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## **The Contribution of Manga as Part of Rituals of Acquiring and Exercising Political Leadership among the Luba of Kasai in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)**

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### **Abstract**

*Manga* are prayers, charms, and rituals involving designated individuals who can mediate between the invisible and the visible worlds, and respond to different requests made by the living. *Manga* are given and performed by charm givers who are known among the Luba people as *benamanga*. The use of *manga* is in line with the indigenous practices of ancestral worship. Luba kings and their aides, *tupita*, chiefs and ritual specialists use various charms and fetishes personified in objects such as wood sculptures, beads, horns, and other parts of animals. These objects act as a receptacle of the spirits. A continued decline of values, bad governance, lack of accountability, and transparency is the norm in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The lack of modern political leadership systems retrieving good values found in traditional leadership and incorporating them into modern leadership continues to derail efforts towards social transformation in the DRC. The objective of the study was to examine the contribution of *manga* as rituals of acquiring and exercising political leadership in the DRC. The results brought to play the use of indigenous *manga* in acquiring and exercising political leadership in the DRC. Traditional leaders, contemporary modern politicians, and the militia have used different types of *manga* to acquire and exercise political leadership. Among traditional leaders, a number of *manga* exist that are acquired by the leader during the enthroning ceremony and throughout the lifetime of the leader. These types of *manga* enable the leader to declare blessings on the community, perform traditional ritual ceremonies, invoke the ancestors, establish justice, seek accountability and responsibility, and protect the land. Further, these *manga* enable the leader to exercise other leadership roles and functions in the society. The findings reveal that among modern politicians, the use of *manga* is not done openly although they are aware of its power and existence. Indigenous *manga* is sought secretly, and few politicians want to be openly associated with the use of indigenous *manga* rituals.

**Key Words:** *Manga*, Traditional Leadership, Modern Leadership, Accountability, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Luba People, Kasai

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### **1.0 Introduction**

*Manga* in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), are indigenous rituals that use leaves of some powerful trees, parts of some strong animals, or human-beings, to make strong charms that are used to denote protection, healing, wealth acquisition, good luck or to bring calamity. Nooter (2017) notes that charms or fetishes (*manga*) evokes the spiritual powers with different intentions, and these could either be positive or negative. Among the Luba people of Kasai, *manga* are performed by the charm givers who are known as *bena manga*. Mbiti (1975, 1992) notes that the use of indigenous rituals (such as *manga*), is in line with the indigenous practices of ancestral “worship” that invokes the spirits of ancestors as practiced in African Religion.

*Manga* can be conceptualised as indigenous rituals that involve designated individuals who can mediate between the invisible and the visible worlds, and respond to the requests of the living. While it is true that other spiritual forces are acknowledged within the culture, *manga* is not primarily thought of negatively as witchcraft; if so, Kings and leaders would not use it. In the Luba tradition, the word for witchcraft is *mupongo*, and the witch is *mwena mupongo*. Such distinction is not only a matter of semantics but also guards against the prejudices or stereotypes that go contrary to the African culture and to its ritual practices which were often condemned as pagan or primitive (Ntsebeza, 2011). Among the Luba, *manga* is viewed as part of the daily lives of the people. This is in spite of its susceptibility to be used for evil or good.

Luba kings and their aides, *tupita*, chiefs and ritual specialists use various charms and fetishes personified in objects such as wood sculptures, beads, horns, and other parts of animals. These objects act as a receptacle of the spirits. In all forms of symbolizations as either amulets, beads, or statuettes, the purpose is to bring peace, prosperity, healing, procreation, food production, blessings, fertility, personal protection, and gaining fame and relevance in the Luba Kingdom, especially among the chiefs (Nooter, 2017). Evidence of the use of indigenous *manga* rituals among the Luba exist. A report by Global Security (2019) indicated that the Luba people used *manga* rituals in the Kamwina Nsapu conflict in the Kasai Central Province for restoration of justice and accountability among modern politicians. It is alleged that the fetishes that they acquired made their bodies bullet proof, enabled them to teleport while they killed several government security forces for imposing a traditional leader on them (Global Security, 2019). The efficacy of the use of indigenous *manga* in this conflict provides evidence of a recent use of *manga* in conflicts and war among the Luba people.

