



CHAPTER 4

PRAYER FOR PROTECTION- PERSPECTIVE ON LOZI TRADITIONS

4.1. Introduction

This chapter comprises of an investigation into the prayer traditions of the Lozi people. The Lozi people of western Zambia belong on a macro level to the Bantu of Africa. Therefore, to a large extent their religious experience resembles that of other African people. It must be mentioned at the outset that a historical examination of Lozi prayer comparable to the major religions of the world, is problematic. Lozi traditional religion suffers a handicap since there are no extant texts prior to the 19th century. Nevertheless, the presence of retentive memory has enabled anthropological literary works to be

collected (Parrinder 1976:17). Thus, this examination is a consideration of specialized monographs on African Traditional Religion, Lozi prayer in particular.

African prayer depicts the core of African spirituality. An investigation into prayer, introduces a valuable dimension to the understanding of African religion (Mbiti 1975:1). The following aspects of African religious thought come to the fore: concept of God, man, the world and spirits. The present study will cover diverse aspects of Lozi religion. But, the central theme is focused on prayer for protection. Traditionally the Lozi, like many primal people of the world, consult a Supreme Being/power when they face challenging situations in life. When calamities strike individuals or the community the assistance of the supreme power is summoned (O'Donovan 1996:42).

Various elements of prayer for protection among the Lozi will be examined. This will lead to investigations of the following: the concept of God, situations of danger, the enemy, spiritual forces at work, the response of the victim and rituals which accompany such prayer. Ultimately, the purpose of this endeavor is to draw comparisons between Lozi traditions and its Psalms counterpart. In this way, the results thereof will contribute to appreciation of prayer for protection.

4.2 Religious life of the Lozi

4.2.1 Introduction

The matrix of the Lozi religion is composed of a threefold strain, namely: *Nyambe* cult, royal grave cult and ancestral worship (Mainga 1972:95; Isichei 1995:142). This religious schema includes communion with the Supreme Being. Worshipers achieve this through sacrifices and offerings to God and ancestors. Such gifts serve the purpose of appeasement. Rituals are accompanied by material aspects of praying such as singing and dancing.

When faced with calamities, people respond through prayer and sacrifices. Lozi people may approach God directly or indirectly. The services of a royal gravesite custodian, village headman and family elder are employed in mediating between the victim and the spiritual realm. At other times, diviners and witchdoctors are consulted, particularly when witchcraft is suspected. Witchdoctors prescribe both curative and preventative medicine. Similarly, rainmakers are called upon when there is a drought. Although the Lozi

traditional ruler is not a priest, he acts on behalf of the kingdom by presenting a sacrificial animal to the grave custodian when there is a national crisis.

In Lozi society, communal danger arises from alien nations and offended royal ancestors - even the Supreme Being. These may cause lack of rain and epidemics. Individual danger is caused by human and spiritual foes. Human enemies normally would be witches. Spiritual foes are malevolent spirits. These enemies may cause loss of property, accidents, sickness and death.

As in many other religious traditions, among the Lozi, prayer is an attempt to influence and manipulate the supernatural forces with a view of gaining positive outcomes. These supernatural forces are known to possess powers of control over different objectives of the communities and in individuals. Of necessity, the nature and character of prayer is influenced by the needs of society and individuals at given times in history.

4.2.2 Nyambe cult

In the Lozi religious experience, the cult of *Nyambe* appears to be predominant (Giles 1997:63). It follows that all prayers are addressed to *Nyambe* directly (Mainga 1972:95; Ocaya 1993:178). *Nyambe* is the name of the Supreme Being. He is accorded with a realization of having created all things. *Nyambe* is therefore superior to all spirits (Jalla 1928:143). Some of his attributes include omniscience and omnipotence as seen from various proverbs and myths (Mainga 1972:95; Ikenga-Metuh 1982:17).

Lozi legend has it that in the beginning, *Nyambe* lived on earth in consort with his wife, *Nasilele* (Jalla 1928: 144; Turner 1952:49; Mainga 1972:95). The aggressive tendency of man, *Kamunu*, compelled *Nyambe* to flee to heaven where he set up his village, *Litooma*. The myth of this episode recounts how *Nyambe* ascended to heaven riding on a spider. Upon his arrival, he poked the spider's eyes and sent it back to earth. The purpose of blinding the spider was to deter man from imitating him as he had done at different occasions.

With the departure of *Nyambe* to heaven, the sun was recognized as his proxy, while the moon represented *Nasilele* (Turner 1952:49). At other times, people thought *Nyambe* lived amongst the stars from where he influenced their lives and death (Arnot 1889:88).

Further, prayers were made at sunrise perhaps, demonstrating associations with sun worship. Those who remember the ancient *Nyambe* worship, look up to the rising sun each morning for continued provision. With heads bowed to the ground, they clasp their hands in prayer (Jalla 1954:3; Rooke 2006:2).

The cult of *Nyambe* lacks the office of priest. However, this function was performed by the oldest member of the family whether male or female. Such a functionary was responsible for officiating on behalf of either the family or village (Mainga 1972:96). Rituals were carried out at an altar situated in the eastern fringes of the village. The altar was composed of white sand or a wooden structure or both.

It appears that *Nyambe* was worshipped only on special occasions and crises such as seedtime and harvest time, war, drought, sickness and death (Turner 1952:49; Jalla 1954:5; Mainga 1972:96).

For instance, before planting commences in September, the village headman sweeps and prepares a spot where an altar is erected. An altar is constructed from sticks and clay and it serves the purpose of holding a dish. Households then place a little of each seed they intend to plant. Garden utensils such as hoes, axes and assegais are also placed on the altar. Thereafter, the headman kneels before the people in front of the altar facing the rising sun. The headman joins his hands and bows down, and then he looks up raising his hands. He continues to stand up and kneel down repeatedly while turning to the right and the left. The villagers join in and follow the leadership of the headman (Turner 1952:49). After prayer, the head man blows the horn and the gathering gives a royal salute. This action precedes subsequent bowing and clapping gestures.

Similarly, when faced with sickness or prior to embarking on a hunting trip or after a nightmare, a person may pray to *Nyambe*. Abstaining from work that day and remaining in prayer to *Nyambe* the whole day until sunset, accompanies such periods of prayer.

During the new-moon prayers were made to *Nasilele* the wife of God (Jalla 1954:5). According to Coillard (1902:224), this celebration is similar to the Israelite Feast of the New Moon. The day of the New Moon was kept strictly as a day of rest. Celebrations were held with men without distinction, participating. Women applauded with shrill cries from a distance. At these feasts, oxen were slaughtered, cooked and eaten in public. The

New Moon was greeted immediately as its outline appeared. Although direct prayers to God are seldom except for serious problems, he is also addressed indirectly through ancestors (Westerlund 2006:97-100).

Excursus: God

Africans believe in a Supreme Being called by various names in different cultures (Mitchell 1977:23). God is pivotal in African Traditional Religion. The centrality of the belief in God is demonstrated by the presence of numerous names in basically every African language for God. Similarly Lozi people believe in a High God (Mulimu). His personal name is *Nyambe*. The Supreme God however is generally considered to be remote from petty human affairs (Reynolds 1963:10). Yet the African God is near to his people (Omari 1971:7). There is an apparent similarity in the use of some of the names across the continent of Africa (Mbiti 1975:43). This similarity owes to the fact that African people have a common origin. Equally belief in God predates the time of tribal separation. The following qualities are common amongst the Africans (Mitchell 1977:23): in African traditional religion God is believed to be the **creator** (Nyirongo 1997:11; Westerlund 2006:118). In this light various creative descriptive names are ascribed to God such as Begetter, Maker, Potter, Fashioner, Carpenter, Originator and many others (Mbiti 1975:44; Imasogie 1985:22). In some societies people believe that God created the universe out of nothing. Yet other cultures believe that he created in phases using the substance from the primary creatures for his later creation (Ikenga-Metuh 1982:18-19). Additionally, God continues to create; for example he moulds children in their mother's wombs (Parrinder 1968:35). There are some tribal groups that hold to the belief that some of the created beings were responsible for specific functions under God's direction. To the contrary others believe that God alone was responsible for all the creative work. The attribute of creator is further explicated from creation myths, which are prevalent across Africa (Mitchell 1977:24). Some of the myths recount a golden age when God lived with humans. At this stage humans were immortal until something occurred to disrupt this blissful existence. Lozi people believe that *Nyambe* is the creator and origin of all things. In Lozi mythology *Nyambe* is the creator of all things and lived on earth with his wife *Nasilele* (Mackintosh 1922:368). *Nyambe* was polygamous and lived like an African king. God had two chief counselors Sashisho the messenger and Kang'ombe the lechwe. The two served as intermediaries between God and man (Jalla 1928:144-145). *Nyambe* made the forests, river and the plain and all the animals, birds and fishes therein. He made man, *Kamunu* and his wife too. In time *Kamunu's* ways trouble God. By eavesdropping *Kamunu* learnt the carpenter and smith's crafts. Thereafter *Kamunu* proceeded to kill numerous animal species. Afraid that similar fate would fall on him *Nyambe* fled to an island however man followed him on a canoe. God worried about man's persistent pestering took *Nasilele* and *Sashisho* with him across the great river and went up to *Litooma* his heavenly village on a spider's web. The spider, which had acted as a guide, was blinded so as to deter man from following. Man tried to reach God by building a platform. Unfortunately it collapsed. Henceforth *Kamunu* has given up on his attempts to follow *Nyambe* (Jalla 1954:1, 2, Mainga 1972:96). There are numerous parallels between African creation myths and biblical ones. Firstly these myths establish the Supreme Being as the source of the world. Although it was thought previously that the African God is transcendent and remote it has been demonstrated that actually he is also immanent. This idea arose from the lack of worship order and the absence of visible communal worship structures (Mitchell

1977:25). Shrines and sacred places employed for conducting sacrifices and prayer are a rare occurrence. Another reason for the earlier dismissal was caused by the rejection of myths as they are not textually based but oral recollections. However myths are a good way of understanding traditional mentality (Omari 1971:6). Further it is common for petitioners to approach God indirectly. Lozi petitioners request their ancestors for solutions to their difficulties. However in many parts of Africa people request God directly particularly when a crisis persists (Gehman 1989:190). Thus the Supreme Being is actively involved in peoples' lives (Westerlund 2006:119). God is believed to be **all-powerful and almighty** (Nyirongo 1997:11; Westerlund 2006:119). He is the source of all power (Parrinder 1968:33; Imasogie 1985:23). The extent of this power is motivated by God's creative acts (Mbiti 1975:50). While Lozi believe that God is all-powerful there are some contradictions as can be seen from the creation myth. For example God was forced to flee from man's aggressive tendencies. In addition Nyambe relied on a spider to provide him with transport to heaven (Mainga 1972:100). To the contrary the following ancient praise illustrates *Nyambe's* power: *Kasamusimwa Kaloyangundu, minyamisimwaeyi. Uyu natumuka bakanwa natumuka ba kaluyango bali mwala. Tanyamaminyi unamanongwawina. Uiluteela bakimwa be lukulimbulula. Kawa maci, bo kawa nungu, to li ba munu* "True, there was none so powerful as to withstand his command when the hour came. Nor was it possible to foretell when his messenger, death, would visit, so that escape was vain" (Muuka 1966:250). African people believe that God **provides** life, sunshine, rain, water and good health for his creation (Imasogie 1985:22; Nyirongo 1997:11; Westerlund 2006:118). Therefore he is praised as giver, healer, helper, guard, and source. Since he is associated with benevolence prayers are made requesting him to supply their needs and rescue them from difficulties (Mbiti 1975:46). He also possesses the capacity to protect his creation (Omari 1971:8). The African God governs and directs his universe (Ikenga-Metuh 1982:20). Despite the presence of death the cycle of life continues through birth. *Nyambe* possesses ambivalent qualities. It has been suggested that he does not intervene in his creation (Turner 1952:49). However Turner misses the point as Lozi historical mythology alleges that *Nyambe* in fact intervenes on behalf of his creation as in this deluge legend: Prior to the time of Mboo, the first Lozi king the Bulozhi flood plain was overwhelmed by the deluge (Meyi a lungwa ngwa). All animals died and farms were swept away. *Nyambe* instructed Nakambeka to build the first great canoe, Nalikwanda (for the people). The canoe was painted black and white stripes signifying black people and spirituality respectively. The canoe was then loaded with every known seed type and animal dung. When the water subsided the canoe landed and the survivors scattered seeds producing plants. Similarly animals sprang forth from animal dung (Jalla 1954:4, Rooke 2006:2). God's goodness does not come to an end. Africans rarely assigned calamities to the hand of God (Westerlund 2006:119). Other forces are held responsible such as ancestors, wicked spirits and witchcraft (Gehman 1989:191). But it is possible that Lozi people could have believed in a capricious God. The rationale behind this postulation being that ancestors had gone through life's experiences hence they were bound to be more sympathetic than God (Arnot 1889:74). Although *Nyambe* punishes offenders he is not malicious but merciful and giver of all things (Muuka 1966:250). In African Traditional Religion God is said to be **omniscient** (Nyirongo 1997:11). His understanding is unparalleled and nothing is hidden from him (Imasogie 1985:23). In Nigeria he is called the only wise God (Mbiti 1975:51). Men can appeal to him for justice, as he is able to reward the evildoers justly (Parrinder 1968:33). However some authors object to the attribute of omniscience (Gehman 1989:189). They argue that the concept is foreign hence incompatible to African Traditional Religion. To be sure various African people hold to the belief in the all-knowing God. Generally it is possible to deceive ancestors but not God. A careful examination of Lozi proverbs yields

limitations in *Nyambe*'s omniscience though. This is explicit in his surprise at man's ability to imitate him. As a result God came to fear man and ultimately fled to heaven. Further *Nyambe*, God resorted to the assistance of diviners in order to discern a place of refuge far from man's reach (Mainga 1972:99). All over Africa the belief in God's **omnipresence** is upheld (Imasogie 1985:23). This characteristic is expressed in different ways. In Cameroon some people say that God is everywhere at the same time. In the same way some people in Zambia say that God never comes to an end anywhere (Mbiti 1975:51). The Mende people of Sierra Leone believe that God fills the universe. Although he is not immanent his name is continuously on the people's lips through blessings, greetings and prayers (Parrinder 1968:33). God is at times assigned a place of abode and may visit specific places on earth. His presence is strongest at shrines and groves. Nevertheless, there is a distinction between holy places and God. Practically people are able to communicate with God wherever they may be (Gehman 1989:190). To portray this characteristic certain metaphors are employed such as wind and air. God is known to be **spirit, invisible** and **eternal** (Nyirongo 1997:11). The pygmies sing about God as follows: *In the beginning was God, today is God tomorrow will be God* (Mbiti 1975:52). God has no body (Imasogie 1985:22). Unlike people from different parts of the world Africans are not known to have practiced the kind of idolatry that leads into making objects representing God (Gehman 1989:190). Although God's cult is limited due to his distance from men and the existence of intermediaries he was addressed particularly when all else had failed (Omari 1971:7; Westerlund 2006:120).

4.2.3 Royal grave cult

The institution of the royal graves forms the second strain in Lozi traditional religion. In this case, prayers and sacrifices are directed to the spirits of the ancestor kings as against *Nyambe* the Supreme Being.

The institution of kingship and royal cult, lies at the center of Lozi society (Isichei 1995:142). In pre-colonial time the king was paramount in terms of the socio-economic and political structure of the kingdom. These functions have been taken up by the post-independence national government. Lozi people prescribe to a belief in the divine ancestry of the royal family. The royal family is said to have descended from *Nyambe* through the ancestress, Mbuyu (Coillard 1902:224; Mainga 1972:95; Brown 1998:25).

Through royal descent, an individual is eligible for kingship. At installation, the candidate undergoes a series of purification rites. After the performance of various rituals and investment of royal insignia, the king is presented to the populace. Henceforth, the king is shrouded in mystery, power and ritualism. The installation of an individual with kingship makes him distinct from ordinary people. The king's special powers and the performance of communal rituals to the gods, ensure the well-being of the kingdom (Mitchell 1977:30).

However Ocaya 1993:178 exaggerates the prominence the kings' divinity over *Nyambe*. In Lozi religious experience *Nyambe* is supreme.

Further, the king, in most parts of Africa possesses sacred attributes. Lewanika (the second Lozi king after the overthrow of the Kololo) for instance, had a high sense of his divinity. Under Lewanika, the tradition of divine kingship came to the fore (Mainga 1973:143). When confronted with the gospel by early missionaries, his Indunas insisted that their king was a son of the divinity, a god himself; hence the reason for paying tribute and homage to him. Due to beliefs in the divine status of kings therefore, royal ancestral worship figures greatly in certain quarters of African society. There is a transformation at coronation, such that all the blood lineage of ancestors invades his being, making him a synthesis of the ancestors and the living expression of the deity (Lemarchand 1977:3; Mulago 1991:122).

A closer examination of Lozi traditions, shows that the mythic origins of kingship are an attempt to cover up the historical aspects of the institution. Similarly, the institution did not appear fully centralized, but evolved with time. It is argued that the founders of the Lozi dynasty did not seize the aboriginal tribal groups suddenly, but gradually. They settled in the north where they established a ruling family. The northern origin theory is further motivated by the occurrence of place names around Kalabo, which are found in early traditions (Mainga 1973:24).

The royal grave cult can be traced back to Mboo (the first known Lozi king during the settlement period) (Giles 1997:60). It does not appear among the earlier groups. It is believed that Mboo's spirit transmigrated from his burial place, Ikatulamwa to his own chosen site at Imwambo (Jalla 1954:14-16). The ceremonial sacrifice at the royal grave is a late development only recorded during the reign of Ngombala the sixth king, contrary to legendary accounts referring the sacrificial rites to the beginning (Jalla 1954:12).

Lozi tradition regarding animal sacrifice at royal graves, narrates that Mbanga, the son of Ngombala, the second ruler in the Southern reaches of the kingdom, ascended to heaven where he acquired great wisdom from *Nyambe*. While in heaven, Ngombala requested animals. *Nyambe* gave him animals from which a herd was picked for sacrifice at the royal graves on his return (Jalla 1954:1-4). It is therefore apparent that the rulers developed the royal grave cult together with its mythical features in order to set kingship above scrutiny.

