

HISTORY OF THE SHILA PEOPLE

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INTRODUCTION

A. The Purpose of the Study

The Mweru-Luapula area covers the lower Luapula Valley and the shores of Lake Mweru. It lies along what is now the north-east border between DRC and Zambia. This area has a regional history that has been treated in varying depths. Since 1798, the history of the area has been treated and considered in the context of the history of the Lunda of Mwata Kazembe, who arrived in the area around 1740. Their military victories and superior political organisation enabled them to control a large state. Their commercial importance as suppliers of ivory and slaves to the Yao and Portuguese traders through Bisa entrepreneurship brought them historical “recognition” from the Portuguese. But beneath their fame and history were the histories of the Bwilile clans, who are remembered by tradition as the first Bantu societies to settle in Mweru-Luapula, and the Shila (a branch of the pre-Chitimukulu Bemba) who established the first centralised state among the “chiefless” Bwilile long before the arrival of the Lunda.

The defeat of the Shila and their incorporation into the Lunda State structure led to the decline of their history into near obscurity. It was only referred to in passing as the diaries of the Portuguese and David Livingstone show. The purpose of this paper will be to try and explain (a) the history of the Bwilile migration and settlement, their political and religious significance (b) the history of the Shila migrations and settlement in Mweru-Luapula, the evolution and function of the political organisation and the effects of the availability of resources such as ivory and salt on the institutions of kingship (c) the gradual disintegration of the Shila state culminating in their defeat and incorporation in the Lunda polity.

Written sources on the Shila history are very scanty. The Shila unlike the Lunda and Bemba states did not have eye witness accounts. The few European visitors who would have documented the Shila history were confined to the Lunda capital, and ended up making very brief passing references. The establishment of colonial rule in this area, induced the administrative officials at Kalungwishi Boam, especially Dr. Blair Watson, nicknamed Kaulung’ombe (the big cow) and Mr. Avery Jones, nicknamed Kalela Mukoshi (the one who nurses his neck) to record the history of the Munungaship (the one who holds this title is a perpetual nephew of Nkuba). Other chiefs like Chipungu, Nkuba were not consulted. Therefore, the outcome of this

exercise was a history which was deficient on several points. A close scrutiny of this recorded history when compared to the traditions as narrated by the Shila of Chief Mununga and other areas shows a marked degree of distorted history to conform to what the administrators wanted to hear. In other words, this history left out much of what will be discussed in this paper.

Daniel Crawford, the pioneer missionary who lived and worked among the Shila at Luanza Mission on the Western shore of Lake Mweru, wrote a few passing notes on the history of the Shila in his books. However, Crawford's literary style makes it difficult for a reader without prior knowledge of Shila history to follow.

The only time Shila history received serious scholarship was when Ian Cunnison (nicknamed Kalanda Mikowa- the one who discusses the history of the clans) conducted his research among the Lunda between 1949 and 1951. His social anthropological writings which have come out of this research have been aimed at showing the dynamics of social relationships existing between Shila as the ruled and the Lunda as the rulers against a historical background. Although his main interest and focus was on the Lunda social structure, Cunnison spent time analysing some aspects of Shila history.

Other written sources with a few remarks referring to Shila history are found in Father Tanguy's *Imilandu ya Ba Bemba* (History of the Bemba) and in the African Elders, *History of Bena Ng'oma*, which gives brief insights of the pre-Chitimukulu societies on the Lubemba plateau. Another source is Mwata Kazembe's *Ifikolwe Fyandi na Bantu Bandi*, which describes the defeat and incorporation of the Shila into the Lunda political structure.

Notes on Terminology:

Bwilile is applied to the "first" Bantu societies led by clan leaders to settle in Mweru-Luapula area. This name was given to them by Nkuba's Bemba because they did not know the concept of kingship which entailed payment of tribute. The name meant a society which ate all that it procured. The term arose because of the Bwilile's ignorance of the value of ivory and the concept of kingship.

Shila was a name adopted by the people born out of the inter-marriages between the Bemba (led by Nkuba Mukuka) and the Bwilile. The name was

derived from taboos (imishila) connected with hunting and fishing. The people practising the taboos called themselves Abashila – the sacred or pure ones.

Bwile or Ba Anza were a Tabwa group related to Kamena, a Bwile chief living in the area of what is now Kapulo and Moba districts of Northe East DRC. They settled on the northern shore of Lake Mweru and controlled the salt trade from the salt pans.

CHAPTER ONE

MIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT

One of the most important factors in the history of the Mweru-Luapula area and parts of Northeast Zambia is the importance of the tradition of migration from Buluba. This is the area in northern Katanga province lying between Lakes Upemba and Kisale. The surviving Bwilile traditions trace their origins to Mputu, an area lying west of Lake Kisale. According to Burton, Mputu was ruled by an "influential" chieftainess Mwadi Mputu. Burton does not tell us how this influence was acquired and over whom it was exercised. According to Verhulpen, this area was at one time inhabited by the Bakalanga, who were very good at pottery and used copper ornaments. This tradition was confirmed by the excavations of the rich burial grounds at Sanga in 1957 which were dated around the seventh and ninth centuries. It yielded pottery and other copper ornaments. Judging from these and other artifacts, it seems likely that this "fishing society" had an advanced form of political organisation

According to oral sources, the Buluba before the Bwilile migration had chiefless societies. Political organisation was centred around clans. Clan leaders were chosen for their seniority in birth, age, leadership qualities and impartiality which were important in ensuring the cohesion of the clan.

Looking at the written records on the history of the area around Lake Kisalae, it seems imperative that the Bwilile migration from the Luba states took place possibly between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries. Bwilile sources are not very clear as to the reasons for their migration from Buluba. It seems the Bwilile clans, used to their loose political relationship, found themselves unable to adapt to the new political framework and decided to leave Buluba and settle on the fringe to escape the tribute orbit. Here they hoped to continue their pattern of political organisation. But with the expansion of the new state, these societies were pushed further away onto a new fringe. This pattern of migration, punctuated by a series of settlements became the feature of migration. And some of those who escaped absorption found themselves in Mweru-Luapula area.

Due to the length of time which has passed, it is very difficult to ascertain from oral sources the routes taken by the migrating Bwilile clans.

From the Kaponto tradition, we get the impression that at least one Bwilile group had settled on the eastern bank of the Luapula (in what is today Matanda's area in

Western Mansa District) before the arrival of the Ushi led by Chabala Muwe. The arrival of the Ushi must have led to the flight of the Kaponto group. They followed the course of the Luapula and came to settle on the western side of what was then the Mweru marsh. The flight from Matanda area has been explained in what has now become the Kaponto tradition of migration. Kaponto (of the clay clan) claims that the cause of his departure from Matanda (also of the clay clan) was a dispute with Matanda over a carved doll (ichisungwa, carried by Matanda's daughter which was thrown in the Luapula river by Kaponto's daughter. A doll was carried by young unmarried girls as a fertility charm to be replaced later by a real baby. If the doll was lost, it was interpreted as bad luck and a possibility of sterility for the girls. To avoid this possibility in Matanda's daughter, it was demanded that a live girl (Kaponto's daughter in this case) should be thrown into the river to drown, as a form of compensation. Kaponto refused and migrated to the Kabesa hills west of Mweru marsh. What this tradition of the carved doll reveals is that it is merely a cliché motif intended to camouflage the real cause. It also shows a clear case of telescoping in which a society without the institutions of kingship is linked to a society which had these institutions.

Kabesa hills overlooked a wide marshy plain to the east which surrounded a highland of seven hills called Kilwa in which Kabeke and Mbolela Pano – Irot here are settled. They are remembered as having been short people with big heads. If one fell they could only rise with the assistance of his friends. If no assistance was available he would die. Kaponto and his people must have visited Kilwa several times. On one visit, one of Kaponto's people accidentally set fire to the dry grass in which most of the Molela Pano group perished except for Katenunwa and his wife who were saved by Kaponto's people who took refuge in the caves of Membo hill. Katenunwa passed on to Kaponto and his people the Mbolela ritual of rain prayers. He died soon afterwards. Before Kaponto and his people could start burying the dead, a rain storm started and continued for several days causing floods which submerged the burned plain, transforming it into lake Mweru. The highlands became Kilwa island. An important development from the accidental burning of the grass was its transformation into an annual ritual connected with rain prayers, conducted before the beginning of the rain.

In part this tradition explains to us the process of political domination and the assumption of religious responsibility by a migrant group. The fire which burned the grass could be integrated as symbolising the passing away of the old institutions which were replaced by new ones which accommodate the old by the continued

observation of the old ritual of rain prayers and annual fires conducted before the rains.

The other Bwilile group claims to have come to Mweru-Luapula from Baluba. One group led by Makungu and Nkambo (both of the Leopard clan). Makungu settled on the western side of the Luapula river opposite the Mambilima falls. His nephew, Nkambo, settled about forty miles down the Luapula river.

A larger Bwilile group (of the Calabash Clan) established more settlements than the other clans. They were led by Kaluwe Kaluongo or Twite and his sister, Mwele. Kabungo and Misange established their settlements at Mwati Island, while Besa, Makandwe and Mulimbantamba established their settlements between the mouth of the Kaombe River and the Mofwe Lagoon. Twite and his sister remained at an island in the Mofwe Lagoon called Kabwe Lunono – the place of the sharpening stone. According to the tradition, the inhabitants of the island used to conduct their prayers at the site of the stone (which was near the present site of the dispensary) in connection with the ritual of sharpening their knives, axes, and spears before going to hunt or skin the game. The name was derived from the presence of abundance of game – mainly the waterbuc (insobe or Mula) which was easy to hunt and contributed to the lagoon's praise name, Mofwe Manyama – Mofwe which abounds in game.

After some years of settlement, Twite and his sister changed the name to Chisenga Manyama or Chisenga for short (meaning the place of skinning game). The change of name could also symbolise the assumption of political and religious power by this migrant clan.