### **2.0 Statement of the Problem**

Traditional African values have deteriorated mainly due to the effects of slavery, colonization, and globalization. The use of charms as a guiding tool on what to do is no longer prevalent largely because of new modern leadership styles that were introduced by colonizers and globalization. As a result of this, a leadership crisis has emerged where some

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rulers in the DRC do not have respect for the rule of law or principles of good governance (Koenane, 2017). This study holds that it is not only possible but also imperative to reinstate political systems that are based on indigenous African values and philosophies. Exploring the dynamics of how power is acquired and used contributes to the on-going discussion on the African renaissance and social transformation. The implication consists of how the two leadership systems of tradition and modernity overlap, and how this reality could be managed. The study explores the relevance of *manga* in the Luba traditional political power dynamics, to draw out implications for modern political leadership.

### **3.0 Research Objective**

The objective of the study was:

- (i) To examine the contribution of *manga* rituals of acquiring and exercising political leadership among the Luba in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

## **4.0 Review of Related Literature**

### **4.1 Tylor's Theory of Fetishism**

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

In the Theory of Fetishism, MacGaffey (1977) details the practice of fetishism in the Kongo. The author looks at the relationship between spirits, figures and practitioners. According to MacGaffey, fetishes have immense power which can either be bad or good. This power is found in the spirit world but some living people are at times also considered to have considerable amounts of it. In the Kongo, fetishes held power that influenced the locals and enabled them to participate actively in the community. These objects were vessels of the power of spirits that resided in them. The objects are also varied based on what they were used for and because they possessed mystical powers, the *Congolese* revered the figures as though they were a living elder of the community.

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

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#### **4.2 Types of *manga* spells in DRC**

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

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

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

The fourth type of *manga* spells are incantations to harm others. The harm could be in the form of getting the adversary to be psychologically malfunctioning, to render the other infertile, and even to physically harm them. These types of spells, while fronting harm, are mainly used against societal misfits. In this way, the values of the Luba community are enhanced as persons work towards becoming more benevolent.

#### **4.4 Quest for power through *manga***

Africans, in general, have used mystical and spiritual powers in an attempt to understand the spirit world. Traditional specialists, among them charm givers, have been at the forefront in administering powers, among them *manga*, in an attempt to communicate with and understand the spirit world. The acquisition of power for the African is directly linked to the wishes of the spirit world. With these, therefore, ceremonies and rituals are used as ways of conciliating, attempting to control and acquire these spiritual and mystical forces (Bruce, 1997), as a way to reaching out to political power and leadership.

Before linking *manga* to power an elucidation of the African understanding of power is given. In Africa, extrinsic and intrinsic power is acquired using different methods. Luck and heredity are some of the ways in which power is acquired. With this, a significant population is left out, thus resorting to other ways of getting power (Majawa, 2017b). These include the use of human senses such as sight, touch, smell, taste, and hearing. For the Africans, these powers complement each other to bring order, meaning, life and progress in society.

Power can also be received through ancestors and charm givers, who play a significant role in the search for mystical and spiritual powers. Africans have a deep belief in maintaining a good relationship with their ancestors to ensure the continuity of life and increase their potency and vigour (Nyamiti, 2017). Further, Majawa (2017a), notes that this link is best done through charm givers, through whom powers of healing, leadership, and prosperity, are acquired.

