



Religion and Society in Central Africa

The BaKongo of Lower Zaire

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to his encounters with colonial police and the flood of documents in which he published his doctrines. One such document, the best known, was analyzed in chapter 5 (Andersson 1958; MacGaffey 1983b).

A movement in French Congo, called Nzambi ya Bougies (*bouguisme*, Lassyism), resembled early Kimbanguism in its opposition to both witchcraft and traditional religious and magical cults. It flourished among wage workers, especially railwaymen, during a period of economic expansion during the 1950s and was recognized by "customary" chiefs and priests as a threat to their authority (Hagenbucher-Sacripanti 1973, 193-96).

9 Prophet and Magician in Modern Life

However altered to meet modern conditions, the customary enclave of matrilineal descent and its concomitants preserved to the BaKongo a measure of autonomy in the regulation of their own lives that they were not given in the bureaucratic world of mission, state, and wage labor to which they also belonged. Lack of direct control over the means and content of communication in the bureaucratic sector meant that the fundamental cosmology and meaning of the European culture was never understood (*Anthology*, introd.). After thirty years of working for the Protestant mission, a man might confess, juxtaposing the traditional cosmology with the geography he had learned in school, that now he did not know which to believe (MacGaffey 1972c, 64). Education alone did not bring understanding of an alien society.

I first became aware of what I subsequently called the religious commissions of the BaKongo by listening to the villagers of Mbanza Manteke in 1965, speaking of things that at the time interested them more than they did me. Discussing prophets, such as the famed local healer Mabwaka Mpaka, they made it clear that a prophet earned the title by the favor of God, for which the evidence was that he healed the sick. Mabwaka's detractors, however, would insist that he healed only to make money and was therefore nothing but *ngang'a n'kisi* (magician). It was also said that a would-be prophet must have his spirit authenticated by recognized prophets; would-be chiefs were similarly authenticated, but the distinctive attribute of a genuine chief was supposed to be the power to kill his own nephew at his inauguration (though there had been no chiefs in Manteke for at least eighty years).

Later I heard these distinctions of ends and effects referred to many times by prophets appealing for the support of their congregations. The prophet works altruistically, incorporating clients in a disciplined public order of which he is the head because the Holy Spirit works through him. These considerations influence the symbolism of prophetic ritual, notably in its iconoclasm, which Protestantism has reinforced. The distinction of ends places the prophet solidly in opposition to the use of charms (*n'kisi*) and all other works of the magician (*nganga*) (Andersson 1958, 3; MacGaffey 1983b, 147). In prophetic ritual this opposition means that the metaphorical element, the con-

struction of complex, particularistic statements employing animal and vegetable materials, carved figurines, and the like, is reduced to little or nothing. What remains prominent is the metonymic element: statements about hierarchical relations of power ("the Holy Spirit") linking man and God through the mediation of a living prophet, the late Simon Kimbangu, and Christ. The accompanying metaphors expressing the use of this power focus on the persons of the prophet and his client and are limited to abstract and universalistic statements. Gestures of blessing, protection, and fortification, white clothes, and clear water in white or clear glass vessels all express the values of publicity, transparency, and generality, which are consciously verbalized. At the same time, the white clothes assimilate the prophets, as the elect, to the population of the otherworld ("the angels"), and the water of cleansing and blessing evokes the water of transition from this world to the other, the path of life and death. Prophetic rituals thus austere express the essence of Kongo religion, "man and the world through which he circulates."

In practice, the public consult prophets or magicians for whatever help they can find, commonly visiting two or three of them and a European type of clinic as well (Janzen 1978). The afflictions that trouble them extend beyond the physical to the psychological and social, including (as I have indicated) unemployment, bad dreams, theft, and failure to find a husband. In every case, the client has in mind the possibility that witchcraft has caused his misfortune, and it is this that the prophet or magician (but not the missionary or clinic) is supposed to be able to detect and counteract since he too has occult powers (*kindoki*).

The theory of witchcraft and healing is based on the image of the body as container for a soul as content. The soul can be removed, and its operation (and hence its owner's well-being) can be adversely affected by attacks on the container, as by blocking (*kanga*) the body's orifices. Accordingly, persons under attack can be defended by purifying and thus strengthening the soul or by fortifying the body by medications, blessings, and charms. Alternatively, protection and well-being can be obtained by attacking the witch, in two degrees. The common method is public accusation against the witch, employed by both prophets and magicians. If the accusation is successful, the witch will be required to undergo a purgative treatment analogous to the healing applied to his victims. The second method, and in modern times the more dangerous one because it is illegal and police intervention can readily be invoked against it, is to resort to charms that supposedly attack the witch's own soul. Willingness to undertake such

attack, for an appropriate fee, is the distinctive feature of the *nganga*, as the public view the matter. The use of violence is supposedly legitimate as redress intended to effect the healing of the witch's victim, but since the proceedings are covert and the allocation of blame an individual responsibility, magical attack is regarded by everyone as very close to witchcraft itself (*Anthology*, nos. 8, 9; MacGaffey 1983b, 74-77).

In this chapter I will be concerned with the description of affliction and healing and with the social context of both. Afflictions, besides being real occasions of personal discomfort, are usually also symptomatic of difficulties in social relations. Some social relations are individual, almost contractual; others are functions of the affairs and relations of groups. Healing, likewise, takes the form either of a quasi-contractual transaction between the healer and some other individual who has become his client or of the incorporation of an individual in a group whose head is the principal healer. In practice, these alternatives are the terms of a continuum that is also marked by a contrast between pneumatic and technical means; prophets, representing hierarchically organized groups, manifest spirit possession, a sign of subservience to higher authority, to which the client also becomes subject. Magicians, representing only themselves, offer medicines and services made impressive by their visual elaborateness.

In what follows, this scheme is illustrated, though in a different order, by these groups, the first three of which all use some version of the name Dibundu dia Mpeve a Nlongo (DMN), "Church of the Holy Spirit":

1. DMNA is virtually a closed, local association that offers healing to its own members and heals others chiefly by incorporating them. The rituals, marked by visual austerity and pneumatism, express and reinforce the group's internal order.

2. DMN-Mbumba also has a distinct local constituency, a particular district in Manianga, and functions as a club for people from that district living in Matadi, but it is more open than DMNA and has some of the functions of a clinic for the general public. Visual austerity and internal discipline are both less marked.

3. The Matadi congregation of DMN-Nsansi has a much broader local (rural) constituency and is only nominally a membership association. Pneumatic manifestations are restricted to the prophet and his immediate entourage and serve to enhance his authority without imposing any general discipline. The risky technique of direct intervention (*tengula mambu*), absent in DMNA, is conspicuous here, more so than in DMN-Mbumba.

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4. A healer, who belongs to the Kimbanguist Church (EJCSK) and therefore can call himself neither a prophet nor a magician, is something of both. Pneumatism is marginal and medication prominent, although in the medicines themselves visual austerity is deliberately conspicuous and explicitly related to the hierarchical order of the church.

5. A magician, unconnected with any church, offers contractual services without pneumatic manifestations and with a considerable elaboration of visible, material technique and apparatus.

The examples substantiate the contrast between public and private ends incorporated in the model of religious commissions and show how the modern prophet fulfills, in evolved form, the basic functions of the local priest, as opposed to the magician. The evolution of these functions has itself taken place in the context of the social pluralism of twentieth-century Kongo.

Discreet Magic

Public pressure against magic has been so effective that no one, in my experience, admits to being *ngang'a n'kisi*, though others call him by this term. Everyone hastens to explain that he merely administers "traditional herbal remedies" learned from his grandmother; he calls them *min'ti*, "herbs," *makaya*, "leaves," or *bilongo*, "medicines," but not *min'kisi* (Andersson 1968, 133-35). When necessary, such medicines are distinguished from the European type as black or African (*kindombe*).

The practice of magic is similarly disguised, though the majority of the population resort to it from time to time. The national soccer teams compete for the services of expert soccer magicians, and the leading politicians and ministers in the government include in their retinues masters of the occult, usually from their own regions but sometimes imported from abroad. The principal clients of ordinary magicians include truck and taxi drivers who need protection; schoolchildren who need to pass exams; the unemployed, for whom a suitably medicated letter may procure work; and women anxious for their children or their failure to bear any.