The remainder of the calabash clan was now lead by Mwepya, a priestess of the spirit Mwepya and Chaushi, living in the caves of Kilwa Island, and her uncle Kalenwa Kamakulungu settled near the Mansa sream on the western shore of what was now Lake Mweru. Here Mwepya built her shrine (iminyunsa) for her spirits. She had the power to foretell the coming of epidemics and advised what precautions to take. She was also in direct communication with spirits such as Nsonga and Makumba (the spirits related to the Ushi institutions of kinship and also associated with earth tremors). She received deputations from the clan leaders in Mweru-Luapula area seeking her advice on what precautions to take.

From the above discussion, we have seen that although the Bwilile were acephalous, their political and religious institutions allowed them to adopt new ideas and the

possibility of dominating the earlier societies they found. This ability to dominate, accommodate and blend the old with the new allowed their political structures to strengthen themselves, a factor which helped them to resist obliteration by the later migrants.

CHAPTER TWO

ORIGINS OF NKUBA'S STATE IN MWERU – LUAPULA AREA BEFORE 1740

A. Tradition of Origin

In the states which developed in Northeast Zambia before 1740, the institution of kingship were introduced by migrant royal clans tracing their origin and kingship from Buluba. Some of these states were established through military victories like those of the Bemba of Chiti-mukulu. Other states, such as that of the Shila, were established through a series of marriage alliances between owners of the land and the migrant royal clan.

In Mweru – Luapula area, kingship was first introduced by the Shila (translated as fishermen) led by Nkuba Mukuka (Nkuba was a hereditary title). The Shila trace their origin to Buluba (the place of origin is not known) and their kingship to Kasongo Mwana. (It is not known if this title refers to Kasongo Mwine Kibanza, recalled by tradition as a grandson of Kalala Ilunga, who was himself a nephew of Kongolo, the founder of the Luba state. He fought hard to put down several succession disputes and internal disorders before his rule was finally accepted). According to the Shila tradition, one of the reasons for leaving Buluba was the increase in the number of succession disputes among the members of the ruling clan before and during the reign of Kasongo. After crushing opposition to his rule mounted by his “uncles,” Kasongo embarked on the expansion of the state probably to drive his opponents further away from his state.

The Shila tradition recalls that their ancestor Mambwe who led a section of the Bashimba (Leopard) clan from Buluba was Kasongo's brother. Whether he was also involved in the succession disputes is not known by the informants. However, the Shila claim that the increase in the number of succession disputes made it difficult for the members of the royal family to live together in peace and harmony. So Mambwe and his group left their original area and came to settle on the eastern side of Lake Upemba, south of Lake Kisale. They called their first settlement Isandulula, meaning increase and spread, which in essence is the concept of the migration itself.

Economics played an important part in the migration as well. The introduction and acceptance of the institution of tribute enhanced the value of ivory in the political and ritual institutions of the Baluba society. Ivory bracelets were worn by members of the ruling family as a mark of identity. Ivory formed part of the treasure the chief was buried with. Some shrines related to the institution of kingship had a number of tusks as a mark of respect for the spirits. The increase in the value of ivory in the institution of tribute induced the clans that were below the hierarchy (all the ruling clans claim relationship to the Luba ruling family to justify their kingship) to leave Buluba to settle in new areas where they subsequently established their own states. Hunting elephants for ivory and meat became a very important occupation. It developed into a specialized craft practiced by a few men organized into guides which were controlled by chiefs. In their quest for elephant herds, the hunters unconsciously became scouts for better arable land, salt pans, rivers with fish, better hunting grounds, and minerals. The location of one or more of these resources attracted new settlements resulting in the expansion of the state or the formation of new ones in areas which previously had none. The importance of the hunters is reflected in the number of the states they founded or came to control.

After settling for many years in Mambwe, on the eastern side of Lake Upemba (nobody knows the number of years, but certainly it must have been several generations), Kalamata, Mambwe's nephew, led a section of the people, went northeast and built his own Isandulula near the Senzi hill on the lower Luvua river. The reasons for his departure are not known but they could have been the same as those we saw above coupled with a desire to establish his state. After several years in the second Isandulula, a dispute arose between Kalamata's son Mumpala and nephew Sampwe. The cause of the dispute is not remembered by traditions. In the ensuing struggle, Kalamata sided with his nephew and forced his son to flee. He went to Mambwe and appealed for assistance. He got it. With his new forces Mumpalo defeated Sampwe, forcing him to flee north into the area which came to be ruled by the Songye. Kalamata fled and took refuge in the caves of Senzi Hill where he died. Several other members of the ruling family fled from Kalamata. Among these were Seya, Lutanda, and Kapongo, who crossed the Luvua river and after living several settlements in the Malungu plains (the names are not remembered), they arrived at Mbete on the Lubemba plateau. There is a slight difficulty in giving the exact location of Mbete, which now appears to be on the southwestern shore of Lake Tanganyika, which appears from traditions to have been close to the

Chambeshi river. This is supported by surviving traditions which indicate that the Lungu and the Mambwe were further south and close to the Chambeshi than they are today.

Among the societies, this Luba group led by Seya, found, were the Lungu who were very good blacksmiths, the original Bemba (ababemba bakale), some Luba groups, BaMusukwa (others say they were Sumbwa—not related to the Sumbwa of Central Tanzania), remembered as having had big teeth which they used in chewing barkcloth to soften it, the Ng'alang'ansa (Galanganza, again not related to those of central Tanzania), and the Sukuma (no relationship with those of Northern Tanzania) who were remembered as very good smiths and also kept some cattle. All these societies were scattered all over the Lubemba plateau under several chiefs such as Chintu wa Mikuchi, Chishimba wa Luombe --Chishimba of Luombe who ruled the area on the Luombe River close to the falls which bear his name today, Chitundu we Tuna --Chitundu of Ituna and Mwamba wa Milenge --Mwamba of Milenge. All these chiefs paid tribute to Mulopwe Kalelelya. (Mulopwe is a Luba term for chief. It is still used in addressing Bemba and Shila chiefs.) It was among these societies that Seya and her two sisters Kapongo and Lutanda and their people settled and built their third Isandulula. From the tradition, this settlement was located close to the Chambeshi. Soon intermarriages took place. The children born of these marriages considered themselves as Bemba rather than Luba. In spite of their new identity, the individual societies retained their titles such as Seya.

B Tradition of Origin from Lubemba to Luapula

It is not known how long Seya "Luba" group stayed in Lubemba. From the tradition, one gets the impression that they were in Lubemba for more than one generation. During their stay in Lutanda (most likely a new title holder) married Mwamba (some say it was Mwamba wa Milenge) of the crocodile clan (Bena Ng'andu). She bore six children, two boys, Mukuka and Chileshe and four girls, Mwali Kalumbu, Nachituti, Namumpundu, and Sempa. Mukuka and his brother took their father's clan. The reason for this unusual act which was a departure from the matrilineal tradition was never explained by any of my informants. In fact, this is the only unique tradition recalled by my informants. Perhaps the adoption of the Ng'andu clan was a later development. It might have been an attempt on the part of Nkuba to link his new state in Mweru-Luapula to the newly established Chitimukulu's Bemba state. The exact reason is not known. When Mukuka grew

up, he became the leader of his mother's group, and took the praise name of Nkuba ya Lubemba --the lightning of Lubemba. The reason for adopting such a pompous name is not known. My informants told me that it implied that he was a tough man --"ali mukali." Whether this toughness was in fighting or in administration is not known. We do not know if this title had other holders. The implication of positional succession and perpetual kinship, where the identity of the new title holder is merged with that of his predecessor and the length of time which has passed, provide opportunity for telescoping.

Nkuba's migration from Lubemba is explained in two traditions. The first, from the Shila informants, states that Nkuba left before the arrival of Chitimukulu. The cause of the migration is said to have been a dispute between Nkuba and his father Mwamba, arising from the carved doll (ichisungwa). A doll belonging to a daughter of one of Mwamba's relative was thrown into the Chambeshi river by Nkuba's daughter. As we saw in chapter one, the doll symbolized fertility for the carrier. Its loss implied a possibility of sterility. Mwamba (it might have a new title holder) and his people demanded compensation of a live girl who would be thrown in the river in order to reverse the possibility of sterility. Mukuka pleaded with Mwamba for his daughter's life. After a lengthy discussion, Mwamba's people asked for payment to be in the form of ivory and pawns.

An examination of this tradition is needed in order to understand the real cause of the migration. This tale may have been borrowed from the Kaponto story already told before. A few informants do not subscribe to this tradition. Instead they have pointed out that the cause of the migration was a fight over kingship between Nkuba and Mwamba. What this implies is that Nkuba staged an unsuccessful rebellion against his father's political authority. This is given more credibility when the sources add that after paying his debt, he was asked by Mwamba to go and look for a new land. He would not have been asked to leave if the reason had been specifically connected with the doll. The use of the story of the doll has merely been an attempt to cover up his expulsion from Lubemba by his father.

Before he left Lubemba, Nkuba sent a party of elephant hunters led by his brother-in-law, Chibinda Lumbwe, who was assisted by Mumba and Chileya, to hunt for ivory and scout for a good land to settle in. The party first went north to Bulungu area. They killed some elephants but their ivory was confiscated by a Lungu chief. The party then went south-westwards into Chishinga area. Again, their ivory was

confiscated by Mupeta. They turned north and came to the shores of Lake Mweru and killed an elephant close to the Munsa stream near Priestess Mwepya's settlement. To avoid another confiscation, Lumbwe and Chileya reported their kill to Mwepya and offered the ivory in the hope that she would offer them one tusk. Priestess Mwepya refused the ivory, calling it "bones without marrow", and only asked for meat. The hunters were surprised but realized that Mwepya was ignorant of the value of ivory. They saw ivory littered all over the settlement. Some was used for pot hearths. When the hunters asked for permission to pick the litter, it was swiftly granted. The hunters collected what they could and left. Before their departure, the hunters noted that their hosts were a chiefless society. And perhaps because they did not know the name of the society, they described them as Bena Bwilile –those who ate by themselves, to imply that they had no chief to pay tribute to. This description became a name which described the chiefless societies of Mweru-Luapula area.