Majawa (2017a) adds that power can also be acquired in the African traditional set up through certain paraphernalia. These are unique objects, chosen by among others, charm givers, and possess life-force with mystical and spiritual powers. They include parts of

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animals or people, animal cords, sacred cords, animal claws, pieces of leather, ointment, sacred scripture texts, precious stones or salve. The objects can be carried as charms, weapons, and amulets. The charms can be used as a source of protection, or to harm others, or to create general calamities (Nyamiti, 2017). This description fits the statuettes, fetishes, symbols, which through incantations are believed to possess potency. It is this link, that *manga*, among the Luba in the Kasai Central in DRC, provides, that is of interest to the study.

## 5.0 Research Methods

This research was 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". 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. The concentration of the study was on the Kasai Central Province. The choice of the Kasai Central Province was based on the long history of the Luba and due to the attitude the Luba in the Province had towards *manga* and its efficacy.

The target population for the study was charm givers, militia and political leaders. 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). In the snowball sampling technique, 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. The researcher targeted 40 participants: 10 charm givers, 8 members of the provincial parliament, 4 provincial ministers, 13 traditional leaders, and 5 militia leaders. The researcher used in-depth interviews (IDIs), observation and focus group discussions (FGDs) to collect primary data for the study. Tape recording was used to record the data and notes were also taken in the field as part of the data collection. Creswell and Creswell (2018) propose a phenomenological data analysis method for qualitative research which was used to analyse the data.

## 6.0 Results and Discussion

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

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

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

Militia (M3) also adds his voice in saying,

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

In the Kamwina Nsapu war, different types of traditional *manga* were used. Among the notable trees used for *manga were*, *mutshi wa lukwanga* (tree of *lukwanga*), *difudu* (tree of *difudu*; both are from the savanna) (Traditional Chief, TC 10), *bikolo bia mabwa* (palm tree branches), *bikolo bia mapanda* (raffia palm branches), *buloba bwetu* (sand from our land), were used (Member of Parliament, MP 3). From the participants, *manga* enabled the Kamwina Nsapu militia to fly like birds, teleport from one place to another and bullet-proof their bodies. They managed to turn sticks into guns, and fruits like *magonda* and *polopopo* (fruits from savanna savage tree), when thrown to enemies, exploded like grenades:

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

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

### **6.1 The *Tshiota manga* among the Luba**

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

When the *tshiota* fire is lit, a ceremony is done where people dance around the holy fire and call upon the ancestors to send power. The traditional chief makes pronunciations

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around the *tshiota* and this can easily be connected with the spirits so that the *nkwenbe* can act on behalf of the village and or an individual. The *tshiota* fire and *nkwenbe* therefore act together to fulfill the wishes or desires of the village and individuals: "...Kamwina Nsapu used this in their war, the *tshiota* fire and *nkwenbe* to gain power in order to fight modern day government soldiers" (Charm Givers, CG 1, 9).

## 6.2 Manga used in politics

(i) *The perspective of the charm giver:* Interviewed charm givers collaborated on the different types of *manga* that politicians and leaders use. Notable are the *bwanga bwa nsamu* meaning charm of teleporting and *bwanga bwa ntuntu* meaning bullet and metal proof charm. These two emerged as the most popular types of charms used by politicians and leaders. Data shows that many times, charm givers use a combination of more than one type of *manga*. For instance, one using *ntuntu* needs to also use *nsamu* and *njiminyi*. The combination enables the user vanish in the presence of an enemy: ... [Miepu] is popular among politicians and other leaders... for protection. Persons having this type of *manga* are able to avoid harm...many politicians and leaders use *miepu* to protect themselves... (Charm Giver, CG 9).

*Bwanga bwa nkudu* which means charm made in the tortoise is also popular among politicians:

...you must wear it or have it in your bag or pocket for you to be completely protected. You can wear it in your under wear, it is a very strong protection, it is as equal as *tshizaba* because it contains all the other charms of protections like *ntuntu*, *njiminyi*, *nsamu*, *miepu* among other...(Charm Giver, CG 9).

