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“Kaliloze witch guns” in Western Zambia**

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**From Kaliloze to Karavina:
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Necromancy in all its horrors and repulsive practices is concentrated here, with the sole object of killing and killing again under the slightest pretext.¹

Introduction²

In October 1956 a young British police officer investigating a murder and near beheading in the Barotseland Protectorate (present-day Western Province, Zambia) was informed by a Capuchin monk that two women had been murdered, “with a suspicion of witchcraft attached”. In the ensuing government clamp down an astounding number of people were formally charged and convicted of contravening the Witchcraft legislation of Northern Rhodesia, and no less than nine young men were sentenced to death. Fifty years on people in Western Zambia still recall the immensity of the government clampdown and readily recount the use of convict labour for the building of roads between Sesheke and Mongu. At the same time academic historians and archivists engaged in researching and preserving the archival records of the Rhodes Livingstone Museum in Livingstone, Zambia, are confronted with armed soldiers investigating rumours of witchcraft being carried out in the tower of the museum in the present.

In 2007 I was invited to present a paper at a global history conference in Dresden. I had become interested in the link between white settler fantasies in Northern Rhodesia (present-day Zambia) and events in Kenya during *Mau Mau* in the early 1950s.³ In drafting the paper I was reminded of a painting that I had seen and photographed in 2006. The painting, by the late Stephen Kapata, entitled *The Witchcraft Clean-up Operated by the Colonial Government in 1957*, depicted a man manacled to a tree and being lashed by a “District Messenger” in

¹ K.H. Lepehne, “The Kalelose”, in *The Central African Journal of Medicine*, Vol. 6. No. 11. November, 1960, pp. 488 – 90.

² Marja Hinfelaar, Paul Swanepoel, Robert Ross, Andrew Roberts, Giacomo Macola, David Gordon, Inge Brinkman and Nancy Jacobs, unselfishly provided me with research material and comments. It was purely by chance that I stumbled across this subject, Ian Phimister, is to be thanked for inviting me to present a paper in Dresden.

³ Jan-Bart Gewald, “Ops Eve And Rockaway: British Military Operations In Malaya And Kenya, The Development Of Settler Fears And Fantasies In Northern Rhodesia, 1950 – 1960”, paper presented at the European World History Conference, Dresden, 2 – 6 July 2008.

Barotseland (Western Province).⁴ Making use of the secondary literature, to substantiate my archival findings, I was surprised to find that no mention was made of the events so graphically portrayed by Kapata. In seeking to discover what was being depicted, I stumbled upon the immensity of the witch-hunt which was conducted by the colonial administration in Barotseland between 1956 and 1958. In the event no less than 1212 people were prosecuted under the terms of the Witchcraft Ordinance, and nine people sentenced to death and executed on murder charges.

In late 1956 the murder investigation indicated that two women had been executed by means of *Kaliloze* witch-guns. First reported in 1906, *Kaliloze* guns have been used to rid society in western Zambia of witches for much of the 20th Century, and probably for a lot longer before the 1900s. Not surprisingly these magical guns, which are preferably made out of the thigh bones of human beings, attracted the horrified attention of British colonial administrators, and continue to fascinate and frighten people in Zambia in the present.⁵ In the course of the 20th Century the *Kaliloze* as a magical weapon has changed and spread eastwards within Zambia, and from the 1970s onwards the *Kaliloze* has to a large extent become synonymous with the AK 47 assault rifle when it is used as a *Karavina*.⁶

The following paper is the first contribution to an ongoing study which seeks to chart the history of the *Kaliloze* witch-gun through the course of the Twentieth Century.

Event

In western Zambia people developed *Kaliloze* guns, magical guns fashioned from human tibia that were used to execute witches.⁷ In 1956 there were a spate of murders where “the victims had been shot a fairly close range with short-barrelled homemade muzzle-loaders, commonly known as *Kaliloze* night guns”.⁸ In the event, in the period of little more than a year thousands of people were arrested and interrogated and 1212 (One thousand two hundred and twelve)

⁴ Following Zambian independence and the general elections of 1968 the specific status of Barotseland within Zambia was substantially altered. Nevertheless, the bulk of events described in this contribution occurred within what is today the Western Province of Zambia.

⁵ *Kaliloze* guns are held by many people in Western Zambia and Eastern Namibia in the present to be responsible for Aids.

⁶ Since 1964 Zambia has sat on the frontline of the anti-colonial and civil war as it was fought out in Angola. Various armed factions had their forward bases in Zambia. *Karavina* is derived from the Portuguese word for carbine and used to describe the AK 47 assault rifle, the weapon of choice for guerrilla movements around the world.

⁷ Many would allege that the execution of witches by *Kaliloze* guns continues in contemporary Zambia. A manuscript on the topic is currently being prepared by the author, for previously published material see, Barrie Reynolds, *Magic, Divination and Witchcraft Among the Barotse of Northern Rhodesia*, London 1963, pp. 79 – 88.

⁸ Reynolds, *Magic*, p. 11.

cases dealt with by district officers in Kalabo, Mongu, Senanga and Sesheke.⁹ Following confessions “by murderers and information subsequently obtained” people were arrested and found to be in “possession not only [of] *kaliloze* guns but also human skulls, limb bones and, in a few cases, reputedly human flesh”.¹⁰ In addition a number of people were taken into protective custody after having been accused of, and in some cases having admitted to, cannibalism.¹¹

Witchcraft

*Witches, as the Azande conceive them, clearly cannot exist. None the less, the concept of witchcraft provides them with a natural philosophy by which the relations between men and unfortunate events are explained and a ready and stereotyped means of reacting to such events. Witchcraft beliefs also embrace a system of values which regulate human conduct.*¹²

Seeking to explain the concept of witchcraft to an audience in Northern Rhodesia in June 1943, Max Gluckman, one time director of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, in a wry comment on the growing anti-Semitism prevalent in the territory at the time, referred to Evans-Pritchard’s study of *Witchcraft Magic and Oracles among the Azande of Sudan*.¹³ Drawing on Evans-Pritchard, Gluckman noted that anti-Semitism, as one aspect of Nazism, could be compared to “magic-witchcraft as a system of beliefs based on invalid premises”:

Nazi ideology argues that most of Germany’s troubles are due to the Jews, who have an inherently evil nature and power (like witches). All Jews are bloated capitalists who sweat the German worker, and at the same time all Jews are bloody-minded communists who threaten the German capitalists. Within this Nazi system of thought, the cause of all misfortune is known in advance: “it is the Jews”. Here is the similarity to witchcraft beliefs, for in Africa the cause of all misfortune is known in advance: “it is a witch”.¹⁴

Gluckman showed that central to Evans-Pritchard’s definition of Witchcraft was that it was a system of beliefs that could not be contradicted within itself.¹⁵ As noted by Gluckman, Evans-Pritchard’s work on magic and witchcraft, provided social anthropologists and historians with a set of principles that could be used to analyse similar systems of thought; “that is, it established

⁹ Reynolds, *Magic*, p. 139.

