

**FROM *CHINAMWALI* TO *CHILANGIZO*:  
THE CHRISTIANISATION OF PRE-CHRISTIAN  
CHEWA INITIATION RITES  
IN THE  
BAPTIST CONVENTION OF MALAWI**

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## Declaration

I hereby declare that with the exception of the sources specifically acknowledged in the text, this dissertation is my original work. It has not been submitted to any other University.



(Molly Longwe)

## Supervisor's Agreement

As supervisors, we have agreed to the submission of this thesis.



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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation critically reviews *chilangizo* in the Baptist Convention of Malawi (BACOMA) and assesses its impact on Chewa society. Christian History has shown that the Christian attitude towards traditional customs and practices surrounding life cycle rituals has ranged from negative and hostile to positive and acceptance, resulting in offering alternative 'Christian' rituals. The issue of *chilangizo* and *chinamwali* have been a real pastoral and missiological problem to the Baptist Convention churches because of the churches' failure to understand the meaning of the traditional rites in the light of the mother tongue Scriptures. This study aims at guiding the Church in Malawi and in Africa to engage with more openness with the cultural issues. This should assist BACOMA to thoroughly understand this cultural phenomenon and the meanings associated with all aspects of the rites. Studying the Scriptures to understand how they re-interpret *chinamwali* and its associated meanings should lead BACOMA churches into an interactive process of discussion, reflection, teaching and action. This study is therefore an attempt to begin this process and make recommendations for BACOMA.

After the introductory chapter, the second chapter gives a survey of the 'religious itinerary' of the Chewa pre-Christian life and thought. The third chapter traces the emergence of BACOMA churches within the American Southern Baptists' religious and Western cultural contexts on one hand, and the African context on the other. The fourth chapter gives a phenomenological description and analysis of *chinamwali*. It also shows the socio-religious significance of *chinamwali* within the Chewa culture. The fifth chapter surveys the historical context of *chilangizo* as the Christian response to the traditional rite. It then analyses the Baptist *chilangizo* liturgy and its contents. The sixth chapter gives the phenomenological description and analysis of *chilangizo* at the grassroots level. It also assesses its impact and makes recommendations towards an improved rite. In view of the assessment and recommendations made in chapter six, the final chapter allows the Chewa Scriptures to re-interpret the rite and its meanings. It also presents a proposed Christian *chinamwali* that maintains the traditional ritual frame and dynamism. The proposal leaves room for creativity and improvement by the individual congregations.

## MWACHIDULE

Chimangiroro ichi chikufufuza mwadongosolo chilangizo m'mipingo ya Konveshoni ya Babatist m'Malawi (BACOMA), ndikuona kufunikira kwache pakati pa mtundu wa Achewa. Mu mbiri ya chiKhristu, zaonetsa kuti poyambirira mipingo imakana ndi kutsutsana ndi miyambo ya makolo. Koma pang'ono ndi pang'ono, mipingo inayamba kubvomereza ndi kulandira za miyamboyo pokhazikitsa mwambo wa chiKhristu m'malo mwake. M'mipingo yathu ya Babatist, nkhanu ya chilangizo ndi chinamwali yakhala bvuto leni leni kuchito ya ubusa ndi yofalitsa Uthenga wa Yesu. Izi zakhala tero chifukwa chakulephera kwa BACOMA kumvetsetsa ndi kutanthauzira chinamwali kuchokera m'Mau a Mulungu muchinenero cha anthu.

Ndicholinga cha chimangiroro ichi kuthandiza BACOMA, komanso mipingo yonse mu Afrika, kuti ikhale yomasuka kuphunzira za chikhalidwe ndi miyambo ya anthu. Cholinga ndi kuti mipingo imvetsetse mozama ndikukhoza kutanthauzira mwambo uli wonse pakugwiritsa ntchito Mau a Mulungu a muchinenero chawo. Chimangirorochi ndi chiyambi chakulimbikitsa BACOMA pandondomeko yakukambirana, kulingirira, ndi kuphunzitsa anthu ake zokhuzana ndi chikhalidwe ndi miyambo ya makolo poyang'ana matanthauzo achi m'Bukhu Lopatulika.

Chitatha chigawo chamayambo mu chimangirorochi, chigawo chachiwiri chayang'ana mbiri, chikhalidwe, ndi zikhulupiriro za mtundu wa Achewa. Chigawo chachitatu chaonetsa kukhazikitsidwa kwa mipingo wa Babatist kuchokera kumbali ziwiri. Poyamba kuchokera ku moyo wachipembezo ndi chikhalidwe cha azungu aBabatist akuAmerika, amene anabweretsa Uthenga Wabwino ku Afrika. Mbali yachiwiri yayang'ana zinthu zingapo zimene zinapangisa aMalawi kulandira ndi kufalitsanso Uthengawo kwa aMalawi anzawo. Popeza chilangizo ndi gawo la chikhalidwe chathu, chigawo chachinayi chalongosola mwatsatane-tsatanu mwambo wa chinamwali cha Achewa cha ndakula. Chigawo chachisanu chapereka mbiri ya chilangizo makamaka mu BACOMA. Chigawo chachisanu ndi chimodzi chalongosola ndi kufufuza m'mene chilangizo chikuyendera m'mipingo ya Babatist. Kafukufuku waonetsa kuti chilangizo sichikukwaniritsa zosowa zeni-zeni za anthu pakulingirira zolinga zimene chinamwali chimakwaniritsa kwa Achewa. Chomwecho chigawo chotsiriza chapereka malingiriro ndindomeko yofunika kuti BACOMA iyambe kukambirana, kulingirira, ndi kuphunzitsa akhristu za m'mene Mau a Mulungu amatanthauzira miyambo yamakolo athu. Chitsanzo cha chinamwali cha Chikhristu chaperekedwa potsirizira pa chimangirorochi.



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**ABBREVIATIONS**

APIM	Achewa Providence Industrial Mission
BACOMA	Baptist Convention of Malawi
BC	Baptist Church
BMCA	Baptist Mission in Central Africa
BMIM	Baptist Mission in Malawi
BTSM	Baptist Theological Seminary of Malawi
BWUSA	Baptist Women Union of Southern Africa
CCAP	Church of Central Africa Presbyterian
DRCM	Dutch Reformed Church Mission
EC	Executive Committee
FMB	Foreign Mission Board
GA	Girls' Auxiliary
NIV	New International Version
PIM	Providence Industrial Mission
RA	Royal Ambassadors
SBC	Southern Baptist Convention
TA	Traditional Authority
USA	United States of America
UMCA	Universities' Mission to Central Africa
WMU	Woman's Missionary Union

## 1. INTRODUCTION

*Ntchembere yanzeru, mwana wake akatha msinkhu, amamuitanira anamkungwi namuuzwa mwambo wa makolo asanapite kumpingo.*

(A wise mother, when her daughter experiences her first menses, calls one or two *anamkungwi* to instruct the girl in the customs of our ancestors [*mwambo wa makolo*] before she goes to the church.)

The above statement by a traditional instructress of initiation rites reflects the importance of ancestral customs among the Chewa people even in the twenty-first century. It also shows that she perceives 'Church' or the Christian message as an after-thought and perhaps inadequate to deal with the deep issues of life. One chief also expressed that he wished his people underwent the traditional initiation rites first then join the church afterwards. This raises the question as to whether the Church has adequately understood cultural practices associated with the initiation rites or been able to appropriately allow Scriptures to interpret rites. The problem is that the way the Christian message has been presented it has failed to helpfully interpret cultural traditions and beliefs. In an attempt to integrate the Gospel with culture, the early Western missionaries to Africa had to grapple with some cultural aspects that seemed to be incompatible with the Christian faith. This became more evident with respect to rites of passage as performed by Africans. Realizing the importance of such transition rites in peoples' lives, the early missionaries attempted to give a Christian response to the traditional customs and practices surrounding the life cycle rituals. The American Southern Baptist missionaries in Malawi have been no exception in facing the same struggle.

Like other missionaries in Malawi, the Baptists responded by introducing a 'christianized' initiation rite called *chilangizo*<sup>1</sup> in place of the traditional rite commonly known as *chinamwali*. Both are collective terms referring to initiation rites for girls and boys which include,<sup>2</sup> puberty rites for girls, marriage rites, first pregnancy and childbirth rites. The problem, however, is that *chilangizo* for girls upon their puberty, does not adequately help the young women to go through the transition from puberty to adulthood.



## 1.1 MOTIVATION

As a researcher, I am aware of my own status as a Malawian Evangelical Baptist woman. This position has enabled me to identify with the women struggling over the issues of *chilangizo*. Although I am a recognized church leader in the Baptist denomination, the issue of *chilangizo* and *chinamwali* are a real problem for me personally.

My personal involvement in *chilangizo* for girls at puberty and for young mothers on their first pregnancy and childbirth created in me a sense of inadequacy and ignorance so that I could not continue with the task. When I was assigned the responsibility of *mlangizi* (plural *alangizi*) in our local church in the early 1980's I was a mother of three children aged between six to one years. I was handed a booklet, *Bukhu la Alangizi* (the Instructresses' Booklet) to help me in my ministry. It contained some explanatory notes, what to tell the initiates, and some Bible verses for each of the rites mentioned above. Every time I was invited to instruct a girl, I read through the booklet in advance, scribbled a few notes, and then went and gave a twenty to thirty minutes lecture to the initiate. In the course of my duties I became more and more disappointed to learn that the parents of the initiates were not satisfied with the Baptist church's *chilangizo*. I have heard similar comments over a number of years from among the Baptist men and women, including some church leaders. Instead, they prefer to send their girls, secretly, to *chinamwali*. Non-Christian parents too have tended to undermine *chilangizo*, saying that it does not deal with the 'real issues.' Thus this study is an attempt to investigate factors that have contributed to such dissatisfaction and to reconstruct the rites in the light of the Gospel. Therefore I undertook this research, as a learner. I am committed to a thorough study in order to search for the truth so that I, too, may benefit from this study.

My beliefs and my role in the Baptist denomination may contribute to bias in the way I view issues. However, in observation, interviews, analysis and writing, I have attempted to be objective. I have endeavoured to put on the Chewa cultural garments and learn to appreciate their heritage as well as learn from the Chewa themselves, even if it meant coming into close contact with the *nyau* whom traditionally I have dreaded.

My motivation, therefore, in the study of transition rites stems not only from academic interests, but from my own personal experience of inadequacy and lack of credibility among the parents. From the perspective of a Malawian mother I also join the ‘circle of concerned women theologians’ in bringing up issues that violate development of full humanity such as violence against women (girls) through some aspects of female initiation rites, child marriage, and so on. Because of this I have come to appreciate the importance of understanding rituals as performed in society. Since every ritual carries some social, moral and religious significance, it is important to take these rituals seriously and understand the theological meanings that lie behind such rituals.

Issues concerning sexuality are a paradox in the African context. While they are regarded as taboo (that is, they are not supposed to be discussed ‘openly’), in most of the traditional rituals, sex education plays a major role in the female initiation rites because of its religious significance. To this end, my position as a female theologian engaged in theological training enabled me to interact not only with women but with both male and female church leaders as well as traditional leaders. In order to adequately equip the ‘God-called men and women for Christian service’<sup>3</sup> our theological education must encompass all aspects of cultural issues. This study aims at equipping the Church in its engagement of Gospel and culture.

To this end, I have used the Chewa people of Lilongwe District, Central Malawi, as a case study.

## **1.2 PROBLEM FORMULATION AND ANALYSIS**

*Chilangizo* in the Baptist churches is a prescribed ‘Christian’ initiation rite in response to Baptist women’s desire to have a Christian way of instructing the girls on facts of life such as on puberty. The problem to be solved in this study is why *chilangizo* is not an adequate response to *chinamwali* for the Chewa women of Lilongwe. Related sub-problems are: What is the historical and socio-religious background of the Chewa people of Lilongwe District? What are the historical factors that prepared the way for the

emergence of *chilangizo* in the Baptist churches in Malawi? How did the Baptist Convention develop *chilangizo*? How is *chilangizo* performed at the grassroots level?

The hypothesis of this study is that *chilangizo* is an inadequate response to *chinamwali* because it does not answer the needs of the Chewa people in the way *chinamwali* does. If the rite is inadequate, then the Baptist Convention needs to consider developing a rite reflecting the Gospel's interpretation of traditional *chinamwali* and which reinforces traditional values that Scripture affirms and purifies or changes those that contradict or undermine the essence of the Gospel so that it makes a lasting impact upon the lives of the initiates. All teaching, Christian and traditional, needs to be revisited especially in light of the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

### 1.3 RELATED STUDIES

A number of publications that reflect similar insights or are relevant to this study have been researched.

Since rites of passage form the main focus of this study, Arnold van Gennep's (1960) work has been useful because of his system of analysis of rites. Bourdillon (1990) also defines the structure and function of ritual.

The literature that is available on girls' initiation rites in Malawi includes responses by earlier mission churches to this cultural phenomenon, such as the Roman Catholic, the Presbyterian, and the Anglican churches.

Chakanza, J (in Cox 1998) traces a historical account of the Church's response to the same issue from the Roman Catholic perspective in *Unfinished Agenda: Puberty Rites and the Response of the Roman Catholic Church in Southern Malawi, 1901-1994*. In his analysis, he has shown the negative position of the Church towards initiation rites, and how puberty initiations are a pastoral problem for the Church because of the different reactions towards them – those with sympathetic and positive attitudes and those with unsympathetic and negative attitudes.

In her work, *Women, Presbyterianism and Patriarchy: Religious experience of Chewa Women in Central Malawi*, Phiri, I (1997) critically examines the attitude and response of the Dutch Reformed Church Mission (DRCM) to female initiation rites and African traditional culture in general. After outlining the histories of women in Chewa society, she analyses stage by stage the position of the Church as it struggled with the customs of the Chewa people over a period of more than forty years when the 'Christianized' initiation rite was finally accepted by the Church. Her work is important because it gives a good historical background of the Chewa people. She also argues for a critical analysis of the content of the teachings of the Church initiation so that they may promote the liberation of women from patriarchal structures and thus reject anything that denies the full humanity of women in Africa.

Chingota, F (in Cox 1998) also gives *A Historical Account of the Attitude of Blantyre Synod of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian Towards Initiation Rites* in Blantyre, the southern part of the country. In his work he shows how the early missionaries responded to the issue of initiation rites by using four approaches at different periods in their history. Using such missionary legacy, Chingota then shows how the Synod has made little progress on developing suitable teaching material for the christianised *chilangizo*. He calls for the Synod's action on such a 'crucial issue'.

Stuart, R G in his doctoral thesis, *Christianity and the Chewa: The Anglican case 1885-1950*, outlines the conversion history of the Eastern Chewa of Likoma Island, Nkhota-kota and Ntchisi through their contact with the Anglican church of the Universities' Mission to Central Africa. Stuart shows the church's insistent opposition to Chewa traditional beliefs that they thought were incompatible with Christianity, one of which was initiation (*unamwali* or *chinamwali*), and the development and replacement of the traditional beliefs with Christian alternatives. The church opposed the initiation ceremonies for girls on the grounds that it involved 'much beer drinking, dancing, obscenity and immorality (Stuart 1974:192). Christians were therefore forbidden to take part. Despite the negative attitude, and like the DRC, the UMCA from the 1920s attempted to achieve a synthesis of traditional Chewa and Christian principles through the Anglican women's organisation called the 'Mother's Union.'

The above responses to the issue of 'rites of passage' show a lack of understanding on the part of the missionaries of the religious and theological significance attached to *chinamwali* rituals. This study attempts to re-examine the rites to discover their religious and theological significance and to use the Scriptures to re-interpret the rite.

Banda, R (2001) in her work on 'Liberation through Baptist polity and doctrine,' includes a chapter on how *chinamwali* is either liberative or oppressive to Baptist Women in Southern Malawi. Although Banda uses the same Baptist booklet *Buku la Alangizi* in her comparative analysis, it differs to this study for she deals with an ethnic group different from the Chewa in Lilongwe and she focuses on only one congregation, while this research examines the practice in a district through observation of three rites and interviews with people from a wide number of churches. Although the initiation rites for girls in Southern Malawi includes pre-puberty girls, this research focuses on the actual physical puberty rites. The rites all serve the same purpose – that of transition from childhood into adulthood. It is important that detailed research on cultural issues be carried out on smaller people groups. Banda's study provides the church with more adequate tools as it seeks to reach every culture with the Gospel. While Banda makes some recommendations for *chinamwali* that are liberative for Baptist women, this study goes further to suggest that Scriptures become the key interpretative tool for the rites and is thus like a 'road map' for a Christian rite that addresses the needs of the Chewa people. The study also gives a sample Christian ceremony.

Increased local academic interest in initiation rites is also seen in a number of writings such as Orison Chaponda (1999) who highlights attempts by one group of missionaries to christianize the Yao male and female initiation rites, (with circumcision for boys) in the predominantly Yao district of Mangochi. Elvira Ignasio (1999) also looks at the Christianisation of the pre-puberty rites for girls and its effect on the Yao society in Monkey Bay. Patrick Makondesa (1999) concentrates on the initiation ceremonies for both boys and girls among the Lomwe of some districts in the Southern Malawi. Van Breugel's (2001) study of Chewa traditional religion and Matthew Schoffeleers's work (1997) provide general cultural background information on the Chewa people.



This study covers female initiation rites. Therefore literature from the Circle of Concerned African women Theologians, though few are from Malawi, is useful to this study. I am aware of their use of 'gender' as a tool for analysis, and their predominant questions concern the role of women in religion in Africa (be it Christianity, Islam, or African traditional religions). These can be summed up in Mercy Oduyoye's (1992) question 'What responsibilities do women have in the structures of religion?' Other works consulted included Oduyoye's (1995) *Daughters of Anowa: African women and patriarchy*; and Emmanuel Martey's (1998) *Women and culture in contemporary Africa*. I have already mentioned Isabel Phiri's *Women, Presbyterianism and patriarchy: Religious experiences of Chewa women in Malawi* and Rachel Banda's thesis on 'Liberation through Baptist polity and doctrine: A reflection on the lives of women in the history of women in the Baptist Convention in Southern Malawi.' Looking from a Christian perspective, all these women point to Jesus Christ as the only Liberator of women in Africa.

Although I have quoted extensively from Mercy Oduyoye's *Daughters of Anowa* and Isabel Phiri's *Women, Presbyterianism and Patriarchy*, I have not engaged with them on the issue of gender as a tool for analysis as they have done. Rather my analysis is basically between culture and Gospel because of the Church's failure to engage with traditional customs. As a result the Church has not been able to provide adequate responses to cultural issues. There is need to engage and analyse women's issues using all analytical tools, and not just with one tool.

Literature on Gospel and culture and research related to it is vital to this study especially with regard to the significance of the vernacular Scriptures as the interpretive key to Gospel and culture engagement. Works consulted therefore included Allison Howell's (2001) *Religious itinerary of a Ghanaian people*; Kwame Bediako's (1995) *Christianity in Africa: The renewal of a non-Western religion* and (2000) *Jesus in Africa: The Christian Gospel in African history and experience*. Articles on the Gospel and culture theme that appear in *Journal of African Christian thought* have also been a useful resource.



#### 1.4 OBJECTIVES

The importance of the study is that while I personally, and others will be well equipped to respond confidently to *chinamwali*, the Baptist Convention of Malawi churches will be able to provide an adequate response that helps Chewa Christians respond to the issues of rites of passage in general, and puberty rites in particular. This study also contributes to theological study in Africa and the world in that it aims to provide a resource not only for academic research, but for practical pastoral responses to many of the challenges still affecting African societies, such as rites of passage which ‘are so important for almost all African ethnic groups’ (Fiedler 1996:176).

Every church is called to be a missionary church. To make a critical analysis of its cultures in the light of the gospel is part of the Church’s mission. As these rites and responses concern women, this dissertation aims to assist in emancipating women from the Western ‘missionary’ mind-set and empowering them to become Christians who can express their faith within their cultural context as Jesus becomes Lord of the Chewa culture.

This study will therefore benefit not only the situation in the Baptist denomination, but the wider church and society in Malawi and also the body of Christ in other parts of Africa and the world.

#### 1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

*Chilangizo* is a Christian response to *chinamwali*. In order to effectively evaluate the present state of *chilangizo* in the Baptist churches in Malawi, I examined four areas – the *chinamwali* phenomenon in its cultural context, *chilangizo* within the church setting, the church liturgy on *chilangizo* and the use of Chewa Scriptures to re-interpret *chinamwali* and its meanings. Although there are some written sources on the subject, the primary focus has been on learning from oral sources mainly through participant obser-

vation and interviewing. The methodology adopted is therefore both phenomenological and descriptive as well as analytical and interpretive.

**Participant observation.** People do not function in an abstract context. Theology is lived. In order to meaningfully come to terms with the life experiences of the Chewa people I sought to come as close to the actual performance of *chinamwali* ritual as possible. *Chinamwali*, among the Chewa people, is associated with the secret society called *gule wamkulu* or *nyau*, which come under the jurisdiction of a chief, and since no uninitiated person is allowed in, a chief granted me permission to attend one five-day *chinamwali* ceremony. Similarly, since no information concerning their activities can be unwisely divulged, I was able to observe 'mock' rituals and talk directly to the *anamkungwi* (the traditional instructresses for initiation rites) through their chiefs. While I was waiting for the real *chinamwali* ceremony which was to be performed towards the end of the year during the month of September, and in order to gain a general understanding of the ritual, I observed three 'mock' ceremonies in the area of Traditional Authority (TA) Chadza with three different groups of *anamkungwi* from three villages; one 'mock' rite in the western part of Lilongwe in TA Kalolo area, and another one in the eastern part in TA Chimutu area. However the main area of my research was in the south of Lilongwe in TA Chadza around Nthenje area.

In order to thoroughly research *chilangizo*, I visited various Baptist churches and, through the pastor and his wife, I arranged and planned with the *alangizi* when I would attend a *chilangizo* ceremony. Although I planned to participate in five congregational *chilangizo* ceremonies, I finally participated only in three of them - two in rural Lilongwe at Chimenya and Mphindo churches; and one in the urban Lilongwe at Mtenere Baptist church. Many *alangizi* mentioned that they were not holding *chilangizo* since many mothers do not report to the church when their daughter matures. Since I had requested for a ceremony, some instructresses at Chimenya and Mphindo encouraged some of the parents to let their daughter be instructed 'because the *alangizi* from headquarters have come to see what we do.'

**Focus Groups.** From February to August 2001, I participated in, observed and listened to women's life experiences through focus groups. At Msambo church in the eastern Lilongwe I met on five occasions with ten to twenty *alangizi* and on two occasions with about fifteen girls from the surrounding Baptist churches. At Chidothi church in southern Lilongwe I met with ten to fifteen *alangizi* on three occasions. At Chimenya in western Lilongwe I participated in two meetings, one with twelve *alangizi* and the other with the *alangizi* and their girls<sup>4</sup> from the surrounding churches over a three-day period. I also had three sessions with five to ten instructresses from five churches in urban Lilongwe. In addition to the focus groups, I held discussions with incidental groups such as at one of the women's weekly meetings at Mtendere and Msambo Baptist Churches; at one of the women's associational meetings where I had the opportunity to listen to discussions about *chilangizo* led by the association *alangizi*; and at the BACOMA annual general meeting where I participated in a discussion session with about thirty pastors' wives.

Participation in the group discussions gave me a wider picture of the state of *chilangizo* in the Baptist churches. The purpose of the groups was to enable women to share life experiences related to *chilangizo* and discuss suggestions for improving the ceremony and the written material associated with it.

**Oral interviews.** *Chinamwali* among the Chewa falls under the chief's jurisdiction, therefore I interviewed one chief to learn about his views on the Christian *chilangizo*, and the challenges it poses to his chieftaincy. I also interviewed a Christian chief to find out his attitude toward both *chinamwali* and *chilangizo*. During the observation of the 'mock' *chinamwali* I carried out extensive interviews with the *anamkungwi* and some Chewa pastors and *alangizi*. I interviewed in total seventeen (17) informants whose names do not appear in the text nor in the sources list.

In order to ascertain the attitude of the churches toward both *chilangizo* and *chinamwali*, I carried out both formal and informal interviews with fifty church members, in groups as well as individually. These included pastors and pastors' wives, *alangizi*, women members, missionaries, and girls. For formal interviews, I purposely selected

church leaders, both men and women, and *alangizi* who have lived since the inception of *chilangizo* and have been involved in the training of other leaders. The rural members who had been previously initiated into the traditional rite were helpful in clarifying some details of the traditional rite. None of the girls I interviewed had undergone the traditional rite. Some of them had been instructed by the church while others had been instructed by a grandmother or an aunt on their first menses. However, the girls were able to voice their suggestions for an improved way of *chilangizo* in particular and the biblical instruction in general.

Apart from Baptist members, I also interviewed five women outside the Baptist denomination and ten women from other ethnic groups in order to widen my understanding of how this cultural phenomenon is handled in other churches and societies.

There were a number of difficulties encountered in the research. While I gained the confidence of many rural instructresses because of my position as *Amayi busa* (pastor's wife) and teacher at the seminary, they perceived my role to be one who had authority from 'headquarters' to correct them and tell them the right way to carry out *chilangizo*. This tended to obscure the true picture of *chilangizo*. This became evident after several discussions. For example, many instructresses did not mention about the elongation of the *labia minora* until after several meetings. Similarly during participant observation, the instructresses thought I was checking whether they used the booklet or not, and this was evidenced in the way they read the booklet to the girls at the ceremony.

**Note taking, tape recording and photographs.** From the beginning, I sought permission from informants to take notes and also to take photos where appropriate. Many church members were happy that their names would appear in a book and so did not mind my taking notes. With the traditional ceremony I was forbidden to take notes in public as it would mean revealing their secrets. However, during interviews many informants did not mind, though they did not feel comfortable for their names to appear in the book. Thus, all informants' names for the traditional customs do not appear in the text, and in the list of primary sources they appear by their titles only. Tape recording was mainly used for recording songs in the *chinamwali* and the 'mock' ceremonies.

Photographs visually enhance written description. However, taking photos can be disruptive especially with regard to initiation rites which are regarded as secret. For the church ceremonies, the women expressed appreciation of the photographs, but with regard to the traditional ceremony, only one group of *anamkungwi* during the 'mock' ceremonies was glad to be photographed. During the actual *chinamwali* I could only take photos of a few *zirombo* who were dancing away from the main function. I was forbidden to take other photos, and so no photos of the actual *chinamwali* appear in this dissertation.<sup>5</sup>

## 1.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The approach I bring into this study resonates with Howell's (1999:22) position who argues that: 'If the Gospel is to be the interpreter of culture, then learning the story behind events and rites, and understanding the meanings behind those rites and artefacts' is a key element to proper engagement of Gospel and culture. There is need for scriptural truths to re-interpret the overall general meanings as well as the specific meanings and practices that occur throughout the rites. Using Bediako's words (2001:2), the Chewa Scriptures should therefore become the 'hermeneutic' or the interpreter of who the Chewa is in his or her culture. Gospel and culture encounter is 'more than the altering of surface elements like music, dance and artefacts' of the Chewa traditions and culture. In its entirety, the Gospel is a 'searchlight and a guide' of our cultures to affirm what is good and rebuke what is tainted by sin. It is through the processes of our mother tongue<sup>6</sup> language that God meets us to show us the right way.

While the church booklet may contain some good elements, the general feeling is that there is something missing in the Christian initiation rites that is failing to meet the needs of the people. My argument is that there should be a way of reconstructing the church rites for Chewa girls that will appreciate the meaning of the whole rite as well as see how the Gospel does interpret this cultural phenomenon of *chinamwali*. Thus the reconstruction will only be possible if there is an attempt to learn about the Chewa past, their history environment and culture and also to search deeply into the Chewa



Scriptures in order to understand where we have come from, who we are, and where we are going.

The rationale behind this study therefore is a critical re-examination of the initiation rites as performed in the Baptist churches in Malawi particularly among the Chewa people in Lilongwe district. As an insider, my general observation is that many Christians do not use the church's prescribed liturgy in performing *chilangizo*.

### 1.7 **RESEARCH STRUCTURE**

This work consists of seven chapters including introduction and conclusion. The introduction gives the background and the motivation of the study, theoretical framework, the present state of research, the problem formulation and analysis, research methodology, and the research structure. Since this study focuses on the Chewa people, and because the Chewa were in Malawi before the church arrived, chapter two gives the context of Chewa life and thought. This is done by tracing the Chewa pre-Christian socio-religious journey.

Chapter three traces historical elements from both the American Southern Baptists and the Malawians in the formation of Baptist Convention of Malawi (BACOMA) churches. It is argued that although the Christian message was well received by the Malawian women it also created questions on cultural issues that were central to their identity as Malawian Christians.

Chapter four gives the phenomenological description and analysis of the Chewa initiation rite for girls. Analysis of the instruction shows that sex education is the hub of the ritual; and interpretation of the rite fits Van Gennep's (1960) general classification of separation, transition and incorporation. It is argued that it is the transition or the sacred stage that gives the Chewa initiation rite its religious significance.

Chapter five traces the historical development of the prescribed liturgy as the missionary response to the Baptist women's desire for a Christian *chinamwali*. This desire, it is



argued, must have come from a people who have a history that has shaped them as African Christian women. Analysis of the content shows that the role of the instructresses is firstly to make converts of the girls, and then give appropriate instruction upon puberty, marriage, pregnancy, and birth of the baby.

In order to understand the practice and meaning of *chilangizo* in the Baptist churches, chapter six gives a phenomenological description and analysis of three *chilangizo* ceremonies performed at grassroots level. An assessment to see whether *chilangizo* is an adequate Christian response to *chinamwali* at the end of the chapter shows that the attempt to 'christianise' the traditional rite is far from achieving the real purpose which stems from the church's failure to understand the socio-religious meaning of the rite in order to adequately engage it with the Gospel. In view of such a failure, chapter seven uses Chewa Scriptures to re-interpret *chinamwali* and suggests a way forward for a Christian *chinamwali* in the Baptist churches, by providing the girls with continuous instruction from pre-puberty until marriage and performing a Christian puberty ceremony which retains as much as possible of the traditional framework.

## **2. THE 'RELIGIOUS ITINERARY'<sup>7</sup> OF THE CHEWA**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The modern missionary movement began penetrating Africa with the Gospel in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>8</sup> However, they did not find a culture-less people. Rather, the Gospel spread amongst Africans, who in the midst of suffering still had a rich heritage from their past. Similarly, the Chewa people of Malawi have been moulded by their past which has given them their identity. Factors from their past influenced their new identity as Christians. This is true not only of Africans, but throughout earlier periods of Christian history. Unless the past is understood and responded to, the process of conversion remains incomplete. It is the aim of this chapter to give the context of Chewa pre-Christian life and thought and to explore the socio-religious factors that have shaped the Chewa history and identity.

### **2.2 GEOGRAPHICAL SURVEY**

Spreading across Central Africa is a broadstrip of matrilineal people groups such as 'the Luba, the Bisa, the Nsenga, the Chewa, and the Yao' (Linden 1978:211). The Chewa referred to in this essay occupy a geographical area labelled Central Malawi which covers territory running from the lake shore to Mchinji and from Kasungu to Ntcheu (see Map A).<sup>9</sup> Central Malawi is made up of nine districts – Kasungu, Dowa, Ntchisi, Lilongwe, Nkhosakota, Salima, Dedza, Ntcheu, and Mchinji. Lilongwe district is the largest district, and Lilongwe has been the capital city of the nation since 1975. As a city, it is strategically positioned and it has given stimulus to development in the central and northern regions.

According to the national census of 1998<sup>10</sup> Lilongwe district has a population of about 1,346,360 (or 13.6% of the country's population), of which the city has a population of 440,471. The altitude of Lilongwe is 4,600 feet (or 1402.8 m) above sea level. The landscape is mostly plain, with temperatures not going below six degrees Celsius during winter (May, June, July), and ranges from thirty to forty degrees Celsius in summer

(September-December). The rainy season begins in December and ends between May and June when people harvest their crops. The rainfall averages 800-1000 mm. Agriculturally, Lilongwe district is rich with maize, groundnuts and tobacco as the main cash crops. The economy of Lilongwe, and the whole country, depends almost entirely upon agriculture (Census report: 2000).

### **2.3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

The early history of the Chewa people can be traced back mainly from migrations of two groups of people from Uluba in present Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly Zaire) between the 14<sup>th</sup> and the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. The first group called the proto-Bantu (or proto-Chewa) entered Malawi from the north and forms the Banda clan of the present Chewa people. The second group referred to as the Maravi (the Bantu) dispersed into many clans or tribes and covered Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique. In Malawi they entered from the north-west and the largest group were the Chewa under Phiri who settled in Central Malawi (Phiri 1997:22-23). Till today, the Chewa people form the largest ethnic group in Malawi.

The life, history and much of the tribal structure of the Chewa of Central Malawi was disrupted by various invasions during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Yao from the east coast of Africa invaded and settled along the coast from Nkhotakota down to Salima. Thus a considerable 'percentage of the lakeshore population is Muslim.' The second invasion came from factions of the Ngoni migration under Zwangendaba from South Africa. In Malawi one group settled in northern Malawi while other groups settled in Central Malawi in Kasungu, in Dowa, in Ntchisi and another in Mchinji district.<sup>11</sup> Another Ngoni faction known as the Maseko Ngoni settled between Dedza and Ntcheu<sup>12</sup> (Pauw 1980). Despite these invasions, much of the Central Region of Malawi remains more purely Chewa, especially in Lilongwe district.

