Efficacy of indigenous charms as weapons of war: Evidence from the Kamwina Nsapu conflict of Kasai in the Democratic Republic Of Congo

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ABSTRACT

Conflicts and wars in the contemporary world are often fought through the use of modern and sophisticated weapons. The forces using such modern weapons are often regarded as having an upper hand especially when their opponents possess what is regarded as inferior weaponry. However, modern weapons can be overpowered as evidenced in the Kamwina Nsapu conflict in the Kasai region of the Democratic Republic of Congo. The insurgency of Kamwina Nsapu militia in the Kasai Central Province sought to bring accountability to the modern political leadership and address bad governance practices. The case of the Kamwina Nsapu revealed the use of charms or fetishes (manga) to address the problem that had emerged in the Luba community. Different types of indigenous charms (manga) were used: trees and sticks were used as guns; slippers as telephones; and fruits as grenades. Militia were able to cut off heads of enemies from a distance with their bare hands and they teleported from one place to another at will. These activities were made possible by use of charms (manga), such as the tshiota fire and nkemwe.

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Introduction

There is documented evidence of the existence of 39 well-known categories of manga spells among the Luba (Nunn & Sierra, 2017). In this section, the study discusses four of the 39 categories. The first is the manga spells, which provide security and confidence. These manga spells provide protection, whether it be from drought, disease, or even attacks on the village. They also protect the community from potential thieves, who dread the efficacy of the manga. In this way, the manga is a confidence enhancer while deterring evil.

There are also manga spells for monitoring. These are used to trace and find lost items. Besides, they are used to unveil concealed thieves and witches. So also, they are used to know when an evil stranger is approaching. In this way, concealed vices and fore-knowledge help the beneficiaries of this manga spells to have additional knowledge and be prepared. In turn, the spells also, like the first category, deter societal misfits.

Manga spells of production increase the performance of the client while decreasing that of business competitors. These spells enhance individual business efficiency which could be translated to group achievement when the individual is part of a team. In this way, the individual members of the team are enticed to have positive group competition that leads to success (Nunn & Sierra, 2017).

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The fourth categorie of manga spells are incantations to harm others. The harm could be in the form of getting the adversary to be psychologically malfunctioning, to render the other infertile, and even to physically harm them. These types of spells, while fronting harm, are mainly used to punish community members who have been found guilty of wrong-doing. In this way, the values of the Luba community are enhanced as persons work towards becoming more benevolent.

From these four categories, manga spells propel benefits to society, hence the focus of this study on Social Transformation. In the area of governance, the focus of this study, political leaders are channeled to behave in more socially beneficial ways. In this way, they are more accountable, responsible, efficient and just. This societal check is realized through the amplifying of the perceived cost of maleficence. Therefore, individuals put minimum effort into activities that generate externalities that are negative on others. The society is hence driven towards social transformation (Nunn & Sierra, 2017).

The Kamwina Nsapu was traditional chief (King) of Bajila Kasanga in the Kasai Central Province. The Kasai Central Province was known for its peaceful environment except the year 2016-2017 that peace was disturbed by the Kamwina Nsapu insurrection, and many schools were used as the training ground of the militias and few schools were destroyed. Children were recruited to participate in wars and fights as Kamwina Nsapu militias and thus the time and atmosphere to attend school was adversely affected during that time of conflicts. The Luba people used manga in the Kamwina Nsapu conflict in Kasai Central Province for the restoration of justice in 2016. It is alleged that the charms protected them from government guns and bullets while they killed several government security forces for imposing a traditional leader on them (Global Security, 2019). The phenomenon of Kamwina Nsapu spread as people from afar got wind of the power of manga and travelled great distances to obtain it. The use of these fetishes became a powerful vector for resistance by the people against the Congolese state (Congo Research Group, 2018).

The DRC has over the last half a century gone through a number of social, political and economic challenges that have plagued the country (Tshiyoyo, 2012). There is an absence of strong leaders who can tackle effectively the challenge of bad governance and promote a culture of good governance in the DRC. These issues have resulted in the country not realizing sustainable development. The rulers of the DRC have had behaviors that are predatory, making it very difficult to effectively implement the rule of law to the letter. This behavior has persistently hindered the country from making strides in improved governance. Rather, it has chained the country to bad governance for close to fifty years. This bad governance, a lack of development, poverty and poor leadership was the basis of the Kamwina Nsapu war in the Kasai Central Province of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The study aims to investigate the efficacy of indigenous manga rituals used by the Kamwina Nsapu militia of Kasai in the fight with modern government soldiers.