¹⁰ Reynolds, *Magic*, p. 11.

¹¹ Reynolds, *Magic*, p. 24 – 7.

¹² E.E. Evans-Pritchard, “The Notion of Witchcraft Explains Unfortunate Events”, in *Perspectives on Africa: a reader in culture, history, and representation*, edited and introduced by Roy Richard Grinker and Christopher B. Steiner, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers 1997, p. 303.

¹³ In his work Hugh Macmillan, formerly of the University of Zambia, has dealt extensively with the position of Jewish people in Northern Rhodesia. Macmillan details the anti-Semitism prevalent amongst the settler community and notes that Gluckman was initially prevented from becoming director of the Rhodes Livingstone Institute on account of his reputation as a “Jew and a Red”. Hugh Macmillan, “From Race to Ethnic Identity: South Central Africa, Social Anthropology and the Shadow of the Holocaust”, in *Social Dynamics* 26: 2 (2000): pp. 87 – 115, p. 98.

¹⁴ Max Gluckman, “The Difficulties, Achievements, and the Limitations of Social Anthropology”, in *Human Problems in British Central Africa*, Number 1, 1944, pp. 23 – 45, p. 33.

¹⁵ Gluckman, “Difficulties and Limitations”, p. 32.

relations between types of events, not specific events”.¹⁶ Stephen Ellis has warned in an article dealing with Witch-hunting in central Madagascar in the first half of the 19th Century, that:

It cannot be assumed that beliefs extant outside Europe, which bear a superficial resemblance to witchcraft as it was perceived in Europe in early modern times, are necessarily the same as the historical European version. The apparent similarities between European and non-European variants may be due largely to the way scholars – especially British ones – have thought about certain types of religious belief in Africa.¹⁷

Citing Malcolm Crick, Ellis noted that it is probable that Witchcraft became a separate topic for anthropology because of its appearance in British society:

This occurrence, by supplying us with a ready-made term, would be sufficient to destroy those cautions we observe in the translation of culture in connection with other problems.¹⁸

Ellis notes that not “all societies maintain a theological or philosophical distinction between radically opposed metaphysical forces of good and evil in the same way as orthodox Christians and Muslims do”.¹⁹ The introduction and rapid spread in Africa of specific forms of missionary Christianity and militant Islam in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries savaged those epistemologies that did not necessarily believe in a bipolar world divided between good and evil. As Ellis noted:

“... recent studies of witch persecutions in Africa point out how the performance of actions or rituals that were once respectable, or at least permissible, may, under the influence of a dualistic Christian theology, be perceived as witchcraft, which, in turn, may be seen as a form of lethal, radical evil inspired by Satan.”²⁰

Quite rightfully Ellis concludes his argument by noting that, “we cannot be sure that an English-speaking African who uses the word ‘witchcraft’ today is referring to the same type of thing as was meant by English-speakers four centuries ago when they uttered the same word”.²¹

Prior to the path-breaking research and analysis provided by Evans-Pritchard in 1937 in *Witchcraft Oracles, And Magic Among the Azande*, British Colonial officials operating in Western Zambia in the 1920s had been confronted by activities that they chose to define as witchcraft.

In 1922, D.W. Stirke, one time Native Commissioner of Northern Rhodesia, who served for eight years in Barotseland in the 1910s, published an ethnography of Barotseland. It is important to bear in mind that Stirke had not been trained as an ethnographer, and as such was one in a long line of British colonial officials who published their ethnic and racial ruminations as self-important ethnographies anxious for formal academic recognition. In it Stirke noted that:

Great faith is put in witch-craft of all sorts. If two men quarrel, one will go to a witch-doctor and pay him an agreed price to bewitch his enemy. The natural vicissitudes of daily life all play into the hands of the witch-doctor. A man cutting a bough, may get hurt by the bough falling on him, the axe may slip and cut

¹⁶ Gluckman, “Difficulties and Limitations”, pp. 32 – 33.

¹⁷ Stephen Ellis, “Witch-hunting in Central Madagascar 1828 – 1861”, in *Past & Present: A Journal of Historical Studies*, Number 175, May 2002, p. 92.

¹⁸ Malcolm Crick, cited in Stephen Ellis...

¹⁹ Ellis, *Witch-hunting*, p. 94.

²⁰ Ellis, *Witch-hunting*, p. 94.

²¹ Ellis, *Witch-hunting*, p. 94.

him, a thorn in the bush may graze him and give him blood-poisoning, he may have a touch of fever, his cattle may die from bad grazing all and everything is immediately claimed by the witch-doctor as proof of the potency of his charm.²²

In the early 1920s Frank Melland, drawing extensively on the experiences of junior fellow colonial officials, published *In Witch-Bound Africa*.²³ After graduating from Oxford, Melland first arrived in Northern Rhodesia in 1901, and was appointed Assistant Native Commissioner, Mpika in 1902.²⁴ In 1910 he and a “chum”, E.H. Cholmeley, cycled through Africa from Northern Rhodesia to Egypt whilst going on home leave.²⁵ By 1923 Melland had become somewhat of a celebrity and specialist on the “Native mind” to his fellow administrators, one of whom described Melland as,

a native expert – an Anthropologist and humane idealist – to whom the native in general and the Native mind in particular is the single problem in this country viewed from the standpoint of eternity.²⁶

