Analysis of indigenous African political leadership among the Luba people of Kasai in the Democratic Republic of Congo

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to examine the nature of indigenous African political leadership among the Luba People of Kasai in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The study employed qualitative research that was rooted in phenomenology. The concentration of the study was on the Kasai Central Province. The target population was 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. A sample size of 40 participants was adequate to enable the researcher to obtain rich information and reach the saturation point. The targeted 40 participants were: 10 charm givers, 8 members of the provincial parliament, 4 provincial ministers, 13 traditional leaders, and 5 militia leaders. The study used In-depth Interviews (IDIs), focus group discussions, and observations to collect data. The findings indicate indigenous traditional leadership among the Luba has various sources of power. These include the use of various symbols of Luba traditional leadership to perform duties on behalf of the community. The use of the manga is also in line with the customs and traditions of the Luba people and guides the leader on the right things to do while on the throne.

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Introduction

There is growing interest in indigenous systems of leadership and governance ranging from Australia, New Zealand, and South America to what is popularly known in Africa as traditional leadership. It is mainly a form of indigenous governance system of communities that is largely based on cultural practices. In Africa, communities believed and still believe that African traditional leadership, governance, and guidance is originally given by God to humanity for transformation and so it has divine wisdom and has to be respected by all (Majawa, 2017a). Traditional leaders hence continue to govern their communities through the provision of security, resolving disputes, regulation of social activities and dispensing justice among other functions (Rapatsa, 2015). However, some fundamental changes to this institution were brought about by colonialism so that traditional leadership has evolved to the present status. According to Dodo (2013), the discussions on traditional leadership are clearly understandable when based on its phases because it gradually changed from the pre-colonial period to the colonial and post-colonial era. In the period before colonization, traditional authorities had immense powers and authority over their land and its subjects. Their subjects were comfortable with traditional leadership because they were familiar with them and understood how they worked. Additionally, they had little choice and could not avoid or run away from the systems because they were almost the same and they could not leave their families, which they valued very much.

The focus here is on the Luba traditional leadership. This leadership used *manga* to strengthen their influence and determine the authenticity of their leadership. The study quest is what has made this Luba African leadership survive this long. A number of

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countries and cultures indicate that the African traditional societies were not without leadership and political systems; they had traditional governance systems that were centralized and had internal kings. Nevertheless, with the coming of colonial intrusion, the dynamics were changed and the African traditional political systems interfered with. As seen, however, some have persisted as noted in the example of the Luba. In literature, there is hardly any concentration on what and how these powers were maintained within these traditional systems. The use of *manga* is one such way that the Luba used. This study desires to elucidate this reality.

The Luba Kingdom is traceable back to the 16th century. This kingdom had villages that were headed by chiefs (*Kilolo*), with the royal compound (*Kitenta*) being the center of the cultural life of the people. The king (*mulopwe*) lived in *Kitenta* and was selected from the *balopwe* or a group of individuals that served as intermediaries between ancestral/spirit world and humankind; these *balopwe* were descendants of the king or were royal blood (De Maret & Smith, 2015). The Luba kingdom was regarded as a collection of diverse people who had different origins; they had come to gain a common unity of both culture and language. The Luba had three major divisions, which were the Luba Katanga, Luba Kasai and Luba Hema whose diverse views significantly shaped nationalist and secessionist politics (Maxwell, 2016). Language and arts are the medium for transmitting and conducting rituals and practices among the Luba. The Luba language is believed to have originated around the River-Congo area which was inhabited by artisan people. The Luba sculptures include divination bowls (*mboko*); stools, memory boards (*Lukasa*) and woodcarvings all regarded as being essential to the culture of the Luba (National African Language Resource Centre, [NALRC], 2018). *Lukasa* were significant devices that had coloured beads that helped the Luba people to remember their ritual life and their complex history.

The traditional religion of the Luba people is based on the veneration of their ancestors and paying respects to spirits. The traditional structure of politics in the Kingdom heavily encompasses these religious notions as the King (*mulopwe*) was regarded as a very important communication link between mankind and ancestors (NALRC, 2018). Since this study is on the role of *manga*, some information linking the Luba Kingdom to *manga* is given in the next section. Among the Luba, politics played a significant role. The Luba people believe that both the physical and the spiritual worlds are permeated by a life-long force (*mooyo*). In understanding this life force, *manga* plays a significant role. *Manga* is intrinsically linked to the leadership of the Luba people. In administering power to the leaders who are believed to have immense life-long force, rituals become the media. The ritual grounds are under the control of the ritual specialists or the charm givers. These ritual specialists evoke the life-long powers using *manga* that have different functions with distinctions being made that can either be positive or negative *manga* (Nooter, 2017).