Indeed, the conquest of dissenters Mwanambinyi and Mange by Ngalama, was crucial as rival centers of supernatural and ritual power were destroyed. Importantly, the development process of kingship is not easy to unravel, as oral tradition does not provide sufficient evidence (Mainga 1973:35).

In many parts of Africa, the spirits of dead tribal leaders, heroes, clan founders and warriors continue to be honoured by some communities (Mbiti 1975:72). Dead leaders are offered respect through legends and ceremonies. In certain societies, the dead leaders are elevated to a status of divinities and may be referred to as being close to God. In such cases, people may approach them through prayer during crisis. They also could mention their names when inquiring from God. The departed are expected to relay the prayers to God. In particular societies, it is considered rude to approach God directly, unless, when it is absolutely necessary. Hence, mentioning the deceased in prayer is common.

The king continues to have special powers even after death. At any rate, the king is said to become more powerful in death than in life. At death, the king is buried at a place of his choice. The deceased king is believed to have the ability to influence the fate of both individuals and the nation. The departed king assumes a position of a mediator between the living and God (Mackintosh 1899:220). Therefore, during calamities, prayers are offered to the dead kings with an understanding that they will convey them to *Nyambe*, God (Muuka 1966:258).

The royal burial site is turned into a shrine, guarded by a number of people selected for this specific task (Mainga 1972:96). It follows then that the burial site is converted into a village. A special custodian of the grave also resides at the village. This official is charged with the responsibility of caring for the actual grave, tending to the needs of the deceased king and acting as an intermediary between the departed king and the living. The royal grave village is one of the many sanctuaries, others being Nalolo the Southern capital, the *Natamoyo's* court (Minister of Mercy) as well as the king's court (Coillard 1902:224).

The grave official also known as *Ñomboti*, possesses special powers, which enable him to communicate with the dead king. His duties involve offering sacrifices to the departed king on behalf of individuals for various requests, ranging from good luck to health. He also performs sacrifices from the reigning king on behalf of the nation. National requests by

means of offerings are performed in cases of calamities such as drought, famine and war. Thus, chiefly ancestors influence their families and nation (Westerlund 2006:89).

In the event that rituals are performed, the reigning king presents an ox or whatever is necessary for sacrifice to the *Ñomboti*. After slaughtering the animal, suitable portions are presented to the spirit of the dead royalty at the grave opening (*Limbwata*). The spirit of the dead king is expected to receive the offering. The official then implores the departed king to intervene on behalf of the kingdom. When the rituals have been conducted and the requirements met, the *Ñomboti* proceeds to report back to the king the message from the spirit.

Before important decisions are made, the dead kings perform a key role through their custodians. They are consulted in order to elicit direction on key issues pertaining to the nation. It is said that Mboo, the first king, continues to preside over national councils and is briefed about the ongoing at his village *Ikatulamwa* (Coillard 1902:594). The verdict from the royal ancestor serves as a guide to the king and his advisors, and ultimately the nation at large (Mainga 1972:97).

The powers of the dead dignitaries are further shown by the fact that travelers are not allowed to bypass a royal grave village without paying homage and presenting offerings. The offerings include white calico and beads of the same colour. Failure to present offerings may evoke the wrath of the deceased king, causing misfortune. The reigning king alone, with his Prime Minister, have the right to enter the sacred enclosure. Libations are poured out in the form of milk, honey and beer. Visitors and travelers to the royal grave salute the dead king both upon arrival and departure (Coillard 1902:171). Homage is paid by crouching to the ground, clapping, loud cries and all the while bowing profoundly (Betrand 1899:164).

Equally, at the installation of a new king, special rites are performed on the candidate at the graves of the ancestress Mbuyu and Mboo, the first king at *Makono*. Thereafter, the new king is presented at other gravesites where sacrifices are performed and approval is sought (Mainga 1972:97). For case in point, the missionary Coillard, was refused a meeting with Lewanika who was paying homage, until he had agreed to send offerings to the royal graves (Coillard 1902:217).

It appears that the reigning king does not only approach his ancestors at the royal graves. Lewanika had a grove near his harem. The grove was carefully screened with mats. The king used to offer prayers, sacrifices and libations to his ancestors at the grove (Coillard 1902:224).

4.2.4 Ancestral cult

The spirits of non-royal ancestors are also venerated by their descendants. In contradistinction from the remote relationship between Lozi people and *Nyambe*, the ancestral spirits are closely concerned with the affairs and behaviour of their descendants (Reynolds 1963:10). In African Traditional Religion, it is difficult to appreciate ideas about God without acknowledging the place of ancestors (Parrinder 1968:87; Bujo 1992:41). Ancestors form the most prominent element of African Traditional Religion (Anderson 1991:79). In some areas ancestors are the most intimate gods of the people. Since they are considered part of the family, they are consulted on important issues. People may not eat or drink without dropping portions for the ancestors. When people invoke their ancestors, they invoke God as well (Westerlund 2006:89). Prayer therefore, is normally offered through the ancestors.

Like in many parts of Africa, ancestors have a vital role in the Lozi religious experience (Turaki 1999:34). They are venerated by surviving members of their families. Ancestral spirits are accorded respect in the form of beer and food at appropriate occasions. The belief in ancestral veneration is founded on the premise that the dead continue to exist after death (Imasogie 1985:37). It appears that the deceased do not change their status. For instance, kings continue in their status as kings in death while subjects also have a fixed status (Arnot 1889:73; Mitchell 1977:27). As a result of the belief in the continued existence of human spirits, their number is in myriads. Ideas regarding the abode of the ancestors are varied. Ultimately, ancestors are considered to be closely watching over their families (Parrinder 1968:58).

During family difficulties and catastrophes, prayers and libations are offered to ancestor spirits (Maboea 2002:15). Requests for blessings and good-will in the areas of health, prosperity and success in hunting, are also addressed to them. Ancestors can become malevolent when neglected, and can cause unprecedented harm on erring members

(Mainga 1972:97; Ukpong 1990:68; Maboea 2002:15). It is their prerogative to attack the living, unfortunately, they may be manipulated to molest innocent people (Parrinder 1968:59; Imasogie 1985:43). Punishment is sometimes manifested through possession of the victim. Their capricious acts include drought, barrenness, sleeplessness, sickness and death (Anderson 1991:82). Other reasons for chastisement, are naming and passing a trade or craft to a descendant (Reynolds 1963:10). In addition, among the Lozi, the husband's ancestors may affect his wife while the inverse does not occur (Turner 1952:50).

Ancestral spirits are considered truly members of the family (Largerwerf 1985:17). The distinguishing mark is noticed in their mode of existence. The deceased no longer share in fleshly existence and they have crossed over into the super-sensible world (Idowu 1973:177). The deceased have become free from human limitations and return to take their abode with human relatives. In this way, they can benefit or hinder them.

Sacrifices and libations may be offered to ancestors (Schiltz 2002:354). Libations include beer, water, milk or some other beverages (Maboea 2002:15). Adult family members commonly perform this practice. In many parts of Africa, there are shrines either in the homestead or behind the house where rituals are held. Among the Masai, veneration may be conducted at graveyards (Westerlund 2006:73). Rituals of this kind may be conducted daily or occasionally. The living dead may also visit through dreams (Anderson 1991:80). Unfortunately, ancestral spirits may be malevolent at times causing misfortune and disease. Through divination, the cause for hardship is determined. If ancestors are responsible, specific rituals are performed in order to appease them (Mbiti 1975:73; Imasogie 1985:43; Ukpong 1990:77). At other times, God is appealed to in order to get rid of the bad spirit (Mbiti 1975:73).

Ancestors are also benevolent. Thus, they are prayed to for crop success for they can send rain as well as fertility to the land. They are sought for procreation to ensure the perpetuation of the race (Parrinder 1968:61). Ancestors were also known to assist in time of war. Equally important is the fact that the ancestral cult does not require local foci. Commoner ancestors have no fixed homes. Rituals are not performed at the gravesite on regular intervals, but could be held at any of the posts near the hut (Gluckman 1968:29-30). Through the process of attacks and intervention by ancestral spirits, men get to obey them and social order is maintained (Parrinder 1968:59; Largerwerf 1985:17).

Since the living have no memory of people who died in the distant past, the related spirits are described in varying ways. They are thought of in terms of superhuman qualities, stupid and naivety. When the last surviving relative who remembered the deceased passes on, they are forgotten. Generally, such unknown spirits are held in suspicion and therefore hated. Thus, people associate such spirits with human possession, diseases - particularly mental illness, deafness and dumbness (Mbiti 1975:72; Anderson 1991:83).

4.2.5 Belief in spirits

The African view of the universe is governed by belief in the visible and invisible (Imasogie 1985:67). In the order of created beings then, there exists spirits between God and human beings. The idea of spirits and the concept of God are crucial to understanding African Traditional Religion; otherwise a rushed classification under animism can be arrived at (Mitchell 1977:30). Although Africans seem to relate to natural objects such as mountains and rivers in their worship, this forms but a segment of the religion. The spirits can be broadly classified in two categories namely, nature spirits and human spirits.

Nature spirits are associated with natural objects and forces. Therefore the first group under nature spirits is related to the sky. The spirits associated with the sky include: the sun, moon, stars, rainbow and rain, storms, wind and thunder (Anderson 1991:76). It is believed that these objects are spirits or are inhabited by spirits (Mbiti 1975:66). In some African societies there is a belief that stronger spirits such as divinities are responsible for the luminaries. Where this belief is prevalent, people may go ahead and offer sacrifices to the divinities in order to seek their assistance or act as intermediaries between the petitioners and God. At the same time, not all African people believe that there are natural spirits in the sky. These objects therefore are understood as simply heavenly objects or forces that are the direct work of God.

The second category of nature spirits is related to the earth. The following objects represent this class: the earth, hills and mountains, boulders and rocks, trees and forests, metals, water in various forms for instance lakes, rivers and waterfalls, certain animals and insects and specific diseases (Anderson 1991:76). As with sky spirits, here also some spirits are regarded as divinities hence, they are accorded high status. Spirits of the sea and forest may be examples of divinities in given societies. In societies where belief in

divinities associated with the sky elements is prevalent, earth divinities are likely to occur. The aspect of correlating earthy objects with divinities is not found everywhere in Africa (Mbiti 1975:70).

It is vital to indicate that people are not entirely bound to nature spirits. The ramification of the foregoing is that people could discard the idea of a particular spirit. It follows therefore that despite the fact that these nature spirits are invisible and appear to be very powerful, they are at the mercy of humans (Mbiti 1975:70). Another important characteristic regarding nature spirits, has to do with the fact that where they are associated with major geographical features, communal ritual is made central.

Spirit possession is common in many parts of Africa. Among the Maasai of Tanzania, women are the usual victims of such afflictions (Peterson 1985:175). Lozi people witness to similar maladies, which are caused by spirits of the bush. Some such complaints are related to forms of madness and fits. These illnesses are called *muba* and *kanono* respectively. *Muba* is relatively late in appearing in Bulozhi. It is reported as having originated from the Totela (Gluckman 1968:85). Treatment is by exorcism. In addition, the use of a genet skin for treatment appears to be universal (Reynolds 1963:65). The reason for a common remedy is ascribed to a lack of enough developmental time which could have given rise to alternatives. Equally important is the fact that most *muba* patients become doctors perpetuating the same method of healing.

The spirits, which are considered responsible for *muba* attacks, are *mwenda-njangula* and *mwenda-lutaka* (Reynolds 1963:65; Gluckman 1968:85). These spirits are believed to appear as creatures in human form. They possess human limbs on one side of their bodies and reeds covered by bees wax on the other side. These demons of the dense bush are said to operate from the thick and do not come out in the light for fear of their wax melting (Gluckman 1968:85). When they desire a human being, whatever the sex, they will try to kidnap them. When one meets the spirit, a fight ensues. In the event that the spirit wins the human being dies but should the inverse be true, the victor is taught how to cure the ailment. This appears to be rationalization of a lunatic (Reynolds 1963:65).

4.2.6 Sacrifices and offerings

Sacrifices and offerings are prominent in all world religions. In African Traditional Religion they are means of achieving contact and communion between man and Deity (Adeyemo 1979:33). Material gifts are brought to the Deity for the sake of appeasement, restoration of health and warding off evil (Ukpong 1990:82, 89; Westerlund 2006:70). Sacrifices involve the act of shedding blood of animals, birds and in some cases human. Blood is synonymous with life in African Traditional Religion. On the other hand, offerings are gifts to the Deity devoid of blood. The following items may be included under offerings: foodstuffs, water, milk, honey and money (Mbiti 1975:59).

In cases of serious danger arising from drought, epidemics, war, raids, calamity, pests and destructive floods, sacrifices are done (Westerlund 2006:70). Hazards at the national scale required the people's response. Among Lozi people, sacrifices are conducted for various reasons, mainly for rain and serious petitions. These sacrifices in most cases involve the slaughter of animals. But in certain instances human sacrifices may have been performed (Arnot 1889:54, 75). Normally, selected animals are sacrificed on behalf of the nation. Domesticated animals may be sacrificed as long as they conform to the set standard. Some of the requirements would be that of color, which may be black, brown, white or red whatever the case may be. Equally, the owner of the animal has to be upright (Mbiti 1975:59; Imasogie 1985:43, 44).

Family-threatening adversities also call for sacrifices. These calamities are health issues, marital difficulties, remembering the deceased and matters of prosperity. While human beings were sacrificed in cases of national disasters, only domesticated animals are employed for family matters (Mbiti 1975:59). In contradistinction it is known that human sacrifices were conducted for the purpose of sanctifying boats, drums, houses and other pieces of property. Where they were conducted, children were the obvious victims although adults were also sacrificed. The macabre affair proceeded with the victim's toes and fingers being amputated. The blood was sprinkled on the object for sanctification. The victim was then killed, ripped apart and thrown into the river (Arnot 1889:54, 75; Holub 1976:318). At any rate, family sacrifices are performed by the family head or ritual leader. Elsewhere in Africa the following are some of the animals sacrificed on behalf of the family: sheep, goats, cattle, dogs and fowls. (Mbiti 1975:59; Westerlund 2006:70).

Similarly, offerings are made both for the community and individual needs. Individual or family offerings are given from whatever they could afford and it included expensive and

cheap substances. Family offerings are conducted in or around the home. In certain cases people have family shrines. Offerings made on behalf of the community are performed at sacred places. These places could be shrines, sacred groves or holy places such as hills, lakes, waterfalls and so on (Ukpong 1990:83).

It is important to underline the fact that prayers always accompany sacrifices and offerings. The reason for this is simply to make known the purpose for such undertakings (Adeyemo 1979:35). In much the same way, sacrifices and offerings are meant to convey the seriousness of the prevailing condition. African people understand that the gods do not feast on the elements, but rather sacrifices and offerings demonstrate their desperation. Presenting sacrifices and offerings show the need not to approach the deities empty-handed. Either the leaders or the assembly may eat these elements. In yet other cases, sacrifices and offerings are left for wild animals.

When the Lozi offer prayers, offerings are often made to the spirits of the forefathers. These offerings are performed under a tree or grove planted for this purpose. The quantity or size of the offering correlates with the measure of the request. In some instances, beer is poured out, at other times, a piece of cloth is offered. Usually, the piece of cloth is tied to a horn of an animal and stuck into the ground. If an ox is slaughtered its blood is then applied over the horn which serves as an altar (Arnot 1889:77).

The purpose of making sacrifices and offerings is to draw the attention of the deity (Ukpong 1990:83; Schiltz 2002:354). But, because there is an understanding that God does not necessarily need these offerings, they are in turn made before lesser spirits such as divinities or the ancestors. Thus, sacrifices are not intended to bend the will of the Deity, rather they serve the purpose of paying homage (Ukpong 1990:83). Further sacrificial meals portray the larger family of the living and the dead (Oosterhuizen 1991:41). The intermediaries do not only receive the sacrifices and offerings; they also relay the prayers to God. Ordinary people concern themselves with observing the correct procedure of the ritual. Ritual leaders, on the other hand, are fully aware of the intermediary role of ancestors (Mbiti 1975:60).

4.2.7 Singing and dancing

Occasions of communal prayers as well as sacrifices and offerings are usually graced with singing and dancing. At these events, people like to sing, dance, clap their hands and express joy. Some prayers have litanies or choruses, which require that the people join in response (Mbiti 1975:61). Witchdoctors also employ songs, dancing, prayers and other magical rites during their healing and protection provision sessions (Janzen 1978:73).

When it is necessary for the worshippers to move from one place to another it follows that they do this amidst the beating of drums, playing of music, dancing and rejoicing. Music and dancing provide an opportunity for the people to participate emotionally and physically in prayer and worship. It is said that music penetrates the being of the petitioners (Mbiti 1975:61). Such celebrations could last the whole day or more.

4.2.8 Medicine and security

4.2.8.1 Medicine

Life is not always smooth and hardships come in diverse forms. Africans are driven to seek answers outside themselves precisely because of the backdrop of ideas regarding the operation of the universe. It follows that usually blame is placed on the presence of witchcraft, sorcery and magic. The victim proceeds to search for remedies, protection against further attacks and ways of neutralizing and even counteracting against the operations of evil forces (Berg-Schlossler 1984:215; Abimbola 1991:56, 57).

Medicine therefore offers both curative and preventative measures against the powers of witchcraft (Largerwerf 1985:29). The functions of diagnosis and prescription of medical portions is the province of either the medicine man or diviner (Lartey 1986:75). In healing rituals, herbs are administered to the victim of witchcraft and sorcery. In addition, mystical medicine is packaged in the form of objects to carry around, bury in the yard or home. It may be necessary for the medicine man to visit the victim's home in order to apply the mystical medicine. By so doing, forces of evil are driven away and protection is guaranteed (Mbiti 1975:171; Abimbola 1991:57).