The hunting party followed the shore of Lake Mweru up to the Kalungwishi confluence. They then followed the river upstream and found some salt pans near where Mununga's village is today. They then crossed the Kalungwishi, passed through Itabwa, then ruled by Tanga, and came to Lubemba. Nkuba paid his debt. The reports of a chiefless society ignorant of the value of ivory induced Nkuba to prepare for his departure to Mweru-Luapula area, where he saw the chances of establishing his own state.

Out of curiosity I asked my informants what happened to the remainder of the ivory after the debt had been paid. They told me that the ivory was transported to the East African Coast (Mpwani), probably Kilwa, where it was traded for guns, bales of cloth, and beads. Nkuba gave his father a share of these items before he left for Mweru-Luapula.

This information on the existence of trade between Lubemba and the East Coast is important. First it shows that trade between the coast and the inland interior such as Lubemba was not a nineteenth century phenomenon, but existed before the eighteenth century. Excavations at Ing'ombe Ilede dated around the fourteenth of fifteenth century provide evidence of the existence of trade between southern Zambia and the East coast. Evidence from Kilwa recorded in 1569 shows the existence of trade in ivory brought to Kilwa by the Africans from the interior. According to evidence, the flow of ivory from the interior was constant, enabling the

sultan to obtain it “easily”. The available evidence indicates that trade with the interior was initiated by Africans, especially those around Lake Mweru (possibly Yao). Trade between Kilwa and the interior is further strengthened by the evidence from Bocarro’s trip from Tete to Kilwa in 1616. During the trip, in return for the gifts of cloth and beads given to the African chiefs, Bocarro was given some ivory which he brought to Kilwa. Although we are not told what happened to the ivory, the indication is that it was sold to some traders before he left.

Trade with the interior was a trickle which increased with demand. This trickle was not recorded at all because as Brian Fagan observed, the volume was small and irregular to attract attention. From the available evidence, it is clear that this was not an “organized trade based on well trodden routes”. It’s development might have been through the “passage of goods from hand to hand (as seen in the evidence Bocarro provides) and the eventual sale in Kilwa.” This process was later dropped for direct trade with the coast as evidenced by the Nkuba caravan.

The importance of the Kuba caravan should not be viewed as an isolated incident. It should, instead be viewed as revealing one of the many unrecorded caravans walking over a thousand miles to trade with the coast. From this, and the evidence from the Coast itself, we should see the development and growth of the Arab and Swahili trade with the interior as growing from the irregular caravans such as Nkuba’s. The existence of this trade with the coast was certainly a major factor in inducing Nkuba to migrate to Mweru-Luapula. Reports of discarded ivory, perhaps at first too good to be true, and the existence of a ready market, combined in inducing Nkuba’s migration.

The influence of luxury goods must have played an important part in the political structure as well. Spreading from the coast through this trickle of trade and through gifts by travellers such as Bocarro, luxury goods helped strengthen further the political support for the chiefs in Lubemba. It is unfortunate that the surviving traditions, Bemba or Shila, do not throw much light on the tribute system in Kalelelya period.

It is obvious that the trade with the East Coast extended further to the west than is imagined. This is drawn from the evidence provided by Mwata Kazembe. He tells that in the reign of Mwata Yamvu Muteba (in the late 1600s), a man arrived at the capital in Kola or Kapanga with several items which included Mpande (cowrie)

shells. The shells came only from East Africa and the probability is that this trader had acquired them at the coast or through the trickle between the coast and the interior.

This tradition pushes back the date of the introduction of firearms in Central Africa to before the arrival of the Lunda of Mwata Kazembe in 1740. Indeed tradition tells us that chiefs were buried with guns, and that the grave of the second Nkuba (Chilehse) an anthill grew up showing the barrel of the gun he was buried with. My informants (who included Nkuba's brother) claimed that the barrel is still visible today.

The spread of guns from the Coast to the interior began immediately after the arrival of the Portugues. On the West Coast, Cardonega reported that the trade in firearms and gunpowder started immediately after the founding of Luanda in 1576. By 1661, firearms were in use among the societies in the Benguela hinterland. By the end of the seventeenth century, several European nations were involved in the trade. Phyllis Martin has shown that by 1750, about 50,000 guns were arriving annually in the Loango coastal area from where they spread into the hinterland. And this should be seen as only a fraction of the firearms traded on the West Coast.

For the East Coast, the spread of firearms (flintlocks and matchlocks) from the coast began around 1600. In 1609, an African auxiliary force of about 200 armed with guns was employed by the Portuguese to put down a revolt against Mutapa Gatsia Rusere led by Mutuzianhe. This intervention has been looked upon as being the first step in the in the foundation and establishment of the prazo system.

According to Bocarro the African societies in the Sena area of the lower Zambezi who had been "formerly terrified by the discharge of a gun" were by 1613 able to "use them" effectively against the Portuguese. By this date, some African chiefs in the Sena area (such as Chombe, for example, who had at this time 150 firelocks and muskets and two cannons) are reported to have been very "powerful" with a "better arsenal of guns than the Captain (Governor)" of the area and were "well provided with powder and ammunition" acquired through trade with and gifts from Portuguese and African trades. By 1700, firearms and powder formed a regular part of commerce between the Coast and the Rozvi state.

Documentation on the spread of firearms north of the Zambezi is scanty. But there is no reason to doubt that the Portuguese must have traded in firearms, especially around Kilwa, which was close to the rich sources of ivory in the neighbouring interior, just as much as they had done in the lower and middle Zambezi area. The gradual expansion of this trade transformed it from being limited and regional to being “thriving well-organised trade in ivory (and according to Yohannah Abdullah, in firearms as well) by the end of the seventeenth century. By 1720, French sources report that French traders at Kilwa were trading with Makua who were reported in 1750 to have been “well supplied with firearms.”

Selectivity in documenting the history of the firearms trade limits our ability to trace accurately the spread of firearms from the Coast to the several Central African societies. The absence of this source should not lead us to assume or even conclude that this trade was absent. From the above accounts on the spread of firearms, it is evident that this trade had taken place in very few quantities. Future archaeological work in Central Africa will definitely shed more light on this.

By all indications the number of firearms reaching the interior was small. The firearms themselves posed problems of maintenance. As they could not be repaired locally, nor could they be sent to the Coast for this purpose, they were merely discarded when they became rusty or faulty.

It is certain that while the Central African societies received firearms as early as the Seventeenth century, because of the distances involved and the difficulty of obtaining gunpowder from the Coast, their sudden dramatic impact was nowhere sustained on the level of West African societies such as those discussed by Daaku. But it is without significance that perhaps the commonest and widespread use of firearms was for ceremonial and festive purposes when the loud bang of the gun was desired to add to the pomp. The ceremonial importance of the guns must have led to the development of the practice of burying chiefs with guns which was definitely practiced by the Bemba sources in the Kalelelya period.

Another tradition from Bemba sources tells us that Nkuba left Lubemba after the arrival and settlement of Chitimukulu on the Lubemba Plateau. We are told that after settling down, Chitimukulu began to envy Mulopwe Kalelelya's praise name- Mulopwe wa Bantu, the lord of people- which as an expression of political power. Chitimukulu proceeded to defeat Kalelelya who he now called “weak and useless,”

and set in motion the migrations from the plateau. It should be emphasised that Chitimukulu's dominance was not easily achieved as we are made to believe by this source. What is certain is that it took a period of time to allow Chitimukulu to establish himself before embarking on the process of absorbing the pre-Chitimukulu societies in his new state. This must have been a gradual process of expansion and consolidation which eventually made Chitimukulu strong enough to attack and defeat Kalelelya. Victory to Chitimukulu must have led to the incorporation of some of the important institutions related to the Kaleleyaship into the Chitimukuluship.

The defeat of Kalelelya led to a northern expansion of the Chitimukulu Bemba state into Lungu area pushing both the Lungu and the Mambwe further to the north and northeast. The Ng'alang'ansa and some Sukuma Scattered all over the plateau with small concentration remaining in Bulombwa near the Mwalule graveyard. However, the main body of the Sukuma went northeast and settled on the south-eastern shore of Lake Tanganyika to become the Fipa. And according to Tanguy one group went westwards to become the Shila.

I should mention that the second tradition is completely unknown by the Shila. This is strengthened by the absence of tradition identifying the route Chitimukulu took. Furthermore, a scholarly research in the Bemba traditions reveals, as Roberts found, a total absence of tradition related to Nkubaship. What he found, as has been shown above, **were similarities in the traditions related to the pre-Chitimukulu period**. The inference by some writers that Nkuba broke away from Chitimukulu is nullified by both the Shila and Bemba traditions. Statements like "Not all the Bembas stayed on the plateau, one section of them headed west wards, towards the Luapula and established a domain there under Nkuba" are wrong and misleading. What brought about this thesis were the colonial administrators who thought that because both Nkuba and Chitimukulu belonged to the crocodile clan and because former claimed coming from Lubemba then their origins had to be the same. The two traditions above show that they were wrong.

C. Kingship in Mweru-Luapula area

Dan Crawford, the pioneer missionary who worked among the Shila of Luanza from 1895 to 1924 made the following observation which in part sums and explains the origin of Nkuba's political power:

History attests that the elephant did it all and the great Nkuba Dynasty is really founded on ivory,... discarded tusks bleaching in the sun became the cornerstone of kingship.