The book, *In Witch-Bound Africa* became a standard reference in any self-respecting academic treatise dealing with witchcraft in Zambia. At the time of its publication, Melland had become an old Africa hand with more than twenty years of work in Northern Rhodesia for the administration and settler community in Northern Rhodesia. Drawing on this experience Melland noted:

[It is a fallacy] that we, the governing race, stop witchcraft. We may flatter ourselves officially that we do, but we do not. We have a “Witchcraft suppression proclamation,” but it does not suppress *witchcraft*. The natives even say that we support it and protect the witches, because the thing against which we have legislated, and for which we prosecute, is witchcraft-accusation, witch-finding and witch-killing. One of the chief complaints against our rule is that (in native eyes) we punish the conscientious man who discovers a witch; the “friend of mankind” – the witch-doctor; the bereaved who have naturally avenged the death of a relative, and the executioners, while we let the abhorred and dangerous witch go at large.²⁷

²² D.W. Stirke, *Barotseland: Eight Years among the Barotse*, London: John Bale, Sons & Danielsson, 1922, p. 119.

²³ Frank H. Melland, *In Witch-Bound Africa: An Account of the Primitive Kaonde Tribe and their Beliefs*, London 1923.

Rhodes House, Oxford, T.R. Williams, letter October 14th 1923, My dear Mother.

In his letter to his mother Williams noted that Melland had taken notes of Williams and published them verbatim, “e.g. some notes on songs that I sent him scribbled out in a hurry, long after I had left the district, and longer still before, had I stayed there, they would have been of any value, scientific or sentimental. These he has published verbatim, and I am duly resentful. Two long official reports of mine he has condensed and included – which seem very jejeune and foolish now. The lion-hunt I am less ashamed of, but as a true story it contains some obvious weak points. It was never a true story, but a good translation of a native report – he has spoilt it by the title”.

²⁴ National Archives Zambia, Lusaka (NAZ), KSD 4/1 Vol. 1, Mpika District Note Book, 1901.

²⁵ Rhodes House, Oxford, Mss.Afr.R. 192, Melland (Frank Hulme) Diary of life in north Eastern Rhodesia, 1901 – 4 3 vols.

National Archives of Zambia, Lusaka (NAZ), HM 30 E.H. Cholmeley, CH/2/1, Book of photographs by Chomeley who travelled through Africa in 1910.

Frank H. Melland and Edward H. Cholmeley, *Through The Heart Of Africa: Being An Account Of A Journey On Bicycles & On Foot From Northern Rhodesia Past The Great Lakes, To Egypt Undertaken When Proceeding Home On Leave In 1911*. London: Constable and Company Ltd., 1912.

²⁶ Rhodes House, Oxford, T.R. Williams, letter 7 June 1923, Chilanga, Native Commissioner’s Office, My dear Mother.

²⁷ Melland, *Witch-Bound Africa*, pp. 197 – 9.

In the eyes of the bulk of Northern Rhodesia's African population colonial rule and the legislation imposed by the British allowed for Witches to run rampant and for witchcraft to go unchecked.

Historiography

Given the extent of the witch-hunt carried out by the colonial state in western Barotseland in the 1950s, it is astounding that accounts of these events have not found their way into the hitherto published standard accounts of Bulozhi and Zambian history. The relevant *District Notebooks* and accounts published by anthropologists and former colonial officers, make mention of Kaliloze guns, but the true extent of the phenomena remained hidden. Specifically, with the exception of a single monograph, no mention was made of the events of 1957 in studies that dealt with Barotseland. This oversight may in part be due to (i.) the boundaries that exist between academic disciplines (ethnography versus political studies versus history), (ii.) the marginalisation of Bulozhi in the postcolonial project that was the Zambian nation state, (iii.) as well as discomfiture on the part of those involved in the postcolonial project with a series of events that appeared to be the antithesis of modernity.

As noted earlier, it was only through a chance encounter with a painting in September 2006, that I first came to realise the full import of what had occurred in Barotseland between 1956 and 1958. In September 2006 I walked into an art gallery in Lusaka and found a painting by the late Stephen Kapata entitled: *The Witchcraft Clean-up Operated by the Colonial Government in 1957*. Unfortunately I did not have enough cash, and the gallery owner refused to accept a credit card, nevertheless I was able to take a photograph of the painting. The painting shows a rural scene in western Zambia, in the background one can see some chickens pecking in the dirt and huts and fences made out of reed matting. In the foreground a crowd of women can be seen kneeling on the left, and a crowd of men kneeling on the right. In the centre of the painting an old grey-haired man can be seen wearing a red loincloth and shackled to a tree by his hands. Behind him an African man wearing the blue uniform of the late colonial "Boma Messenger" is leaning back in preparation to whip the manacled man with a large Sjambok/Chicotte, much as a golfer might prepare to put all of his force into a swing to tee off on the drive. As the manacled man screams in agony a "Boma Messenger" wearing sergeant stripes looks on, and a European colonial official wearing shorts, a solar helmet, hands in pockets and smoking a pipe stands off to the side. It was in searching for material to contextualise this painting, that I came to discover that the events depicted had largely been passed by in the published literature. In what follows an overview is presented of the references available in the published literature which deals with Kaliloze guns.

Although he did not refer directly to what we now consider to be a Kaliloze night-gun, D.W. Stirke, a Native Commissioner who had served extensively in Barotseland, did draw attention to the ritual importance of firearms in a context of witchcraft and healing in an ethnography that was published in 1922. After describing the pervasive nature of witchcraft, the knowledge of poisons, and the believe of people in sorcery, Stirke referred to the following:

Another very favourite remedy for complaints is the firing of a gun –loaded with powder only- at the afflicted party. This is generally done when the sick person is unable to afford a “doctor’s” fees. As guns are left for long periods loaded, it sometimes happens that the bullet is accidentally left in, and the patient is then freed from any further need of medical attention in this world.²⁸

In the early 1920s Frank Melland, who had mellowed somewhat in the twenty years since his somewhat melodramatic arrival in Northern Rhodesia, published *In Witch-Bound Africa*. In it, Melland sought to make a clear distinction between witches and witch-finders, and made a plea for a change in legislation which would recognise this distinction. Discussing the manner in which Witch-doctors assisted clients in ridding themselves of witches, Melland makes mention of a procedure that is similar to, or is the same as, Kaliloze:

Wuta wa kumalele, or *Katuluzhi*. (Stated to be originally Lunda, but adopted by some Kaonde.) A has an enemy B; and approaches C, who he has reason to believe can help him. C sends him to a tree (name not divulged) to dig its root, and also to a grave. He has to walk round the grave and collect certain leaves from its vicinity. The roots and leaves when dry are pounded and mixed with gunpowder. A loads his gun with mixture.