However, it is difficult to accurately substantiate the efficacy of some of the prescriptions. What is certain though, is the fact that confidence is generated by such medicine. The result of this hope inspires the sick, provides courage to the traveler and security is guaranteed to the person who senses the eerie presence of wicked forces.

Ultimately, God is the source of all medicine. Therefore it is common for people to side-step traditional healers and their potions and appeal to God. Traditional healers too may appeal to God for their potions to be effective (Westerlund 2006:117). When the situation turns desperate, the victim may turn to God in request for protection and assistance. Inversely, the victim may pray and seek the assistance of a medicine man as God's tangible outworking agent (Lartey 1986:75).

4.2.8.2 Protection objects

There are diverse objects that are used for religious purposes (Udvardy 1989:45). In particular, some of the charms serve the function of eliciting protection for the bearers (Galaty 1981:73; Lartey 1986:75). To be effective, the objects may be worn around the neck, arm and waist. Some are carried around in pockets and bags. They are also put on rooftops, buried at gates leading to homesteads, in house foundations and fields. In yet other cases such articles are swallowed. Furthermore, different kinds of objects can be found at shrines and sacred places.

In African Traditional Religion there is a fine line between magic and religion. This is demonstrated by the above use of objects in order to manipulate the spiritual for human ends (Mitchell 1977:59; Berg-Schlossler 1984:215). Although the use of charms and magical elements is widespread, it is believed that the upright do not require these elements for protection. Consequently, there is an encounter between humans and the divine apart from magic.

4.2.9 Role of evil

There are fundamental questions precipitated by the concept of evil and its origin. Equally perplexing to diverse, people of various religious backgrounds is a question regarding why people suffer? In African Traditional Religion the answer is three-pronged, namely: human mistakes, forces of chance and malicious forces (Peterson 1985:175).

By nature, African society is closely knit. This translates into the bounding together of every member of society into one whole. Thus individuals have obligations to the entire group. The group on the other hand is safeguarded by traditions. When these traditions

are ignored or deliberately disregarded, certain misfortunes are evoked. Conversely, when traditions are followed, balance occurs resulting in harmony and prosperity in the community. Usually a misfortune befalls individuals, but in certain cases, the entire community is affected (Mitchell 1977:64; Westerlund 2006:94).

Societies observe taboos which impinge on community life. Exemplarily taboos forbid disrespecting the elderly, immorality and neglecting the ancestors. Ignoring taboos results in misfortunes such as prolonged labour, persistent illness and failure. Consulting a diviner may provide a solution. Remedies include communicating with ancestors, performing prescribed rituals and confession of one's mistake as in the case of prolonged labour where a pregnant woman is required to mention the partner in adultery (Mitchell 1977:65).

In certain African societies people believe in the existence of a divinity that is characterized by misfortune and evil deeds (Janzen 1978:68; Arhem 1989:83). The Yoruba god, Eshu is an example of this type of divinity. He is associated with performing tricks on his victims. It is however vital to underscore the fact that he is not evil incarnate. Eshu is capable of benevolence and protecting those who honour him (Eades 1980:120).

Sorcery and witchcraft are key contributors to the presence of evil in African cultures (Westerlund 2006:173). However, not all African societies attest to witchcraft (Guenther 1992:84). Whereas divinities and people's mistakes lead to misfortune, chief among these factors is the work of witches and sorcerers. Sorcerers and witches are known to cause harm to people maliciously. The major difference between sorcerers and witches is in their manner of causing harm. Sorcerers are believed to employ material objects and manipulate them for their evil intentions. On the other hand, witches use their innate powers to bring harm to the victims. Overall, bad magic is feared across the African continent (Berg-Schlossler 1984:216).

Excursus: Sorcery, witchcraft and magic

Witchcraft is **defined** as the manifestation of mystical forces which may be inborn in a person, inherited, or acquired in various ways (Mbiti 1975:166; Hayes 1995:339). Forces of witchcraft may attach themselves to an innocent person who inevitably becomes a witch (Reynolds 1963:14; Mitchell 1977:65). Magic and witchcraft may be combined voluntarily or otherwise to cause harm on certain individuals (Hopkins 1980:60; Schiltz 2002:347). Sorcery on the other hand involves the casting of spells, poisoning, or other physical harm

done secretly (Hayes 1995:340). A sorcerer then causes harm to befall the victim's life, crops and animals (Reynolds 1963:14; Mitchell 1977:66). Witchcraft causes a lot of fear on people (Schiltz 2002:338). Among the Azande it is clear that witches possess inherent ability to cause harm to the victim. They perform no rite, utter no spell and do not use medicine. On the other hand sorcerers are capable of doing harm through the performance of magical rites and bad medicine (Evans-Pritchard 1937:21). Unlike the Azande Lozi people do not distinguish between a witch and sorcerer. Similarly other African people do not segregate witches from sorcerers (Hopkins 1980:58; Dillone-Malone 1986:374; Largerwerf 1985:5). There is an absence of the limiting definition of witchcraft as inherent power of evil. The *muloi* (witch) is conscious of his malevolent acts as he engages both observable substances and manipulation of spirits (Turner 1952:54). Sorcery, witchcraft and magic may not be described as a form of religion. But clearly there is a level of belief in the malevolent power residing in the practitioners of this dark art. Witchcraft may have been the ancient religion of Europe and possibly Africa (Melland 1923:60). In the historical study of Lozi religion it appears that sorcery, witchcraft and magic existed to the near exclusion of both the *Nyambe* and ancestor spirits cults (Mainga 1972:35). However, supporting data for these assertions is nebulous and unsatisfactory (Reynolds 1963:15). Yet witchcraft/ sorcery are widespread. These are forces to be reckoned with in Africa (Dillone-Malone 1986:374; Largerwerf 1985:5; Schiltz 2002:335). Witchcraft and sorcery offer an explanation to instances of illness, misfortune and death (Mbiti 1975:165; Largerwerf 1985:5; Guffler 1999:181). The common causes of witchcraft are domestic tensions and jealousies. For people living in closely knit communities opportunities for revenge abound as feuds and dissensions are common (Gluckman 1968:76; Mbiti 1975:167; Dillon-Malone 1986:378). Thus witchcraft normally is targeted against one's kin (Guffler 1999:186). Although witches are generally motivated by malice they may at times be subject to familiars beyond their control (Reynolds 1963:15). Further witches may kill for cannibalistic and strengthening aims (Grabner-Haider & Marx 2005:459; Westerlund 2006:173). Sorcerers and witches operate in ordinary human realms and not necessarily in the supernatural plane (Mainga 1972:35). It is said that sorcerers and witches possess powers to manipulate matter with the purpose of causing harm to the victim. By magic human beings are able to tap into the mystical forces and powers in the universe. Yamba people of Cameroon believe that God is the source of bad powers (Guffler 1999:182). While some may be aware of this inherent ability there are others who may not. Mystical forces are neither malevolent nor benevolent in themselves. However, because they are at the disposal of humans they could be manipulated for certain harmful ends (Maboea 2002:19). Witches were hated and often put death (Berg-Schlossler 1984:216). The Lozi claim that they **originally** borrowed the art of sorcery and witchcraft from the Luvale and Mbunda people (Mainga 1972:35). The Luvale do not seem to accord much of their beliefs, rituals and ethics to *Kalunga* (God). Their corpus of beliefs leans towards medicine and witchdoctors (White 1962:35). They believe witchcraft is hereditary but can be intentionally acquired too (Hayes 1995:340; Maboea 2002:20). Women form the majority of witches. It follows that witchcraft is passed from mother to daughter (MacGaffey 1987:309). Witchcraft remains latent in a young girl until she reaches puberty. It has been suggested that witches are organized into companies. On the contrary there is insufficient proof to support proper organization serve for the feasts of necrophagers (Reynolds 1963:23; Grabner-Haider & Marx 2005:459). Since they are nocturnal they like to operate at night (Hopkins 1980:59; Dillone-Malone 1986:377). Witches may fly to their covens or to their victim's residence. It is uncertain whether they transport themselves physically or spiritually (Parrinder 1968:124, 125; Hopkins 1980:58, 59). In African Traditional Religion it is said that witchcraft and sorcery employs incantations, words, rituals, animals and magical objects to afflict

the victim (Guffler 1999:186). Among Lozi people **methods** of witchcraft are broadly classified as familiars, projection and direct attack (Reynold 1963:27; Guffler 1999:186). Firstly, familiars are agents or animated weapons, which have the ability to seek out the victim and execute the instructions assigned by the master. These agents are entitled to rewards that include an opportunity to kill from time to time. Familiars can take either human or non human form. The human familiars are acquired by killing and raising the victim or rather the victim's shade. In other cases a living human being is magically stolen and simulacrum is left behind only to sicken and die (Guffler 1999:186). Usually a carving is fashioned to represent the shade. This kind of familiar travels on foot and is capable of killing the victim with a knife (Melland 1923:214, 215). Non human familiars are made from animals such as *linkalankala* (small tortoise shell), *kalankata* (large snail shell) and *nkala* (crab). These shells are filled with medicines and believed to magically come alive for the purpose of carrying out assignments. Another common animal familiar *lilombamema* (snake like creature with a human body) is capable of killing at height of its growth (Melland 1923:207-209; Reynolds 1963:36; 38). The second class of witchcraft methods involves the projection of an invisible missile also known as *siposo* (Reynolds 1963:39; Hopkins 1980:60). This form of witchcraft occurs more frequently than familiars. The projectile is magically dispatched through a witchcraft gunshot *kaliloze*. Cases of sharp pains in the chest are commonly diagnosed as resulting from *kaliloze* shot. The problem develops when a patient actually suffers from severe pneumonia case. Another form of *siposo* is the manipulation of lightning for harmful purposes. Yet an intriguing example concerns a Luvala sorcerer who was found in possession of a padlock that was employed for the purpose of attacking his victims. By closing the padlock it is believed that the targets life is cut off (Reynolds 1963:40). Thirdly direct attack is also a form of witchcraft common among the Lozi (Hopkins 1980:59). Whereas *siposo* can be sent from a distance direct attack requires contact with the victim. The sorcerer may introduce *mabela* (poisonous substances) into the victim's stomach, skin or lungs with an attempt to destroy him. In many cases poison is administered to a victim orally by placing it into beer or food. Some sorcerers may sneak into the victim's hut at night and blow poison over his body with particular attention to the mouth area. Still other sorcerers introduce poison subcutaneously such as planting a poisoned piece of iron in the victim's path. The Yoruba believe in *magun*, sorcery infected to a woman to kill her partner in case of adultery (Schiltz 2002:339). Similarly a sorcerer can prick a patient with a necrophager's fork when commiserating (Reynolds 1963:42). **Protection** from witchcraft attacks is achieved by soliciting the service of a witchdoctor (Hopkins 1980: 63). Charms may be prescribed and worn on the client's person. In the quest to secure protection from magical missiles, for instance, people have been known to insert needles in their bodies. These needles are believed to function by sympathetic magic.

4.2.10 Human intermediaries

Besides diagnosing the root of a given crisis and offering remedies, human intermediaries may also assist in connecting the people with the spiritual realm. These religious leaders include diviners, mediums, seers, and witchdoctors/medicine men. Others are ritual leaders, rainmakers and traditional rulers.

These functionaries are the embodiment of traditional religions. They keep the traditions; carry out varying duties to insure the preservation and protection of not only the people but also the cultural values. Through sanctions and prohibitions traditions are maintained.

Excursus: Human intermediaries

Although under ordinary circumstances the intermediaries discussed in this study may not be easily separated for the sake of clarity, they will be considered individually. The **diviner** enables the witchdoctor to function by ascertaining underlying root causes of tragedies, sickness and death. He operates by manipulation of objects, inspiration, dreams and intoxication (Parrinder 1976:103; Galaty 1981:73). Without his work witches for example would cause havoc undetected rendering the witchdoctor impotent. In fact belief in magic and in the supernatural would lose much of its strength for he continually demonstrates its importance in human affairs (Reynolds 1963: 95). In addition they reveal malevolent spirits responsible for a given crisis (Anderson 1991:77). If indeed a spirit is involved the reason for its anger is uncovered and remedies prescribed (Mainga 1972:98). They are also able to warn people about future events (Schiltz 2002:347, 353). Diviners may be men and women who have acquired the skill passed down through generations. They may also contact the spirits directly or with the assistance of mediums. But sometimes diviners use common sense and imagination (Mbiti 1975:156). The prevalence of danger, sickness and misfortunes has led to the value accorded to these functionaries (Galaty 1981:73). **Mediums** are people who get in touch with the spirit world. To fall into a trance mediums require outside assistance from ritual drumming, dancing and singing. At the height of these ritual activities the medium may fall down and enter a trance. When the medium is under the state of possession, trance, she may lose control of her faculties. Possession could lead to strange feats such as jumping about, beating herself, banging her head and even walking on thorns or fire. During the trance the medium is able to communicate with the spiritual realm. Either one or numerous spirits may communicate through her. The medium may speak in strange languages, which need interpretation. In an instance a medicine man or diviner may render the meaning. In this way unknown things are revealed (Imasogie 1985:67). There is yet another class of people who fall under this category, namely, **seers**. Seers are distinguished from mediums by virtue of their mode of operation. While mediums fall into a trance and are possessed by a spirit seers rely on intuition. They at times foresee future events. In contrast to diviners they do not necessarily undergo training (Imasogie 1985:68). By their sharp foresight and insight they describe things yet to come. It is possible that in many cases they actually describe what they have seen before even if perhaps before completion. To be effective a diviner ought to possess enormous knowledge concerning people and events in his locale, considerable experience in related difficulties, and quick intuition. In addition the diviner must possess information regarding symptoms of various maladies affecting his client to enable him to diagnose adequately prior to meeting him. At any rate the diviner may acquire information about the patient through his informants. The diviner utilizes a number of **divination methods** in order to conduct diagnosis (Maboea 2002:87). One of the ways of performing divination is through patterning. In this case representative objects are cast to the ground and by the position of their fall answers can be deduced. Divining bones, seeds and nutshell for instance fall under this category (Parrinder 1976:113). The materials are symbols of predetermined answers and by throwing them an astute diviner is able to diagnose. Another method of divining is called pointing.

Pointing is achieved by the use of materials such as a horn, stick, creeping tortoise and small hand held mat. When divining questions are posed, answers are provided in relation to the movement by the object. It must be noted however that the diviner keeps contact with the implement and is able to apply downward pressure thereby manipulating the desired movement (Reynold 1963:110). Similarly other divining implements harness the magnetic force such as an axe, pestle, wooden spoon and pieces of wood. The axe is commonly used by Lozi, Tonga and Shona of Zimbabwe. The axe is laid on the ground and responses to questions are deduced from its ability to move or not. In different situations reflecting materials have been used for divination. The principal is the same as gazing into a crystal ball. A typical example is water. A diviner will gaze into a pot of water and claim to read the answer (Parrinder 1976:119). In some cases mirrors have been used. Where mirrors were not available other reflecting objects like polished stones and metal have been used. Mental divination is also used. Here communication is established between the diviner and the ancestral spirits. Diviners achieve this through dreams or fall under trance. They may sometimes employ material symbols of the spirit. It is believed that the diviner must have killed someone particularly a close relative the spirit of who is in the employ of the diviner (Turner 1952:54). Divining by ordeal, a rather unorthodox method, is found all over Africa (Parrinder 1976:121). Where witchcraft is suspected a stringent emetic is prepared and administered to each suspect (Hopkins 1980:63). It is expected that the innocent will vomit while the guilty party will sicken and die (Westerlund 2006:173). Lewanika, the Lozi king, banned the use of the poison ordeal, *mwafi*, in 1891 (Gluckman 1955:97-98). Prior to that date it was commonly used in the Lozi Empire. This is demonstrated by a report concerning an alleged sorcerer who was selected from a number of suspects by a diviner. He was taken to the *kuta* (royal court) where he was seated on a platform on a mound in the fringes of Lealui, the royal capital. He was then given *mwafi* to drink. If the concoction stupefied the accused and he fell into the fire the guilty verdict was passed and subsequently he was killed (Grabner-Haider & Marx 2005:459). If he vomited the *mwafi* he was innocent. In this manner many people were killed. In much the same as the poison ordeal boiling water was also a tool for testing sorcerers. Like the poison test Lewanika also banned this practice (Arnot 1889:66, 92, 94). Heated arguments between villagers led to a fire being lit and a pot of water placed on it. The people involved in witchcraft accusations were then obliged to wash their hands in boiling water. If after twenty-four hours their skin began to peel they were considered guilty if not innocent. The convict amidst insults was dragged out of the compound for burning. At other times witches were killed by lynch mobs and their paraphernalia destroyed (Hayes 1995:339). During one episode involving the boiling water ordeal an old man dipped his hands in boiling water. Several hours later there was no effect on his hands whatsoever. This was met by shouts of triumph for the supporters of the method. But perhaps this could be attributed to his age and callousness of his skin. There are other miscellaneous methods such as making a suspect to stand on a stone while holding a charmed pot. If the suspect trembled it indicated that one was possessed by an evil spirit. The list to the methods is by no means exhaustive. Importantly most of the devices listed depend not on intrinsic power but that of the diviner (Turner 1952:73). This opens the devices to manipulation by the diviner (Reynold 1963:126). **Witchdoctors/Medicine men** were very powerful and wielded a lot of influence in Lozi society (Arnot 1889:58; Hopkins 1980:63). Their work involves providing remedies for the afflicted (Peterson 1985:176). They operate in different ways. Some are herbalists, who simply treat ailments without necessarily divining or engaging in battles against sorcery (Dillon-Malone 1986:378). The simplest of herbalists are ordinary individuals who have limited knowledge about diseases and remedies (Maboea 2002:21). On the other hand the witchdoctor engages in parrying, defeating and in