The same people will often consult prophets for the same reasons and with the same hope. The magician distinguishes himself from the prophet by demanding a fee before he provides his remedy; his rationale for doing so is that something obtained for nothing is worth nothing. Magicians, like prophets, can be men or women but are usually men. They learn their craft by apprenticing themselves to a master whom they pay and whom they also assist over a period of

time; they may also claim to have had the work revealed to them in dreams by some forebear or to have inherited recipes.

Many people have acquired one or more herbal remedies by inheritance or purchase and use them for their own or others' benefit, with or without fee. Such people are not *nganga*, but the line is difficult to draw; some would be *nganga* if they could. In the past as at present, the real *nganga* is supposed to have *kundu*, "witchcraft substance," with which to see the dead and combat witches. In observable practice, the magician is still a healer who undertakes, like the prophet, to solve problems, identify witches, and provide the kind of protective devices that, with or without accompanying potions and lotions, are worn on the body or placed about the house. Unlike the prophet, the magician may also provide devices that attack someone else, supposedly to right a wrong already committed or to avert a threat. The magician who provides such a service for a client is not held responsible if the victim finds out about it.

A few magicians are well-known and travel extensively in the course of their practice, more especially if they normally live in a rural area. One man known to me, a retired stationmaster, had founded near the railroad line a hospital for the treatment of insanity, in which he specialized. Patients were brought by their relatives, who stayed, as in other hospitals and clinics, to cook for them; some of the patients were kept chained or under sedation. The doctor had four wives as his staff at the hospital and a fifth to manage his clinic in Kinshasa, to which he frequently traveled. This clinic, its founder, and his methods have been described by Masamba (1976, 76-80).

A Town Magician

One Matadi magician, whom I shall call Malabikisa, had built a small two-roomed clinic behind his house. At its door a line of clients could be seen on almost any afternoon after work. As they entered, they were required to remove their shoes; he explained that medicines buried under the floor must not be polluted by feces carried on shoes. Inside, they discovered a gloomy little room lit by a single candle revealing a small stuffed crocodile, a number of nondescript bundles hanging from the rafters, a small table littered with jars and bottles, and a large turtle shell leaning against the wall, on which hung a calendar advertising the Dime Savings Bank of Brookline. A red curtain concealed the entrance to an inner room.

Malabikisa was an unimpressive man in appearance, style, and reputation. His techniques, besides whatever virtue may have resided in some of his potions, consisted of familiar magical routines combined

with blatant manipulation of his clients. He would astonish the credulous, browbeat the foolish, and confirm others in the suspicions they brought to him. After listening to a case he charged a fee, high (\$1.40 at the official rate of exchange) or low (\$.70 = 35K), as appropriate, explaining that anything you got for nothing was worth nothing. His "cures," insofar as he effected any, depended on the passage of time; the ailments and anxieties his clients hastily brought him could be expected to heal themselves while Malabikisa administered this or that dose and told the patient to come back tomorrow or next week. He kept notes on each case on a small pad, in such a way that it looked like a doctor's prescription; he would mutter over the meaningless hieroglyphics in French: "premier sens, deuxième sens," underlining things with his pen, reading the patient's palm, adding more hieroglyphics. Here is a series of cases as I observed them:

CASE LIST FOR A MAGICIAN

1. A woman arrives in haste, having lost two zaires (\$4.00), which she believes stolen. Her account shows she suspects Edward, the bachelor tenant in her compound. Malabikisa confirms that Edward is the thief, but suggests she will only get half her money back, and then only after paying his fee, 30K. She has only 20K (0.2 zaires).

2. A girl aged sixteen, married for two months, whose husband has left her because she is not yet pregnant. Malabikisa writes on his pad the date and three rows of hieroglyphs, has her sign it. She insists she be given medication, is given a small potion, and some oil to rub on her hands and feet.

3. A girl, aged eleven; she has trouble in school, brings a pen to be medicated ("cooked"). Malabikisa assures her that even if she were last in her class she will now be first with the aid of a pen and a medicine she will drink to help her think clearly. (It is the beginning of the school year, and the magician has a whole collection of pens to medicate; also, one or two job application letters.)

4. A woman suffers from irregular and difficult menstruation. She is barren, her husband wants to leave her. Malabikisa reads her palm, writes on his pad, pokes her stomach, tells her that tomorrow she must bring, as fee, a bottle of beer, kola nut, and two candles. He makes cuts on her stomach with a razor blade and rubs in medication; the treatment is painful, I hold her hand tightly. She is also to have a purge which will remove the dirt (*salleté*) blocking her womb, which is caused by her father's clan, abetted by her own clan. She will become a new woman. In fact, she has had this treatment before and wants a more specific diagnosis and a date for her cure. Malabikisa

sings a hymn, urges her to have faith, and tells the story of the Annunciation.

5. A woman brings her two children, a bottle of palm wine, and a packet of salt. She has been dreaming of dead people and cemeteries. She is given other salt to take home, which only she and the children will eat. Malabikisa also gives her a little packet on a string to tie around her waist, other packets for the children, and a bottle of some preparation in which she and the children are to bathe every day for five days, that the dreams may end. She dreams that ghosts mount her at night; she has no husband, but would like one. She and her older children are given a single medicated cut on each wrist and elbow.

6. An assistant brings in a report on a house-cleaning to be signed. Medication was sprinkled all around the house and candles lit within it, so that is now *tranquille*. The client, a young married man with two children, no longer has bad dreams, but treatment continues; *min'kisi* are prepared for him to carry in his pockets. (On another occasion, a client is reproved for referring to such things as "*min'kisi*" and told he should say "*médicaments*").

7. An elderly man has trouble with his wife, who has "turned into a devil." He is to bring earth from her footprints and prepare flowers, bottles of orange soda, beer, and palm wine and two candles for the assistant, who will come to cleanse the house and remove the *n'kisi* his wife put in it.

8. A fine-looking, presentable man with a good education, who works in the post office, has two problems. The first is that his father, who died recently, left his property to his son. The man has a written will but expects trouble from his father's clan, the normal heirs. Malabikisa foretells that there will indeed be trouble but that it will pass; he advises patience and right conduct. Second, the man has been transferred from one branch of the post office to another without adequate explanation and suspects that his boss has something against him. Malabikisa avers that his fathers are behind it and tells the man to come back tomorrow for treatment. Meanwhile, he applies cuts to the client's knee and ankle and rubs in medicines for "rheumatism," causing him considerable pain.

9. A girl has fever, her head swims. Malabikisa collects two leaves with which he makes a funnel. He digs up a root from under the floor, scrapes off a quantity of it, puts it back, adds palm wine to the scrapings, squeezes drops into the girl's nose. Her mother is required to express her goodwill for the child's recovery while standing with her back to the turtle shell, while in front of her a wick burns in a clay water jug. As she reaches the end of her declaration

she is startled by an explosion of gunpowder in the jug. Afterwards, Malabikisa explains the exercise to me, not in terms of its theatrical effects, but by mentioning other medicines buried under the floor that have the power to distinguish between good and evil and to visit harm on the insincere.

The standard techniques here include the potions, lotions, ablutions, medicated incisions (*nsamba*), drops in the nose, eyes, or ears, domestic lustrations, charms to be worn on the body, oaths, buried medicines, and divination attributing afflictions to father's or mother's clan. The innovations are superficial but include treatment for modern problems such as scholastic difficulties and theatrical effects such as the prescription pad and the hocus-pocus in French. Although this particular healer, no doubt partly for my benefit, made frequent pious references to faith in God, the style of his operation in no way recalled a church service but was modeled to some extent on a European medical clinic. As compared with the work of a prophet, it is notable for the complexity of its material apparatus and the elaboration of metaphorical density in medications, props, and associated procedures.