At sunrise he takes his gun, and mentions B by name, saying: “B, come between me and the sun!” He then aims at the newly risen sun and fires. At the shot B gets ill and quickly dies.²⁹

In April of 1948, C.M.N. White, a colonial District Officer who would later become director of the Rhodes Livingstone Institute, published an article in the journal of the international African institute, *Africa*, that dealt with witchcraft divination and magic in “the North-west corner of Northern Rhodesia”.³⁰ In it White provided an extensive account of the Kaliloze gun:

Night-gun: *uta waufuku* (Lunda), *Kaliloji* (Lwena). This normally consists of a human leg-bone, drilled through and used as the barrel, being attached to a rough wooden stock. Sometimes the leg-bone of a marabout stork is used, as in the case of one which I saw at Mwinilunga, the whole being about a foot in length. The gun is loaded with gunpowder mixed with certain medicine and primed with ordinary powder. The medicine used in devices of this sort is often referred to as *lupelu*, but *lupelu* really means little more than a charm. In one case the *lupelu* in a night-gun was said to be the lips and nose of a rabbit, and the person who hired the owner of the night-gun to kill a man was told to provide the *lupelu*. The night-gun is pointed at the victim and when it is fired the victim dies. It is fired in the usual way by applying a match, but no medicine actually touches the body of the victim, who nevertheless dies. A night-gun is believed to kill at a distance if necessary, but often a hole is made in the house-wall and the gun fired through the hole at the victim asleep in bed. The latter should awake at the report and then die.³¹

²⁸ D.W. Stirke, *Barotseland: Eight Years among the Barotse*, London: John Bale, Sons & Danielsson, 1922, p. 120.

²⁹ Melland, *Witch-bound Africa*, p. 213.

³⁰ C.M.N. White, “Witchcraft Divination and Magic among the Balovale Tribes”, in *Africa*, Volume 18, Number 2, April 1948, pp. 81 – 104.

³¹ White, “Witchcraft Balovale”, p. 100.

The power of witchcraft in combination with attributes associated with firearms, comes to the fore in, “Black Magic Feuds”, a small three page article published in 1949 by W. Singleton-Fisher, the missionary son of missionaries who settled at Kalene Hill mission near Mwinilunga in north-western Zambia in 1905.³² In it Singleton-Fisher describes a variety of practices with which sorcerers could create creatures that acted and operated to the benefit of their owners. Thus he refers to snails, crabs, and invisible serpents that all have the ability to harm and ultimately kill the opponents of their masters. Interestingly, in describing the ritual practices involved in creating the “seed” out of which an *Ilomba* (an invisible water serpent) would emerge, Singleton-Fisher noted that it included a “brass cartridge case” inserted into a duiker’s horn filled with grease and charms, which in turn was pushed into a bushbuck horn similarly filled with grease and charms.³³ Following its discovery the “seed” was brought to Singleton-Fisher by a “Lunda friend” who was “surrounded by a crowd of shouting, greatly agitated men”. Referring to the duiker horn in the charm the men said that this, “was the head of the *ilomba* and the cartridge case was put in to make it invulnerable”.³⁴ The power attributed to the cartridge case and by extension firearms is obvious. Apart from the magical creatures that could be created and brought to life by sorcerers, Singleton-Fisher also referred to magical firearms that could effectively be used against these magical creatures as well as people:

Sometimes a tiny gun is carved by the witch-doctor with a tiny wooden bullet blackened in the fire. This is called *wuta wawufuku*. It is carried in the powder box and can be used against an enemy by aiming it in his direction at night and pronouncing against him certain magic words. He will then have a sharp pain in his chest and exclaim: “They have shot me. They have shot me.” Most cases of pneumonia are put down to *wuta wawufuku*, so much so that the disease is called *kasa*, from *kwasa*, to shoot. Many times when I have visited a man sick with pneumonia his relatives have solemnly explained to me that the sick man has been shot by a *wuta wawufuku*.³⁵

Apart from being used to shoot people, the *wuta wawufuku*, could be used to shoot and kill the *ilomba*.³⁶

Writing on the Kaliloze gun in the 1950’s Reynolds saw the magical gun described by Singleton-Fisher as being the same as the Kaliloze gun, and the manner in which White described the “night-gun: *uta wawufuku* (Lunda)” would seem to underscore this. However, this need not be the case, instead, it is clear that firearms and everything associated with them could be part and parcel of magical activity. Furthermore, in certain circumstances the affects that could be induced by Kaliloze guns, could be the same as the affects induced by Singleton-Fisher’s *wuta wawufuku*.

³² Regarding the Fisher Missionary family the personal papers of Walter Fisher, and his wife, Susanna Elizabeth Darling, are stored in the National Archives of Zambia (NAZ) Fisher, W. & S.E. (HM 8). A small monograph dealing with the family, Pauline Summerton, *Fishers of Men*, London: Brethern Archivists and Historians Network, 2003, contains a deeply disturbing picture of a bare-footed six year old Singleton-Fisher standing at the grave of his sister in Africa.

³³ W. Singleton-Fisher, “Black Magic Feuds”, *African Studies*, Vol. 8. No. 1, Johannesburg 1949, pp. 20-22.

³⁴ Singleton-Fisher, “Black Magic”, p. 21.

³⁵ Singleton-Fisher, “Black Magic”, p. 20.

³⁶ Singleton-Fisher, “Black Magic”, p. 22.