some cases killing the enemy (Reynold 1963:48; Hopkins 1980:63; Maboea 2002:3). The Lozi witchdoctor may be either male or female. It is however apparent that women restrict themselves to the office of herbalist. In this way the dangerous function of witchdoctor is the domain of men. This phenomenon is perhaps necessitated by the belief that women often gravitate to witchcraft (Reynold 1963:52; Hopkins 1980:58). If this is correct then a female witchdoctor would have difficulties establishing her practice. The witchdoctor is called on when the cause is mysterious and inexplicable to ordinary people. Through the administration of medicine the victim may recover. The ultimate source of power is the supernatural (Maboea 2002:25). People attain the profession of witchdoctor through the process of ailment and treatment. When a sick person is successfully cured of sickness he/she is permitted to go and administer medicine to people suffering from the same illness. If the healed person is intelligent and capable of learning the art soon he/she will be able to add more curatives to his/her repertoire. Success at the job soon establishes him/her as a witchdoctor. On the other hand continued failure would dent his reputation resulting in falling back into mediocrity. It is also possible for one to attain to the profession of witchdoctor through inheritance and apprenticeship (Parrinder 1976:107). It is said that certain individuals have been known to travel far and wide to go learn the art from renowned witchdoctors. Various factors form the background motivation for someone pursuing the career. Some of the ingredients are desire for wealth and power. In certain cases a sense of responsibility towards their relatives and fellows in terms of seeking to secure their protection from harm is high on the agenda. Conversely there are isolated instances of pretentious individuals who join the craft under the guise of seeking to render assistance to their fellowmen when in fact they are motivated by strong desire for self-gain and warped characters (Magesa 1997:242). Witchdoctors use similar magical forces to the ones employed by sorcerers. It is therefore, unknown how many witchdoctors combine sorcery with their craft since occasionally some witchdoctors are guilty of the evil act (Dillon-Malone 1986:378; MacGaffey 1987:309). Although the arrival of European doctors led to the waning of the practice they are still respected in African society (Reynold 1963:56, 59). There are diverse causes of misfortune ranging from spiritual influences to natural and witchcraft. Both ancestors and other malignant spirits are held responsible for causing harm. Since Lozi people lived in a world potent with different influences even accidents or carelessness such as poor handling of an axe leading to injury could easily be interpreted as having been influenced by ancestral spirits or witchcraft. Besides providing curative solutions to patients witchdoctors also administer protective charms (Maboea 2002:89). Charms are employed to defeat witchcraft attacks. These protective medicines are given in order to secure property or persons and to ward off current or futuristic attacks. Some of the charms prepared for this purpose are horns containing medicine to prevent spirits from entering the house. There are more sinister charms such as teeth of a puff-adder set to bite a bad spirit, parts of human body, and skull given to a patient as a protective charm (Reynold 1963:70; Hopkins 1980:63). By virtue of the fact that witchcraft is the chief cause of ailments and harm when a witchdoctor is contracted to provide protective remedies this signals the drawing of battle lines. The client therefore enters the magical field proper. Since securing protection involves parrying attacks the witchdoctor becomes the client's defense. It follows that unless one of the combatants withdraws or quickly wins, the battle may lead to a disastrous end with one winning or both if not all including the client being killed. When healing a person suffering from attacks by spirits of the bush for instance the doctor may use carvings of *mwenda-njangula* and *mwenda-lutaka* (bush spirits). The carving is dipped in a pot of hot medicine and then rubbed. At other times the patient is made to inhale steam from a pot of medicines. At the same time a stick is stuck into the ground next to him. A typical treatment involves the use of genet's

skin while the patient is covered with a blanket with a pot of steaming medicine beneath. The skin is placed on his head while he is inhaling the steam. The doctor dances to cast the spirit out (Reynolds 1963:66). Some medicine men are known to combine prayer for their patients, sacrifices and administration of medicines (Ukpong 1990:79; Janzen 1978:73). The people responsible for performing rituals and conducting prayers at village and family levels are referred to as **ritual elders**. Both men and women can attain this status. Ritual elders acquire their position by virtue of their age and experience. Equally some of them are descendants of ritual elders a status that would have availed them to the procedure and manner of conducting rituals. Religious activities on behalf of a community such as prayers cannot be held in the absence of a ritual elder. In a family the oldest member performs ritual functions. In some African societies priests play an important role. This is profound in societies where the belief in divinities is predominant. Priests are responsible for temples and cults associated with major divinities. Hence, priests are found amongst other places in Ghana, Nigeria and Uganda (Mbiti 1975:158, 159). Where priests are absent ritual elders perform the functions related to the priestly office. The following are some of the related duties: sacrificing, leading rituals, praying, blessing and acting as link between God and the people. Elsewhere the traditional ruler is the main priest of his community. Training of priests is undertaken at temples. Candidates to the profession may be children of parents who are grateful to the deity for a specific reason. Others also offer themselves to the service of a divinity. Where women are trained as priestesses they may in certain societies be required to stay single as they are married to the divinity. To become a priest one undergoes rigorous training involving various prayers, songs and dances, rituals, skills and crafts. All the other aspects of the religion are incorporated. Therefore the priest is knowledgeable in religious matters, myths, traditions, legends, proverbs and all practices of the people (Mbiti 1975:159). **Rainmakers** are found all over Africa particularly in the drier parts of the continent (Parrinder 1976:78). The profession of rainmaker is in most cases hereditary. The actual training for rainmaking is lengthy as it involves a careful study of weather patterns. Another point of focus is on the behavioral patterns of creatures. Exemplarily the migration of birds and movements of insects are interconnected with weather cycles. In addition close observation of plant life is a vital climactic indicator. These fundamentals go a long way in assisting professional rainmakers. While the title suggests the ability to produce rain Africans understand that God provides rain. Lozi people together with some of the surrounding tribes believe that the Supreme Being controlled weather (Reynolds 1963:128). Therefore these functionaries do not make rain even though they officiate at rain rituals. Suffice to say that their input, though, is highly regarded particularly in times of drought (Mbiti 1975:159). Being highly religious men, rainmakers spend a lot of time in prayer requesting for rain from the rain giver. For exemplar Kaonde people of North Western Zambia do not have rainmakers. Rain is considered a gift from the supreme God, *Lesá*. When rain is late Kaonde people pray to *Lesá* for intervention (Melland 1923:154-55). Tonga people of Southern Zambia equally pray to *Leza* requesting for rain. The rain cults of the plateau and valley Tonga as well as the annual ritual at rain shrine are an attempt to obtain favour from *Leza*. Lozi people believed in the supernatural powers of the chief and this necessitated a desire to shelter in the chief's yard for protection against lightning during a thunderstorm. This derives from belief that Lozi royals descended from the supreme God, Nyambe. Furthermore the king was regarded as a demi-god in the old beliefs. As a result it is possible to suggest that the people believed that the chief controlled the weather or could intercede to the supreme God on the subjects' behalf (Turner 1952:49). They occasionally entreated him with the view of eliciting his medicinal powers in order to cause rain to fall so as to water their gardens. However the chief acknowledged that he did not possess power

over rain (Arnot 1883:78). Later the Lozi rain cult receded and this development has ushered in rainmakers as primary custodians over affected villages. The rainmaker, *sitondo* as he is known, is required to control both lightning and rain. He is further expected to ward off an undesired storm. The rainmaker is equipped with charms employed for his craft. Some of the instruments are: fly switch (*muhata*), carved stick, a horn filled with medicines (*mushengo*), and python skin belt or arm band (*mulu*) (Reynold 1963:131). In the midst of a storm when everyone takes cover the rainmaker bravely walks into the open singing and shouting to the clouds. It is possible that the content of his incantations are a set formula. The rainmaker possesses both malevolent and benevolent powers. In many parts of Africa societies were governed by **traditional rulers**. Sometimes these rulers were kings, queens, rainmakers or priests. There are other societies that never had traditional rulers (Parrinder 1976:71). Where traditional rulers are found they are surrounded by religious ideas. In most cases their right to rule is associated to myth and legend with God. Lozi people believed in the divine descent of the king (Mainga 1972:96). For that reason the ruler has praise names like child of God, or son of God (Mbiti 1975:160). The Lozi king's powers were very wide but this ought to be interpreted against the backdrop of the national council, *Kuta*. In cases of tyrannical leaders the Prime Minister together with the national council assisted in ousting such a leader and installing another. This was the fate of Tatila Akufuna and Mwanawina (Coillard 1902:57). Unfortunately the influence of the national council sometimes was too strong for the king to allow change in the kingdom. He had powers of life and death in the entire kingdom. He was not only a royal but also a divine king sometimes referred to as the earthly God (Muuka 1966:258). The king's ascendancy to power is often shrouded in mystery. The king was installed to kingship by the grandees. At installation traditional rulers undergo various rituals to enhance their stature (Mbiti 1975:161). The Lozi king goes through purification rites as well as coronation rituals proceeding through the dead kings' gravesites (Mainga 1972:96). Because of the old belief in the king's divinity and the potency of his medicines subjects regarded him to be invincible. Even the king's servants purported to be powerful for they were servants of a god. For instance Sipopa claimed to be inviolable to a spear and bullet. But during the insurrection the poor fellow was shot in his flight and died (Arnot 1889:78). Although succession revolved within the royal family it was a fluid matter. In view of the flux state, the king was cautious not to antagonize the royalties (Muuka 1966:258). Coillard (1902:172) wrote, "Ours is a land of blood. Kings and chiefs succeed each other here like shadows. They are never allowed to grow old. If you come back in a few months, shall we still be in power?" Besides coronation rituals the following rituals are associated with their office: royal funeral rituals, movement of rulers to the extent that certain societies prohibit them from touching the ground, other activities would be hunting, and they are not to be seen eating (Mbiti 1975:161). They carry symbols relating to their position including scepters and drums representing their ability to communicate with the people (Parrinder 1976:72). These rulers are symbols of their dominions. When their health fails the nation goes through a crisis. They unite the people and are responsible for security. By exercising his rule the traditional ruler ensures protection and welfare for the people. Some rulers are also priests as they link their people with God. When the Lozi kingdom goes through the hazard of drought the king presents an animal on behalf of the kingdom to a royal grave priest, who prepares it and offers the prescribed parts to the ancestor king. In this way he mediates on behalf of his nation in order to pray and appeal for rain (Mainga 1972:96).

4.3 Prayer for protection

4.3.1 Introduction

Prayer in Africa is a demonstration of a person's religious life (Mijoga 1996:362). Sometimes it is an expression of gratitude for what has been provided by God. For that reason praise names are ascribed to the Supreme Being (Mbiti 1975:56).

African prayers vary in literary form and style. It appears that those that have a definite literary form could have originated several years ago. (Mbiti 1975:1) In addition, it is possible to postulate that they may have enjoyed repeated use. On the other hand, those that lack a literary form were created extemporaneously at certain occasions.

Another feature common to most African prayers is their brevity. These prayers are spontaneous and to the point. Obviously, other prayers are long and formal. In the majority of the prayers, God is the addressee. Yet, other prayers are addressed to the ancestors as well as other spiritual beings. In such cases, the other beings are recognized as intermediaries (Mbiti 1975:61). In Africa, naming is very important. Thus, invocation is more than a mere welcome since the named person is said to be present (Shorter 1975:15).

For Africans prayer is conducted for concrete intentions (Mijoga 1996:362). The backdrop for prayer is the knowledge concerning God's attributes. God is the source of providence, all-powerful, supplier of all good things, and merciful one. Consequently, his subjects request him for good health, healing, protection from danger, safety for traveling, safe delivery, long life, and for many children, rains during drought, and food in times of famine, cessation of epidemics, victory in war, security of the village, prosperity of the land and preservation of plant, animal and human life (Uka 1991:174; Westerlund 2006:44, 70).

Pre-scientific Africans in their traditional life had neither technological advancement nor scientific powers to rely on except for casting all their hopes on God. In other parts of Africa though God seems to be remote and is hardly prayed to. The relationship between the people and God in these places resembles that of a mighty chief and his subjects. Indeed the chief is considered too great and revered to be approached (Parrinder 1968:38). Where this is prevalent people pray to lesser gods and ancestors. *Leza*, the God of the Tonga of southern Zambia is one such example. He is too far away and fearful. The lesser gods are intermediaries and therefore are asked to pray to God on behalf of the people.

4.3.2 Aspects of prayer

4.3.2.1 Trust, posture and worship places

African people pray because they believe that God hears and answers them. Similarly they believe that he is near given the fact that he is everywhere with them simultaneously. When the Africans pray they take numerous postures. Thus people pray while sitting down, kneeling, prostrating themselves, and remain standing. They may also clap their hands or sing while praying (Mbiti 1975:98; Westerlund 2006:47).

There are many different worship places in African Traditional Religion. Some of them belong to families examples of these would be graves of the departed relatives, gates to the homestead, backyards, little shrines, sacred trees and piles of stones in the compound (Parrinder 1968:90). At these places the head of the family stands at dawn and mutters a prayer. At other times he turns to God at sunrise without any sacrifice, temple or priest.

Other places of worship are associated with communities. Some such places are groves, rocks, caves, hills, mountains and trees. Although the Masai for example do not have specific worship places they believe that God manifests in trees and mountains (Westerlund 2006:70). In other parts of Africa small shrines in the form of clay huts abound, particularly in West Africa (Parrinder 1968:89). Normally these appear neglected, but a priest crouches at the altar from time to time to make offerings.

Shrines or sacred places are revered. At these places sacrifices are offered. People may offer animals, birds, food, utensils and coinage (Mbiti 1975:19). Prayers are also conducted at shrines and sacred places. These places are regarded as holy. In certain cases shrines are considered to be sanctuaries where life may not be taken.

Places of worship are both man made and those occurring naturally. People build houses, for instance, and dedicate them for religious use. Equally natural places isolated from the compound are also utilized. In most cases communal places of worship are tended and cared for by a local priest. The priest apart from cleaning the shrine receives petitioners and acts as intermediary when offering sacrifices. Further it is the responsibility of the priest to protect the place from malcontents seeking to desecrate the place.

4.3.2.2 Functions of prayer

In Africa as anywhere else different prayers are offered at different times and for varying situations. Some prayers have been formalized through memorization and have taken a poetic pattern. Such prayers are passed from one generation to the next. On the other hand prayer can also be composed at the moment without prior memorization.

Prayer assists people to get close to God because they are able to commune with him directly. In communal prayer people are cemented together in one purpose. This feature figures prominently in prayers that are accompanied by choruses or litanies. In such cases the people are able to participate in a responsorial manner. The officiant leads and give directions to which the assembly responds thus allowing everyone to share in the need expressed by their prayer. Prayers also remove anxiety, fears, frustrations and worries. All the impending hardships are brought before God, hence, cultivating the people's dependence on God (Mbiti 1975:57).

On the other hand the general picture in Africa is that regular communal prayers to God are rare. But individual prayer is common particularly when the petitioner is in crisis. God is the resort to the desperate when all else has failed (Parrinder 1976:39).

Prayer is made to God requesting for protection from all possible dangers. Usually these prayers are short and focused on the requirement. In *African prayers* (1975) Mbiti organizes prayer genres thematically. Thus only prayers that are predominantly protective in character appear under prayers of protection (Mbiti 1975:56). However, an examination of other genres yields different results. African prayers are difficult to classify thematically. Prayer texts may be categorized in various ways (Shorter 1975:16). For instance prayers for sowing time, prayers for the day, month and year may have elements of protection. Therefore caution must be considered when defining prayer thematically. The following prayers demonstrate the point:

4.3.3 Sowing prayer

4.3.3.1 Introduction

Lozi people approach God in September prior to the commencement of sowing. During such rituals different communities assemble in their locales to perform a number of acts

and pray to *Nyambe*. Requests to the Deity for provision of increase in the fields, strength for the agricultural task, blessing and protection from hazards are presented (Mainga 1972:98).

4.3.3.2 Text and translation

Lozi sowing prayer	
<p><i>O Nyambe, you are the creator of all. Today we, your creatures, prostrate ourselves before you in supplication. We have no strength. You who have created us have all power. We bring you our seed and all our implements that you may bless them and bless us also so that we may make good use of them by the power which comes from you , our creator. (Di Nola 1962:38)</i></p>	<p><i>Nyambe, u mubupi wa linto kaufela Kachenu luna libupiwa za hao lwa I tahisa fapila hao ka kupo Haluna mata Wena ya lu bupile u nani mata kaufela Lu ku tiseza lipeu ni libelekiso za luna Ili kuli uli tonolofaze mi utonolofaze cwalo Ni luna kuli lu itusise zona ka mata a zwa Ku wena mubupi wa luna.</i></p>

4.3.3.3 Genre

This is a prayer for sowing time. Petitions are presented before *Nyambe* for strength and blessings. God's blessings guarantee favour and success. Further, blessings secure an individual or community from failure. A recipient of blessings possesses power of inviolability. The blessed person and property are immune from destruction. Therefore prosperity and protection from failure are embedded in the blessing.

4.3.3.4 Literary context

This prayer for sowing is classified together with similar African prayers of sowing and agriculture. Thematically these prayers from different African societies are dominated by requests for a good crop. A close examination of these prayers results in allusions to other attending motifs. Requests for, rain, protection from injury caused by thorns, snakes

and beasts are simultaneously brought before the divinities (Di Nola 1962:38; Mbiti 1975:69).

Therefore based on its literary context the Lozi sowing prayer considers aspects of protection indirectly. The petitioner requests for the seed to yield plenty. There is an expectation that the seed will germinate and bear fruit in due season. Remotely included in the request is the aspect of protection of the seed from crop failure. In order to have good growth necessary pre-requisites are needed. For example in the most arid places of Africa drought could easily wreck the people's lives. Similarly other natural agents and pests can lead to crop failure and result in life threatening conditions. Hence blessings ensure healthy workers and a good crop.

4.3.3.5 Cultural context

Agricultural prayer rites are attested all over Africa (Theron 1996:13; 114). They are diversely observed from one society to another at the beginning of the planting season. At many of these rituals ancestral spirits and divinities are summoned to cause an abundant crop. For example Venda people of South Africa observe rituals which include tilling their chief's field. Thereafter a pot of grain is cooked. Then the chief's maternal aunt fills her mouth with water and spews it on the ground saying:

Here is food for you, all our spirits; we give you every kind of grain, which you may eat. Bring us also crops in plenty and prosperity in the coming season (Parrinder 1968: 83).