I was introduced to Malabikisa by one of his former clients, who at one time set store by his remedies. In the cooler aftermath, each was shrewdly informative about the other, without rancor. The healer understood his client's restless neurosis. The client knew that the healer was above all a womanizer, almost fired from his job in a social center for seducing girls; his clinic gave him endless opportunities to inquire pruriently into the physical and social problems of women, to handle their bodies, and on occasion to tempt one to join him on the bed in the inner room, behind the red curtain. Unlike the prophets and the rural healers, he belonged to no particular community and was neither a repository of its lore and values nor subject to its social discipline. Born and brought up in Matadi, he spoke the urban dialect, Kileta, or a KiKongo much diluted by Kileta and Lingala expressions. His clients and associates were a casual and transient sample of the town's population, and his healing interventions were furtive and opportunistic.

The retributive function of magic is difficult to document since the client thinks of it as therapeutic self-defense but keeps quiet about it to avoid the accusation of sorcery. The function is thus most easily recognized in judicial proceedings after the event. In all the following cases, the reality of sorcery (deliberate use of supposedly noxious devices by a witch) is accepted without question by the judges.

COURT VERDICTS ON MAGIC

1. In the communal court of Nzanza, Matadi, in 1967, a wife brought charges of sorcery against her husband, on behalf of her sister's son, who lived with them and had aroused the husband's jealousy by his success in trade. The husband went to a magician, who demanded thirty francs and a "needle paper" with the nephew's name on it. Since the husband brought only an IOU instead of money, the magician revealed all to the nephew and gave him the paper, for thirty francs. The husband was sentenced to thirty days in prison and a fine, but the magician was not charged.

2. In the same court in the same year, a wife married only "with palm wine," instead of the more formal "with money," accused her co-wife, who had been married formally, of insult ("pig, placenta eater") and of consulting a magician, who had "tied three cords" for her. Inquiry showed that the defendant, the primary wife, had been suffering from material and sexual neglect. The husband had consulted a magician about his impotence, which the magician blamed on a string that the primary wife wore around her hips; the string was a *n'kisi* because it had been treated with medicines (*miemo*) to enable her to dominate her husband. Her view of this string was not recorded, but her co-wife had also obtained from a magician an *aide médicale* in the form of a piece of wood worn on a string around the neck, good to cause the return of stolen property ("exciter le voleur de ses vêtements de les remettre chez elle"). The husband was fined for stirring up trouble and failing in his conjugal duty.

3. Y., mayor (*chef de secteur*) of a rural district near Kasangulu, wrote to the chief of Kasangulu Territory in 1963 that his life was in danger at the hands of his nephew K. The case was heard in the territorial court. Y. testified that he had been approached by a group of people who thought that to improve the village's hunting luck they should build a new shrine for a set of cult objects called *bilembo bi mpu* or *bileko*. Y. objected, saying that the *mpu* was always kept in the same place, by the clan's Grandchildren. However, people began to draw palm wine for the feast and to contribute money. Some of this money came from Y.'s nephew K. and was given to a certain man who thereafter fell ill; in his delirium he blamed his affliction on the coins, saying that K. intended to kill him.

K. was then hauled before a diviner (*ngang'a ngombo*, also called *ngang'a kimpipi*), who photographed him four times, without success. His image failing to appear in the photograph, he was identified as the witch responsible for his own wife's death; moreover, it was her fury that had taken effect through the coins, thus threatening yet

another death. K. was then required by the magician to pay the divination fee, ritually sweep out his house, and destroy his satchel of noxious medicines.

Testifying in reply, K. gave a different account of the divination, which he said everybody, including Y., was supposed to have attended. Y., however, refused, ostensibly because he feared that the diviner would declare that to relieve the hunting situation the village should be burned, the *mpu* abandoned, and a Dieudonné cult expert brought in to purify the people; in reality, Y. knew that he was the real sorcerer, who had trammled K. in his evil-doing, sought to put the entire blame on him, and was afraid of being exposed by the diviner.

A witness to the divination said the magician photographed everybody, the elders in one group, the cadets in another. The witch was to be identified as one who appeared in the photograph upside down. After various tests and maneuvers, the magician declared that the ancestors had revealed to him that K., through the use of sinister coins, had caused various deaths.

The verdict:

"Whereas K. has confirmed the testimony of Y.,
and Whereas he caused the death of his wife, who sought to avenge herself by bringing sickness on another.

and Whereas he has falsely accused his uncle Y.,

the Court finds him guilty of causing this sickness; instructs Y. to reconvene his family for the rites of *mpu*; holds that, if the invalid does not recover, the responsibility will lie with Y. for not requiring his nephew K. to carry out the instructions of this Court and of the magician [*le féticheur*]; and

requires K. to pay the Court's costs.

Ainsi jugé et prononcé en audience publique, 21 ème jour du mois de septembre mil neuf cent soixante trois."

The Kimbanguist Church: a rural healer

Members of the Kimbanguist Church, like those of all other churches, are supposed to have nothing to do with magic, and they take this rule very seriously. A young man whom I had last seen departing to look for work in Kinshasa explained, after his return to the village, that he had found work as a truck driver but had had to give it up; all the other drivers used charms that protected them and caused accidents to others, whereas he, as a Kimbanguist, was defenseless,

and therefore the risk to his life was too great. This excuse was not convincing since Kimbanguist drivers normally protect themselves with Nkamba water. A Kimbanguist family in Kasangulu, whose fruit tree was apparently protected against thieves by a charm hung on it, explained with much amusement that it was not a real charm, just a snail shell full of mud, but the thief would not know that.

The following document is a transcription of field notes describing certain Kimbanguist events in and near the small town of Kasangulu, mostly my observations of a healer who was a loyal and active member of EJCSK and whose activities were known and approved by its authorities. His original commitment to the Kimbanguist movement apparently had to do with his unfavorable political situation in his clan ("slavery"), as is often the case. He sharply distinguished between his activities and those of a magician, although the whole configuration of his little settlement is typical for rural healers (cf. Janzen 1978). The differences to which he himself would draw attention include the explicit verbal references to EJCSK as a legitimating framework; the fact that he charged no money, though he accepted gifts; the use of Nkamba water and earth; and, ultimately, his own conviction that what he was doing was true and righteous.

The "diary" also records other aspects of ordinary Kimbanguist life, including the fund-raising *nsinsani*. My companion, N., was an assistant territorial administrator; by 1970 he had been promoted to the rank of administrator and had also been made a pastor in EJCSK. The healer is something of an anomaly in the church, whose dogma is that the prophetic mission of Kimbangu did away with the need for medicines and with the role of *nganga*. It is also dogmatic that there has only been and can only be one prophet, Kimbangu himself. The healer does not know what title he should have, but in N.'s presence accepts that of "helper" (*n'sadisi*), which means either that he helps people or that he helps the work of the prophet.

KIMBANGUIST DIARY

6 March 1966: Accompanied by N., I visited a Kimbanguist healer in the hamlet Belo II. The healer built this hamlet for himself and his adherents in the 1950's after a dispute with his kinsmen in his original village, Belo I. He says that in 1921 he went to Nkamba, and there received from the Spirit the injunction to heal, together with the recipes for the potions he administers. Was arrested several times by the Belgians and jailed but never exiled; apparently they thought he was slightly mad. Recalls praying in the forest while the police were nearby,

looking for him. He regards himself as having belonged to the Kimbanguist church since 1921. It is dogmatic with him, as with most Kimbanguists, that everything began in 1921.

People come to Belo II on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Friday mornings, possibly Mondays as well. Wednesday is set aside for the work of the Church, Saturday is market day, and Sunday is a day of rest. The Healer has a room of his house set aside as a clinic: benches outside, red cross on the door. In adjacent houses stay people undergoing prolonged treatment. He keeps a log of all patients and their symptoms: sleeplessness; stomach pains; inflammation in the back, internal bleeding, syphilis; chest cough; no appetite, swollen hands and feet; listless, anemic; unable to find work; internal bleeding, has had two children, unable to have more, wants to, her heart bothers her, her eyes wander.

