

Ubuomba: Negotiating indigenisation of liturgical music in the Catholic Church in Zambia

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Abstract

In the early 1950s the Vatican accepted the translation of Catholic hymnals into local Zambian languages and the incorporation of indigenous musical instruments into the liturgical music. This development inspired a group of priests and seminarians, led by Father Charles Rijthoven from Ilondola mission in Northern Zambia. Because of its geographical location, a Bemba indigenous musical style derived from *ingomba* (royal musicians) was adopted and is now commonly referred to as *ubuomba* (lit. being a royal musician). The word *ingomba* is derived from the word *omba* (to clap) as in *omba amakuku* (to produce low-toned claps by means of capped palms), a characteristic which forms the core of rhythmic structure of the musical style. Besides hand clapping, *ubuomba* songs are usually accompanied by double-headed drums known as *inshingili* (hour-glass shaped drum). Over the years the *ubuomba* style has spread to other parts of the country and formed a Catholic liturgical music identity. This study tries, by way of ethnographic investigation, to outline the way in which the *ubuomba* musical style has been used to negotiate the indigenisation of liturgical music in the Catholic Church in Zambia.

The focus of this study is on the origins and processes of development of the *ubuomba* musical style and how it relates to wellbeing within the Catholic Church; these developments are based on song text, instrumental accompaniment, dance and mime. The 'contemporisation' and 'commercialisation' of the *ubuomba* musical style to incorporate Western musical instruments such as guitars, drum kits and synthesisers is examined with reference to internal and external musical influences.

Keywords. Indigenisation, *ubuomba*, wellbeing, Catholic liturgical music, Zambia

Introduction

This article is a descriptive analysis of the development of *ubuomba* music and the liturgical, political, social and cultural aspects embedded in it. Within the broader context and social complexities, the functional role that the embedded aspects play and how they are utilised is examined, while at the same time paying attention to elements that have changed, since their inception in 1952, and what has continued to date in the whole musical performance structure. The focus of this study is on the origins and processes of development of the *ubuomba* musical style in the Catholic Church in Zambia. These developments are examined with regards to song text, melody, rhythm, instrumental accompaniment, dance and mime.

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Furthermore, ‘contemporisation’ and ‘commercialisation’ of the *ubuomba* musical style to incorporate Western musical instruments such as guitars, drum kits and synthesisers is investigated based on internal and external musical influences. Chomba (2007:62) indicates that because of the striving for contextual relevance, musicians in the Catholic Church are drawing on elements of local or other African popular musics and integrating them into the liturgical music of the church. Regarding the current local music culture in Africa, Hellberg (2007:367) states that they contain at least three strands: pre-colonial musical traditions, imported and more or less localised Western music, and popular music.

Data for this study were collected for the most part in the course of a social ethnomusicological study carried out in Northern, Lusaka, and the Copperbelt Provinces of Zambia from the year 2000 to date. During this period, which entailed doing extensive fieldwork and a literature review, I became interested in the religious, musical, social and political complexities of human behaviour and musical influences from within Africa and from other parts of the world. When embarking on this study I encountered challenges in the usage of the Bemba language by my research subjects, as they often mixed linguistic practices and literacies, which were often characterised by code switching and slang. This is the case because Bemba is commonly used even by other ethnic groups in the country, resulting in the inclusion of borrowed words from other languages within the country, within Africa, and other parts of the world (Central Statistical Office CSO 2011:13). However, after consulting linguists such as Mubanga Kashoki, a retired professor from the University of Zambia, and interacting with several *ubuomba* musicians and clergy from the Catholic Church as an insider and participant observer, I developed a platform for investigating in-depth information and knowledge that warranted ease of interrogating and eliciting interpretations and meanings of the music, dance and dramatisation. It became necessary for me to adopt the research stance of ‘observer as participant’, as described by Merriam:

Using this method the researcher may have access to many people and a wide range of information, since the researcher’s observer activities are known to the group, and participation in the group is a secondary information-gathering process. (2009:124)

Merriam continues that the researcher might begin as a spectator and gradually become involved in the activities being observed ((2009:126). In this dual researcher role, open-ended interviews were held with 30 individual research participants and 30 focus groups drawn from the research area described above.