This observation was confirmed by informants. Nkuba and his party, which included his uncle Kasulwe and several clans, left Lubemba for Mweru Luapula sometime before 1700. Nkuba's first settlement was at Mwepya's, where soon after he entered in the first of his many marriages by marrying Mwepya's daughter. These alliances helped Nkuba to establish and cement new kingship and political relationships with the Bwilile clans. After Mwepya's death, Nkuba's wife became the new title holder. Her position brought Nkuba to the realm of the Bwilile political and religious power as the husband of the important Bwilile clan leader. Reminiscent to the Lunda (where Chibinda Ilunga had gradually assumed Lueji's political power) Nkuba gradually assumed political power, leaving Mwepya to perform her religious functions. This process was slow and must have taken many years or several generations to accomplish.

Having acquired political power, Nkuba took a trip to Kalungwishi area to inspect the salt pan his scouts had located. He was pleased with the quality of salt. He decided to explore the northern areas in the hope of finding more salt there. In the meantime he appointed Mununga Chilumbwe son of Namumpundu to remain in the area and organize salt production. In this northern exploration, he located the salt pans at Ifuna (Mukunga), Katete (Putu today), Kakwale (Pweto and Kasama areas), and Filumbi (Kapulo area). He explored the southern Malungu plains as far as the Lufunzu river, a tributary of the Luvua. One source tells us that an indecisive battle took place between Nkuba and Kamena, a Bwile chief. The border between the two was agreed to be along the Luzungu River. Nkuba appointed his son Muchelenge as the chief in the northern area. Nkuba then visited the western shore as far as the Muntemune stream before returning to Mwepya's.

No state is formed and maintained without oppositions or rebellion and the Shila state was no exception. Opposition in this case was the resistance against absorptions and incorporation into the new political system by a people who had formerly enjoyed a different political system. This was both verbal and physical. Rebellion on the other hand was revolt or reaction against the existing political system which was viewed as being oppressive.

The first opposition to Nkuba Mukuka's new state from Kaponto, the Bwilile clan leader on Kilwa Island. Kaponto had been receiving regular requests for palm oil

from Nkuba to which he had complied. With the passage of time, Kaponto realized that requests were becoming demands, and that the gifts of palm oil were being treated as obligatory. The difference between tribute and a gift was that tribute was obligatory on the ruled as an expression of their acceptance of political authority. It was expressed in form of animal parts or whole animals, salt, iron and iron objects given directly to the chiefs or his representative to be transmitted to him through the hierarchy. Failure to pay tribute was regarded as rebellion and punishment was harsh. A gift was non-obligatory and was given because of kinship reasons or friendship and did not carry any political significance. On one occasion Kaponto refused to send the palm oil requested and, instead, sent a bowl of palm kernels with a message asking Nkuba to grow the oil palms for himself and save the trouble of sending messages to Kilwa. Mukuka felt insulted by this clear insubordination to his political authority which he had assumed had been accepted in Kilwa as well. He quickly assembled a fleet of canoes and prepared to sail to Kilwa and punish Kaponto. He asked Mwepya to accompany him. The fleet had only sailed for a few miles from the shore and met a strong westerly wind (Mulumbi). Nkuba's canoe capsized drowning both Nkuba and Mwepya. The strong current swept their bodies to the shores. The invading force had to turn back to mourn their leader and priestess. Nkuba was buried at Kalala Nkuba where Nkuba lies near Kabuta Fishing Camp, twenty miles north of Nchelenge Boma.

Nkuba Mukuka's death was followed by a period of succession dispute between Kasulwe, the uncle who came with Nkuba and Chileshe, Mukuka's younger brother. Several Bemba leaders opposed Kasulwe's bid for power. It was certainly against tradition for an uncle to succeed a nephew. It was the other way round. To ascertain the credibility of his candidacy and spiritual acceptance, a hunting party was sent in the bush to kill an animal that would confirm his acceptance or rejection. The hunting party returned with a hyena. Since this was a man eating animal, it was interpreted as a spiritual rejection of Kasulwe's candidacy. However, to avoid division among themselves, it was suggested that Kasulwe would be responsible for the installation of new Nkubas. He became a Chitontamata- responsible for stringing the royal bow (which Mwamba gave to Nkuba before his departure) at the time of installation and loosened it at the time of the chief's death. He was allowed to be the regent during the interregnum, to keep the chiefs seat warm before the appointment of a successor.

D. Nkuba II Chileshe Mumbemba and the Southward Expansion of the State.

The southward expansion of the state is credited to Chileshe, popularly referred to in traditions as Mubemba. His first task was to carry out his brothers resolutions to punish Kaponto. He sailed to Kilwa but Kaponto surrendered without a fight. Kasongo, Mukuka's eldest son, was appointed to be the ruler in Kilwa and to be responsible for the channelling of the palm oil to Nkuba.

Stories of the presence of Bwilile clans along the Luapula River induced Chileshe to sail southwards from Kilwa. He sailed along the Luapula and came to Chisenga island in the Mofwe lagoon, where Twite and his sister Mwele lived. Chileshe and his party saw a lot of discarded ivory in all settlements on the island. To gain possession of the ivory, Nkuba Chileshe and his party decided to stay on the island a little longer than they had planned. During their stay Nkuba proposed marriage to Mwele. She agreed. Gradually, Chileshe began to assume more political power. Twite protested without success. He decided to leave Chisenga Island and settle at Kasato-the place of pythons-on the west bank of the Luapula close to the south western shore of Lake Mweru. His departure was in fact a de facto recognition of Chileshe's new political authority. When he had sufficiently established himself, Chileshe asked Mwela for permission to pick up the littered ivory. Permission was granted. He collected the ivory and sent a big caravan to the East Coast. The caravan came back with bales of colth, beads, and a few guns. Some informants added that some of the bales of cloth, beads and guns were **sent to his father now under the rule of Chitimukulu.**

During his stay at Chisenga Island, Chileshe realized that it was conveniently situated close to large elephant herds on the western bank of the Luapula. This advantage induced him to shift his capital from Mwepya's to Chisenga Island. From here he organized "regular" caravans to the East Coast. He also continued to maintain contact with relatives in Lubemba, sending the regular gifts, which same writers like Cunnison have interpreted as tributes to Chitimukulu.

After setting in Chisenga for a number of years Chileshe took a trap to upper Luapula. He crossed to the eastern bank of the Luapula River. He subdued Kabeli, a Bwilile clan leader near the present site of Mwansabombwe, Kazembe's capital . He absorbed the several small families and clans living between the Ng'ona and Kaombe Rivers. He met Malebe. They fought an indecisive battle and this resulted in an agreement to establish their boundary along the rocks (Mwala wa) of Micence. This is near Kapala's village today. Chileshe then crossed the western bank of the Luapula and fought another indecisive battle with Nkambo. They established the

southern border along the Lushipuka River. Having established the southern border of his state, Chileshe returned to Chisenga Island.

A few years later Mulimbantamba, a Bwilile clain leader at Chibondo salt pan refused to send tribute to Nkuba. Instead of sending salt as he had previously done, he sent saline soil and asked Nkuba to make his own salt. (This is a cliché of Kaponto's palm kernels). Nkuba sent his nephew Walya to go and punish Mulimbantamba. Walya was repulsed with heavy losses. Fearing reprisal from a larger force which Chileshe has organized, Mulimbatamba fled to Dikulwe river near Kambove with Chilshe in pursuit. Chilshe fought the a Lomotwa of Mwine Kalwani. As he approached Dikulwe River, Chileshe's supplies ran out. The Lomotwa took to the bush leaving the invading army with no hope of replenishing their supplies. His forces were forced to chew bark fibre (ulushishi). However, before he retreated, he appointed a nephew to become Nkuba wa Dikulwe. During the retreat Nkuba fell ill and died before he reached Chisenga Island. He was buried at Chibondo. According to tradition an anthill grew on his grave showing the barrel of the gun he buried with. This earned him a new praise name, Mubemba Watumbe Iculu—the Bemba on whose grave grew an anthill.

E. Administration and Incorporation

Having established his new state, Chileshe was faced with the formidable problems of administering his southern state which had no chiefs. Before he proceeded to make appointments, Chileshe consulted Twite for advice. This was a significant step in that it shows that Nkuba respected the ritual authority and powers of the original owners of the land. Twite in turn suggested that Chileshe should send a clan delegation with ulupemba (white clay) to Nsonga, a spirit (Ingulu) living in the caves of Kundelungu plateau (white clay) to Nsonga, a spirt (ingulu) living in the caves of Kundelungu plateau on the western fringe of the Luapula Valley. The significance of this proposal is that it shows the ritual importance of Nsonga in the religious and ritual life of the people of this area. This importance implies that this is the oldest spirit in the area and that Twite derived his political and religious institutions which were sanctioned by Nsonga. By consulting Nsonga, Nkuba was in effect recognizing his ritual authority which was manifested in the lupemba he sent back to Nkuba. Attached to the lupemba was the taboo which forbid Nkuba to meet Nsonga's piest in person. If Nkuba was in a the village about to be visited by Nsonga's priest, he was obliged to leave the village and come back after the priest

had departed . Should they meet unexpectedly on the bush path, Nkuba was obliged to give the priest ulupemba for ritual purification as well as a ritual submission. Should Nkuba fail to do this, then the priest was obliged to throw and hit Nkuba with the lupemba. This was to condemn him to death. Tradition says that this is how Kasongomfumu met his death. This relationship between Nsonga and Nkuba is similar to the one existing between the Bemba chiefs such as Chitimukulu, Nkula ,Nkweto and Mwamba, who are buried at Mwalule. They are not supposed to meet Shimwalule in person. If he was passing through a village in which any of them was, that chief was obliged to leave the village and hide in the bush and only return after the priest had left. Their meeting was only supposed take place when their corpses were being taken for burial at Mwalule.