The Chewa of the Central Region speak Chichewa which was proclaimed the national language alongside English in 1968. Generally Chichewa is a 'honorific' language. In the normal sense a prefix 'a' is added to a word to denote plural, but it is also added to a

name of a person or his title to denote respect (Mangoche 1990:18). The Chewa of Lilongwe sometimes add the prefix 'o' to names or titles of people instead of the prefix 'a'. A general title of '*abambo*' (father, or equivalent of Mr) is added to address an elderly male while '*amayi*' (mother, or equivalent of Mrs) is used for elderly female. It is also common to call people by their titles such as '*abusa*' (pastor[s]); '*amayi busa*' (pastor's wife); '*anamkungwi*' (traditional instructress[es]); or '*alangizi*' (the church instructress[es]) when addressing the person. Thus the Chewa people are courteous and have a 'sense of protocol' (Mangoche 1990:21). Most of these titles will frequently appear in this study.

## 2.4 SOCIAL ORGANISATION

The Chewa are matrilineal and trace their descent from an ancestress. The social structure of the Chewa people begins at the family level. Several family units are ruled by a chief, called the village headman. The *machembere* (elderly women) and the *mandoda* (elderly men) of the village are an influential force in choosing and advising a chief. Usually a man of good character is chosen as a chief. On a rare note one is chosen because he is a *mfiti* (witch) because people fear that *akutha anthu* (he will finish people by bewitching them because he is jealous). A Group village headman is chosen to head a group of more than ten village headmen. The office of traditional authority is a senior position for a chief with a larger area of jurisdiction. At present there are twelve Traditional Authorities (TA) in Lilongwe district - Chadza, Mazengera, Kalumbu, Kalumba, Tsabango, Maliri, Khongoni (female), Kalolo, Chimutu, Chitikula, Chiseka, and Masula (see Map B).<sup>13</sup> The general title for all the chiefs is *amfumu* (chief). The chiefs are both political and spiritual leaders of their communities. Apart from the traditional hierarchical structure of the chiefs, there is also a hierarchy related to power among the Chewa chiefs. Thus those who have undergone *mkangali* initiation are regarded as senior for they possess more mystical power than the non-*mkangali* chiefs.

Included in the eldership group is the leader of the *nyau* institution called *wakunjira* (lit. 'from the path') and *anamkungwi*, the female leader and instructress of initiation rites.

Usually the chief chooses two *anamkungwi*, who are supposed to be his close relatives, especially the first who is probably his sister.

The position and role of *anamkungwi* is very significant in Chewa society. This position can be traced from the religious and political powers held by Makewana during the proto-Chewa period discussed below. The *anamkungwi* are regarded as the custodians of the traditional customs. Their role during *chinamwali* is to impart those customs to the younger generations. Thus *chinamwali* is the means through which the young initiates are linked to the ancestors, thereby giving the initiates identity and a sense of history. Because most of the customs centre around the harmony of family life, the *anamkungwi*'s counsel is given to the girls on their puberty; to couples as they enter into marriage, during the first pregnancy, when the baby is born, and during *kutenga mwana* (lit. 'taking the child') ritual about six weeks after the birth of the first baby. Similarly, *anamkungwi* give counsel to the chief during his installation, during his second stage of initiation, and during his *mkangali* initiation ceremony.

The significance of *anamkungwi* leads us to trace the history of the position of women in Chewa traditional society. This is significant to our understanding of the concern of the Malawian Christian women about 'instructing their girls' about the facts of life. According to different traditions which Phiri (1997) and Schoffeleers (1978) have cited in their works, 'female personages' or 'spirit wives' feature in the religious and political organisations of the so-called proto-Chewa from the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The most prominent female personage was Makewana whose roles included being a prophetess serving at a rain shrine and performing ritual intercourse at the shrine to mark the end of the initiation ceremony for girls. According to Phiri (1997:31), this is the highest religious position to be held by a woman in Chewa society. *Anamkungwi* are now responsible for initiation rites.

Phiri (1997:32-35) continues to show that, as in other matrilineal societies, the Chewa woman was significant within the family system as she was regarded as the 'root of the lineage [*tsinde*].' Being the root of a lineage accorded the woman high status because she was looked at as a 'sacred vessel of life,' responsible for the perpetuation of the



lineage, and the whole community. Fertility was therefore at the core of the Chewa female initiation rituals. The *anamkungwi* as the custodians of the ancestral customs made sure that all the necessary precautions were taken and taboos observed to ensure that nothing endangered life.

The Chewa followed the *nkamwini* (somebody else's) system of marriage whereby the husband goes to stay at the wife's home, after performing the wedding ceremony (*chinkhoswe*) at the wife's home. However, the husband was free to take the wife and settle at his home (called *chitengwa* being taken). It should be noted that the mother remained 'united with her own kinsfolk and controlled, with their help, the offspring of her marriage' (Phiri 1997:32). Although the family group whose ancestress was the root of the lineage was maternally based, the most important person in a direct family line was the maternal uncle who had control over the woman and her offspring (Stuart 1974:28). Thus the Chewa are said to be both matrilineal and matrilocal (Phiri 1997:32-40).

Like other traditional African societies, the Chewa society has a very strong sense of community. This is evident in the ongoing activities of the community such as funerals, weddings, and *zizangala* (celebrations, specifically referring to initiation rites and funeral commemorations). Community life is seen also in the upbringing of children. Apart from the grandparents, aunties, uncles, brothers and sisters, who usually live in the same village, every adult has the right to discipline and ensure that a child is brought up according to the traditions of the elders. Above all, *chinamwali* is the established traditional educational institution where morals and the art of living are taught to boys and girls. Although the whole community is involved in the *chinamwali*, the actual instruction is left to the *machembere* (elderly women) and *aphungu* (tutors) under the supervision of the leaders, *anamkungwi*. *Chinamwali* therefore undergirds the *anamkungwi*'s credibility and establishes the initiates' identity and a sense of something being passed on because generations of Chewa have felt that the rite is wholesome and incorporates the girls into their community.



## 2.5 THE CHEWA COSMOLOGY

Lilongwe is a multi-religious city with a large representation of Christian and non-Christian faiths. As Chaponda (1998:4) remarked 'within this multifold of religious faiths is found a vibrant *Gule Wamkulu* or *Nyau* culture.' His observation is that the *gule wamkulu* culture seems to be growing side by side with the Christian religions. *Gule wamkulu* is at the heart of the Chewa traditional religion and below is a survey of the Chewa cosmology which the Christian faith encountered.

In his comparative history of the *Chisumphu* and *Mbona* cults, Schoffeleers (1978:147-149) argues that it has been established from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries documents, as well as from recent local research, that the cult of the Makewana shrine in its traditional form was known as that of *Chisumphu* (rain-giver). Since this is one of the Chewa names for the High God, it shows that the Chewa people believed in the High God. Other names such as *Leza* (nurturer), *Chiuta* (rainbow), *Mphambe* (God of thunder and lightening), and *Namalenga* (creator), are often used (Ott 2000:297-300 and Van Breugel 2001:29-41). All these names are related directly to the natural phenomenon of rain, to creation, or to God's sustaining power (Ott 2000:299). They also relate to the economic activities of agriculture of the Chewa people (Bourdillon 1990:115ff).

However, as in many African societies, the Chewa cosmology includes belief in the reality of the spirits. According to Van Breugel (2001:73-75), the Chewa believe in the spirits of the dead, commonly called *mizimu*. These spirits include 'those of senior relatives, those of one's own generation, and even those of one's descendants.' However, the spirits of the dead senior relatives are also called *mizimu ya makolo* for they are 'more particularly the guardians of the ancestral customs (*miyambo*) and are 'considered to have a position of authority with regard to the family group' (Ott 2000:73 and Van Breugel 2001:73). The Chewa believe that all the *mizimu* do interfere in the lives of the living. Van Breugel (2001:74-75) further points out that the Chewa also recognize the spirits of the dead chiefs. He also distinguishes the Chewa use of *mizimu* (for all spirits), *azimu* ('for spirits who trouble or punish the living'); the 'stupid spirits' (those who

cross boundaries), and *ziwanda* ('evil spirits who wander about to haunt and harm people.' They are spirits of 'deceased witches or murderers').

This study follows Van Breugel's use of the general term '*mizimu*' to refer to the spirits of the dead as guardians of the ancestral customs (*miyambo ya makolo*). Being guardians of *miyambo ya makolo*, the *mizimu* have a double role in relation to the living; both positive and negative. Positively, their role is that of intercession; the *mizimu* speak to *Chiuta* on behalf of the living. The *mizimu* also protect the living by 'warning them of impending danger, and by being able to give success to their relatives' labour.' The Chewa believe that they are surrounded by enemies, and so their only recourse is to the *mizimu* for protection (Van Breugel 2001:77). Negatively, when the living offend the ancestors, especially when they neglect the *miyambo* (customs), the *mizimu* punish them. They can cause illness, can send all sorts of misfortunes, or they can bring infertility to the living (Van Breugel 2001:83-85). It is however not clear whether this negative function makes the *mizimu* to be called *azimu* or whether they remain two distinct groups. Basing himself on p'Bitek, Gelfand, Idowu, and Jacobs concerning the spirits, Scott Moreau also observed that:

Spirits were often thought to be the source of medical problems in the community.... They were able to cause insanity or bring disease (malaria, smallpox, dysentery, polio, tuberculosis, etc)....They could also disrupt the reproductive cycle by causing infertility or miscarriages or by causing babies to be born with deformities....Spirits were thought to be one of the causes of social problems, such as loss of employment, social status, family stress, etc.

(Moreau 1990:105-6)<sup>14</sup>

The Chewa believe that the *mizimu* of the recently dead survive the body after death, and that they normally stay in the graveyard. But from time to time, the *mizimu* come and stay at the foot of a big tree in the village, and sometimes they trouble people. The scrupulous funeral rites among the Chewa are therefore meant to chase the *mizimu* away from the village so that they stay in the graveyard until all the necessary rites have been observed (Van Breugel 2001:80).

Central to the Chewa traditional beliefs is the *nyau*, believed to be the symbolic representation of the invisible spirit world. Van Breugel describes the *nyau* as a 'secret asso-

ciation of dancers using masks and animal structures' (2001:125-168). Plate 1 shows one of the *nyau*. Usually referred to as *zirombo* (animals), or *gule wamkulu* (big dance), the *nyau* is:

The vehicle of much of the religious thinking and aspirations of the Chewa and is also the means by which he becomes a true member of the tribe. The *Nyau* embodies tradition and has proved to be also the mainspring of resistance to outside interference throughout the centuries. It is into this tradition that a young man has to be initiated if he wants to be a real man, a real Chewa.

(Van Breugel 2001:164)

Everything about this institution is secret – the language, the meeting places (graveyards), their activities and even the identity of the dancers. Those who reveal these secrets are severely punished. Their behaviour is characterized by 'reversals' for they are said to be in a marginal state.

Since they are a personification of the *mizimu*, the *nyau* too have a double role. At funerals, the *nyau* ritual is fundamentally a prayer intended to please and placate the *mizimu* so that they do not come to the village to trouble people. It also ensures the deceased's acceptance by the *mizimu* (Van Breugel 2001:164).

*Nyau* is also believed to be a prayer for continued fertility in the village, hence their presence at the girls initiation rites, as well as at funerals. Van Breugel reported one of his informants saying that:

*Nyau* is an integral part of the *chinamwali* ritual to ensure that the young woman will have children. It is a prayer to the *mizimu* that they may intercede with *Chauta* that the young woman will have many children and healthy children. If the *Nyau* were not to come, perhaps the young woman might die, perhaps she might be barren.

(Van Breugel 2001:152)

The *nyau* presence at the initiation of girls is also to 'inculcate right behaviour' and, at the same time, frighten them and punish previous bad behaviour.

The *nyau* dancers' use of obscene language (*zolaula*)<sup>15</sup> in their songs, where repeated mention is made of the male and female sexual organs, is to show the people's appre-

ciation and 'celebration of the powers of life which *Chiuta* has given these organs' (Van Breugel 2001:152).

A rigorous attempt is therefore made among the Chewa people to honour and appease the *mizimu* by carrying out their demands and remaining faithful to the ancestral customs such as the proper burial and initiation rites. Most of the taboos that surround the life cycle rituals have to do with sexual abstinence. The belief is that there is some mystical power associated with sexual fluids, menstrual blood, and sometimes with salt (DeGabriele 1999 and Van Breugel 2002).

Therefore, while initiation rites (*chinamwali*), for boys and girls, are the means by which one becomes an adult member of Chewa society, *chinamwali* for girls, who are 'sacred vessels of life,' is also the means by which fertility for the girls is established for replenishing the race. The presence of *nyau* is not just to inculcate right behaviour, but to intercede with *Chiuta* for continued fertility in the village. The driving force behind all this is the Chewa belief in the *mizimu ya makolo* as the guardians of the ancestral customs which must be passed on from generation to generation through initiation rites, thus giving the initiates identity and a sense of history.

The Chewa people are thus moulded by the above cultural heritage. Its nature echoes Harold Turner's (1977) six-feature analysis<sup>16</sup> of the primal worldview, where there is no dichotomy between the physical and the spiritual. Turner's six features are: (1) 'a profound sense that man is akin to nature;' (2) 'the deep sense that man is finite, weak and sinful and stands in need of a power not his own;' (3) 'the conviction that man is not alone in the universe but is surrounded by a transcendent spiritual world in which a hierarchy of both benevolent and malevolent spirits are found;' (4) 'the belief that people can enter into relationship with this benevolent spirit world and so share in its powers and blessings;' (5) 'the belief that man's relationship with the spirit world is not only for this life but goes beyond death such that the "living dead" remain united in affection and in mutual obligations with the "living living;" (6) and, 'the conviction that the "physical" acts as the vehicle for "spiritual" power, and that there is no sharp dichotomy between the physical and the spiritual.'

## 2.6 CONCLUSION

The Chewa people of Central Malawi, and of Lilongwe in particular, have a rich cultural heritage. The socio-religious institution of *chinamwali* gives the Chewa people their identity and a sense of history. It is to such a people that the Southern Baptist missionaries from America brought the Christian message in the mid twentieth century. The next chapter studies the emergence of the Baptist churches in Malawi.

### 3. THE EMERGENCE OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTISTS IN MALAWI

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to utilize some of the resources of the history that prepared the way for the emergence of *chilangizo* in the Baptist churches in Malawi, which is the main subject of this dissertation. Although the history of the Christianization of Africa of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was mostly credited to the work of the overseas missionaries, Mbiti (1986:7-12) rightly observed factors on the mission field that also played significant roles in the expansion of Christianity in Africa.<sup>17</sup> The emergence of the Baptist Convention of Malawi (BACOMA) churches in Malawi in the 1960's was no exception; it was the fruit of both the American Southern Baptist context as well as of the African context. It is the aim of this chapter to trace factors from both contexts that influenced the beginning and the development of the Baptist churches in Malawi. An 'excursus' giving a brief discussion of the Baptist beliefs that have a bearing on the subject of *chilangizo* ends the chapter.

#### 3.2 THE AMERICAN CULTURAL BACKGROUND

Baptists first emerged in seventeenth century Europe. However, it was on American soil that Baptist witness developed to become one of the largest evangelical denominations in the world. The growth of the Baptist denomination must be seen in particular from the context of nineteenth century American Christianity as well as within the context of the Western cultural background dating back to the eighteenth century.

Speaking about American Christianity, Andrew Walls (1996) attributes the shift in missionary emphasis from Europe to North America to the fact that from the nineteenth century, North America emerged as a Pacific power. The birth of the main missionary movement of the nineteenth century was due to the 'Christianising of the United States,' which was carried over to the twentieth century missions. An increasing percentage of missionaries were American and bearing the title 'evangelical' (Walls 1996:226). The



zeal for missions abroad was a 'continuation and extension of home missions.' There was 'vigorous evangelism' which aimed at individual commitment 'yet recognised the family unit and created and strengthened local *communitas*' (Walls 1996:228). American overseas missions 'began not with the official machinery of the churches, but with voluntary societies' (Walls 1990:12). The surge of new societies outside the major denominational boards had the effect of transferring 'overseas many of the attitudes and values that had produced the evangelisation of the frontier' (Walls 1990:12).

American Southern Baptists must be seen in this context of the country's missionary success. In addition to vigorous evangelism, Latourette (1975:1037) attributes the Baptists' missionary success also to the peculiar way their messages appealed to the rural masses – simple but effective language, simple democratic type of church government, and the informality of the services. Other factors, such as the inclusion of religious liberty into the bill of rights, the founding of academies, colleges and theological seminaries, as well as emphasis on the importance of conscious conversion, facilitated further growth of the Baptists (Hastings 1996: 1036-37). In the 1950s, Baptists were the largest of the Protestant denominational families.

From the early nineteenth century, Baptist churches throughout America responded with zealous missionary activity resulting in the opening of new mission fields in Asia, Africa, and Europe (Latourette 1975:1038).

The zeal to evangelise the whole world must also be viewed from the broader Western cultural background of the eighteenth century Enlightenment that produced in the Western mind rationalism which, together with the scientific and technological advances, gave the West a superior attitude over the rest of the world, both culturally and religiously. Thus the Western world was seen as 'advanced,' 'enlightened,' or 'civilised,' and 'Christian,' while the rest was classified as 'primitive,' 'animistic,' 'pagan,' and 'non-Christian.'<sup>18</sup> The feeling of superiority brought the conviction to civilise and christianise the entire world, 'primarily by means of the program of colonialism and the planting of Western-type churches in all parts of the world' (David Bosch 1994:343). Hence exploration and colonialism worked together with missions. As Akosua Perbi

(2001:12) points out, three things motivated colonialism: 'commerce, Christianity and civilisation (or gold, God and glory!). As the colonial powers searched for new sources of wealth, civilisation and Christianity went hand in hand to eradicate the superstitious beliefs in magic, spirits, ancestors, and witchcraft of the 'primitive' people. Hence the zeal to evangelise the 'pagan' world must also be seen against this background of the Enlightenment worldview. Kwame Bediako (1995:192-93) observes that the major concern of the World Missionary Conference of 1910 held in Edinburgh, as it considered the 'missionary problems in relation to the non-Christian world' was the primal religions, especially of Africa, for which the term 'animism' was used. The concern was therefore whether the animists could really be converted, since the general feeling was that the animists had no religion to prepare them for the Christian faith.

The nineteenth and twentieth century Western missionaries were therefore greatly influenced and shaped by their worldview in that, while 'they retained their faith in God and the domain of the supernatural, ... they also placed great value on science and reason' (Hiebert, et al 1991:89-90). This was evident in their building of churches to focus on religious matters, while schools were to civilise the people, and hospitals were where nature and disease were to be explained in natural terms. The world of the spirits, magic, witchcraft, and other supernatural forces was rejected as fiction and illusion. This kind of background becomes evident in the way the Baptist missionaries responded to the issue of *chilangizo* in Malawi in the 1970s as discussed in chapter five.

The Southern Baptists' cultural background therefore cannot be understood outside of the contexts of both American Christianity and the Western worldview. The African context too - directly or indirectly, congenial or hostile - provided its own dynamics which helped to shape Baptist Christianity in Malawi, as discussed below.

### **3.3 SOCIAL-POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS REALITIES IN THE AFRICAN CONTEXT**

Southern Baptists arrived in Nyasaland, still a British Protectorate, in 1960, when politically it was a period of the growth of African nations on the continent. Malawi was in a

transition period gaining its independence from the colonial power in 1964. It was a time when the leadership was working towards unifying the different tribes in the country, as well as attempting to fight against poverty, disease, and ignorance (BMIM 1995:1).

The Southern Baptists emerged when approximately a third of Malawi's population was Christian, about half of them Protestants and about half Roman Catholics (Latourette 1975:1438). Missionary and indigenous churches existed throughout Malawi, despite some traditional resistance to Christianity in some parts of the country, such as in Central Malawi among the Chewa people as discussed by Linden (1974) and Schoffeleers (1978). Hastings (1994:306) notes that one of the factors for the rapid growth of the Church was the African zeal to share the Gospel with others. That shows that the indigenous Christians were seen, as Thompson remarks:

Not just as objects of evangelization but, as subjects in a process of dynamic religious change.... In a huge number of ways... the growth of Christianity was effectively an African, rather than a European affair.

(Thompson 1995:10)

In the formation and development of African theology, it is acknowledged that the massive embracing of Christianity and its fast spread in Africa was due to the *religiosity* of the Africans which acted as preparation for the Gospel message. The Gospel was therefore the fulfillment of that which the African was waiting for in his spiritual yearning. Bediako (1995:192), using Harold Turner's six-feature general structural analysis of primal religions, attributes this *religiosity* to the primal religious background which has affinities with the Christian faith.

The manifest Christian growth in Nyasaland was part of this remarkable growth of Christianity on the continent, and it was among such people with a rich religious heritage that the Southern Baptists came and started their work.

Another contributing factor to the growth of Christianity was the availability of the Scriptures in the languages of the people, who could hear the Gospel in their own

tongues. Hilary Mijoga (1998:31) noted that vernacular translations of the Bible in Malawi 'accelerated the spread of the Gospel.' The Scriptures had been translated into Chinyanja (now Chichewa) which was the common language (although in differing dialects) of about two-thirds of the population. As Lamin Sanneh has shown in his work (1989:170), Scripture translation played a central role in showing the significance of local religions as providing the language for Christian apprehension.

The local assimilation of the Gospel message shifted Christianity from any Western possessiveness and accorded the translatability principle as the 'only true basis and starting point for seeking indigeneity,' for not only is African Christianity 'overwhelmingly vernacular, but also that it is through the vernacular that the living forces of the primal imagination are perpetuated and carried forward into Christian usage' (Bediako 1995:123, 175). Kenneth Ross (1996:109) also shows that translation 'acted as a powerful affirmation of the integrity of pre-Christian African religion' as seen in the use of the traditional African names for God – *Chiuta*, *Mulungu*, *Leza*.

In summary therefore, the religiosity of the African people in Malawi, coming from a primal religious framework, coupled with the translation of the Scriptures into the local languages, produced vigorous independence and originality which characterized the indigenous people's response to the Christian message. The indigenous people then became the agents with responsibility to pass on to others their newly found faith.

The concerns of the culturally biased Western missionaries who met at the 1910 Edinburgh conference of whether the animist could be converted were therefore unwarranted. Thus in 1926, in Le Zoute Belgium, the missionary movement was forced to change its attitude and affirmed that 'Africans have been prepared by previous religious experience for the reception of the Gospel and that their experience contains elements of high religious value' as noted by Bediako (1995:201).

The Southern Baptists' missionary zeal therefore found the 1960's Nyasaland a fertile soil where the Gospel was already growing. It cannot be denied that Malawians responded to the Christian message as they heard it 'in their own language.' However,

as Walls (1996:101) remarks, 'the first hearing and the first response is not the whole, nor necessarily the climax, of the story.' The impact of the Gospel message upon the Malawian women created a new set of questions and a 'yearning to be able to make assured choices with a good conscience' (Walls 1996:91), especially when the Gospel disturbed the core issues of their religious framework (Howell 2001:228). This was evidenced in the questions women asked about 'facts of life' for their children, especially girls, for life cycles are very much a part of African religious life.

### **3.4 INDIGENOUS 'BAPTIST' PRECURSORS**

Southern Baptists were not the first Baptists to work in Malawi. Others who had come earlier included Scottish Baptists, Seventh Day Baptists, Free Will Baptists, and National Baptists (America) (BMIM 1995:1). However, Southern Baptists' work in Nyasaland can be mainly traced from the work of one indigenous missionary of the early twentieth century.

John Chilembwe became a national missionary to his own people after studying theology in the United States of America (Longwe 2000:26). With the help of the National Baptists Inc. (America) Chilembwe founded the Providence Industrial Mission (PIM) in Chiradzulu, the southern part of the country, in 1900, and built many schools. Chilembwe gained great respect from his people because of his opposition to foreign rule (Shepperson and Price 2000:127-142). In 1915 Chilembwe led a revolt against the suffering humiliation of the Africans under the colonialists and he died in that action (Hastings 1996:487-88 and D. Phiri 1999:9-22). His mission, as radical as it was, highlights the indigenous forces at work during the colonial-missionary era. The death of John Chilembwe and the destruction of his buildings did not end the PIM spirit as in spite of the suspicious attitude of the government toward 'African-led and other small churches,' Chilembwe's disciples carried on underground and the church continued to grow particularly in the central part of the country called Mangochi among the Chewa people (Longwe 2000:37). Leadership disagreements divided the PIM in Mangochi in 1937 with those separating from Chiradzulu PIM, adding 'Achewa' to be Achewa PIM (not all PIM churches in Mangochi turned APIM (Longwe 2000:50 and Makondesa

2002). The two groups continued separately. Achewa PIM was established and grew basically in the eastern part of Lilongwe. Longwe notes that:

Between 1938 and 1945 Achewa PIM experienced remarkable growth in terms of numbers of individual members....It was as a result of the preaching of such men as Kafu-latira, Kamkalamba and Ndalama. Though they did not go outside their home ground, they walked for kilometres through villages teaching about redemption and challenging fellow people to accept Jesus as Lord and Saviour of their lives.

(Longwe 2000:52)

It was mainly with such a vibrant indigenous church, APIM, that the Southern Baptist Mission in Malawi initiated their work in Lilongwe in the early 1960's, although, eventually the two bodies continued separately, as discussed fully by Longwe (2000).

### **3.5 SOUTHERN BAPTIST MISSION IN MALAWI (BMIM)**

The Southern Baptists in America, through the Baptist Mission to Central Africa (BMCA) sent representatives to survey for possible work in Malawi in 1954 and 1956 (BMIM 1995:1). As a result of the impressive report on the opportunities for witness, Baker, quoted by Longwe, reports that:

In July 1959 two SBC missionary couples, Leroy and Jean Albright, and William and Blanche Wester left Zimbabwe under the Baptist Mission of Central Africa (BMCA) to start new work in Malawi. They both took up residence in Blantyre. In 1960 the Albrights moved to Lilongwe while the Westers remained in the City. In September of the same year, they were joined by another couple straight from America, Gene and Beverly Kingsley. The Kingsleys joined the Westers in Blantyre.

(Longwe 2000:65)

The missionaries, in Lilongwe and Blantyre and later in Zomba, adopted the Bible study or Sunday School approach as a tool for evangelism and spiritual growth.<sup>19</sup> While the missionary men took the men's classes, the missionary wives took the women's classes (Int. B. Wester and B. Kingsley, 13/10/2001). In due course, the BMIM established relationships with several individual nationals and a couple of indigenous churches such as Zion church at Ndalama,<sup>20</sup> (about 45 km away from Blantyre), and Achewa PIM in Lilongwe.



When the Albrights moved to Lilongwe in 1960, they linked up with the Achewa PIM. The Albrights developed a good relationship with the APIM (Longwe 2000:66). For them it was a ready opportunity to evangelize the people through already established indigenous local churches (Longwe 2000:66). In addition, Albright saw great potential in working with the 'tribal people,' for one characteristic of 'group oriented tribes was that they made decisions on vital issues as a family or group' (Longwe 2000:101).<sup>21</sup> The APIM, who had worked independently, without any foreign body or assistance for some time then, were divided in their responses to their involvement with the white BMIM. To the majority of the group, it was an opportunity to be exposed to and work with other Christians outside their community. Some members, however, felt that their 'independence as an African church was in jeopardy' (Longwe 2000:66). This did not stop the missionaries who continued to work with the APIM in Bible Studies, and provided the much-needed leadership training in the APIM.

The BMIM's emphasis on leadership training led to their building of the Bible School in Lilongwe. The first students in 1962 comprised all the groups and individuals with whom BMIM had developed a relationship. The BMIM and the APIM continued to work together in evangelism and church planting. Bible studies, leadership training, Sunday schools, and also theological training by extension programmes were introduced by the BMIM to the benefit of the APIM. The converts, especially in the rural areas continued to join the APIM churches, while those who were meeting in the town were said to belong to BMIM. Initially there was no problem. However, as the BMIM converts increased, the first Baptist church (Lilongwe Baptist Church) building was built in the city in Kawale location. Lilongwe Baptist Church became the mother body from whom emerged more Baptist churches in Lilongwe and most of central Malawi, due to extensive witnessing by the local converts and continued Bible studies, which were done jointly with the APIM (Longwe 2000:73-83).

Malawians, therefore, provided the human resources, while the Baptist Mission funded the ministries with funds from the International Mission Board (IMB) (Longwe 2000:84). APIM members were very zealous in evangelism. The APIM were also

instrumental in supporting the idea of Malawians beginning their own Baptist indigenous body.

### 3.6 SEPARATION OF NATIONAL CHURCH FROM THE MISSION

Impressed by the indigeneity of the APIM, the Malawian Baptist leaders belonging to the BMIM expressed the desire to form their own national body. However, the Mission and the Malawians differed in their understanding for the formation of the national body, and each gave different reasons according to each one's interpretation of the 'indigenous' principle. For whatever reasons, the national body, Baptist Convention of Malawi (BACOMA) was eventually formed in 1972. Since then, BACOMA has operated under the mercy of BMIM when it comes to its financial support and institutional activities. This position can be likened to Klaus Fiedler's (1994:364) remark about faith missions that the 'mission is the scaffolding of the church and, after the church has been established, the scaffolding is to be dismantled.'

For about twelve years (1963-1975) APIM worked in partnership with BACOMA and BMIM such that both Convention Baptist work and APIM work continued to grow tremendously, with Baptists reaching as far as the northern part of the country. The BMIM continued to offer leadership training courses at the Bible School; carried out Sunday school and Bible studies to both BACOMA congregations as well as APIM congregations until the APIM broke away from the partnership and reverted to independence. Other areas of growth were the children's ministries through Sunday school, and the women's ministries, whose teachers were the missionary wives. Longwe (2000:88) mentions that 'from the beginning of the partnership, one of the major concerns of APIM and BACOMA' was to have a Christian *ulangizi* (instruction) for girls similar to the one in the Dutch Reformed Church. Since such a program is a women's programme, it is relevant therefore, to briefly discuss the emergence and establishment of the women's group in the BACOMA churches.

### **3.7 THE EMERGENCE OF WOMEN'S MINISTRIES AND THE DESIRE FOR CHILANGIZO**

From the beginning of the BMIM's work missionary wives' took women for Sunday school and Bible studies, and other activities. The women's work is significant because it forms the basis for the theme of this research on female initiation rites which is discussed in the following chapters. In her study of the history of Baptist women in Southern Malawi, Rachel Banda (2001) shows that the missionary wives' vigorous evangelism among the Malawian women came out of their cultural background of 'support roles.' Understanding the SBC's position regarding women in America first will shed some light on their work on the mission field in Malawi.

Since its inception in 1867, and before 1888, SBC tradition on the role of women in America and on the mission field abroad was very clear. Women were primarily expected to be homemakers and mothers, as well as to be subordinate to their husbands, to church and to society (Fletcher 1994:85). Many men reinforced the women's domestic role with Scripture 'that women were neither to address public assemblies nor have power over men' (1 Timothy 2:9-15, NIV) (Fletcher 1994:95). Instead, women were given teaching roles, which according to most women, was inadequate, for they knew that God had called them to much greater avenues of ministry. In 1888 the Baptist women formed the Woman's Missionary Union, (WMU), auxiliary to SBC. While many men supported the women's organisation for it would keep them from pressing for convention positions, others opposed it for fear that women would be tempted to speak and teach in the churches. Despite all the reactions, the women's group grew strong in the area of supporting missions through fund raising, prayers, and moral support. In addition, the WMU developed a program of missionary training for girls of all age groups – Sunbeam Band for younger children up to eleven years old; Girls' Auxiliary (GA) for 12 to 16 year old girls; and Young Woman's Auxiliary (YWA) for girls over 16 years. Fletcher (1994:95) concedes that: 'It is doubtful that Southern Baptist Missions would have made as much progress had not the powerful women's organisation come into being.'

On the mission field not all missionary wives saw themselves only in domestic roles. Some saw themselves suited to domestic support roles, while others took the responsibility of 'training native women organising, instructing and sending out native women to do the pioneer work of evangelism' (Tucker 1990:255). So both features were seen on the mission field. Similarly in Malawi, both elements featured among the missionary wives. Women like Blanche Wester and Beverly Kingsley, and others, were involved in vigorous teaching of women and youth as well as training them to organise and lead their own groups (Int. B. Wester and B. Kingsley, 14/10/2001). Then there were others who understood their role as that of domestic support and attending to family (Int. G. Scott, 23/10/2001). One missionary leader, Sam Upton (quoted by Banda 2001:40) affirmed that it was SBC's policy that women were first to be good wives and mothers and second to support their husbands in ministry.