In discussing the process of change the term ‘indigenisation’ has been used to indicate the musical traditional style pertaining to the Bemba *ingomba* (Royal musicians) that initially replaced the Western church hymns, but later included elements from localised Western music and other African musics. Hellberg (2007:370), Babiracki (1985:96–100) and Nettle (1985:89–90), among others, used the term ‘indigenisation’ to describe the processes of change that the music cultures of some churches in African and Asian countries went through in the latter half of the 20th century. The term ‘localised’ has been used in this article to describe the new Catholic Church musical styles² that have been integrated into liturgical service besides the dominant *ubuomba* style. In this regard the term ‘localised’ refers to what

² The new Catholic musical styles being referred to include four genres from indigenous Bemba music: Imipukumo (topical songs that carry a didactic text, such as, for example, work songs), Chilumbu also known as Ifimbo fya malilo (funeral dirges); Kalela (music for the Kalela dance) and Mfunktutu, as well as contemporary styles that include Bemba Kalindula and Congolese Rhumba (from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)).

Krister Malm defines as a musical style that has been adopted from another culture closer to the culture it has newly become a part of (Lundberg, Malm & Ronström 2000:32).

Although the development of the Catholic Church and its music in Zambia has received scholarly attention, I have not yet encountered literature specifically on *ubuomba* music. However, Mapoma (1969) has discussed the use of folk music among some Bemba church congregations in Zambia. The following are studies on the development of the Catholic and other churches in Zambia: “The music of Zumaile village, Zambia” (Mensah 1970), “The Mutumwa Churches of Zambia: an indigenous African religious healing” (Dillon-Malone 1983), “The White Fathers’ Archive in Zambia” (Hinfelaar 2003), “Personhood and Self in Catholic Formation in Zambia” (Simpson 2003).

Historical Background

To contextualise the indigenisation of liturgical music in the Catholic Church in Zambia, it is imperative to provide a brief background on the development of the church in the country. Although expeditions and attempts to establish Catholic missions were made as early as 1795 by Portuguese Gamitto, and Jesuit White Fathers between 1881 and 1885, the year 1891 marked the beginning of Christian missionary work in Zambia; that was when three French White Fathers of the Society of the Missionaries of Africa arrived and settled at a place near Mambwe Mwela, a village in Mbala district of Northern Province. This was followed in 1895 by the foundation of their first mission post at Kayambi, near Chief Makasa in Kasama, the Provincial Headquarters for the Northern Province. In 1905 two French Jesuits arrived from the south and founded Chikuni mission in Monze district and in Kasisi in Lusaka (Hinfelaar 2004:65). After the upheavals of the First World War, missionaries from other congregations arrived in the 1930s. They consisted mainly of the Conventual Franciscans from Italy, who settled in the emerging Copperbelt, and of Capuchin Franciscans from Ireland, who founded mission posts in Livingstone and Barotseland (now Western Province). The beginning and the development of Christian missionary work coincided with British colonial rule in Zambia.³ Colonial administration made it easier for the Catholic missionaries to spread their Christian work throughout the country (Kashoki,⁴ 2010).

Although the Second World War was another setback, when it was over another wave of missionaries arrived from many parts of the world, especially after Zambia’s Independence in 1964 and after the end of the Second Vatican Council in 1965.

Christian church music as it is known in Zambia and other countries in Africa is the revival of earlier Jewish Tehllim and Mizmor in worship, which involved stringed musical instruments, drums and dancing to the lord (cf. Exodus 15: 1–20, 2 Samuel 6: 1–6, Psalms 149:3) (Chomba 2007:v) Chomba continues that the Catholic Church adopted and developed this lyric poetry (*psalm* in Greek meant a song) into unisonic plainchant, later known as ‘Gregorian chant’.⁵ Phiri (2012), a curator at the National Museum, points out that

³ Before independence Zambia was known as Northern Rhodesia.

⁴ A retired professor of Literature from the University of Zambia.

⁵ Gregorian chant is the plainsong or liturgical chant of the Roman Catholic Church. It is one of the five principal repertoires of Latin liturgical chant of the Middle Ages, the others being: Old Roman, Ambrosian, Gallican and Mozarabic (Randel 1986:351). It consists of sacred Latin texts set to melody and sung without accompaniment (monophonic) (Kamien 1992:88).

musical instruments and dancing were forbidden in worship as they were associated with Greek pagan music, which was performed annually and occasionally on their festivals and rituals dedicated to Zeus, the god of all nations, and also to Hermes, the god of eloquent speakers (cf. Acts 14:12, Jungmann 1958:14). Between the 10th and 18th centuries, breakaway groups from the Catholic Church, such as the one led by Martin Luther, capitalised on new music in order to win over many followers (Tinalesa,⁶ 2010). Consequently, the Catholic Church was compelled to accept polyphonic church music with musical instruments, preferably the organ.