The Healer charges no fee. Says he heals by prayer and herbal potions. There are two sorts of disease, those sent by God and those caused by evil influences, including witchcraft and the charms of other persons, also by ill will in the patient's own heart and the sins he has committed. The Healer has the ability to distinguish the types and sources of illness. When a patient comes for the first time he may confess privately or publicly, or the healer will tell him "You have stolen something." It may be necessary to call members of the patient's family.

10 March: By appointment we return a few days later. By 9 A.M. a few patients, all elderly, have come to attend the clinic: two men, half-dozen women. The Healer has an assistant, a younger relative, who like him has a beard. We remove our shoes, enter the clinic.

The assistant prays. N. prays, including in the prayer an explanation of what I do. Healer reads from the Bible a passage about healing the sick, making the lame walk, etc., and prays, including in the prayer an explanation of what *he* does. He comments on the sad state of the country: "Truly in all this country of Congo we have no sense, we are as women." The women present seem not to mind this slight. N. agrees; people lack sense to follow God's law, they make magical charms, hence all the suffering and confusion we are now in.

The sick sit on the floor, two at a time. The helper sprinkles them with water, said to be from the Holy City, Nkamba. There isn't much left, he has to be sparing; he can get more from M. Diangienda's house in Kinshasa. The helper sprinkles the patient's head, back, chest, and both shoulders. Mixes a little earth "from Nkamba" with water to form a paste which he rubs on afflicted areas; hardly enough mud to leave a mark. Gives patient a pinch of the earth to eat, followed by a

few drops of water. Passes his hands over the patient's limbs, muttering to himself; he appears to be stroking her afflictions from her body into her legs and hence out through the open door. In addition to this treatment, some of the patients get a potion in a glass to drink, not always the same potion. One woman balked at a large glass of cloudy white liquid, said to be a purge, on the ground she had eaten that morning; she was excused. Another potion was said to be good for anemia.

The room also contains white chalk on a shelf; in a frame, photos of M. Diangienda in Israel, and of a low-relief tableau which shows Simon Kimbangu chained to a rock in the middle of water. This incident took place, N. explained, at Boma or Moanda, where Kimbangu was taken to be drowned in the Atlantic, after the Belgians had tried and failed to burn him with a drum of gasoline. The drowning didn't work either. The original of the relief lies in the prophet's mausoleum at Nkamba, at the foot of the glass case containing his coffin.¹

Outside the clinic, numerous herbs have been planted; the uses of some are pointed out to me. *Nge unguba* is good to rub on the chest; N.'s wife had sore breasts, but after he had rubbed this on them they felt better. *N'sedi-n'sedi* purges the stomach; if you have diarrhea you need a purge to get rid of all the bad things inside you. According to N., the elders used to eat pepper and never suffered from diarrhea, no matter what their diet; but now we have "hygiene" and in consequence we get diarrhea easily. Similarly, in the back country people go about shirtless and are strong and healthy, but we wear clothes and therefore suffer from colds.

22 April: I arrive in Belo at 9 o'clock; the clinic has already begun. I have ignored N.'s view that I should always have him with me because I find he takes it on himself to answer questions I address to the healer. My visit is unexpected and unannounced, but there is no fuss when I slip into the clinic, leaving my shoes at the door. A young man is being healed: "his eyes wander." Two witnesses stand beside him: the Healer's apprentice on his left, a woman assistant on his right. The Healer prays, a prayer which is partly a sort of conversation with God and partly a catechism in which the witnesses answer on behalf of the sick man; there are also references to Biblical stories about healing the blind. At the end the Healer says, "Alright, give him the stuff."

The apprentice scurries around to find holy water which he sprinkles on the invalid, pours some on his eyes, rubs it on his back and abdomen, gives him a few drops to drink. Has him stand up, shakes his hand three times in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, using a downward thrust which apparently suggests the casting-

off of evil. Prays that the evil should "come out." Instructs the sick man to leave the clinic (which in this case he calls *Nzo a Nzambi*, which means church) and go straight home without shaking hands with anybody. I recall that when I came in the apprentice, next to whom I happened to find myself, refused to shake hands, saying it was a rule of the Church not to shake hands on coming into church.

Two sick women get essentially the same holy water treatment, with additional rubbing on arms and feet. The mood is conversational and casual. The Healer chatters away, sometimes sings bits of Kimbanguist hymns, throws in homiletic advice. Every so often his body jerks, as with a violent hiccup, he says "Oui?" and appears momentarily to listen, like someone answering a telephone; he may add a word or two, such as, "Who's that?" All this occurs without pause or warning in the middle of his discourse, prayer, or whatever, which resumes immediately afterwards. According to his apprentice he is hearing spiritual messages; the apprentice also jerks occasionally, and says he is beginning to hear things too.

The women receive the final blessing by the three holy names and the handshake. The meeting is over. Apprentice turns to me and shakes my hand most warmly with the same triple downward thrust and showers me with blessings. In answer to a question, he says the chalk is to put into medicines, which he calls by the same word as that for charms. There are several bottles of cloudy liquid under a table. The apprentice says the young man's trouble is that he has been "putting people into Mpungu." Mpungu is a charm, usually in the form of a sealed bottle, by which one can do harm to others. Now, it has turned on him, so his furtive device stands revealed.

A woman appears with her daughter; at her entreaty, the clinic is resumed. The Healer finds scarves for them to cover their heads, takes off his sneakers; we re-enter the building. Prayer. Healer takes woman's name and address; she is from a village near Nkamba, Mbanza Ngoyo, which she calls Nazareth. Symptoms? Her daughter, aged about thirteen, goes to a Catholic school; every time the exams come up which might entitle her to pass into sixth grade she falls sick. Now she has a sore on her ankle which won't go away and makes it painful to walk. Has had medicines and injections, to no avail.

The Healer wants to know who her father is, because it is the father who must fight for her, just as our Father fights for all of us. It appears that the father is no longer around. What have people been saying to or about the girl in her home? The mother knows of nothing. The Healer ("Oui?") shrugs, sends girl out to a female assistant: "Mama! a child's coming?" For confession, the apprentice explains. Girl re-

turns, kneels with head hung, but nobody says anything about her sins, if any. Assistant returns too and stands beside her as witness. Anybody can be a witness, the apprentice explains; they simply represent the invisible witnesses whose responses are heard only by the Healer. "Witnesses on earth, witnesses in heaven."

The Healer begins his prayer-conversation with God and the witnesses, dwells on the dire consequences of sin; the girl hangs her head. He has a stern word for the mother too. The witness responds with professions of faith. "Alright, give her the stuff." Holy water is sprinkled on girl, mother, and baby the mother has with her; rubbed on chest, back, arms and legs. Each gets a few drops to drink, including the baby. The apprentice, instructed to clean the sore on the girl's ankle, finds a grubby piece of cottonwool in a cardboard box in a corner of the room, tears off half which he holds down with his big toe while he mops at the sore with the other half, finishing the job with the clean bit. Mixes water and earth from the Holy City into a soup which he pours on. The Healer ("Oui? Who's this?") says he should have put on some other medicine which is kept in a little brown bottle with a dropper. But the mud's on there now, and besides, there's hardly anything left in the bottle. Oh well, forget it.

Outside, I exchange presents with the Healer. None of the sick gave him anything; after all, he's doing God's work, not trying to make money. The apprentice notices a sore on the back of my hand, is greatly concerned; "E tata! look at this, he says he's had it a long time." "Put earth on it," says the Healer. Shoes off again, the apprentice mixes a paste, applies it, shakes hands.

We set off for town. I stop to buy kerosene. While I am in the store the apprentice greets a member of DMNA and tells him what was done for my hand. The news makes a great impression.

The Healer comes all the way to my house. I serve drinks, but it seems that what he came for was to heal my wife. That morning, when asked how she was, I had mentioned casually that she had a slight headache, so he wanted to do something about it. Arrangements are makeshift. We are not asked to remove our shoes or even to kneel, but the whole family is sprinkled with holy water and given a few drops to drink; it tastes of kerosene. We all receive the handshake of the three holy names.