In addition to Bible study, the missionaries taught women sewing, cooking, and other home making skills. These activities attracted many women so that by 1961 women's work in southern and central Malawi had spread and the number of women attending meetings increased (Banda 2001 and Longwe 2000). The missionary wives' WMU background gave them impetus to help Malawi women organise into a women's group at national level with its executive committee. However, its organisation was not necessarily similar to that of WMU in America. The Malawi women's group did not develop any girls' programmes except periodic camp meetings for all the youth (Int. B. Kingsley, 14/10/2001). The missionaries assisted in the arrangement of and the teaching at the women's annual meetings where leadership training, instruction in homemaking skills, and other activities were carried out.<sup>22</sup> The annual meetings were held at the Bible School in Lilongwe. Banda (2002:39) points out that although there was much foreign missionary influence in the women's work, Malawi women were given the opportunity to 'engage themselves in the work, which they felt to be important and their engagement took note of both culture and the Bible.' This is significant for it shows that the women had heard the Gospel message in their own language (*Chichewa*). Thus the impact of the Gospel on the Chewa women and their culture created a new set of questions on issues that affected their lives. This will be reflected in the discussion about *chilangizo* as a Christian response to *chinamwali* in chapter five. It will be shown that it was at one annual meeting that the desire for *chilangizo* was brought up.

Although Baptist doctrines have no direct influence on the subject of *chilangizo*, some beliefs and practices of the Baptists have a bearing on the subject of our study, and will be discussed briefly below.

### 3.8 'EXCURSUS' - BAPTIST BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

**Authority of the Scriptures.** As Evangelicals, Baptists believe that the Bible is essential in Baptist life and the life of the church. Matters of church polity and practice must agree with the Scriptures. They believe that the authority of the Bible is 'derived from God who revealed Himself finally and completely in Jesus Christ, to whom the Scriptures bear witness' (Estep 1987:599). Like many other Africans, Malawians believe in the authority of the Scriptures, especially if they can be read in the vernacular languages. This is why the *chilangizo* instruction is said to be a Christian instruction in contrast to the traditional rite. However, although *chilangizo* is believed to be a Christian rite, yet it gives only a few Bible verses as proof-texts. The study of *chilangizo* in chapter five will show that the scripture verses are quoted to support the instruction that is given to the initiates.

**Local church autonomy.** The principle of local church autonomy is one of the most cherished distinctives of ecclesiology among Baptists, especially so among Southern Baptists. In their desire to follow the Scriptures, Baptists have always reaffirmed this identifying mark by recognizing that the churches of the New Testament were local, independent, self-governing, and 'operating through democratic processes' under the Lordship of Jesus Christ (Chapman 1997:4-5).

Baptists define a local church as:

A local body of Baptized believers who are associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel, observing the two ordinances of Christ committed to His teachings, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth.

(Turner 1987:16)

Autonomy is a term which expresses the right of each individual church to own its own property; call its own pastor; make its own decisions; develop its own programmes; baptize believers into its membership, and be accountable only to God for its decisions and actions (Sullivan 1983:25). This will be evidenced in the way each congregation carries out its programmes for the instruction of the girls. However, the meaning of 'autonomy' is misunderstood by Christians at the grassroots level for BMIM has a highly centralised structure which is reflected in the local situation.

**Autonomy and interdependence.** Following the same New Testament pattern in their denominational life, the denomination has a system that enables churches to work together voluntarily for 'eliciting, combining, and directing the energies and resources of the churches in the spread of the Gospel to the ends of the earth' (Chapman 1997:4).

The need for such cooperation, whereby the churches work together without sacrificing congregational autonomy, resulted in the formation of District Associations, as well as of a national body called the Baptist Convention or Union (Sullivan 1979:2). Following the same pattern when Malawian Christians expressed the need to form their own body at a national level, it came to be known as the Baptist Convention of Malawi (BACOMA). At District level an association is a cooperation of churches in a given area.<sup>23</sup> Hence we have, in Malawi, Lilongwe association, or Mzuzu association, and so on. Association meetings are made up of elected messengers sent directly from the member churches. Since not all the messengers can meet every time an issue arises or some action is to be taken, leaders and committees are elected. The executive committee represents the larger group, and the churches give their association or convention certain responsibilities. The association or convention executive committees are not to be policy-making bodies, but rather play the role of facilitators, providing avenues for fellowship and leadership training sessions from time to time for its member churches. We shall see in chapter six the complaints from many instructresses about lack of adequate training in 'our association'. Problems arise when these committees regard themselves as 'bosses' rather than 'servants', and also when these committees become inactive, as Lilongwe association has experienced at times.



**Congregational form of government.** In light of the Baptist doctrine of the priesthood of all believers,<sup>24</sup> a local church should be at the apex of the organisational chart, not at the base.

Baptists prefer a congregational system of church government which keeps the power and responsibility with the masses of the membership, even though our system is slow and at times burdensome.

(Sullivan 1983:79-80)

Baptists therefore choose democratic processes in order to magnify the worth of each individual and the importance of each local congregation. As mentioned above, association and convention meetings are 'checks and balances' where programmes and activities are updated. The denomination is not structured for the purpose of giving orders to the churches. The conventions or associations should seek to protect themselves from any tendencies toward a hierarchical system.

The form of government and structure of the church, with its absence of a central authority is not the same as the Chewa cultural view of leadership, and this has sometimes caused confusion. Many members think and wish that the executive committees were controlling and decision-making bodies, like the chiefs and the elders. Traditionally, people look to authority figures for decision-making and direction, but it is not the case with the church. Many members still refer to '*kulikulu anati...*' ('at the headquarters, they said this and that.') Wherever I went to meet with the women in the rural areas, it was a common comment that '*Inu ochokera kulikulu muzibwera-bwera kudza-tiphunzitsa*' (You, from the headquarters, should come often to teach us).

The concept of *kulikulu* also has in the minds of the people, the notion of a place. Lilongwe became the centre for the Mission because of its fast growing work. The Bible School was built there; most of the meetings were being held at the Bible School premises. The printing press was built adjacent to them. Throughout the years, until recently, in the 1990's, Lilongwe has been the centre of all Baptist work in Malawi. It is not incorrect therefore that people refer to Lilongwe as *kulikulu*, although it is emphasized

that our *likulu* is in heaven, and the local church is the centre around which all work should be done.

In the traditional structure of most African societies there is a central authority and a central place at the chief's court. In the Chewa society for example, while a chief concurs with his people, they still look to him as a decision-maker and his court is where decisions and policies are made. It is this concept that is in the people's minds with regard to both the executive committees as decision makers, and Lilongwe as their headquarters.<sup>25</sup> This loose ecclesiastical structure with its absence of centralized authority has both positive and negative effects with regard to the work of *chilangizo* in the Baptist churches.

### 3.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter has traced factors from the history that influenced the emergence of national Baptist Convention churches in Malawi (then Nyasaland). It has been shown that their Western cultural background shaped the North American Baptist missionaries as carriers of the Gospel to Africa. Africans too, as receivers and evangelists of the Gospel, were influenced by their religious and political environment and background. These historical factors have shaped the impact of the Gospel on Malawi women who then raised a new set of questions, especially in the area that touched them most – that of *chinamwali* which traditionally is a key element in the religious framework of the Chewa. Some elements of Baptist doctrine and polity that directly or indirectly influence the issue of *chilangizo* have been highlighted.

Ecclesiastically, this study limits itself to the geographical area of Lilongwe, which is predominantly Chewa. As this study is on the Christianization of a traditional practice, the following chapter discusses the Chewa traditional rite for the girls called *chinamwali*.

#### 4. CHEWA TRADITIONAL FEMALE INITIATION RITES: *CHINAMWALI*

##### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

It has been demonstrated by scholars such as V Turner (quoted by Bourdillon 1990:18-24) and Van Gennep (1960) that the meaning and significance of religion is 'essentially entrenched and transmitted' through its rituals. Although Chewa traditional society has undergone many changes during the past centuries (Chaponda 1998:1-10), initiation rites still form an integral part of contemporary Chewa culture. There are male initiation rites into *nyau* society, as well as female initiation rites. Isabel Phiri (1997:34-36) has argued that the importance of female initiation rites 'can also be measured in terms of the fact that the Chewa had four stages of initiation ceremonies for women.'<sup>26</sup> In order to understand the impact and significance of initiation rites on Chewa society, this chapter gives a phenomenological description of the traditional initiation rites for girls and an analysis of the instruction given to the girls. It is argued that apart from the sociological and cultural importance, it is within the religious context that initiation rites have the most significant impact on Chewa society.

##### 4.2 THE CHEWA PUBERTY RITES

As in many African societies, female initiation rites were and are still very important in Chewa society. When a young Chewa girl is initiated upon her first menstruation she becomes a member not only of her family but also of the whole community, 'and takes on adult responsibilities and community responsibilities, including that of replenishing the race' (Oduyoye 1992:12). The girls' initiation rites have much religious significance for the Chewa people as seen in the following exposition of a girl's journey from her first menstruation experience through to the time she undergoes the *chinamwali* ceremony, called *mkangali*.

When a girl experiences her first menstruation she undergoes a ceremony called *chikule* performed for a smooth transition from childhood to adulthood. The belief among the

Chewa is that menstrual blood is sacred and that it has mysterious powers of sustaining human life. Proper rituals must therefore be performed and all taboos observed so that nothing endangers her life and that of the whole community should she become sterile (Phiri 1997:32-33), or should she suffer from *mdulo* (cutting).<sup>27</sup> Whoever notices the girl's first menses must inform the mother immediately, who in turn informs the grandmother. The chief, as the owner of the *mbumba*<sup>28</sup> (people) and the one responsible for the girls' initiation, is also informed through his *anamkungwi* (traditional instructors).

The taboos to be observed during the girl's first menstruation are sexual abstinence for the parents until the end of her menses when the rituals described below are performed. The chief abstains only in the case of a girl who will be initiated at *mkangali*, (the chief's initiation, as discussed below). All informants mentioned that if the parents break the sexual taboo, the girl suffers from a disease called *mdulo* (cutting), or *tsempho* (a transposition). The symptoms of *mdulo* or *tsempho* are *kutupa masaya*, *kusololoka zala*, *kusanza magazi*, or *kutuwa* (swollen cheeks, elongated fingers, vomiting blood, or rough dry skin), and eventually the girl dies if not given the necessary herbs to cure the illness. In normal circumstances the girl is given food without salt and is instructed not to salt any food whenever she is menstruating.<sup>29</sup> The grandmother's role is to take the girl into two to three days' seclusion for instruction concerning the menses. The girl is warned of the dangers of having sex during menstruation, and she is instructed on how to take care of the menses so that no one sees the blood, nor the menses linen, called *mwele* or *mthete*. She is instructed to respect her parents, the elderly people, and especially the chief. At the end of her menses, the chief provides the necessary herbal medicine, called *khundabwi*, for the girl to eat in food or to drink with the parents (and the grandmother). Again the chief eats *khundabwi* only in the case of the special girl who will undergo *mkangali*. After taking the herbal medicine, all are free to resume their sexual activity.

Many informants mentioned that in the past, instead of the herbal medicine, the girl was given a man to have sex with at night. Such a man was called *fisi* (hyena), because he came at night as a 'hyena to steal'. The warning for both the girl and the man was, as



one informant stated, 'this must be kept as a secret and that it was just a one time ritual, not to be repeated or continued'. Some informants said that this practice was the cause of polygamous families, for some men decided to marry the girl after the ritual act. In some cases it was the cause for premarital pregnancies among girls for some men continued to meet with the girl secretly. However, few informants insisted that the ritual is still practised in spite of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Their argument is that the family looks for someone whom they see as HIV/AIDS-free, for they claim that the elderly women, just by looking at someone in the eyes, are able to identify those who are sick.

The belief behind the sex ritual is to 'end' the menses whereby the girl is given the strength of a man, who ritually 'opens her womb'. Alternatively, the medicine acts like a husband and protects her from any danger until she is married. Sometimes the small herbal roots are run through a string (*mkuzi*) and tied to the waist of the girl to symbolize a husband. The first menstruation ritual therefore is done as a protective ritual whereby the parents can continue with their sexual activity without harming the girl. The girl is also free to marry and have sex until the time of her actual *chinamwali*. It remains the responsibility of the chief, after *chikule*, to arrange for the girls in his village to be initiated. The girls can be initiated at any of the following ceremonies – at a funeral or its commemoration, at *chikudzu-kudzu* or at *mkangali*.

A girl can be initiated at a funeral of an elderly person who belongs to the *nyau* society. It is believed that an elderly person cannot go to the graveyard alone, but that he must be escorted by a maiden(s) who is related to the dead person. Dressed only up to the waist (nowadays they put on a petticoat covering the chest) the girls lead the procession to the graveyard, and if one is too young to walk, she is carried on the shoulders by the *phungu* (tutor). In some places the girls reach the graveyard, peep in the grave and then return home while the rest continue with the burial. In other places, the girls do not reach the graveyard but return on the way.

The girls are then put in seclusion in another house where instruction is carried out every night until the immediate funeral rites are over two to three days later. Instruction can begin even a night before the burial ceremony and continue after. Nevertheless, the

girls are 'captured' and put in the funeral house a day before the burial. The leading girl may not have reached puberty. In this case, the initiation is not due to the physical puberty but to fulfill a social obligation according to Van Gennep's classification (1960). Similarly, *chiputu* for girls in Southern Malawi fulfils a social role (Banda 2001).

Periodically, a chief will arrange for funeral commemoration ceremonies for a number of people who died in the previous year, called *chiriza*, when tombstones are built, or *mpalo*, when it is just a commemoration. Girls can be initiated during either ceremony.

If a chief has too many girls who married before being initiated, he may arrange for them a quick, one-day initiation ceremony, called *chikudzu-kudzu* (quick quick). Others call it *chimbwindi* (missing). In this case, the husbands will also be initiated separately, but by the women instructresses, and the main instruction to both the husband and wife would be concerning married life.

Since all the above initiations are modified and of short duration, usually one night of instruction from *machembere* (elderly women), it is up to the tutors to continue instructing the girls after the ceremony. Initiates themselves however, need to take initiative to continue learning by attending other initiation ceremonies.

Girls (and boys) may also be initiated at the *mkangali* ceremony, which is the chief's initiation ceremony and this is the focus of this chapter as discussed in full below. However, many informants remarked that because of its implications, not many parents have their daughters initiated at *mkangali*. They prefer the other types of initiations.

#### **4.3 MKANGALI: THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF CHEWA INITIATION RITES**

Generally, *mkangali* is a term that refers to the initiation ceremony for girls and boys among the Chewa people (Phiri 1997, Van Breugel 2001). In the actual sense, *mkangali* is the last stage in the initiation of a chief (*mmeto wa mfumu*, or *chinamwali cha mfumu*). When a man is chosen to be a chief, he undergoes the initial installation cere-



mony, that is, the first stage in the initiation rites for a chief.<sup>30</sup> He then arranges for another ceremony called *kuzulula mfumu* at which the chief is given the right to own *nyau*, and the ground for the *nyau* dances. (*kugula bwalo*) At this stage the chief begins to acquire magical powers to protect his subjects, especially the *nyau*. It is after this stage that the chief arranges for his *mkangali* rite as the final stage of the chief's initiation. It is also the highest level in terms of *kukhwima* (magical protection). Such a chief is greatly feared by people, and he is more highly respected than the ones who have not been through *mkangali* for they are regarded as *mtsenye* (children).

However, the paradox is that *mkangali* can only be held if there are girls to be initiated at this ceremony. In fact, the leading initiate must come from among the chief's sisters' daughters. The sister should actually tell the chief that '*Uyu mudzatulukire mkangali!*' (This girl is for your *mkangali!*), and this should be done upon the girl's first menstruation. If none of his sisters offers such a girl, then he cannot hold *mkangali*, and often times it shows that there is not a good relationship between the chief and his sisters. While the offering of her daughter strengthens their relationship, it is strengthened further when everything goes on well at the initiation ceremony and when the girl(s) later has children.

Although I attended part of the chief's vigil at *mkangali*, it is not within the scope of this paper to discuss this. What follows below is an exposition of the *chinamwali* for girls at the same *mkangali* ceremony. As with any other major event, intensive preparation is made in terms of both material and spiritual requirements as shown below.

*Mkangali* is *chizangala* (celebration) and people look forward to it. A day is therefore announced for each of the following activities: cutting firewood, grinding and milling maize for flour. The chief may ask the whole community to participate in the activities, and to make financial or material contributions. Some chiefs may exclude the Christians. The *nyau* community also begin the preparations for the big event. One or two *nyau* dancers attend the preparations. Their role is mainly to frighten the women, although it is termed as *kusewera* (playing)' with them. The neighbouring chiefs also come *kudzaonerera nzao* (to watch their friend) on some occasions. Thus, the commu-

nity of both the living and the ancestors is involved right from the preparation stage to the end of the ceremony.

The way messages are passed on especially to inform each other about the dates for a particular activity is also worth mentioning. The *anamkungwi* pass on a few red grains of corn to each other, at the same time communicating the dates. The red corn is used to prepare *chimera* for beer. The rest are informed by a masked *nyau* dancer called *mjere*. The *mjere*, with a flag in his hands and an axe on his shoulders, runs from village to village, while singing *mwesu, nyama, nyama, mwesu* (eat, meat, meat, eat). He either announces the dates or he delivers letters. It is expected that people will give him monetary gifts wherever he goes.

It takes about a month to have all the required items ready. Large amounts of money and resources are needed for *mkangali*, and although the whole community contributes towards the event, the chief himself bears most of the cost. It also costs a great amount of money to have another chief with more powerful magic come and fortify the ceremony with herbal mixtures (*khundabwi*, or *ntchiri*). Initiation rites are vulnerable occasions where enemies can come and harm the initiates mysteriously. The chief must, therefore, protect his subjects.

At this particular ceremony the deterrents were planted on the *kufulula mowa* (the first beer brewing) day during the morning hours. The chief in charge and the initiate chief went round planting the deterrents at the strategic places – the ground, the *nyau* dressing room, the seclusion house, the initiate's tree, and the main fireplace. One informant explained that in other areas deterrents are planted the night before by the chief and his *anamkungwi*, and sometimes this is done when they are naked.<sup>31</sup> I will briefly describe the strategic places.

**Bwalo** (The ground). This is the ground that was appointed by the chief at his *kuzulula* ceremony, where all public functions are held, but it is mainly for *nyau* dances. Although deterrents were planted during the *kuzulula* ceremony, it is important that at

this function, they are planted again. Normally there is a big tree – in the central area of the ground and the deterrents are planted about six metres away to the east of the tree.

**Liunde** (The *nyau* dressing room). A temporary grass structure is built close to the ground and is used by the *nyau* dancers as their dressing room when they are performing. The deterrents are planted inside. Meanwhile the *nyau* dancers, who are an important part of the *chinamwali* are getting ready at *kudambwe* (the graveyard). There, for about a month or two, they have been making the structures, and of course, magical protection is part of the preparations.

**Tsimba** (The seclusion house). A house is identified as a seclusion house for the initiates. It can be the instructress' or the aunt's house. At the *mkangali* function, the *tsimba* is used mainly for sleeping and the evening meals. The deterrents are planted where the girls sit and lie.

**Mtengo wa Namwali** (The initiate's tree). On every *mkangali* ceremony, a tree that is a short distance outside the village will be identified as *mtengo wa namwali*, or *mtengo waukulu* (big tree) where the girls spend most of the time during the day and where most of the instruction and preparations are done for whatever the girls perform later. Only the tutors, the main *anamkungwi* and a few other women are allowed at the tree. My informant took me there on the first day when they were preparing the girls for the *chiwulu-wulu* ('flying') ceremony. The deterrents are planted about six metres away from the tree and that is where the girls are seated. This tree is never to be cut. It is changed if it dries, or when the chief dies, then the new chief chooses another tree.

**The main fire.** On the eastern side in front of the chief's house, a spot is chosen, usually closer to a tree, where the main fire is lighted, and deterrents are planted here. This fire is said to be the *chizimba* (activating agent) for all the fires that are made at the ceremony.

Mwale (1977:153-4) reports that deterrents are used as both defensive and offensive weapons. Some informants also gave examples of people who had died because of their

evil intentions at the initiation ceremony as evidence of the powers of these deterrents. A current example was of one chief who was reported to be very sick two days after the day when women pounded maize for the *mkangali* ceremony. Three days later he died. Almost everyone at the ceremony was saying that he must have done something at his previous visit to the site and that was what had killed him. Another example was that several years ago, at a chief's *mkangali* ceremony, one *namkungwi* from Sekerere village suddenly became sick during the function. Although she later revealed her misdeed, that she wanted a piece of the food for *chizimba*, she died because the medicine was irreversible.

Whether or not these examples were just hearsay, many informants testified that the *mkangali* ceremony is very dangerous because of the consequences if the deterrents used are not powerful enough.<sup>32</sup> Other informants said that it is because *mkangali* is such a menace that many chiefs no longer hold *mkangali*, for apart from its protective nature, it can also harm girls, if an enemy succeeds. However, economic restraints also hinder some chiefs from undergoing *mkangali*. Others pointed out that it is rare nowadays to see more than about three girls being initiated at *mkangali*.

Speaking in favour of the deterrents, one informant emphatically said that '*anthu ena ndi achipongwe* (other people have evil intentions). As such people want to harm others, it is therefore important that a chief protects his *mbumba* (people). There are various types of deterrents, each with different instructions and taboos to be observed. Thus the fortification rituals, usually carried out a night before the ceremony or in the morning of the first day, are mainly for the protection of the community and the girls from evil because of the power of the ceremony. However, the deterrents act also as offensive weapons in that whoever comes with evil intentions is attacked.

Another area of preparation is that of *gule wamkulu* (the big dance). It takes more than a month to weave and construct the animal structures and have them ready for the *chinamwali*. A brief account of a few of them and the type of spirit each represents is given below.<sup>33</sup>

*Njobvu* (the elephant) is the hub of the *mkangali* ceremony for it represents the spirit of important chiefs. The elephant *nyau* comes out only at the *mkangali* initiation ceremony or at the funeral of a *mkangali* chief. During the *chinamwali*, it appears on the day before the last day of the ceremony and is offered large amounts of money as a gift. That is why *mkangali* chiefs are much respected and feared because they represent very powerful and influential spirits. The woven structure is covered with sacks and is painted dark grey with mud. It takes one man in each leg. It is the most complicated structure to construct and takes time to build.

*Chimkoko* is another *nyau* that ‘represents a respected ancestor’ (Van Breugel 2001:158). Its presence on *mkangali* symbolizes the solidarity between the dead chief and the living one. It is called *mwini bwalo* (owner of the ground), for it is made only by the hosts, not by the visiting *nyau*. The structure is covered with maize-cob husks. It takes ten to twelve people inside. It also takes time to build.

*Mkango* (lion) represents ‘a bad spirit who terrifies people’ (Van Breugel 2001:159). It is also nicknamed ‘*popi*’ and although it roams around the village almost every day of the *mkangali* ceremony, it symbolizes the ‘terrible power of the *mizimu*’ who have no mercy, but can attack and kill. It is covered with sisal or fine grass that looks like hair, and takes two people, one at the back and one at the front (see Plate 1).

*Nkhandwe* (wild dogs) are the type of masked dancers or *zirombo* (animals), representing *ziwanda* (evil spirits) ‘who wander around trying to harm people.’ They may attack a member of any family (Van Breugel 2001:164). They come at night and frighten the initiates.

*Ajere* masked dancers represent ‘wicked people who kill with evil medicines’ (Van Breugel 2001:165). They wear black masks with white stripes. They walk around carrying axes on their shoulders, and usually accompany the *njobvu*. They also act as messengers delivering messages between chiefs.



*Makanja* or *namkhwanya* are masked dancers representing 'a spirit who comes to punish people' (Van Breugel 2001:162). He looks threatening and 'superhuman because he walks on stilts' (Van Breugel 2001:162). His body is covered with sacks and rags and he puts on a coloured mask.

The preparation of these masks and structures is done at the *dambwe* which is situated at the graveyard. Only the initiated are allowed to go as everything that goes on at the *dambwe* is supposed to be kept secret. As the *nyau* are also believed to be in a 'marginal' state when performing, they need magical protection from evil people or witches.

The *nyau* themselves attempt to bewitch each other because of envy and jealousy. Therefore, planting deterrents at the *dambwe*, *liunde*, and *bwalo* is also for the protection of the *nyau* community against any spiritual powers as Mwale indicates:

When *Gule wamkulu* was popularised and the headmen claimed ownership of the institution, magic began to be used to (*kutsilika*) plant deterrents around the *dambwe*, the *liunde* and also around the *bwalo* to keep away enemies and evil spirits which ... would interfere with the smooth running of their performance.

(Mwale 1977:153)

Having made all the preparations, the major daily events of the five-day ceremony are discussed below. The events are given according to the beer brewing calendar. This is the traditional counting system the people use in order to know what events take place on which day of the ceremony. A full documentation of the ceremony is in Appendix A. Included in the documentary are additional songs and sayings collected through mock ceremonies and oral interviews.

#### 4.4 THE CEREMONY

The first day is called *tsiku lofulula mowa* (the beer brewing day). The main events on this day are the fortification rituals that usually take place during the morning hours, as discussed above. Then the fire making ritual takes place in the afternoon so that the women can commence cooking beer. Since beer drinking signifies an important element



in the festival, its preparation has a symbolic function at the chief's house. It is performed as follows.

All the *anamkungwi* and the chiefs' wives fetch three stones for the fireplace from a close-by area. They drop the stones about six meters away from the fireplace. The women then make a fence with mats or cloths to shield all onlookers. Lined up inside the fence, lying flat on the ground, are first the leading *namkungwi*, followed by the chief's wife, and the second *namkungwi* or the chief's second wife (if he has two wives). While crawling on their bellies like snakes, with their arms folded to the elbow, each woman pushes a stone with her head to the fireplace.<sup>34</sup> No one is supposed to see them except those shielding them. The rest of the women give them monetary gifts while *ululating*, before the *anamkungwi* and the chiefs' wives rise up. After lighting the fire, all the chiefs carry the clay pot on to the fire, but using only their small fingers. The leading *anamkungwi* pours water into the pot. She goes ahead and brews the beer day by day for the next five days. This beer is called *mowa wa njovu* (the elephant's beer). It is a symbolic beer cooked on fire which has protective deterrents and is drunk only by the chiefs and the *nyau* leaders (*akunjira*) as representatives of the ancestors. It is a symbol of honouring the authorities.

At night the initiates sleep in the company of older girls in one house. The *nkhandwe* (wild dogs) *nyau* dance outside the house to frighten the girls by throwing some leaves and/or ash into the house at the girls and by trying to force open the door while the girls scream and resist by holding the door from inside. Sometimes the *nyau* make fire by the door and burn tobacco leaves or hot chillies, blowing the smoke into the house in order to choke the girls. All this stresses the importance and mysterious nature of the ceremony. The activity aims to sensitise the initiates to the fact that they are in transition as they leave their old childish ways and move into the adult world. When the *aphungu* (tutors) see that it is too much for the girls, they redeem them by giving the *nyau* monetary gifts, then they stop harassing the girls but continue to dance.<sup>35</sup> This gives the girls a sense of security knowing that there is someone to save them.

The first day's activities end with *anamkungwi* preparing food for the *nyau* late at night before the *nyau* go back to the *dambwe* (graveyard). They thus acknowledge the presence of the ancestors.

The second day is called *tsiku lophikitsa mowa* (the day of re-boiling the beer) and is also known as *tsiku logwira anamwali* (the day of 'capturing' the initiates); or the day of *mchezo wamfumu* (the chief's vigil). The main events for this day include the 'capturing' of the initiates to go into seclusion and 'head cutting' (to begin hearing instruction) rituals. The girls are prepared at the *mtengo* to be introduced to the chief and the public at the *bwalo* (ground). In the evening the initiates perform a fire ritual around the village. After supper the *zirombo* perform their dances and the chiefs' vigil goes on while the rest sleep. Below is a brief discussion of the main events.

The official 'capturing' of the initiates is usually done in the afternoon hours, although some carry it out in the morning. In the midst of the crowd, each *namkungwi* takes a girl, covers her with a piece of cloth and announces: *Lero ndiwe namwali! Usatuluka kubwalo*. (Today you are an initiate, do not go outside). They all join in *ululating* and take the initiates into the seclusion house (*tsimba*). The tutors (*aphungu*) are called to go and 'cut the head' (*kudula mutu*). The *phungu* (singular) is normally the one who named the girl at birth, or the mother may choose any trusted friend.<sup>36</sup> She stays with the girl and attends to her during the whole period of the initiation. The tutor continues to mentor the initiate even after the initiation to make sure that her initiate is living according to the expected lifestyle of one *wometa* (who has been initiated).

As soon as the girls are captured and taken into the *tsimba*, they are seated. Then the main *namkungwi* announces, '*dulani mutu!* (cut the head!). The tutors make the girls kneel and each tutor whispers a saying into one ear and another into the other ear of the girl. Although *kudula mutu* literary means 'cutting the head', its general meaning is that *chiyambi choti namwali ayambe kumva mwambo* (it is now time for her to begin hearing the counsel), and it involves just the whispering into the ears of the initiates. Any two of the following sayings are the usual ones to be said.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>1. <i>Mzako akati tsegula</i><br/> <i>Kodi mtsegula bwa?</i><br/> <i>Uku phunthu uku phunthu</i><br/> <i>Pakati palenga dela</i><br/> <i>Tandiuza chalenga dela</i><br/> <i>Chalenga dela m'nkhole</i><br/> <i>Nkhole yanga ndiukulu</i><br/> <i>Phungu liri ndi mwambo</i><br/> <i>Tsinkhinthi, mwambo m'nkhole</i><br/> <i>Kafunde, funda mwambo</i></p>     | <p>When your friend says open<br/>         How do I open?<br/>         There is a mount here and one here<br/>         And a gap in the middle<br/>         Tell me what has caused the gap<br/>         The menses have caused the gap<br/>         My menses is adulthood<br/>         The tutor has counsel<br/>         The menses counsel is secret<br/>         Learning, learn the counsel</p>            |
| <p>2. <i>Mzako akati sendera</i><br/> <i>Kodi msendera bwa?</i><br/> <i>Uku kuli bawe uku bawe</i><br/> <i>Pakati palenga dela</i><br/> <i>Tandiuza chalenga dela</i><br/> <i>Chalenga dela m'nkhole</i><br/> <i>Nkhole yanga ndiukulu</i><br/> <i>Phungu liri ndi mwambo</i><br/> <i>Sinkhinthi, mwambo m'nkhole</i><br/> <i>Kafunde, funda mwambo</i></p>       | <p>When your friend says move closer<br/>         How do I move closer?<br/>         There is a mat here and a mat there<br/>         And a gap in the middle<br/>         Tell me what has caused the gap<br/>         The menses have caused the gap<br/>         My menses is adulthood<br/>         The tutor has counsel<br/>         Menses counsel is secret<br/>         Learning, learn the counsel</p> |
| <p>3. <i>Mzako akati ndagona</i><br/> <i>Ndagona kalambilambi</i><br/> <i>Kalambilambi wamnjira</i><br/> <i>Uyo apita wampsyitikiza</i><br/> <i>Tandiuza wampsyitikiza</i><br/> <i>Wampsyitikiza m'nkhole</i><br/> <i>Nkhole yanga ndiukulu</i><br/> <i>Phungu liri ndi mwambo</i><br/> <i>Tsinkhinthi, mwambo m'nkhole</i><br/> <i>Kafunde, funda mwambo</i></p> | <p>When your friend says I lie<br/>         I lie flat<br/>         Lying flat on the path<br/>         Everyone passing steps on<br/>         Tell me who steps on<br/>         The menses step on<br/>         My menses are adulthood<br/>         The tutor has counsel<br/>         Menses counsel is secret<br/>         Learning, learn the counsel</p>   |

Throughout the initiation period, the girls learn these sayings and the songs, for the sayings also serve as a password after their initiation.<sup>37</sup> However, my informants said that a girl cannot master all of them at her own initiation ceremony. She must attend other girls' initiations in order for her to learn more and be able to instruct others.

After 'cutting the head', the girls (covered all round with cloth) are led to the *mtengo wa namwali* (the initiate's tree). At the tree, while the girls lie face down and are covered, the women sing and dance round them. Two women drummers also perform their drumming skill. One significant rite at the tree is the 'capturing' of the 'animal' which occurs after the singing and pointing at the girls:

*Chagona, chagona apa nchiani*  
*Chimzenga, chimzenga*

Lying, what is lying here?  
 It is an animal, animal

Then at the end of the song all the women shout:

*Tiyeni tigwire! (one)*  
*Aaa! nyamaa! (all)*

Let us capture!  
 Yes! The animal!<sup>38</sup>

As the women shout, they all touch the girls, but the girls are not supposed to *kudzidzi-muka* (to be threatened) for they should have been warned before. This ritual stresses the fact that the girls have started the transition journey, and here they are identified with an 'animal.'

The following rite is performed in order to check if the initiate is pregnant or not.<sup>39</sup> While kneeling and singing, four women turn the girls from side to side,<sup>40</sup> at the same time picking the money that the tutors hid under the girls' elbows and knees.

*Timsande kodi wakula*

Let us search if she is grown (repeated)

After collecting the money while still kneeling, they show the money to each other (to be shared later), and sing,

*Mkanda de mkanda wa mkamwa*  
*Ndatola mkanda de, mkanda wamkamwa*  
*Ndatola, ndatola, mphande*  
*Ndatola mphande*

Beads the mouth beads  
 I have picked beads de, mouth beads  
 I have picked, picked money  
 I have picked money

Meaning: 'This money (*mkanda* and *mphande*) is my gift for my mouth' (singing). In the past, they used (*mkanda woyera* (white beads) instead of money to signify the purity of the girl. Nowadays, money is used instead of the actual beads.