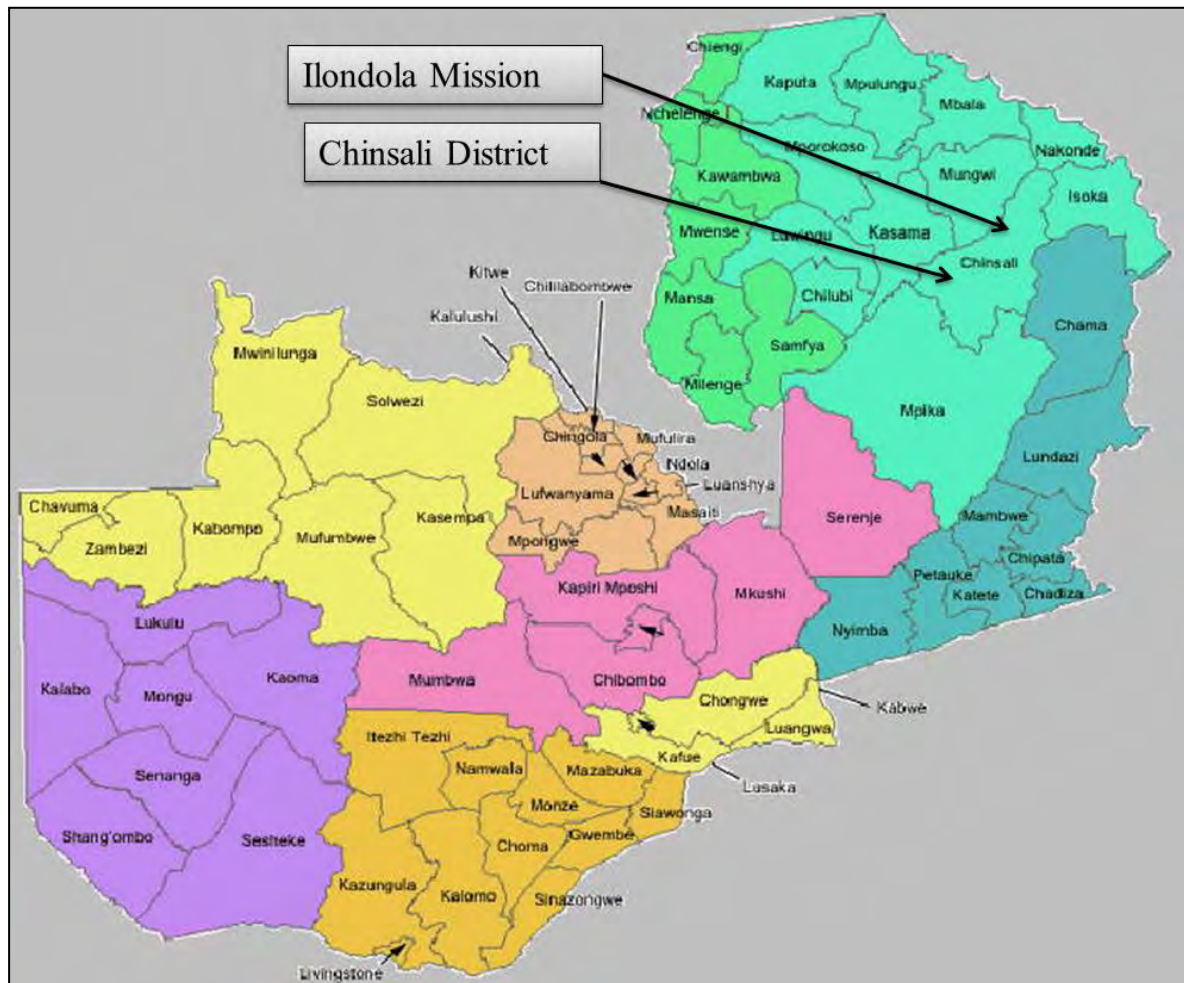


Figure 1: Map of Zambia showing all the districts, towns and cities in the country (<http://www.ezilon.com/maps/africa/zambia-maps.html>)