People such as politicians have often given sacrifices to some deities in exchange for protection and help. The manipulation of *manga* is common among the Luba people (Macola, 2015). The head of a household leads the incantations that are directed to the deities. When mediums are in trance, spirits are believed to speak through them. Through this, they can carry out divinations (Peterson, Emma & Stephanie, 2016). By being in charge of the *manga* rituals, the charm givers found significant roles in how politics was conducted in the Luba kingdom. Specifically, the king, his court and ritual specialists used *manga* that came in the form of Luba wood sculptures that served as a receptacle for the spirits. As Nooter (2017) noted, such *manga* was personal protection and gaining fame and relevance in the Luba kingdom especially among the chiefs. Today, those seeking power are said to be seeking *manga* for the same purpose, a factor that shall be explored under modern governance systems and the Luba.

This paper aims to examine the nature of indigenous African political leadership among the Luba People of Kasai in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Literature Review

To have a clearer understanding of the African leadership system, it is important to address its evolution. This is because the African cultural worldview in its totality continually evolves because it adapts itself to changing times (Majawa, 2017a). This is looked at in two main phases: the time of pre-colonization and during colonization. The post-colonial phase will be addressed later under the modern governance systems. African kingdoms and states existed before colonialism, together with their political systems that governed the land, water, and conflicts within and beyond the kingdoms had values, traditions, and customs that guided them rather than a formal constitution (Martin, 2012). As Martin explains, “The concept of power in Africa fused the secular and the sacred. The traditional leader was both a religious as well as a secular leader and he acted as a link between the living world and the dead, between the subjects and their ancestors”. Kings assisted by chiefs governed a majority of the communities in Africa before colonization. The king’s authority was vested in political, social and economic heredity. The government of a kingdom was formed with close collaboration with the chiefs and senior headmen who were in charge of districts (Keulder, 1998).

In the Southern region of Africa, the example of Botswana stands out. The country had kingship (Bogosi), which was the most significant political institution. During this era, the king or paramount chief had legal, political, religious, economic as well as symbolic authority. He received help in carrying out his duties from senior advisers (*Bagakolodi*) and ward headmen (Keulder, 1998). In Zimbabwe, before the arrival of Europeans, the Shona and Matebele (*Ndebele*) were the two main kingdoms. The Shona Kingdom consisted of the Dzete, Njanja, Nobvu, Hera and Rozwi tribes. On its part, the Ndebele was composed of two main tribes, which were the BagaSeleka and BagaLanga. Ancestry based on patrilineal lineage formed the basis of administrative, religious, political and social systems among these people. All clan members were united by a common ancestor who had a name, and the chief got his title based on who the ancestor of the clan was (Garbett, 1966). Specific concentration on the Shona and the Ndebele shows the way in which they were organized politically in chiefdoms that were relatively autonomous. The Shona Kingdom had a loose system of

chiefdoms that were independent. This was unlike in the Ndebele Kingdom that had strong and centralized kingdoms with a central King in charge of administrative, political, social and religious affairs (Keulder, 1998). African traditional leadership was greatly changed during colonial times. Colonialism suppressed the influence of indigenous political systems. This was done to the extent that traditional leadership was a form of ruling the people indirectly, which was mainly practiced in African states that were influenced by the British. South Africa, one such country, had the White Paper on Traditional Leaders and Governance of South Africa. In the guise of combating revolutions, the British powers eliminated systems of traditional rule and introduced different forms of governance (White Paper, 2003).

Still in South Africa, during the second phase of this colonial period, (under South African rule – from 1915 to 1989), several trends emerged. The first is the direct intervention in the configurations of traditional power as a way of ensuring that indigenous populations were controlled effectively with the aid of traditional leaders that were sympathetic. The second is the transformation of traditional leaders into structures of administration to enhance control over them in the guise of building their legitimacy. Third is the securing of dominance of modern state structures over those that were traditional using legislation and coercion. After attaining independence, most traditional leaders were not included in political office; this reduced further their status from being political leaders to cultural agents (Mahlangeni, 2005). In Zimbabwe, war destroyed a significant part of the governance system that existed before colonization; the repressive modern administration was imposed on the indigenous people. This had a negative effect on traditional leadership because it reduced their power and status. The traditional mode of life was severely disrupted.