*Bwanga bwa diyi dia bukokeshi* which means words of power, is a different type of *manga* among the Luba of Kasai Central Province. This type of charm is given in spoken words where charm givers make it enter through the tongue so that when someone speaks, the used words get accepted by the listeners. This *bwanga* gives someone the wisdom to speak, and increases the knowledge base of the speaker. It is popular among contemporary politicians due to its power to suppress, dominate and control large crowds of people. Additional information shows the use of this charm among speakers having public fear, "...this *bwanga* gives you courage to speak in public with no fear and your word becomes final. When you speak people will listen to you careful because your words are sweet to the listeners. Even if you lie, they will believe in you..." (Charm Giver, CG 5).

*Bwanga bwa kakongo kongo mbumbula nkila* is a different type of charm established by the study. This type of charm is used for self-defense and politicians and traditional leaders use it for their personal protection. When someone tries to kill or hurt somebody having the *bwanga bwa kakongo kongo mbumbula nkila*, the *kakongo kongo* harms the attacker plus his/her family. The spiritual law about this type of charm is that a person must not drink water in any form because it can result in death through the power of the *kakongo kongo*. This is because this type of *manga* is buried in the river and it throws mud into the eyes of the person who tries to kill or is planning evil against someone having this type of *manga*. This type of charm thus is a powerful weapon of force, "...whoever plans to hurt you will be destroyed by the *kakongo kongo*, it will kill him or them, it is a complete self-defense..." (Charm Giver, CG 6).

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(ii) *The perspective of the politician:* The study sought to establish, from the contemporary political leaders, the existence and use of *manga* among the Luba people of Kasai province. This was aimed at obtaining collaborative evidence on the phenomenon of *manga* and its use. The interviewed contemporary politicians pointed out the presence and use of *manga*:

I firmly do believe in *manga*...I have seen *manga* for myself and therefore have no reason to doubt it. Many, of those in the parliamentary or the civil service offices, sustain and maintain their positions through *manga*... (Member of Parliament, MP 3).

In support of the existence of *manga* and its use among politicians, Member of Parliament (MP2) says:

It has been demonstrated by many charm givers that we politicians we go to get *manga* from one charm giver during elections, so that we get the position we want, and after election we get *manga* from other charm givers so that they continually protect us against our enemies and against other charm givers because we do not want to keep the instructions of doing good, that were given to us by the first charm giver (Member of Parliament, MP 2).

Also members of Parliament (7, 6 & 4) support this when they say:

Generally people use *manga* to acquire political positions. Even those who deny it use it. Most of those who say that the *manga* does not exist, most likely have very powerful *manga* themselves and do not want anyone else to acquire them...They do this to blind people so that no one else can have it....

Though the belief in *manga* is there among politicians, there are those who do not feel comfortable discussing it:

I cannot answer the question of *manga*, whether they are strong or not because I don't practice them but I know they exist (Member of Parliament, MP 8). We have noticed that all the tradition leaders are partaking in *manga*. I do not believe in *manga*. I have become MP without *manga*. It exists but I do not believe in them... I prefer not to speak about it at this present moment... (Member of Parliament, MP 6).

So, in conclusion to the existence and use of *manga* for political power, Members of Parliament (MP 7 & 2) say that:

*Manga* to get into power are not only strong in Kasai but everywhere. *Manga* have a big impact on political leadership in the Kasai Central Province because we have seen those not capable and qualified to become MPs become MPs and Provincial Ministers. Their *manga* have made them to be in this or that position...(Members of Parliament, MP 7, 2).

*Manga* is dominantly used for positive hence “good *manga*”. This is supported by the following statements:

...*manga* influence people get jobs....Many political leaders enter into leadership through *manga*. That does not exclude the fact that there is competency, selection and



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election. Our ancestors used *manga* to perform well, therefore if someone uses *manga* to perform well, I see no problem... (Member of Parliament, MP 7, Provincial Minister, PM 2).