Polyphony was used occasionally during big feasts mainly in seminaries and Catholic institutes, while Gregorian plainchant remained dominant in all parishes. Gregorian chant was valued as the only sacred music with Latin as the language of the church and worship. Mutale (1979), Archbishop of Kasama, points out that Protestants valued polyphonic music as the best way to praise God but it should be flexible enough to use local languages. Mutale

⁶ A Catholic Parish Secretary and retired teacher.

continues that when missionaries of different denominations came to Africa, they all arrived with different backgrounds. Looking at the 'miserable' lifestyle of the Africans, they considered them and their culture as pagan (Mulenga,⁷ 2002). Mulenga's view is also evident in studies conducted by Mapoma (1969:76); Chomba (2007:vi); Cheyeka (2009:146) Gordon (2009:46). So African music and musical instruments, especially drums, which were used in social festivals and rituals, were forbidden in church worship as they were considered pagan.

In Zambia African tunes were incorporated into Catholic Church worship on Christmas day 1952, which marked the beginning and birth of African church music in the country. The idea of incorporating African singing, dancing and drumming was initiated by a Dutch Catholic Priest, Fr Charles Rijthoven, a member of the Order of White Fathers, based in the heart of Bembaland Ilondola Parish in Chinsali District.⁸ Rijthoven borrowed the idea from Joseph Kiwele of Shaba Province in the then Zaire (Congo DR). Joseph Kiwele, with the help of the Bishop of Shaba, sought special permission in line with four encyclicals, especially *Musica sacra disciplina* by Pope Pius XII, which allowed secular music and musical instruments in public worship. Just like the missionaries in the times of Martin Luther, Rijthoven was prompted to incorporate local indigenous music into the liturgy because of the difficulty that missionaries had in convincing the Bemba, who were attracted to the style of worship introduced by the Lumpa, an indigenous church, introduced by Alice Regina Mulenga, popularly known as Alice Lenshina.⁹ The popularity of the Lumpa Church music, which was catchy and had sweet melodies, prompted the Catholic Church in Chinsali to capitalise on Bemba music from *ingomba* (royal musicians) and *mfunkutu* to form a style known as *ubuomba* (Gordon, 2009:56).

According to Hinfelaar (2004:69), the White Fathers negotiated with the colonial administration for them to be allowed to continue using *ubuomba* for their services as their aim was to attract as many converts as possible. Unfortunately, this state of affairs, as indicated by Bwalya (2000), a catechist in Chinsali Catholic Parish, led to the banning of indigenous worship, which included the Lumpa church. Elias Mutale, Archbishop of Kasama, points out that the negative actions of the colonial administration have been blamed on the missionaries, who did not go to such extremes (Mutale, 1979). Mapoma (1969:74) agrees with Mutale when he points out that the advantage in using *ubuomba* music in the Catholic Church was twofold: first, it attracted people to the church, and second, the songs provided a familiar musical idiom in which the congregation could express itself freely.

Ubuomba: the music

The word *ubuomba* is derived from the word *ingomba* meaning Royal Musician of the Bemba chiefs.¹⁰ The word *ingomba* is derived from the word *omba* (to clap with capped palms, an

⁷ A retired Educationist and Zambian High Commissioner to the Democratic Republic of Congo.

⁸ Chinsali district used to be part of Northern Province, but is now the headquarters for the newly formed Muchinga Province. However, I have still used Northern Province because the available maps have not been updated as yet.

⁹ The name Lenshina comes from the mispronunciation of the name Regina by the Bemba people.