The Healers abruptly leave. The apprentice won't shake hands again, he says one's enough. I follow them down the street, because they have someone else to visit. The Healer walks very briskly, talking to himself all the time; his apprentice carries a briefcase stuffed with medicines in bottles. Passersby offer friendly greetings.

We enter a compound; the visit is expected, the greeting joyful. The women wash their hands, don headscarves. We assemble in the bedroom of a smoky little mud house, the family all kneeling. The healer prays briefly, then the apprentice. Healer himself does the holy water routine, making a point of beginning with the husband. Healer sprinkles the room, goes outside to sprinkle all around the house. One of the women is instructed not to cross her arms. The family are raised up, with the invocation "that their spirit should be quiet." They have one child, but the wife has recently had a series of miscarriages. Without further ado, or handshakes, we leave.

Further down the street, the Healer indicates a house in which there is Mpungu; it's inside, explains the apprentice, but *he* can see. On either side of the door are splashes of red and white paint. Further on, we separate. I shake the Healer's hand but the apprentice won't follow suit; he says one's enough.

29 May: *Nsinsani* in town. This is a sort of potlatch which is one of the Kimbanguist Church's principal money-raising devices. The faithful, as individuals and as parishes, contribute money in turn under the eye of M. Diangienda himself, who makes a special visit for the occasion, surrounded by pomp and circumstance. He is carried in a litter and attended by his personal brass band.

At lunch, before the main event begins, I ask about the Healer. M. Diangienda explains that the man had asked for a formal license from the Church, which had been refused because of the risk of liability, but M. Diangienda had himself visited the clinic incognito, had seen that it was a harmless matter of prayers and herbs, and had allowed it to continue.

For two hours, continuously, the band plays the festival song, *O n'kembo*, while contributions pour into a large enamel basin from the hands of endless lines of worshippers. The words of the song, in translation, are:

Glory! the glory of God the Father is gone abroad!
 Glory! the glory of the Lord Jesus is gone abroad!
 Glory! the glory of Simon Kimbangu is gone abroad!

The cymbals have known so much concussion to the glory of God that only a fragment of each remains. After the announcement of the preliminary totals, another round; and so on. 72,000 F is collected, all of it (according to N., who is in charge of it) to go towards a roof for the local Kimbanguist school.

I leave before the end. Later on, among the crowd hurrying homeward past my door I see the Healer's apprentice. He greets me but refuses to shake hands, explaining that he has just received a blessing from M. Diangienda and has to go straight home.

30 May: Ask N. about the handshake business. Says it is a secret of the Church, and yet not really a secret. People who had received a blessing were afraid it might be stolen from them by enemies, "people with two hearts." Handshakes are a standard means of conveying good and evil influences; can also be done by the breath, continues N. Similar to the funny money trick; in fact only yesterday someone had slipped a loaded bill into the collection-bowl with the intention of stealing the lot (that is, the entire sum would follow this bill back into the thief's pocket). But M. Diangienda can see these things; he challenged the witch, who made off. As for the handshake, N. himself wouldn't hesitate to shake my hand, but not just anybody's. You have to be careful.

The Manianga Tradition: Ngunzism

Moise, leader of a small prophetic congregation in Kasangulu, reviewed the religious history of the world one evening in 1966, for the benefit of his followers. His point of view in telling the story was that of a native of Kinkenge in Manianga, on the north bank of the Zaire, and a member of one of the Manianga churches ("ngounziste"), whose leader is Mbumba Philippe. The story begins with a sequence of four churches and ends with a cycle of four prophets whom it allocates to four sectors of the universe.

MOISE'S STORY

In the beginning, said Moise, there was only one Christian church, the Catholic, but after a time, because the priests were hiding the Word of God, Luther founded the Protestant Church. This went very well for a while, until the Protestants, leaning more to the flesh than to the spirit, began to play politics on behalf of the colonial government. Then a reformed Protestant church, the Salvation Army, made its appearance. Moise was not clear what sin it slid into, but Kimbanguism was the next vessel of the Spirit.

Moise seemed aware that this succession gives the historical order incorrectly but passed on. In 1921, Simon Kimbangu appeared as a prophet at Nkamba, on the south side of the Zaire. Manianga elders say that in those days they crossed over to see him by walk-

ing on the water or using the canoe-shaped leaves of *makangaya* (*Setaria megaphylla*).

One week after the revelation of Kimbangu, Mbumba Philippe appeared as a prophet on the other side of the river, at Kinkenge in Manianga. Kimbangu crossed over to join him, and together they wrought mightily. The colonial government arrested them, shut them up in oil drums, and tried to drown them in the Zaire but was unable to. After a while, the work increasing, they asked God for helpers and were given Matayi Mwanda and Maswa André.

Later, Kimbangu was arrested and exiled to Upper Zaire. Mwanda was called by God to minister to the dead in their village in the otherworld, so he walked alive into the Zaire and was never seen again. One week after Kimbangu's arrest, Mbumba also was arrested but escaped. He and Maswa remained at large and are alive to this day, one in Brazzaville and the other in Kinshasa. [*Anthology*, no. 6]

As in more classical myths, the Nzadi is identified by the speaker with the real Zaire but is marked as something more by the magical events attending its passage. It is doubly indicated as the boundary between the living and the dead by the unsuccessful drowning attempted by the government and the voluntary disappearance into it of Mwanda. The "village of the dead" and Upper Zaire, that is, the eastern part of the republic to which troublemakers were exiled, are clearly seen as parallel and opposed to the living, visible world of the BaKongo. The corpus of Kimbanguist legends about the exile of the prophets and their return to Kongo repeatedly and poignantly draws on the same metaphor (MacGaffey 1982). In 1960, after the body of Simon Kimbangu was brought back to Nkamba, there was much talk among Kimbanguists of his "resurrection," provoking unsympathetic neighbors to ask, If he's been resurrected, whose bones have you got in that coffin?

The story distorts history to make it exhibit the symmetries of Kongo cosmology: the compounding of pairs into sets of four and the idea of cyclical repetition ("one week later"). It also exhibits a characteristic skepticism: it is expected that those who are given power will misuse it for selfish ends. Finally, the story functions as the charter of Moise's church, the Church of the Holy Spirit by the Prophet Mbumba (DMN-Mbumba) in segmentary opposition to (1) all non-Christian religion; (2) all European, non-Kimbanguist churches; (3) south-bank Kimbanguism, especially EJCSK; and (4) all other north-

bank, Manianga churches of the "ngounziste" (DMN) tradition. Matayi Mwanda, a minor figure, appears here for symmetry's sake.

Moise once belonged to DMNA (whose own legendary charter appears in the *Anthology* [no. 51]) but left to found his own congregation of DMN-Mbumba because his talents and ambitions went unrecognized. He says he discovered that the prophets of his DMNA congregation were really witches who laid hands on the sick at night by the same gesture used to heal by day and so stole their souls, which the false prophets used to prolong their own lives.

The Church of the Holy Spirit in Africa, DMNA

Of all the Churches of the Holy Spirit, DMNA is the most highly disciplined and introspective, and its ritual is the most impressive. Its file in Nzanza commune in Matadi is thin because unlike many less substantial organizations it does not seek government recognition; it rarely even replies to correspondence. Its older members are veterans of the clandestine prophetic movement, and at the threat of repression, as in 1974, they shrug their shoulders and say, Let them arrest us; we have been arrested before. Their congregations are largely closed, dedicated to the service not of temporary clients but of Manianga people for whom this church is a symbol of their past and future. Kongo nationalism is a strong, though quiet, theme, heard in hymns and sermons, occasionally felt in political activity. A government inquiry into the 40 percent negative vote in Matadi in 1968 against the new national constitution identified certain members of DMNA by name as propagators of the view that, if the referendum failed, Mobutu might be dismissed and former president Kasa-Vubu restored. (In most of the country the vote was 98 percent in favor.)