The study employed a qualitative research that was rooted in phenomenology, expounded in the philosophy of Husserl (1977), and other phenomenologists to the effect that people's experience of life can be captured and interpreted. In phenomenological studies, the essence of phenomena, such as manga can be determined through people who live the experience. The study was carried out in the DRC which has a total of 26 provinces drawn up in the new constitution of 2011. The concentration of the study was on the Kasai Central Province. Kasai Region is composed of five provinces (Kasai, Kasai Central, Kasai Oriental, Lomami and Sankuru). The target population for the study was the Luba people who lived in Kasai Central Province. From these target population, charm givers, militia and political leaders were selected as the units of observation by the researcher. The political leaders comprised of local traditional chiefs of villages and modern leaders in Kasai Central Province in the DRC. Since there was no sampling frame of persons who use manga and of those who administered it, the study used the non-probability snowball sampling technique. The study used, In-depth Interviews, focus group discussions and observations to collect data.

Literature Review

Theoretical and Conceptual Background

Tylor's Theory of Fetishism

Tylor proposed the Theory of Fetishism in 1866. According to the theory, since spiritual beings have the power of embodied human beings and material objects, they can use their mystic energy to influence them. Such objects thus acquire and possess special powers and have personal consciousness. Fetish objects that have mystic powers, protect those carrying them from diseases, enemies, or for harming others. As Majawa (2017a) points out, the objects carried in such traditions often include teeth, horns, beads, dead insects, images of people among others. The objects are believed to possess some destructive and therapeutic mystical powers. The form or shape of the fetish determines the person, animal or object involved. Fetishes, therefore, take the image or properties of the person or object involved. They are based on the principle of like things attract each other.

The term fetish (object used for supernatural powers) is used in this study as manga. The reverence granted to it, as well as its magical powers, will be elaborated (Wallace, 2015). In the Theory of Fetishism or the theory of manga, MacGaffey (1977) details the practice of fetishism in the Kongo. He looks at the relationship between spirits, figures and practitioners. According to MacGaffey, fetishes have immense power which can either be bad or good. This power is found in the spirit world but some living people are at times also considered to have considerable amounts of it. In the Kongo, fetishes held power that influenced the locals and enabled them to participate actively in the community. These objects were vessels of the power of spirits that resided in the figures. The objects are

also varied based on what they were used for and because they possessed mystical power, the Congolese revered the figures as though they were a living elder of the community.

This theory explains the use of fetishes, which are referred to as manga in the local language of the Luba people. Traditional leaders for a long time have used manga as a source of power, to enable them to rule over the people. Manga is a source of protection and guides the leader on the appropriate leadership practices that they need to embrace and what needs to be thrown away. Tylor's Theory explains what fetishes are. In this context, manga are fetish rituals popularly practiced in traditional leadership among the Luba people.

Concept of Charms (Manga)

In the context of this study, manga in Tshiluba, is plural for medicine, and refers to fetishes that are believed to confer magical powers on those that wear, possess, or ingest them. Manga also include drinking of potions from a clay pot called a tshizaba (a term, which also came to refer to the potion itself) and ingesting live red ants (mankenene).

Though some think of charms and magical powers as something to do with cheating minds (Davis, 1998), charms are still part of the African cultures. This means that Africans continue to be surrounded by the concepts of manga in different forms. Based on this understanding, this study addresses charms, which in DRC (Kasai Central Province), are referred to as manga.

Charms (manga) in DRC are rituals that use leaves of some powerful trees, parts of some strong animals, or human beings, to make strong charms that are used to denote protection, healing, wealth acquisition, good luck or to bring calamity. Manga evokes the spiritual powers with different intentions, which could be either positive or negative (Nooter, 2017). Manga are performed by the charm givers who are known as bena manga. The use of manga is in line with the indigenous practices of ancestral "worship" that invokes the spirits of ancestors as practiced in African Religion (Mbiti, 1975, 1992).

Children or grandchildren inherit the manga to ensure continuity of societal traditions. Mediums, priestesses, and priests are professionals who communicate in tongues and often go into a trance to reach into the ancestral world. Additionally, they carry out divination, sorcery, and give charms for the benefit of the people.

Manga can be conceptualised as prayer rituals, involving designated individuals who can mediate between the invisible and the visible, and respond to the request of the living. While it is true that other spiritual forces are acknowledged within the culture, manga are not primarily thought of negatively as witchcraft; if so kings and leaders would not use them. In Luba tradition, the word for witchcraft is mupongo, and the witch is mwena mupongo. Such distinction is not only a matter of semantics but also guard against the prejudices or stereotypes that go contrary to the African culture and to its ritual practices which were often condemned as "pagan" or primitive (Ntsebeza, 2011).