¹⁰ There are 73 languages spoken in Zambia, which have been classified into 9 main linguistic groups according to regions: Northwest (Northwest Lunda/Wiko); East (Chewa/Tumbuka); South (Tonga/Ila/Lenje); Northeast (Bemba); Corridor (Mambwe, Namwanga, Lambya, Nyika (Roberts1976:69). The Bemba group is a conglomeration of different tribes all sharing the same

action referred to as *omba amakuku*, which is done to show respect or appreciation for good will) (Mapoma, 1980:84). Therefore, *ubuomba* means being a royal musician. Chitwansombo (2006), a royal musician, indicates that the name *ingomba* was favoured because the royal musicians performed music exclusively for the Bemba chiefs, an action which was most appropriate for praising God. Although there are four types of present-day *ingomba* – *ingomba sha filimba*, *ingomba sha tulelo*, *ingomba sha masamba* and *ingomba sha bafwalwa* – the Catholic *ubuomba* cannot be associated with one specific type, but to the whole concept of being a royal musician, which is a combination of the functions of all the four types of *ingomba* (Mapoma, 2012; Mwela,¹¹ 2012). However, Chomba (2007:32) emphasises that the *ubuomba* musicians of the Catholic Church focused on the function of praising the king, in this case God, and not so much the other characteristics such as style of dress and type of musical instruments, which are the distinguishing features of the Bemba *ingomba*. For instance, Tinalesa (2010) points out that *ingomba sha bafwalwa* are identified by the dancing skirts they wear; *ingomba sha Kalela* by the type of dances they perform; *ingomba sha filimba* by the type and size of musical instruments they play; and *ingomba sha masamba* by the *inshingili* drums they play. According to Chitwansombo (2006), besides the amalgamation of characteristics from the different types of *ingomba*, *ubuomba* involves a large group of singers and instrumentalists. Chitwansombo adds that the distinct types of *ingomba* could be identified in *ubuomba* performance through the small groups constituted in the following way: one group will be made up of singers, the second group will be made up of dancers, and the third will be made up of instrumentalists.

The word ‘music’ in this article should not be understood as having the same implications as its Western sense, as the Bemba equivalent may also mean ‘song’ (Lumbwe, 2011). According to Mapoma (1980:36), among the Bemba the terms *ulwimbo* (song) and *ingoma* (drum) are used to indicate music, although the term *ingoma* is used more often in that wherever drumming is heard, there would be singing and dancing. In addition, some songs do not carry a melody, but are sung rhythmically, sounding almost monotonously, following the tonal inflections (natural contours) of the Bemba language. Such songs could be described by some Western music-oriented persons as ‘chanting rhythmic recitation’ (Lumbwe, 2005, 2009). Out of the five genres that constitute indigenous Bemba music – *Inyimbo sha baiche* (children’s music: games and story songs); *Imipukumo* (topical songs that carry didactic text, such as work songs); *Chilumbu* also known as *Ifimbo fya malilo* (funeral dirges); *Kalela* (music for the *Kalela* dance) and *Mfunkutu* – *ubuomba* singers of the Catholic Church adopted *mfunkutu* style for their worship. The *mfunkutu* genre consists of two categories, namely general music, for example, for beer parties and coronation ceremonies; and marriage music. The music discussed here is *mfunkutu*, general music for coronation ceremonies. Mapoma (1980:38) points out that *mfunkutu* is not only a name of a specific dance, but also a genre of music which is performed by ‘older’ Bemba at social functions, and that the dance refers to specific movements called *ukuifukuta-wila*, which include the shuffling of feet, twisting of the waist, and the up-and-down movements of the arms by the dancer.

Over the years *ubuomba* music has developed into a musical style that not only incorporates Bemba *ingomba* music and *mfunkutu* music but includes *kalindula* and Congolese rumba

language: Bemba, Shila, Tabwa, Mukulu, Chishinga, Ngumbo, Lunda of Luapula, Bisa, Lala, Kunda, Ambo, Swaka, Lamba, Luano, Ushi, Unga, Seba and Kabende (Mapoma 1969:72).

¹¹ A member of the Zambia National Dance Troupe and prominent *ubuomba* musician.

styles, which are contemporary African styles of music (Chasaya,¹² 2010). By implication the incorporation of *kalindula* and Congolese rhumba styles means that the accompanying musical instruments and some dances are also assimilated into *ubuomba*.