In 1949 the Witchcraft Ordinance in Northern Rhodesia was amended to allow, “genuine complaints to the District Commissioner”. The amendments removed the penalties (50 pounds or 2 years) for white magic, and reduced the penalties, including corporal punishment, for people alleged to be wizards and black magicians. On reporting on these amendments to the legislation, the correspondent for the journal, *African Affairs*, drew attention to, “some of the curious weapons cited included the *kalilozi*, the night-gun, a human thigh-bone, loaded with gunpowder and charms”.³⁷

In a personal account detailing her experiences among the Lunda Ndembu in the early 1950s, Edith Turner, who lived with her husband during his fieldwork in north-western Zambia, reported on the birth of a child.³⁸ Unfortunately after the child was born the mother, Rosina, began haemorrhaging. Turner describes how a man named Sakawumba, “a doctor against sorcerers”, undertook action to end the sorcery that was killing the young mother.

Controlling his dread he took his men down to the graveyard. In the pitch darkness they located a grave by the feel of the bare soil. They dug, aiming to find a leg bone in the wormy mess. ... At last Sakawumba’s hand contacted the right bone, a tibia; he drew it out, treating it carefully: it was going to be a gun. Taking it to one side, he stuffed into it slivers of bone and powerful medicines from his wallet, packing them down with scraps of testicles and liver, the organs of strength. The men gathered around in the darkness, and Sakawumba sang his occult verses while they chanted the reply. Squatting, he rotated on his heels and aimed the bone until it pointed in the direction of the brick farm by the road. “Pa-a!” Could he hear a report? Far away an explosion occurred in an invisible python that was crushing Rosina’s life.³⁹

Victor Turner, the husband of Edith Turner discussed above, in describing the healing capacities of his favourite informant, Muchona, a man whom he likened to an academic don “scoring debating points on a don’s dais, gowned or perhaps in a habit”⁴⁰, noted that:

Muchona himself practised a modified form of *Kanengá*, exempt from most of its terrifying elements. Thus, while most *Kanengá* practitioners collected medicines from the interior of graves, and some would even brandish human thighbones while they danced, Muchona merely took grass from the surface of graves and leaves and bark scrapings from trees growing in a circle around them.⁴¹

In the immediate aftermath of the witch-hunts conducted by the British in Bulozhi, Barrie Reynolds, Keeper of Ethnography of the Livingstone Museum and later the National Museum of Zambia, wrote a small three page article for *NADA*, the in house journal of the Southern Rhodesia Native Affairs Department.⁴² In it Reynolds provided a detailed description of “Kaliloze

³⁷ Henry Swanzy, “Quarterly Notes”, in *African Affairs*, Volume 48, Number 191, April 1949, pp. 105-6.

³⁸ Edith Turner, *The Spirit and the Drum: A Memoir of Africa*, Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1987.

³⁹ Turner, *Spirit and Drum*, p. 54.

⁴⁰ Turner, *Forest of Symbols*, p. 138.

⁴¹ Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967, p. 137 (Emphasis added).

⁴² Later Reynolds became the chief ethnologist of the National Museum of Man, National Museums of Canada and later Foundation Professor of Material Culture, James Cook University, Townsville, Queensland, Australia, and director of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Cape York Ecology Project. *Anthropology Newsletter*, Vol. 16, No. 10, December 1975, p. 3.

<http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/cgi-bin/fulltext?ID=121580665&PLACEBO=IE.pdf&mode=pdf> Accessed 23 February 2009. Reynolds was Cambridge-trained as was the man who appointed him, Desmond

Night Guns”, and noted that a change had recently taken place in the manner in which these weapons were being constructed.⁴³ Reynolds, who had been invited to interview the accused and to examine the confiscated material used in evidence in the court cases, noted⁴⁴:

The traditional kaliloze is fashioned from a limb bone, either animal or human. One epiphysis is removed and the exposed shaft hollowed out to form a barrel. The remaining epiphysis acts as the butt and a touch hole is bored just in front of it. The gun is now complete, though sometimes the maker prefers to mount the whole on a wooden stock. Sometimes, too, a thick stick, of the dimensions of a limb bone, is used instead of an actual bone.⁴⁵

These kaliloze guns, according to Reynolds, were fired at the sun, or through a hole in a wall, but “there is agreement on one point, ... there is no physical wound and death is caused by supernatural means”.⁴⁶ However, notes Reynolds:

It would appear that this traditional method of execution has not always proved completely effective, for in recent years there has been introduced, ... a type of gun which consists of a metal barrel set on a wooden stock... This is loaded not only with a magical charge but also with such lethal missiles as fragments of hard wood, copper or even shot... [and] is fired directly at the supposed witch...⁴⁷

Reynolds followed up his article in *NADA* with a full length monograph which sought to situate the Kaliloze guns within a wider context of magic, divination and witchcraft in Barotseland.⁴⁸

A few years after the publication of Reynolds’ article in *NADA* an article dealing with “The Kalelose” was published in the *Central African Journal of Medicine* by a person working in Mulobezi hospital, at the end of the line of rail from Livingstone into Barotseland. The article, which will be dealt with more extensively further on, details the manufacture and use of Kalilozi guns for magical killing. In 1961 *Fate*, an American magazine specialised in “true stories of the strange and the unknown”, and littered with esoteric articles and advertisements for mystic eyes, crystal balls and the like, carried an article based on the *Central African Journal of Medicine* article.⁴⁹ As is to be expected, the article, in keeping with the magazine’s house style, was decidedly sensational, and accompanied by a photograph purporting to show one of the editors examining, “one of Africa’s most feared black magic devices, its stock is carved from a piece of burial stretcher and the barrel is made from the arm bone of a dead girl”.⁵⁰

Clark

⁴³ B. Reynolds, “Kaliloze Night Guns”, in *NADA: The Southern Rhodesia Native Affairs Department Annual*, Vol. 35, 1958, pp. 61-4.

⁴⁴ National Archives of Zambia, Lusaka (NAZ), BSE 1/10/79, Letter Desmond Clark, Livingstone, to The District Commissioner, Kalabo, 9th October 1957. Reynolds was invited to visit Mongu and Kalabo to “gather information and examin[e] confiscated material with a view to collecting items suitable for the Museum collections”.

⁴⁵ Reynolds, *Kaliloze*, p. 61.