After establishing their purity, the girls are prepared to be introduced to the chief and the public at the ground. The girls are uncovered and seated upright. Using white flour paste, two women decorate the girls (*kulocha* or *kutheka*) with a pattern by painting a ring round the upper arms, one dot on the forehead with three dots on each side of the face and two dots on both the front and the back of the neck, ending with a dot on the upper head (*paliombo*).<sup>41</sup> Then they all go to the *bwalo* (the ground) where the initiates meet and dance with the chief and in front of the public.

At the ground the instructresses and the initiates join the dancing chiefs. After dancing for a while the onlookers give monetary gifts to the chief initiate and to the girls. While still dancing they all move to the spot where the deterrents were planted for *chipo-ndamgaga* (stepping the soil/land) ritual. The chief, his wives, his instructresses, and the girls dance with all their feet meeting at the spot, while singing,

*Chiponda mgaga, de de*  
*Wachiona chiponda mgaga*

The stepping of the soil, de de  
You have seen the stepping of the soil

Meaning: 'This is the initiation you were looking forward to, and this is the girl initiate that you were given.' (Referring mainly to the leading girl). This is an official introduction of the girls to the authorities.

The next phase of the ceremony is referred to as the *chiwulu-wulu* ceremony.<sup>42</sup> Carried on the shoulders of the tutors, the initiates dance, displaying their beauty to the public (*kuyangala*) (see Plate 2). Most of the songs mention the names of birds such as *phwiti* and *lumbe*. For example the following song is sung while the girls proudly shake only their shoulders:

*Taonani phwiti maye*  
*Phwiti wasewera*

Look at the phwiti (name of bird)<sup>43</sup>  
Phwiti is playing

Meaning: 'The girl is like this bird that plays closer to people without fear. So it is also the girl's time to play for people to see her.'

At the following song, the girls stretch their hands sideways and look at the crowd from side to side (called *kuyangala* or display) and the crowd applauds them. Many come to give them money.

*Lumbe, lumbe, lumbe, lumbe*  
*Lumbe sangalala*

Lumbe (the name of a bird)<sup>44</sup>  
Lumbe be happy

When the ceremony at the ground is finished, the girls bid farewell to the seated chiefs by bowing, then they walk away to the *tsimba* (seclusion house.) I was informed that only their tutors and a few trusted friends of their mothers are allowed into the seclusion house.

In the evening the initiates perform another ritual at which the girls go to nearly every home in the village *kupala moto* (to take a hot piece of firewood). With their heads covered, the girls lie down at the door of the kitchen. The tutors cover the girls completely with a piece of cloth. They wait while singing until they are given some money. Then the girls rise, go into the kitchen, pick a hot piece of firewood each and walk away to another house. Their tutors and the other women help to carry the firewood. I was informed that the pieces of firewood are thrown in the toilet for nothing should be carelessly disposed off. But in other areas, the firewood is used to make a fire at the seclusion house. The meaning of this ritual is that 'today is the day for the function that you had contributed your money to.'

After the evening meal, the *zirombo* dance for a while at the ground, while the initiates go to sleep in their *tsimba*. The night's ceremony is the chief's vigil initiation (*mchezo wa mfumu*).<sup>45</sup>

The third day is called *tsiku lotandaza mowa* (when beer stays put). It is also called *tsiku la mchezo wa atsikana* (the girls' solemn vigil), for the main activity on this day takes place at night. The *zirombo* dance in the evening, and after they retreat, the *mchezo* of the women with the girls takes place.

The girls' vigil usually begins after midnight in a dimly lit and crowded room,<sup>46</sup> with as many as fifty women and four drummers (one or two of them males who have been initiated at a previous female rite.) The methods of instruction include much singing, dancing, demonstration, and even dramatising. One song may take ten to fifteen minutes and the dancing is done systematically. Sometimes the initiates are required to dance, or to act. Since sex education seems to be the main ingredient of the vigil, it is done towards dawn, and the ceremony ends with a swearing in ritual. The girls are instructed on general good morals, cleanliness, sexual taboos, motherhood, being a faithful wife and on sexuality through the songs, action, and sometimes with explanation.

The instruction on sex begins by two or three women taking off their own clothes with and leaving their big pants, while singing:



*Bvulani tioneke, tioneke, kodi*  
*Bvulani tioneke uchembere*  
*Ati siuyu tioneke*

Undress let's see, let's see,  
 Undress, let's see motherhood  
 Here it is let's see

Or

*Uyo apande kubvula pano*  
*Ali ngwala*

Whoever does not undress here  
 Is to see

They tell the girls, 'Now that you have been initiated, do not go out and tell others that you saw so and so's nakedness.' Sometimes the male drummers, half-naked, also join the women. This is to show the seriousness of the *mwambo* on sex.

Two or three pairs of women act as wife bathing the husband. Starting from the head, she washes him, massaging and stretching every part down to the feet while singing:

*Ukatere, ukatere,*  
*Potsuka oMwale*

You go and do like this, like this  
 When bathing Mr. Mwale (name)

Then each woman pairs with an initiate and repeats the actions while the rest continue singing the above song or a variety of similar songs.

After the bathing ritual, pairs of women shave the pubic hair, followed by the woman and initiate pairs. A piece of cloth is folded into the shape of a man's sexual organ on his body. The husband lies flat on his back with his legs stretched apart, while the wife kneels and carefully shaves him with a razor blade. When she finishes, she cleans him with a damp piece of cloth. She then disposes of the hair. When it is the husband's turn to shave the wife, she sits with her legs apart, but they end up having sexual relations.

During the mock ceremonies, other informants showed how, after the shaving ritual, the wife carries the husband on her back to the bathroom, undresses him, washes and dries him. After smearing ointment and dressing him, she carries him on her back to the house. She then prepares food, carries him on her lap and feeds him. Each act is accompanied by singing.

While singing the same song above, the women demonstrate a husband making sexual advances to his wife who is lying down. The wife refuses because she is either having her period, the mother is away, or because a child is sick. The husband insists until he succeeds and has sexual relations with her. The teaching is that the couple must abstain from sexual activity whenever the wife is having her menses, if a child is sick, or if the wife's mother is away.<sup>47</sup> Sometimes when a chief is away from the village, all the couples in the village abstain from sexual activity.<sup>48</sup>

The normal sexual activity between a married couple is demonstrated in a similar manner, a pair of women first, then a pair consisting of a woman and an initiate. While softly singing the songs below, and standing facing each other, the wife holds and caresses the husband's private parts (a folded piece of cloth was used to demonstrate). Then the husband sits with his legs outstretched, while the wife kneels and dances by shaking her waist. Eventually, they both lie down, one on top of the other. What the women demonstrate at this time is the shaking of their waists during the sexual activity, especially the one lying down on her back. All the other women sing loudly, while clapping their hands and others *ululating*, thus waking up those who might be dozing off. The room becomes filled with dust as the couples move whilst acting. Although no explanation is given, the action implies that a wife should not lie still during the sexual act. She should shake her waist to assist the husband in the act.

<i>Tiye tiye</i>	Go ahead, go ahead
<i>Sewera naye</i>	Play with him

Then,

<i>Anzanu atere, atere, atere, atere</i>	Your friends do this, this, this
<i>Akakwatana.</i>	When in marriage.

At the end of the demonstration all the women actors dust themselves off while the initiates are forbidden to do so for fear that some evil people may use the dust to harm the girls.

Finally, and while singing the above second song, the women demonstrate how a wife cleans the husband's private parts after sexual activity. While the husband is still lying

down, the wife holds his sexual organs and wipes them gently with a small piece of cloth.

A drama to test the faithfulness of the wife to her husband usually ends the sexual instruction. There can be slight variations on the details, but the drama I observed went as follows:

Two couples perform. Each husband says to his wife, 'Since we have nothing in this house, I am going to look for work in the city.' The wives agree and the husbands bid farewell to the mothers-in-law as well after explaining why they are going away. Then upon their return, one husband finds another man with his wife, who, of course flees. The angry husband goes to complain to the *anamkungwi* asking her, 'Did you really counsel her well? Look at what she has done!' It is therefore the responsibility of the *anamkungwi* to sort out such matters in order to preserve the marriage. The other husband finds his wife without any problem. After she welcomes him, he goes to thank the *anamkungwi* that his wife really understood the *mwambo* (counsel) that she was given. 'Look we are together again!' the husband proudly comments. Although no explanation was given to the girls, the drama was self-explanatory.<sup>49</sup>

My informant also told me that the women had not given some of the counsel referred to as *zakumphasa* (literally of 'sleeping mats'), and meaning 'of the bedroom.' Such counsel is given in full to newly wed couples. The husband and wife are supposed to perform to each other to prove that they were initiated. Some of the counsel appears in the documentary in Appendix A.

To solemnize the ritual, a swearing in ceremony ends the vigil. The *anamkungwi* tell the girls that what they are going through is very secret; nothing should be revealed to anyone, not even to their mothers or they would die. In a closed circle the *anamkungwi* and the initiates kneel down in the middle of the room. While singing softly they all beat the ground repeatedly with their palms, ending by pointing toward heaven, and mentioning *Leza* (one of the Chewa names for God which comes from a root verb meaning *kulera*, to nurse) (Van Breugel 2001:30).<sup>50</sup> Beating the ground is one way of swearing an oath;

the other being 'cutting' one's throat with the second finger and pointing toward heaven. Thus they vow to keep everything as a secret.

After the swearing in ritual, the women give monetary gifts to the girls while exhorting them to behave well. The tutors collect the money, and then the tutors leave with the initiates for washing at the stream.

The fourth day is called the *chingondo* or *thimbwiza* (head crown) day, for that is the main event for the day, ending with another vigil for the girls with the *nyau* or *zirombo*. On this day the beer is also ready for drinking, although the following day, being the last day of the ceremony, is the official beer-drinking day. In some cases the *zirombo* dance during the day, after the girls perform the *chingondo* ritual.

*Chingondo*<sup>51</sup> is an animal moulded from good quality soil (the type used to make clay pots) which stands for the chief's *nyau*. The elephant figure is worn as a head crown or helmet by the leading girl, only at the *mkangali* ceremony or at the death of such a chief (see Plate 3). The other girls wear cattle like mouldings. One or two *anamkungwi* fetch the soil from a nearby *dambo*, hide it in a piece of cloth and bring it to the initiates' tree (*mtengo*). They also bring red brick, white maize flour and charcoal. Each element is made into fine paste. The thick mud paste is moulded like a hat or crown on the girl's head. Then the animal figure is moulded on top of the hat. The first girl wears an elephant animal, while the rest of the girls wear *chinyau* (cow-like *nyau*). Both the hat and the moulding are painted with the white paste, so that no one recognizes it as clay. Then they are decorated with red and black dots (*kulocha-locha*).<sup>52</sup> Similarly the girls are decorated on the upper chest. They wait for the crowns to dry before going to the *bwalo* to perform.

When the crowns are dry the girls and their tutors walk in a line to the *bwalo* (ground). Closer to the ground the tutors carry the girls on their shoulders and enter the ground while singing, *Taonani phwiti maye! Phwiti wasewera!* (Look at *phwiti* (name of bird) mm! *Phwiti* has played!). Still on their tutors' shoulders, the girls dance in front of the chiefs, making sure they do not drop the crown. After performing for about fifteen min-

utes they are dropped down and walk to their *tsimba*. In other areas they dance for about ten minutes, are dropped from their tutors' shoulders, have their head crowns tied with a piece of towel, and then enter the ground again to continue dancing in front of the chiefs for another ten minutes or more before leaving for the *tsimba*. In both cases the girls are given monetary-gifts. The whole crown structure and all the small pieces must be disposed of very carefully and so every precaution is taken to drop the head crown on a piece of cloth where all the pieces are collected to be disposed in a pit latrine. Usually the girl's mother is responsible for its disposal. The belief is that if the crown or any piece from it is picked up and used by evil men, the girl may become sick, barren, or die.<sup>53</sup> Hence every precaution is taken to make sure that the crown is carefully and completely discarded.

My informant told me of a girl whose head crown fell during the initiation ceremony several years ago. The initiate stopped talking, and later on she could only stammer. During my field research, we met this girl (now a woman) and my informant introduced me to her saying, 'this is the one I was telling you about! Look! She cannot talk properly!' Although I did not say anything, I could hear her stammering speech as she narrated her misfortune.

Many informants testified that the *mkangali* ceremony is very dangerous because girls can become barren if the protective deterrents are not strong enough to stand against such kind of evil or witchcraft.

The *chingondo* ritual is a characteristic feature that makes the *mkangali* ceremony the most distinctive of all Chewa initiation rites. It has deep religious significance for it links the initiates to the most powerful spirits - the elephant and the cattle *nyau*.

To stress the mysterious nature of the ceremony the girls spend another vigil with the *zirombo*, and thus have a direct encounter with the spirits, from whom the girls must also learn the *miyambo* (customs), thus linking the initiates with the ancestors. All the information concerning this ceremony was given from oral sources. The *zirombo*, called *namkanya*, spend the night with the girls, instructing them, frightening them, or pun-



ishing them, especially if any of the initiates was reported to be of bad behaviour. The tutors stay close and rescue the girls when they are satisfied with the treatment, by giving money to the *zirombo*. It really depends on the *zirombo* themselves to decide what to do with the initiates. Most of the instruction is contained in the songs and the actions the *zirombo* perform. Issues such as observing sexual taboos during the menses, and respecting the parents and all elders are stressed. The emphasis is that the initiates are no longer children, but adults. Hence all past bad behaviour must be left behind. In addition, it is most important to establish the fertility of the young women.

To signify death of the old life and entry into the new life, the initiates may be buried in the ground and the *zirombo* dance around them until their tutors redeem them. They may be told to climb a tree, while the *zirombo* light a fire underneath and put either tobacco leaves, or chillies on the fire. The girls are not supposed to run away but to persevere as a sign of adulthood until their tutors redeem them. Sometimes the *zirombo* hold a stick and the girls hold the other end and they pull each other. The *zirombo* then pull hard until the girls fall down, and continue to pull them while they are down until they are redeemed.

One informant told me that this is also the same night that the girls are taken to *liunde* and shown the *nyau* structures. They are taken into the *chimkoko* structure to see what it is made of, but severely warned never to reveal what they have seen and been taught.<sup>54</sup> Then early in the morning the *zirombo* take the girls to a nearby dam. The *zirombo* begin to dip themselves in the water, followed by the girls and their tutors, as a symbol of dying to past life and starting a new phase of life. While the *zirombo* go their way, the girls go back to the seclusion house (*tsimba*). My informant indicated that most of the brutal practices meted out on the girls in the past, have ceased. However, if a girl is specifically reported to be of bad behaviour, she undergoes a difficult time.

The last day of the *mkangali* ceremony is marked by feasting – eating, drinking, and dancing - *mnjeza* for the chiefs and then *gule wamkulu* to celebrate the end of the ceremony. It is also the day on which the elephant *nyau* comes out to perform in front of the chief's house, where it is also given its monetary gift. After the public activities, the



girls are taken to their respective homes. In almost every home there is a cluster of people drinking and chatting. Others who could not attend the whole ceremony come at least for this last day.

The hair shaving ritual (*kumeta*) ends the girls' five-day seclusion period of the *chinamwali*. At the *tsimba* their hair is cut short (in the past all the hair was shaved). People believe that the hair should never enter the parent's home for fear that witches might steal the hair for *chizimba* (activating agent in magic). The hair must therefore be disposed of in a pit latrine. The logic is that the girl is now an adult, and everything from the old 'nature' must be left behind or be disposed of. After the hair shaving ritual, the girls wait at the *mtengo*, where their friends continue to teach them all the things they have been learning. They wait until all the other activities finish so that the women continue with their programme to escort the girls to their homes to re-incorporate them, now adults, into the community life and its obligations. In other cases, this is done the following day.

Dressed smartly (not necessarily new clothes) and with their heads covered, the girls sit lined up at the chief's house. The mothers are supposed to 'redeem' their daughters by giving the chief the required amount per girl. Any man wishing to marry a girl would quickly discuss with the girl's uncle and give the redeeming money to the girl's mother and so she becomes his wife soon after the initiation.<sup>55</sup> When all the dues are paid to the chief and with the leading girl in front, they all proceed to the home of the first girl while singing: *Namwali tikamtule komake, Akasonkhe moto* (Let us take the initiate back to her mother, to make fire). After performing all the necessary rites discussed below, they proceed to the home of the next one, and so on until all the girls are finished.

The mother welcomes them usually into the girl's own house, or if she does not have her own house, into her mother's house. Then at night the girl sleeps at a friend's house, for it is impolite for a mature girl to sleep in the same house with her parents. At the door, the *namkungwi* tells the girl to kneel while the other girls wait standing. The *namkungwi* puts a small stick below the first stair into the house. She helps the girl to

stand and makes her jump over the stick (*kumuolotsa*). She enters the house without looking back. This symbolizes doing away with the past life. The girl's tutor must stand beside her so that they both enter into the house. Before they enter the house, the girl's mother gives them some money. Then the *namkungwi* picks the stick and the others continue to the second girl's home where the procedure is repeated. The activity is repeated until all the girls are taken to their respective homes. To reinforce their memory, the tutor repeats instruction on some important issues to the girl at the house, such as respecting her parents and elderly people, helping with house chores, and observing taboos. The girls are instructed to stay close to the house during the following week until they undergo *dulira* (cut the small hairs round the face) ritual. This is to avoid her meeting with the chief before the *dulira* ceremony is performed.

After one week, the tutors (*aphungu*) collect the girls back to the seclusion house, while the *anamkungwi* assemble in another house. Then they all go to the *bwalo* (ground). The girls sit on mats with their tutors. Each tutor brings a razor blade for her initiate. While the girls are seated, the tutor unwraps the razor blade and puts it on the girl's head and places money on top of the razor blade. Then the *anamkungwi* collects the money from all the girls. When she has finished, each tutor neatly shaves the hair around the girl's face. The mothers dispose of the hairs of their daughters. The *anamkungwi* assists any tutor who is not doing well. The mothers just look on. When all are through, the *anamkungwi* asks anyone to begin counselling again. The mothers begin by throwing money first then they speak. After the mothers have spoken, anyone else is free to give her counsel. When all are finished, each mother takes a plate of flour or some money and gives it to the *anamkungwi* to share with her colleagues as a token of appreciation.

The tutors take the girls back to their respective homes. They repeat to the girls what their mothers had rebuked them about at the *bwalo*, and exhort them to change to adulthood behaviour. These activities mark the end of the *chinamwali* ceremony. If the girls attend school they are then free to return there.

They are, however, reminded that after the initiation, when they meet with the chief, they must kneel at the far side of the road (*kupatuka*). Then the chief will give them

money. If an initiate is alone, he will put the money on the ground and tell her to pick it up, but if she is with a friend, the chief will give the money through the friend.

#### 4.5 A SUMMARY OF THE TEACHING

In addition to the religious significance, initiation rites have a great educational purpose: As Mbiti (1969:122) remarked: 'The occasion often marks the beginning of acquiring knowledge which is otherwise not accessible to those who have not been initiated' and who are seen as 'children.' The initiates must be prepared for adult life and are given instruction on matters of 'sex, marriage, procreation, family, and community responsibilities' (Anderson 1986:112) to help them cope with the new stage in life. The Chewa initiation rites are, therefore, occasions where social, cultural and religious values are taught to the girls.

The method of instruction is generally characterised by songs or sayings, actions (demonstration, acting, or dancing), and instruction or explanation. Although the instructresses (*anamkungwi*) are responsible for the instructions, the initiates' tutors (*aphungu*) and other young women are also involved in instructing the initiates to make sure that they learn the important things that would identify them with the already initiated. The following is a summary of the teachings extracted from the Chewa initiation rite for girls, as described above and in the full documented text in Appendix A.

*Ulemu* (respect) to parents, adults, and especially to the chief, is a sign that one *ndi-ometa* (had been initiated). It is a sign of good citizenship. *Ulemu* is shown in acts such as kneeling and clapping hands when a chief is passing; kneeling when speaking with an elderly person; helping an elderly person with house chores, or assisting to carry heavy loads for them. In the parent's home, *ulemu* should manifest itself in the way a girl speaks to her parents, in helping with house chores, and knocking before entering the house. The initial instruction given to the girl on her first menses emphasised that she must show *ulemu* especially when she is menstruating. She must make sure that her menses linen are stored in a secret place where no one sees them, she should not use the same bathroom as her parents, and she must not even come close to her father when she

has her menses. *Ulemu* is also manifested in the way the initiate relates to all the others in the community.

The following are some songs containing instruction on *ulemu* to the parents: *Mwanawe, usamantukane pamtumbo! Mpa atate wako kukada, mwananga* (My child, do not curse me mentioning my private parts! They belong to your father at night, my child); or *Inu amayi mwantengera nsalu yanga! Mumpakire chigodole chotere!* (You my mother, you have taken my piece of cloth! You have stained it with menstruating blood!) A girl is not supposed to talk rudely to her parents, even if they have wronged her. Another example is: *Usakalawirire komako, Ukapeza chiri changanga, nakwatana* (Do not go early to your mother's house, you will find it there, having sex). It is taboo to find one's parents having sex.

Another area which requires respect is concerning how a woman handles her menstruation. This is stressed in songs such as, *Ndaiwala ine, muntoleleko, kumadzi, mwere* (I have forgotten, please pick for me, at the well, the menses linen). Or, *Ndipo adabvala chimwere chake tonje, chosatsuka* (But she wore her menses linen, unwashed).

Closely related to *ulemu* are good manners (*khalidwe labwino*). It has been mentioned that the presence of *nyau* at the initiation ceremonies is to change behaviour from bad to good, or from good to better. Bad behaviour is likened to 'childhood' behaviour; it is therefore severely punished so that the initiates enter adulthood life as good members of society. Good behaviour includes pure sexual behaviour until marriage, as mentioned in the following song, *Elelele, elelele, kaya, Chimbolo chikupeza, Kumeneko, kaya* (Elelele, may be, The penis will find you, there). However, if a girl was given a (*fisi*, hyena) man to purify her at the end of her first menses, the teaching is paradoxical as she is only tested for pregnancy and not for sexual purity.

A girl who is generally of good behaviour participates in community activities such as funeral ceremonies and in *zizangala* (celebration) ceremonies such as initiation rites.

Much skill and more time are given to the instruction concerning marriage issues. In fact it forms the climax of all the teaching during the solemn vigil. It is performed late in the night when most of the people are supposed to be asleep. Procreation in the marriage context is the vital role in adult life. The initiates must be well instructed so that nothing is left to chance.<sup>56</sup> For this important role, preparation for married life begins even before the initiation, when young girls are taught the elongation of their *labia minora* (also called *makutu* [ears], or *makwerero* [stairs or ladders]). Its importance is stressed in the songs at the initiation, such as *Usangoyamba mchiwale, mwana wanga, anzako akuna nyini!* (Do not just be playing while your friends are doing the elongation!). This is practised in some African societies and the belief is that without the elongated *labia minora*, the husbands do not enjoy having sex. (Linden quoted by Chakanza 1998:159).<sup>57</sup> Concerning the same practice by the Yao people in Tanzania, Fiedler (1996: 189, 206) argues that this act is designed to make a girl 'more desirable and acceptable to a man.' Many female informants also stressed that a woman who has no *makutu* (ears) or *makwerero* (stairs) can be divorced because there will be nothing to hold the male sex organ when having sex.<sup>58</sup>

The significance of sexual activity for married couples is brought home when the women instruct by actually demonstrating what should be done before to arouse each other, during the actual act, and the clean-up after the act. Other tips for 'successful marriage,' such as shaving each other's pubic hair, bathing the husband, or feeding him are also included in the instruction. Instruction on sexual fidelity in marriage, especially on the part of the wife, is demonstrated by the dramatization of the instruction, which marks the end of the instruction session on marriage issues. Most of the instruction is to 'please' the husband. However, in some songs the teaching is to reprove irresponsible husbands. Husbands are expected to fulfill their conjugal rights, as well as take care of their wives by providing food and clothing. Complaints are echoed in the women's songs such as: *Amnanga chakale-kale, eae! Takodolani awo ndigona ndekha ine!* (My husband, it has been a long time, eae! Please call him, I am sleeping alone!). Or, *Nsalu mnjiti oMwale? Kodi mumannamiza? Paja munkanena nsalu nkabvala!* (Where is the cloth Mr Mwale? Were you lying? You remember you said that I would be clothed!).

Teaching on the observance of taboos is very important in Chewa society. Most of the taboos require sexual abstinence. According to Van Breugel (2001:172-73), this is due to the belief that 'sexual activity, sexual and menstrual fluids are highly mysterious and powerful and therefore dangerous.' If the taboos are not properly observed, the result is that the *mizimu* become angry, hence they can punish by withdrawing fertility, or inflicting sickness on the 'law breaker', or even death to a child.

The demonstration on sexual taboos is usually through drama showing a husband making sexual advances to his wife. The wife refuses because she is either having her period; the mother is away; or a child is sick. The women demonstrate that the man succeeded after several attempts. They use the drama to teach that this should not happen for it is the wife's responsibility to refuse.

The vigil for the girls and the *machembere* (elderly women) is the focal point for the girls' *chinamwali*, at whatever occasion the girls' are initiated, and sex education is the main event. The belief is that any girl who has not been traditionally initiated 'does not know anything.' She is ignorant, therefore is a 'child' and cannot marry one who is initiated.

#### 4.6 INTERPRETATION AND MEANING OF CHINAMWALI

The above description and analysis of the initiation ceremony for girls shows that initiation rites play a very significant religious, social and educational role in Chewa society. However, in addition to the form, initiation rites, like other religious rituals, are also symbolic in nature and an understanding of the generalized meanings and the underlying particular meanings of the rite will be helpful in our evaluation as to whether the Christian faith responded adequately to the *chinamwali*.

According to Van Gennep's classification of rituals, initiation rites come under the category of *rites of passage*, which involve rites of separation, rites of transition, and rites of incorporation (1960:1-11). Van Gennep's classification is similar to Turner's



interpretation as referred to by Bourdillon (1990:317). Turner also pointed out that transition rites pass through three stages. The first stage is that of separation, which stresses the structure before the ritual takes place. In Chewa society the uninitiated are regarded as 'children.' The 'children' are therefore cut off or separated from the 'profane world' and placed within the 'sacred parameters' of *chinamwali*. The second stage is what Turner calls anti-structure in which the initiate is put in seclusion for a period of time. He calls this sacred stage the 'liminal' state. The third stage emphasises the restored structure, whereby the initiate is incorporated back into the normal life.

It is the 'liminal' stage of seclusion which gives *chinamwali* its sacred significance. *Chinamwali* is a stage of 'sacredness' in which the uninitiated are separated from the 'profane world' and brought into the world of the ancestors to be instructed, intensively for five days, in the *miyambo ya makolo* (ancestral customs).

It was mentioned in section 4.2 above that Chewa girls, after the first menses ritual, can be initiated at any of the four ceremonies - a funeral, funeral commemoration, *chikudzu-kudzu* (quick-quick), or at *mkangali*. It must be noted that all these ceremonies, except *chikudzu-kudzu*, are to do with the dead, where *nyau* play a vital role as representatives of the *mizimu*. Hence, *kumeta anamwali* (to shave initiates or to initiate girls) at these functions is to bring them in the presence of the ancestors. All the rituals performed during the ceremony undergird this spiritual incorporation of the girls.

The presence of *nyau* throughout the *chinamwali* ceremony, signifies the presence of the ancestors, therefore intensifies the mysterious nature of the ritual. *Nyau* are indeed the 'symbolic representation of something powerful and frightening' as described with features such as 'bad spirit,' 'cruel spirit,' 'wicked spirit,' or 'angry spirit' (Van Breugel 2001:157-166). This reinforces the girls' coming to an understanding of and respect for the spirit realm. The vigil of the initiates with the *nyau* on the fourth night emphasizes to the girls the fact that they are no longer children, but are in transition to adulthood. Burying the girls into the ground, entering the *nyau* structure, or dipping into the water, signify dying to the past childhood behaviour. Other activities such as dragging the girls, or any other punishment reinforce the secrecy required which emphasizes the

importance of the ritual. The presence of the ancestors also signifies the importance of history. There is continuity of history as the *miyambo* (ancestral customs) are passed on from one generation to the next through *chinamwali*.

Another significant element of the presence of *nyau* at *chinamwali* for girls is that it symbolizes a prayer for obtaining fertility for the girls. This is featured more in the songs that mention the female and male genital parts (*kulaula*). According to Van Breugel (2001:151-152), 'the dances and songs are in some way a celebration of the powers of life, a eulogy of the generative powers of man, and of the Creator.' The miming of the sexual act and the erotic dance by the women also signify the importance of fertility for the continuation of the community. The swearing of an oath at the end of the vigil and the mentioning of *Leza* shows that the prayers are not directed to the *mizimu* but to *Chiuta* through the *mizimu*. This shows that barrenness of a woman in Chewa society is regarded as taboo. Thus prayer to placate the *mizimu* to receive their blessings is vital in Chewa society.

In addition to the *nyau* masked dancers, various other functionaries play significant roles which have symbolic meanings at the *chinamwali*. The Chewa chief is both a political and a religious leader. He mediates between the living and the ancestors and oversees that people carry out all the ancestral customs. At *mkangali*, the elephant *nyau*, signifying a powerful spirit, is the chief's symbol. The 'elephant' head crown (*chi-ngondo*) of the leading girl links her with the powerful realm of the spirits (of the chiefs.) It should be noted that during the chief's vigil on the first day of the ceremony, the new chief is given *chitambala* (the elephant's trunk) and some herbal mixture as a symbol of power over his people. Therefore, the elephant is a sign of power. The chief also symbolizes a husband to the girl after she has matured. He provides the right *mtela* (herbal medicine) during the 'marginal' state of her first menses as well as during her *chinamwali*.

Other important figures during *chinamwali* are the *anamkungwi* (instructresses), who are said to be the custodians of the *miyambo ya makolo* (ancestral customs) on behalf of the living dead. Tutors (*aphungu*) are mentors assigned to the initiates. They attend to

the needs of the initiates and provide redemption when the girls are in trouble. The mother or guardian is also a very important figure in the girl's life from the time of her first menses to the actual *chinamwali*. She must abstain from sexual activity to protect her daughter from the *tsempho* disease during her first menses and during her *chinamwali*.<sup>59</sup> There is a significant and mysteriously dangerous connection between sexual activity, menstrual blood and the 'protective' medicines used at the ceremony. It is therefore the responsibility of the mother (and other relatives) to avoid such dangers. The mother is also the one who disposes of all the pieces of the head crown and the girl's hair after shaving her, for they are vulnerable elements that can be used for malevolent purposes.

The role of each of these religious functionaries - the chief, the *nyau*, the instructresses, the tutors, and the initiates' mothers - signifies that the girls are incorporated into the spiritual realm of the ancestors; that the initiates are well protected during such a susceptible period; and that above all, their presence signifies a public acknowledgement of the transition from both the leadership and from the ordinary people.

Other symbolic acts point to the vulnerability of the sacred period. From the time of her first menses to the time of her *chinamwali*, the initiate is in a very susceptible state. Hence, she is given *mtela* (herbal medicine, called *khundabwi*), or a *fisi* (hyena) to sleep with her to 'make her strong'. Thus she is made safe. The planting of deterrents around the strategic places during *chinamwali* is to protect the girls from evil people or spirits. The careful disposal of *chingondo*, and the girls' hair on the last day, is characteristic of the vulnerability of the ritual period.

While *chinamwali* is a rite during which cultural values are transmitted and the initiates are introduced to new roles in society as adults, the overall symbolic meaning of *chinamwali* in Chewa society is that of a transition through death and re-birth to a new life. Matthew Schoffeleers (1997:29) equates female puberty to death and notes that just as 'death marks the change from human being to spirit', so too 'puberty marks the change from barrenness to fertility, from childhood to adulthood, and from incomplete to complete social status.' When the initiates lie down and are covered, it symbolizes a corpse.

When they are buried in the ground, it symbolizes doing away with the old childhood life. The shaving of the hair at the end of the seclusion symbolizes that the initiated should not enter the parent's home with the old behaviour. The girl is now a new creature whereby the old person has gone and the new one has come. The women's erotic dance and the miming of the sexual activity symbolise the woman's new role of bearing new life.

If in Chewa society a young couple remains childless after marriage, something must have gone wrong either on the wife's first menses, in which case blame is directed at either her mother for failure to observe the necessary taboos, or on the girl's *chinamwali*, in which case the chief becomes responsible. This agrees with Oduyoye's remarks:

Rituals for women, whether positive or negative, are related to procreation. The survival of the human race is dependent on its female component. .... Most African religious traditions have placed procreation at the center of the woman's universe; multitudes of taboos and rituals have evolved to direct her life and to keep her safe for procreation.