In Kasangulu and Matadi, services are held three, four, or more times a week, usually beginning at dusk and continuing sometimes until dawn. In Matadi, the main congregation meets in the courtyard of the house of one of its wealthier members. He is the proprietor of a commercial complex, including stores and a bakery, in which some of the members are employed. At the head of the room are several tables for the convenience of the elders and the musicians. Other members stand, or sit on the floor, down the sides of the room, men on one side, women on the other (it does not matter which). Except at the head tables there are no chairs. There are always more women present than men, but the disparity is not as marked as in most DMN churches. In Matadi, where the congregation is relatively prosperous,

the women as well as the men are able to fulfill the ideal of having a special white costume: for men, plain white shorts, shirt, and cap; for women, a long white smock and a kerchief. The uniform, which adds to the dignity of the ritual, is intended to recall the appearance of the angels in heaven (Rev. 7:13-15).

The program of worship begins with an ordinary Protestant service. Many of the hymns that are used come from the standard Protestant hymn book, with a preference for those by Swedish authors, as in any Manianga congregation. However, DMNA also has its own hymn book, printed in 1967, with a duplicated annex of several hundred more hymns. The tunes are sung to the jumpy rhythm characteristic of Manianga music, but they are soon lost in the deafening noise produced by a varied battery of percussion instruments. The women all use one or two tin rattles each, but most of the din comes from a group of eight or ten men playing such instruments as the *mbandi* side drum, the *nkonko* or *n'konzi* slit drum, and the *n'kwiti* friction drum or simply pounding on the tables with sticks.² Others incessantly blow police whistles. Apart from the absence of the long dance drum, *ngoma*, which all Lower Zaire churches have banned as an occasion of sin, the performance strongly resembles the louder sort of secular party.

The second and longer, also louder, part of the program is characteristic in general of the Manianga DMN churches. It consists of three basic parts: (1) healing the sick, (2) healing the "seriously" sick, and (3) weighing the spirit (*bascule*). All are primarily dances, accompanied by singing and drumming. In the first part, those with ordinary ailments sit on the floor in a line (men separately and first) while a healer designated by the leader runs around the line three times, fluttering a towel. Having completed his rounds he moves rapidly down the line blessing each head by placing a hand on it, at the same time praying aloud. Usually his hand trembles, and he may show other mildly pneumatic symptoms. Since most of the congregation takes part, this phase, despite its name, is probably best regarded as conferring blessing rather than healing. In the second phase the "seriously sick" are those with a specific ailment that they tell the healer about. Each sick person has a healer assigned to him; at any moment, as many healers may be at work as space allows. Each does what he sees fit, but the basic technique is to circle the patient flapping a towel and to lay hands on the head or afflicted part, with invocations and much trembling, for a period of ten or fifteen minutes. The effect the rite represents is to surround or as it were deluge the patient with the Holy Spirit (*mpeve a nlongo*). Healers sometimes use water, sprinkling the sufferer with it or giving it to him to drink, but in DMNA this is

unusual. Some puff and blow, to add to the wind (*mpeve*) created by the flapping towels, or cover the sufferer with a towel. In all this each is said to follow spiritual instructions received as he works. The direction of the circling movement, as usual in Kongo rituals, is counterclockwise. In Kasangulu once I asked the pastor why some of his healers were moving in the opposite direction; he said that they were beginners, and the following week perfect conformity prevailed.

The towels used are not ordinary towels (*mpamba*, "empty, nothing"). They are blessed at the holy city of Nzieta by the spiritual head of the church, Mangitukwa Luke, successor to Masamba Esaie, the founder. In DMNA, the prophetic succession is traced through Kimbangu, but he is mentioned only as a historical figure; the mediator mentioned in hymns (in 1970) was Luke. To reinforce the control exercised from Nzieta in Luke's name, the church in 1968 introduced a new ritual, "blessing of children," which could be performed only with a special towel, called a sign of blessing (*dimbu kya lusakumunu*), that Luke had sanctified (*wabieka nlongo*). Only one such sign was allotted per settlement, and the relationship between settlements was itself hierarchical. Matadi, which already had a towel of its own, received another in 1970 to pass on to the church in Tshela (Mayombe), which would then be able to bless its own children.

The water used should have been blessed by the pastor, but any drinking water will do. As one man put it, "Water blessed by the church isn't better, it's just different; someone else's cooking may be no better than your wife's, but it makes a change." Drinking water, however, and other drinks, are subject to taboos. Only water from running streams should be drunk, and none that has stood overnight or come from a sealed bottle. At one level, this rule is a sensible health precaution, but it coincides with a view that still waters and closed vessels, like charms, may contain spirits. So a DMNA prophet will drink homemade lemonade but not bottled lemonade. *Mwanda*, one of the words translated "spirit," is the specific force of certain charms, according to Doutreloux (1967, 240), and also the force that pushes a cork out of a bottle. In the 1870s, the chief Lutete, of Ngombe Lutete, who commanded the ivory route from Stanley Pool to Sao Salvador, imported soda water from the coast in bottles, of which he was half frightened, calling them "devil water" (Johnston 1884, 147).

The most spectacular phase of regular ritual is the "weighing of the Spirit" (*ntezolo a mpeve* or, in French, *bascule*), which takes its name from Job 31:5-6: "If I have walked with vanity, or if my foot hath hastened to deceit; let me be weighed in an even balance, that God may know mine integrity." Two appointed weighers (*mim'pesi*, from

Fr. *peser*), having first been weighed by the pastor or some other, stand at the head of the room in front of the tables, right hand outstretched. The candidates, in pairs, white clothes fluttering, dance toward them using a skipping step, with arms upraised and hands fluttering, apparently representing birds. Each seizes the hand offered to him and leaps high into the air, repeatedly, for some little time. Normally, the pair then return together to their starting point and repeat the performance twice. At the end of the last jump, each candidate staggers away, apparently out of control, trembling violently, eventually collapsing to his knees to give thanks for the spiritual charge he has received, as though it were electricity, through the extended hand of the weigher. By then another pair of dancers will already have advanced. The men are all weighed first, then the women. If the congregation is in good spirits, most of them will participate repeatedly in the *bascule*, and the performance may continue for hours.³

As a form of exercise, spiritual and physical, the *bascule* recalls the communal dances of American Shakers. It strengthens the body, cheers the spirit, and builds group loyalty. It is also a powerfully dramatic art form and thus provides DMNA members with many satisfactions. In addition, it is sociologically complex. The outline given above shows how the basic structure of the *bascule* corresponds to the status ranking of the congregation: the pastor or leader, who designates the weighers but does not usually participate himself; the weighers, who are men in good standing; other men; women. To be weighed, and not found wanting, is to be integrated into this hierarchy of domination, but it often happens that individuals are refused and are unable to complete the required three weighings or succeed only on a second attempt. Refusal is supposed to be the work of the Spirit, to whom it is apparent that the candidate's spiritual state is deficient. In practice, the candidate himself decides that he is not achieving sufficient elevation, or the weigher may refuse his hand or in taking it may not help the candidate to jump. In such instances, the candidate moves aside and confesses some minor offense, kneeling before the leader or some designated elder. The usual offenses are minor things like punishing a child unduly or harboring resentment. Nobody pays any attention to the confession, which is usually quite inaudible in the continuing din, and no penance is assigned. After confessing, the candidate is weighed again, probably successfully. Neophytes, partly from lack of practice no doubt but largely from lack of acceptance, are often unsuccessful for some time until their incorporation is effective. It is probable also that changes in the dominance order are effected through the *bascule*; in one isolated

congregation I watched a struggle for leadership being carried on in this way, the lieutenant asserting himself by refusing to allow the leader of the congregation a successful weighing. Others present knew what was going on and commented on it in terms of the personalities of the rivals; this was the third congregation this leader had founded, they said, only to lose control of it.

The characteristic DMNA rituals of healing and *bascule* are both rooted in classical religion, though once again the differences are as interesting as the continuities. In northern Kongo, ecstatic leaping was provoked by contact with certain charms. A photograph taken in 1927 shows a magician, divining whisk (*mpiya*) in hand, leaping into the air in the characteristic Manianga fashion (Manker 1929, 135). A form of public, competitive demonstration of the capacity to tremble (*mayembo*) was also held, in which the form was that of the *bascule* dance, the focus either a raffia cloth (*lubaadi*), waved by the leader, or the herb *mansusu* ("basil"; *ocimum gratissimum*), believed to excite the spirit (Andersson 1968, 138).