In another example, Botswana developed a parallel system of rule during the colonial era. In this system, colonial governments were in charge of governing the affairs of European population while; traditional leaders dealt with the affairs of African the affairs of the indigenous people (Picard, 1987). The British colonialists also established in the protectorate a Resident High Commissioner who represented the legislative authority. The traditional leaders held no legislative authority other than the requirement to set up and implement laws on behalf of the government that had colonial power (Oomen, 2005). In countries that were under the influence of German rule, traditional leaders were turned into puppets of the white colonialists, with no power to make decisions regarding the welfare of their communities (Keulder, 1998). The situation was not very different in African states whose colonial power were the Belgians.

Although the Belgians attempted to destroy the African traditional chieftaincy (Rugarabura, 2008) and force a total assimilation in colonies such as DRC, the focus of this study, kingdoms such as Luba managed to endure the pressure and have continued to the present day. Despite their presence, these indigenous political systems are neither very influential nor superfluous (Amoateng & Kalule-Sabiti, 2011). That notwithstanding, one cannot dispute their importance in the allocation and management of available natural resources.

Influence of Traditional African Leadership Today

Traditional leadership is still relevant in many parts of Africa. It is looked at in two ways: the first is where it complements modern governance, and the second, is when it conflicts with modern governance.

The study starts by addressing the complementarity. In Ghana (West Africa), traditional leadership takes the form of chieftaincy, which embodies the rich culture of the Ghanaian people and is regarded as a catalyst for transformation and development. The chief is selected or elected according to customary usage and is recognized by the modern government. This traditional system of government is enshrined in the constitution as a way of fostering a harmonious working relationship between the ruling government and chieftaincy institutions. Ghanaian chiefs played the traditional role of settling disputes, maintaining law and order, collecting taxes and managing the economic development of the country (Asamoah, 2012).

Also in West Africa, the example of Nigeria is significant. In this country, traditional leaders performed the duties relating to religion, judicial disputes, legislation, and maintaining law and order in society. Essentially, the traditional ruler formed the nucleus of governance (Tonwe & Osemwota, 2013). Over the years, traditional leaders and their role has changed in Nigeria. Previously they served as chief executives in their local communities, but now they are advisers to the modern systems of local government (Tonwe & Osemwota, 2013). However, traditional leaders generally continue to have a key role in the governance system and are regarded as a source of advice and counsel to the elected local government.

Traditional leadership is recognized in the constitution of South Africa including the White Paper of 2003. This is a result of South Africans, especially those residing in rural areas believing that the traditional governance systems, based on traditional leaders, are much better than the local government when it comes to value check. The claim is that modern governance systems are not as efficient, as the traditional ones in combating corruption and in socially transforming lives, as well as availing services in tribal areas (Koenane, 2017). Both systems work to bring in democracy in South Africa (Kadt & Larreguy, 2018; Krenane, 2007).

Complementarity is also seen in Zimbabwe. The traditional leadership systems, which have thrived for centuries, controlled resource allocation, human behaviour, and the general religious and political domains. Traditional leaders were chosen by their families but eventually confirmed and endorsed by the elected government. They were incorporated into a modern governance system (Chakunda & Chikerema, 2014) that is founded on the Western model and exists based on the Act of Parliament on traditional leadership in Zimbabwe.

A majority of the traditional leaders derive their legitimacy from their culture and history which is in most cases supported through divine reference (Lutz & Linder, 2004). Traditional leaders are well listened to in communities where they are selected based on traditional norms; they are highly respected and sometimes even venerated. The traditional leaders in Zimbabwe were largely respected because they were regarded as being wise, able to make popular decisions; people liked their appearance or etiquette (Dodo, 2013). In this country, traditional leadership and modern governance complement each other, a factor that comes to play majorly during elections (Chigudu, 2015).

In DRC, the traditional leadership system of chieftaincies is generally hereditary within the family or appointed from the political hierarchy and so helps decentralise political power (Rugarabura & Robain, 2008). In some regions, the positions are inherited; they remain in specific families and passed over from one generation to the next. Traditional leaders have significant power and influence relating to dispute resolution, maintaining law and order, religion, and guarding their power closely often through the use of *manga*. The traditional chiefs have their advisors who sit around the chief, discuss and resolve matters relating to their communities (Gaynor, 2013). Traditional leaders in DRC are exclusively male who originate from the king's (*mwami*) lineage. The traditional leaders perform the role of preserving the customs and traditions of society and keeping them alive from one generation to another. Traditional leadership is enshrined in the DRC constitution and is recognized as an institution at local levels on issues that affect local communities. They also deal with matters that relate to customary law (Rugarabura & Robain, 2008).