⁴⁶ Reynolds, *Kaliloze*, p. 61.

⁴⁷ Reynolds, *Kaliloze*, p. 63.

⁴⁸ Barrie Reynolds, *Magic, Divination and Witchcraft among the Barotse of Northern Rhodesia*, London: Chatto & Windus 1963.

⁴⁹ Ron Ormond and Ormond McGill, “Africa’s dread kaliloze gun”, in *Fate Magazine*, August 1961, pp. 56 – 63.

⁵⁰ Ormond & McGill, “Kaliloze”, p. 57.

Following anthropological research in the early 1940s, Max Gluckman, the founding father of the “Manchester School” in cultural anthropology and one time director of the Rhodes Livingstone Institute, returned to Barotseland in 1965.⁵¹ In a re-edition of his classic, *The Judicial Process Among the Barotse*, Gluckman contrasted the Barotse plain that he had seen and described in 1940, as the “land of milk and honey” with the “permanent famine area” of 1965.⁵² Dealing with Zambian independence and the changing relations between younger and older people, Gluckman noted that:

Friction between young and old, as well as general fears, were also aggravated by an outbreak of witchcraft accusations in 1957 – 8. In Kalabo District in 1956, a woman was shot by a witch-finder, on allegations of being a witch. When the murder was discovered, the District Commissioner at Kalabo decided that many more crimes of this pattern were occurring, and he apparently persuaded his fellow-officers to agree to invite denunciations of similar murderous witch-finders.⁵³

Gluckman proceeded to detail the campaign initiated by the D.C. Kalabo. The arrest, torture, starving, and flogging of alleged witches was vividly remembered by people in Barotseland. The monograph written by Barrie Reynolds and based in part on evidence collected in the witch-hunt of 1957, came in for stinging critique on the part of Gluckman, noting that, “if anything, [the book] is biased in favour of the actions taken”.⁵⁴ Particularly galling to Gluckman was the fact that his Barotse name “Makapweka” had been misappropriated by a British District Officer who had been instrumental in the witch-hunt of 1957. Indeed, as Gluckman noted:

The situation was so disturbed and tense that I judged it to be inadvisable to study villages in detail by carrying out census and genealogical investigations, and by enquiring into past quarrels, lest these awaken fears that I was hunting for deaths and witches responsible for these deaths.⁵⁵

The events of 1957 effectively scuttled Gluckman’s attempts at returning to his original research field and replicating the triumphs of his earlier work; accordingly the witch-hunt of 1957 had a direct impact upon, and was of importance to, the development of the Manchester School, Zambian historiography, and anthropology as a whole.

Magic, Divination and Witchcraft among the Barotse of Northern Rhodesia, written by Barrie Reynolds on the basis of his privileged access not only to people arrested, but also to the material confiscated during the witch-hunt of 1957, was published in 1963.⁵⁶ Although the monograph was widely reviewed, - if not always equally favourably - , the events of 1957 failed to attract the attention of academics studying and working on the history of Northern Rhodesia

⁵¹ Prior to Zambian independence in 1964 Gluckman had been refused permission to enter the Central African Federation.

⁵² Max Gluckman, *The Judicial Process Among the Barotse of Northern Rhodesia*, Manchester: Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, 2nd edition 1967, pp. 419 – 420.

⁵³ Gluckman, *Judicial Process*, p. 424.

⁵⁴ Gluckman, *Judicial Process*, p. 424.

⁵⁵ Gluckman, *Judicial Process*, p. 427.

⁵⁶ Barrie Reynolds, *Magic, Divination and Witchcraft among the Barotse of Northern Rhodesia*, London: Chatto & Windus 1963.

as it became Zambia in 1964.⁵⁷ Furthermore, or more specifically, no mention was made of the events of 1957 in studies that dealt particularly with Barotseland. This oversight may in part be due to boundaries between academic disciplines (ethnography versus political studies versus history), the marginalisation of Buluzi in the postcolonial project that was the Zambian nation state, as well as discomfiture on the part of those involved in the postcolonial project with a series of events that appeared to be the antithesis of modernity.

Following Zambian independence, the National Archives of Zambia published a series of *Calendars of the District Notebooks*, which were in effect a compilation of highlights lifted from the District Notebooks deposited with the Archives. Published between 1975 and 1980, volume three of the series dealt with the District Notebooks of Western Province. Although the publication referred to Kaliloze guns in the mid 1920s, it chose not to refer to or mention at any stage the events of 1956 – 58.

In the words of Sir Roy Welensky, the Barotseland Protectorate was ignominiously “sold down the river” and incorporated into Zambia at independence in 1964.⁵⁸ Following the drubbing of ruling United Independence Party (UNIP) candidates in the general election of 1968 (eight of the eleven contested seats going to opposition parties), UNIP exacted its revenge by abrogating the Barotseland agreement in 1969.⁵⁹ In the words of a senior UNIP official, “the Lozi were to be punished, not placated, for their imprudence in electing ‘former Johannesburg waiters’”.⁶⁰ Subsequently, the position of Buluzi within the Republic of Zambia remains controversial to this day.⁶¹ The inclusion of Buluzi as an integral part of Zambia remains a cornerstone of national policy for all post-colonial Zambian governments.⁶² The words and explicit warning spoken by Frederick Chiluba, upon his ascension to power, ..., are as relevant for the subsequent president’s of Zambia as they were for Kenneth Kaunda at independence in 1964.

⁵⁷ The book was reviewed by, Edward H. Hunter, in *American Anthropologist*, New Series, Vol. 66, No. 5 (Oct., 1964), pp. 1198 – 1199. Hunter noted, “It is only fair to say, ... , that those who expect another Northern Rhodesian monograph in the tradition of the Manchester school will be disappointed.” P. 1198. Murray Wax, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Autumn, 1964), pp. 116 – 117, noted “Reynolds’ study lacks both the view from inside the native village and a real understanding of the interpretive literature on African witchcraft”. P. 116.

⁵⁸ That Barotseland was to be “sold down the river”, in the words of the prime minister of the Central African Federation, Welensky, had become apparent to one and all by early 1963. Roy Welensky, *Welensky’s 4000 Days: The Life and Death of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland*, London: Collins 1964, p. 360.