The practice of using manga which are types of fetishes is popular in the DRC in general and among the Luba people in particular. Different types of fetishes are evident in literature. The tenta is a fetish that certain people have to set a magical trap to help anyone who may be involved in any of the following activities: having a problem or a debt, who engages in sexual activities with the wife of another, or even one who steals. The victim may want to avenge, seek justice or even settle scores with the presumed perpetrator through sourcing for help from a charm giver. The way in which the tenta is transmitted is mainly through the leg where someone may strike something and the magical effects automatically penetrate the body (Tshibinda, 2008).

Bizaba is another type of fetishes, which consists of consulting a charm giver, who takes the clients through a rite to make them immune to physical objects, which would otherwise harm them. The harming objects range from bullets, knives, and even spears. It is believed that when the person to whom bizaba has been administered is attacked, blood will not spill. These fetishes were often used by armed groups in the DRC as a means of invulnerability against bullets (Tshibinda, 2008). Examples of such groups are the Mai-mai and the Kamwina Nsapu.

At all levels of society, the use of charms was and is still an essential component of leadership. Even though colonialism destroyed the indigenous political systems (Barret, 2013; Middleton, 2015) and Christianity is now well spread, the use of manga still exists. Luba kings, political leaders, and their aides, chiefs and ritual specialists used manga that were personified in wood sculptures as receptacles of the spirits. Manga appear in all forms of symbolizations as amulets, beads, or statuettes, with a purpose to bring peace, prosperity, healing, procreation, food production, blessings, personal protection, and gaining fame. These attributes are relevant in the Luba Kingdom, especially among the chiefs. The three components: forms of manga, their purpose and relevance are of particular interest to this study since the practices resonate with political power in modern society. Also, modern politicians and influential leaders still use manga for protection and acquiring power, and for good luck.

Kamwina Nsapu use of charms (manga)

In 2016, attacks were witnessed in Kasai Central Province of the DRC, a region that had not previously experienced conflict. Children and young men, known as the Nsapu militia who had gone through traditional rituals using charms (manga), guarded roadblocks erected by a customary chief. Kamwina Nsapu inherited the traditional power from his uncle according to the Luba tradition and custom; the central government refused to recognize him as chief because he was a member of the opposition party (Congo Research Group, 2018).

In examining the Nsapu militia, which is at the core of the Kasai crisis, the role played by magic and custom in the conflict arose. The sensational tactics of the militia were captured by the media in DRC. These included the belief that sticks could be turned into guns and that young girls would stop bullets. Further, going through a ritual baptism and taking a potion called tshizaba at the site of the tshiota fire could protect combatants from being struck by bullets. In the Luba, belief in such magic exists and continues to remain just as any religious faith (Congo Research Group, 2018).

The Kamwina Nsapu conflict is comparable to the Bundu Dia Kongo movement in Kongo-Central, or the Raia Mutomboki of the Kivu provinces in the DRC. In both conflicts, the use of charms was widely witnessed and both conflicts arose due to the perceived marginalization of communities by the government. All three revolts are evidence of the use of magical power and manga to fight political injustices and subsequent violence (Congo Research Group, 2018).

In the Kamwina Nsapu conflict, magic and custom were significant. Closely related to magic is the relevance of tradition and custom particularly among customary chiefs. In the Luba group, customary chiefs are believed to have magical powers, sometimes referred to as witchcraft, mupongo or buloji (Congo Research Group, 2018). The source and manifestation of these powers is fundamentally ambiguous. On one hand, there is a negative connotation to witchcraft because it is seen as a way of harming a person or group of persons using supernatural means. On the other, customary chiefs use it as a way of protecting their people of villages from other supernatural forces. This leaves the use of manga by the Kamwina Nsapu such as the (tshiota and tshizaba) open to controversy. Some regarded it as a distortion of custom because it was used to kill. This was in contradiction to the role of the tshiota fire because its main purpose was benevolence. The fire was lit as a way of resolving a problem of great importance to communities or villages (Congo Research Group, 2018).

However, for the Kamwina Nsapu and members attached to it, the use of magic and tradition was for combating the state and other persons who were perceived as enemies. The militia group was fighting with people armed with guns and rocket-propelled grenades. The fear by soldiers of the armed militia was a testament in itself to the potency of the manga that was being used by the armed group (Congo Research Group, 2018).