The second position is where traditional leadership systems are in conflict with modern governance systems. Examples of this are noted again in South Africa. In this region, traditional leadership and modern leadership have been referred to as being in a quagmire (Rapatsa, 2015). Tension exists between human rights, social groups and democracy. One view rejects democracy as a better governance system in favour of the traditional leadership structure. The tension between the two leadership systems arises because either side tries to outdo the other in superiority and recognition (Sithole, 2009). In addition, some modern leaders argue that the traditional leadership systems were undemocratic. With this view they support the modern governance systems which they claim portray more democracy. However, this position is challenged by Logan (2011), who shows the democratic nature of the African Traditional leadership systems. This second point challenges those who claim that the traditional African leadership systems did not incorporate all genders. Dodo (2013) shows the different roles played by each gender in governance.

Despite the conflicts on the one hand and the complementarity on the other, this study focuses on how traditional leadership could add value to modern governance systems. This is more so in the area of values that lead towards social transformation. In this way, traditional leadership becomes an essential condition for good governance (Koenane, 2017).

Method

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. As Merriam and Tisdell (2006) explain, "the task of the phenomenologists, then, is to depict the essence or basic structure of experience" (p. 26). Thus, this research entailed capturing the use of *manga* as it was experienced by the Luba in the political leadership sphere concerned with acquiring leadership power. This research design was relevant for this topic because its purpose was not to capture specific "objective" truth, as the positivists would have it (Creswell, 2014), but rather, to understand the reality of *manga*, and how it influenced leadership from different angles, within the Luba society of DRC.

The concentration of the study was on the Kasai Central Province. The Kasai province was chosen for two main reasons: one, the region has one of the major ethnic groups in the country and thus adequate evidence exists of use of *manga* in the area. The Luba had used *manga* in their history for leadership and governance of their traditional kingdoms. The target population for the study was the Luba people who lived in Kasai Central Province. From this 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. The study used the non-probability snowball sampling technique (Ishak & Bakar, 2014). The researcher contacted local gatekeepers in the Kasai Central Province to be able to reach out to the first snows. These gatekeepers include the area local chiefs and elders who were the *indefacto* authority at the grass-roots levels. Through them, locally known charm givers were identified and contacted. In addition, the study reached out to political leaders and militia who were beneficiaries of *manga*. The first respondents then guided the researcher to other participants. For the purpose of this study, a sample size of 40 participants was adequate to enable the researcher obtain rich information and reach the saturation point. The targeted 40 participants were: 10 charm givers, 8 members of the provincial parliament, 4 provincial ministers, 13 traditional leaders, and 5 militia leaders. The study used an In-depth Interviews (IDIs), focus group discussions and observations to collect data.

Findings

In addressing research objective one nature of indigenous African political leadership among the Luba Community, five sub-topics are used: sources of power among traditional Luba leaders; symbols of Luba traditional leadership; roles of the Luba traditional leaders; governance in Luba traditional leadership; and finally, disintegration of Luba traditional leadership.

Source of power among traditional leaders

According to the research findings, the traditional leaders among the Luba people derive their power from customs; they have customary power to exercise leadership,

“Traditional leaders in our Luba community inherit their powers according to the traditions and customs of our ancestors” (Traditional Chief, TC 1). From this explanation, the power is inherited from ancestors based on the customs and traditions of the clan.

Among the Luba, “power comes from a Supreme Being who is their God” (Traditional Chief, TC 1) The Supreme Being gives power, strength and wisdom to the traditional leader/chief and requires the person to lead, based on traditional principles and philosophies, represented in religious and *manga* rituals. Once this power is received, it is exercised through the *tupita* (representatives of each clan or village, in the Kasai territory), “The traditional leader is the custodian of the hereditary tradition and exercises the sovereign power of the people through his *tupita*. The leader must follow clan traditions and principles which include use of *manga*” (Traditional Chief, TC 1).

The *tupita* also form the cabinet committee of the traditional leader. Under the care of a traditional leader, the *tupita* are part of the decision making process, advice the leader, promote justice, peace, harmony and development in the clan. The traditional exercised power is known as *bukalenge bwa kabukulu* and the person who exercises it is referred to as “*mukalenge wa kabukulu*” (Traditional Chief, TC 2), which means a traditional chief/leader.

