth, songs related to these different moments...

Then, when the rules are regular, the girl leaves, accompanied by a woman more elderly who is not his mother in a secluded corner of nature; there she digs a hole and sits at above. She will stay there all the time of her period to let her blood flow in the earth without eating or drinking.

The woman who accompanied her stays close to protect her from possible kidnappers. Upon return she will be considered a full-fledged woman and will be able to get married.

3.2 Responsibilities of the adult

3.2.1. Initiation

From all these observations, the learning of ritual behavior in girls and boys is different.

- The boy is introduced to the employer's responsibility; by going hunting, fishing, cultivating briskly, working for his wife and children and remaining a guarantor of his family.
- Learning or initiation of the girl remains in matrimonial rites or protectors of cultural values, customary, ancestral especially based on sex or marriage because it is said "in

this house, there is no marriage means that there is no sexual relationship.

Hence the protection, the delights of marriage, the marital maintenance is the prerogative of the woman. This is why Bemba women attract many men by their initiation to sex as a guarantee of marriage. They manage to become almost virgin to attract more: "who dip his finger in the honey, does not do it only once".

3.2.2. Importance of ritual behavior

The importance of this behavioral learning in the rite of initiation does not seem to be of less value by its form, nevertheless in the depths, it remains a protective guarantee of the ancestral values for all the adult life.

3.2.3. Social integration

The important thing is to be initiated or to have learned how to behave in order to be in perfect communion with one's culture and traditional society. We probably guess that the social group (clan, village, and tribe) has a considerable influence on individuals, fortifying the integration of all the partner members of the community.

Interviewed in December 2016 on the subject concerning us, the customary chiefs KYONA Nzini, KILEMBA Mumo, LUKONKO Lankasu who are the guardians and protectors of the manna of the ancestors declare in these remarks that: "today, here and now, the lack or the almost nonexistent practices of the rites of initiation have upset the whole life of our peoples, we have become a people without culture, almost in different fields; we lack reference and even our vital forces have become minimal or even simple, they say.

Boys were circumcised outside the village and cared for by men and not by women. And at the exit of their barracks, they were incarnated of a force likely to make them able to catch a lion (DAUPHIN-TINTURIER, 1983).

Women were kept for more than a month without speaking while receiving instructions on life. They could not even wash anything at the river (underwear, baby clothes and for themselves) or pound at night etc.

Therefore, if all these practices are respected, the community can never have epidemics, infant deaths, or even gynecological diseases. And the girls who used to bathe their linen at the river fell sterile.

3.2.4 Social integration

The learning of ritual behavior was the mode of insertion of young adolescents into adult life. Remaining in his environment of insertion, the individual draws from the source and finds the help and protection he needs.

On the contrary, he is bound to respect the order of God's will by submission to the will of the ancestors whose wisdom of the ancients (sentences, rites, customs, practices, manners ...) is there, the living manifestation.

By this unfailing conformity, according to NYAMABO Kabubakala (1978: 146-154), this deity will ensure the integrity of his being and that of the ancestors members of

the community. Reason why, the survivors must avoid moving away from the line traced by the manna of these ancestors who are the real leaders of the clan.

Moreover, when we understand the major role of ancestor worship, by magic rites, the living community consults the ancestors to win their blessing by soothing their anger

3.2.5. Social adaptation

According to the mode of the Bemba, this people had already understood since all time that the adult life is the most important stage of the human life, to that, it was necessary to fully learn the adolescent and the teenager to this life in spite of the difficulties, the harmful consequences of the experience, the failures, the disappointments, the social and family reality.

When they arise unexpectedly, consciously or unconsciously, that these girls or boys responsible can adapt to the taboos, customs, taboos, and way of life of this people of which they are, their offspring and that in addition they do not represent validly their culture until the end of their lives.

As for Professor RADJA bin SAIDI (2000), the beginning of adult life is characterized by ambitions and dreams. This shows us that at this stage, our young adults are feeding on spirit and dreams to make the best of their lives, because it gives them the chance to achieve great feats.

The insertion of the adult into the culture of this people is a symbol of growing up. A girl or boy who had not been initiated or who had not gone through such ritual ceremonies was not prepared for adulthood and was considered as failed, lost, useless, without a future, without spirit to say predisposed to inefficiency, social immorality, divorce ...

3.3. Social evolution of ritual behavior

3.3.1. The fate of man

The fate of the girl and the boy in the community is perceived by his adult behavior. That of the boy is less disturbing because he is the one who marries, he is not generally blamed for inefficiency and social instability in adult life; his preparation or learning is not stuck with a lot of acrobatics.