Having received his ritual mandate, Chileshe proceeded to make his appointments. Mukamba, a nephew and a very good blacksmith, was sent to Kapilimakombwe , near the present site of Mbereshi Mission to exploit the iron ore at Mingeli. He was also given the task of collecting tribute from Kabeli and other Bwilile clans living between Ng'ona and Lufubu rivers. Nakabutula, a niece was sent to Kapweshi on the upper Lufubu river. (Her former village site is now in the area covered by the Kapweshi Plantation Scheme). Mulumbwa was sent to Mununshi area. Lwamfwe Iwa Nkuba and Kapala both sons, were sent to Kaombe area to guard the southern border with Malebe. Katele,a nephew, was sent to Lunde area. His former village site is in the middle of the Lunde burial ground for the Mwate Kazembes. Mulwe and Mubamba, nephews, and Nkuba Mukashi (mother of Kaweme, see below), a sister were sent to rule the area between Mwatishi and the Inshinda lagoon. On the western shore, he sent Kaweme, a nephew to the area adjacent to the Bukungolo Hills. His area bordered Muchelenge's which was to the north. South of the Kabesa river, was given to Mukobe (a brother to chief Mununga). His area extended to the Lufukwe. It included the Kawama area that later became the burial ground for the Nkubas. Walyo was given the Chibondo to control salt production from the salt pan. South of Chibondo was a large marshy area, which was given to another Mulumbwa. It extended to the Lushipuka River. Mwati, a Bwilile clan leader ,was appointed to be Ichbengele cakwa Nkuba--- the supplier of the fish to Nkuba's larder.

Not all of the Bemba elders were pleased with these appointments. Some elders were disappointed that they were left out. One of them, Nkomba left Chisenga Island in anger. With a few people he sailed up- stream along the Luapula River. He sailed

near Malebe close to Mambilima (formerly Johnstone) falls. He became Kashiba's Chibengele after arrival of the Lunda.

Each of the appointed chief was given a Chishimba stone .this stone represent the Chishimba spirit which; tradition relates, came from Buluba and was related to the institution of kingship. Its absence constituted the absence of political power. According to the Shila tradition, the Chishimba spirit was synonymous to kingship – E chalo cine. Its importance in the institution of kingship is similar to that attached to Makumba by the Ushi. Chishimba was kept in a specially prepared basket called ichipe ca calo—the basket of the nation or land. It was wrapped with bark cloth and kept in a specifically prepared shrine (ing'anda yaba Chishimba) dedicated to the spirit. It rested on ivory as a mark of respect. Each chief was expected to make periodic prayers at the shrine for the peace and prosperity of the Shila State. Before these prayers were offered, the blood of an animal killed specifically for this purpose was sprinkled round the shrine as an invocation to the spirit.

Each of the appointed chiefs was given royal bow – ubuta bwa calo- a symbol of political authority. Informants told me that the bows came from Kalamata in Shaba. The bows and arrows were kept in the Chishimba shrine. Each chief kept some red powder (inkula) which symbolised blood.

It was rubbed on the faces of the warriors during the war or the lion hunt to make warriors aggressive and courageous. They also kept Impemba which symbolises peace. It was put in the shrines of Ba Chishimba, those of the dead chiefs and the spirits related to salt making to call for peace and prosperity.

The implications of the new appointments were to spread and effect to concept of kinship and establish hierarchical channels of tribute collection and to emphasise changed roles. The appointment of chiefs to live with the Bwilile clan leaders was in itself a process effecting domination by the spatial dispersion of the person through whom it was expressed. It had two results. First it accelerated intermarriages between the Bemba and the Bwile resulting in the production of a new society calling itself Shila-the fishermen. And second, it brought about the gradual introduction of tribute among Bwilile clans. As results of a new social and kinship relationship arising from the intermarriages, resistance was averted.

The development of Nkubas state was not imposed on the Bwilile as the Lunda and Bemba did on their conquered societies. Nkuba 's political organization was not geared to achieving complete supremacy or pre-eminence over the Bwilile clans. In

fact its development, which took place almost without the use of force, was due to a gradual acceptance and accommodation of the new political system by the Bwilile clans through intermarriages. The few military victories over Kaponto and Mulimbantamba, and the indecisive battles with Malebe and Nkambo on the upper Luapula and with Bwile or Bena Malungu on Lufunzu, indicate that Nkuba did not possess a superior military force, hence his reliance on, and overemployment of the strategy of marriage alliance. So although this was not technically a conquest state, its development conforms to Vansina's analysis of a conquest state. He wrote:

"The process of conquest... is complicated, for conquest means not only to defeat enemies, but to integrate them, that is to make the enemy accept the loss of independence. The incorporation of enemies becomes even more complex if they themselves have not had a state structure before their defeat. For then it is not merely a matter of making the enemy accept subjection, but also of teaching him to adopt a new political organisation".

The acceptance of Nkuba's political organisation was attributed to what Southall calls "more highly specialised political institutions than the people they dominated... The high veneration in which they held their own chiefs was an attitude which proved to be communicable to the Bwilile clans and the Bemba were successful in converting them increasingly to their political values". This was, as we have seen, largely made possible by the marriage alliances.

Incorporation and accommodation were factors which were well used by the Bemba. The ritual powers of the Bwilile were recognised and maintained. The appointment of some Bwilile clan leaders such as Mwati established the gradual process of Bwilile absorption into the new political hierarchy. In this process, intermarriages were an important factor. Not only did they make possible the resolution of conflict between the Bwilile and Bemba as a result of the new kinship of relations, but they also provided the basis of integration into a new homogenous society called Shila, translated literally as fishermen. The name was derived from the hunting and fishing taboos (imishila, sing. unushila) which had to be observed by hunters and fishermen on hunting and fishing trips. One of these taboos was the refraining from sexual relations shortly before and during the hunting and fishing trips. The people observing the taboos were called Abashila, sing. Umushila, meaning the sacred ones. Later a distinction was drawn between the fishermen who were referred to as Abashila Katya – the sacred fishermen and the hunters who remained Abashila. With the passage of time, the two groups were simply referred to as Abashila, and this became the name of the new society. By 1740, when the Lunda arrived, the

societies had achieved complete integration. It is not possible to know the number of years it took to achieve this but it **must have been more than two or three generations.**

F. Political Organisation

From what we have seen above, the Shila state as it developed showed the same characteristics as those which developed in states such as the Bemba and Lunda which developed after it. It had naturally defined border (imipaka) – the Chishinga escarpment on the east, the Kundelungu Plateau on the west, Mwala (rocks off) Micence and Kansaenda river in the south and the Lufunzu river in the north – which were recognised by their neighbours. It had a strong political organisation which had the obligation to defend the state from external attacks and internal disorders.

The Shila State as a whole was defined as icalo cakwa Nkuba – Nkuba's country. This was to differentiate the state from the neighbouring states ruled by other rulers. We have already seen that by appointing his sons and nephews as chiefs, Nkuba was in effect decentralising his political power. Each appointed chief was given an area called icalo as well – which was marked from the others by naturally defined features, usually streams and rivers. Each icalo, as was the state, was with the chief's name, such identified as Muchelenge country – icalo cakwa Muchelenge. The name of the chief became hereditary within the local line. Each successor to the title had to be approved (formally) by Nkuba before his installation. The installation was made by a local Chintotamata, usually an uncle, to reflect the relationship between Nkuba and Kasulwe.

The administration of the Icalo and the dispensing of justice were internal responsibilities of the chief. Nkuba did not interfere in the matters of the chief's icalo. If a chief was found to be flouting the rules and regulations pertaining to and required of his office, Nkuba, in person or through an emissary could censure and advise the chief. Although political power was derived from him, he could not depose an installed chief, however bad his behaviour. According to Shila tradition, once a chief was approved, appointed and installed, he could not be removed. A chief remained a chief for life.

The northern areas given to Muchelenge, Mununga, Kaweme and Mukobe were geographically larger than those given to their brothers and cousins in the south.

Perhaps this disparity arose from the availability of more resources in the north than the south. This situation afforded the northern chiefs to appoint their own sub-chiefs to some parts (also known as ifyalo, sing icalo). For example Mununga VI Kapelemena appointed three hunters, Munkombwe Kanwamulupako, Kapema and Mutondolo to rule the eastern part of his icalo which was abundant in game. Similarly Kapema appointed his nephew, Mubanga, to rule the area south of Lokonzolwa and his sister to rule the area opposite Kilwa Island. Muchelenge is only known to have made one appointment. He sent his nephew Kabwe Katende to Katete (known as Kabwile or Puta today) to control salt production between the Chienge and the Ifuna streams. Although the titles of sub-chiefs became hereditary within their own lineage, they only ruled on behalf of the chiefs and never on their own. To strengthen their own political power, the chiefs appointed their own relatives to head important and strategic villages as well as to posts such as bachilolo to assist them with decision making. These appointments were beneficial in the administration of the area as well as the collection of tribute.

Each chief looked to Nkuba as his source of political and ritual power. Nkuba prayed for the peace and prosperity of the state. He blessed seeds sent to him annually from all parts of the state. These were then sent to the sub-chiefs and village headmen to be mixed with the other seeds before planting to ensure a bountiful harvest. The chiefs ate the first crops of the year in a ceremony called ukusomona – to taste, which marked the beginning of the harvest season.

Nkuba exercised ritual power for the whole state as well as his own village. This power was delegated to his chiefs, sub-chiefs and headmen. Each of them had a ritual pot (ingongo) containing medicines for the purification of the village or the icalo. When a death occurred in the village, the headman had to purify it (ukulungika umushi – to normalise the village) by washing his hands and face in the prepared medicines. The same medicines were also used in protecting the village from attacks by wild animals such as the lions. The chief's pot (ingongo ya calo) contained the medicines for purifying the icalo when a lion was killed within the borders of the icalo. The lion was first skinned and "treated" by the doctor (inganga) before it was sent to the chief for the ritual ceremony of stepping on the lion's skin (ukunyanta inkalamo). This was aimed at banishing the lion's spirit and to protect the icalo from further attacks by lions.