(Oduyoye 1992:17)

When the sacred period is over the young women are incorporated back into normal life, 'confirmed in their belief that the norms and values of their society must be maintained' (Bourdillon 1990:315-321). The feasting and drinking of beer by the whole community symbolize fellowship and solidarity. After the shaving ritual at the end of the fifth day, the instructresses perform a 'home-taking' ritual and the 'entry into the parents' house' ritual. The girl is not supposed to look back as she enters the house, signifying that the past life is gone. The re-incorporation is actually a process, for it takes another week for the girls to be fully incorporated after the second shaving ritual. The period extends even beyond the two weeks when the initiates continue to be tested by those already initiated to check whether they understood the instruction. It is like a traditional process of 'conversion' experience.

The various colours used on the girls also carry symbolic meanings. Red colour symbolizes danger. So when the girl is menstruating, she is in a dangerous state, and therefore should not have any sexual relations. However, the dangerous condition begins when the blood is very dark in colour, symbolized by the black colour. As the flow of

blood decreases, the colour also becomes lighter. When the menstruation finishes, the girl will see white substance coming from her private parts. White, therefore, stands for purity. It means that she can now have sexual relations.

#### 4.7 CONCLUSION

The phenomenological description of *chinamwali* has shown that the rite is not just a socio-cultural practice, but that it fulfils a most significant socio-religious purpose within the Chewa society. The initiates are separated from the 'profane' world and put into a five-day sacred seclusion period to receive instruction for their new roles as adults. The main focus of *chinamwali* is instruction in sexuality. We have seen that the girls are brought in touch with the realm of the spirits, represented by the presence of *nyau* throughout the ceremony. The girls' relating to the ancestral spirits and the mysterious atmosphere gives them a different understanding of the spiritual realm in terms of their powers. If they disobey any of the customs, punishment will befall them. If they carry out all the customs they will be blessed with healthy children. The young women come out of the *chinamwali* ceremony with a new perspective on their identity; they confidently recognize that they are now fully Chewa women. The Chewa *chinamwali* for girls can be likened to the Ashanti nubility rites in Ghana as summarized by Sarpong:

The facts have shown that the rites are, in the first place, a religious exercise... They purify the girl and thus orientate her into adult womanhood in which her former a-sexual life is replaced by access to sexuality (within legitimate and decent limits), and this gives her the right to marry. The rites focus attention on the girl and give her that publicity through which she hopes to attract a husband. They further serve as an instrument of instruction in the qualities of a wife, in motherhood, and in maternal attributes... The same rites engender social solidarity and reciprocal assistance among members of a community. They also act as sanctions against bad husbands.

(Sarpong 1977:89)

The above phenomenological description and analysis reflects the socio-religious significance of *chinamwali* in Chewa society. In *chinamwali* the young woman is treated as a whole person and is re-incorporated back into the community as an adult. In section 3.7 it was mentioned that Baptist women's conversion to the Christian faith caused them to ask more questions concerning their new faith. The following chapter discusses the developments that led to these questions and the nature of the Church's response.

## 5. ***CHILANGIZO: A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO CHINAMWALI***

### 5.1 **INTRODUCTION**

In chapter three we looked at the emergence and growth of the Baptist work in Malawi and saw that the work grew more rapidly in Lilongwe than elsewhere. We also saw that the Southern Baptists came at a time when many Chewa had already joined the DRC, the Roman Catholics, the Anglicans, and a growing indigenous church (APIM). A brief study of the attitudes and responses of the earlier missionaries, especially by the DRC and Nkhoma Synod, will help us to understand some factors that led to the Baptist *chilangizo* which is the focus of discussion in this chapter.<sup>60</sup>

### 5.2 **EARLIER MISSIONARIES' (DRC) RESPONSES TO INITIATION RITES**

Nkhoma Mission in Central Malawi was founded by the Dutch Reformed Church Mission of South Africa in 1889 (Pauw 1980:63). This church was the first to come into contact with the Chewa society in Central Malawi. Writing from a woman's perspective, Phiri (1998:129-145) gives a systematic examination of the attitude and response of the Dutch Reformed Church Mission (DRCM) to initiation rites, and African traditional culture in general. Because the focus of this study is on the interaction of the Gospel and Chewa society, this section will analyse stage by stage the position of the Church as it struggled with the customs of the Chewa people, particularly with regard to female initiation rites.

Initially the DRCM showed a condemnatory attitude towards those members who were still practising the traditional rituals. Phiri (1998:132) reports that in 1903, fourteen years after the beginning of Nkhoma Synod, 'the DRCM told its members that those wishing to join the baptismal class should not attend the initiation ceremony – *chinamwali*.' Although reasons for such a ban were not clearly stated then, an extract from one missionary, Mrs. Stegmann, twenty years later showed that:



There are many things in these ceremonies in conflict with the demands of Christianity....The initiation of the young pagan girl is accompanied with much cruelty and degradation, and it was to rescue our young girls from this that we had to decide which steps had to be taken. Experience shows us that the African regards his traditional rites as something possessing very great power, and even now with civilisation coming to them at such a rapid pace, we find it difficult to let them realise that there is no actual power in these tribal rites.

(quoted by Ross 1996:103)

Other factors, such as the association of *chinamwali* with *nyau*, the association of *chinamwali* with low attendance of girls at school, and the belief that *chinamwali* was sinful, also contributed to the ban (Pauw 1980:332-333, Phiri 1998:56). Right from the beginning, the mission set about building schools and churches, as well as providing medical facilities for the people. Women missionaries in particular, 'concentrated on work among women and girls in evangelism and primary education, general mission programmes of primary education, and hospital work' (Phiri 1998:45). Boarding homes for girls were set up in order to lead them to faith in Christ and to build up good Christian character in them, 'while also training them as future wives and mothers of Christian families and as useful members of society' (Pauw 1980:200). While the establishment of these programmes coupled with the condemnation of the rite were meant to be liberative for the girls, many people failed to join DRCM, some withdrew, while others continued secretly practising *chinamwali* (Phiri 1998:133). This showed how important *chinamwali* was (and still is) in the social organisation of the matrilineal Chewa people, for without undergoing initiation, it is not possible to be accepted as a full adult member in Chewa society.

In the 1920's some change of attitude towards cultural practices was felt at international, national, and at local levels. Similarly, at the Church level, one of the DRC missionaries suggested that 'the church should consider starting a Christian initiation ceremony,' for mere banning, without any alternative, 'did more harm than good.' (Phiri 1998:133). Although others saw only the negative elements and disagreed with the suggestion, the Church officially endorsed what some Christian women had already started informally. In 1930 the Church officially accepted the 'christianized' *chilangizo* (Pauw 1980:333, Phiri 1998:134). This was also reflected in Stegmann's extract:

Merely to condemn their rites and give them nothing in their place, however, do more harm than good. For this reason the “Chilangizo” or Christian Initiation Ceremony was started here some 20 years ago.

(quoted by Ross 1996:103)

The Church adopted the three stages of traditional rites – ‘puberty, marriage and pregnancy’, and went ahead to develop the requirements for each rite. It replaced the traditional instructresses (*anamkungwi*), with the Christian instructresses (*alangizi*). It gave instructions on choosing the *alangizi* as well as on their qualities. The Christian instructresses were to work under the supervision and training of the women missionaries. The missionaries added some new elements to the initiation rites, and these were taught to the church instructresses. A training programme for the instructresses was developed. It was compulsory for all the children of church members to attend the Christian initiation rite.

The Christianized puberty rite included the following elements in its ceremony - the initial instruction on ‘the sanctity of the body, and the respect due to it, physical implications of puberty, behaviour towards men and her elders’ (Phiri 1998:136). This initial instruction was followed by a public ceremony during the long school vacation when all those who had undergone the preliminary instruction went for a period of seclusion for further instruction and to be received into the group of initiated women. As Phiri observed:

The public ceremony was held in the evening in a secluded ‘well-lit’ hall within the village, and with all the initiates dressed in white. The programme for the evening was: opening prayer, singing of hymns, sharing of Word of God, some instructions to the girls, welcoming the girls into the group of women by shaking hands, hymn and prayer.

(Phiri 1998:136)

The programme was organised twice or more a year. Then once a year camps were organised outside the villages for all the initiated girls. Temporary shelters were built and food was provided by the girls’ parents (Phiri 1998:137). The program of the camp included:

Learning games and songs, knitting, sewing, cooking, taking care of babies, and Bible Study. Lectures were also given by the missionaries and *Alangizi*, and nurses or doctors were invited to come and explain to the girls the functions of women's bodies.

(Ross 1996:106)

All the instructions are contained in lesson form in a 36-page booklet called *Mawu othandiza Alangizi a m'Sinodi wa Nkhoma CCAP* (Guidelines for Instructresses of Nkhoma Synod CCAP). Since it is a lengthy booklet, only the Table of contents translated in English (with permission) is attached in Appendix B.<sup>61</sup>

### 5.3 NEED FOR CHILANGIZO EXPRESSED IN THE BAPTIST CHURCHES

When the Baptist missionaries arrived in Malawi in the 1960s they found that the earlier missions were well established in their position with regard to initiation rites.<sup>62</sup> Nkhoma Mission had now positively responded, and started a Christian initiation ceremony. Did the Baptist missionaries face similar challenges with regard to traditional customs? What was their response to the traditional rites?

In section 3.7 above, we discussed the emergence and organisation of the Baptist women's ministries due to the increasing number of women joining the Baptist denomination. This led to the missionary wives assisting in the organisation of women's annual meetings for fellowship and instruction. It was at one of the annual meetings that the women expressed their concern to have *chilangizo*. According to Garner (1998:14), the women raised the question about *chilangizo* in 1970, almost a decade after receiving the Gospel message: 'In other churches there are instructresses to instruct their children about facts of life, *kodi ife a Baptist ana athu tiziwalangiza bwanji?* (What about us Baptists, how are we going to instruct our children?)' (Int. *Amayi Phiri*, 13/7/2001). Another earlier Malawian leader added that it was because: 'We saw that our friends the Presbyterians have *chilangizo* in their church, we too must have something in our church, for we do not want our girls to be taught unchristian things' (Int. *Amayi Ng'oma*, 31/8/2001). Before looking at the missionaries' response to this question, it is very crucial that we understand the question from the women's perspective as Malawians and African Christians.

Adopting the Christian faith, as Walls (1996:8) argues, did not erase the women's identity as Africans; as African Christians they still carried their past with them. They did not start their new life 'in a vacuum,' or 'on a clean slate.' What they are actually asking is 'What about our past?' In other words, having been formed by their own 'culture and history,' their Christian mind continues to be influenced by their past, and the nature of the Gospel message also 'disturbed the core elements of their cultural beliefs' (Howell 2001:228) causing them to reflect upon their past and present status. Puberty is a crucial transition rite for the continuation of the community through the woman's bearing children, and to fulfill this need, *chinamwali* is the traditional mechanism for incorporating the girls into the Chewa community as well as maintaining their childbearing role. Since the 'old mechanism' has been condemned as 'pagan' or unchristian by the missionaries, the women are now searching for what Walls (1996:91) calls 'a key to conduct' or a 'new rule of life to act as an alternative' in their new faith.

The first response from the missionary women was: 'It is the responsibility of every mother to teach her own children about facts of life' (Int. *Amayi* Phiri 13/7/01). The early missionaries confirmed that that was how they trained their children, 'a father talks with his son, while the mother talks with her daughter' (Int. *Amayi* Wester, *Amayi* Kingsley, 14/10/2001). Still another missionary also testified that 'when my daughter matured, I talked with her, and later I gave her a book that contained all that she needed to know about marriage, children, and so on. My mother was the one who also gave me the book' (Int. *Amayi* Scott). Realising how important their concern was, the Malawian women insisted that 'according to our culture, it is not the mother, but someone else who is supposed to advise the girl' (Int. *Amayi* Phiri, 13/7/01). The women's statement reflects their social and cultural situation with the emphasis on community as discussed in chapter 2.4. That is why it is not the mother who instructs the girl. Similarly, the missionaries' statements reflect the individualism of western society as well as the emphasis on reading things from books. Without understanding the significance of the women's concern for their children, especially girls, the missionaries, unintentionally, were tempted to impose what we may call their 'cultural-Christian' model on the young church. For a culture based on reading and writing, the temptation tends to be that all

information must be in black and white so that everyone can read by her/himself. Thus, the saying is true that ‘when Christianity starts a dialogue with other cultures and religions, it never presents a culture-less version of the Gospel’ (Ott 2000:24).

According to *Amayi Phiri* (Int. 13/7/01), nothing concerning the Malawian women’s question was done or discussed until after another year when the question was raised again at the women’s meeting. From then on the issue was discussed further and eventually they all agreed to have Christian instruction written down that embraces all the ethnic groups. We may infer that during the ‘silent’ period, the missionaries would have been consulting with the earlier missionaries on the issue for two missionary wives remarked that it was difficult in those days to ask more questions about the cultural practices of the people, especially in Lilongwe, because people were still suspicious of any enquirers.<sup>63</sup>

#### 5.4 BAPTIST RESPONSE TO INITIATION RITES

At a women’s annual meeting in 1972 the women agreed to have a booklet produced. They discussed and agreed to come up with instruction material for girls on puberty, courtship, marriage, pregnancy, and birth of the first baby, similar to what the Presbyterian Church had done following the Chewa traditional stages. *Amayi Elizabeth Phiri*, a Seminary-trained pastor’s wife<sup>64</sup> and *Amayi Swafford*, a missionary’s wife, were chosen to work on the booklet (Int. *Amayi Phiri*, 13/7/2001).

According to *Amayi Phiri* (Int. 13/7/01), work on the booklet started a year later. She explained that since she and *Amayi Swafford* were staying in the same town, it was easier for them to work together. For the Scripture verses, she said that they gave each other assignments to go and find suitable verses for a particular rite.

It took us a long time, may be one year, to come up with a book. We never asked anyone, not even the Presbyterians. We were writing in English and then in Chichewa.

Int. *Amayi Phiri* 13/7/01



She mentioned that she did not know who typed the booklet, but she only saw the final copy which was read at the annual meeting in either 1974 or 1975. She did not even know who did the editing. However, the production of the booklet was a joint work between the Malawians and missionaries; the Malawians did the translation, while the missionaries did the editing. However, the content of the booklet was more or less similar to the one for the Presbyterians of Nkhoma Synod.<sup>65</sup> The meeting agreed with the contents of the booklet. Later on, copies were made available to the churches. Churches were advised to choose *alangizi* who were supposed to come the following year to the meeting for training on how to use the booklet.

However, in her note to me, *Amayi Swafford* mentioned that:

Mrs Phiri and I were asked to develop a program of training for Baptist girls and young women. We interviewed a CCAP missionary, Mrs. Grunervault ... to get information about the CCAP Alangizi program. Using her information and Mrs. Phiri's knowledge of the cultural practices, Mrs Phiri and I developed what we felt was a suitable Christian training program for Baptist Christians. The program is given step by step in the book.

(Note, *Amayi Swafford*, 21/2/01)

In further correspondence she added:

I'm sure we took our completed work to that committee for discussion, alteration, and final approval. I think the book was presented at an annual women's convention. From there it was probably left up to the leaders of each association to train or give help as each church requested help or information.

(Note, *Amayi Swafford*, 27/2/01).

A group of other earlier Malawian leaders also mentioned that as a national committee, 'we had several meetings and discussions before the book came out.' The main argument was on their differences in some traditional customs, especially between 'rural and urban women' (Int. *Amayi Ngoma*, *Amayi busa Kanowa*, *Amayi busa Galatiya*, 31/8/01). The informants emphasized that they worked as a team for one week and when they finished, the draft was sent to the men's committee for approval. I am uncertain as to which booklet they were referring to as they mentioned both the *chilangizo* booklet and the women's manual in our discussion.



The missionary wives, together with the Malawian women leaders continued to train other women leaders (now including the *alangizi*). At first the training was done at the national annual meetings only, but later it was done at the association meetings as well. Lilongwe association grew quickly and in order to cope with the growth the leaders had to change their strategy. In addition to the training sessions at the association meetings, the leaders moved out to the churches and trained leaders there as well (Int. *Amayi* Kumwembe, 26/6/01; *Amayi* Mwale, 19/7/01). In addition to the women's leadership training, *Amayi* Kingsley also regularly held youth Bible study and fellowship meetings (Int. *Amayi* Mkuwa, 28/6/01; *Amayi* Kachipande, 21/6/01; *Amayi* Kingsley, 29/8/01). This trend went on until the early 1990s when both leadership training and the youth meetings began to decline which has continued to the present time.

According to those engaged in the production of the booklet, the book was meant to be a guide for the instructresses in their work of instructing the girls in the Christian way. Thus the purpose of the book was:

To provide a resource for our women and churches to provide Christian training at the times when the people felt it important to give instruction. It was a resource rather than a program.

(Note, *Amayi* Swafford, 27/2/01)

When the women expressed their desire for a Christian instruction concerning facts of life for their girls, their underlying concern was that the Malawian Christians, like many Africans, wanted to retain the essence of their identity. Replacing a ritual by a set of written instructions was not just 'christianising' the rite but 'acculturalising' the people as well, but without realising the ineffectiveness of the process on the lives of the girls. This process will be discussed further in chapter six while the booklet is analysed below.

### 5.5 BUKHU LA ALANGIZI (THE INSTRUCTRESS' BOOKLET)

The booklet can be looked at in two sections – the introductory section and the section containing instruction on *chinamwali* (puberty), courtship, marriage, first pregnancy, and the birth of the child. Appendices C and D are the Chewa and English<sup>66</sup> translation

respectively (with permission) of both the introductory section and the *chinamwali* section.

The first section answers the questions ‘who are *alangizi* and how can we choose *alangizi*?’ It explains that each congregation should choose two faithful and mature Christian women to be *alangizi* so that they can convert the girls to the Christian faith and lead them into maturity in their faith. Scripture verses to help the *alangizi* in converting the girls are included in the introduction. The *alangizi* should ‘also act as *aphungu* (tutors) when the girls have their first menstruation.’ The *alangizi* should meet the following qualifications: they should have been members for not less than five years; if possible they should be able to read and write; they must show exemplary Christian lifestyle and witness, for their work is to teach the girls Christian values. The *alangizi* should also be able to attend association meetings ‘which are held once or twice per year.’ When instructing, they should not ‘receive any gift for their gift is in the joy they get in serving the Lord.’ Since this paper discusses *chinamwali* (puberty rite), I summarise below the teaching that is given to the girls from the perspective of the booklet. Instruction on courtship, marriage, first pregnancy, and the birth of the baby does not appear since the rites are outside the scope of this thesis.

## 5.6 A SUMMARY OF THE TEACHINGS ON PUBERTY

According to the booklet, convert-making seems to be the main role of the *alangizi*, while instruction about facts of life is stated as a secondary role. This is explicit in the statement from the introductory section of the booklet that says:

Their main work is to lead girls who do not know Christ to receive Him as their personal Saviour; and to lead the girls to grow spiritually in Christ. The *alangizi* will also act as *aphungu* (tutors) when the girls have their first menstruation.

Making converts is stressed through the addition of Scripture verses for the women to use (see Appendices C or D). The secondary role of *alangizi* is to instruct the girls about the physical, spiritual, psychological, and social implications of puberty. This is evi-

denced in the physical changes that take place as the body grows. This implies that it is God's way for the women to have children. Menstruation therefore is a sign that the girl is now mature and ready to have a child when she has sexual relations. In view of the fact that she is not married the girl must remain chaste until she is married. The *alangizi* should teach her not to engage in premarital sex for the consequences of sin can bring grief to the parents as well as to the girl herself for she can have fatherless children, and/or can contract venereal diseases like syphilis or gonorrhoea, but also HIV/AIDS. They ought also to instruct the girl to take care of her body and her clothes, especially during her menses. The girl must be of good behaviour and show respect for the chief, the parents, and the elders, as well as being obedient and hard working. Since the girl is now an adult she should stop playing with children.

The *alangizi* should teach the girl about her attitude towards God which includes: keeping the Sabbath; respecting God's house; not to swear; not to use God's name in vain; and to avoid things such as lying, stealing and fighting. The *alangizi* are forbidden to teach anything that is not compatible with the Word of God such as taboos on *mdulo*, for it has no power to harm anyone. They need also to instruct the parents on the implications of marrying off their daughters at an early age. A few Scripture verses have been given to support the teaching (see Appendix C or D).

## 5.7 CONCLUSION

We have seen that because the DRC Mission was the first to come in contact with the Chewa people of Lilongwe, the Mission struggled in its response to the Chewa traditional practices, especially *chinamwali*, and moved from a condemnatory response to an attitude of acceptance. Historical developments have shown that the Baptist policy, coming almost a hundred years later, adopted the Presbyterian version of *chilangizo* into the Baptist response to the Baptist need for a Christian *chinamwali*. Thus the Baptist response to *chinamwali* is a booklet containing information on the choice and qualifications of *alangizi*. Their role is that of making converts of the girls and instructing them upon puberty, marriage, first pregnancy, and the birth of the first baby. As a Christian *chinamwali* in the place of the traditional one a few scriptural verses are given to sup-

port the teaching. The instruction for the girls' *chinamwali* focuses on puberty and its implications, as well as the required behaviour of one who is now an adult.

The missionaries and the Malawian leaders carried out training, emphasizing that the instructresses use the newly introduced booklet to instruct the girls upon puberty. Little emphasis however, was placed on ritual, symbols and the development of ceremonies that would encapsulate the teaching. The early enthusiasm and emphasis on leadership training at national and associational level began to wane gradually until every congregation was responsible for its own *chilangizo*. This state of affairs is evident in the way *chilangizo* is perceived and carried out at the grassroots level as shown in chapter six below.

## 6. *CHILANGIZO* AT THE GRASSROOTS LEVEL: PUBERTY RITE

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

In order to understand the phenomenon of *chilangizo* at the grassroots level in the Baptist Convention, I chose to observe three puberty ceremonies, two in the rural areas and one in the urban setting of Lilongwe. This chapter attempts to give a description of the three ceremonies as well as to analyse the meanings and teaching the women emphasized at each ceremony. An assessment, in the form of questions, of *chilangizo* as a Christian response to *chinamwali* ends the chapter.

My presence at the ceremonies was not just as a researcher doing some observation, but as an insider. As a teacher at our Baptist Seminary, and as *amayi busa* (a pastor's wife) who has served in the women's leadership committee, at both the national and association level, I was received as one from *kulikulu* (the headquarters). Especially in the rural churches, I was regarded as one who had come to check on whether they are doing things correctly or not, as well as to teach them. While this worked to my advantage by winning their confidence, in other cases it spoiled the reality of the performance of the ceremonies because they wanted to 'impress' me with the 'thoroughness' of the ritual.

The two rural ceremonies were held at Mphindo Baptist Church in the southern part of Lilongwe, and at Chimenya Baptist Church in the western part of Lilongwe. The third was at Mtendere Baptist Church, a multi-ethnic church in urban Lilongwe.

When the parents inform the *alangizi*<sup>67</sup> of a girl's first menses, it is an invitation for the instructresses to go and instruct the girl. The *alangizi* then arrange with the parents a suitable date for the *chilangizo* ceremony at the girl's home. I will now describe three ceremonies which I observed. Full documentation for each of the three ceremonies is given below.



## 6.2 CHILANGIZO CEREMONY AT CHIMENYA BAPTIST CHURCH<sup>68</sup>

Chimenya Baptist is a rural church. It is situated ten kilometres away from the city, along the main road in the western part of Lilongwe district in the area of Traditional Authority Njewa (see Map B).

I arrived at the pastor's home about eleven in the morning. After exchanging greetings *amayi busa* excused herself to go and inform the instructresses about my arrival. For about twenty minutes women came in, greeted me, and went out. Then *amayi busa* and two women asked me to follow them. At the back of the pastor's homestead were several houses, and we entered one of them. A group of women were busy outside, some making fire, while others were cutting vegetables, and a container of water was heating on another fire. I was ushered into the house, to a living room with good chairs. One by one the women came, greeted me, and walked out. Two instructresses came inside and stayed with me, but then they kept going out and coming in. Eventually I learnt that they were waiting for one initiate whose parents had sent her to a maize mill. We waited for more than thirty minutes when eventually they decided to begin without her.

One instructress asked her colleague if the bathing water was ready. She was told that even the girls were ready. They were waiting for us. I was then told to follow them. We were led to a small grass bathroom behind the kitchen where the two girls were waiting for us.

One instructress helped to undress the girls. While one was waiting, the instructress started to bath the other girl. She washed her at the back and the chest, and left her to finish bathing herself. She told the girl to wash thoroughly the armpits and under the breasts to remove any sweat which could bring bad odour. As the girl finished bathing, the other instructress asked her to show if she was pulling her *labia minora*. The girl opened her legs a little bit and the instructress nodded for approval (I did not see anything). After dressing, she was escorted out to another room where she waited for the other girl. As the girl went out, the instructress assisted the second girl with the same process and checked her *labia minora*. She then commented that 'this is very important



for us the Chewa people!’ (This time I saw a little bit of the girl’s *labia*). I walked out as the second girl was about to go out. I went and waited in the living room together with one instructress.

The other instructress walked in, followed by the two girls, looking smart, but not in new clothes. One lady came in and complained about the third girl who had delayed and said: ‘It is not good for them to bath separately; they are supposed to leave all their dirt at the same time!’ So the bathing of the dirt symbolised dying to the old life. However, the third girl arrived during the instruction time. She was led and ushered in to where her friends sat. I am sure it was after her bath as well.

In the house, the girls were seated together on one long chair, I sat on another chair and the two instructresses sat on another chair. One instructress, who was also related to the girls, called in all the other women for prayer. Some of them sat on the floor. One instructress prayed. After prayer, all the other women went out and continued preparing food. The two instructresses and I remained inside with the girls.

While we were all seated, one instructress read to the girls from the booklet the whole section concerning the puberty rite, including the instructions for the instructresses. The girls were seated still, with their heads slightly bowed down (see Plate 4). She read for about fifteen minutes.

In the end she asked the girls, ‘*Mumamvetsera?* (Have you been listening?) Then in turns the two instructresses emphasized the following points, sometimes repeating the same point several times. Below is my own arrangement, but the instruction was given randomly.

**Respect.** The girls were instructed to respect their parents, chiefs, and all elderly people. *Ulemu* (respect) is very precious wealth. They should kneel before their father for he is their second ‘god.’ They should not despise the parents just because they are now adults. They have brought them to where they are now. ‘In the past we used to help the

elderly people to mill their maize, to fetch water, smear their homes. Nowadays girls refuse to help them.'

**The meaning of menstruation.** *Mthethe* is the cloth that is used during the menses, and *kukula* (maturity) means *kubvala mthethe* (wearing menses linen), although some now use cotton wool.

**The menses linen.** One instructress demonstrated what she termed the old practice of wearing the menses linen, and how to dry one by putting it around the waist, and lamented, 'unfortunately, today's girls refuse to use them and instead they use cotton wool and pants.' She explained that pants alone are not enough, especially with heavy flow. They were told to be careful, for the cotton wool may fall down, that would be a shameful thing. Instead, they must have pieces of cloth in addition, which must be kept safely where no one can see them. The menses linen must be changed often, and if too wet, should be thrown into the pit latrine.

**The menses flow.** When seated for long time, 'check yourself before you stand.' People will question whether a girl was really instructed (*kodi analangizidwadi?*) if she stains her dress with blood. They were advised not to go to school the next morning when menses begins at night. They should also isolate themselves from friends during the first two days of the menses for the flow tends to be heavy. They should count dates to make sure that they are prepared. Since they are defiled when menstruating, they should not go near their parents.

*Chizungu chakuphani* (modernity is killing you) these days, for you have no respect for your father, you just pass him by when menstruating, you do not know that you do smell. *Kuthawana ndi makolo until mwayeretsedwa!* (Keep away from parents until you are sanctified!).

**Sexual purity.** They were warned to be careful and not to engage in sexual activity. They are to be careful with boys, for many of them just want to defile their sexuality

They must know that their bodies are temples. They should therefore refrain from all evil.

We want you to wed in church, so be careful, do not have sex before. We, the instructresses in the Baptist churches are being *kunyozedwa* (despised) that we do not counsel you well for children are not wedding in church.

They were admonished to pay heed to all the words they have heard read from the booklet.

**Traditional beliefs.** One instructress made the following comment but did not explain further: 'In the past, in the Southern Region, there was no putting salt when cooking, but now *amadyetsedwa mankhwala*' ('they eat a herbal mixture').

**Physical fitness.** Not much was said on this, except that they should be hard working except on Sundays, which is God's day. They must also respect God's house.

These oral instructions took another fifteen minutes.

When the two *alangizi* felt that they had exhausted their counsel, the parents and the other women were called in. The mother was the one who began to talk. (Apparently she was the parent/guardian to all the three girls). Since she was seated at a distance far from the girls, she had to throw her money on to the lap of the girls as she spoke, commending as well as rebuking their behaviour. She requested that they change their behaviour on the things for which she was rebuking them, such as lack of respect to their father. She emphasized to one girl that she should visit her often and she rebuked another girl for laziness.

When the mother finished, the grandmothers (two) joined in giving their counsel to the girls and then the rest of the women also said a few words to the girls. One grandmother, putting money on the girls' laps, said that their father was the one who gave them the money commending them that they should continue their good behaviour. The

women repeated most of what had been said by the instructresses. One woman commenting on the existing good relationship within the family encouraged the girls to maintain the same. Another woman encouraged them to be hard working in helping their parents' in house chores.

After instructing the girls, women counselled each other. Following the same pattern, a woman would give money to the one she was addressing and either rebuke or commend her. The money was in very small denominations of 10t and 20t coins, but the women seemed to enjoy this bit. It took another fifteen minutes.

One instructress thanked all the women and apologized to me for having taken so long to finish. She then prayed. The money was counted and given to the girls. I did not hear the total amounts. They were told to go and buy soap to keep their clothes clean.

Then food was served and since it was a bigger room, the girls shared their food with the instructresses; I shared with the pastor's wife, and the rest of the women sat outside to have their meal. The whole *chilangizo* ceremony took about two and a half hours from the bathing ritual to the end of the meal.

### 6.3 CHILANGIZO CEREMONY AT MPHINDO BAPTIST CHURCH<sup>69</sup>

Mphindo Baptist Church is a rural church about ten kilometres from the city, off the main road towards the southern part of the country in the area of Traditional Authority Chadza (see Map B).

I arrived at the pastor's home about eleven in the morning. One instructress welcomed me together with the *amayibusa*. They took me to a smaller house, belonging to one of the pastor's daughters. We sat on an already laid mat. The room was quite small. Soon two more instructresses came in. For the next hour, the instructresses went in and out of the room which provided me with an opportunity to ask them some questions. Finally, the pastor sent a message to remind them that time was running out.

*Amayi busa* requested one instructress to bring the initiates in. The instructress then led in the procession of six girls. She directed them to sit facing opposite us with their legs outstretched. The weather was cold but none of the girls was wearing a jersey.

The mood was informal and we exchanged greetings. The door was closed halfway. The instructress who brought in the girls came to me and said '*Amayi, atsikana aja ndiame-newa*' ('Mum or Madam, here are the girls'). I thanked her but reminded them that I was just an observer and that they needed to do as they always do.

Then *Amayi busa* introduced each of the girls by name. Three were from a preaching point called Nyemba, and four were from Mphindo church. She told the girls to greet me. Remaining seated I exchanged greetings with them. The seventh girl came in a bit later and she was instructed to greet me as well.

Then one instructress summoned the two girls from Nyemba to go out to meet with one lady. When they went out, the instructress said to us: 'I have received word that the girl in purple cloth has rude behaviour. She dresses indecently even before her father, such that her mother feels embarrassed.' When she finished talking, she went out and summoned the girls in. They re-entered after about three minutes.

After a little whispering among the instructresses, one instructress prayed. Then she told the girls not to feel embarrassed to tell us what they saw. Then another instructress asked each one of them, 'Who saw you?' All, except one who mentioned her sister, mentioned their mothers. She continued to state that that is what they were in the room for:

We want a Christian girl to show respect, because our instructions come from the Bible. We the instructresses are just continuing what your mothers told you. And so this book is what we read for the girls upon their reaching puberty. For before, you were young, but now you are initiates.

She handed the booklet to the pastor's wife who read the whole section including the instructions to the instructresses, in a flat, low, and stammering voice. Occasionally, when she paused, another instructress would ask '*Mwamva?*' ('Do you understand?') Then at the end, the reader asked, '*Tonse tamvetsetsa?*' ('Have we all understood?')



There are dos and donts!’ The whole reading took about twenty minutes while the girls were just listening (see Plate 5).

All the three instructresses and the *amayibusa* continued to instruct the girls in turns, without the book. Some points were repeated by all the instructresses. Sometimes reference was made ‘as written in the book.’ The following instructions were given not in this order, but I have arranged them in headings:

**Respect.** ‘We want a Christian girl to show respect for others, for our instruction comes from the Bible.’ All the instructresses emphasized that the girls must respect their chiefs (*mafumu*), even when the chief is a drunkard. When a girl meets with a chief on the way, she must go to the side of the road and kneel for the chief to pass first. Similarly, all elderly people must be respected too. ‘Do not be discouraged when an elder is requesting you to assist him/her, and do not despise them.’ So too the church leaders must be respected. They must also respect their parents. They should not just walk into their parent’s house without knocking.<sup>70</sup> They may find them naked. When a parent calls them, they should listen while kneeling down. ‘Here we receive a lot of visitors, so you must show respect at church, in the family, and in the community,’ commented one instructress.