If it is a question of receiving the apprenticeship, it is recommended to him to live with the old and the adults older than him, to accompany them to the fishing, the hunting, the field, the cemetery by digging the tombs, in going to grief, staying with them under palaver trees, being associated with the judgment and resolution of the problems of daily life, receiving care and advice. All this is learning the job.

3.3.2. The fate of the girl

To have and to know a trade, it is the rule of play in the initiation to the adult life. As for the woman, her fate remains very doubtful. Whatever its character, education, socio-economic and cultural position raises concerns and is at two poles:

a) Space pole

The spatial situation of the girl's initiation remains the home, the attendance of the old mothers, and of the mothers authorized for the initiation. These moms are called "BANA KIMBUSA" according to Anne-Marie DAUPHIN-TINTURIER (2003).

b) Temporal pole

This situation is the social delimitation of the girl or the family of other girls who are betrothed, pregnant early or free. They can go from one to three months depending on the possibility of the family.

During this period, the girl is forbidden to speak. Hence the term "CISUNGU" according to Anne-Marie DAUPHIN-TINTURIER (2003), that is to say dumb but seeing, where the girl is subject not to speak and to hear only, and she did not not entitled to speak.

This is the period during which one takes advantage of his weakness to not react, the opportunity becomes royal to learn only the likes of the initiators, that is to say to their will, at their pleasure ...

3.4 Future perspective

To top it off, "custom" is a normal phenomenon that presides over the institution of a primitive society of which it constitutes the right and behavior.

For Paul VANDENWELL (1961: 29), "in the first ages of each civilization, there is total agreement between religion, morality and law ... But this social bond is felt imperatively by each member of the community (horror before the break of the interdicts and its magical consequences ".

Here the guilty man trembles himself before the supernatural phenomena he has unleashed. It is forbidden, everything that is contrary to normal: incest, acts against nature etc.

According to ROULAND quoted by KYUNGU Nsenga and KASONGO Kyalwe (2012: 249-274), community law is thus conceived and accepted as the possession and inheritance of an infinite chain of generations. He enjoys moral support and is the object of the jealous vigilance not only of living contemporaries but also of lost ancestors.

The interest of the latter is that the authority of the law be observed at all times, that an attachment is unshakable and a strict observation of these doctrines be considered as a duty by the survivors, and on the one hand considered as the essential to the integration of the myths to which all adult members are exposed during the process of socialization.

4. Conclusion

The pre-marriage ritual behavior of Kasenga's Bemba in particular, and the Bemba of Haut-Katanga province in general, traditionally remains the essential tool or practice of the effective life of the adult.

However, this learning has a positive influence on the life of the adult, and this, by playing a preponderant and necessary

role in the cycle of the life of the man to the extent that it is thanks to the rites of initiation that young boys and girls are prepared to enter adulthood.

The marriage was fundamental to allow the two young people to structure themselves as an adult father and mother and not simply a father and a spawner, and to ensure through an alliance, an offspring in the house of the young woman. If the first marriage was maintained, the two protagonists became step-parents, transferring their educational potential from their own children to their sons-in-law.

As a purely individual man, if his personality was strong enough, he could even gain authority and be recognized as a leader. But if that first marriage did not hold, for whatever reason, only the woman actually kept the responsibility for the education of a son-in-law. This is shown by the various observations of the initiation ritual, be it those of AUDREY RICHARDS (1956).

The woman had to fulfill all the functions of daily life, especially in the country. She was even trained to perform the male activity par excellence as the cutting of trees, at the time of field preparation. The absence of a husband was certainly prejudicial, but his presence was not fundamental in the education of the son-in-law and in some respects he could be replaced by a brother-in-law.

Moreover, it is in adult life that man lives for a long time and experiences multiple difficulties in maintaining himself. It is in this same life that man defines himself, determines himself, is judged and appreciated, disavowed, esteemed, respected, honored or dishonored by society, hence the need for this learning.

Ultimately, these practices have advantages and disadvantages as any situation, but it is advisable to take what is useful to the value of the human being and to abandon what breaks human dignity. Moreover, the boy as well as the girl is initiated in relation to their biological maturity: the appearance of sperm in the boy and the first menstrual periods in the girl.

This situation was supported by Roger BASTIDE (1999) who insists on a particular point: "The initiation makes possible the marriage, even if the social puberty is not always confused with the biological puberty for the boys (the age and the duration of the ceremonies vary according to the groups: they can go from a few weeks to several years). For girls, however, social puberty coincides with the biological puberty (first menstruation).

It is these facts which draw attention to the two opposite sexes that their bodies have undergone a modification which may require them to seek information from adults on the behavior to be taken; This forces them to seize this opportunity to subject them to learning ritual behaviors, tradition, prohibitions to help them behave as a mature and responsible person who can find an honorable place in society.

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