The sign of *nganga's* success in returning the soul was that he would give a raffia cloth (*lubongo*) to one of his assistants, still "in the spirit" (*mu mayembo*), to lay on the head of the patient (*tensikisa lubongo ku ntu mbevo*). Until he could do so three times, the soul had not returned. Having succeeded, *nganga* would administer medicines and lotions and tell the patient what taboos to observe (*Cahiers* 78, 159). Variant usages included the use of a baton (*n'kawa*) in place of the raffia cloth (*Cahiers* 78, 243). In 1700, a missionary observed a similar ritual, in which the magician shook and snapped the skins of certain animals over the sick person's body to draw out the evil (Cuvelier 1953, 131). In both the classical and the Christian versions, the patient is seated on a mat, surrounded by ecstasies who "try" to lay on his head a cloth signifying spiritual integrity, while a tremendous din is kept up, songs are sung describing the activity itself, and the leader engages in a "war" (*mvita*) with occult enemies. The differences are that in the Christian version the context is biblical (referring most to Revelation) and clarity and whiteness are emphasized: white uniforms, white towels, and water instead of palm wine or other medication. The dance drum (*ngoma*) is also absent.

DMNA healing procedures are clearly related to those of Mvutudi, Ntombodi, or Ntadi. Though these are listed as *min'kisi* in the *Cahiers*, they appear to consist only of procedures, involving no physical object other than the patient; the names are based on the verbs *vutula*, "to return (the soul)," *tombula*, "to raise up (spirits)," and *tala*, "to



PLATE 12: "Weighing the spirit" (*bascule*), Matadi, 1970.

look, divine." They required the participation of a *nganga*, a group of ecstatic assistants (*min'tombo*, *min'tuntuki*), and other persons and were expensive, costing a pig and much else besides. When it was determined that a sick person's soul had been taken "to the forest," a pig would be sacrificed to appease the dead ("half for them, half for us"). The invalid was then seated on a mat and surrounded by ecstasies singing and sounding drums and rattles (*mazu mingi*, "tremendous noise"); drops might be put in his eyes and his face anointed with medicated palm wine. The *nganga*, meanwhile, himself in trance, would "go to the forest" (i.e., rush about spectacularly) to seek the soul of the invalid in the fork of a tree, under a stone, or in some other place where it had been hidden and would negotiate with the dead for its release. In some accounts, these spiritual expeditions are described as "going to Kongo," that is, to the mythical origin on the other side of Nzadi (see chap. 2 above); modern DMN prophets substitute "Zion" for "Kongo" (Buakasa 1973, 231; *Anthology*, no. 48, par. 8).

In smaller and quieter section meetings, and often in private consultations, DMNA members practiced divination, which meant, in effect, that the idiom of spiritual guidance legitimated personal counseling. The church did not countenance public accusations.

DMN-Mbumba

That Church of the Holy Spirit whose head is Mbumba Philippe consists mostly of people from his home region of Kinkenge in western Manianga. Mbumba died in prison, but in 1959 a man whose real name was Mawungu Daniel went about in Lower Congo as the reincarnation of Mbumba. In 1970, Mawungu lived in Kinshasa, as do the heads of most Kongo churches. He played a quiet role in the background of his church, healing and blessing individuals who came to him. DMN-Mbumba lacked the austerity, discipline, and quasi-monastic quality of DMNA. Trembling occurred more spontaneously and lacked the character of dance it often has in DMNA. The clothes of the prophets were white but might be embroidered with signs and figures revealed in dreams. In Matadi, the main congregation all wore on their uniforms the letters *sp* in red, standing for "soldier and policeman (of the Lord)" (*solda ye pulusi*) (MacGaffey 1983b, pl. 10). Individual prophets wore red bands on their wrists or around their heads to protect their powers from witchcraft interference; their clients might be advised to obtain similar wrist bands, together with the classical *kimbanzya* grass (eleusine), as protection and sign of reconciliation with their elders. Such bands are called *n'kaku*, "barrier"; in former times, "barriers" might be elaborate metaphorical statements in material form similar to charms (Laman 1962, fig. 10).

The church's structure in Matadi revealed a hierarchical elaboration appropriate to a relatively large organization but in fact founded on entirely different factors. The congregation gathered on Sundays and Wednesdays for a service of the Manianga DMN type, consisting of the usual items of Protestant worship with the addition of ecstatic dancing (*bascule*). Blessings were given, but no individual healing took place. On other days, separate "section" meetings were held in different quarters of the town. The section with which I was familiar was headed by Ntengo, a cheerful, muscular man of about thirty-two, who was proud that his name, given him by his followers, means one who is not afraid to tear down (*tengula*) obscure and difficult personal problems. His meetings began with the basic Protestant service, which was merely the prelude to the main business of individual consultations. He and the core group of his followers were relatives of the original Mbumba Philippe, and the relationship between them and the main church in Matadi was not simply hierarchical but also at least latently political since they did not accept that Mawungu Daniel "was" Mbumba Philippe. The local head of the church regarded their attitude more with disappointment than anger, saying that he himself had

accompanied the prophet on a tour of Kinkenge, in which his authenticity had been acclaimed.

In the section, the sense of kinship organization extended to the entire membership, for whom Ntengo provided medical help, personal advice, and brokerage in dealings with the rural homeland. Relatively few clients were unconnected transients. While Ntengo read palms and gazed skyward for spiritual guidance (MacGaffey 1983b, photo 10), his staff at the head of the room would explain the nature and history of the case to me in utterly secular terms, including intimate and sometimes scandalous details that the prophet would not declare publicly. "Red light!" he would exclaim in such cases. When I asked what red meant, he said, "You know, traffic lights; stop! danger ahead!" In effect the band functioned as a Kinkenge social center (*foyer social*) in town. It maintained its own, tightly controlled membership list, with dues of a few pennies a week. Children were allowed to belong, but the treasurer checked to see that they were not using their lunch money to pay the dues. Funds were used to relieve members of the congregation in distress; the prophet received no salary and was a regular employee of the railroad.

Ntengo's palm reading (*bukandazi*, "chiromancy") was apparently copied at a distance from European practice, treated as an elaboration of the indigenous view that the lines of the palm were placed there by God (*Anthology*, no. 20, par. 4). Another Kinkenge prophet, affiliated with a different church, also read palms, but their techniques differed, and neither bore any resemblance to actual European techniques (Gettings 1965). Both prophets also read foreheads, the idea being, as with palms, that they could see numbers written there. In this instance, the adventitious element consists of certain phrases from Daniel and Revelation, superadded to the concept of *lusunzi* (soul, life chance). Schoolboys with the right numbers on their palms and foreheads were told they would do well in school (the prophets' judgments as to which ones looked intelligent coincided with mine); others were told that their numbers were too low (on a scale of one to one thousand) or that the number had been covered up (so that it could neither be read nor be effective) by the witchcraft of jealous "fathers" offended by some slight or some favor refused.

As a social worker, Ntengo depended partly on professional mystifications to impress his clients, partly on confidence and negotiating skills, the support of his followers, and the fact that during his interrogation (*mfyedolo*, "divination") his clients were never sure how much he really knew and were therefore forced to be honest about their own situations and motives. The assistance he offered included

information, advice, and psychological comforts in the form of such rituals as blessing the client or his house, providing red string "barriers" and sanctified towels, and "bathing in Jordan." The blessings, intended to "subdue evil spirits" (*kubula mpeve zambi*), included sprinkling and washing with Jordan water and also a particular gesture, as though the prophet were trying to knock down insects buzzing near the client's ears.

"Jordan" was a pool outside Matadi, revealed by the Holy Spirit for the use of the church. It was described to me as an astonishing place, where miracles of regeneration took place. We hired a taxi and visited it one day. It turned out to be a small artificial reservoir, owned by a particular *simbi* spirit. On a hot sticky day, the swim was extremely refreshing, and we all felt regenerated. Demijohns of water were filled to take back to the sick in town, and the driver asked that the prophet bless his taxi with water, too. Ntengo obligingly poured water on the car, laid hands on it, and prayed. "Better give the tires some extra, they're a bit thin," said the driver. Spiritually retreaded, we drove back to Matadi at terrifying speed, down a mountain road full of sharp curves. We arrived safely.