The chief's village possessed special importance as the political, ritual and economic centre. It was larger than the other villages. It was fortified with stockades (amalinga). Within the village was the chief's own place (ichipango) surrounded by

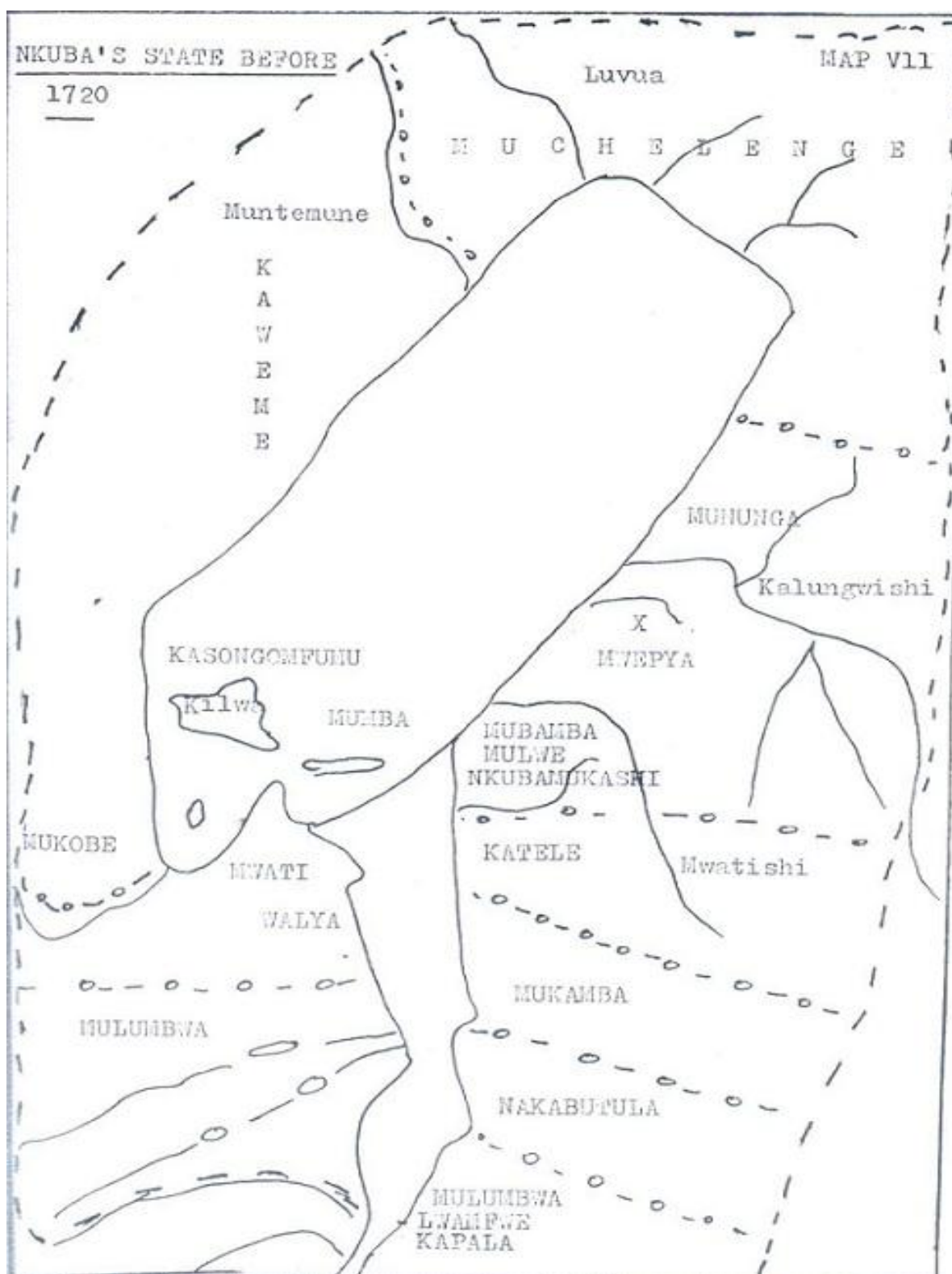
an enclosure of the Tupempe shrub to ensure the safety of the chief as well as to separate it from the subjects. The palace was usually built in the middle of the village for security reasons. According to informants, all palaces were built in the same way. They had two gates, a small one to the south used by the chief's wives and relatives and the northern one used as the official gate by all people visiting the chief on official business. Each of the gates was attended by attendants, usually favourites of the chief. West of the main gate was a small waiting place (insaka) for the visitors. Inside the enclosure, the southern area was for the houses of the chief's wives and granaries. In the middle was the chief's house (umusumba) . On the western side was the Chishimba shrine, the ritual and political centre of the icalo. On the eastern side was the shrine (umuchushi) for the dead chiefs. The order of palace construction is maintained even today. The explanation given is that the west symbolises the origin of kinship in Buluba, and the east that of their recent origin, Lubemba.

The palace was highly respected. Admission was reserved. Once admitted one had to go through the ritual of clapping hands while kneeling on the ground. The chief was addressed as Kanabesa, a title brought from Lubemba. Matters of state were addressed with the Chilolos. When cases were heard, the Chilolos acted as the jury. However, their effectiveness depended on how consultative the chief was. In any case they were not expected to oppose the chief's decision but could only offer their advice.

The capital shifted to a new site after the installation of a new chief . For example, eleven Munungas have had capitals in six sites of ten miles radius from the first site.

As could be seen, decentralisation of political organisation was good for the administration of the ifyalo and collection of tribute. It enabled chiefs to deal closely with the problems affecting their own areas. Tours to different parts of icalo enabled the chiefs to assess the loyalty of their subjects and to ensure internal order. The effectiveness and cohesion of political control in a decentralised state depended on the control exercised by Nkuba on the chiefs. Chileshe was a good administrator and was able to keep in contact with the affairs of the state by having roving messengers and spies (inegu). This to an extent was dictated by the military preparedness the state was in at the time of expansion. After his death his heirs did not recognise any military campaign. Stability helped to relax the tight control on the chiefs that Chileshe had exercised. The loosening of political control enabled some chiefs like Muchelenge and Kaweme to assume autonomy except for their tribute to Nkuba. Laxity on the part of Kasongomfumu is seen as the beginning of the disintegration of the Shila state as we shall see in Chapter Four.

Map - Nkuba's State Before 1720



CHAPTER FOUR

THE DISINTEGRATION OF THE SHILA STATE

In chapter Two we saw that the decentralization of Shila political power was designed to assume effective political control of the Shila State by having Nkuba's personal representatives in the regions.

Regional collection and distribution of tribute was its consequence. In the third chapter we saw that in spite of the economic resources of the Shila state, the political organization was unable to exploit them for its political and military advantage. The presence of the resources accelerated political decentralization and gave rise to a movement towards political autonomy among some chiefs, encouraged by the absence of a strong political and military leadership at the center.ⁱ Nkuba's ineffectiveness partly arose from the absence of external and internal threats to the security of the state. Peace and stability led to the disintegration of the military organization which Chileshe Mubemba had built when he was expanding the state to the south and west. Lack of effective leadership at the Centre, which became visible immediately after the death of Chileshe Mubemba led to the loss of political and administrative cohesion which had once prevailed in the state during the reign of Nkuba Chileshe.ⁱⁱ

The disintegration and demise of the Shila state could be described as internal in origin and accelerated by external forces. The extent of disunity among the Shila chiefs came into the open after the death of the Kasongomfumu. Before the installation of Lubao Nsenshi to the Nkubaship, Kaweme, the Shila chief of Bukongolo area put forward his bid for the Nkubaship.ⁱⁱⁱ He claimed that Lubao Nsenshi was weak and lacked leadership qualities required of the position. His candidacy was opposed and finally rejected for several reasons, among which were the following. If Kwame's candidacy had been accepted, it would have established a precedent for progressional succession as is the case among Bemba chiefs.^{iv} This would have found it very difficult to command the loyalty of the chiefs like Mununga and Mukobe who were of the senior line.

And this must have been the strongest reason for the rejection of his candidacy. Others felt that he was already an installed chief, and as such he could not be installed twice. In the Shila tradition, a chief was only installed once. Others felt that even if the above reasons were ignored Kaweme could not be acceptable to many councilors who felt that he was a bit too hard to please. And others felt that the

acceptance of Kaweme's candidacy would have lowered the prestige of the founding line.

Kaweme was disappointed by the rejection of his candidacy. To register this disappointment, he decided to take a new title – Nkuba Chimbala (Chimbala is leftover evening meal which was thrown away in the morning). This new title meant in part that he was now Nkuba's equal. Relationship between Lubao and Chimbala was strained right from the beginning of his reign. Lubao did not attempt to improve the situation at all. As a result, Nkuba Chimbala acted in the way he pleased. His payment of tribute was very irregular, almost to the point of defying Nkuba's authority. Nkuba Lubao, remembered as a weak man who loved to drink beer, left Kaweme undisturbed. This weakened his position vis-à-vis his chiefs who had expected him to act and discipline Nkuba Chimbala in some way.

His failure to act coupled by his administrative inefficiency, resulting in a decline of tours which minimized his contacts with the chiefs, alienated him from many Shila chiefs. In fact, his ineffectiveness created a power vacuum in the Shila state that isolated Chisenga from the rest of the state. The isolation of the centre of political power underlined the weakness of Shila state. It registered the decline of the Nkubashin as the political centre of the state.^v

THE COMING OF THE BWILE

Mweru Luapula are continued to attract new migrants along long after the foundation of the Shila state. They came in small family groups and in large groups. Among these were the BaBwile or the BaAanza^{vi} led by Mpweto Mutita Kaloba or Katontoka.^{vii} The Bwile trace their origin to Buluba. They trace the origin of their chieftainship to Kumwimba^{viii}, perhaps Kumwimba Mputu, who might have been the sixth Luba chief. (it could not have been Kumwimba Ng'ombe, listed as the fourteenth chief who ruled around 1835). Their leader was Kamena whose relationship with Kumwimba is not remembered. He led the Bwile from Buluba to the area between Lufunzu and Moba. One of his chiefs, Mulolwa, settled on the fringe of the Shila state.