Bizaba is another type of fetish which consists of consulting a sorcerer, who takes the clients through a rite to make them immune to physical objects, which would otherwise harm them. The harming objects range from bullets, knives, and even spears. It is believed that when the person to whom bizaba has been administered is attacked, blood will not spill. These fetishes were often used by armed groups in the DRC as a means of invulnerability against bullets (Tshibinda, 2008). Examples of such groups are the Mai-mai and the Kamwina Nsapu.

Efficacy of charms (manga) in the Kamwina Nsapu conflict

The findings bring to play the Kamwina Nsapu. This is a militia group that arose in 2016 in Kasai Central Province. This group had both male and female members and spread over four provinces. The renowned leader was Kamwina Nsapu. The group came into existence following the need to resolve a conflict among the Luba community. The modern day government had killed a popular traditional leader known as Kamwina Nsapu and had installed a new traditional leader. This explains the name Kamwina Nsapu. The Luba people at the time felt that this leader had been installed undemocratically and not in line with the transfer of power among the Luba traditional leadership system. The ensuing conflict between the government and the Luba people started a war in which government soldiers were sent into the Kasai area to fight the militia (Traditional Leader, TL 3; Charm Giver, CG 7).

The other reason for fighting the government as established by the study was bad governance. This was riddled with high levels of corruption from the provincial to the central government. As a remedy to the situation, militias were prepared by the traditional leaders and charm givers and given powerful manga notably the tshiota fire ceremony and nkwenbe to go and fight the modern day government:

...surprisingly the government started paying some traditional leaders money so that they lit them tshiota fire in their villages so that they can initiate young people to fight the militia of Kamwina Nsapu. That type of tshiota was called tshiota tshia majanyi (the fire of betrayal), because it was used to betray the people, to betray Kamwina Nsapu so that they will be defeated by injustice, corruption, by evil doing from the provincial and central government. The ancestors and God did not allow that to happen that is why the central government was humbled despite the fact that they sent hundreds of thousands of soldiers... (Traditional Chief, TC 4).

Militia (M3) also adds his voice in saying,

I was one of those who were with Kamwina Nsapu...we fought the system of bad governance...we were against injustice...politicians were becoming rich overnight through looting of natural resources and corruption. Our people needed a change of leadership and we provided that to them and we have accomplished our mission...(Militia, M3).

In the Kamwina Nsapu war, different types of traditional manga were used. Among the notable trees used for manga were, mutshi wa lukwanga (tree of lukwanga), difudu (tree of difudu; both are from the savanna) (Traditional Chief, TC 10), bikolo bia mabwa (palm tree branches), bikolo bia mapanda (raffia palm branches), buloba bwetu (sand from the land), were used (Member of Parliament, MP 3). From the participants, manga enabled the Kamwina Nsapu militia to fly like birds, teleport from one place to

another and bullet-proof their bodies. They managed to turn sticks into guns, and fruits like magonda and polopopo (fruits from savanna savage trees), when thrown to enemies, exploded like grenades:

...things that people saw during that event, were things that they see in dreams and movies, but they saw them with their own eyes. We were using slippers as phones, even just from my left hand without phone, I was able to call other militias. We were flying through birds, and flies, we were teleporting at will and to whatever place we wanted to be. Bullets and rockets from any guns had no power to penetrate our body... (Militia, M 3).

From the data, the strength of manga is used by the Kamwina Nsapu "to pursue justice and rule of law... stopping modern day politicians from doing as they wish, [hence promoting] good governance..." (Traditional Chief, TC 12).

From the data the Kamwina Nsapu militia were brutal towards government militaries. During the war, they uttered powerful words such as mukete wa bajanyi, bukole budiku, butuku mbwa midima which means arrow of spirits, strength and power. Upon uttering these words, they became immune to charms of other people and from the attacks of the government soldiers. In this way the militia were able to kill their opponents. The following extract supports this:

...the militia had no mercy towards the militaries. It was enough to say mukete wa bajanyi, bukole budiku, butuku mbwa midima. When they have said that even if you have your charm it will be neutralized and they will cut your heard from a distance without touching you... (Provincial Minister, PM 1).

The Kamwina Nsapu used manga to fight their opponents. They opposed injustice in the modern political governance. In this way they promoted justice among the Luba. The result led to justice among the Luba. One of the most notable manga was the nkwenbe.

Origin and form of nkwenbe

The study sought to find out what the origin of nkwenbe was and what form it takes when invoked. From the findings, it was established that the nkwenbe was initiated by Luntu who is one of the ancestors of the Luba people. The nkwenbe lives in Lake Mukamba and is a power given by the ancestors to do either good or bad. For instance, when there is no money and children are not going to school, the people can call on nkwenbe to appear and offer a solution. Another research entrant supported this by stating:

Once invoked, the nkwenbe can appear anywhere and in any place of the world and at whatever time and assist or offer solutions to whoever is in need... (Charm Giver, CG 7).