This use of *manga* is to perform well in the leadership practices. Hence because it is inherited and used to practice leadership, when the good type of *manga* is used, then it is acceptable. The support for the use of the good type of *manga* in Luba is significant.

**(iii) The perspective of the modern leader: Focus Group Discussions**

A focus group discussion was done consisting of modern political leaders to examine the role that *manga* plays in acquiring and exercising political leadership. Modern leaders were drawn who participated in this discussion. The findings of the study established that traditional leaders have been the primary custodians of the people ensuring that the people were safe, well governed and customs and traditions of the people were well kept. In order to achieve these, in the discussion members pointed out that *manga* were essential and part of the traditional systems of governance. The use of *manga* by traditional leaders enabled them to perform their duties as traditional leaders and those traditions and customs are maintained to this day. One of the leaders supported this argument in an answer by observing:

...it [is] the duty of the traditional leader to keep and protect his town, villages and people from any attacks. Because of the duty conscience of many traditional leaders, and because of their strong sense of responsibility and accountability, they use *manga* to protect their towns, villages and people from any evil forces that come up or that is sent to kill or destroy... (Provincial Minister, PM 3).

The study established that *manga* used to cover and protect entire villages are still used to protect the people whether they know it or not. The people and their way of life have been kept alive and sustained through the use of *manga* which is regarded as crucial for survival. In an answer, a modern leader supported this finding by observing: "...tradition and customs are still happening till today. If they were not happening our towns and villages would have disappeared or vanished during war, and tribal conflicts" (Provincial Minister, PM 3).

The findings of the study found that even among Christian leaders, the presence and efficacy of *manga* was not to be denied. *Manga* were reported to be used for good purposes such as healing but also some types were used for evil such as killing. *Manga* that are used for good purposes such as healing, establish justice, protection were reported to be good *manga*. This is supported in an answer by a provincial minister, "I know that when we talk about *manga*, there are good *manga* for healing, and there are negative *manga* for killing..." (Provincial Minister, PM 2).

Exercise of power over the people by traditional leaders among the Luba people was established to be done through the use of *manga*. Traditional leaders do not use *manga* in a bad way such as oppressing or manipulating people but rather to make their leadership strong. The *manga* also enable the leader to be ready for any eventuality such as sudden attacks. Through possessing the *manga*, traditional leaders are able to protect the people together with their property:

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...imagine if we were not ready with our *manga* in our houses, when the event of Kamwina Nsapu came up, our people would have died seriously. There were towns and villages that were surrounded by militaries and polices, wanting to kill boys and girls that were suspected militias. That did not happen because of the protection or coverage of *manga*... (Provincial Minister, PM 4).

### **6.3 Use of *manga* in succession politics of the traditional Luba leaders**

The transfer of power in traditional leadership shows the use of *manga*. Traditional leadership among the Luba is based on heredity and *manga* is part of the power acquisition. The findings establish that members from the reigning family are against corruption because of their regard to traditional leadership. To be a *bukalenge mbwetu, katwena tubusumba* is in reference to the traditional power which cannot be bought. The reigning family therefore cannot pay for what is rightfully theirs (their birth-right).

There have been efforts by contemporary government leaders to corrupt traditional leadership. However, through the use of *manga*, chieftaincy has remained alive among the Luba people (Charm Giver, CG 3). With this position, those not from the reigning family are viewed as easily corruptible and hence not trusted with traditional leadership, as noted in the following statement:

In acquisition of power, those from the reigning family are absolutely against corruption because they say *bukalenge mbwetu, katwena tubusumba*. This refusal and rejection of corruption from the modern government comes from a long tradition of *manga* that has kept the chieftaincy. This is a very powerful influence of *manga*, rejection of corruption in order to lead. One who is not from the reigning family will readily corrupt in order to gain chieftaincy... (Member of Parliament, MP 2).