Ntengo's Casebook

In the 70 cases recorded, clients complained of afflictions as follows: menstrual and reproductive, 7; money shortage, failure of ambitions, 14; nightmares, 19; illness, 20; chronic illness, repeated deaths, 12; and miscellaneous, 6. Ntengo's diagnoses included: none mentioned, 13; natural causes, 2; resentment in mother's lineage, 12; resentment in father's lineage, 11; and resentment among affines, 5.

Ntengo sent seventeen of his clients back to the village to negotiate with their relatives and offered appropriate advice to twelve and ritual services to thirty-one. In only three cases were relatives summoned to his presence, and in nine no treatment was recorded. Interesting cases included the following.

1. "They have killed the battery in my radio."
2. Client dreamed that a man brought her a goat and told her to cut its throat. "I began cutting, but the goat cried out, Father! Father! I kept on, and still the goat cried, and presently it turned into my own child. When I woke, the child had a terrible fever, and he's not better yet." The prophet said, "This child is himself going to be a prophet. If you see any more signs, call me immediately, even at work. Mean-

while, the child should wear a *n'kaku*, and you should get a towel and be treated (*kubulwa*) for evil influences.

3. "My wife dreams of blood on the floor, I can't keep a job, and my son Isidore is failing in school." The prophet: "Although you only brought one with you, you have two wives and they fight."

4. Woman brings a few coins someone gave her; she wants to know if it is safe to accept them. The prophet says they came from an enemy, who is mad (*kilau*) and has evil intentions; he gave her the money in order, through her, to inflict similar madness on his *mbanda*, her husband's brother's wife. It would be safe to buy soap or kerosene with the money, but not food. She and her husband decide to give it to the church instead.

5. A man bought a used car with some money he had made, but it foundered on its first trip to the village. His fathers were annoyed that he had bought a car instead of goats and pigs for a farm in the village from which they could all expect to benefit; their jealousy ruined the vehicle. The next time he had money he bought another car, but also bought some livestock for the village, and to be doubly sure, he asked the prophet to treat (*kakisa*) the car with Jordan water to protect it.

6. A woman appears, accompanied by her "camarade;" she has miscarried at three months. The prophet points out that the *camarade* has a wife already, no wonder there's trouble.

7. Owner of a fleet of trucks complains he's not making the expected profit, the cost of repairs is too high. Prophet explains that the drivers are using the vehicles for intercourse with their women; the parts of the vehicles are so annoyed by this behavior they just give out (*bisengwa bifwemene*).

Conclusion

Despite common agreement and their own insistence that they are radically different kinds of healers, prophets and magicians seem alike in many ways to the observer of their practice. The most explicit difference, associated with the terms *ngunza* and *nganga*, is that the former, the prophet, charges no money, though he accepts gifts. His is a public service, both in the sense that it is represented as free to the public and that it is performed at the commandment of higher authority: God, who (as prophetic sermons often explain) is allied with the earthly government and above reproach. Prophetic services of divination and healing also take place for the most part in public and depend for their effectiveness on the intervention of the congre-

gation in support of the prophet. Closer inspection of the congregation supporting the prophet shows that it consists of people from the same rural region, usually clansmen, affines, and classificatory fathers and sons of the prophet himself. A prophet's relations with his followers, nominally constituting a church, are largely a transformation of existing bonds of kinship.

On all these dimensions, the magician's practice is contrasted. His relations with his clients are explicitly a matter of exchange, as between strangers. Though the magician proclaims that what's free is worth nothing, nevertheless a faintly sordid quality attaches to these as to all commercial exchanges, of which self-interest rather than kinship is the ground. The transaction take place in private and may, if revealed, become the object of legal charges.

In this distinction between public and private healing, the distinction of mystical from technical means, which differentiates witchcraft from magic among the Azande, is present, though only as a secondary consideration and rotated through ninety degrees from its position in the Zande paradigm. The "public" is relatively mystical; what is "private" is relatively technical. So Van Wing repeatedly insists, against the facts he himself reports, that chiefs have nothing to do with magic. Kongo prophets also make a point of not employing "charms" (*min'kisi*), but this often means only that medicines and signs used by individuals defined as prophets are ipso facto not charms. The distinction of means (mystical vs. technical) is derived from the distinction of ends or purposes by reference to the ideal social structure, a benevolent despotism sanctioned by important spirits whose delegate (*mvwala*) is the chief or prophet. Witches and magicians are associated with the kind of egalitarian, commercial, and anarchic social relations that more often prevail in real life. The powers of witches and magicians are obtained by exchange, not by gift from above, and inhere not in them personally but in the objects exchanged. These objects include both parts and representations of the individuals to be healed or harmed by the exchange: "meat," in the case of witches, or hairs and other exuviae in the case of charms prepared by magicians.

Though in principle public and private healing differ in ends and means, in practice a continuum of healing media exists, differentiated metonymically by reference to the rank of the energizing spirit in the hierarchy of spirits and metaphorically by the decreasing particularity and density of the external objects and rites through which the energy is channeled. The most disapproved kind of charm is one that contains the soul of one or more victims snatched from daily life for the purpose. The most honored is a direct representative of the highest Nzambi, a

human vessel of the Holy Spirit. In between there would once have been many *bisimbi* and ancestors of varying degrees of importance, corresponding to the corporate interests they represented, but in modern conditions the mediating hierarchy is diminished. Little remains except the opposed terms: God (Nzambi), associated with both church and state, and various furtive, privatistic expressions of individual problems and ambitions.

Metaphorically, the prophet's white robe, his holy water in clear glass bottles and enamel basins, his austere gestures of prayer and benediction, contrast with noxious-looking furs, skulls, and claws in the tightly wrapped bundles that he persuades his clients to give up or that in spite of them he discovers in concealment. In modern times, the objects in which the souls of victims of witchcraft are believed to be imprisoned, or through which they are entrapped, include money itself and tools. Coins, rather than food, are the typical bait used by modern witches, and doped change received in commercial transactions afflicts the unwary with suffering.

Conclusion

This book is about the organization of religious belief and practice in the social milieu in which the use of the Kongo language is indispensable and in which social action presupposes the framework of matrilineal descent.

The inseparability of sociology and epistemology has been recognized by Max Weber, cited in the Introduction, and by such diverse observers of social change in Africa as Monica Wilson, commenting on the persistence of communal rituals among the Nyakyusa (1959, 173, 219), and early modern Jesuit missionaries in Congo, when they attempted, by the *ferme chapelle* system, to confirm converts in their new faith by inducting them into new rural communities (Markowitz 1973, 14). In pursuing this principle systematically, I have moved, in the chapters of this book, from the past, when matrilineal Kongo was economically and politically autonomous, to the present, when it is little more than an increasingly circumscribed and threatened enclave, with a culture correspondingly impoverished. This decline does not, of course, characterize the career of the BaKongo themselves, who as one of the best-educated and politically powerful groups in Zaire play an important part in the national bureaucracy and in the increasingly homogeneous national culture that is emerging.

Chapter 9 gave some sense of the texture of modern religious life as it is carried on in the customary sector of this plural society. In every example that life is to some degree covert, as is to be expected. The customary sector is controlled by the bureaucratic sector, that is, by Zairians employed in the state, the church, the university, and other institutions whose manifest organizational mode is bureaucratic and whose language is French. In upholding the policies of these institutions they defend official interests, with which their own interests as members of an emergent managerial class are to a considerable degree identified.

The bureaucratic sector allots to the customary sector a certain autonomy over its own affairs as long as they are considered harmless. In this respect, healing has been, and remains, a controversial issue, in Zaire as in the United States. By its constant references to a particular cosmology that purports to explain the course of events, by its constant intervention in social affairs, its implicit statement of norms of indi-