Song texts

Initially, in the early 1950s *ubuomba* music, as created by Rijthoven, used selected hymns already translated into Bemba from European languages, which were maintained as they were or dressed with new tunes and performed with piano or organ accompaniment. Examples of such songs included:

Example 1: Text of the hymn *Mwekatula mwinshilila* (Pass me not, oh gentle saviour)

<i>Mwekatula mwinshilila</i>	Pass me not, oh gentle saviour
<i>Ndemipapata</i>	Hear my humble cry
<i>Ilyo muleita bambi</i>	While on others thou art calling
<i>Mwilanchilila</i>	Do not pass me by
<i>Yesu, yesu</i>	Saviour, saviour
<i>Shumfwa ndekuta</i>	Hear my humble cry
<i>Ilyo muleita bambi</i>	While on others thou art calling
<i>Mwilanchilila</i>	Do not pass me by

Example 2: Text of the song *Mwe mfumu mutubeleleko luse* (Lord have mercy) (Mapoma 1956:13)

Mwe mfumu mutubeleleko luse	Lord have mercy
Mwe mfumum utubeleleko luse	Lord have mercy
Mwe mfumu mutubeleleko luse	Lord have mercy
Kristu mutwelele	Christ have mercy
Kristu mutwelele	Christ have mercy
Kristu mutwelele	Christ have mercy

¹² A retired Broadcaster and member of *ubuomba*.

MWE MFUMU MUTUBELELEKO LUSE

Mwe mfu - mu mu - tu - be - le - le - ko lu - se,

mwe - mfu - mu. mu - tu - be - le - le - ko lu - se

mwe - mfu - mu mu - tu - be - le - le - ko lu - se

Kri - stu mu - twe le - le, Kri - stu

mu - twe le le Kri - stu mu - twe le - le

In the late 1960s, with the help of Fr Joseph Chomba, Marcelino Milota, Bernard Kachingwe, educators Joakim Chungu and Chajitan Lunsonga, new liturgical tunes were composed. Marcelino Milota and Bernard Kachingwe composed their songs in Mambwe,¹³ while the rest composed in Bemba. Although the *ubuomba* songs are composed following the principles of *mfunkutu* music, the characteristics of the song texts do not follow strict principles of *mfunkutu*. The main characteristics of *ubuomba* song texts could be described as follows:

¹³ Mambwe is the language spoken in Mbala and Mpulungu districts found in Northern Zambia.

- The solo and chorus phrases share the same text, literally or with minimal differences;
- Sometimes the solo phrase is in the form of a question to which the chorus provides the answer;
- The soloist may sing the first word of a phrase or make pneumonic sounds to signal entry of a chorus phrase into the main cycle of a song.

Example 3: Text of the song *Amalumbo* (Praises)

Amalumbo kuli lesa	Praises to God
Amalumbo kuli kabumba	Praises to the creator
Amalumbo kuli tata	Praises to the father
Uwaikala mwachindama	Who stays in a holy place
Mulya mumwakwe	There in his home
Nakula kutotela we lesa wandi	I will be thanking you my God
Nakula lumbanya ishinalyobe	I will be praising your name
Uluchelo	In the morning
Akasuba	In the afternoon
Ichungulo	In the evening
No bushiku	And at night
Lesa ube chibusa wandi	God be my friend

Rooted in these characteristics, *ubuomba* songs need not necessarily be described as being set in ‘call and response’ mode, but instead ‘solo and chorus’ or ‘leader and chorus’. The song texts are composed in such a way that they convey a spiritual message in conformity with the teachings of Christianity and the doctrine of the Catholic Church. Mwela (2012) adds that most of the song texts are based on spiritual salvation and the quest for one’s soul to enter heaven after death. However, Chomba (2007: 51) points out that by the 1990s calls for the contextual relevance of Catholic Church music prompted *ubuomba* composers to include topical issues such as HIV/AIDS and corruption, among others. This development, on a semantic level, implies that *ubuomba* songs can be interpreted on two levels: first, there is the literal meaning of the text; secondly, there is a metaphoric level which entails the transfer of ideas from one context to another, for example, from liturgical service to general education. In this regard Bwalya (2000), a director of an *ubuomba* group, points out that the content of the song text is considered the main factor that determines the suitability of a song for use in church. That is why Kunda (2001), indicates that among *ubuomba* musicians the issue of harmony is not a subject for discussion as the tendency is to sing in parallel thirds, a characteristic borrowed from *mfunkutu* and other Bemba music traditions. By implication, singers do not follow strict or prepared arrangements, but instead harmonise in their own way. Concerning this style of harmonisation, Chomba (2007:32) indicates that for *ubuomba*

singers what is important is for the total performance of the song to sound so good that it stimulates the listeners to dance.¹⁴

From the year 2000 to date *ubuomba* music has not only been performed in the Catholic Church for liturgical purposes, but has also been performed at Bemba *ubwinga* (wedding) ceremonies and kitchen parties, and has also been recorded on CDs and DVDs for sale. The commercialisation of *ubuomba* music has resulted in the incorporation of Western musical instruments such as electric guitars, synthesisers and drum sets to create a fusion of *mfunkutu* drumming and contemporary musical styles such as *kalindula* from within Zambia and rumba from Congo DR. Sinjela (2010) observes that some *ubuomba* songs have been used by recording artists who have produced them in the style of rap and hip-hop music.