**During menses.** The girls must wear the *mthethe* or *mwele* (menses linen) properly so that even when the flow is heavy, it does not show. If the linen is not enough they can add cotton wool or dry tassels from corn. One instructress demonstrated with a piece of cloth. When they start menstruating, they should not go to church or to school for ‘*chimananyanya chikaona anthu!*’ (the flow becomes heavy when it sees people!) They must avoid playing with children now that *mwakula* (you are grown up). They should not even go closer to their father, for he may smell their menses. The girls must wash themselves and change the linen often to avoid bad odour as well as staining their dresses. ‘*Zimachititsa manyazi kuti zidziona kera. Anthu azati, Kodi sanalangizidwe?*’ (It is a shameful thing for people to see a girl’s dress stained with blood. They will ask ‘Were the girls instructed at all?’) They should not use their parents’ bathroom but must use



their own bath dish, or wash at the river. At the end of every menstruation, the girls used to smear their parents' homes, but for us Christians,

We want you to come and show us your menses every month. You can come to either of us - the instructress, or *Amayi busa*. We are saying all this because we want you to have Christian marriages.

(*Amayi busa*)

**Attitude towards men.** The girls must avoid playing with men. Now that they have matured they must fear them, for they are evil. It is not good that today they have been instructed, and tomorrow they run away with a man. They must inform their parents and the church if they are courting, for the book says so. They were told to take care of themselves for their bodies are the temple of God. The instructresses' lament was that:

We the instructresses are being despised that we are not doing our work well, and so we want you girls to marry in church. Today the pastor knows that you, the seven girls who are here today, means seven marriage ceremonies. We are really pleading with you girls not to shame us.

**Decency in dress.** Since they are now grown up their dressing must also change. *Kubvala kosalondeka ai!* (Indecency in dressing is forbidden!) especially in the presence of their father. One instructress turned to the girl who had been reported by her mother concerning her dressing and asked her: 'Does your mother give you enough underwear?' The girl replied in the negative. 'We are going to talk with your mother for, if she does not give you, where does she expect you to get them from!' 'It is true that some parents' behaviour can mislead a child!' commented one instructress.

**Obedience.** The girls are to be obedient to their parents, especially when the parents are rebuking them. When the girls are called, they must go, kneel, and listen, without complaining.

**Physical fitness.** As written in the book, having menses is not an illness that should make one lie down as if she is sick. It is shameful to do that. The girls must continue to assist in house chores, much more now that they are adults. The parents must see change in them. 'You must do your housework before you go to *chiwale* (gambling using beads).'

**Traditional beliefs.** Things do change, for in the past ‘we were told not to put salt in the food when cooking. Now Jesus conquered all that.’ The girls were instructed to continue putting salt even when they are in their menses. They should even warm water for their father and respectfully tell him ‘*Ababa, ndaika madzi kubafa*’ (‘Dad, I have put water in the bathroom’).

**Changed behaviour.** The instructresses urged the girls to show by their good behaviour that they attended *dambwe ya Baibulo* (biblical initiation). For even ‘the chiefs and the church deacons know that you have come here for instruction.’ They are expecting to see changed lifestyles from them. The girls must also show their parents that *aonana ndi Mzimu Woyera lero* (they have met with the Holy Spirit today).

The oral instruction took about twenty minutes.

In the end I was asked to pray. The girls were then released. After a while, food was served and the five of us shared the meal together. I am sure the girls had their share as well. The whole ceremony took about an hour.

#### 6.4 CHILANGIZO CEREMONY AT MTENDERE BAPTIST CHURCH<sup>71</sup>

Mtendere Baptist Church is a multi-ethnic urban (all Malawian) church in the northern part of the city (see Map B).

I arrived at the pastor’s house just after two in the afternoon. I set off with his wife to the girl’s home. It was a ten-minute walk but we took a bit longer because of the greetings on the way. One instructress joined us on the way. The initiate was a child in the home of one of the instructresses. We waited for almost thirty minutes for another instructress to arrive.

Two instructresses, *amayiri busa* and I, were ushered into a small bed-sitter room. Two of us sat on the bed while the others sat on the floor. I was asked to pray. Then the pastor’s

wife welcomed us, greeted the girl, and said to the two instructresses, 'Here is work for you!'

They asked one another about the booklet, but they had all forgotten their copies. One instructress asked the girl, 'What did you see the other day?' When she did not reply, the other instructress said that the mother is the one who saw her stained pant in the washing basket. The mother then invited the instructress to come and check with her, which she did and confirmed that it was her first menses. The instructress explained to the girl that what had happened is *kutha msinkhu* (maturity) and showed her how to wear the menses linen. Another instructress told her that the instructresses have come concerning the menses, and encouraged her not to feel shy or afraid. One instructress started talking, and in turn, they all joined in to instruct her. The following are the areas they talked about, not in this order, but randomly.

**Meaning of menstruation.** Have you ever heard about menstruation (*kutha msinkhu*)? One instructress asked the girl. She replied in the affirmative but that she did not know the meaning. The instructresses explained that the meaning of what had happened to her was blood coming out from her private parts. One *mlangizi* told the girl that another word for menstruation is *kusamba* (literally bathing). But she explained that in this sense, 'it is the monthly flow of blood' that she had just begun.

**When menstruating.** Proper care must be taken to wear the menses linen so that it does not make a heap at the back between the buttocks. One instructress took time to demonstrate. She called for the small plastic bag which the pastor's wife brought. She pulled out a small string and put it around her waist without taking off her clothes. She also pulled out a piece of cloth and folded it into a pad with more linen in its middle. She demonstrated on the girl herself how she should wear it. The idea in folding the piece of cloth was that there is more cloth across the private part and less on the sides. The instructress warned that sometimes the flow gets heavy. It was therefore necessary that the girl has at least three pieces of linen, and change at least three times a day. She should wake up early in the morning and wash the linen thoroughly with soap and change often. This would also take away bad odour. She should avoid playing games

such as *phada* (girls' game of jumping a rope) or netball, for the pad may fall down and people can see it, *zochititsa manyazi!* (it is shameful!).

The instructress indicated that the menses linen must be dried well and kept away in a plastic bag after every menses, possibly under her stored clothes. As no one should see them, they must be kept out of sight. The linen must be thrown away after they have been used for a long time.

**Body anatomy.** The pastor's wife took time to explain that since she has now matured, she will experience significant changes in the growth of her body as well. Her breasts would grow, her skin and her face would become smooth such that boys would now admire her and make advances to her. She warned her to watch out and never to have sex with a boy as it was dangerous. If she has sex she would become pregnant. That would also be dangerous for she is too young. The baby would be growing inside her while she was small which would cause death. The problem is that in addition to pregnancy, she would contract HIV/AIDS, for the boys she may be sleeping with might have been sleeping with other girls. So '*osanyengedwa ndi anyamata*' (do not be lured by boys'). She was warned to be careful, not to have sex, and not to rush into motherhood.

**Decency in dress.** *Amayi busa* instructed the girl to wear clothes decently (*modzilemekeza*). This means not to wear short skirts and bend while sweeping the floor in the presence of men. But she must always put on a piece of cloth on top of her dress and work the floor while kneeling. If she puts on short dresses, boys will go after her. Once she gives herself to them, they will begin to touch her breasts and that is very dangerous. One instructress asked the pastor's wife to read 1 Timothy 3:9, '*Momwemonso, akazi adzibveke okha ndi cobvala coyenera, ndi manyazi, ndi cidziletso...*' ('I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety...' '*Mwamva?*' ('Do you understand?')) She asked.

**General cleanliness.** The girl was instructed to keep her body and her clothing clean all the time. She was rebuked that 'many girls do not clean their underwear, instead they

just keep them stained and say that they will wash later.’ That is a bad habit which she must not emulate.

**Respect.** One instructress commented that ‘Since your mother has not reported any bad behaviour from you, we know you are a well behaved girl, so keep it up and continue to respect your parents, and even children.’ Respect is very important for it shows that the girl is obedient.

*Amayi busa* concluded by cautioning the girl to pay heed to all that the women had said to her. People should see change in her and that will show them that the girl really met with the *alangizi*. She exhorted the girl to go to church. The warning was ‘If you do not change, we will come again. We want to hear good reports about you!’

*Amayi busa* closed with prayer. In her prayer she thanked God for the instructresses and said that God is the one who shall reward them for their commitment to the ministry of giving instruction. The instruction took just over thirty minutes.

We went out of the room and one instructress went to report to the mother that the function was over. A meal together ended the whole ceremony.

A uniform pattern, with a few variations, is observed in the two ceremonies from the rural churches. The parents did not inform the *alangizi* when their daughters experienced their first menses. Although the *alangizi* knew about it, they had no authority to arrange for *chilangizo*, until upon my request when they organised the ceremony to be performed for more than one initiate. The urban procedure resonates with the booklet instructions – the parent informs the *alangizi* upon the girl’s first menses. The *alangizi* arrange with the mother for a day of the ceremony. Two or three instructresses together with the *amayi busa*, conduct the ceremony before the end of the menses. All the three ceremonies commenced with prayer, after which one instructress read the booklet (except at the urban church). After reading the women continued in turn to give oral counsel. No one read the Scriptures. A prayer ended each ceremony, and eating together ended the whole function.



All the three ceremonies show that at the grassroots level people are using both the prescribed booklet and oral instruction to communicate to the girls about the required behaviour and conduct in accordance with their new status of adulthood.

## 6.5 A SUMMARY OF THE TEACHING CONTENT AND MEANING

From the above ceremonies, it is obvious that much emphasis is put on instructing the girl to show *ulemu* (respect) to her parents, especially the father, to elderly people, especially the chief, and to God's house. The respect should be manifested in the way the girl takes care of her menstruation. During her menses, the girl should not use the same bathing facilities with the parents; she is not to come close to men; nor attend church. In addition, no one should see the blood or the menses linen, and she should dress decently.

The instruction also emphasizes good manners (*khalidwe labwino*). This includes good morals. The girl is taught on the sanctity of the body. She must therefore keep herself pure without sex until marriage, for that pleases both God and her parents. Since she is now an adult, she should stop playing with children (those who have not yet matured). Good conduct includes keeping the body and her clothes clean. When she is menstruating she must bath often and change the menses linen often to avoid bad odour. She must also be hard working and not be lazy. The girl is now an adult, and people must see her changed behaviour towards the elderly, in the home, in the community, and in the church.

In the oral instruction much emphasis was put on the need for the girls to marry in church and not elsewhere, and not to become pregnant before marriage. The main reason for such emphasis is that it brings reproach upon the instructresses from the parents as well as from society, and this makes *chilangizo* lose its credibility especially from the traditionalists' point of view. Except at Mtendere church, the rural instruction did not mention anything concerning the contraction of HIV/AIDS or any venereal diseases as a result of promiscuous behaviour.



Indirect teaching on the importance of elongating the *labia minora* was observed especially at Chimenya church when the instructress checked to see whether the girls had already done it. Informal discussions with instructresses in the rural areas also revealed that the instructresses encourage the girls to make sure that they 'go and play *kuchi-tsamba*' (in the bush) with their friends. It was claimed that the girls' grand parents or aunts were responsible for 'educating' the girls on this, and that the instructresses' role is to check the progress. For the Chewa women, elongation of the *labia minora* is included in what they term 'facts of life.' If this is not done, it is sufficient ground for divorce.

Observance of taboos such as 'Do not salt any food when menstruating!' was forbidden in the booklet as well as in the oral instruction. The prohibition is based on the fact that '*tsempho* has no power.' However, no alternative biblical teaching was given.

*Chilangizo*, like the traditional rite, is supposed to be an occasion where social, cultural and religious (Christian) values are taught to the girls upon their reaching puberty. It is supposed to help the girls make a smooth transition physically, psychologically and spiritually into womanhood, thus becoming a whole person. However, having looked at the Baptist response to *chinamwali* in the form of a set of instructions in a booklet with a few Scripture verses, and having observed the ceremony at grassroots level, this chapter ends with an assessment of whether *chilangizo* is an adequate response to the traditional rite, especially to the Chewa people. Three questions are explored below.

## 6.6 IS 'THE BOOK' AN ADEQUATE RESPONSE?

The 'booklet' *chilangizo* can be adequately assessed only in the light of the significance and function that *chinamwali* plays in the lives of the Chewa people. This will enable us to see whether the 'booklet' *chilangizo* is serving the same purpose and meeting the needs of the people as the *chinamwali* ritual does.

## Generally, rituals

Help people remember who they are, recreate a world order, give people a sense of identity and belonging, relate them to the transcendent, and indoctrinate insiders and outsiders alike to the true values and perceived realities of a society.

(Hiebert, Shaw, Tienou 1999:300)

We have shown that *chinamwali* is central in Chewa society, for it serves both socio-cultural and religious functions. The ritual is a festival of remembering and reliving the *miyambo* (ancestral customs) of the Chewa people. It is a transition rite through which girls die to the old childish life and are re-born to the new adult life. Girls are transformed and turned into responsible women ready to bear children and participate in their roles as part of the community. *Chinamwali* is a sacred period during which initiates are enabled to experience and relate directly to the *mizimu*, and receive their *mwambo*. Thus *chinamwali* links the girls with their past, giving them a sense of history and identity. As a religious institution, the presence of *nyau* during *chinamwali* represents prayer on behalf of the girls for fertility for the continuation of the community; hence the rite is crucially important as far as incorporation into community is concerned. *Chinamwali* is a ceremony that involves significant preparation and protection beforehand and the ceremony takes five days with a follow-up afterwards. There is even a public acknowledgement of the transition by the majority of village leadership (chiefs, *anamkungwi*, *nyau*), and the ordinary people. The content of the ritual is aimed at equipping the initiates for their new roles as adults with sex education as the focal point.

Condensing the *chinamwali* ritual that reveals 'imaginative and artistic thought forms, colourful and glowing pictures and actions and symbolic language' into a 'logical and systematized' set of instructions is an inadequate response (Jim Slack 1991:10). A ritual is performed like drama on a stage, while in the case of *chilangizo*, a text is read, hence it cannot convey all that a ritual contains and accomplishes. Although *chilangizo* is supposed to be a Christian ritual, the content of the booklet does not contain biblical teaching that adequately interacts with the traditional teaching. While the booklet attempts to give biblical teaching and claims to interpret 'puberty' within God's plan of human development, it gives only a few scriptural verses as proof-text. The inadequacy of the content of the booklet and its inability to answer the Chewa needs can be illus-

trated from the statement in the booklet '*tsempho* [or *mdulo*] has no power' (see Appendix C or D no. 10 on page 6). As shown already in chapter 5 (5.2), Mrs. Stegmann, an early DRC missionary at Nkhoma, also thought *chinamwali* had 'no actual power' (quoted by Ross 1996:103.)

We have seen from chapter four that *mdulo* and the observance of sexual taboos form part of the teaching content of *chinamwali*, which comes from a belief system that is intimately tied to the spirit world. Thus the above statements are naïve, and indicate lack of understanding of both the social and spiritual power associated with the rites. Failure to understand their own Chewa world, and dismissing the notion that there is any power in the rites means that the Christian response has not been able to address the very issue that Chewa women believe, namely that there are mystical powers related to the rites. The women's request should be understood from the perspective of the Chewa primal worldview. Like most African societies, the Chewa people have a 'deep sense of a spiritual world of powers or beings' with whom they interact and from whom they seek blessings and receive protection (Harold Turner 1977:31-33). The Chewa worldview is also similar to what Mbiti (1986:156) described as a 'world in which people recognize and experience many dangers and threats to life, even if they smile, sing, dance and make merry.' Hence the need for mystical protection during *chinamwali* and vigorous attempts to appease the ancestors through the observance of the ancestral customs and all taboos.

A key problem of the booklet is the failure to address the issue of mystical powers which is indicative of the fact that it was written from the perspective of the Western worldview. The problem is compounded by the fact that the book does not bring out the issue of the initiate's identity, of her being part of a historical process and a part of a community. It certainly does not incorporate the young women into community. The fact that I had to 'hurry' one ceremony along because funds had not been forthcoming suggests that there is hardly a sense of community ownership of *chilangizo* and is indicative of the church's failure to see it as a meaningful rite. Mbiti's observation about the African worldview is worth recalling.

Human life is seen as a unity between physical and spiritual entities. And this is a major aspect of the African Weltanschauung [world-view] which is deeply rooted in the total life of the people. It is a world-view which African peoples hold, consciously and unconsciously, individually and more so corporately or communally.

(Mbiti 1986:156)

Mbiti (1986:155-158) therefore emphasized that if the biblical message of salvation is to 'penetrate into the depths of their being, it has to enter their total worldview, or embrace their total world, both physical and spiritual.' Any Christian instruction, therefore, that does not touch on the people's worldview remains superficial.

The purpose and meaning of *chilangizo* therefore falls short of meeting the real needs of the Chewa people because it replaces a 'ritual' with a set of 'biblical' teaching that is abstract and merely literary. The text does not deal with the Chewa integrated worldview that assigns a major place to religious factors and beliefs. The ritual in traditional culture is rich both in content and meaning. *Chinamwali* is a logical framework within which the Chewa socio-religious needs are expressed. It is also a framework through which the Chewa itinerary and identity is expressed because it provides a link with the past, thus giving a sense of continuity and community. When all this is not adequately responded to, it leaves a vacuum in the lives of Christian women, and this makes *chilangizo* not credible and satisfying either to Christian or to non-Christian.

Although *chilangizo* fulfils technically the categories of a transition rite, in reality it is far removed from the dynamism of the traditional rite. This is also evidenced in the methods of teaching, which are of a formal lecture type; from the environment surrounding the ceremony, with only a few people involved; and from the setting of *chilangizo*. They portray a picture contrary to that of the traditional rite. *Chilangizo* does not therefore help the girls to make a smooth transition physically, psychologically and spiritually into womanhood.

Looking at the question of the Baptist women again, they asked: 'Our friends have *chilangizo* for their girls, how about us, how are we going to instruct our girls in the matters of life?' This question is both theological and missiological. It is a cultural concern of the women who have heard and assimilated the missionary message not in Western

terms, but 'in terms of their own African religious understanding and background' (Bediako 1995:119). The women's question shows us what Bediako (1995:175) calls 'the living forces of the primal imagination [being] perpetuated and carried forward into Christian usage.' It was not just a matter of wanting to be 'like our Presbyterian friends,' but what does the new faith say about puberty, about the pre-Christian rituals and the meanings behind those rituals? It was genuine concern of a people who are seeking to be both true Africans and true Christians. The women were looking for what Walls (1996:91) calls a 'key to conduct' from the new faith. Gospel and culture encounter is a missiological and theological concern. Failure to provide an adequate interpretation of the event (puberty), namely the rites and their meanings, also contributes to a spiritual vacuum in people's lives. The missionaries failed to understand the question from a theological and cross-cultural point of view, hence were unable to engage adequately the Gospel they were transmitting with the crucial cultural issues. Oduyoye (1992:9) rightly remarks: 'Most Westerners lack an understanding of the importance of African religion as an integral part of African culture and life.'

As the Christian alternative is inadequate to meet the needs of the Chewa people, I suggest that the Christian ritual be improved to maintain the traditional ritual framework but with Christian content and meaning. Similarly, the booklet should be revised and used only as a training manual for the *alangizi*. The booklet should not be used at all by the *alangizi* during the ceremony. The content should contain biblical teaching that reinterprets *chinamwali*. These suggestions are developed in the last chapter. Failure to adequately respond to the traditional Chewa initiation rite also affects the performance of *chilangizo* as discussed below.

## 6.7 DOES THE REALITY MATCH THE 'THEORY?'

In order to discover if the reality matches the 'theory,' we need to look at whether the performance of the three ceremonies fully relates to the ritual and the prescribed booklet.



The three case studies of *zilangizo* (plural) ceremonies show that the instructresses wish to remain true to the instruction prescribed in the booklet, hence their reading word by word. The problem lies in their failure to distinguish between instruction for them and instruction to the girls. There are two possible explanations: either the women had never used the booklet before, but used it on this occasion just to impress me, as one from the 'headquarters,' that they do use the booklet as required, or, that was how the instructresses actually use the booklet in all their ceremonies. Their understanding is that the whole section must be read to the girls before they instruct them orally. The question we need to ask in this case is 'How many of our audience can read?' We have seen that none one from the rural churches read from the Bible, and how they struggled to read through the booklet. Therefore, the cause of failure of the instructresses to appropriately use the booklet does not lie with the recipient culture. Rather it relates to the transmitting Western agents. While written communication does have definite advantages, here we can see a sense of cultural superiority of a people from a culture that focuses on writing over the oral people, which unfortunately, some Malawians have also inherited and insisted that the *alangizi* should now be using the booklet *chilangizo*. The fact that most of the rural Chewa people have not had the educational opportunities to learn a written 'culture' that others have had does not make them unintelligent people.<sup>72</sup> The Chewa people have an imaginative and artistic way of communicating, using colourful pictures, actions and symbolic language. They have effectively passed on their rich cultural heritage to younger generations using the oral methods of *chinamwali*. This is what contributes to their identity as Chewa people and gives them a sense of history and continuity. The Chewa are who they are today because of their past.

The performances of the *chilangizo* ceremony itself also show a very formal, dull classroom-like situation. They do not portray the picture of a ritual, or a process that symbolizes the transition from childhood to womanhood. Apart from a few demonstrations on how to wear the menses linen, there is no action involved. Everything is done while all are seated. Participants do not even clap hands, let alone sing and dance. The ceremony is stripped of all the joy that goes with such ceremonies - singing, dancing, gift-giving, dramatising, *ululating* and so on. These elements are vital teaching techniques to this particular audience. With the exception of the ceremony at Chimenya church, the



ceremonies were also restricted to only a few people: three instructresses at Mtendere church, and four at Mphindo church.

In contrast, Rachel Banda (2001:232-272) reports that Baptist women in the Southern Malawi perform their church *chilangizo* communally, involving the whole Christian community, and perform it with a lot of action – singing, dancing, dramatizing, explanations, illustrations, object lessons. At the beginning of one such ceremony, she observed that: ‘The afternoon was filled with the excitement of the event in the neighbouring villages’ (Banda 2001:232). People expected that it was going to be an exciting event which they eagerly anticipated.

The idea of puberty rites is to impress upon the initiate that she is no more a child but an adult, hence the repeated reminder by the instructresses: ‘*Mwateremutu mwakula!*’ (‘What has happened means you are now a grown up!’). If this occasion then is to have a significant impact upon the life of a girl, the performance of *chilangizo* in Lilongwe needs considerable re-assessment and change.

There is a huge dissonance between theory and practice. We have seen that the booklet has a twofold purpose, namely to make converts and instruction on *chilangizo*. Oral interviews revealed that the convert-making part of the booklet is virtually not done, or known. None of the *alangizi* knew about this role (Int. *Amayi Mwale et al*, 13/8/2001). Even those who meet with the girls once in a while, do so only to check their menstruation record, and not to give instruction on conversion (Int. *Amayi Samu*, 21/6/2001). Practically from the beginning of *chilangizo* in the Baptist Convention, the emphasis has been on instructing the girls at puberty, and not making converts. While the booklet instructs parents to inform the *alangizi* when a daughter has her first menses, many parents do not; and that is why others used my request as coming from the ‘headquarters’ so that parents would send their daughters for the ceremony. With the exception of Chimenya church, the mothers of the girls were left out of the ceremony, while in the booklet, the mother is supposed to be instructed as well.

With regard to the teaching content, the oral instruction did not cover all the elements that are in the booklet. Illustration of this is when the instructresses emphasized sexual purity so that the girls do not become mothers out of wedlock, none of them mentioned the danger of sexually transmitted diseases as recorded in the booklet, nor that the girls were breaking God's command. With the exception of Mtendere church, the rural churches did not explain the element of how the body changes as the girls grow.

Chimenya Church exhibited an element which the other instructresses did not mention to the girls. Chimenya instructresses had a bathing ritual for the girls where they checked them for the elongation of the *labia minora*. One instructress actually emphasized that 'this is important for all Chewa women.' This element is not mentioned in the booklet, but we can see women using common sense in adapting a cultural practice into the Christian life. Chimenya women did not hide anything of what they do, while the others said nothing about this element during the ceremony. Instead it came up during our group discussions. Some instructresses actually mentioned that the booklet lacked some important information, citing the elongation of the *labia minora* as the missing information. While their action could be interpreted as 'hypocrisy,' the truth is that their actions showed that they were unclear in their understanding, because there had been a divorcing of the Gospel from culture, and they had not used their vernacular Scriptures to interpret the rite.

It becomes clear that the instructresses wish to remain true to the teachings of the booklet, yet they have not been assisted to develop creative ways to help them respond to the issue of puberty. The women have not been helped to discover the significance of this transition in a young woman's life and so take part in re-interpreting the change process in order to develop their own response. The greatest need is therefore more training for the instructresses to be able to make an adequate analysis of their culture in the light of the Gospel in order to re-interpret the life cycle rituals. Many *alangizi* feel ill-equipped for their task.

## 6.8 WHAT IS THE PRACTITIONERS' PERCEPTION OF CHILANGIZO?

In order to get a general picture of *chilangizo*, interviews with church leaders, the instructresses, as well as the girls from both rural and urban Lilongwe highlighted the following observations and concerns.

One of the early leaders lamented the lack of training for the *alangizi*:

These days, it is not like the way we used to do with the missionaries; the association instructresses do not even go to train the leaders in the local churches, they just wait for the association meetings when they counsel the whole group. This is not effective teaching. It means they also do not know what to do. They should be taught to love their work as *alangizi*.

(Int. *Amayi Kumwembe* 26/06/2001)

Many of the long-standing Baptist members admit that there is a change of emphasis. One such pastor, a Seminary graduate, who has been a leader in the association for a long time also sadly noted that: 'Emphasis on leadership training has gradually ceased and yet the need for the training of *alangizi* can be felt everywhere among the *alangizi* (Int. *Abusa Chisi*, 15/03.2001). Pastor Chisi mentioned that although the missionaries facilitated the leadership training (provided transport, food and accommodation), it was the national leadership that requested that the meetings be held. At present he sees three contributing factors to this gradual decline in leadership training on the part of the local churches, which are:

- Lack of proper planning on the part of the District Association leaders, yet people are eager to learn.
- Though funding is not the major issue, it is still a contributing factor.
- Lack of training materials.

(Int. *Abusa Chisi* 15/06.2001)

Meetings with clusters of *alangizi* in the northern, eastern, and western part of the district, and in the city, revealed unanimous dissatisfaction with the association's training programme; it is almost non-existent. Other instructresses mentioned: 'We are despised by other churches because we no longer go to *likulu* (headquarters) for training like the Presbyterians do' (Int. *Amayi Mkuwa*, 28/6/2001).

The booklet does not give instructions on how the instructresses should be trained. Yet many *alangizi* argued that a person can be qualified and chosen as an instructress, but it would be difficult to do a good job without the necessary training. One current leader of the instructresses testified:

I was first elected in 1985 as *mlangizi* in the Association. I did not go for any training but I see it as my gift. It was mainly at association meetings that I knew how *chilangizo* was getting on in the churches, when the local church *alangizi* report about their work. We were also advising them to use the books, for many were still instructing *zachikunja* (of 'outside'). At least one of the instructresses should be able to read and the other one can explain. I never travelled to the churches, and I never observed what they were doing. I also asked the *alangizi* to call me whenever they need help.

(Int. Amayi Kalua 26/06/2001)

The relevance of training in this case is not just to do with training a person to use the book, rather the real problem lies in the fact that the women are not empowered to understand *chinamwali* and therefore the training has to do with how they deal with puberty and not just with a book.

Similarly, girls expressed their concern on the lack of *chilangizo kulikulu kwathu* (at our headquarters) such that some are defecting to other churches (Zelesi Nsabwe et al, 20/3/2001). At one of the meetings, which was held for both the instructresses and their girls, fifteen out of twenty girls expressed the same feelings that 'we were just wondering why as Baptists we do not have *zilandizo* like the Presbyterians and Roman Catholics.' The meeting attracted twenty-one girls from four churches (Int. Mercy Zakaria et al, 15/9/2001). The general desire expressed by the girls was for continual consistent teaching as well as some girls' camps.

The above evidence portrays the true picture of *chilangizo* in the Baptist churches of Lilongwe. It can, therefore, be argued that the *alangizi* in Lilongwe Baptist churches have not been empowered to develop an effective ministry because they have been forced to rely upon a book that does not address the puberty rite as a full ritual of transition and incorporation into the community. The result is that many girls are denied the opportunity of going through a ritual that not only instructs them how to live but gives them dignity as women and identity as Chewa Christian women. All this suggests that



both the booklet and the performance of *chilangizo* in the Baptist churches in Lilongwe need radical changes.

Female church members also found it difficult to express their struggle with some of the traditional practices that surround all the life cycle rituals. The women have heard or been told that such practices were unchristian. At first I did not understand why it was mainly male members who readily commented to me that most of the rural instructresses teach things that are not Christian. Yet many instructresses denied such allegations. Here again, it shows the inadequacy of the way Gospel and culture have been related to interpret the life cycle rituals.

In the course of several meetings and discussions with *alangizi* it was acknowledged that many women experience tension in their homes with respect to some traditional beliefs and practices (Int. Mary Chinyama et al 15/9/2001). Many women admitted that they found it difficult to break away from some of the practices for fear of the consequences.

Most of the taboos had to do with sexual abstinence (*kudika*, 'waiting') and we have learnt from chapter four that to have sex during one's menses is taboo. Traditionally also the parents must abstain from sexual relations during the first menstruation of a daughter in the home. The women mentioned other occasions when parents practice sexual abstinence, such as when a daughter is pregnant; when a child is sick; when a child is away from home; when a child's clothing item is left outside the house at night; when a mother is away from home, when a wife has a new born baby until it has undergone a ritual of *kutenga mwana* ('taking' the child) three to six months after its birth. They also referred to sexual abstinence at a communal level, during initiation ceremonies, during a funeral, and in some cases when a chief is away. In all these situations, it is the responsibility of the wife to make sure abstinence is carried out in her marriage. However, if the husband secretly has sex outside marriage the taboo does not apply. Pressure is therefore put on the woman while the man can have sex somewhere else, and this is hazardous to their lives, especially, in view of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The Christian husbands, who want to remain faithful in their marriages, find such absti-

nences too great a strain as well as meaningless. Perhaps that is why many Christian men insisted that the *alangizi* be taught to instruct only Christian things and not *zachikunja*.

With regard to the first menstruation of a girl, twelve out of twenty rural girls who attended a *chilangizo* at Chimenya church, explained that their mother gave them some herbal medicine to eat at the end of their first menstruation. The mothers were church members. This confirmed the belief in sexual abstinence until the girl is given some herbal mixture to purify the menstrual blood. This substantiates Edet's statement that:

Blood is treated with awe and circumspection in all cultures, for it has a mysterious potency that can be dangerous unless properly handled.... In connection with puberty and birth, women during menstruation and birth carry a contagion and require ceremonial cleansing.

(Edet 1992:27)

Some of the girls mentioned that they were forbidden to salt any food while cooking when menstruating, while others were not forbidden. The women who were interviewed expressed fear that to break these taboos would bring death or *mdulo* upon the girl. Most *alangizi* also admitted that many rural Christians, especially mothers, go through these practices for fear of breaking the ancestral customs, and hence suffering from misfortunes. Although *chilangizo* has been in existence for over thirty years in BACOMA, it has not brought liberation to Chewa women as they still live in fear of breaking taboos and thus bringing misfortune and disharmony upon themselves, their families and the whole community.

Chewa Christians, both men and women, are in a dilemma because they want to remain true to their Christian values, yet the fear of breaking traditional taboos and being punished is great.

## 6.9 CONCLUSION

*Chilangizo* was an attempt to 'christianize' the traditional rite, but in many respects, it is far from achieving the real purpose. The booklet does not adequately respond to the socio-religious purpose that *chinamwali* achieves in traditional Chewa society. In *chi-*



*namwali* the young woman is treated as a whole person. This is in contrast to the Christian rite which fails to reincorporate her into the community. In addition there is a huge dissonance between the prescribed liturgy and what is done at grassroots level. The practitioners show dissatisfaction with both the content and the performance of the Christian rite. All these are evidence that the church has failed to understand the meaning of the traditional rite and all aspects associated with it. As a result the church has not interpreted *chinamwali* and its associated meanings fully with the mother tongue Scriptures.

The best place for BACOMA to begin is by thoroughly understanding the traditional rites and the meanings associated with all aspects of the rites. Then there is a need to study the mother tongue Scriptures to understand how Scripture re-interprets *chinamwali* and its associated meanings. This should lead into an interactive process of discussion, reflection and teaching. Chapter 7 is my attempt to begin this process and make recommendations to BACOMA.

## 7. CONCLUSION: TOWARDS A CHRISTIAN *CHINAMWALI*

### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

We have explored the development and the performance of *chilangizo* and found that it is an inadequate response to *chinamwali*. The purpose of the present study is not to dwell on the past, but to examine the past and to allow Christ to redeem the past, so that the Gospel may provide a way forward for *chilangizo* in the Baptist churches in Malawi. In view of the evaluation in chapter six, chapter seven concludes this study by re-interpreting the puberty rite in the light of the Chichewa Scriptures and proposing a way forward for Christian *chinamwali*.