The findings indicate that contemporary government leaders have tried to influence succession of traditional leaders because of their significance and power among the Luba people. In their efforts, they have attempted to send emissaries during succession in order to influence who becomes the next traditional leader. As a result of this, some individuals have been tricked out of their positions as traditional leaders. This has come as a result of their signing documents that they do not quite understand due to illiteracy. With this, traditional leadership has, in certain occasions, been transferred to the wrong people. Such occurrences have led to loss of authentic traditional power and subsequently loss of proper use of *manga*, because the new undue leaders may not follow, or may not be properly linked to the principles of *manga*, customs and traditions of the Luba people. This point is reiterated in the following statement:

The emissaries from the government that perform the investigations of succession of power have a proverb that they give when they are confronted by rejection of corruption from the reigning family. *Kakudila, kakwakwila kakwelela diyi dimpe mu tshialu* which means the one who takes good care of you, is the one you will speak good of in public. Due to the fact that some of our people are not learned, they are tricked out of their power by being asked to sign documents that they do not read or simply cannot read. The[y]...have messed things up... (Member of Parliament, MP 2).

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#### **6.4 FGDs: The contribution of *manga* as rituals of acquiring and exercising political leadership**

The findings from the focus group discussions detailed the way through which *manga* are used to acquire leadership among the Luba people. Luba chiefs reported that they use *manga* in their day to day activities and that the *manga* guides them on how to perform their traditional leadership duties. Presence of *manga* was reported by all the chiefs who participated in the focus group discussion. The *manga* is regarded to be something good, which is inherited from the ancestors and guides the traditional chiefs. Answers by traditional chiefs supported this finding by stating that:

I still use the *manga* of my ancestors to lead my people and they are still very influential. These *manga* are not bad. They are good because they guide me as a chief (Traditional Chief, TC 6).

...*manga* is not evil. As chiefs we only use *manga* for good. Only in defense is the evil *manga* used... (Traditional Chief, TC 7).

One of the traditional chiefs reported direct use of *manga* to protect the community from external attacks. The *manga* also guided the traditional chief to be accountable and responsible to the people. This findings indicate both the respect accorded to it and the efficacy of it performing as it is required. The traditional chief in the focus group discussion stated:

I am the living testimony of the influence and power of *manga*. When my villages were attacked it is *manga* and the influence of *manga* that protected us...the *manga* also helps us to be good people and responsible people... (Traditional Chief, TC 8).

The *manga* are also sought by modern political leaders who seek it for various purposes such as protection, gaining power or staying in power. Charm givers prepare and give different types of *manga* to the people seeking them specifically politicians. The findings shows that in spite of modern day leadership, politicians are still resorting back to using traditional ways to acquire and exercise their political leadership which further concretizes the efficacy of *manga* as a powerful tool among the Luba people. A traditional chief reported that:

The political leaders are coming with money to ask for *manga* for protection and the charm givers are giving them *manga* to protect them because of their money. There is influence of *manga* on the people and money...they acquire power using our *manga* and the same power makes them rich and prominent (Traditional Chief, TC 6).

There are politicians and other people who have lots of influential and strong *manga* in our villages. Some *manga* that even the chief has never heard about (Traditional Chief, TC 10).

The discussion group found that traditional chiefs are given certain types of *manga* to make them powerful. *Bwanga bwa nsamu* enables a person to teleport from one location to another in case of danger. *Bwanga bwa njiminyi* makes a person to vanish in front of the enemies and therefore they cannot see you. *Bwanga bwa miepu* is a force field that surrounds a person and does not let anything harmful such as a bullet, stone or even an arrow come into contact with you. *Bwanga bwa ntuntu*, which allows a person to deflect harmful objects such

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as bullets or even a rocket propelled grenade. *Bwanga bwa lwendu*, meaning *charm of journey*, allows one to cross physical barriers without being seen by enemies. This is commonly used by business people when traveling in order to safeguard their property during journeys and militia also use this type of *manga* to cross enemy frontiers.