According to the Luba tradition, “enthroning of a traditional leader is an ancestral ceremony that preserves the traditions and customs of the people” (Traditional Leaders TL 1; TL 4; TL 9). In the ceremony, the traditional chief adorns chieftaincy attires known as *makuku a bukalenge* which make the person *mfumu* “*mfumu wetu*, means our chief, the Luba believe that you have the power over them and to defend them with your words of power... what you say must happen, what you stop from happening in your town or villages will not happen” (Traditional Chief, TC 6).

Incantations known as *me yi a bukalenge* are used to express the will of the ancestors which also serve as a source of inspiration for the leader to be a good role model to the people. The new chief is required to perform a traditional ceremony known as *kubala kwa mitoto* meaning the counting of stars after staying in doors for a period of 30 days. The ceremony itself is done at night where sacrifices are made to the ancestors after which the traditional chief receives power to begin performing the duties of a traditional chief, “After that traditional ceremony of *kubala kwa mitoto*, the traditional leader receives double power, he will be able to communicate with the departed ancestors, and he will be capable to see and know who is a witch when he meets people, because he has become a witch himself...” (Traditional Chief, TC 5).

The traditional leaders have *diyi dia ditunga* which means power and authority that is given to the leader by the people,

...with that *bwanga*...when the leader speaks, whatever is said must happen, because there is connection between the traditional leader and the spirits of the living and the departed ancestors. It is not the traditional leader that acts, but the spirits act on behalf of the traditional leader... (Traditional Leader, TL 3).

A traditional leader has the *me yi a bukole* which means power in the words that the leader speaks, “...when the leader speaks, whatever is said must happen” (Traditional Leader, TL 3). Power is acquired by the traditional leader during the initiation ceremony where the leader is given power over the living, the spirit and the dead. That power in the words of a traditional leader must not be under estimated, because it can destroy instantly, give life, protect, and can bless. What the leader declares or utters on behalf of the community is power and is bound to happen. Traditional chiefs among the Luba have to keep *mukayi wa bukalenge* (laws of traditional leadership), “...what makes a traditional chief a true traditional chief is when he upholds the *mukayi wa bukalenge*...” (Charm Giver, CG 3). This will ensure that the chiefs are both respected by the people and obey the laws of the *manga*, which makes them authentic leaders according to the Luba people. In understanding the nature of the source of traditional African leadership among the Luba, the place of the Supreme Being, traditions and customs has been discussed. Also, the *tupita* (representatives of the villages), are presented as support to the traditional chief/leader. The ceremony to enthrone the leader, the power and authority in the position as well as the duties that the leader has to adhere to laws (among them the laws of the *manga*) shed light on the source of this power. This paves way to the symbols of Luba traditional power.

Symbols of Luba traditional power

From the research findings, traditional leaders possess certain symbols of power. These symbols are varied and often possess a form of *manga* in them that further differentiates them from other similar symbols found within the Luba people. The notable symbols of power include the *tshifulu tshia bukalenge* which is a cap of power decorated with pearls, raffia palm and *disala dia nkusu* which refers to long feathers of a parrot. The cap symbolizes loyalty, goodness, courage, and victory. The traditional leader also wears *menu a Nkashama* meaning leopard teeth and it is a form of a royal necklace. The *tshiseba tshia Nkashama* which means leopard skin is worn below the belt and at times this is made as a bracelet to be worn on the arm. The teeth and skin of the leopard symbolize power and strength possessed by a traditional leader. Heroism is symbolized by *diesa dia bukalenge*, a fly whisk made from the tail of a buffalo. A necklace known as *mukaba wa bukalenge* made from pearls and leopard teeth is worn to symbolize legitimacy, dignity, integrity, respect for rules of law and stability of power.

Another popular symbol of power is the *dikombo dia bukalenge*, a walking stick that is held in the right hand and is a sign of the undisputable power inherited from the ancestors. This walking stick symbolizes command and authority over all the people led by

the traditional leader. The *lukanu lukunze lwa bukalege* which is a red bracelet is worn on the left hand and it is a symbol of glory and power of a traditional chief. This also symbolizes acceptance from the living, dead and charm givers which makes the traditional chief the leader of all, both the living and the dead.