Although sowing prayers are addressed to the Deity or ancestors primarily for the crop they also include requests for rain, protection on the field from natural hazards and animal danger (Mbiti 1975:69). They are also aimed at restoring, maintaining and enhancing cosmic harmony (Theron 1996:13). Thus they represent protection from crop failure which may cause starvation and other dangerous elements.

4.3.3.6 Division

The Lozi sowing prayer is divided into two parts the invocation and praise followed by the petition and trust. The following structure demonstrates the point:

- **Invocation and praise- Strophe I**
- **Petition and trust- Strophe II**

4.3.3.7 Detailed analysis

4.3.3.7.1. Invocation and praise

This prayer is addressed to *Nyambe*, the Lozi Supreme Being (line 1). It was probably uttered by those who held strongly to *Nyambe* worship. In the prayer the suppliant recognizes *Nyambe* as creator. In Lozi mythology *Nyambe* created all things in the beginning (Jalla 1954:1; Mainga 1972:98).

Nyambe is praised for the past creative activities. This is achieved by prostrating before the Supreme Being (line 2). The sowing prayer to *Nyambe* provides an exemplary of the posture undertaken in prayer. It is apparent that the suppliant may have bowed before god's proxy the sun. Like the people of northern Ghana, Lozi people do not practice sun worship. Petitioners stretch their hands towards the rising sun but the Supreme Being is distinct from the proxy (Parrinder 1976:34). Having humbled himself the petitioner acknowledges his weakness (line 3). His weakness must be considered in the light of *Nyambe's* creative power. The fact that the legendary *Kamunu* was capable of imitating the creator in almost every project does not colour the petitioner's status in comparison to the creator (Jalla 1954:1). The suppliant praises and acknowledges that God is the creator, focus of prayer and reliable provider.

4.3.3.7.2 Petition and trust

The suppliant picks up the motif of creation again. *Nyambe* is not only creator but also the all-powerful one (line 4). He is able to sustain his creation and provide for them. *Nyambe* also makes the seed to grow.

The petitioner proceeds to present seed, implements and himself before *Nyambe* for blessings (line 5). The worshipper understood that he needed the Deity's blessings in

order to achieve the task of ploughing, sowing, and harvest. Blessings are a source of protection on the seed and crop too.

Prayers for man's work are attended by the unforeseen (Mbiti 1975:68). Pre-technological people understand that natural processes lie outside human manipulation. Prayer therefore is a desire to co-opt chance in order to harmonize the physical with the spiritual realm. In this way work is ritualized and sanctified. Therefore seeds, implements and laborers are dedicated to God for the sake of invoking the obscure powers. Consequently the suppliants hope that their labour will yield fruit.

Although the Lozi sowing prayer does not mention requests for rain directly it is assumed that such a request is part of the prayer ritual. It is inferred that requests for rain are made due to the time when this prayer was made. This prayer was offered in September at the beginning of the rain season. In addition it is hard to work in the gardens without the reward of rain. Rain is an answer from God signifying abundance (Mbiti 1975:62). Parallel prayers in the literary context include petitions for rain for example the prayer of Dogon people of Mali (Mbiti 1975:69). During drought this ritual would have included requests for prayer.

An exemplar of the rainmaking ritual is about the Bamangwato in South Africa. At one occasion a bull without blemish was selected. Such an animal had one colour like black. Thereafter it was given water and then slaughtered at the grave. Fires were lit and the meat roasted. The chief was the first to partake of it followed by the rest of the congregation by order of age. Then the assembly proceeded to worship under the direction of the chief. Intonations were addressed to dead chiefs (Parrinder 1968:62). Congregants made the welking noise and sang some rain songs on their way home. That same evening rain there was drenching rain (Willoughby 1928:208).

When the Lozi nation is facing a calamity such as drought prayers are offered to safe guard the people against the adverse effects of the hazard. At the national level and in the royal grave cult the prerogative of bringing requests to the royal ancestors rests with the reigning king. The king presents a sacrifice to the grave custodian, Nomboti. Such a sacrifice is normally cattle which of necessity have to be black typifying the dark rain clouds.

The grave custodian then proceeds to bring the sacrificial animal before a dead king's grave. At the royal gravesite the animal is slaughtered. Then designated animal parts are removed and offered to the departed king. The rest of the animal is prepared and eaten by the assembled people. This done the gathering is led in song and prayer addressed to the royal ancestor spirit requesting for rain.

Amongst the Dogon of Mali altars for God (*Amma*) exist (Mbiti 1975:69). These altars are communal property. The chief is the officiant at the group altars. Similar to the Lozi custodians there are priests who provide service to *Amma*. These priests are possessed by a force and are commissioned by a diviner. A dedicated priest has the responsibility of offering regular sacrifices. Annually priests and priestesses officiate at these ceremonies (Parrinder 1968:37).

When drought is affecting only certain areas of the Lozi kingdom, prayers are conducted at the local royal burial site to the respective king. In cases when the drought is wrecking the whole nation, rituals are made in all regions.

At village level people in the affected area perform necessary rituals. This is achieved by appealing to *Nyambe* for intervention. At any rate it appears that prayers are conducted regularly in the *Nyambe* cult at the commencement of the sowing season. Village people gather for prayers in September prior to the rain season.

Similarly at one occasion a Lozi chief, Mahaha of Sesheke gathered close to fifty people for prayers to *Mulimu*, God. The name of God *Molimo* is associated with protection amongst the Basuto (Parrinder 1976:36). *Mulimu* was approached under a *Muzungula* tree. In front of the tree a little shed was made from grass and stakes. Next to the shed was an altar made out of wood. The chief placed a skin cloak and a wooden dish full of water as an offering when requesting for rain (Coillard 1902:535).

By turning to *Nyambe* prior to sowing the suppliant in our prayer expresses his confidence in the abilities of the Deity. Having prayed the worshipper trusts that the task of sowing will proceed smoothly and that the crop will be secured.

4.3.3.8 Setting and date

4.3.3.8.1 Historical setting

If *Nyambe* worship is older than the royal grave cult then this prayer presents early ideologies concerning the Deity. Although only a conjecture religious history indicates a development from family/communal setting to a later centralized national religion. Thus its form is antecedent to the establishing of the monarchical institution in the 16th Century. However, this particular prayer is a product of the 20th Century. Moreover *Nyambe* worship has not been completely overtaken by the royal cult.

4.3.3.8.2 Cultic setting

Prior to the commencement of the rain season in September the village headman prepares the place for prayer (Turner 1952:49). A sacred spot is swept and an altar is erected from sticks and clay. Then a dish is placed on the altar. This dish acts as a receptacle into which each household puts a little of each seed type they intend to plant. Hoes, axes and assegais are also placed therein. Proceedings are led by the headman who kneels down before the altar facing the rising sun. Simultaneously, the headman joins his hands, bows down and looks up with outstretched hands. He turns to the left and right while performing the actions repeatedly. The rest of the people join their leader in performing the gestures. In this case the headman then offered this sowing prayer to *Nyambe*.

Previously there were fields designated for *Nasilele*, the wife of *Nyambe* (Mainga 1972:98). Villagers would work in these demarcated fields while singing and praying to *Nyambe*. Prayers were offered requesting *Nyambe* to cause rain to fall and the seeds to germinate and yield a harvest. In time due to scarcity of land wasteland was used instead.

4.3.3.9 Synthesis

The above prayer is addressed to *Nyambe*. God is acknowledged as the creator. The community confesses humility for indeed, they are only creatures of God. All power is ascribed to God. The prayer shifts from praise and announcing God's attributes to supplication. Requests pertain to God's blessing not only on the implements and seeds but also on the people. The power of God is sought for the purpose of enhancing growth and a healthy yield.

Although this prayer lacks the obvious language of protection, it is possible to read it in. Tribal agricultural communities feared natural disasters such as drought and pests since they could easily lead to crop failure. Similarly, they relied on good health and strength for their manual labours. Failure of any of these conditions may threaten their livelihood. Hence, Lozi people depended on the gods to secure their crop and grant them increase.

In addition, the blessing is not only intended to provide a positive effect in terms of increase, but also to act as a deterrent against any adversity. In this case the blessing becomes a power of protection from any harm.

4.3.4 Morning prayer

4.3.4.1 Introduction

Traditionally Lozi people worship the Supreme God *Nyambe* (Mainga 1972:96). In their religious schema there are other intermediaries who are venerated (Muuka 1966:258). Deceased royalties and ordinary ancestors are venerated. Lozi mythology depicts the sun as *Nyambe's* representative (Arnot 1889:88). Although some African societies worship before the sun it is difficult to equate the ritual to sun worship obtaining in ancient Egyptian religion (Parrinder 1976:44).

Those who remember the ancient ways rise in the morning, stretch their hands before the sun and welcome the High God as king (Rooke 2006:2-4). The Lozi morning prayer is addressed to God. It contains praise resembling homage paid to an earthly king. Beyond praise, its cultic and literary contexts predicate aspects of protection. Similarly, its mythological history supports a protection motif.

4.3.4.2 Text and translation

Lozi morning prayer	
Here is our king. He has come.	<i>Ki yo wa taha Mulena waluna. U tile</i>



<p>Mangwe, Mangwe Molyetu! (Glory, glory glory to the one over us!) (Jalla 1954:3; Rooke 2006:2)</p>	<p><i>Mangwe, Mangwe Molyetu</i> <i>Kanya, kanya kanya ibe ku ya fahalimu</i> <i>aluna</i></p>
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4.3.4.3 Division and literary context

The above prayer exhibits welcome and praise, but its brevity makes it unnecessary to divide the prayer further. It consists of three lines.

Originally this prayer is quoted in Jalla’s *Litaba za sicaba sa Malozi* (legends myths and history). It conveys a rather difficult theology concerning the Deity. The approximation of the sun to God has led some to suggest that the sun was worshipped as the local God (Rooke 1990:3). For example, Mackintosh (1922:370) suggests that every morning *Kamunu* (man) prays to the sun and to *Nasilele* at new moon. However, mythological beliefs of Lozi people indicate that subsequent to *Nyambe*’ s ascension, the sun came to be recognized as his proxy (Scheub 2000:185).

While the prayer contains no direct mention of protection, the mere evocation and appeasement of the Deity opens the channel for his benevolence. In turn, prosperity and protection are ensured. It is most likely that praise in the morning should have connotations with securing the Deity’s guidance, blessing and protection during the day. By conjecture, this matter of fact is supported by the protection motif in the paralleled cultural Morning Prayers by the Vasu and Konde ³³ of Tanzania (Omari 1971:8; Mbiti 1975:32).

4.3.4.4 Cultural context

³³ *We rise up in the morning before the day,
To betake ourselves to our labour,
To prepare our harvest.
Protect us from the dangerous animal
And from the serpent, from every stumbling block* (Mbiti 1975:32).

Vasu protection prayer

Oh Izuva you are the greater, you are God. One who creates people, children, trees and grass. One who passes above us and sees anyone who has ill feelings towards me when you rise up in the morning, protect us today and judge among us who is right (Omari 1971:8).

Different African societies have legends regarding the Supreme Being. Some of these myths concern the golden age. It is common belief that the Deity lived on earth with man in primordial time. However, due to differences with man, God ascended to a remote abode.

Thus the absence of the Deity from the earth has led many African people to recognise the sun as his proxy. For that reason petitioners frequently offer their prayers at the break of dawn, as the sun appears. Other prayers are offered at dusk. Importantly, the sun is not worshipped but it symbolises the Deity. As it traverses across the sky, African people conceive this as a metaphor of God's omniscience. Equally its brilliance is figurative to his glory and majesty. Other sky symbols are lightning, rainbow and sky itself. Among tribal people who depend on nature these images signify benevolence (Shorter 1975:111).

4.3.4.5 Detailed analysis

The Lozi morning prayer is addressed to *Nyambe* through his proxy the sun (line 1). Traditionally in Africa, salutations were made to a person of high status or deity (McKenzie 1997:332). The Vasu of Tanzania also prayed to Izuva (Sun) everyday. Each morning the head of the Vasu family spits saliva four times in the direction of the rising sun (Omari 1971:8). Similarly, the Lozi and Konde elders face the east to the rising sun and offer praise and welcome (Mbiti 1975:32). After *Mrungu's* (God) ascension Izuva became his eye, watching over the earth. The sun fully risen, the suppliant acknowledges the coming of the God king (Omari 1971:8). Elsewhere in Africa, symbols of spirit worship include wooden or clay figurines. Such objects function not only as tools for worship, but means of protection (Olowola 1993:41). Lozi people on the other hand do not have man-made symbols of the Supreme Being.

The Lozi elder praises the God king and ascribes glory to him (Rooke 2006:2). Similarly, Izuva is acknowledged as great, creator of people, children, trees and grass (Omari 1971:8). Kuria people also acknowledge the sun as originator of all things (Ruel 1997:163). Izuva is omniscient; his overhead path from rising to setting is interpreted as watching over his people (Omari 1971:8). Further, the sun takes note of people's actions on its journey (Ruel 1997:164). This high regard for the sun precipitates an interpretative question. Although the Vasu may have worshipped the sun as a separate god, it appears that he was identified with the Supreme Being (Omari 1971:8). Thus the sun is not represented as a person. Importantly, its visible presence is evidence of its beneficent effects. The sun causes plants to grow, consequently providing life to animals. Inversely, the sun is capable of causing destruction (Ruel 1997:164).

There is a marked shift pertaining to petition. The Lozi prayer terminates with praise resembling that offered to an earthly king (line 3). Perhaps praise is the objective of the prayer. To the contrary the Vasu referred to protection from people with ill feelings (Omari 1971:8). Equally, the Konde include a different motivation for their prayer; the day's labour, harvest. In turn this leads to requests for protection from dangerous animals, serpents and stumbling blocks. The Kuria also requested for good in the morning. The Vasu and Kuria family head also uttered the prayer at dusk requesting protection from evil (Ruel 1997:164).

If the Lozi prayer was simply praise it would explain the exclusion of elaborate petitions. However, this point is difficult for various reasons. This morning prayer appears to be a daily prayer (Rooke 2006:2). Hence, it is postulated that the present text may have belonged to a larger text that included petitions for the day. Alternatively, additions were made to this praise and welcome address dependent on need. Moreover, the act of naming a person in Africa renders him present mysteriously. These magical overtones make the presence and availability of *Nyambe* a source of blessing, care and protection against harm (Tambiah 1968:186; Shorter 1975:15).

Although the glory of the sun may have evoked praise this response remains problematic on a continent which enjoys plenty of sunshine. In contradistinction to the more northerly people of Europe who anticipate the return of the sun in spring, the sun is more oppressive in parts of Africa (Parrinder 1976:44). Therefore, it is unlikely that an invocation could have been made for the sake of welcoming the sun. Notwithstanding Shorter's (1975:3)

assertion that thanksgiving is an expression of man's dependence on supernatural powers, most of the African prayers are rather materialistic, lacking in communion (Olowola 1993:39). Even though requests and sacrifices, offerings of thanksgiving and memorial are common features of prayer in Africa, the dominant motif remains petitions for protection and flourishing of life (Magesa 1997:199).

When gratitude is unaccompanied with petition it may incorporate faith in the continuance of the favour for which the worshipper is grateful (Shorter 1975:18). Upon this theory we proceed to read the daily requirements into the praise. Chief among daily needs would be shelter, food, ability to work and protection from harm. Traditional African prayers generally include elements of praise, thanksgiving, a declaration of state of affairs in which the prayer arises and requests. Concreteness is a central mark in these prayers. Some of the requests in prayer are: healing, protection from danger, safety in traveling, security, preservation of life and various matters pertaining to life (Mbiti 1975:56).

One of the basic elements in African Traditional Religion is harmony (Dryness 1990:43). There is a fundamental harmony between the world and living things. This is preserved by ritual and religion (Mbiti 1969:67). Although nature is basically positive, it can be precarious. The need to enhance harmony therefore requires certain observations. Taboos, rituals and prayers may serve the purpose of awakening the world (Zuese 1979:36, 43, 44). To this end, the pygmies of the Ituri forest observe some taboos and light fire in the morning. The Ibo morning prayer³⁴ illustrates the point (Okorochoa 1986:199). Thus the means of fellowship with the gods goes beyond communion to enlisting their support for the community. By means of prayer and ritual, the African intends to manipulate the powers in the spirit world to his own advantage (Okorochoa 1987:52).

Since evidence from parallel morning prayers points to a strong protection motif, it is inferred that the Lozi also anticipated God's protection for the day. Protection could have been posterior to the main praise element. Even if the extempore prayer is not part of a larger text by calling on the deity, it is plain that the suppliant expected his presence. His presence brings balance in life. Thus providence and protection are availed to the petitioner.

³⁴ "Give us life,
worthwhile life".

4.3.4.6 Setting and date

4.3.4.6.1 Historical setting

The morning prayer has been associated with contemporary ceremonies and people who hold to ancient *Nyambe* beliefs. If Rooke is correct in linking the prayer to the mythological deluge, then the prayer may be ancient. This early date is further motivated by the fact that the sun became *Nyambe*'s proxy in mythical history after His ascension to *Litooma*, his heavenly village (Scheub 2000:185). An auxiliary argument is found in the similarity of the flood legend with other stories of cataclysmic events told in different parts of the world. Although in its current state, the prayer is a product of the early 20th Century. It contains archaic materials. The praise "Mangwe, Mangwe, Molyetu" is in ancient Luyana language spoken prior to Kololo invasion in 1830. Luyana is extant at the royal capital and in songs and proverbs.

4.3.4.6.2 Cultic setting

This Lozi morning prayer is offered at the rising of the sun. The worshipper accompanies the utterance of this prayer with symbolic action. This prayer is grounded in the *Nyambe* cult. It appears that it was conducted at the family level. On the other hand, this prayer may have been performed by an individual. At any rate, there is no real distinction in Africa between communal and individual prayer (Shorter 1975:22).