The findings give more information on nkwenbe which travels in mysterious ways and appears suddenly at different places:

The spirit takes a shape of a human being and you talk and converse with it...after finishing the spirit will go. The spirit is free to eat or not...You cannot ask the spirit who he/she is and even if you do, the spirit will tell you it is someone you know. The spirit will then come to you in a dream and will tell you he/she is your ancestor who came to visit you... (Charm Giver, CG 8).

The researcher sought to establish who can invoke the nkwenbe and the respondents to this question who were charm givers indicate that this type of manga can be invoked by religious people including pastors, priests, business people and politicians of goodwill. The nkwenbe is invoked only for good purposes and not for evil deeds. Upon invocation, the nkwenbe appears to offer solutions to the problems that the people are facing at a particular time within the community. Answers of interviewed charm givers describe the process of invocation and appearance of nkwenbe by stating:

...one kneels down when there is a big problem...and invokes the spirit by saying, 'mu dina dia nkambwa wanyi Luntu (in the name of my ancestor Luntu)...I want you to appear and tell me where is my suffering coming from and what do I have to do to finish it... (Charm Givers, CG 9, 1, 10, 2).

The nkwenbe when invoked appears and tells a person the exact problem that they have. The nkwenbe can come as a man or a woman, and comes in person and not in a dream. The spirit will speak the language of that very place. When the spirit comes, it can ask what is happening, and a person can deny then the nkwenbe starts by describing what is happening to someone and offers solutions to the problem. The charm givers further cited various instances when the nkwenbe had been invoked, and its appearance solved problems that were ailing the community including during war and wars among the community. This findings confirm not only the presence of manga but also a direct citation of instance of occurrence where it has been used to solve problems among the Luba community.

The data presents the Kamwina Nsapu militia as no ordinary people. This was based on their ability to use manga. In their struggle they won against the injustices of the government of the time. The notable charm was the nkwenbe. This is bwanga that is made with the power from chiefs and charm givers, where words are given spirit.

The nkwenbe charm is only found in the Kasai Provinces of the Democratic Republic of Congo and is particularly used for leadership because it makes the person to become strong. This charm is also regarded as being the most powerful bwanga for leadership purposes. The nkwenbe can either be male or female and they come in three forms namely; nkwenbe wa bena lulua meaning female one, nkwenbe wa bakwa luntu meaning male one, and finally, nkwenbe wa unite Kasaienne which means kwembe of other tribes

in Kasai. The charm givers reported that anyone who has nkembe and follows it will become a very successful leader as supported by an answers by a charm givers which stated:

Whoever has nkembe will lead the people according to his will and all of them will bow and follow him... leaders have come for nkembe which makes them very powerful... (Charm Givers, CG 8, 5). Nkembe was used by the Kamwina Nsapu to conquer government soldiers. Kamwina Nsapu had it and President Mobutu Seseseko had it too... (Charm Givers, CG 7, 6).

The data showed how the Kamwina Nsapu used the nkembe to make themselves bullet proof and to demonstrate power against modern government soldiers. The Kamwina Nsapu militia therefore were never harmed or killed by weapons of the modern government soldiers, "the Kamwina Nsapu used the female nkembe to demonstrate power and protect the militia by bullet proofing them..." (Charm Giver, CG 8). As noted, this is a powerful bwanga and is used by the Luba people to today.

During those days, "...when we had the Kamwina Nsapu event, many soldiers were sent into all our villages and towns with the mission of killing many traditional leaders and militia...however, little did the soldiers know that we have nkembe and this bwanga had told us what will happen in advance..." (Militia, M5). The second manga used by the Kamwina Nsapu is the tshiota.

The tshiota manga among the Luba

The findings of the research established the presence of another popular bwanga among the Luba. This is the tshiota which is a type of holy fire. The tshiota is used to perform rituals and invocations to call upon the ancestors for help when there is a problem in the community. This help includes protection of community members before they go out to perform an activity on behalf of the community. This includes activities such as fighting during war. The study established that tshiota fire was used also by the Kamwina Nsapu in addition to the nkembe: "The Kamwina Nsapu used the tshiota ceremony to obtain power to protect themselves from the weapons of government soldiers...and it worked because their bodies became impenetrable to weapons such as bullets..." (Charm Giver, CG 10).