⁵⁹ Gerald L. Caplan, *The Elites of Barotseland, 1878 – 1969: A Political History of Zambia’s Western Province*, London: Hurst 1970, pp. 217 - 220.

⁶⁰ Cited in Caplan, *Elites of Barotseland*, p. 218.

⁶¹ In a PowerPoint presentation dealing with forms of transport in Zambia presented to staff and students of the History Department of the University of Zambia in March 2004, I included a colour photograph of the *Nalikwanda*, Lozi royal barge, used in the annual Kuomboka ceremony, as an example of waterborne transport. During the subsequent discussion one of the department’s professors referring to this slide felt called upon to warn me not to use such “divisive symbols” in my academic presentations.

⁶² Formally the Barotseland treaty was abrogated in 1969, following the disastrous election results for UNIP in Barotseland in the elections of 1968.

Many academics working on Buluzi, inadvertently or otherwise, end up allying themselves with the regional sentiments expressed in the Western Province. This was not the case for the historian Gerald Caplan, who chose instead to ally himself with the nationalist sentiments expressed at the time in Zambia. Indeed, Caplan noted that his political history, *The Elites of Barotseland*, offered:

A clear example of a traditional ruling class choosing to ally itself with white imperialists against African nationalists.⁶³

That Lozi politicians, in the general election of 1968, might have anticipated alternative nationalisms to the one being expressed in the UNIP slogan, “One Zambia, One Nation”, is downplayed by Caplan who chose instead to record that, “the threat of a black fifth-column within Zambia is far from chimerical”.⁶⁴ In a widely publicised article forty years after his stay in Zambia Caplan was even more direct in his accusations when he recalled what he described as “another shocking lesson to a nice ignorant boy from Toronto”. Without a shred of evidence, beyond hearsay, Caplan went on to note the following of Barotseland:

The traditional elite of an anachronistic kingdom struck an alliance with South African apartheid leaders against the new nationalist government of Kenneth Kaunda.⁶⁵

Caplan chose to have a low opinion of the ethno-nationalist sentiments of Lozi in favour of the nationalist project that sought to transform “an artificial colonial entity into a united and stable state”.⁶⁶ Indeed, he believed that his work indicated how secessionist tendencies developed and, “how they might constructively be contained”.⁶⁷ As regards the period 1956 – 58, Caplan chose to mention nothing regarding the witch-hunt, choosing instead to focus on intrigues being fought out within the Lozi court at the time.⁶⁸ Similarly, in keeping with Caplan’s modernist approach, Robert Rotberg, in his *The Rise of Nationalism in Central Africa*, completely failed to mention events in Barotseland at the time, let alone the colonial government witch-hunt.⁶⁹ Andrew Roberts, writing on the History of Zambia as a whole, fails to mention events in Barotseland.⁷⁰

Widely praised at the time of its publication, *The Hidden Hippopotamus* by Gwyn Prins, purported to be a reappraisal of Lozi history.⁷¹ Although Prins refers extensively to Gluckman’s

⁶³ Gerald L. Caplan, *The Elites of Barotseland, 1878 – 1969: A Political History of Zambia’s Western Province*, London: Hurst 1970, p. vi.

⁶⁴ Caplan, *Elites of Barotseland*, p. 218.

⁶⁵ Gerald Caplan, “The Conspiracy Against Africa”, November 2006.

⁶⁶ Caplan, *Elites of Barotseland*, p. v.

⁶⁷ Caplan, *Elites of Barotseland*, p. vi.

⁶⁸ See here Caplan, *Elites of Barotseland*, pp. 181-3 which deals with the case of Sekeli Konoso of the Barotse National Association.

⁶⁹ Robert I. Rotberg, *The Rise of Nationalism in Central Africa: The Making of Malawi and Zambia, 1873 – 1964*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1965.

⁷⁰ Andrew Roberts, *A History of Zambia*, New York: Africana Publishing Company, 1976.

⁷¹ Gwyn Prins, *The Hidden Hippopotamus, Reappraisal in African history: the early colonial experience in*

work – specifically the 1973 edition of *Judicial Process*-, and deals extensively with witchcraft and sorcery in the Buluzi kingdom, he makes no mention whatsoever of the 1957 witch-hunt. Instead, in keeping with Caplan, Prins chose to suggest that Gluckman’s work with informants was flawed.⁷² In discussing his own fieldwork Prins notes that:

The reason why I never paid for information except in unsolicited ways, ... I was frightened by the career of one of my predecessors in Buluzi who reportedly paid freely for information. In consequence he received a great deal from needy and greedy people, cooked to his taste as they understood it; he was also given a Lozi nickname which means, in free translation, ‘the recklessly generous giver’ (*Makapweka*).⁷³

Significantly, the edited volume, *Guardians in Their Time*, which dealt with the experiences of Zambians under colonial rule, has on its cover a painting by Stephen Kappata depicting a manacled man being interrogated by a white colonial official.⁷⁴ This painting, which has been correctly attributed to Kappata but not named in the book, forms part of a series of at least two paintings by Kappata that dealt with the witch-hunt of 1957. Indeed, the manacled man being interrogated is identical to the manacled man being lashed in Kappata’s later painting entitled, “The Witchcraft Clean-up Operated by the Colonial Government in 1957”. Not only does *Guardians in Their Time* fail to deal with Buluzi or issues within the Barotseland Protectorate in the period under review, but the volume also does not make any mention of the witch-hunt of 1957.

Originally published in 2000, *Speaking with Vampires* remains one of the more unconventional and interesting monographs in African History.⁷⁵ Far from shying away from the ephemeral and controversial aspects of history, the historian, Luise White, tackled, head on, the issue of rumour in colonial Africa; and not just the issue of rumour – as if that were not ephemeral enough –, but the issue of rumour as it related to the supernatural and the metaphysical. For nearly thirty years Luise White researched and collected rumours in central and eastern Africa (Uganda, Congo, Zambia, Kenya and Tanzania) that dealt with bloodsucking white men and their assistants, doctors, firemen, game rangers, priests and so forth, as “a primary source with which to write, and sometimes rewrite” history.⁷⁶ That is, White was not particularly interested in the *Vampire* as such, but much more in what talking about vampires could actually mean. Or as White put it in a presentation:

I was never as interested as what vampires meant as I was interested in what talking about vampires meant, and why stories and accusations about who was a vampire might be a big deal at one time and not another.⁷⁷

western Zambia, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980.