This prayer is also associated with daily devotions and ceremonies at special cyclic times of the year (Rooke 2006:2). One such ceremony is the *Kuomboka* when Lozi people sail from the flood plains to the highland. Lozi mythology point to the first *Kuomboka* necessitated by *meyi a lungwangwa*³⁵. *Kuomboka* coincides with the waxing of the moon³⁶. Prior to the ceremony royal ancestors are consulted. When their blessing is given, the ceremony may occur. It is also important that the plains are inundated in order

³⁵ *Meyi a lungwangwa* refers the primordial water that swallowed everything. Legend has it that the deluge occurred before Mboo the first known male chief. During this great flood the Zambezi plains flooded animals died and plant life was swept away. The people were terrified to escape the flood in their dugout canoes. *Nyambe* responded by instructing a man, *Nakambela* to build a big boat *Nalikwanda*. The boat was built and painted in white and black stripes signifying spirituality and the black people. The boat carried the people who took with them every seed type and animal dung. On landing the seeds were planted becoming progenitors of plant life. Similarly animals sprung out of the dung.

³⁶ The moon is a symbol of *Nasilele* the wife of *Nyambe*. When the moon is waxing prayers are offered at royal gravesite to royal ancestors who in turn implore *Nasilele*. The goddess conveys requests to *Nyambe* for blessings.

for the royal barge, *Nalikwanda* to sail. If Rooke has correctly linked this prayer to the ceremony, then support for protection can be adduced from rituals surrounding securing blessings and safe passage from the Supreme Being. In contemporary times the prayer is uttered by those who remember the ancient ways of *Nyambe*.

4.3.4.7 Synthesis

This prayer does not mention danger directly. It is inferred that the petitioner requests for protection through the welcome address. The text points to praise of the High God represented by the sun. However, for two reasons I will infer a protection motif in the prayer. It has been pointed out that when juxtaposed with similar prayers like the Vasu prayer elements of danger, provision and blessing are envisaged. I also argued that praise may have been part of a larger ritual. In any case, the coming of the Deity presupposes benevolence on the suppliant and community. Hence this particular prayer may have served the purpose of introduction or welcoming the deity.

Another way of conjecturing protection arises from the literary historical context. Jalla and Rooke make allusions to the mythical ascension of *Nyambe* and the occurrence of the deluge respectively. Given the destructive effect of the floods, a mythological force forms the background of the prayer. Thus, the prayer is interpreted against the backdrop of dangerous waters and *Nyambe's* provision of the way of escape. Its later use encompasses more than thanksgiving - it looks back to the protector who rises above them and protects them.

4.3.5 Blessing and cursing

4.3.5.1 Andonyi war prayer

4.3.5.1.1 Introduction

Lozi people employed cursing as a weapon not only for protection, but also for aiding them in their desires to conquer the enemy. This extempore Andonyi war imprecation has no reference to God. Yet it was expected to be effectual.

The efficacy of performative words has been described variously. Firstly, such words operate under psychological dimensions like self-fulfilling prophecies. Secondly, they derive power from the shared vital force latent in both animate and inanimate objects. This

extension of personality is as real as its human counterpart. When a person has good force everything he does will prosper. The vitality can be put in human words, prayers curses and blessings (Abegunde 1991:242). Thirdly, their potentiality is attended by the Supreme Being (Westerlund 2006:157). This is true even when the name of the Deity is not called on (Gulliver 1963:286). The power from traditional medicine is the fourth reason. Ultimately the religious historical background of tribal people points to a belief in protector gods. Each tribe has a covenant with its own protector God. Thus the Deity leads them to battle and secures victory for them (Grabner-Haider & Marx 2005:417). In this way the ritual and words uttered find their realization through power from the Deity.

4.3.5.1.2 Text and translation

Text	Translation
<i>Let them die like Mubako</i> ³⁷	<i>Ba shwe sina Mubako</i>
<i>Let them die like Mubula</i> ³⁸ (Jalla 1954:9).	<i>Ba shwe sina Mubula</i>

4.3.5.1.3 Genre

This short prayer is identified as cursing words. Further these portent words serve protective and destructive purposes. They were uttered with the intent of securing victory over the enemy subsequently resulting in safety for the fledgling kingdom.

4.3.5.1.4 Division and literary context

³⁷ Mubako is a tree specie

³⁸ Mubula is also tree specie. The significance of pounding the herb mixture is likened to the death of the enemy.

The brevity of this magical utterance provides only one strophe. Ritual formulas are usually short being accompanied with ritual action (Shorter 1975:20). This cursing prayer is imbedded in a historical mythological narrative (Jalla 1954:9). The author may have employed a piece that was reworked orally over a period of time. Hence a historical narrative has been infused with magical aspects.

At any rate, the legend depicts the function of verbal magic in securing victory over an enemy. Consequently these utterances resulted in security for the kingdom from the marauding horde. The fact that this prayer account goes back to the formative stage of the kingdom lends support to its historicity, however, reservedly given the vulnerability of the emerging state.

4.3.5.1.5 Cultural context

In African Traditional Religion, the desire for divine protection may be expressed negatively through cursing or exorcism (Shorter 1975:19). The operation of the curse is made explicit in the Arusha (Tanzania) belief system. A curse is pronounced to punish an alleged offender. In such cases Arusha people believe that Engai, the High God sends misfortune if the victim is an offender (Gulliver 1963:286). But protection can also be secured through the use of a positive form, blessing. Blessing and cursing are attempts to influence the direction of divine power (Mckenzie 1997:334). The negative form acts against the enemy while the positive encourages the idea of life (Shorter 1975:19). The Yoruba too believe that cursing is a powerful means of inflicting illness or even death (Westerlund 2006:186). Although a curse is usually a spoken word, the Yoruba believe it can be set in motion by a mere look. Blessings and curses are uttered with or without being accompanied by charms (Adamo 2004:28). The victim is cursed so as to bring destruction on him. Equally, a good person evokes a blessing from people who are pleased by his deeds.

A curse is employed in securing protection. For example, a prayer uttered in the morning could contain elements of cursing on any potential evil worker. By so doing, the curse becomes a prayer of protection against maliciousness or physical harm caused by an evil person. For example, the following curse by king of Biolurun Pellu:

If any man or woman, black or yellow, tall or short, or of whatsoever description, seek after my hurt by the interposition of Angels, old people, or my deceased father, confound that person, kick him to the ground, rub his lips to the ground, bore a hole through his lips and tie them to the roof of the house, give his head a good slapping, and make himself to become as a dog to which thou hast given tail, and class him among the dumb and senseless (McKenzie 1997:335).

4.3.5.1.6 Detailed analysis

The Andonyi war curse has no addressee. Yet the victim was fully known. It appears from the curse that Lozi people believe in the destructive power of negative spoken words (lines 1-2). In many African societies, there is confidence that performative words spoken correctly in the right place at the specified time are effective (Adamo 2004:27). Certain people are said to have omens in their words. Among such people are medicine men, witches, elders and other people who for some reason have intrinsic power. Yet, in other African societies anyone can curse almost anyone else (Gulliver 1963:286).

In this occasion, the continued attacks from Andonyi left the Lozi people insecure. Traditionally, when an African identifies an enemy, certain remedies are sought for example, the use of medicines or curses. In the event that the victim lacks the ability to pronounce portent words, he summons the assistance of a medicine man (Adamo 2004:27). For that reason the vulnerable Lozi community contracted the services of a medicine man. The medicine man in turn, provided some herbs and instructed a damsel to pound the mixture. She pointed the pestle in the direction of the Andonyi country as she pounded. This action was accompanied by the curse. Generally, Africans believe that when words are uttered, they take a life of their own (Abegunde 1991:242). Spoken words are expected to be effectual. Among the Arusha, once a curse is pronounced, the High God sends misfortune unless it is revoked (Gulliver 1963:286). The presence and acts of the medicine man in the text indicate a relationship between sorcery medicines and curse (Westerlund 2006:186).

Dramatization is an aspect of material prayer (Shorter 1975:22). It is believed that through sympathetic magic the desired end can be realized. The actions of pounding symbolized the envisaged resounding defeat of the enemy. Through speech the nature of defeat, is specified as death. Words have power to bring destruction. Among the Yoruba and Masai a curse is uttered publicly in the presence of the victim. They also assert that curses are mostly effective between relations (Westerlund 2006:156,186). In the case of the Lozi, the opposite is true. It can be safely concluded that the Andoyi were neither present nor related to Lozi people and yet, the curse was expected to be effectual.

Tambiah (1966:194) has argued that words in themselves have no power. To suggest that primal people believe in the power of words is equating their beliefs to magic. The efficacy of words derives from symbolic acts associated with the utterances. This matter of fact provides an aura of operational reality. The case in point illustrates that confidence in the acts and pronouncements may have raised the morale of the Lozi warriors.

There are cases however, where the declaration of performative words is not accompanied by action and yet, the speaker expects their materialization (Ray 1973:26). The presence of medicine also attaches support to belief in the magical effect of the actions. Here, as in other parts of Africa, traditional medicine is said to be effectual through supernatural power (Abimbola 1991:57; Maboeba 2002:26, 26). Hence Lozi tribesmen realised their desired results of protection and victory on the battlefield through a combination of cursing, ritual acts and traditional medicine. Ultimately, the agent for the curse is God since he is the final arbiter (Westerlund 2006:157).

4.3.5.1.7 Setting and date

4.3.5.1.7.1 Historical setting

Legend has it that the Andonyi had raided the Lozi persistently in the early settlement period. In the view of the historical data, Lozi people could have settled in the area in the 16th Century (Mainga 1973:19; Malan 1995:56). Lozi failure to repulse and defeat the marauding tribe, led the king to seek the service of a medicine man. Subsequent to the cursing and dramatization, tradition has it that Andonyi people were defeated. And the region was secured.



4.3.5.1.7.2 Cultic setting

The medicine man charged a damsel to pound a mixture of herbs in a mortar. This act involved pointing the pestle in the direction of the Andonyi country. Through the action of pounding and intentional pestle pointing, prayer was materialized. These acts were accompanied by cursing words. Since there was a national threat, the king was involved in securing the services of the medicine man/diviner. Moreover, this ritual was conducted at national level. Such rituals were performed as need arose.

4.3.5.1.8 Synthesis

The historical context of the curse points to danger arising from a tribal enemy. Andonyi raids on Lozi people were a threat to the young state. The scale of danger was national. This motivated the community to seek assistance. Representing the dominion, the king procured the assistance of a medicine man. Both the king and medicine man functioned as intermediaries. Through sympathetic and verbal magic, victory was secured. This was acted out in a counter offensive resulting in victory.

4.3.5.2 Ila/ Tonga war prayer

4.3.5.2.1 Introduction

During the last war made on Tonga and Ila people of southern Zambia, Lozi warriors uttered curses and blessings. The Blessing was aimed at providing the warriors with the enablement at war. Inversely, the curse was directed at the enemies. The purpose for such pronouncements was to cripple the enemy lines and rout them. These pronouncements are effectual by magical forces.

4.3.5.2.2 Text and translation

Lozi blessing and curse	
May our countrymen live!	<i>Tu ka yoye bakwetu</i>
Fellow countrymen may we live long	<i>Tu ka yoye</i>
May our enemies perish!	
May our enemies perish!	<i>Ba ka fe!</i>

May our enemies perish! (Coillard 1902:212)	<i>Ba ka fe! Ba ka fe!</i>
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4.3.5.2.3 Genre

This prayer is classified under verbal magic or blessing and curse. Although it is not addressed to God, religious history indicates that it is prayer nonetheless. Perhaps, this was the earliest form of prayer bordering on beliefs in the power of words, operating on their own without direct aid from a deity. Thus the source of this power is problematic. It has been suggested that certain people in African society have the power to pronounce blessings and curses such as kings, priests, witchdoctors, elderly, poor, etc (McKenzie 1997:334). Other primal people believe that everyone possesses this ability which resides in one's stomach (Ray 1973:28). Yet, others argue that tribal people do not necessarily believe in magic, rather the efficacy of the words derives from communal authority (Tambiah 1968:202). At any rate, there is ample evidence suggesting belief in the efficacy of spoken words (Shorter 1975:19).

Eventually, the power of the words emanates from the Supreme Being (Gulliver 1963:286; Theron 1996:50). The historical, cultural context suggests that in Africa, the awareness of the divine is taken for granted. African people have a holistic approach to life which ensures belief in the divine as the ultimate reality in all circumstances. This presents a hermeneutical key, however, by conjecture to conceiving the efficacy of such words. Hence, cursing and blessing may represent an early form of prayer and in this instance, it served as means to securing protection and triumph.

4.3.5.2.4 Literary context

The literary historical context of the prayer provides a narration of the political history and economic systems of the Lozi kingdom. Importantly, the evolution of a large state added economic pressure on the royal aristocracy. In order to maintain the colossal expenditure of the royal establishment, administration and military, the kingdom relied more and more on pillaging.

At war, the warriors depended on the power of the gods and magic. Hence, the pre-battle and war rites support the religious attempt to manipulate the Deity and royal divinities. Divine favour and royal ancestors' support was sought in order to secure victory at war and protection for the warriors.

4.3.5.2.5 Cultural context

Kithuri blessing and curse

May people be well, may they be well,

Male, female, male, female

May they multiply themselves

Bad luck go away from us

The (uncircumcised) man who hates another may he perish

The man who does wrong may he also perish

The man who curses another who says: 'may he perish'

He will die on the spot cursed by the curse of the back (Shorter 1975:54).

The foregoing blessing and curse by a Kithuri clan elder (among the Meru of Kenya) is an attempt to evoke the benevolence on the family and malevolence on the foes. African people believe that words have power to cause destruction and construction. This invocation calls down blessings on boys and girls and goats and cattle. The curse of the back involves the baring of women against the enemies (Shorter 1975:54). This ritual act signifies the ultimate curse of destruction. In this way prayer is materialized in accompaniment of speech.

4.3.5.2.6 Division

The cursing and blessing utterance on the Illa/Tonga people is logically divided in a two part structure below:

- **Blessings- Strophe I (lines 1-2)**
- **Cursing- Strophe II (lines 3-5)**

Even though the prayer is concise it embraces two distinct genres of blessing and curse.

4.3.5.2.7 Detailed analysis

4.3.5.2.7.1 Blessings (lines 1-2)

The prayer begins by pronouncements of blessings (lines 1-2). It appears as though this is a war slogan serving the purposes of uplifting warrior morale. However, at the centre of the belief system is an understanding that these utterances are powerful (Coillard 1902:212; Shorter 1975:53). To be blessed implies being healthy, bearing children, having provision and in this case protection (Oosthuizen 1991:41).

It is possible that ancient Lozi warriors had confidence in the outworking power of the blessing. The extent of the blessing is realized by securing protection for the blessed person. Bestowed with the blessing, the warrior was inviolable and his protection was guaranteed. The prayer was uttered antiphonally. The call was pronounced by a selected person then the warriors reiterated (Ray 1973:28, McKenzie 1997:334). A damsel was specifically appointed for the task. In some cultures, the power to utter performative words does not lie only with specific mediators but with everyone. This is informed by the belief that everyone possesses a force in his stomach (Malinowski 1961:427).

Alternatively, since the blessing was pronounced on the warriors, these ritual words were only effective as self-fulfilling purpose. The hearers' spirits were lifted up by their positiveness (Tambiah 1968:202). It is difficult to stretch the foregoing to the Kithuri blessing above. It appears that the speakers believed in the efficacy of uttered words and their ability to bring the desired results (Shorter 1975:53).

4.3.5.2.7.2 Cursing

The second part of the prayer is a curse (lines 3-5). Portent words are directed at the enemy (Coillard 1902:212). It was hoped that these words would destroy the enemy. The curse operates inversely to the blessing. A cursed person cannot prosper. There seems to be a link between the efficacy of the curse and the enemy's acts. For that reason, the enemy is overpowered by magical words actualized in war.

The Lozi enemy forces were weakened and rendered defenseless by the outworking of the curse. This is paralleled by the battle against the Andonyi³⁹ where the working of magic and subsequent cursing led to the demise of the opponent. Due to its destructive nature, a curse is not uttered carelessly, rather it is employed in extreme cases (Gulliver 1963:286). The “curse of the back” in the Kithuri curse illustrates a vulgar action made by women who bare their behind to an enemy in contempt (Shorter 1975:53).

It must be underlined that prior to the Lozi war curse, certain rituals were performed. These rites aroused the power of the royal ancestors (Coillard 1902:211). Equally, the spears were imbued with power from the gods of the underworld. Hence, the imprecation must be seen from such a religio-cultural context.

4.3.5.2.8 Setting and date

4.3.5.2.8.1 Historical setting

The immediate historical context of the prayer is the 19th Century. This prayer was performed prior to the Ila/Tonga - Lozi war. However, the prayer contains remnants of ancient theological conceptions concerning the efficacy of words. Thus it must be understood as a continuation of this perception.

4.3.5.2.8.2 Cultic setting

Pre-battle rites included devotions by the king. The war drums were played all night. Offerings consisting of calico, beadwork, water, milk or honey were sent to each royal grave in the land. In addition a sheaf of spears remained lying at the designated royal grave for forty-eight hours. This act was supposed to invoke blessings from the dignitaries of the other world on the spears (Coillard 1902:211).

³⁹ See above prayer.

When marching to war an old man headed the army with a young girl in front of him followed by the king, *Ngambela* (Prime Minister) and the troops. The young girl was a prophetess, elected for the task by the divining bones. She was the interpreter of the gods. Nothing could be done without her. She carried a horn filled with medicines and charms. The troops were not allowed to pass her and when she felt tired or ill the young men carried her.

Approaching the enemy, she fired the first shot. She did not sit, sleep, drink or eat as long as the battle lasted. She only put the horn down when the halt was called. At this point, the young men struck their spears into the ground. Through the manipulation of spears, prayer was materialized (Shorter 1975:22). She then sounded the above battle cry with refrains from the troops.

These pronouncements were uttered in a war situation. In this ritual action, the presence of the community, ancestors and divinities is summoned. Through communal actualization, cursing is therefore not only declared, but is also confirmed (Ray 1973:22). The corporate repetition of the words adds truth to the words. *Nyambe* does not have a central worship center. What is critical is not the sacred place, but the ability of the people to approach the Deity anywhere. However in this instance he is approached through royal ancestors. If indeed the cursing is an extension of the pre-battle rituals, then the blessing and cursing ought to be perceived as part of invocations at the royal gravesite.