When a person is anointed to be a leader, the *lupemba lwa bukalege* which is kaolin is used for the ceremony. This is a powder that the traditional chief is anointed with when he is made a leader and it is equally used by the leader to bless the people. The medal of power known as *mundayi wa mu nshingu* is another symbol that was given to traditional leaders by colonial powers as a sign that the powers were recognized and accepted by the colonial government. The traditional leader further wears a dress of power known as *makuku a bukalege* and has a two edged sword known as *mwela wa nkaza* together with an axe of power called *difuma*. Finally, the traditional leaders possess a *muchete wa bukalege* which is a wooden suitcase that is used to store all the symbols of power in their possession. All these symbols of power give glory to the traditional leaders and reinforce their political, judicial and religious power:

It is a must for a traditional leader to have some *manga* which will help the leader in case of a challenge from the people or from outside. People who have evil intentions will test their traditional leader to know how powerful the leader is. After that test of power, the traditional leader becomes their friend and their leader because they know about the strength and power of the leader (Traditional Chief, TC 4).

Roles of traditional leaders among the Luba

The study sought to find out the roles played by the Luba traditional chiefs in Kasai Central Province. Five key roles emerge: monitoring the observance of human rights; ensuring continuity; checking on security; promoting progress and development through transformation; and conflict management. Based on the findings, the first role of the *Mukalege wa Kabukulu* is to defend the human rights of the people in the community. In this context, two main sets of rights emerge. The first set is the rights of the people. These include the “right of free movement”, and also the “right to freedom of worship” (Traditional Chief, TC 12). The second set of rights of people is the customary rights of the community. Among the Luba, there are customs and traditions which carry with them certain rights. Examples of these are, traditions about incest. While this is a practice that is entirely condemned, it carries with it the right of the child to grow freely and have say in their future marriage. Also, the traditions on marriage, faithfulness shed light on the rights of married couples to belong, and to be part of the family within which they are married. This is especially so for the woman; it gives authority and power to the married woman to make decisions concerning her family and even to inherit when the husband is deceased (Traditional Leader, TL 3). The role of the *mukalege wa kabukulu* in the defence of human rights is hence essential among the Luba. The second role of the *mukalege wa kabukulu* is to ensure the continuity of the clan (*tshisamba*) and of the tribe (*tshisa*). A species devoid of procreation and nurturing of its off springs is headed for oblivion. Among the Luba, sustainability of the human species through family and procreation is significant. Also, the nurturing of children to ensure that they grow to maturity, get their rightful share of protection, and mature to adults is also significant. These two parts form the concept of continuity among the Luba. With this role, the importance of family is reiterated. This role is in the hands of the traditional leader/chief (Traditional Leader, TL 3). The third role of the *mukalege wa kabukulu* is the providing on security (Traditional Leaders, TL 3; TL 12) Security is a major component in safety, peace and development of the community. The Luba are prone to external and internal invasion. They border Angola to the South West. This means that there could be invasion from the neighbouring communities in Angola, in search for minerals, especially diamond. Also internal invasion could come from their neighbouring ethnic communities such as the Tetela (East), the Kuba (West). Security of the Luba territory is hence a core task of the *mukalege wa kabukulu*. The fourth role of the *mukalege wa kabukulu* roles is the promotion of progress and development through transformation. The leaders organize people to work in groups and carry out activities such as hunting, farming, harvesting, leading to progress and development. Progress entails the movement towards a specific goal while development is movement and growth. When a society is subject and proponent of positive change, it moves towards a goal (progress) and when it moves and grows in all its areas, it develops. Among the Luba, these two concepts (progress and development) are core in transformation. From the respondents this is noted, “*manga a Mulele Pierre* are *manga* that are used to search for resources in our province and were able to bring *kuya kumpala and dishidimuka* [progress and development]” (Traditional Leader, TL 4). The fifth of the roles is that of conflict management. The *mukalege wa kabukulu* has a key role in ensuring that conflict is managed. Conflict is a subsequent of human interactions. These could be personal, social, religious, cultural, political, economic and even environmental. The *mukalege wa kabukulu*, has the *tupita* who attend to the different cases, follow up on the required evidence and make decisions on the needed interventions (Traditional Chief, TC 1; TC 8; Charm Giver, CG 4).