⁷² Caplan, *Elites of Barotseland*, p. 238, noted:

Moreover, as an American Scholar [Philip Silverman] and I both discovered, many Lozi consider that Gluckman received a great deal of false and inaccurate information, and that the ‘truth’ was not revealed to him.

⁷³ Prins, *Hidden Hippopotamus*, 247.

⁷⁴ Samuel N. Chipungu, *Guardians in Their Time: Experiences of Zambians under Colonial Rule, 1890 – 1964*, London: Macmillan Press, 1992.

⁷⁵ Luise White, *Speaking with Vampires: Rumor and History in Colonial Africa*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000.

⁷⁶ White, *Speaking with Vampires*, p. 4.

⁷⁷ Luise White, “On Unpacking the Occult: Why We Need to Go Back to Friuli (or Transylvania. for that mat-

That is, it is the rumour about vampires, and not the bloodsucker itself that is, “the stuff of history, the categories and constructs with which people make their worlds and articulate and debate their understandings of those worlds”.⁷⁸ Never the less, it is intriguing that in an extensive study, that at no stage shies away from, instead, revels in the obscure and fantastic, should not have picked up on the extensive witch-hunt carried out by the colonial state in Barotseland in the 1950s in the run-up to Zambian independence.

Karavina

The Kaliloze guns of the 1950s did not disappear following the clamp down of the colonial administration, instead belief in the efficacy of these weapons continues into the present day. In the course of time the Portuguese Angolan word for an AK47 assault rifle, Karavina, has come to be synonymous with the use and meaning of the Kaliloze. Thus in Zambian parliament, the MP for Kalabo, noted in 2003:

Mr Speaker, the guns that are, now, in Kalabo are too numerous to mention. The kaliloze that I mentioned in my maiden speech, is not something like the laptop from the New Deal Government. It is an AK47. They can come straight at you any time and shoot you even when your family is watching.⁷⁹

Interestingly the MP referred to the “laptop” of the new deal government, which in turn was a reference to the use of sorcery by the erstwhile minister for health, Katela Kalumba, who was believed to have used a laptop to travel where ever he wanted and to predict the coming of the police to arrest him.⁸⁰

As with the Kaliloze, Karavinas were and are used to rid society of witches and wizards. The description provided in an academic study of weapon use and Karavinas in Western Province of Zambia in 2004 noted:

The victims for the Karavinas are people suspected of being wizards and the procedure is that some locals pay a person to execute the suspected wizard, most of the time with an AK 47.⁸¹

However, although the Karavina appears to be used solely to kill witches and wizards, the Kaliloze continues to exist and is used to inflict death through magical means. Thus the kaliloze is believed to be responsible for causing diseases and conditions that are diagnosed by bio-medical practitioners as being Aids, TB, or heart attacks. A medical anthropologist working in the Caprivi strip just to the south of the Western Province noted in her dissertation that:

ter)”, paper presented at ..., p. 1. Available on internet at: <http://history.wisc.edu/bernault/magical/Luise%20White%20occult.htm> accessed 8 November 2010.

⁷⁸ White, *Speaking with Vampires*, p. 55.

⁷⁹ Miss Q. V. Kakoma, M.P. for Kalabo, Parliamentary Debate 2003.

⁸⁰ <http://mwakonle.blogspot.com/2007/09/witchcraft-in-politics.html>. Accessed 6 November 2010.

⁸¹ Johan Brosché and Maria Nilsson, *Zambian Refugee Policy: Security, Repatriation and Local Integration*, Uppsala University 2004.

It is also believed that increasing use of ‘*thobolo ya kaliloze*’, an imitation gun made from human bones, hair and teeth is enabling ‘long-distance’ witchcraft in response to increased trends in mobility and dispersal of kin, since it can be used to transmit illness or death to a person living far away in other areas of Namibia or abroad.⁸²

In addition, the Kaliloze continues to be used in contemporary Zambia to rid society of those thought to be engaged in sorcery and witchcraft. The case of an evangelical pastor named Jasper, who was attacked in 2008, illustrates the point being made:

Jasper says: “I went back to the village for a holiday from school. While there, one of the men in the village wanted to shoot me using a witchcraft gun called Kaliloze.”⁸³

But striking in that it explicitly indicates the believe in the efficacy of Witchcraft by those nominally appointed to dispense justice on behalf of the Zambian state and its people is the following example, in which a Zambian judge sentenced a man to jail for allegedly having caused the death of another man through magical means to wit a Kaliloze gun. The Zambian Broadcasting Corporation reported on the case in the following manner:

A man believed to be in his early 70’s has been sentenced to two years imprisonment with hard labour by the Zambezi Magistrate Court.

George Kazhimana was jailed after he pleaded guilty of practising witchcraft contrary to Section 5 Cap 90 of the Laws of Zambia.

Facts before the court were that Kazhimana of Nyakulenga village of Zambezi district killed Kajimbala using supernatural means, a **Kaliloze gun**.

Kazhimana pleaded guilty to killing the man only identified as Kajimbala of Nyakulenga village in Zambezi district.

In passing judgement, Justice Steven Mabona, said he was convinced beyond reasonable doubt that Kazhimana killed Kajimbala using supernatural means.⁸⁴

In Summation

Although far more research needs to be conducted, it appears to be the case that in Western Zambia, from at least the early 1900s onwards, forms of sorcery and witchcraft have taken place that are in some way directly linked to gunpowder and the use of firearms. That is, it is clear that large groups of people in Western Zambia have at varying stages in the course of the past one hundred years believed that their problems associated with witchcraft and sorcery could be controlled through the use of firearms, both magical and otherwise.

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⁸² Felicity Thomas, *The impacts of HIV/AIDS on livelihoods, vulnerability and support networks in Namibia*, University of Sheffield 2005.

⁸³ Challenge

⁸⁴ Zambian National Broadcasting Corporation, 3 July 2008.

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