When the tshiota fire is lit, a ceremony is done where people dance around the holy fire and call upon the ancestors to send power. The traditional chief makes pronunciations around the tshiota and this can easily be connected with the spirits so that the nkembe can act on behalf of the village and or an individual. The tshiota fire and nkembe therefore act together to fulfill the wishes or desires of the village and individuals: "...Kamwina Nsapu used this in their war, the tshiota fire and nkembe to gain power in order to fight modern day government soldiers" (Charm Givers, CG 1, 9).

The findings established that through the power of the tshiota the dead came back to life and acted on behalf of the living. One such power is the mikishi, spirits of the dead that acted on behalf of the living; they even returned to give feedback. At the end of a mission the mikishi are invoked to take the sent militia back to their place of residence. A ceremony follows where a chicken is cut at the tshiota, cooked and eaten as thanks to the ancestors

The militia that were fighting the government were initiated through fires of tshiota and drinking a powerful potion called tshizaba. These manga made the militia to be very powerful and strong in their fight for justice and good governance in Kasai, "We had hundreds and hundreds of tshiota fires in Kasai Provinces in general, and thousands and thousands of militias were formed and initiated to the tshiota and drinking Tshizaba to go and fight the government soldiers..." (Traditional chief, TC 4).

The militia derived their power from the tshiota fire that was lit by traditional chiefs and charm givers using specific trees. The specific trees that are used to light the tshiota fire include the mutotshi, lubamba, lukwanga, difudu, and tshikusukusu. The tshiota fires was also used to purify the society. Through the tshiota fire, the traditional leaders are able to call upon the power of manga which enabled and still gives power to militia to this day. The study findings established that through the fire, the ancestors are called upon through rituals that are done including drinking and pouring traditional liquors into the tshiota fire. When someone is initiated into the tshiota with tshizaba, they are asked to stand and purify themselves with kapia meaning fire from the tshiota. This fire reactivates the power in the body of a person and militia were required to regularly retreat back to the tshiota fire in the evening in order to warm themselves and reactivate their powers, as said in the following statement:

...kapia of tshiota (fire of the tshiota)...we used it to bring the politicians back to their senses...used the tortoise shell for the great protection of the militia. We kept our manga inside the shell. We also used salamander skin to preserve our manga (Traditional Chief, TC 11, Militia, M 1).

One of the reasons for using the tshiota bwanga was to protect the Luba people against the government because the people had concluded that the government did not bring progress and development in the Kasai province.

The use of manga by the Kamwina Nsapu resulted in a long-protracted war between the Luba people and the modern day government. While the government used modern weapons, militia used manga to successfully fight and win over government soldiers. This shows the efficacy of manga used and the results attained. The tshiota and nkembe are not only some of the most powerful manga among the Luba, but equally among the most respected, and having a high level of efficacy.

Reasons of fighting

In order to ensure that they maintain and protect their accountability and responsibility to the people the traditional chiefs used the Kamwina Nsapu. This is a demonstration of their responsibility and accountability to the people. Through the use of manga, militia were prepared to go and fight the modern day government in order to bring change in the leadership. The findings establish that the people were tired of a dictatorial regime. They expressed their disillusionment in that that regime had little or no interest at all in their people. Hence they resorted to fighting, in order to bring change to the province and to the country. This is supported by a traditional chief who said, "...manga as our traditional remedy, our strength, our traditional power, were used to make the government understand that we needed change in the provincial leadership and in the central leadership..." (Traditional Leader, TL 7). Among the notable aspects linked to accountability among the Luba, protection, problem solving (conflict management), justice and benevolence arise.

Militia and manga for accountability

The study has already established that militia fought government soldiers through the use of indigenous manga among the Luba people of Kasai Central Province in the DRC. The militia fought as a result of various underlying reasons and one of the reasons that emerged was the establishment of justice and accountability by the modern day government. The fighting and militia use of manga in the war was aimed at bringing change in the leadership and transformation of the country. The fighting aimed at bringing a change in the modern government and its systems of governance as noted in the following statement, "...we targeted the politicians, and law makers, the soldiers and police who were supporting and defending a bad political system, that was very detrimental for the people and our country..." (Militia, M 3.)

The fight for more accountability and transparency by the militia was guided by the belief that the actions of the people were in line with the traditional and customary laws, where doing good on behalf of the community was not regarded as a crime. The militia fought because of the belief that the people deserved change and leaders were to be accountable and transparent. The militia used the good type of manga as a way of making modern leaders accountable. A militia who was part of the Kamwina Nsapu militia says that, "...people must be given chance to have a bright future than living in poverty like slaves. We have used only our traditional manga to bring change, nothing else..." (Militia, M 5).