In the area of conflict management, the study finds it important to mention land a key resource in DRC and among the Luba. Land is placed in this section since it may be a source of conflict if mishandled. In Luba, traditional leaders exercise power over land that is communally owned and provincial or central government have to seek permission from traditional chiefs when in need of land, “they still recognize that the land was owned by the chiefs on behalf of the community and is therefore owned communally...” (Traditional Chief, TC 3). This authority not only gives the *mukalege wa kabukulu* significant relevance but also a notable role in determining issues of the Luba. These roles demand that the Luba people be subject to the authority of the *mukalege wa kabukulu*. This submission enables harmonious living within the clan, “Submission to the traditional leader was necessary in the Luba society due to socio-economic factors such as fear of enemies and the need to plant, harvest and hunt for food” (Traditional Chief, TC 1). These roles of the *mukalege wa kabukulu* shed light in understanding the nature of traditional leadership in promoting good

governance among the Luba people. In realizing these roles they use *manga* in governing the Luba. This aspect of governance is what follows in the next section.

Governance in Luba traditional leadership

In the exploration of the nature of African political leadership in promoting good governance with the use of *manga* among the Luba, the study sought to establish how leadership and governance is practiced among the Luba people. Interviewed traditional chiefs, charm givers and modern politicians shared on traditional leadership and how it differs from modern day government. They also shed light on the values espoused in traditional leadership. Their contribution is grouped into three: power and duty; organization and hierarchy; submission to ancestral customs and traditions.

From data, traditional leaders have both the power and duty to maintain peace in the regions under their authority. As noted under source of power among Luba traditional leaders (4.2.1), their power is derived from the Supreme Being and also from the traditions and customs of the ancestors, "Traditional leaders in our Luba community inherit their powers according to the traditions and customs of our ancestors" (Traditional Chief, TC, 1). This power grants them duties as discussed under roles of traditional leaders among the Luba (4.2.1) where monitoring the observance of human rights; ensuring continuity; checking on security; promoting progress and development through transformation; and conflict management were noted. In support of the power of the traditional leader, he is the spokesman of the village unless someone else is delegated to speak on behalf of a chief. People who have received delegation to speak on behalf of the traditional leader are referred to as the *mwanyampala wa mfumu* meaning representative of the traditional leader (Traditional Chief, TC 5). The second category of the contribution of the respondents on matters of governance among the Luba is the level of organization and hierarchy of power among traditional leadership. At the lowest level of hierarchy we have the heads of families. These are answerable to the *tupita* (representatives of each clan or village, in the Kasai territory). These in turn give advice to the senior traditional leader (*chef de groupement*) on issues of governance. These Senior Chiefs are in charge of at least six villages (Charm Giver, CG 3).

The organization of governance among the Luba is majorly oscillating among the heads of families, the *tupita* and the senior chief and then the king at the helm. The last three are termed as the traditional leaders. The relationship of the traditional leaders is explained by Traditional Chief (TC 4): "...for a pot to sit well there must be three stones to support it on the fire so the chief and the *tupita* have to maintain peace together for development... they are vital to governance system in Luba Traditional leadership".

The third group of the participant's contribution is submission to ancestral customs and traditions among the Luba. The findings of the study established that among the Luba people, it is a "tradition that people have to be submissive to customs and traditions of their ancestors" (Traditional Leader, TL 3). Traditional laws have to be respected and followed. Failure to adhere to this traditional precepts, and at worst an open dis-respect of the laws, results in the use of traditional instruments of power to remedy the situation. This is led by the traditional leader and the *tupita*. Actions may include the use of *manga*, calling upon the ancestral spirit of power or resorting to use of police officers and the army from the provincial government, "...our customs and laws have to be adhered to and respected...when this does not happen, we resort to using *manga*.... The police can also be called in when things are beyond our jurisdiction..." (Traditional Leader, TL 8).

These findings indicate that a clear line of authority and what needs to be done in traditional leadership among the Luba exists. Also the use of *manga* is significant as it is called upon when customs and traditions are not adhered to. This is part of the governance system of the Luba traditional community. The section seeks to shed lighter on to the nature of Luba traditional leadership and hence includes the aspect of disintegration of traditional leadership.

Discussion

These findings concur with Koenane (2017) who observes that traditional leadership and governance system in Africa is widely known and acceptable to the indigenous Africans. The role played by traditional leaders include governing their communities through ensuring security, regulating activities in society, resolving disputes, and administering justice to the people. The findings also agree with Rapatsa (2015) who finds that in the traditional system of governance, power was inherited based on clannism where it is passed to the next in line to the throne. The research findings of the study confirmed that traditional leaders have *diyi dia ditunga* which means power and authority that is bestowed upon them by the people through different enthroning ceremonies. This authority enables the traditional leader to have power when speaking and whatever is declared by the traditional chief is bound to happen. Igboin (2016) concurs and notes that traditional leaders derived their source of power from historical practices, culture, traditional institutions and social values in their communities.