### **7.0 The contribution of *manga* as rituals of acquiring and exercising political leadership**

In addressing this part, the efficacy of *manga* re-borrowing from the Kamwina Nsapu conflict comes to play. Among the Luba, *manga* have been used to exercise traditional leadership beliefs in order to bring change, good governance and transformation in the society. The case of the Kamwina Nsapu revealed the use of *manga* to address the problem that had emerged in the Luba community. Different types of indigenous *manga* were used: trees and sticks were used as guns; slippers as telephones; and fruits as grenades. Militia were able to cut off heads of enemies from a distance and they teleported from one place to another.

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

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

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

Traditional chiefs who were part of the war on government soldiers indicated that they resorted to using indigenous *manga* because they knew that it was going to work. The findings established this was indeed the case and militia who participated in the war and conflict collaborated this evidence. The use of guarded words by traditional leaders and charm givers was to protect the community from harm and danger. As Majawa (2017b) notes, words that are protective can transform into amulets or objects and used as a source of power.

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These words are often incantations such as the ones made by Luba traditional leaders in the presence of the holy fire known as *tshiota* to protect the militia. Bently (1977) concurs that incantations are pronounced in front of symbols and fetishes. Through the pronouncement, the two get power. In this way, the involved symbols point to things that are beyond the senses and represent expressions of deeper religious and social meaning.

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

## 8.0 Summary and Conclusion

Among the Luba people of Kasai Central Province, there are different types of *manga* rituals that are used to acquire and exercise political leadership. For traditional leaders, a number of *manga* exist that are acquired by the leader during the enthroning ceremony and during the lifetime of the leader. These *manga* give power and authority to the traditional leader to perform duties in the community and on behalf of the people. Through these *manga* the leader is able to declare blessings on the people, perform traditional ritual ceremonies, call on the ancestors, establish justice, seek accountability and responsibility, and protect the land in addition to exercising other leadership functions in the community.

Contemporary politicians and those seeking political power are ready to sacrifice both their money and possessions for *manga* in order to acquire power. However, some have *manga* that does not guide or assist them well. They opt for evil *manga* and refuse to use good *manga* and do so in most cases to make people to suffer. When good *manga* is used for its rightful purpose, then desired benefits are realized both to those preparing the *manga* and those who are using it. However, evidence on *manga* use among the Luba has continued to show that modern day politicians are not retrieving the good values in indigenous *manga* and are rather resorting to using it for evil or unintended purposes. This has resulted in most *manga* being regarded as being evil by most people who encounter it. The findings of the study, notably among interviewed charm givers and traditional leaders have pointed out that good and bad *manga* exist.

The findings reveal that among politicians, the use of *manga* is not done openly and everyone is aware of its power and existence. Its use by those who have sought it, is done secretly and no politician wants to be openly associated with the use of *manga*. Yet the findings report wide spread use of *manga* among modern politicians because politics in modern day Luba is associated with charms and different types of *manga*. Charm givers reported that most of the politicians sought different types of *manga* from them for use in acquiring political positions.

## 9.0 Recommendations

*Manga* can either be good or bad which means it can be used to do well or evil in the community. Traditional leadership encourages and promotes the use of good *manga* and shun bad types of *manga*. This explains why they are often govern the good type of *manga* to

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enable them perform their duties. *Manga* is vital for the acquisition and exercise of leadership in both traditional and modern leadership. However, a majority of the modern leaders are using the evil type of *manga* to acquire and exercise political leadership. This has resulted in bad governance and leadership in the Luba society that has led to dictatorship, low levels of development and has even resulted in conflict and wars aimed at bringing new and better leadership.

Charm givers are often held with suspicion by the educated and the converted. The misconceptions block the realisation of the contribution of *manga* in exercising good political governance. The study recommends that the charm givers are well-grouped and monitored so that they channel *manga* in doing good. In addition, scholars are challenged to write and disseminate right information based on scientific evidence on the efficacy and the contribution of *manga*.

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