### 7.2 RE-INTERPRETING *CHINAMWALI*

It is unfortunate that generally *chinamwali* and the meanings of its particular activities have not been well understood by the Christian tradition (including BACOMA) in Malawi, and Christians have not used the Scriptures, especially in the mother tongue, to interpret the rite and its multi-faceted meanings. Baptists believe in the authority of the Scriptures to guide the way they conduct their affairs (see chapter three), it is therefore not enough just to find out which rites 'liberate people as individuals or groups and which ones oppress them' as suggested by Chakanza (1988:167). Nor is it adequate just to 'christianise' the rites without understanding their socio-religious roles in society. This is an encounter between the Gospel and culture in which the vernacular Scriptures should become the hermeneutic of the Chewa culture. Using Bediako's words (2001:2), the centrality of the Scriptures means 'more than the importance of a few selected verses as proof text,' for the Chewa ought recognize and acknowledge Jesus as their own Saviour and Lord and as the one who fulfils and transforms their culture, as they enter deeply into and search the Scriptures (K and G Bediako 2002:3).

From the perspective of the Christian faith therefore, this section will consider the theological issues in the *chinamwali* rite and give biblical interpretations. The Scriptures

should highlight and endorse what the Christian faith affirms in, and point out what is lacking in *chinamwali*. The Gospel should purify what requires cleansing, and/or modify elements or areas that necessitate change. The aim is to have a Christian *chinamwali* that will impact non-Christian Chewa society. This, by no means, is a once for all experience. It is a process of growth as evidenced in the question of the Malawian women in 1970, 'Now that we are Christians, how do we instruct our girls about the facts of life?' Since the Chewa people strongly believe that *chinamwali* or to be initiated is *miyambo ya makolo* (ancestral customs), it is proper to examine, first of all, the cult of the ancestors in the light of the biblical teaching.

The continuity of the Chewa community and its customs is faithfully preserved through the performance of *chinamwali*. The historical tradition of *chinamwali* gives the initiate a sense of identity. A true Chewa is the one who has undergone the rite of *chinamwali*. It is therefore through *chinamwali* that the new initiates are introduced to the spiritual world of the ancestors and instructed in their customs. Failure to perform *chinamwali* means dishonouring the ancestors and cutting off the lineage. This may bring misfortune to the individual or to the community. To make sure the *miyambo* (customs) are followed, the *nyau*, who are the physical representations of the spiritual powers of ancestors, enhance and uphold *chinamwali*. Thus the *nyau* represent spiritual powers that have great influence on the Chewa people, and their presence at funerals and initiation rites has tremendous impact on people's beliefs. The fear of the spiritual powers and *nyau* therefore, permeates Chewa life, for Christians as well as non-Christians.

Here we are faced with the issue of the cult of ancestors who are the spirits of the dead humans and not any other spiritual beings. They are an integral part of the community, 'linking the living and the departed in a common life' (Bediako 2000:30-31). Their authority and power holds the Chewa people together, and their customs sustain the community as they are passed down from their 'fathers and mothers' to later generations. It is these *mizimu* (ancestors) who are the agents between the living and *Chiuta* (God). They also give a sense of identity to the Chewa community. How does the Christian tradition respond to the issue concerning Chewa ancestors who form part of their worldview?

The Scriptures say a great deal about the dead and what happens to their spirits (for both believers and non-believers). This should not be confused with what the Scriptures say about Satan (the deceiver), demons and angels who are distinctively classified as spiritual beings that are different from humans and their spirit/soul. Unfortunately some of the western theological and missiological interpreters like Scott Moreau referred to in chapter two (2.5) and others have lacked discernment in this area and often confuse ‘ancestors’ and ‘spirits.’<sup>73</sup> Bediako helpfully clarifies the issue:

I consider it more helpful to speak generally of ancestors, rather than ancestral spirits. For the ancestor is not a kind of mystical floating spirit.... The ancestor is primarily a name, a person, attached to a place or a relic, possibly a stool or a skin, which shows the continuing relevance of that name, that person, for his/her society, as a point of reference for the appreciation of his/her life and career. Ancestors are credited with more power simply by virtue of having passed into the after-life.

(Bediako 2002:6)

Conversion to the Christian faith for the Chewa means that they have turned over everything of who they are to the lordship of Jesus Christ who, by his resurrection from the dead, has demonstrated that he possesses power over death. He therefore displaces the mediatorial function of the human ancestors between mankind and *Chiuta*, and becomes himself the Great Ancestor. With the help of the Holy Spirit, who also ‘intercedes for the saints’, the Chewa Christians should pray to *Chiuta* through Jesus Christ, the intercessor (Romans 8:26, 34). Jesus Christ now becomes the Intercessor through whom all prayers to *Chiuta* must be directed. Since Jesus has ‘gone to the realm of the “spirits and the gods”... he has gone there as Lord over them in the same way that he is Lord over us’ (Bediako 2000:27). Responding to the Akan worldview, which is similar to that of the Chewa, Bediako clearly states:

Jesus Christ, “the Second Adam” from heaven (1 Cor 15:47) becomes for us the only mediator between God and ourselves (cf. 1 Tim 2:5). He is the “mediator of a better covenant” (Heb 8:6), relating our human destiny directly to God.

(Bediako 2000:26)

On the understanding of this new view of Jesus, all Chewa Christians can act on this basis and expect certain things to follow. The Chewa believe that it is through the ancestors that the girls are blessed with fertility, and that observance of the ancestral

customs brings other blessings to the individuals and to the community. Hence the performance of the rituals and the observance of the *mdulo* taboos are meant to placate the *mizimu* for this purpose. It is a disgrace upon a family for a Chewa woman to be barren. Every precaution is therefore taken on the girl's first menses and during her initiation to ensure and establish her womanhood and motherhood. God's command and blessing to humanity to '*mubalane ndipo mucuruke*' ('be fruitful and increase in number') of Genesis 1:28 affirms Chewa aspirations. The Chewa people know that '*Ana ndiwo colandira ca kwa Yehova*' ('Children are a gift from God') (Psalm 127:3), that is why they depend on their ancestors to pray to *Chiuta* on their behalf for the blessing of fertility. However, with the new understanding of Jesus outlined above, when Jesus becomes Lord, all prayers are through Him. God is the one who opens a woman's womb to have children,<sup>74</sup> even when the womb was closed by God himself.<sup>75</sup> Of course, any medical problems need to be sorted out by the medical experts. In addition to praying for fertility, all the other blessings that the Chewa people may be looking for - good health, good luck, good harvest, good marriage, and so on - come only from God through his Son Jesus Christ who is the provider. God promises to bless his people when they obey him.<sup>76</sup> However, God's view of blessing may not be the way the Chewa perceive blessing. For God can also bless and use a woman who does not deliver a child. This gives single Chewa women and couples without children new hope. If they dedicate themselves to the service of God it could have a powerful impact in introducing 'children' spiritually to the Lord Jesus Christ. This is good news for the Chewa people that as they make Jesus their Lord, they have everything in him.

In addition to the intercessory role of the ancestors, the negative role is that of inflicting punishment or other misfortune on the living when they disobey some *miyambo* (customs). This is evidenced in the way the Chewa observe *mdulo* taboos, especially when a daughter has her first menses and during her *chinamwali* (initiation). Fears of 'cutting' her ('*kumudula*') and causing her to be sterile, of suffering from *mdulo*, or even of dying, permeate Chewa society. Such fears are not baseless; they cannot just be called 'superstition,' be ignored or brushed aside. They are genuine fears of real and active spiritual beings that inflict on people such punishments. It is believed that to break any taboo angers the ancestors. To illustrate this, if a daughter or child suffers from *mdulo*,



it is the mother who is normally accused of *kusasamala* (not being careful) or *kupha okha mwana!* (killing her own child!). Similarly, if a girl remains childless after marriage, the mother is blamed for failure to observe the necessary taboos. Normally, this means that the parents did not abstain from sexual activity at the appropriate times, and it is the wife who must refuse to have sex with her husband (see Appendix A, women's demonstration after song 51). In 4.6 above it was noted that 'most African religious traditions have placed procreation at the centre of the woman's universe' (Oduyoye 1992:17). This is why the woman is responsible for making sure the taboos are observed, and if anything goes wrong, she is blamed. There is some mysterious power that works through the sexual act and inflicts *mdulo* on the victim. Some informants, both Christian and non-Christian, have testified to the death of a number of children due to *mdulo*.

The question is: Is it in reality that 'ancestor spirits' [ancestors] come and punish the living?' If we look at some passages in Scripture, with the exception of the spirit of Samuel (and he only related words that God had already spoken) (1 Sam 28), it appears that the spirits of the dead cannot come back and interfere with the living. And yet that is what the living human beings think happens. So who actually comes to punish if it is not the *mizimu* [ancestors]? Here we need to be discerning. For if Scripture says that '*Satana yemwe adzionetsa ngati mngelo wakuunika.*' ('Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light') (2 Corinthians 11:14, NIV), why can he not imitate an ancestor? Normally people think that it is their ancestors that come and punish a person. Could not, in reality, there be a demonic masquerade occurring as Paul warns: '*Koma nditi kuti zimene amitundu apereka nsembe azipereka kwa ziwanda; osati kwa Mulungu, ndipo sindifuna kuti inu muyanjane ndi ziwanda*' ('No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons') (1 Corinthians 10:20)? Could it not be that deceiving spirits do interfere with the living – claiming to bless them (when God himself blesses them), or inflicting them with misfortunes and filling them with fear? This is evidenced by the fact that the Chewa spiritual world is populated mostly with 'evil' spirits represented by the *nyau*. The Chewa believe that the mysterious powers surrounding *chinamwali* and all the *mdulo* taboos derive from the *mizimu*. Could not evil spirits impersonate ancestors and reinforce obe-

dience to the ancestral customs so that they can keep the people under their control? For the Chewa, this new interpretation of *chinamwali* can be done from a Christian understanding. Jesus Christ already conquered the masquerading and impersonating spirits and can set the Chewa people free from their bondage and from fear of death. If the Son of God came '*kuti akaononge ntchito za mdierekezi*' ('to destroy the work of the devil') (1 John 3:8), then God has mightily broken into Chewa history in the ministry, death and resurrection of Christ to destroy the works of all spiritual powers.

Paul calls these spiritual forces '*maufumu; aulamuliro; mphamvu za dziko lapansi lam-dima; ndi mizimu yoipa yamumlengalenga.*' ('rulers; authorities; powers of this dark world; and spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms') (Ephesians 6:12) Paul testifies that because '*mwa Iye cikhalira cidzalo ca Umulungu m'thupi*' ('all the fullness of the Deity lives in Christ') (Col 2:9) Christ becomes head over them all. Since Jesus transcends the whole spiritual domain, and 'summing up in himself all their powers and cancelling any terrorising influence they might be assumed to have upon us' (Bediako 2000:27), there is no need for Chewa Christians to continue their allegiance to any of them, nor to fear them. The good news is that Jesus Christ has power to redeem the Chewa from the evil powers.

Love and obedience go together. Fear of punishment is key to obeying *miyambo* for harmonious living in Chewa traditional society. Since Jesus has become Saviour and Lord, the only real and true Ancestor for the Chewa people, his Gospel is more than just fear of and obedience to God's law. The Gospel means Jesus living and dwelling within a person so that the person responds in obedience because of love – not because of fear of punishment. Jesus says in John 14:21 '*Iye wakukhala nao malamulo anga, ndi kuwasunga, iyeyu ndiye wondikonda ine.*' ('Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me'). So loving God and obeying his commands is imperative for the Chewa Christians. Both in the Old Testament and the New Testament, love is the driving force. It is true that God warned the Israelites in the Old Testament that he would punish them, but that was because he loved them and wanted them to respond to him out of love and not fear. God went much further and offered something far, far better than fear – love through his Son (1 John 4:4-21). This text even talks

about the fact that '*chikondi changwiro citaya kunja mantha*' ('perfect love drives out fear') (v.18). Because God created both our 'fathers' and us '*muchikhalidwe chake*' ('in his likeness'), his *miyambo* (customs, laws), not *yamakolo* (ancestral), become ours. One of the problems apparent in the booklet *chilangizo* is that fear is emphasized. It was also emphasized in the reactions of the *alangizi* who would tell the girls 'you must not shame us!' The love of God now becomes the motivating factor for Chewa Christians to obey the word of God. If it is only fear of punishment then they are no better off than those who adhere to traditional beliefs.

However, Chewa Christians' allegiance and obedience to their new Ancestor, Jesus Christ does not cut them off completely from their past history. Nor does their new identity in Christ make the Chewa Christians abandon their ancestors to 'hell.' There is need to realise that the same God who has loved us before the foundation of the world, does have something to do with our past (ancestors). Just as Hebrews 11 shows us biblical ancestors who were not perfect, it provides us with a 'model and guide by which we can understand similar journeying in the lives of our [lineage] ancestors' (Bediako 2002:5).

With regard to belief in *mdulo* diseases, we have seen that modern medical diagnosis has been given to the symptoms and causes for *mdulo*, (Van Breugel 2001:208). The Scriptures acknowledge the traditional belief that some diseases indeed are spiritually caused and can only be healed spiritually. One example in the New Testament is a woman 'who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years' (Luke 13:10-13). Such illnesses cannot be healed by mere 'scientific' medical treatment. While traditional healers use spiritual powers to heal *mdulo*, such healing is temporary, and Christians require the power of God through Jesus Christ for 'complete healing.' This means that while Jesus restores people to physical health, he is concerned with their total well-being as well.<sup>77</sup> It is, therefore, not enough just to mention in passing that '*mdulo* has no power.' Chewa Christians need to pray for the complete healing power of Jesus Christ in cases of spiritual-related illnesses.

The engagement of Gospel and Chewa culture, therefore, is:

About the conversion of cultures, the turning to Christ and turning over to Christ of all that is there in us, about us and round about us that has defined and shaped us when Jesus meets us, so that the elements of our cultural identity are brought within the orbit of discipleship. Our discipleship is to Christ who is Lord over us and everyone else.

(Bediako 2001:2)

Obedience to the *miyambo* through sexual abstinence is an important aspect of instruction in *chinamwali*. It is a way of denying oneself any pleasure on behalf of someone who is in a vulnerable position. This can be likened to 'fasting' in the Christian tradition. Similarly, the presence of *nyau* as prayer on behalf of the living is the traditional way of reaching out to transcendence. So *nyau*, as 'prayer,' and sexual abstinence, as 'fasting,' can be likened to 'prayer and fasting' in the Christian tradition, which usually go together. The Christian fasting, however, normally includes abstinence from food as well. Paul admonished married Christians in the Corinthian Church to mutually agree to abstain for a time '*kuti mukadzipereke kwa kupemphera*' ('so that you may devote yourselves to prayer') (1 Cor. 7:5). It can be presumed that when the 'church was earnestly praying to God' for Peter, when he was in prison, fasting was an integral part (Acts 12:5). The differences lie in the object of their prayers. Since prayer is part of worship, true worship must be directed only to God through the Spirit of Jesus Christ and not through the ancestors. Another significant element is the night vigils. At the *mkangali* ceremony described in 4.5 above, there were two vigils for the girls, one with the *machembere* (the elderly women), and the other with the *nyau*. This parallels the Christians' night vigils – overnight prayer meetings. There is something significant about praying all night through. Jesus also 'spent the night praying to God' (Luke 6:12). Chewa Christians need to learn from the traditional practices. All night prayer and fasting meetings would bring meaningful religious experience to the Chewa Christians. It would also be highly significant for the Christian tradition to adopt a night vigil *chinamwali* ceremony for the girls.

During *chinamwali*, the girls were taught sexual abstinence during their menses. It is believed that during the menses the woman is said to be 'hot' and therefore it is 'dangerous' to have sex (Van Breugel 2001:172). In other words, when the 'hot' menstrual blood and the 'hot' sexual fluids meet in sexual activity, something mysterious and



dangerous happens, resulting in *mdulo*, or death. The Old Testament refers to a menstruating woman as '*wodetsedwa*' (defiled) and rules that any man who lies with her would be unclean for seven days until he carries out the purification rites (Leviticus 15:24). Paul in Colossians 2:17 calls these rules from the old covenant '*mthunzi wa zirinkudzazo; koma thupi ndi la Kristu.*' (a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality ... is found in Christ.) The teaching from the new covenant is that 'defilement' is caused by sin inside man (Mark 7:21-23), and that living holy lives should be the goal of every Christian. Prayer and fasting, in addition to constant teaching, should be included in the liturgy of the church in preparation for Christian *chinamwali*.

Fear of evil both from the spiritual and the physical realms and the need for mystical protection is very strong in traditional Chewa society. Chewa people are aware of the evil that haunts them all the time either from the spirits or from evil people. We have seen the rigorous attempt to mystically protect the initiates by planting deterrents called *mnchiri* in strategic points during *chinamwali*. The Chewa people need to know that evil comes from Satan, or *mdierekezi* (devil), or '*cinjoka cacikuru*' (great dragon) who was 'hurled down, and leads the whole world astray' (Revelation 12:9). Morally, human disobedience and error makes humans responsible for and face their own wrong doing. They also must know the victory of Jesus Christ who conquered the dragon by the '*mwazi wa Mwanawankhosa, ndi cifukwa ca mau a umboni wao*' ('blood of the Lamb, and the word of their testimony') (Revelation 12:11). In addition to constant prayer and fasting, Chewa Christians need to compose songs of triumph from the Scriptures and sing them during *chinamwali*, like the one in Revelation 12:10,11 to testify and celebrate their own victory in Christ Jesus for his victory is the victory of his people as well.

Sexual purity is not taught in traditional Chewa society since the girls are introduced to sex on their first menses. They are only required not to be pregnant at the time of their *chinamwali*, whether they are married or not. The *chinamwali* ceremony therefore is not just for 'sex education' but it has a deeper religious meaning – establishing fertility for the initiates. Christian sex education could form an important part of instruction during *chilangizo* ceremony. If there is continued periodic instruction on good morals and what constitutes a Christian marriage given to boys and girls until they are married, and to



married couples as well, it would assist many Chewa women (and men) who have been made to believe that the physical rite of elongating the *labia minora* is what holds a marriage together.<sup>78</sup> Biblical teaching on good morals will help girls (and boys) to abstain from sex before marriage and to remain faithful after marriage. This should protect them from the dangers of contracting venereal diseases as well as HIV/AIDS. Girls are vulnerable in this area and the church could creatively teach both girls and boys about HIV/AIDS. Apart from the fear HIV/AIDS, living a pure life is good in itself both for the individual and for the couple. Jesus brings new life to the Chewa people. He gives added inward empowerment against sexual sin.

One aspect of the traditional practices that the Christian faith needs to affirm and emulate with regard to puberty rites is the strong *communitas* shown in the involvement of the community from the preparatory stage to the end of *chinamwali*. Almost the whole community contributed towards the ceremony, either in monetary form or with items such as maize flour, or firewood. The festive mood runs throughout the ceremony as women are busy cooking food, brewing beer, drawing water, while some men sit in groups holding a calabash of beer, and others help the women with the harder tasks, such as cutting firewood. At other times, children and women would be running away while laughing from *nyau* dancers. This kind of attitude shows solidarity among the Chewa society. The actual ceremony was characterised by singing and dancing, ululating, clapping of hands, drumming, and giving of gifts. Part of this is what characterised the early Church, when people were together listening to the teaching of the apostles, in prayer, and in sharing meals (Acts 2:44-47). And if *communitas* is so important in Chewa society, then all the aspects that bring solidarity and the elements that bring joy to the ceremony deserve more significance in Christian puberty rites (or some other social events).<sup>79</sup> Christian *chinamwali* needs the Christian community to greatly participate and to publicly acknowledge the incorporation of the young women into the adult life of the community.

We have seen that the Chewa belief in ancestors underpins the *chinamwali* rites. We have also shown that the Scriptures show that Jesus Christ, through his death, resurrection and exaltation to the spiritual realm, becomes our Ancestor and the sole Mediator

between humans and *Chiuta*. It is also through Jesus that the Chewa people can pray to *Chiuta* and receive his blessings. Because Jesus is Saviour and Victor over all the spiritual powers, even over those who pose like ancestors, he is able to protect all who trust him against *mdulo*, misfortunes and evil forces. Jesus is also able to heal all our diseases. The Scriptures teach sexual purity until marriage and sexual faithfulness in marriage. Sexual purity also protects the girls from contracting the deadly disease of HIV/AIDS. We have also seen that Scriptures affirm the traditional *communitas* and encourages the Christian community to conduct Christian *chinamwali* in a similar manner. The way forward and the proposed liturgy for Christian *chinamwali* in the last section reflect this biblical re-interpretation of the traditional rites.

### **7.3 THE WAY FORWARD FOR CHINAMWALI AND A PROPOSED LITURGY**

The assessment of *chilangizo* for Chewa girls on puberty in the Baptist churches as a response to the pre-Christian rite has shown that the response falls short of meeting the real needs of the Chewa people. The root of the problem is similar to the experiences of the Akan of Ghana summarised as follows:

Up to now, our churches have tended to avoid the question [How does Jesus of Nazareth belong to the Akan clan, family, tribe and nation?] and have presented the Gospel as though it was concerned with an entirely different compartment of life, unrelated to traditional religious piety. As a result, many people are uncertain about how the Jesus of the Church's preaching saves them from the terrors and fears that they experience in their traditional worldview. This shows how important it is to relate Christian understanding and experience to the realm of the ancestors. If this is not done, many African Christians will continue to be men and women "living at two levels", half African and half European, but never belonging properly to either. We need to meet God in the Lord Jesus Christ speaking immediately to us in our particular circumstances, in a way that assures us that we can be authentic Africans and true Christians.

(Bediako 2000:23)

The reason why the booklet *chilangizo* is not an adequate response, or that reality does not match theory; or that church leaders, the instructresses, and the girls complain about the rite, stems from this lack of understanding of the Chewa worldview. The Baptist practitioners agree that *chinamwali* is important and should continue as a ritual. This is in agreement with the general observations concerning the 'holistic' nature of rituals that 'African rituals have an import that is at once psychological, spiritual, political, and

social' (Oduyoye 1992:9). Through discussions many suggestions have been given to improve the form and the content of the Christian *chinamwali*, while letting the Chewa Scriptures provide the meanings of the rite. The Christian *chinamwali* therefore should comprise continuous instruction and the performance of the actual rite.

Many members agreed that instruction, through the monthly meetings, must begin from pre-puberty with the girls from the age of eight years<sup>80</sup>. In addition to Bible teaching, the *alangizi* should instruct the girls on things like *ulemu* (respect), *ukhondo* (hygiene), body anatomy, plus other relevant issues that touch their lives. Using good judgment the *alangizi* may, at times, separate those nearing puberty and prepare them for the approaching menses, and encourage them to report immediately to the *alangizi*, or to their parents. Instruction ought to continue even after their *chinamwali* to prepare the girls for courtship and then marriage.

In addition to the booklet content, BACOMA must interact with cultural issues and provide good biblical teaching for her members. The churches need to institute vigorous teaching and training programmes for *alangizi*. If the instructresses consistently carry out Christian *chinamwali* and give continuous instruction to the girls, there should be no room for double initiations – secretly the traditional one first, and later the church one. Many women are eager to learn, especially on issues that touch their lives. The churches must discuss cultural issues with parents and provide teaching on how the Gospel interprets them. Such a learning environment will open many Chewa girls and women to the saving power of Jesus Christ.

In view of all this, the booklet is still necessary for Baptist women as a training manual for the *alangizi*. Although this was the original aim of the booklet, it shows that many churches have not taken time to train the instructresses. I propose that even the title *Bukhu la alangizi* (The Instructresses' Booklet) should change to read '*Maphunziro a alangizi*' (Training for *alangizi*). The booklet can still be in two sections: the first part containing more teaching material for the church, while the second part should contain proposed *zinamwali* ceremonies,<sup>81</sup> beginning with the puberty *chinamwali*, and followed by *u kwati* (marriage), *mimba yoyamba* (first pregnancy), and *kubadwa kwa*

*mwana* (birth of the child). The aim of the proposed ceremonies is to leave room for creativity and adjustment. The proposed liturgy in this dissertation is for the puberty *chinamwali*. Appendix E is the proposed booklet containing the first part and only the puberty ceremony in the second part.

Although *mkangali* is the highest level of traditional initiation for girls, not many people favour it because of its consequences as discussed in section 4.4 above. Many chiefs prefer to initiate their girls at other ceremonies such as funerals or the commemoration of funerals at *chiriza* or at *mpalo*. The actual instruction given to the girls at these ceremonies is done at night and is similar to the instruction given at *mkangali* during the girls' vigil with the *nchembere* (elderly women). It was suggested and agreed in our discussions that the Christian response maintain as much as possible the traditional framework - an initial preliminary instruction as soon as a girl experiences her first menses and a night vigil ceremony at the end of the menses instead of some months or a year later. The night's ritual should have the dynamism of the traditional rite but – singing and dancing, drama, prayers, etc. but with Christian content. All church informants agreed that every congregation arrange with its *alangizi* once-a-month meetings for the girls. The instructresses should continue to instruct the girls on how to maintain their purity until and after marriage.<sup>82</sup> At the end of the year, all the instructresses could meet together in their various zones with their girls for three to four days, the aim of this event being larger participation whereby about ten to twelve local congregations meet together. Fellowship, prayer, Bible study, learning of other skills, games, and other activities could be the content of such an event.

For the preliminary instruction, the mother needs to inform the instructress as soon as her daughter matures. The instructress in turn informs the pastor (through his wife), and the chief (through his *anamkungwi*). The mother must give the chief's dues through the instructress. The two instructresses ought to meet with the girl at her home the same day to give her the preliminary instruction and to pray with her and her mother, aunt or grandmother thanking God for the girl's puberty and asking God to protect her from the evil one, and to bless her with good health and good future. The girl could remain in

seclusion until the *chinamwali* ceremony at the end of her menses. In the meantime the parents and the church women should prepare for the vigil ceremony.

In order to give the same sense of excitement and anticipation as for the traditional event, *chinamwali* should follow the traditional pattern, but with Christian content. Singing, action, and explanation should be the main pattern of instruction. This gives the instructresses opportunity to be more creative in forming the necessary Christian songs. Similarly, the elderly women (*machembere*) of the church and the previously initiated girls could be part of the instructing team for the whole night. The content of the instruction could as much as possible be contained in the songs and cover elements such as: the meaning and implications of menstruation, *ulemu* (respect) and *khalidwe labwino* (good behaviour), *ukhondo* (hygiene). Sex education must be the main element with the emphasis on how and why the girls should remain pure until marriage.<sup>83</sup> Let the initiates be taught how to live as adults and Christians in society.

#### **7.4 A CHRISTIAN CHINAMWALI**

The following is a proposed *chinamwali* ceremony for the night at the end of a girl's first menstruation.<sup>84</sup>

GAWO LACHIWIRI

SECOND PART

**CHINAMWALI (KUTHA MSINKHU)**

PUBERTY RITE CEREMONY

Malangizo kwa Alangizi

Instructions for the Instructresses

Pamene alangizi mwadziwitsidwa kuti mtsikana watha msinkhu, muyenera mukumane ndi mtsikanayo mwansanga. Mumuuze mwachidule tanthauzo la zimene zamuchitikirazo. Mumuphunzitsenso kabvalidwe ndi kasamalidwe ka mwele. Mtsikanayo asagwire ntchito yolemetsa, komanso asayende yende mpaka atabvinidwa potsirizira pa msambowo.



When you have been informed that a girl has matured, you must meet with the girl as soon as possible. Briefly, instruct her on the meaning of the menses, how to wear and take care of the linen. She must do light work and should remain in seclusion until the *chinamwali* ceremony at the end of her menses.

Muyenera kudziwitsa mai busa anu amene adziwitsenso abusa. Dziwitsaninso anamkungwi popeza ndiwo amene ayenera kukanena kwa mfumu. Mayi wa mtsikana apereka nkuku yokanenera kwa mfumu.

You must inform the pastor's wife who should inform the pastor. Inform also the traditional *anamkungwi* who will inform the chief. The girl's mother must pay the chief's dues.

Alangizi ndi mpingo, mogwirizana ndi makolo mukonzekere kumubvinira namwaliyo usiku wonse potha pa msambo wakewo. Tsimba labwino ndi kunyumba kwa mlangizi, komabe mukhoza kusankha malo ena opangira chinamwalicho. Alangizi, machembere a mumpingo, makolo a mtsikana (osati mai ake), ndi atsikana olangizidwa kale a mpingo (koma awiri akhale phungu), ayenera kudza kuchinamwalicho.

The instructresses and the church, together with the parents, should prepare for the night's vigil *chinamwali* at the end of the girl's menses at the instructress' house, or any other house. The instructresses, the elderly women of the church, the girl's aunt or grandmother, and older girls of the church who have been through the rite should be invited to attend the *chinamwali*. Let two of the girls act as tutors.

Anthu onse oitanidwawo atatha kudya chakudya chamadzulo pamodzi, abusa kapena akulu a mpingo ayenera kutsegula mwambo ndi pemphero ndi mawu apang'ono achilimbikitso kuchokera m'Bukhu Lopatulika. Monga mau ochokera pa Genesis 1:26 'Tipange munthu muchifanizo chathu, monga mwa chikhalidwe chathu.' Apemphere kuthokoza Mulungu chifukwa chakulenga munthu mu chifanizo ndi chikhalidwe chake. Apempherenso kuti Mulungu awateteze amayi ndi anamwali onse pa mwambo umenewu.

When all the invited people have taken their evening meal, the ceremony should begin by prayer and a word of exhortation from the pastor or an elder. He can give an exhortation from Genesis 1:26 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness' and pray thanking God that he created us to be and live like him. Also asking God to protect the women and the initiates from all dangers during the ceremony.

Kuimba, kubvina, ndakatulo, ngakhale masewero, ziyenera kutenga gawo lalikulu pachinamwali, kuti namwaliyo amvetse mwambo. Baibulo mukhoza kuwerenga koma osati Bukhu la alangizi ayi.

Please note that singing, dancing, and acting should be used in instructing the girl. You can use the Bible but not the instructresses' booklet.

Mwambo wa usiku ukhoza kukhala motere. Ichi ndi chitsanzo chimodzi, koma alangizi muyenera kukonza nyimbo zambiri ngakhale masewero ndi mau ochokera mBukhu Loyera kuti chinamwali chikhale chopambana kwa namwali (anamwali).

The night's programme may be as follows. This is just one example of *chinamwali*. The instructresses should come up with many songs and drama with words from the Scripture to make the rite more meaningful and interesting to the girls.

Machembere ayimbe nyimbo (ziwiri ngakhale zitatu) kuti namwali adziwe chimene anthu abwerera, monga,

The women should sing two or three songs concerning the purpose for the vigil, such as,

- |                                |                            |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. <i>M'Baibulo, m'Baibulo</i> | In the Bible, in the Bible |
| <i>Muli mwambooo</i>           | There is counsel           |
| <i>M'Baibulo, m'Baibulo</i>    | In the Bible, in the Bible |
| <i>Muli mwalankhula</i>        | There is speaking          |

Machembere aziimba akumuzungulira mtsikana atakhala. Ena a amayiwo atanyamula maBaibulo kumanja kwawo. Tanthauzo lake ndikuti ulangizi umene apatsidwe tsikanayo ndiochokera m'Baibulo. Popeza baibulo ndi Mau a Mulungu, ndipo Mulungu ndi amene adatilenga. Mwambo wa Mulungu ndiye wotiyenera ife.

The women should be singing while going round in a circle with the initiate seated. Some of the women can hold a Chichewa Bible in their hands. They show it to the initiate. The meaning is that their counsel is from the Word of God, who is our Creator. It is God's counsel which we must follow.

- |                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| 2. <i>Sinkadabweratu ine</i>       | I would not have come here               |
| <i>Sinkadabweratu pano</i>         | I would not have come here               |
| <i>Yandiendetsa mnkhole yakoyi</i> | It is your menses that have made me walk |

Mtsikana ali chikhalire ndi phungu wake pambali, onse adziimba atachita bwalo. Azizungulira, koma ena atayerekeza kubvala mwele, koma osabvula zobvala zawo.

Atanthauza kuti onse abwera chifukwa cha mtsikana amene wakula. 'Tsopanotu walowa mbungwe la anthu akulu.'

While the girl is seated with her tutors, the others should be dancing in a circle while wearing something like the mensens linen, but not actually taking off their clothes.

They should explain the meaning that ‘now you are mature, you are no more a child!’

- |                              |                                   |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 3. <i>Mukatere, mukatere</i> | What you have done, you have done |
| <i>Ndiko kukula kumeneku</i> | This is what maturity is          |

Zimene zikuchitika panozi ndichifukwa chakuti mwakula ndipo mulandire mwambo woyenera.

What is happening here is because you have now come of age and you need to be instructed.

Tsopano ndi nthawi yakuti atsikana akale aperekere maumboni a khalidwe lawo kupyolera mu nyimbo ndi kubvina. Popezatu iwo tsopano ndi anthu akhalidwe labwino kunyumba kwawo, m’mudzi, komanso kumpingo kwawo.

After singing and dancing, the older girls should take the floor. The aim is to give their testimonies through songs and dancing that it is because they received the same teaching they are now good girls in their community, in their homes, even at church.

Machembere ayenera kumawafupa atsikanawa pamene akuimba ndi kubvina.