Traditional leadership among the Luba follows a great history of culture, and practices carried out by the ancestors of the Luba people. This includes great ancestral ceremonies such as the enthroning of a new traditional leader aimed at preserving the values and traditions of the Luba people. This ceremony involves *makuku a bukallenge* (the dress of power) which makes the person a *mfumu* (traditional chief) and various incantations known as *Makuku a Bukallenge* which are used to call upon the ancestors to bless the new leader to promote good governance practices. The use of these ceremony to install a new traditional leader equipped the person with the courage to direct the various affairs of the community at all times. This is a deeply held belief and great cultural practice among the Luba of Kasai Central Province.

Among the Luba, installing of a new traditional leader involves use of different types of *manga* (charms). The study established those traditional leaders and their aides notably the *tupita* use different symbols that have *manga* in them. According to Nooter (2017), Luba kings together with their aides, ritual specialists and chiefs used different forms of symbolizations such as beads, amulets, statuettes and sculptures that were the receptacles of spirits. These symbols were used to bring prosperity; healing, new life, blessings, protection, production of food and gaining of relevance and fame in the Luba traditional leadership systems. These findings concur with Majawa (2017a) who points out that fetish objects have mystical powers and are carried to protect those who carry them from enemies, diseases or for purposes of harming others. Majawa further notes that objects carried in traditions often include things like horns, teeth, beads, dead insects and images of people among other things and the type of fetish determine the animal, person or object that is involved. They take the properties of image of the person or object involved. Traditional leaders use different types of fetishes that symbolize their power and give them authority to perform their duties and functions among the Luba people of Kasai Central Province in the DRC. Nyamiti (2017) also agrees with this finding by observing that in Africa, power can be acquired through heredity from the ancestors and through charm givers. Africans have a deep held belief in ensuring that they maintain a good relationship between them and their ancestors as a way of ensuring the continuity of life and increasing their potency and vigor. This is best done through the use of charm givers who give powers of healing, prosperity, and leadership (Majawa, 2017a). The findings of the study established that various types of *manga* are used for different purposes among the Luba of Kasai Central Province. This, as Nyamiti (2017) observes includes animal parts, sacred cords, and pieces of leather, ointments, precious stones, animal cords or statuettes. These are used as for protection, harm other or create calamities. MacGaffey (1977) describes the practice of fetishism in the *Kongo* and examines the existing relationships between figures, spirits and practitioners. These fetishes possess an immense power and can either be good or bad. The objects are also quite varied based on what they are used for in the society and possess considerable amounts of power. This theory supports and confirms use of the various symbols of power among the Luba traditional leaders. The different symbols of power bequeath the leader with the required authority, power and protection that is vital in traditional leadership among the Luba people. The findings of the study agree with reviewed literature on the use of symbols of power with *manga* in the Luba traditional system of leadership. These symbols indicate the power that the person in possession has. Similar to modern day governance, the leader of a country is bequeathed with certain symbols of power in the power transfer ceremony. These symbols give the leader the power to perform leadership duties in the society and people are expected to both recognize the leader and respect the symbols of power in their possession. Similarly, among the Luba, this is the norm where new leaders are given a plethora of power symbols that are expected to earn them respect from the people and give them the authority, they need to perform the leadership functions and duties.

Conclusion

The paper focusses on indigenous African political leadership among the Luba of Kasa. Among the community, there is the use of *manga* in them which distinguishes them from any other similar symbols in the society. The use of the *manga* is also in line with the customs and traditions of the Luba people and guide the leader on the right things to do while on the throne. The *manga* spells out what is a taboo in the community and the leader is required to at all time ensure that the laws, customs, and traditions of the *manga* are strictly adhered to and followed in the community or territory. Through the ceremonies that are performed on new leaders, the use of different types of fetishes is seen as part of the traditions and customs of the Luba people. Anyone who deviates or who fails to respect and abide by these customs is seen as an enemy of both the community and the land and is deemed to attract the wrath of the gods and ancestors. This understanding has made a majority of the traditional leaders to understand the high responsibility that has been bestowed upon them and the need for them to be accountable and transparent in the way that they lead the people and the community.

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