Additionally, the militia fought with the belief that they were accountable to their ancestors and to the people. This made them have key values and principles during the conflict. For instance, corruption was regarded as evil and against the laws and traditions of the land. This made the militia to reject any form of corruption from modern leaders who thought they could corrupt the militia to stop the fighting. However, the militia stood their ground, and anyone who accepted to be corrupted was regarded as a betrayer and the manga that they had been given to protect them equally prohibited the militia from being corrupted:

...we are accountable to our ancestors and to our people we refused corruption from politician from the provincial and central governments who thought that all people can be corrupted. They were ashamed to see that we refused to be corrupted or to negotiate with them on the same table, but we wanted them out of power, and they are out of power today... (Militia, M 4).

The event of the Kamwina Nsapu war was cited as one of the evidences that indigenous manga found in the traditional leadership system of the Luba were powerful and can be used as a remedy to modern problems. It is already evident that manga used in this conflict superseded superior government and modern weapons that the government soldiers were using. Through using manga, simple things like stones, fruits, sticks, foot wear were turned into powerful weapons that were used against the government soldiers. Ordinary fruit like pawpaw, and mangos, became grenades and kill soldiers. Drinking of live red hunt, using sleepers as phones, a stick becoming a gun, cutting the head of an enemy from a distance by just raising your hand and saying in the name of the great chief, watching and monitoring the enemies through tshizaba or mirrors among others. This was in order to seek justice and establish the truth which is one of the values that interviewees reported needed to be retrieved from traditional leadership and incorporated into modern leadership. Based on the Kamwina Nsapu conflict, an interviewed traditional leaders observed that, "...we can also retrieve the value of defending the truth...[and] retrieve the value of establishing justice and rejecting injustice no matter what it takes...retrieve the value of being strong and courageous even in front of a lion like the government..." (Traditional Leader, TL 4).

This indicates that the fighting was based on the deep beliefs and values held in traditional leadership. Some of these values include justice, truth, and good governance that the traditional leaders felt was not present in the modern political leadership. The fighting by the militia sought to bring these values into the modern government. The fighting was aimed at bringing change in government in order to bring better governance systems in the modern political leadership. This was supported in an interview answer by one of the traditional leaders, "...the militias were fighting for change of leadership in the province and in the country..." (Traditional Leader, TL 4).

Discussion

The case of the Kamwina Nsapu revealed the use of manga to address the problem that had emerged in the Luba community. Different types of indigenous manga were used: trees and sticks were used as guns; slippers as telephones; and fruits as grenades. Militia were able to cut off heads of enemies from a distance and they teleported from one place to another.

These activities were made possible by use of manga, such as the tshiota fire. This agrees with literature that indicated the use of manga by the Kamwina Nsapu militia. According to the Congo Research Group (2018), the use of fetishes by the Kamwina Nsapu militia demonstrated the use of indigenous manga against the modern day government. A report by Global Security (2019) also supports this finding where it alleged that there was use of charms by the Kamwina Nsapu militia to protect themselves from guns, bullets and weapons of the government soldiers while several soldiers were killed by the same militia.

The use of manga by the Kamwina Nsapu concurs with literature. According to the Congo Research Group (2018), types of manga used by the militia included tshiota fire and tshizaba which were used to protect the militia and to also solve problems of great importance in the villages or communities. The findings of the study supported this by revealing that the tshiota fire was one of the manga used by traditional chiefs to equip the militia and protect them in their fight against the modern day government. Incantations and rituals were done around the tshiota fire to protect the militia and give them mystical powers to fight the modern day government soldiers.

This finding agrees with Majawa (2017b) that power that is produced by uttering the right words linked to spiritual powers. These words can be used to cast spells, curse, swear oaths, and make attempts at controlling people, events, nature and the spirit world. The words become more potent when uttered by a traditional healer or religious leader or diviner and such words can give confidence to people to pursue certain actions. This is precisely what happened in the Kamwina Nsapu conflict where the militia fought after traditional ceremonies had been performed by the traditional leaders together with charm givers. The militia acquired power and became confident that they were protected by manga from the more complex weapons of government soldiers. The militia would fly in the sky like birds, teleport from one location to another, disappear into thin air once they had been spotted, turn sticks into guns, use sandals and telephones, cut off the head of the soldiers from a distance and turn fruits into grenades and bombs once they threw them at government soldiers.

Traditional chiefs who were part of the war with government soldiers indicated that they resorted to using indigenous manga because they knew that it was going to work. The findings established this was indeed the case and militia who participated in the war and conflict collaborated this evidence. The use of guarded words by traditional leaders and charm givers was to protect the community from harm and danger. As Majawa (2017b) notes, words that are protective can transform into amulets or objects and used as a source of power. These words are often incantations such as the ones made by Luba traditional leaders in the presence of the holy fire known as tshiota to protect the militia. Bently (1977) concurs that incantations are pronounced in front of symbols and fetishes. Through the pronouncement, the two get power. In this way, the involved symbols point to things that are beyond the senses and represent expressions of deeper religious and social meaning.