Sometime before 1740 a succession dispute arose between Mulolwa and his nephew Mpweto Mutita Kaloba supported by his brothers Chisabi, Kapulo, Kasama, Kalembwe and Mwabu. In the ensuing fight, Mpweto and his brothers were driven across the Lufunzu river into the Shila territory ruled by Muchelenge.^{ix} The chief

allowed them to stay in his territory. And to cement friendship with the new arrivals Muchelenge married Mpweto's sister Chaleka.

Some Shila informants believe that the Bwile were attracted to the area south of the Lufunza River because of the attraction of salt in the Mweru Luapula area. They claim that the Bwile learned of the existence of salt from some adventurous Shila traders who traded as far north as the Tumbwe area. My informants stated that the Shila traders were the source of salt in these areas. Salt came to the chiefs in form of tribute in order to be allowed to trade or pass through the area. The Shila claim that because of the constant desire for salt sections of the Bwile led by a skillful hunter, Mpweto or Katontoka decided to leave Mulolwa's area and migrated southwards probably in search of game came to Muchelenge's area, who welcomed them.^x

The marriage between Chaleka and Muchelenge assured the Bwile of their continued stay. After a short period, Chaleka gave birth to a stillborn baby (akapopo) and died soon afterward. During the Ukutobolola ceremony (to review the cause of death and discuss the form of compensation to be given by the survivor to the deceased family), Muchelenge offered to pay ivory and some pawns and a substantial number of hoes.^{xi} Mpweto and his faction rejected the offer as insufficient. Muchelenge offered to add some more hoes, but this offer was rejected. Mpweto told Muchelenge that they would only accept a number of salt pans as compensation for his sister's death.^{xii} This aroused Muchelenge's suspicion that the intention of the chief was to acquire territory. Muchelenge refused to consider this proposal because it entailed ceding territory to another clan. The Bwile applied considerable pressure coupled with threats to "bring the whole BaAanza from across (the Lufunzu) to come and enforce their demands".^{xiii} To avoid a possible military confrontation, Muchelenge tried to compromise by appointing a few Bwile as headmen of two salt pans at Kakwale and Filumbi.^{xiv}

The Bwile interpreted this as a success and applied more pressure for more concessions. This proved too much for Muchelenge. He decided that he should consult Nkuba. He set sail for Chisenga Island. On the way he fell ill and died close to Chitutu village and was buried in the boulders which bear his name today.^{xv} Shortly after Muchelenge's death, Mengelwa, a niece succeeded. Her succession was at a very difficult time. And before she established her political power, the Bwile applied considerable pressure on her. In this situation, Mengelwa could do nothing but give in. The Bwile gradually began to assume political power. The Bwile claimed land from the Muntemune stream on the west to Kalobwa stream on the east.

Mengelwa became chief in name only and her political power was confined to the Muntemune area.

Mpweto Mutita Kaloba divided the new territory between brothers and nephews as follows:

Kizabi, a “brother”, got the Kalunga are which stretched to the Lufunzu.

Kasama a “brother” got kakwale area close to Kashengeneke.

Kapulo, a “brother” got Filumbi area on the western fringe of the Tabwe state.

Putu Mulubi, a “nephew” got the Katete are.

Kalembe, a “brother” got the ifuna (Mukunga) area which marked the southern boundary of the Bwile state. He in turn appointed his brother Mukunta to be the chief close to the Kalobwa stream.

Mwabu, a “brother” got the Kabwe area.

Mpweto got part of the Kakwale area, and built his capital close to the Kashengeneke gorge. See map.^{xvi}

The loss of the northern area to the Bwile, which left only the Kalungwishi salt pan under the control of the Shila, was accepted by the Shila without resistance.^{xvii}

Whether this was by arrangement or by mere resignation dictated by their inability to change the course of events is not known by my informants.^{xviii} Many believe that passivity might have been the main cause. The Shila accepted the fate which befell Mengelwa. None of the chiefs attempted to assist the young chief who had found herself in the midst of a situation that was beyond her control. And no attempt was made by the Shila chiefs to negotiate with the Bwile to leave a portion of the land for Mengelwa who was now confined to her village near the Muntemune stream.

I asked several of my informants why the Shila conceded the loss of territory over a case in which they had the advantage to press their will. Responses varied with most indicating that passivity among the Shila was the major reason. It is clear from what has been discussed above that this passivity had grown with the passage of time. The will to fight which had been evident during Chileshe’s reign had evaporated. At most they preferred to make concessions rather than fight. Passivity coupled with disunity among the Shila had by 1760 cost them all the land that they had under their control. It had been absorbed into another state.

THE COMING OF THE LUNDA OF MWATA KAZEMBE

The process of disintegration was given a final push by the Lunda, who had arrived in the area around 1740. The Lunda migration to the east which subsequently brought them to Mweru-Luapula area was induced by

- a. The desire to punish the Lubunda, who had fled from Musumba (Mwata Yamvu's capital) to Mweru-Luapula area during the reign of Mwata Yamvu's capital) to Mweru-Luapula area during the reign of Mwat Muteba, after being accused of setting fire to a section of the capital in which the Prince died,
- b. The desire to control the Kachila salt pan on the Lualaba river and
- c. The stimulation and impact of long distance trade with the west coast which created a desire to expand their state and to tap new sources of ivory and slaves to lubricate the trade.^{xix}

The Lunda crossed the Luapula river around 1740. They defeated the Ushi, Bena Mukulu, Bisa and Bena Chishinga before coming to Mweru-Luapula area. The Lunda forces were opposed by Nakabutula, the Shila ruler in Kapweshi area.^{xx}

The superior force of the Lunda forced her to flee to her brother Katele, who was on the upper Lunde stream, with lunda in hot pursuit. They attacked Katele's village.^{xxi} They killed Nakabutula during the attack.^{xxii} Katele's resistance was so strong that for some time he held the Lunda forces at bay. But this resistance soon crumbled. The village was sacked and Katele was forced to flee and establish his village in the Mantampala thicket, from where he waged a successful guerilla war against the Lunda. The Lunda came to respect him for his courage.^{xxiii} But unfortunately he was treacherously killed by Chibamba (Kazembe Ilunga's uncle) who had been left in charge of some forces o continue fighting katele,^{xxiv} in the absence of Mwata Kazembe Ilunga who had gone on an expedition which took him as far away as Nkonde.^{xxv} Military action had failed and Chibamba had befriended Katele only to have him killed. He was strongly rebuked by Ilunga.

In the course of my research, I had the opportunity to ask my informants why Katele and Nakabutula were not given assistance in resisting the Lunda invasion. Their answers implied that this was due to political disorganization of the Shila and their inability to raise an army to defend their state. What is even more surprising is the fact that Nkuba was not informed of the presence of the Lunda in the state, their

attacks on Nakabutula and Katele or of their stay at Lunde and of the death of Mwata Kanyembo. The distance between Chisenga and Lunde is less than 20 miles, and even if the channel between Kapambwe (the entreport to Chisenga on the eastern side of the Mofwe lagoon) and the island was blocked by the sudd (ifisela) as some informants claim, it was still possible to send a message to Chisenga on the drum.^{xxvi} Why this was not done is not known by any of my informants. This argument can be seen as an attempt by the Shila to cover their inability to act and shows how disorganized the state had come to be. It also shows that contact and communication between Nkuba and his chiefs had completely broken down.^{xxvii} Chisenga Island was therefore completely isolated from the events which were taking place in the other parts of the Shila state. This isolation is confirmed by the Lunda sources which recall that they were not aware of the existence of Nkuba during all the time they were at Lunde fighting Katele and Nakabutula.^{xxviii}

According to the Shila and Lunda traditions, the existence of Nkuba in Chisenga Island came to be known to the Lunda as a result of an event which took place in Chisenga Island shortly before the return of Mwata Ilunga from his northeast expedition.^{xxix} Nkuba had a nephew Chituti, a young man whom the Shila traditions recall caused the deaths of several pregnant women in his quest to find out why babies develop.^{xxx} He is also accused of having an affair with one of Nkuba's wives and of having wished his uncle a quick death so he could succeed him.^{xxxi}

Nkuba arranged to have his nephew killed during a hunt. He was skinned and later burned.^{xxxii} His scalp was spread on Nkuba's seat and covered with animal skins and mats (nobody knows why Nkuba did this). It is a unique action in the history of the Shila.^{xxxiii} Chituti's absence became conspicuous after a short period. NaChituti (mother of Chituti) inquired about his whereabouts and was told that he had gone on a mission to the upper Luapula. But soon the secrecy surrounding Chituti's death was leaked to her by her husband Mwalimunshi,^{xxxiv} who also revealed that her son's scalp was on Nkuba's seat. She received the news of the death of her son calmly waiting for proof. She waited for some time. One day Nkuba had a beer party at the palace to which Nachituti was also invited. When Nkuba temporarily left the seat, Nachituti quickly peeped under the coverings of the seat and saw her son's scalp. This confirmed his death. Accompanied by her husband, she crossed to the Eastern side of the Mofwe lagoon with an intention of staying with Mubamba at Kapilimakombwe. It was here she learned that the Lunda had just passed through the area on their way back to the crossing point (now at Kalumbu's village) en route to Mwati Yamvu. She followed them and found Kalandala, a Lunda aristocrat, near

the site of the present capital of Mwata Kazembe, who took her to Mwata Ilunga. She urged Kazembe to avenge the death of her son. She lamented that “if he had killed him only and not skinned him”. Kazembe sent a punitive force under the command of Kalandala and Kashinge to Chisenga Island. By the time they got there Nkuba Nsenshi and his son Muchinda had fled into hiding on the western side of the Mofwe lagoon. This indicates that some form of communication was maintained between Chisenga Island and the eastern mainland. Some informants told me that Nkuba had fled from Chisenga Island as soon as he found out the flight of his sister from Chisenga Island to Mulumbwa’s country. The Lunda killed many people on the island. The heads were decapitated. NaChituti told Kalandala and the Lunda that Nkuba’s head was missing. The Lunda laid in wait for Nkuba’s return.