Musical instruments

As indicated earlier, *ubuomba* music was accompanied by piano or organ and later by *inshingili* double-headed drums and *mfunkutu* drums *sensele*, *ichibitiko* and *itumba*, as well as *ifisekese* shakers. The *inshingili* drums are strapped around the neck of the player and supported by shoulders, while *mfunkutu* drums are strapped around the player's waist, as shown in the pictures below.



Figure 2: How *inshingili* and *mfunkutu* drums are strapped to the player

On *inshingili* the musician plays a two-tone motif which is interlocked with that of the second player to produce a rhythm pattern that is complemented with that of *mfunkutu* drums. *Mfunkutu* drums are all single headed and are strapped around the waist of the player.

Other musical instruments incorporated in the *ubuomba* performances include the local *banjo*, the *babaton* (shown in Figure 3) (Mwela, 2012), as well as Western guitars, synthesisers and drum sets (Kasonde,¹⁵ 2008). According to Chanda (2010), a music educator, the inclusion of

¹⁴ Chomba describes the good sound of singing that stimulates a listener to dance in the Bemba phrase 'chileumfwika umunsaunte'.

¹⁵ A Catholic Parish Secretary in Lusaka.

local and Western musical instruments has been part of the process of evolution of indigenous and contemporary music in the country. In the same vein, Arom (1991:5) adds that traditional musics are firmly embedded in history and as such have continued to evolve as they are practised in societies with strong oral traditions. Arom adds that the evolution of musics could be attributed to an organic and in some sense a self-perpetuating renewal reinforced by elements derived from the surrounding traditional world, and the influence of ethnic groups on each other.



Figure 3: The *babaton* and *banjo*, stringed instruments used by *ubuomba* musicians



Figure 4: *Sensele* drum and *itumba* drum used by *ubuomba* musicians

Dance and mime

Since the inception of *ubuomba* in the Catholic Church dance and mime have been received with mixed feelings by different quarters of the church. However, Mutale (1979) points out

that moving when singing during mass is acceptable, and even desirable as long as it is done within acceptable limits. Chomba (2007: 60) emphasises that the incorporation of dance and mime into liturgical service is an expression of joy, on one hand, and it conforms to the Zambian cultural way of expressing praise and respect for a supernatural being, in this case God, on the other hand. Chitwansombo (2006) points out that, according to the Bemba *ingomba* tradition, dance and mime are closely associated with the whole performance structure, as they are by extension an emphasis and expression of the lyrics of the song in observable actions. Chitwansombo's point highlights the customary way that the Bemba use bodily expression of praise to someone in a position of authority. According to Chandamukulu (2005), the mother of Mwinelubemba Chief Chitimukulu,¹⁶ praises carry more weight when expressed through the use of the voice, body and actions such as prostrating, clapping hands (which is done with cupped palms) and kneeling down. Chandamukulu continues that these gestures are more meaningful than even the spoken word.

As indicated earlier, *ubuomba* singing is accompanied with *mfunkutu* dancing and miming. However, in this context, the shuffling of feet, twisting of the waist and the up-and-down movements of the arms by the dancer are not performed in the same way as *mfunkutu* for marriage ceremonies or for beer parties. According to Kunda (2001), *ubuomba* dance movements are performed more gently and within the acceptable limits of the Catholic Church. Concerning *mfunkutu* dancing, Ilunga (2003), a Catholic parish member, points out that *ubuomba* dancers are mindful that they cannot incorporate marriage *mfunkutu* and beer-party dance styles, as these will be inappropriate for the church setting and at the same time against the principles of Bemba customary and cultural principles. In addition, choreographers usually break down the dance into different routines that (a) match the subject of each stanza, (b) the lyrics of the song, and (c) the ritual for which it is being performed. The mime actions follow the lyrics of the song as well as the general theme of the ritual or occasion, and are intended to convey praises and respect for God. In this regard, dancers customarily carry artefacts such as an axe, ox tail, fly whisk etc., all which symbolise authority in Bemba culture (Mulenga, 2002).