4.3.5.2.9 Synthesis

This prayer embodies two aspects of protection, namely: blessing and cursing. The cursing word was aimed at weakening the enemy. Although in Africa it is a grave offence to curse members of another group, in situations of extreme contumacy where a person or group is threatened, it may be employed (Gulliver 1963:286). The Illa and Tonga people are part of people who were pillaged by the Lozi. Such groups were attacked for supplies such as animals, food and women. In any case, war is dangerous business and the likelihood of death is certain. Hence the warriors sought triumph through the magical pronouncements.

Secondly, the blessing ensured protection and long life to the warriors. It is believed that the blessed man remains untouched in the face of danger. Even though many warriors fell at war it was commonly held that verbal magic was effectual.

Thirdly, the ultimate source of power for the curse and blessing is the High God. Even where charms are used, the power derives from the Deity. The ancestral gods act as intermediaries between the petitioners and the Supreme Being. Thus by making utterances, the protagonist is convinced in the efficacy of the words.

4.3.6 Prayer for protection from a mythic foe

4.3.6.1 Introduction

There are other hazards of nature from which the Lozi sought protection. For instance, the local people were scared of rapids and falls. They never ventured close to a falls without an offering to appease the divinity of the deep. It was believed that a monster inhabited the rapids of Matome at the junction of the river Lumbe. Only the king and other superior functionaries in the land knew the creature. People who knew the rites were employed in securing safe passage and guidance to the travelers. To appease the serpent, a snakeskin would be tossed towards where it was believed to reside (Coillard 1902:170).

During Coillard's travels on reaching the falls, his guides requested that he make an offering to the gods, which he refused. For fear of misfortune, one of the guides threw himself on a rock, clapping and praying to *Nyambe* as follows:

4.3.6.2 Text and translation

<p><i>O Nyambe thou inhabitest these abysses, appease thy wrath!</i></p> <p><i>These white people are poor, and have nothing to offer thee.</i></p> <p><i>If they had snuff and beads, we would know it and I would not</i></p> <p><i>Hide it from thee.</i></p>	<p><i>Nyambe wena ya ambakani libuba tokolomoha bunyemi bwa hao</i></p> <p><i>Makuwa ba ki ba botana, habana sebakona ku kufa</i></p> <p><i>Kambe ne banana kwai ni bufaha ne luka ziba</i></p> <p><i>Mi neni sike na kupatela sona</i></p>
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<p><i>O Nyambe, be not revengeful, do not swallow them up; appease Thy wrath, Nyambe!</i> (Coillard 1902:169-170).</p>	<p><i>Nyambe usi kutisi bumaswe, usike wa lumiza Tokolomoha bunyemi bwa hao, Nyambe</i></p>
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4.3.6.3 Genre

This prayer exhibits a strong protection motif. It arises out of a situation of imminent danger from mythological creatures inhabiting the falls. Thus it is classified as a prayer for protection.

4.3.6.4 Literary context

The prayer is found in historical narrative regarding the background to the establishment of the missionary enterprise by Coillard of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society. Its immediate context is an attempt at depicting the religion of the indigenous people of Barotseland. By alluding to their belief in mythological creatures inhabiting the gorges, the author portrays vividly the religious experience of the locals. Although the prayer account is written from an incredulous Christian perspective, the author depicts the religio-cultural milieu of the Lozi. Thus the petitioner is forced by this backdrop to pray to the Deity for protection. The presence of perceived danger in the rapids arising from belief in the mythological creature motivated this response.

4.3.6.5 Cultural context

Prayer for a safe journey

Gently! Smoothly! Isay so. Death does not come to him for whom prayer is made; death only comes to him who trusts in his own strength! Let misfortune depart, let it go to Shiburi, and Nkabelane. Let him travel safely; let him trample on his enemies; let thorns sleep, let lions sleep; let him drink water wherever he goes, and let that water make him happy, by the strength of this herb (Mbiti 1969:75).

This prayer is offered by a diviner on behalf of a traveller. Protection is sought from death, misfortune, enemies, thorns and lions. The intermediary washes the traveller in herbs. In

this way consolation is provided for the recipient and his family (Mbiti 1969:68). African people are threatened by many enemies in the fields and at home. Besides animal, and human caused danger people are under fear of nature. Lighting, rain and storms can easily cause harm to people (Shorter 1975:108). Thus prayers are made to secure protection from these elements and the powers behind them.

4.3.6.6 Division

This brief prayer has to two parts, the invocation and complaint and the petition. The following structure demonstrates the following:

Strophe I Invocation and complaint

Strophe II Petition

The opening phrase is repeated in closing forming an inclusio.

4.3.6.6 Detailed analysis

4.3.6.6.1 Invocation and complaint

This prayer is addressed to *Nyambe* who inhabits the falls (line 1a). The suppliant refers to *Nyambe*'s abode as the abyss either metaphorically or as an acknowledgement that he is omnipresent. It is most certain that the cause of fear is not *Nyambe*, but the mythological creatures of the deep. The local people believed that the rapids were inhabited by *Matome* (Snake like mythic creature).

The worshipper immediately requests *Nyambe* to appease his wrath (line 1b). The awesomeness of the rapids evoked fear in the travelers. Alternatively, *Nyambe* may have been understood as controller of the creatures that caused danger. If this is true, the suppliant would be justified in requesting that *Nyambe*'s wrath be appeased.

The address is followed by complaint (line 2). The complaint is an exaggeration. Although the missionaries had money, the worshipper informs *Nyambe* of their lack. This matter of fact contradicts the omniscience of *Nyambe*. This theological understanding is also repeated in the failure of *Nyambe* to conceive the mind of *kamunu* in the creation myths.

However, the overall depiction is that *Nyambe* knows all. If indeed *Nyambe* is all knowing, then these may be cases of contradiction or anthropological expression.

At any rate, the absence of appeasements for *Nyambe* in this instance did not deter the suppliant from requesting for his intervention. The nature of offerings regularly brought before the Deity, is given as beads and snuff (line 3). Other material offerings commonly used among Lozi people include cloth, animals, oil and beer (Arnot 1889:54, 75-77). Gifts were not obstacles to the benevolence of God to his subjects in this instance.

4.3.6.6.2 Petition

The intercessor returns to the theme of appeasement stated earlier in the opening address (line 4). It appears from the phrase that the worshipper believed in a vengeful Deity. Whether this affirmation is a result of the failure by Coillard's party to offer gifts to *Nyambe*, or he believes in a malevolent God who acts arbitrarily, is not known. For some reason, the Deity is angry enough to want to swallow the wayfarer.

In spite of the causes for the Deity's anger, the suppliant trusted in his ability to withhold anger and render favour. Thus he requests for the appeasement of the Deity's wrath. There was another way of securing safe passage through the falls such as employing the services of local medicine men. These held the secret rituals involving tossing a skin of snake in the direction of the suspected mythical creature. However in this case the petitioner appealed directly to the tribal God for urgent vindication. *Nyambe* is capable of changing his predisposition of wrath to mercy.

4.3.6.7 Setting and date

4.3.6.7.1 Historical setting

This prayer was uttered during Coillard of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society's enterprises in the 19th Century. The mythological, theological underpinnings of belief in mythical creatures inhabiting inanimate places such as the falls is common to people of many cultures predating this time.

4.3.6.7.2 Cultic setting

The above prayer is addressed to *Nyambe*, the Supreme God. It appears that the petitioner believed that *Nyambe* inhabited the rapids. The intercessor explains the inability to make an offering. What is not clear is whether the reason advanced for not presenting an offering is true or not. Given the reluctance and attitude of the missionaries towards the local gods and rituals, it is possible that the petitioner intentionally falsifies information. Requesting *Nyambe* to hold back his wrath and protect the travelers concludes the prayer.

4.3.6.8 Synthesis

There is a strong reference to danger in the prayer. From a glance it seems as though the traveler has an encounter with an angry Deity. Although remotely, this may be part of the larger theological framework of the local people - a more vivid enemy is in view. The mythological, historical context points to belief in a snake-like creature that indwelt the falls. The danger of attack was a reality to the paddlers such that the suppliant interceded for the missionaries.

The presence of danger motivated the response in prayer. Prayer in this case is a channel of communication with the Supreme Being in request for an answer to the potentially dangerous situation. In addition, this response exhibits the suppliant's confidence in the ability of *Nyambe* to intervene and rescue. This confidence is so strong that the worshiper believes that the deity will overlook the failure to bring offerings before hand.

Nyambe is recognized as the all powerful creator. He is triumphant over mythological creatures and capable of rescuing his subjects. He fills the universe, for indeed, he inhabits even the abyss.

4.3.7 Prayer for the accused

4.3.7.1 Introduction

Prayer was sometimes offered on behalf of an individual facing danger from human harm. Petty jealousies are common in closely knit societies. At times they lead to accusations of witchcraft. To that end the accused is forced to take a test to prove whether he is guilty or not. Failure to handle the ordeal signified death.

Chiefs also played a role in accusations and execution of suspects. Unfortunately, tyrannical rulers misused their powers and killed people mercilessly. In this context, Sipopa carried out executions either for magical purposes or as a way of purging individuals who were thought to be dangerous to his reign. The ordeal practice was later banned by king Lewanika.

4.3.7.2 Text and translation

<p>Father, husband, brother, friend! Fear not you are innocent. Your foes were jealous; They grudged on your mabele!⁴⁰ Nyambe knows you are a good man! Nyambe grant you to vomit the poison! (Holub 1976:320).</p>	<p><i>Ndate, munaka, muhulwani, mulikani!</i> <i>Usi ke wa saba hauna mulatu</i> <i>Lila za hao li nani muna</i> <i>Li nyemezi mabele aha</i> <i>Nyambe wa ziba kuli u muna yo munde</i> <i>Nyambe aku tazise mwabi</i></p>
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4.3.7.3 Genre

This is a prayer for an accused person. The declaration may be classified as a wish. However, the utterances are more than a mere wish. They represent an ejaculation of prayer at the point of crisis. The victim's relatives desired his protection. Significantly, this prayer portrays a call to *Nyambe* for protection given the pervasion of justice during the reign of Sipopa.

4.3.7.4 Literary context

⁴⁰ Mabele is the local word for millet.

The episode is part of the unstable political history of the Lozi people. Further it captures the tyrannical rule of Sipopa. Ruling after the overthrow of the Kololo conquerors, the land was under constant fear of rebellion. Driven by paranoia, the chief resorted to the use of charms and magic. He also employed the purging of treason suspects. At his instigation innocent people were executed.

Another prevailing danger arose from neighbour jealousies. Scores were settled through witchcraft accusations. In such cases the suspect was forced through the ordeal involving either drinking poison or placing one's hands in a boiling pot of water. Failure spelt death. Thus danger of being lynched even when guiltless was real. This led to this extemporaneous prayer.

4.3.7.5 Cultural context

God who created man!

My Life, the lives of my relatives.

Whoever wishes me to live,

Let him live also.

Whoever wishes me to die,

Let him die.

Whoever, wishes that I should have good things,

Let him have them.

Whoever says that I should not eat,

Let his mouth dry up (Shorter 1975:106).

This Ibo prayer from Nigeria is wish for retribution on the victim's enemies. The petitioner addresses God. It is offered in a ritual involving other prayers to lesser divinities. The wishes are aimed at the destruction of the adversaries.

4.3.7.6 Division

The prayer is divided into two parts, namely; encouragement to the victim and a protection wish:

- **Complaint and encouragement- Strophe I**

- **Protection wish- Strophe II**

4.3.7.6 Detailed analysis

4.3.7.6.1 Complaint and encouragement (lines 1-5)

The petition commences with words of encouragement set in a background of hysteria (line 1). Amidst panic, the group cried out mentioning their relationship to the victim. This is the typical cultural way mourners would address the deceased. The victim resembled the dying or dead.

Immediately the relatives called out words of encouragement (line 2). Their fortitude was the innocence of the victim. This signals belief that the innocent could survive the ordeal. For instance, it is said that an innocent person could dip his hands in a boiling pot of water and remain unscathed.

The cause of the murderous intent is identified as jealousy (line 3). The enemy was envious of the victim's millet produce (line 4). This aroused the adversary's invidious scheme to eradicate the victim. Thus, the plot involved witchcraft accusations. The perpetrator, although not mentioned in the text was Sipopa, the tribal chief (Holub 1976:320).

Again, the theme of innocence is repeated at the end of the section with the addition of *Nyambe's* omniscience (line 5). This matter of fact introduces an underlying principle that the Deity is in control and would take care of the situation. Solicitation for protection is motivated by the victim's innocence.

4.3.7.6.2 Protection wish

The ejaculatory, "*Nyambe* grant you to vomit the poison" is more than a wish (line 6). It is a call upon *Nyambe* to give the victim the ability to overcome. In this case the relatives desired protection for the victim from the effects of the poison. At any rate to wish is to pray (Shorter 1975:3). It was customary to proceed with the execution if the accused failed to vomit and was over-powered by the emetic.

Witchcraft accusations are common among Lozi people. Not even the king is able to excuse an accused person. The ordeal therefore, served the purpose of exempting the guiltless. So strong was this belief that it was said that a baby could dip hands in a boiling pot of water and remain unharmed. The second method of conducting the test was by introducing a poisonous concoction to the suspect. On passing the test the accused was declared innocent.

However, during the tyrannical rule of Sipopa, there was no escape for the accused. The tests were conducted outside the village and execution was carried out swiftly by Mashoku, the royal executioner.

Against this background therefore, the relatives turned to *Nyambe* for justice and protection. They spontaneously implored the Deity. Their wish was under-girded by confidence in *Nyambe*'s omniscience and omnipotence.

4.3.7.7 Setting and date

4.3.7.7.1 Historical setting

During the tyrannical rule of Sipopa, killings were carried out at his order. There was open disregard for law. Individuals were killed for petty jealousies. Under the king's service was one Mashoku, an executioner. He was charged with performing hideous killings. The accused man's execution occurred while Holub was visiting at the royal capital in the 19th Century. The accused was forced to drink poison. While his accusers hailed insults at him, shook fists in his face and spat on him, his relatives encouraged him to vomit. The prayer was the cry by his relatives (Holub 1976:321-322).

4.3.7.7.2 Cultic setting

During Sipopa's rule similar episodes of accusations were conducted either at the king's court or privately elsewhere. Although in this instance the relatives and the accusers were present during the ordeal, the political situation was pervaded with corruption and eerie murderous activities perpetuated by the chief.

It is possible that prayers may have been offered in like circumstances. However, there is no indication of patterned forms of prayer activities. In any case, the spontaneity of this

prayer indicates the belief that the Supreme Being could be called on without conventional forms. Thus, *Nyambe* can be approached without priest, temple and sacred place.

4.3.7.8 Synthesis

The prayer consists of aspects of enemy danger, confidence and petition in wish form to the Supreme Being. Additionally, it also conveys motifs of *Nyambe*'s omniscience and the accused man's innocence.

The enemy is represented by a horde of people who desired the execution of the accused. Danger was real as depicted by the literary narrative. The accusers hailed insults and spat in the face of the victim. The king's manic behaviour was the epitome of evil. Once the individual was tried and sentenced in the king's court, escape was a distant reality.

Amidst the certainty of the eerie affair, the relatives portrayed confidence in the Deity. This is depicted in their impulsive wish for the victim's safety. Indeed, they expected the accused to vomit the poison and escape death.

4.3.8 Prayer for the day

4.3.8.1 Introduction

This prayer for the day is offered in the morning. The petitioner approaches *Nyambe* at sunrise when God's proxy, the sun appears. It is uttered by a family representative. Thus it is a communal supplication. This prayer is comprised of invocation, praise and petition. Generally, *Nyambe* was invoked during major needs such as war, drought, sickness, death and sowing time (Turner 1952:49; Jalla 1954:5; Mainga 1972:96).

4.3.8.2 Text and translation



Prayer for the day	
<p>Yoo shoo! Yoo shoo! O great King! No man can compare to Thee. We come to Thee, because Thy favours are innumerable. Thou showest great compassion to Thy servants; We come to Thee, so as to receive Thy blessing and so As to be strengthened. Thou art a powerful King, O King Nyambe! Everything is possible for Thee. Thou canst call back to Thee all men and they cannot refuse compliance, as Thou reignest over all things. May Thy rains water our seeds so that they may grow, as Thou art all-powerful. Thou helpst the one who weakens and feedest the hungry one. We bring to thee our children so that Thou mayest educate them by Thy power. O Master, may Thou never be angry with us, as we are feeble creatures. (Junod 1938:137-138).</p>	<p><i>Yoo shoo! Yoo shoo! O ho Mulena muhulu!</i> <i>Ha kuna mutu ya swana ni wena.</i> <i>Lu taha ku wena, kakuli linubu za hao ha li na palo.</i> <i>Batanga ba hao u ba bonisa mukekechima.</i> <i>Lu taha ku wena ili ku to amuhela limbuyoti za hao mane hape ni ku fiwa mata.</i> <i>U mulena ya mata! O ho mulena Nyambe!</i> <i>Ku wena linto kaufela za kona hala. Wa kona ku biza mutu kaufela mi ha kuna ya hana.</i> <i>U busa linto kufela.</i> <i>Pula yahao I kolobise litoze za luna kuli mele kakuli wena unani mata kaufela.</i> <i>U tusa ya fokola mi hape u fepa ya lapile.</i> <i>Lu tisa bana baluna ku wena kuli u ba lute ka mata ahao.</i> <i>O ho mulena u sike wa lunyemela kakuli lu libupiwa ze fokola.</i></p>

4.3.8.3 Genre

According to Junod (1938:137) this is a morning prayer. A closer examination of the elements indicates that the suppliant is concerned about family welfare. Desire for well-being transcends requests for the present. It encompasses futuristic aspects. This is demonstrated in the petitions for future protection from calamities proceeding from God's anger, progeny's well-being and provision of strength and good crops. Hence, the

petitioner requests for protection from hazards of drought and crop failure and God-inflicted calamities. Further, the suppliant is concerned about family security.