In his hideout, Nkuba ran out of provisions and sent his cook Fibalala to Chisenga Island for supplies. Fibalala was using Nkuba’s paddle which was fitted with a bell to warn people of his coming. The ringing of the bell as Fibalala paddled to Chisenga Island alerted the Lunda who quickly led an ambush. Fibalala was arrested as he landed; he pleaded for his life and promised to lead the Lunda to Nkuba’s hideout. The Lunda forces managed to kill Nkuba and his host Mulumbwa but Muchinda dived under the sudd and swam to safety. Nachituti was very pleased to see the heads of Nkuba and Mulumbwa. Having nothing to reward Mwata Ilunga, she took a basket filled with earth—to symbolize land and a pot of water—to symbolize water and gave them to Ilunga to symbolize the ceding of the Shila state to the Lunda. Nachituti was able to do this because of the political vacuum existing in Chisenga Island. Kazembe Ilunga accepted her gifts and recited an important praise which is now recited by every new Kazembe being installed and on every important occasion such as during the annual Mutoboko ceremony (to commemorate the day of installation of the ruling Mwata Kazembe);

Lunda version:

Nkonda bilo

Wekondele ubuleyi ne butombo

Mutumba mwabilwa ntanda

Bashele babilwa mbushi ne mikoko

English version:

I love

To

Seize the country by force

I who am given lands and people

Whereas others are given goats and sheep

Kazembe's acceptance of the symbolic gifts was followed by a plea by NaChituti to Mwata Kazembe asking him "to remain here and rule the Shila because "if you go away they (Shila chiefs) will kill me." According to the Lunda tradition, Kazembe felt compassion for her and decided to remain in the area and built his capital on the edge of the Mofwe lagoon. She remained in Kazembe's capital where she died and was buried at the Lunde royal grave yard.

NaChituti role has raised some bitterness among the Shila who believe that the Lunda would not have remained in the area had it not been for her "unpatriotic" action of inviting the Lunda to become rulers over the Shila. To emphasize this they gave NaChituti, now a fugitive from her own people, a new praise name, -NaChituti waobwele u Lunda – NaChituti, who invited or induced the Lunda to stay where they are now. The Lunda on their part dismiss the Shila claims. They argue that by the virtue of their victories over the Katele, Nakabutula, and Nkuba himself, they had acquired possession of the Shila state. They claim that NaChituti's symbolic gifts were worthless in themselves because they had already acquired what was being symbolically given to them. These gifts, they argued, merely legitimized their right to remain in the area.

Shortly after the establishment of the capital at Mofwe (near present-day Chombe's village in what is now Kanyembo's area), Ilunga asked Kasulwe to appoint a successor to Nsenshi. Muchinda, who had escaped death from Kalandala's forces, was installed as the new Nkuba. Chisenga Island became Kazembe's "storehouse-ubutala bwakwa Kazembe." This meant that Nkuba had to pay tribute to Kazembe. Nkuba was also invested with Lundahood and became "Kazembe's wife-Mwadi" This meant that by defeating Nkuba, Kazembe put him behind him like a husband puts a wife behind in the house. Kazembe left Nkuba in charge of fertility of the land and remained the head of the Shila chiefs.

Nkuba's defeat prompted other chiefs to like Lubunda, Malebe and Mulundu to come and surrender to Mwata Kazembe. They were given a task to building the first

royal house (itshot) am to dig a defensive trench (impembwe). This is still visible at Chomba's village today.

Lunda Political Organization in the former Shila State.

The Shila state formed only a small unit of the vast Lunda state which stretched from Lualaba River I the west to Bisaland in the east. The Prime motive in the expansion of the state was the collection of tribute—ivory mainly, and slaves which were important items in the Long distance trade with the west coast. Slaski has postulated that 'The conquering Lunda were probably never numerically preponderant, but they established themselves as a governing class.' Unlike the Shila, the Lunda retained a highly centralized political organization. To run this system effectively and to guard against the possibility of the new political organization, Kazembe Ilunga appointed some members of the aristocracy who had distinguished themselves in the wars or assignments to positions of governors to geographical areas (amayanga, sing. Iyanga).

These appointments were not hereditary at all. The governors were appointed to superintend the Shila chiefs, to organize and accelerate the collection of tribute and to forward it to Kazembe, to ensure regional stability and internal order and in times of war to raise an army which fought under the command of Mwine Mpanda who could be described as Kazembe's chief of staff.

The governors appointed in the former Shila area were Kashinge, sent to Kilwa Island to organize the palm oil tribute to Mwata Kazembe. Kilwa had been given to him after he has led a punitive expedition to punish Kaponto and Makamba, who had been reluctant to send their tribute to Mwata Kazembe. Kalandala, who had killed Nkuba, was sent to Chisenga Island "to keep an eye on Nkuba." Muchinda gave him his sister Ntambo, thus uniting the Lunda and Shila d institutions. One of Kalandala's children, Lukwesa succeeded his uncle Muchinda as the sixth Nkuba. And from then all the Nkuba who have succeeded to the position have been descendant of Kalandala. Musanda was sent to the west shore of Lake Mweru to supervise Nkuba Chimbala and his chief Mubanga and NaMulenga. Kasumpa was sent to Kalungwishi area to live with Mununga and his chiefs Munkombwe and Kapema and from Tabwa chiefs, Chipepa was sent to supervise the Bwile chiefs and to collect the salt and fish tribute. He built his village near the Lunchinda River (which is near Chipungu's village and is today the boundary between northeast Zaire and northeast Zambia. Nswana Ntombo was sent to live with Mulumbwa.

And Koni was sent to Mbeleshi area. For our period, the Lunda presence in the regions inhibited the possibility of revolts. But after our period, Kazembe Keleka, who succeeds Ilunga, had to put down several revolts by the Bwile and the Shila. The Lunda superior force helped to retain the northern area in the polity.

Effects of the Lunda Victory on the Shila State

It was clear from the titles given to Nkuba by the Lunda that he was going to play a secondary role to that of Mwata Kazembe in the political affairs in his former state. His acceptance of Lundahood displeased several Shila chiefs (it is difficult to visualize what else he could have done in his position), led by Nkuba Chimbala. They viewed Nkuba's acceptance as a betrayal of Shila political and religious institutions and more especially, the secret society Ubutwa, of which he was the symbolic head. This society which was open to initiated members is remembered as having started among the Mbolelaponi of Kilwa Island long before the coming of the Bena Bwilile. When Katenunwa and his wife were saved by the Kaponto people after the accidental fire, it is said that Ubutwa was one of the traditions they passed on to Kaponto and his people before they died. When Nkuba subdued Kaponto he becomes the leader of the society. The society had lodges all over Mweru-Luapula, Bangweulu area, and the parts of Buluba. The aims of the society, in the words of some informants who participated in the activities of the society before it was proscribed in 1909, "were to provide entertainment for and to assist in the burial of the members." Each lodge had a Shingulu(chief priest) whose functions included initiation and presiding over the Butwa society ceremonies.

Most of the lodges resented the Lundanization of the Nkubaship and Nkuba's acquiescence to it. Many chiefs felt that this restricted his authority as the supreme leader of the society. Nkuba's position was further exacerbated by his sister's marriage to Kalandala, who had killed his father. This was viewed as an attempt to appease the Lunda, and therefore a sign of weakness. Many of the lodges gradually turned to Nkuba Chimbala on whom Lunda hold and influence was slight. This action could be interpreted as a protest against Nkuba's Lundahood and a vote of no confidence in his ability to lead the Butwa society and the Shila chiefs. The title, Kazembe's wife, meant that in spite of his responsibility for the fertility of land, the Nkubaship was apolitical shell. The gradual assumption of political leadership among the Shila chiefs and of the Butwa society by Nkuba Chimbala shifted the centre of leadership from Chisenga Island to Lukonzolwa. This development in a way satisfied the aspirations for which Nkuba Chimbala had campaigned. It was a de facto recognition of his growing influence and popularity among the Shila chiefs.

It was to him that the Shila continued to look for leadership in times of crises. To emphasize his new role, he changed his title to Nkuba Bukongolo (Nkuba of Bukongolo). Bukongolo was taken from the name of the steep Plateau north of Luanza River, which rises from the western shore of Lake Mweru. The shift of Butwa centre and political leadership to Lukonzolwa completed the gradual decline of the importance of the Nkubaship.

The weakness of the Shila State would lead us to postulate that had it not been for the stability which prevailed in the area and the absence of a determine resistance among the Bwilile clan leaders similar to that put up by Malebe and Nkambo, the Shila state would not have emerged. Similarly the absence of external attacks contributed to the longevity of the state. Some of my informants argued that stability contributed to the development of Shila passivity in guarding against external attacks." They lived an untroubled life knowing fully well that they will wake up the following day "amused one informant. There is no doubt that the Shila state had changed with time. The strong willed political and military leadership of Chileshe Mubemba was lost by his heirs.

The Shila traditions demonstrated one important thing for us , that is the availability of rich resources such as iron and salt which were important in the internal and regional trade could not bring about the emergence of a strong political organization like that of the Lunda or the Bemba. Rather, it is the strong political organization which utilized the resources to its own advantage as did the Lunda of Mwata Kazembe in the eighteenth century. The crevices in the Shila political structure were such that this attempt was only partially successful.

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