These expressions are then used to communicate, to protect and secure places, people and times from evil spirits and invite good spirits to bring good luck to society. In this way, people who devote themselves to the power of these symbols feel secure and nurture their confidence since their welfare is watched (Nyamiti, 2017). Garfield and Hagen (2018) also note that incantations to symbols and fetishes are done using specific and special rituals. Through these rituals, status and power are legitimized. These are often expressed differently between ordinary community members and those individuals who are powerful. The practice of these rituals is still evident across African societies where they are evoked for various functions in the society.

Through the war, the findings revealed that the traditional leaders fought the modern day government because it was corrupt, practiced bad governance and had brought little levels of development in the Kasai Central Province. The people wanted a change of government so bad that they resorted to fighting the government that had more complicated weapons. They however, resorted to using the available indigenous manga in the Luba community that made the militia a formidable force against government soldiers. The study confirmed this, in the findings which had been earlier reported both in print media, reports and in scholarly works on the use of fetishes and charms in war and conflict in the Kasai Central Province in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Conclusion

Among the Luba, manga is part of the tradition, within which traditional leaders appreciate and follow the laws, customs and traditions. Traditional leaders are obliged to follow the inherited traditions, customs and laws. The use of manga is part of the duty of these leaders within the society. With this therefore, they call upon the charm givers to prepare different types of manga, and to assist them as they act on behalf of the community.

Traditional leadership among the Luba involves the use of indigenous manga. These manga help the traditional leader to protect the community, and bless the people. The process involves calling upon ancestors. The traditional leader, with the use of manga, is able to solve disputes, perform rituals, heal the land from epidemics, and establish justice and accountability in the Luba society.

The study has established that manga can either be good or bad. This means that it can be used to do well or do evil in society. Among the Luba people of Kasai Central Province, use of bad manga is shunned and both traditional and modern politicians are encouraged to use good manga. Good manga can heal, protect, bless, establish justice, promote good governance, ensure responsiveness, solve disputes, bring prosperity and ensure good leadership practices. Evil manga are harmful, often leading to loss of life, sickness, lack of development, bad leadership and governance and a weakening in the practices of traditional leadership. The Luba community encourages the use of the good type of manga to benefit the society and its people as established in the study.

The efficacy of manga among the Luba is determined by its reliability in achieving what it sets out to do, in line with user's expectations. Whether it is used as a source of power, for protection, leadership, prosperity, good luck, healing, to harm or do other good deeds in the society, the study noted it is potent.

In the experience of Chief Kamwina Nsapu, there was effective use of strong manga in the war. These included lighting of the tshiota fire upon which rituals were done to protect the militia against the sophisticated weapons of soldiers: sticks turned into guns, slippers were used as phone, soldiers' teleported and disappeared. Through this abilities, they were able to fight and win against the modern day government in their effort to bring change and accountability in modern political leadership. Manga were used to deal with corruption and other mal-practices, hence bring forth justice and good governance in Kasai Central Province, in DRC.

The various types of manga used to acquire power in traditional leadership have equally proven efficacious. For instance, in the installation of traditional leaders, a plethora of manga is used to bestow power on the leader, who in turn is required to lead, based on the principles of the manga used. These types of manga include charms of protection such as ntuntu, nsamu, njiminyi, miepu and charms of leadership and good governance like lukanu lwa bukallenge, nkwenbe, lukanu lwa bilumbu, tshiakunda, diyi dia bukokesha, lupemba lwa bukallenge, tshitokatoka among others. Through the charms and symbols of power that have manga in them, the traditional leader not only acquires power but also leads according to the principles of the manga that has been acquired.

Manga have a role to contribute in bringing accountability in modern political leadership. These manga that have proven efficacy in traditional leadership, can also operate in modern leadership. Through these, good governance, a pre-requisite of social transformation, can be used in Kasai Central Province and the DRC at large. However, checks have to be in place due to the pointers towards the use of manga for evil by modern leaders. This is in reference to bad type of manga that harms people and the community. This is founded on the acknowledgement among modern leaders on the efficacy of manga.

This requires the traditional leaders to not only be accountable for what they do, but also be good leaders, have interests of the community at heart, protect the community, defend it, establish justice, perform religious functions among other roles. The manga therefore check the leader(s) and ensures that they do their work in line with the principles that are required.

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