4.3.8.4 Literary context

This prayer is embedded in a literary context which is predominantly on Bantu spirituality (Junod 1938:132-138). Broad similarities are drawn from different cultural societies concerning belief in the Supreme Being, frequency of prayer among Bantu tribes, and the permeation of prayer as a means of communicating with the Deity. Like many Bantu speaking people of Southern Africa, Lozi people share the belief in a request answering Deity (Mainga 1972:95).

4.3.8.5 Cultural context

Ila people from Zambia pray to the Supreme Being, Leza, in instances of sickness when their ancestors have failed to respond (Junod 1938:133). Prior to praying, the head of a household fills a plate with meal flour and water. Some of the mixture is poured to the ground and prayer is made in this manner:

Leza, I pray thee, if it be thou hast made our brother sick, leave him alone, that Thy slave may go about by himself. Was it not Thou who createdst him on earth and said he should walk and trust thee? Leave Thy child that he may trust Thee, Eternal One! We pray to Thee- Thou art the Great Chief!

After uttering the prayer, the supplicant fills his/her mouth with water and squirts some out as an offering. The above prayer has common features with the Lozi prayer for the day. For example, the Deity is metaphorically addressed as Chief. There is also a general belief that sometimes calamities emanate from the Deity (Soyinka 1990:19). When God is the cause of harm, prayers for redress are addressed to him.

4.3.8.6 Division

The Lozi prayer for the day is divided into the following two stanzas:

- **Invocation and praise (lines 1-4)- Stanza I**

- **Petition (lines 5-11)- Stanza II**

The first stanza is composed of invocation, praise and confession. Similarly, the second stanza consists of petitions and confessions.

4.3.8.7 Detailed analysis

4.3.8.7.1 Invocation and praise- (lines 1- 4)

An oldest member of a household addresses the Supreme Being in prayer (Mainga 1972:74-75). This practice is common in Africa. Typically, domestic and community prayers are offered by men and older women (Mbiti 1991:68-71; Zahan 2000:19-20). The Deity is referred to as great king. *Nyambe* is set apart from his creation. He is incomparable. God has no equal among men. This assertion discounts the attempt to equate the African Deity to aucthonous rulers. Lozi mythological history distinguishes between *Nyambe* and Kamunu. *Nyambe*, like other African Supreme Beings is the creator, giver of both plant and animal life (Jalla 1954:2; Mainga 1972:95; Westerlund 2006:118).

Approaching the Deity in praise serves the purpose of appeasing and welcoming him into the ritual. Praise, libation and offering prepare the way for the petition to be brought before the Deity. However, there is no indication that calling a Deity by name entails conjuring him into service. It is possible that the petitioners believed that praise was an emollient. Royal motif forms a common thread interwoven in the prayer fabric. In line 6 the great king is identified as *Nyambe*, the Lozi Deity. God is ascribed with rulership and he is called master (lines 9, 13).

Furthermore, the petitioner acknowledges God's provision of blessings. In Lozi cosmology, the Supreme Being is the giver of blessings. God provides directly through nature or indirectly through both visible and invisible agents. The worshipper is motivated to entreat the Deity due to the provision of numerous gifts in the past. The nature of blessings is not disclosed. In any case, these blessing may refer to health, provision of food and sustenance.

God's generosity is reiterated in line 5. He is compassionate. Herein lies a glimpse into *Nyambe's* character. Based on earlier allusions to God's blessings, the present revelation

of God's character is given meaning. It follows that *Nyambe's* compassion must be a reference to his blessings. God's gifts demonstrate his compassion.

4.3.8.7.2 Petition (lines 5-11)

In stanza 2 the suppliant requests for a variety of items. Petition is made for blessings (line 5a). Blessings have been mentioned earlier in connection with past occurrences. The suppliant focuses on requesting for blessings presently. Blessings are important in Lozi beliefs. They can be passed from one generation to the next. Different people in Lozi and other African societies have the ability to transfer blessings (Coillard 1902:212; McKenzie 1997:334). They include parents, the aged, leaders and mediums. Above all, God can endorse blessings on an individual.

Blessings guarantee success in different endeavours of life. A person who is enthused with blessings portrays material progress. Such an individual is successful in the field, hunting trips, and fishing and in all labour. Blessings also offer security against enemy vices. Blessings therefore have a double effect. Hence by requesting for blessings, the suppliant desires the ability to succeed, and acquire protection from destructive forces.

In this text the petitioner expects God's blessings and strengthening (line 5b). The nature of strength is not mentioned directly. It is possible that the worshipper or someone in the homestead is undergoing a difficulty. Equally, the suppliant may have embarked on a task that required God's strength. In many African societies, evil is active and manifested in different forms. Enemies abound in closely knit societies whether imagined or real (Gluckman 1955:76; Dillon-Malone 1986:378). Feuds erupt over petty jealousies. Unfortunately, such disputes easily degenerate into full scale animosity. And sinister plots are hatched to cause harm. Such an environment is a recipe for witchcraft and sorcery attacks. It is unclear whether there is an actual danger or not, yet the petitioner seeks the Deity's strengthening.

Petitions for blessings and strength are punctuated by praise. The worshipper is confident that God is able to supply the needs since he is powerful. According to Lozi mythology, *Nyambe* possesses creative power (Jalla 1954:2; Mainga 1972:95). For that reason, the inquirer trusts that God is capable of replenishing the needed strength. God's kingship,

which was first mentioned in Line 1, is repeated. Even though Lozi people believe in divine kingship, *Nyambe* transcends human kings.

Nothing is impossible with God (Muuka 1966:250). This assertion is made explicit in God's ability to give and take life (line 6). In fact God's messenger, death, is irresistible (line 7). To this end, God's ability to require life from anyone signifies his power. Then again this power to take life may be the reason for the petition. This is possible if the petitioner or a family member is overwhelmed by a debilitating crisis. Such a calamity has resulted in fear of death. Motivated by the crisis the suppliant requests for blessings and strength. The ejaculatory "you reign over all things" surmises the praise interjection (line 8). God is king unlike any human king. His rule is extensive. He governs the universe and every living thing.

Another round of petitions involves intercession for sustenance, welfare of the suppliant's descendants and protection from God's wrath (lines 9, 11-12). The worshipper requests for rain in order to water the gardens. Prayers for rain are common among agricultural tribes particularly those in arid areas (Mbiti 1975:52). Drought can easily reduce an individual or an entire community to starvation. Inversely, good rainfall ensures abundance and provision. Thus, rain is a critical blessing among sedentary communities. Besides prayers, Lozi people seek the assistance of rain-makers during droughts. At any rate even when such mediators are summoned for rain-making rituals, God is the final arbiter. The inquirer's request for rain guarantees protection from the hazards of drought, crop failure and starvation.

Requests for rain and good crop are motivated by statements of confidence. *Nyambe* is inundated with utterances of trust in his ability to uphold the weak and feed the hungry. The suppliant considers God's enablement in the task at hand. Perhaps, the worshipper was preparing for work in the gardens. In this case, prayer is made for strength for the agricultural task. Feeding the hungry entails either the Deity's continuous or future related provision. It is most likely that this reference is related to God's previous acts. *Nyambe's* past dealings therefore, are the basis for the present request.

Similarly, supplication is done on behalf of the children within the homestead. In African society, children are important gifts. Through descendants one is remembered. A person's name and life is perpetuated through one's children. Barrenness is considered a

curse. People who die childless do not qualify to the status of ancestors since the deceased are venerated by their children. Equally, bearing children who are delinquent and do not observe communal norms, is repugnant. In serious cases, breaking tradition is tantamount to excommunication. This is a state of being lost. To avoid such a situation, the petitioner requests the Deity to assist in the children's upbringing. Proper education secures an individual from bringing shame upon oneself and family. Therefore, education and observation of custom is a deterrent against being cut off from society.

Lastly, God is requested to withhold his wrath (line 11). Either the worshipper is concerned about a present situation or is generally seeking future assurance from God. If the worshipper was experiencing a child-related problem, it is possible that the request was aimed at seeking redress. But, it is equally possible that the supplicant is directing prayer toward future security. A futuristic aspect of the request is not a general insurance against chance attacks. Such petition is better understood from a broad religious cultural context. Although Lozi people believe in the benevolence of the Deity, they also understand that calamities may come from him. Failure to observe custom can evoke the wrath of God. Such wrath manifests in drought, extensive storms, natural hazards and epidemics (Coillard 1902:169-170). For fear of catastrophes, the worshipper prays to God for protection of the community from divine judgment. This matter of fact is reinforced by the literary and cultural context of the prayer. Exemplarily, Ila people believe in *Leza's* (Deity) wrath which can cause sickness. Similarly, Tswana belief is illustrated by a case of lightning. When a woman was struck by lightning the Tswana people affirmed that the Deity had collected a wife for himself (Junod 1938:132-133).

4.3.8.8 Setting and date

4.3.8.8.1 Historical setting

Royal language and etiquette are involved in *Nyambe's* praise. Common gestures exist between the modes of honouring the Deity and royalty. For instance, a loyal subject bows, kneels and claps when approaching the ruling king. Similarly, the suppliant employs approximate gestures at prayer. Furthermore, comparable language of praise is used in both instances (Yoo shoo!).

Evidently the founders of the monarchy borrowed from religious repertoire and manners. This is precisely because *Nyambe* worship predates the Lozi royal establishment. In

addition, *Nyambe* worship is independent of royal control. If this hypothesis is correct, then verisimilar prayers, language and gestures are antecedent to the establishment of the monarchy in the 16th Century.

The composition date of this prayer is the early 20th Century. Thus it is assumed that the presence of gestures and court-like language is an indication to the transmission of ancient, stylistic formulas through oral traditions.

4.3.8.8.2 Cultic setting

The Lozi family elder rises up in the morning to offer prayer before *Nyambe* (Junod 1938:137). Prayer is presented at an altar erected from pieces of wood. White sand is also heaped at the altar. A gift bearing receptacle is placed on the altar. Having prepared the offering the suppliant prays facing the east in the direction of the rising sun. After *Nyambe*'s primeval ascension to heaven (Litooma), accompanied by his entourage, the sun became his proxy (Arnot 1889:88; Turner 1952:49; Scheub 2000:185). Lozi people are not involved in sun worship. The prevalence of family prayers in Lozi traditions points to the familial ritual system of Lozi society. Although a tribal God, *Nyambe*, lacks a centralized cultic system.

4.3.8.9 Synthesis

In this prayer, the oldest member of the homestead addresses *Nyambe* in the morning. God is involved in the affairs of his people even though at times he appears to be distant (Junod 1938:137). *Nyambe* is powerful and able to do everything. Lozi people therefore depend upon *Nyambe*; they commune and appropriate his powers through prayer.

The petitioner seeks blessings, education for children, and protection from God's wrath. Due to the unpredictability of natural forces, the Lozi elder prays for protection. In Lozi belief system accidents and calamities do not occur by chance. Indeed the literary context of the prayer reinforces this matter of fact. An exemplar of *mbelele* rites in Mozambique attest to the tribal African's fear of nature. Baskets are hung on a tree to attract heaven's attention in order to break a drought, cause rain to fall and get a good crop (Junod 1938:137). Similarly, appeasing the Deity secures protection from harm caused by evil

forces and God's anger. The inclusion of a request to *Nyambe* to abate his anger indicates actual or feared danger of this God's malevolent acts.

In order to enlist divine aid, the petitioner calls on *Nyambe*. Prayer therefore is a vehicle for communicating with the Deity. Petitioners may also converse with their ancestors. The Lozi elder offers grain to *Nyambe* in order to appease the Deity.

4.4 Synthesis- Lozi prayers for protection

Early misconceptions about African Traditional Religion portrayed the Supreme Being as remote and disinterested (Turner 1981:7). Notwithstanding the fact that God is acknowledged as the creator, missionaries and explorers failed to identify an active Deity in African societies. It is presumed that having completed the task of creation, God withdrew. God's involvement in the continued maintenance and guidance of the affairs on earth ceased. To the contrary, a close examination of African Traditional Religion reveals the continued involvement of God in the operations of the world (Gehman 1989:192). African people recognize that God is both ruler and judge of the universe. It is apparent that God is called upon when people are faced with dire situations. In turn, the Deity reaches out and provides rain, sunshine, children, health and protection.

4.4.1 Prayer related protection

The aforementioned Lozi prayers can be surmised and illustrated as follows:

	Sowing prayer	Morning prayer	Andonyi war Prayer	Illa/Tonga war Prayer	Protection from natural dangers	Prayer of an accused person	Prayer for the day
Danger	Danger is conjectured	General enemies	Danger of the young	Danger of dying at	Danger arises from	Actual danger of	Danger is inferred from



	from rain and crop failure resulting in starvation	and an inferred mythic enemy	state being wiped out. The enemy identified as Andonyi people	war. The enemies are warriors of pillaged Illa/Tonga people	fear of drowning. The enemy is represented as a mythical snake which inhabited the rapids	failing the poison ordeal and being lynched. The enemy is the king and his cohorts.	crop failure and <i>Nyambe's</i> wrath
Petitioner	Elder seeks <i>Nyambe's</i> provision and blessing. These translate into inviolability and provision of necessities of life	Praises the appearance of <i>Nyambe's</i> proxy; possibly a guarantee to safety and provision	Curse is uttered by a young woman under the guidance of a medicine man. Rituals involving magic accompany the curse	Curse and blessing are spoken antiphonally led by a young woman	The supplicant cries out to <i>Nyambe</i> to provide safe passage to the travelers	In this case the wish is uttered by relatives of the accused person.	the elder petitions <i>Nyambe</i> for good crop and assurance of not becoming victims to <i>Nyambe's</i> wrath
God	Is the provider of strength fertility in the field and protection	Praised as king.			<i>Nyambe</i> is not differentiated from the danger. But He is requested to relent from wrath. <i>Nyambe</i> is lied to concerning offerings	The intercessors believe that <i>Nyambe</i> is all-knowing therefore the accused will be vindicated	<i>Nyambe</i> is the source of strength, fertility and life. He is incomparable.
Outcome					<i>Nyambe</i> is invoked to appease His wrath		Declaration of praise and trust demonstrate confidence in the God's answer.

Lozi cosmology is replete with varied forces of evil. These forces extend to natural phenomena encountered in the forest, mountains, rapids, rivers and lakes. Human enemies are present in Lozi society such as foreign enemies, witches and the spirits of deceased people. Spirits of the dead can be dangerous until they find rest or after required rituals are performed (Mitchell 1977:54). Danger also arises from contravention of custom. When this occurs, individuals and communities are vulnerable to ancestral afflictions. The Supreme Being may also unleash punishment on erring parties. In order to alleviate suffering, Lozi people employ different approaches.

Prayer is the commonest way of approaching God. The question about how far God is worshipped is therefore of utmost importance (Parrinder 1968:37). In African Traditional Religion, people pray either corporately or privately. Anybody can pray at any time or any place (Mbiti 1975:55). Then again certain people may pray on behalf of others. These officiants include chiefs, priests, rainmakers and medicine men. At the family level, the head or oldest member of the family conducts prayers but, occasionally, a ritual elder or local priest may pray when requested.

Lozi prayers like Traditional African prayers generally include elements of praise, thanksgiving, a declaration of state of affairs in which the prayer arises and requests. Concreteness is a central mark in these prayers. Some of the requests in prayer are: healing, protection from danger, safety in traveling, security, preservation of life and various matters pertaining to life (Mbiti 1975:56).

Community prayers are offered in request for rain, peace, cessation of epidemics and dangers to the nation, success at war and fertility of people, animals and crops. An appeal to divinities or intercession can be done directly to God. At times intercession is accompanied by sacrificial rituals to redress the prevailing calamity (Mitchell 1977:60). Similarly, ancestors are approached and requests for their assistance offered. By performing specified rituals, ancestral aid is solicited and curses are removed.

In contemporary Lozi society there is no marked distinction between the royal cult, ancestral veneration and *Nyambe* cult. Through ritual observations and practices any given request may be brought before the higher powers simultaneously. Nevertheless, each stream of religion has distinct characteristics (Mainga 1972:98).

When an individual is sick, or struck by calamity he/she prays to *Nyambe* requesting for protection and healing. An altar is erected from pieces of wood, a heap of river sand or reeds may be grown signifying a place for prayer. Oblations are offered to *Nyambe*, the supreme God in the morning at sunrise. These oblations are in the form of water in a dish. The Deity is solicited in prayer and the suppliant hopes to secure redress thereby (Coillard 1902:535). The role of traditional medicine ought to be underlined too. Although the victim approaches God in prayer, the answer is sometimes provided through magical-medical practices (Shorter 1975:18).

4.4.2 Other forms of protection

Verbal prayer is not the only way of personal or corporate expression. Varied language of symbolic action, expressed in ritual and dance is utilised (Shorter 1975:5). When the worshipper expresses himself/herself with the aid of corporeal objects, prayer is materialized. Examples of tangibles include certain styles of dressing and observing silence. Similarly, bodily actions are performed such as spitting, dancing and gesturing.

Protection against calamities, drought and epidemics are resolved through the aid of human agents. In the case of drought, for instance, affected people approach a medicine man or rainmaker to reverse the misfortunes. Through traditional, medicinal powers, the rainmaker manipulates the forces of nature to generate rain. The procedure is secretive and the rain doctor performs the required rituals behind closed doors. The rest of the people remain outside singing and waiting for the first sign of rain.

Other practices which accompany prayers are taboos placed on the victim in order to secure protection from harm. Protective amulets are worn on the victim's person. The sufferer is smeared with medicinal potions in addition to other varied observations (Parrinder 1968:93).

Another way of securing protection is by seeking foresight from the divinities through the help of diviners. Counsel is obtained regarding the future in order to avert danger through prescribed observances. The services of specialists in magic are sought for. These functionaries are critical particularly when witchcraft is suspected. Protective charms are acquired from medicine men to counter witchcraft and sorcery for instance.