According to Chasaya (2010), dances are performed by three groups: first, the young girls (aged between 7 and 15); second, the group of women; and third, the group of men who usually perform the mime. Depending on the occasion, these groups may perform at the same time, although the girls usually perform their routines during a procession within the mass setting, especially during offertory and communion. In order to enhance *ubuomba* performances, the singers and dancers wear attire which includes:

- White shirts and *chitenge* material wrapped around the waist with white head-dress for the women;
- Shirts made from *chitenge* material with black trousers for the men; and
- White dresses with white veils and white gloves for the young girls.

Rehearsals and performances

For *ubuomba* musicians rehearsal time is more than just practising the songs, dances and mimes. According to Chomba (2007:65), *ubuomba* musicians also include discussions on the

¹⁶ Chief Chitimukulu is the most senior of all the Bemba chiefs and that is why he is referred to as *Mwinelubemba* (the owner of Bembaland).

general wellbeing of each member of the group. This is the case because *ubuomba* groups are treated as family units in the Catholic Church. Chomba adds that the Bemba attach great significance to wellbeing and describe it as a way of improving people's lives through their participation in healthy activities such as singing and dancing that foster happiness and a sense of togetherness (Ilunga, 2003). Regarding wellbeing, Chinkumwa (2002), a member of an *ubuomba* group, points out that during practices and performances members have the opportunity to:

- interact socially;
- exercise physically through the energetic dance steps;
- share experiences;
- acquire shared knowledge; and
- attain emotional fulfilment through group membership and solidarity.

Rehearsals are broken down into small groups engaged in singing, dancing, instrument playing and miming. Songs are taught by rote, because in most cases the songs are not scored and also very few singers are able to read music (Mwela, 2012). However, the group leaders are usually able to read the tonic-solfa and in some cases even staff notation. The whole group learns the main melody of the song and once the song has been mastered, harmonies are included based on traditional principles. This means that instead of following the Western style four-part harmony, the same melodic line is sung in parallel thirds higher and lower (Sinjela,¹⁷ 2010). Sinjela continues that among the different Christian denominations in the Zambia *ubuomba* singers are the only groups that do not sing choral music with Western-style harmony, but instead rely on indigenous ways of harmonising their music.

Once the group leader is satisfied with the performance of the song, the singers are then taught the dance routines to accompany the song. Mwenya (2006), a librarian at the Catholic Church Education Centre, indicates that the routines are created as development of *mfunkutu* dance steps, and they are taught by whoever choreographed them. Regarding the mime actions, Mwela (2012) points out that the actions are created based on the meaning of the song text and taught to the group through imitation of the instructor. Similarly, the instrumentalists learn and practise the songs separately and by rote as well. Once all the different groups have learnt their parts satisfactorily, the whole *ubuomba* outfit gets together to combine the song, dance and mime.

Ubuomba performances are mainly Sunday services, festivals and ecumenical gatherings. During these times all the components of *ubuomba* – singing, dancing and miming – are amalgamated into one performance. However, according to Chinkumwa (2002), *ubuomba* performances have been extended to television and some groups have also produced audio and video recordings of their songs for the purpose of selling them to raise funds.

Conclusion

What emerges from this discussion is that the development of *buomba*, the music and performance styles, has coincided with that of the geographic (rural to urban), social, cultural, political, economic and religious. In the indigenisation process the Catholic Church drew on Bemba secular music styles, *mfunkutu* and the music of *ingomba*, an amalgamation which was

¹⁷ A Music Educator at Kitwe Teachers' College.

incorporated into the liturgical service and this style has been further contemporalised, commercialised and integrated in *kalindula* and Congolese rhumba, and has also been incorporated into indigenous ceremonies, especially some marriage ceremonies such as kitchen parties and weddings. Furthermore, the *ubuomba* style has spread beyond Bemba land into other areas of the country, especially Lusaka and the Copperbelt. Besides the development of the new musical style *ubuomba*, musical groups within the Catholic Church operate as small family units that offer spiritual, moral and emotional support for its members by promoting a high sense of wellbeing.

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