The women should give money gifts to the girls as they dance.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 4. <i>Yeli yelele, tandiona mzako lero</i> | Joy yaaa, look at me today             |
| <i>Yeli, nkakumana ndi amfumu, yelele!</i> | Joy, when I meet with the chief, yaaa! |
| <i>Mpo mmagwada lero yelele!</i>           | I kneel down today yaaa!               |
| <i>Mwambo wake ngomwewu, Yeli yelele!</i>  | It is the same counsel, Joy yaaa!      |

Mizere yachiwiri ndi chitatu ya nyimboyi kumasintha nkumachula zimene adasintha monga, anzanga akandiputa, mpo simbwezera; nkaona agogo asinja, mpo mmawalandira; nkapita kutchalichi, mpo mmasesa lero, ndi zina. Akatha apitilire kuyimba nyimbo iyi:

Tanthauzo ndi lakuti, mwambo wake ndiomwewu umene tonse tinasinthira khalidwe lathu loipa kutsata labwino. Ndi Yesu yekha angasinthe munthu kukhala wakhalidwe labwino.

In the second and third lines, one girl at a time goes inside and mentions the thing she has changed from, such as ‘I do not pay back evil for evil,’ ‘I now help the elderly,’ ‘I now clean the church building,’ and so on. They should continue to sing the following song:

The meaning is that this is the counsel we all receive which changes us from bad behaviour to good conduct. It is only Jesus who can change our bad behaviour.

- |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| 5. <i>Kodi n'ndani adakusinthira khalidwe?</i>   | Who changed your behaviour?           |
| <i>Ndiye Yesu, ndiye Yesu yekha, Yelele!</i>     | It is Jesus, it is only Jesus, Yaaa!  |
| <i>Chikondi cha Yesu nchopambana, Yelele!</i>    | The love of Jesus is great, Yaaa!     |
| <i>Yesu, Kholo lathu, tasinthika ife, Yelele</i> | Jesus, our Ancestor, we have changed! |
| <i>Tidzamvera ndikukonda inu Yesu!</i>           | We shall love and obey you, Jesus!    |
| <i>Yelele! Yelele!</i>                           | Yaa! Yaa!                             |

The meaning is that other people are admiring the girl's changed behaviour; the response is that it is because of her moving from dread of ancestors to love of The Ancestor, Jesus Christ, that her concern is now to please and obey him.

Potsiriza gawo limeneli payenera kukhala kupuma panthawi yochepa, pamene anthu amwe chakumwa chimene chakonzedwa.

At break time some drinks are served.

Gawo lachiwiri, amayi busa kapena mlangizi atsegule ndi pemphero lakuthokoza Mulungu:

The pastor's wife or one instructress should begin the second part with a prayer thanksgiving to God.

Zikomo Ambuye chifukwa chakutitsogolera gawo loyambali. Zikomo chifukwa cha umboni wa atsikana awa amene atamva mwambo wanu, anausunga ndiku-mvera konse monga mwa mau anu akuti 'Mwana wanga, usaiwale malangizo angawa, koma mtima wako usunge malamulo anga' (Miyambo 3:1). Tsono mutitsogolerebe pamene tikupitiriza mwambo wathu. Amen.

Thank you Lord for guiding us through the first part. Thank you for the testimonies of these girls who have kept the counsel they were given according to your Word 'My child, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart' [Proverbs 3:1]. Now we ask you to lead us as we continue with our ceremony. Amen

Onse pamodzi ndi namwali aimirire kupanga bwalo nkumaimba nyimbo izi aku-bvina mozungulira.

All, including the initiate, should stand and dance in a circle.

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|---|-------------------------------|
| 6. <i>Yohani fotini, twenti waniiii x 4</i> | John fourteen, twenty one x 4 |
| <i>Iye wondikonda ine x 4</i>               | One who loves me x 4          |
| <i>Amvera lamulo langa</i>                  | Obeys my commands             |

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|--|---------------------------|
| 7. <i>Popanda Mulungu kundikonda ine</i> | Without God loving me     |
| <i>Nkadakhala yanii lero</i>             | Who would I be today      |
| <i>Popanda Yesu kundisintha ine</i>      | Without Jesus changing me |
| <i>Nkadakhala ndiri kuti lero</i>        | Where would I be today    |

Onse atakhala pansi, mlangizi abwereze kufotokoza za chikondi cha Mulungu kwa ife mwa Yesu Kristu, ifetu tiyenera kumumvera iye. Tiyenera kumvera malamulo ake chifukwa timamukonda. Onse ayimbe nyimbo iyi kulimbikitsa kuti pamene timvera Yesu, iye adzatimangira mabanja athu, mpingo wathu, ngakhale mudzi wathu, ndi china chili chonse.

While all are seated, one instructress should stress the fact that since God loved us through his Son, Jesus Christ, we return this love by obeying his commands. They should all sing the following song to emphasize when we obey Jesus he will build our families, our church, our community, and so on.

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|---|--|
| 8. <i>Limanga banja o dzina la Yesu</i>   | It builds marriage oh the name of Jesus      |
| <i>Limanga banjaa dzina la Yesu</i>       | It builds marriagee the name of Jesus        |
| <br><i>Limanga mpingo o dzina la Yesu</i> | <br>It builds the church o the name of Jesus |
| <i>Limanga mpingoo dzina la Yesu</i>      | It builds the church the name of Jesus       |
| <br><i>Limanga mudzi o dzina la Yesu</i>  | <br>It builds society o the name of Jesus    |
| <i>Limanga mudzii dzina la Yesu</i>       | It builds society the name of Jesus          |

Onse atakhala pansi, amayi awiri asonyeze sewero lamtsikana amene wakula koma akuganiza kuti waphweteka.

While all are seated two women act showing a girl who has matured but knows nothing and thinks she is hurt. She therefore tells her dad who takes her to the hospital.

*Mtsikana:* Adadi, taonani ine ndaphweteka, kaya ndi chiyani chandicheka!

*Abambo:* Aaa! Kodi mumasewera bwanji? Taonani tsopano waphweteka eeh! Onani magari! Tiyeni kuchipatala!

Anthu onse nkuseka. Ndipo anamkungwi aimirire nayambitse nyimbo (Masalimo 139:13-14):

*Girl:* Dad, look, I have hurt myself; I do not know what has cut me!

*Father:* O, No! How do you play? Look now you have hurt yourself, eh! Look at the blood! Let's go to the hospital!

They all laugh. Then the instructresses stand and begin to sing a song from Psalm 139:13-14.



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| 9. <i>Ndinu mudanlenga inetu eee!</i>      | You created me yaa!                |
| <i>Mudandiumba bwinotu eee!</i>            | You moulded me well yaa!           |
| <i>Ntchito zanu zonse nzodabwitsa eee!</i> | Your works are wonderful yaa!      |
| <i>Onani lero ndakula</i>                  | Look today I have matured          |
| <i>Ndakulatu, ndakulaa.</i>                | I have matured, I have matured ye! |

Akatha kubvina, amulongosolele mtsikana kuti:

Mulungu adatilenga kuti thupi lamunthu likamakula limasinthika mumsinkhu ndi mmaonekedwe. Akafika msinkhu wina mtsikana amayamba kusamba kwa masiku seven kapena kucheperako (kutuluka magari kokozera). Kusambaku kumapitiria kamodzi pamwezi. Chizindikiro chimenechi chimaoneka kwa akazi onse. Chomwecho sizodetsa nkhawa kuti ndi matenda.

Kusambaku kumalozera zamtsogolo. Imeneyi ndi njira yomwe anakonza Mulungu pofuna kutipatsa mphatso za ana.

Apitirize kuyimba,

After dancing the instructresses should give the following explanation to the girl:

God created us so that as we grow our bodies change both physically and in how we look. At a certain point the girl begins to menstruate for about seven days or less (blood coming out of the private parts). This blood flow happens once a month to all women. It is not any illness to worry about. Menstruation foretells the future role. This is God's own way in order for us to have children.

They should continue singing,

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|---|--|
| 10. <i>Mwateremu dzisamalen i Joyce x 3</i> | Now with this, take care of yourself Joyce |
| <i>Bvalani mwele</i>                        | Wear menses linen                          |
| 11. <i>Nchenje, nchenje, taona</i>          | Fly, fly, look                             |
| <i>Nchenje, yaonanji?</i>                   | Fly, what has it seen                      |
| <i>Yaona n'nkhole</i>                       | It has seen the menses                     |

Kutanthauza kwa nyimboyi ndiye kuti namwaliyo adzidzisamalira maka akamasamba kuopa kununkha.

The meaning of the song is that the girl should take care of herself whenever she is menstruating so that she does not smell.

Anamkungwi amuonetse mtsikana kabvalidwe ka mwele bwino-bwino. Amupatse nayenso achite monga waonera mpakana akhonze ndipo anthu alulutire. Amuonetsenso kachapidwe ndi kasungidwe kache pamene nyimbo ikuimbidwabe. Potsiriza abwereze kumulongozolela kuti:

While still singing, the instructresses should demonstrate and teach her well how to wear the men-ses linen and how to clean and take care of them. They should then explain the following to her:

Tsopanotu iye ayenera kudzisamalira thupi lake koposa kale. Akhale waukhondo nthawi zonse ndi thupi ndi zobvala zake. Mtsikana adzisamalire kwenikweni thupi lake ndi nsaru zake panthawi imene ali mumsambo kuti asapezeke akutulutsa fungo loipa. Komanso asakhetsere paliponse mwazi wamsambo, popeza zimachititsa manyazi kuti ena aone mwazi umenewu. Kuyimba kupitirire.

Now she must take care of her body more than before. She must keep her body and her clothes clean at all times, particularly when she is menstruating so that no bad smell comes out. She must make sure that no blood stains remain anywhere for is it a shameful thing for people to see the stains. The singing continues.

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|---|-------------------------------------|
| 12. <i>Kumana, kumana mtsikana x 2</i>      | Refuse, refuse the girl             |
| <i>Mmati undipatse</i>                      | I wanted you to give me             |
| <i>Wabvundikira</i>                         | You have covered                    |
| 13. <i>Mulungu adawauza Adamu nda aHava</i> | God told Adam and Eve               |
| <i>Muberekane, muchurukane</i>              | Be fruitful, and increase in number |

Longosolani kuti njira imene amatipatsira ana Mulungu ndi yakugonana mwamuna ndi mkazi amene ali pabanja. Kugonana kwa mwamuna ndi mkazi amene sali pabanja ndi chimo la chigololo pamaso pa Mulungu ('Usachite chigololo' Eksodo 20:14; 1 Akorinto 6:13, 19).

They should explain that God gives us children through sexual activity in a marriage. Therefore sex outside marriage is adultery to God ('Do not commit adultery' Exodus 20:14; 1 Corinthians 6:13, 19).

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|--|------------------------------------|
| 14. <i>Kodi lamulo la Mulungu likuti chiani?</i> | What does God's law say?           |
| <i>Likuti Usachite chigololo</i>                 | It says do not commit adultery     |
| 15. <i>Kodi abale simudziwa ee!</i>              | Friends, do you not know eh!       |
| <i>Simudziwaaa ee!</i>                           | Do you not know eh!                |
| <i>Kodi abale simudziwa ee!</i>                  | Friends, do you not know eh!       |
| <i>Simudziwaa ee!</i>                            | Do you not know eh!                |
| <i>Thupi lanu liri kachisi, liri kachisi</i>     | Your body is a temple, is a temple |
| <i>Wa Mzimu Woyeraaa!</i>                        | Of the Holy Spiritiii!             |

Onse azibvina akugwira thupi lawo ndikusonyeza kumwamba kokhala Mzimu Woyera.

They should be dancing while touching their bodies and pointing towards heaven where the Holy Spirit is.

16. <i>Mwendo, mwendo nkuyenda</i>	Leg, leg is for walking
<i>Maso, maso nkupenyera</i>	Eyes, eyes are for looking
<i>Chimodzimodzi, ziwalo zachinsinsi</i>	Similarly, private parts
<i>Ntchito yake m'banja</i>	Their job is in marriage

Amayiwo ayenera kusonyeza ntchito yake ya chiwalo chochulidwacho. Koma akachula ziwalo za chinsinsi, azisonyeza pongodikhula mwaubwino. Ayenera kumubvinitanso namwaliyo.

Chiphunzitso chake ndi chomwecho chakudzisunga osadzidetsa mpaka adza-kwatiwe. Chiwalo chiri chonse chiyenera kugwiritsidwa ntchito molemekeza Mulungu.

The women demonstrate the use of the part that is mentioned, such as leg for walking. But for the private parts, they should demonstrate by shaking their waist up and down. They should let the initiate dance also.

The teaching is still on sexual purity until marriage. Each part of the body should be used to honour God.

Chiphunzitso chotsatirachi chipangidwe musewero. Ndilokhuza atsikana awiri kapena atatu amene akuphunzira kumachokera pakhomu pamakolo awo.

The following instruction should be acted by two to three girls who are day schooling and are staying with their parents.

Atsikanawo akaweruka kusukulu, mmodzi amabwerera kunyumba, koma enawo amayamba kucheza ndi anyamata nkumakafika mochedwa kunyumba. Makolo awo akawafunsa amati amagwira ntchito yasukulu. Patapita nthawi, mmodzi wapezeka ali ndi pakati nasiya sukulu. Mnyamata wake adaikana mimbayo. Mtsikanayo anabvutika nayo mimbayo popezanso makolo amtsikanayo anaipidwa nazo. Mwana atabadwa, mtsikanayo amangodwala dwala ndipo mayi wake analibe nthawi yomuthandiza, popeza anali mayi wa bizinesi. Mtsikanayo amangosilira mzake uja atatsiriza sukulu mpaka kumanga ukwati ku mpingo. Kudwala kudapitirira mpaka kumwalira. Pamaliro anthu ankangonong'onezana nkumati kodi si edzi imeneyi?

After school, one girl goes straight home while the other two go somewhere else with their boy-friends and reach home later. When their mothers ask them why they always come later, they say they were doing some work at school. After sometime, one girl becomes pregnant and stops school. The boy refuses responsibility and gets away with it. The girl is very upset and sad about it, but she can't do anything. Her parents also are angry with her. After having a baby, she is always sick, and her mother, a business woman, has no time to take care of her and the baby. She envies her friend who finished school and wedded in church. Her health deteriorates and she dies, leaving the baby. At the funeral people were asking each other 'did she not die of this deadly disease called HIV/AIDS?'

Potsiriza atsikana onse adaimba, akuzungulira, ndikugwedeza mapewa kusonyeza kukana.

They end by singing while going round and moving their shoulders demonstrating refusal:

17. <i>Ine toto, ine toto</i>	Me no no, me no no
<i>Ine, toto'edzi ndaikana</i>	Me, no, no, AIDS I have refused it
<i>Mankhwala sikondomu, ine toto</i>	Medicine is not condom, me no no
 <i>Edzi ndaikana</i>	 AIDS I have refused it
<i>Mankhwala nkuziletsa,</i>	Medicine is self-control,
<i>Kudziletsa annanu, kudziletsa</i>	Self-control you children, self-control
<i>Edzi ndaikana.</i>	AIDS I have refused it.

Alangizi alongosolele bwino bwino za kuopsya kwake kwa matenda opatsirana kudzera muchiwere-were monga chizonono kapena chindoko. Koma makamaka matenda a masiku ano a HIV/AIDS amene alibe mankhwala ochiritsa. Mankhwala abwino ochinjiriza ndiwo a kudziletsa, osachita chigololo. Atsikana osakwatiwa asalole kugona ndi mwamuna amene akugwiritsa ntchito makondomu. Ayenera kulemekeza Mulungu mwa kusunga thupi lake moyenera.

The instructresses should explain well the danger of contracting venereal diseases like syphilis or gonorrhoea. The most deadly disease is HIV/AIDS which has no cure. The best remedy is a self-controlled lifestyle, not indulging in sexual immorality. Unmarried girls should not even agree to sleep with men who use condoms. The girls must honour God by keeping their bodies pure.

Potsiriza nthawi yammamawa alangizi amusambitse mtsikanayo ndi madzi ofunda, abvale zobvala zabwino. Mutsimbamo ayenera kukonza bwino. Ndi nthawi yoti atsirize kumulanga akumusupa mtsikanayo. Mai a mwanayo ayenera kuyamba gawo limeneli. Adzimuyamikira kapena kumuzuzula uku akuponya ndalama pamtsikanayo. Onse achibale akatha, alangizi aonjezere ndi kutsirira ndemanga pa mau a makolo. Wena wonse achitenso chimodzimodzi, kuponya ndalama pamene akumulangiza. Alangizi berezenso ziphunzitso ziri mmunsimu.

At the end in the early morning hours the instructresses should bath the initiate with warm water and let her wear nice clothes. They should clean the room, ready for the last section of the instruc-

tion and gift-giving time. While all are seated, the mother should begin commending and rebuking the initiate while throwing her gifts to the girl. Other relatives should follow. The instructresses should repeat for emphasis where necessary. The rest do likewise while throwing their gifts. The instructresses should repeat instruction on the following points:

Lero mwakula chifukwa cha chikondi cha Mulungu. Yesu adanena kuti lamulo lalikulu ndi kukonda Mulungu ndi mtima wako wonse, ndi moyo wako wonse, ndi nzeru zako zonse, ndi mphamvu yako yonse, ndi kukonda mzanko monga udzikonda mwini (Marko 12:30-31). Chikondi choterechi chidzakupangitsa iwe kumvera izi:

Today you are now an adult because of God's love. Jesus said that the greatest command is 'to love God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength,' followed by loving your friend as you love yourself (Mark 12:30-31). This kind of love should be the driving force for you to obey these things:

Asamasewere ndi ana ochepa msinkhu popeza iye wateremu wakula tsopano.  
Not to play with children since she has now matured.

Adzilemekeza makolo, mafumu ndi akulu.  
To respect parents, chiefs and elders.

Adzikhala womvera.  
To be obedient.

Adzipewa mabodza, kuba, ndi ndeu.  
To avoid lying, stealing, and fighting.

Adzikhala wolimbikira pa kugwira ntchito pakhomo, mmudzi, ndi kumpingo.  
To be industrious in the home, in the village, and in the church.

Adzilimbika kupita kuchalichi kukapemphera.  
To be committed in attending church services.

Asamalumbira ndi kutchula dzina la Mulungu pachabe.  
Not to swear and mention God's name in vain.

Adzichitira ulemu nyumba ya Mulungu.  
To respect God's house.

Alangizi aptirize kulimbikitsa kuti kubvinidwa kotereku kukukhadzikitsa uChewa wake komanso chiKhristu chache. Ndipo khalidwe lake losinthika lidzakhala



umboni kwa atsikana ena kuti nawonso afune kubwera kwa Yesu ndi ku mpingo wake.

The instructresses need to emphasize to the initiate that going through this Christian *chinamwali* establishes her identity as a Chewa girl, and as a Christian. Her changed behaviour should be a testimony to her friends so that they will also desire to come to Jesus, join his church, and go through the Christian *chinamwali*.

Potsiriza peni-peni apempherere namwali kuti Mulungu amuteteze ndi kumuthandiza adzisunge mpaka akalowe m'banja. Wopemphera amusanjike manja namwaliyo pomupempherera. Kudya ndi kumwa onse pamodzi ndi kubalalikana zitseke zonse. Alangizi ndi aphungu amuperekeze namwaliyo kwawo atafundira nsalu kumutu nthawi yakummawa komweko. Nyimbo yake:

At the end the initiate should be prayed for so that God protects her and helps her to remain pure until marriage. The one praying should lay hands on the initiate. Eating and drinking together should end the ceremony after which people can disperse. The instructresses and tutors should escort the girl home while singing:

18. *Mtetezi wanga Yesu*  
*Mtetezi wanga*

My protector is Jesus  
My protector

Wotsogolera nyimbo adzisintha mawu ndikuikira wena monga 'momboli wanga,' 'mchiriti wanga,' 'mbuye wanga,' chomwecho akuyenda. Akalandiridwa kunyumba, alangizi apemphererenso mtsikana pamodzi ndi makolo ake, kuyamika Mulungu chifukwa cha nthawi yabwino ndi mwambo wonse umene mtsikana walandira.

The leader should be mentioning all that Jesus is, such as 'my saviour,' 'my healer,' 'my lord,' and so on as they walk. At home the instructress should pray with the girl and her parents, thanking God for the good time they had and for the instruction the girl has received.

Sabata lotsatira, panthawi yamapemphero payenera kukhala kamwambo womulandira mtsikana ku mpingo. Amfumu aitanidwe kudzaonerera. Potsiriza mape-mphero pakhale chiyanjano ndi kumwa thobwa pamodzi kusonyeza umodzi wa anthu a chikhulupiro chimodzi.

The following Sunday, during the worship service there should be a small ceremony to introduce and incorporate the young woman to the wider society. The chief or his representative should be invited to the worship service. A drink of sweet beer should be served at the end of the service to symbolize an act of fellowship and the embracing into the corporate body of faith.

## 7.5 CONCLUSION

The aim of this liturgy is that the Christian *chinamwali* be a means of evangelism and discipleship in itself, enabling young women to recognise the Lord through the very event, thus wanting to dedicate their lives to God in holiness, and to wait for a husband in marriage. Through this study one has moved from pre-Christian *chinamwali* to a Christian *chilangizo* which is in fact a Christian *chinamwali*. This too, is part of the religious itinerary of the Chewa people.

Pre-Christian *chinamwali* has a socio-religious significance in Chewa society. Its symbolic meaning is that of death to the old life and re-birth into the new life of adulthood, where the young woman is re-incorporated into the community of the living and the dead. *Chinamwali* is the transition rite where ancestral customs are passed to younger generations, and this gives the young woman a sense of identity and history. The initial Christian response to the traditional rite was in the form of a booklet, *Bukhu la Alangizi*. Through observing three ceremonies, interviews and discussions, the author assessed whether *chilangizo* is an adequate response to the traditional rite. The study revealed that while the Christian response attempted to respond to *chinamwali*, it falls far short of meeting the needs of the Chewa people. The church does not respond adequately to the issue of puberty as a full ritual of transition and incorporation into community, where the young woman is treated as a whole person. It does not reflect the Chewa sense of identity and history, for while it fulfils technically the categories of a transition rite, in reality *chilangizo* is far from the dynamism of the traditional rite. Although *chilangizo* is claimed to be a 'Christian' rite, the biblical teaching is too abstract and depends on literary 'text' rather than allowing Scripture to interpret the *chinamwali* and all its meanings. The church has also failed to empower the practitioners to develop an effective ministry, hence there is much dissonance between theory and practice, which has also resulted in *alangizi* losing their credibility among both Christians and non-Christians.

Learning about *chinamwali* and its meanings and then re-interpreting *chinamwali* using the Chewa Scriptures enables Chewa Christians to move from the pre-Christian *chinamwali* to Christian meaning which therefore produces a Christian *chinamwali*.

I hope that through this study what people will experience is a sense of transformation and conversion as they move from the pre-Christian *chinamwali* to the Christian meaning of *chinamwali* and to a Christian *chinamwali*. It is hoped that this study also provides a pattern and model for the ongoing religious journey of Chewa Christians as they seek to do a critical analysis of many other aspects of Chewa and African culture and use the Scriptures to interpret what is learned regarding the meanings of culture.

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## ENDNOTES

### *Chapter one*

1. The Presbyterian Church of Nkhoma Synod was the first to adopt *chilangizo* in the place of the traditional rite. See Phiri I, 1997. *Women, Presbyterianism and Patriarchy*.
2. *Chilangizo* does not include boys' initiation rites, whilst *chinamwali* includes the boys initiation. Male *alangizi* are chosen in the Baptist churches, but I was informed that they instruct the young man only on his wedding ceremony, and not before.
3. It is the *motto* of the Baptist theological training in Malawi.
4. The instructresses stressed the need for such combined meetings because that was what other churches in their areas were doing, and it was helping to have the girls marry in church. The first thing on the programme was to check that none of the girls was pregnant. This is similar to what happens during the traditional ceremony.
5. Any photos from the traditional rite have been used in this paper with permission (see Plates 1, 2 and 3).
6. Emphasis on the use of mother tongue language is made in this dissertation because in other African societies the mother tongue scriptures may not be used. In addition, a situation may arise in future in the Chewa context where young people who do not have a good command of English are tempted to use English Scriptures rather than mother tongue, because they see English as a sign of 'modernity.' Thus they fail to appreciate the fact that God speaks to us in Chewa, and that we also hear him better in our own mother tongues (see Acts 2:6-8).

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*Chapter two*

7. See Howell, A (2001) for a full discussion on *The religious itinerary of a Ghanaian people*.
8. We know from African Church history that the Church has been in Africa much longer than it has been in the West. Sundkler and Steed (2000:7) point out that there is immense 'literature devoted to the first thousand years of Church history in Egypt, Nubia, Ethiopia and North Africa.' What began in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was the modern missionary movement which enabled people in southern Africa to hear about Jesus Christ.
9. Department of Surveys, Blantyre, 1996.
10. See *Malawi population and housing census report*, December 2000.
11. Mvera in Dowa was the first station that the Dutch Reformed Church Mission built in 1889, while Kongwe in Ntchisi district was the second station, built in 1894 (Pauw 1980:9-10).
12. Here again DRCM work was subsequently established (Pauw 1980:10).
13. Department of Surveys, Blantyre, 1996.
14. Moreau uses 'spirits' to refer to both the spirits of the dead and other spiritual beings.
15. 'Obscene' (*zolaula*) is a Christian reaction, while the Chewa regard it as a 'sacred' language used during the 'liminal' state.
16. For a full discussion see Turner, H W 1977. The primal religions of the world and their study in Hayes, V (ed.) 1977. *Australian essays in world religions* (27-37) and Bediako, K 1995. *Christianity in Africa: The renewal of a non-Western religion*, (91-108).

*Chapter three*

17. Mbiti lists spontaneous evangelization; the work by catechists, church ministers, teachers and preachers; African missionaries among peoples of other languages; the African traditional religion; and the Bible in the languages of the African people as the contribution of the Africans themselves in the spreading of the gospel.
18. For a fuller discussion on the making of a European worldview and primal religion see part one of Bediako, G 1997. *Primal religion and the Bible*.
19. Southern Baptists rank Sunday School and Bible Study as primary educative tools for evangelism and spiritual maturity. They encourage their local congregations to make full use of these tools. Baptist Con-

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vention churches in Malawi adopted and continued with the same methodology, doing Sunday School on Sunday mornings, and Bible study usually during the week (see Longwe 2000:75).

20. The Zion Church at Ndalama in Zomba chose to become a Baptist church. However, after about two years, it reverted to Zion, see Longwe 2000:71.

21. Albright's work among the tribal people gave him ample time to study, know, and trust the Chewa people. He found them to be capable in guiding themselves. This kind of attitude towards the indigenous people brought some misunderstanding between Albright and the later missionaries when the Baptist national leaders expressed desire to form their own national body (see Longwe 2000).

22. Rachel Banda (2001) discusses fully the history of the Baptist women's organisation in Malawi.

23. The number of churches in the associations range from six to twenty. However, Lilongwe is an extraordinary association with more than a hundred churches.

24. That all believers are equal and that all have equal privileges before God. There is therefore no one who is higher in authority over another. In other words, there is no hierarchical structure.

25. There are however varying degrees of centralising tendencies shown by BACOMA central leadership.

#### *Chapter four*

26. Although Phiri mentions four stages, she lists five stages as follows. The first initiation ceremony is the puberty rite, marking the end of childhood and the beginning of womanhood. The second ceremony is when the matured girl has found a partner to marry, she undergoes sex education. After marriage, the couple receives instruction on how to live as a couple. The fourth ceremony is the first pregnancy, followed by instruction after the birth of the baby. See Phiri (1997:34-36).

27. *Mdulo* is a 'cultural disease' believed to be caused by breaking cultural taboos. See Van Breugel (2001:169-209) and DeGabriele (1999: 9-23) for a full discussion.

28. In matrilineal society, *mbumba* means female subjects from the maternal side, and in Chewa society, they have great influence in the choice of chiefs.

29. Salt is believed to be 'hot' just as the menstruating woman is 'hot' and can cause *mdulo*. See Van Breugel (2001:175-177) for a full discussion.

30. The normal context for choosing a chief is when the incumbent dies, and the elderly women discuss as to who should be the successor. In other cases, when a chief's jurisdiction becomes too large for him, some families may require to separate themselves from him and choose their own chief among them. If granted permission, then a new chief is installed. A new chief can be male or female. The new chief may



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also be either a Christian or a non-Christian. One informant remarked that nowadays the number of Christian chiefs is growing. However, if a Christian chief is installed, he cannot go to the next level in traditional Chewa society unless he gives up his Christian status, because he has to own *mzinda* (*nyau*.)

31. I failed to get more information regarding this ritual.

32. To illustrate how even Christians are fearful of the *mkangali*, during my field work as I was observing the ceremony, the pastor with whom I was working could not sleep well thinking that anything bad could happen to me. Similarly, other Chewa Christians thought I had been bewitched when they saw that I came out with a swollen foot.

33. For a bigger list of the animal structures and masked dancers, see Van Breugel (2002:156-166).

34. My informant said that in other places, the women carry the stones on their heads but in a big basket and drop them at the place where the fire is to be made.

35. I was informed that sometimes the young *nyau* dancers get drunk before performing. They can therefore be quite rough and cruel. If any woman is found outside at night during this time, the young men 'capture' her and send her to the men's initiation place (*dambwe*) where she is initiated into the men's rite. Many informants said that if a woman is initiated at the men's rite, she undergoes untold sexual ordeals.

36. Since people are very suspicious about each other, the friend must really be a very good friend who cannot harm the girl.

37. Soon after her initiation ceremony, women usually test the new initiate to see if she remembers what she learnt. She should be able to say any one or more of them.

38. Most of the songs at the tree mention 'animal' to refer to the initiates. I could not get the real meaning.

39. Here the checking cannot be for chastity because the girl would have been exposed to sexual activity with a man called *fisi*, (hyena) at the end of her first menses. This results in moral laxity in Chewa society and poses great challenge to Christian moral values as well as to the issue of HIV/AIDS pandemic.

40. I was informed that if a girl is found to be pregnant, the mother answers a big case (*mlandu*) before the chief. The proper procedure would be to report the pregnancy a week before this ceremony, so that the instructresses instruct her separately concerning the pregnancy before joining the other initiates on this ceremony. However the ceremony that I attended, the explanation for searching was not for pregnancy, but to collect the money.

41. No meaning behind the decoration was given, but the white (paste) signifies the purity of the initiates.

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42. The whole girls' ceremony at the tree is called *chiwulu-wulu* from the verb *kuwuluka* (to fly). Sometimes this day is called *tsiku la chiwulu-wulu* (the 'flying' day). Similarly, the girls carried on the shoulders are likened to the flying birds. That is why the girls were given names of birds. Another informant explained that this was a traditional way of displaying the girls to the men so that they can choose who to marry. Even the dressing of the girls was up to the waist only, leaving the whole top part bare. In a similar way, in the churches, the youth camps and meetings also act as occasions for choice of spouse (Int. Chiwayu, 2/7/2001).

43. *Phwiti* is a very small bird, living in the village fence (Scott and Hetherwick 1929).

44. *Lumbe*, the night-jar with long wing feathers (Scott and Hetherwick 1929).

45. Although I attended the chief's vigil, it is outside the scope of this paper to give the full documented text. It is an area that requires further pursuance. However, I was informed that this marked the climax of the *mkangali* ceremony for it is where the new chief is 'officially' given some kind of a certificate in the form of a package covered in either an old blanket or sack cloth containing some secret magical items. The package is named *chitamba* (the elephant's trunk), and contain a small axe, a small axe handle, and the *zitsamba* (magical herbs). Another informant said that included in the package is a human part from a dead baby. The chief in charge of the whole ceremony prepares this trunk and hands it over to the new chief at this ceremony. It is the chief's property, and together with his wife (wives), he must observe all taboos surrounding it, otherwise he or she will die. It is to be kept in the first wife's house, never to be moved, and when the chief dies, he will be buried with it. If the wife does not produce the trunk on the chief's death she has a big case (*mlandu*) to answer.

46. While the small lamp does not give enough light to the room, it is also a deliberate requirement to keep the light low.

47. The Chewa are a matrilineal culture where the husband stays at the wife's home, and many times the young couple build closer to the parents' house.

48. This concerns *mdulo* taboos and the instruction also forms a vital part of the chief's vigil, where two women acted in the similar way to teach the new chief the importance of observing the sexual taboos especially when the *nyau* are in seclusion.

49. Since the girls are not yet married, the women do not explain the meanings of all the *miyambo*. This is just the beginning. When the girl finds a spouse to marry, the elderly women counsel both of them regarding marriage. This time they explain fully the meanings to the couple.

50. In addition to this meaning of 'nursing' or 'rearing,' Van Breugel (2001:30) gives a nineteenth century association of *Leza* with 'the lightning' from T C Young (1961), The idea of God in Northern Nyasaland.

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51. *Chingondo* must have a very significant role for the *mkangali* ceremony. It is also called *chinyama* (big animal). The women speak of 'taking it out from the water' (*kubvuula*). The real meaning is not water but 'coming out from the bush'. *Chingondo* is also what distinguishes *mkangali* from the other initiations either for the chief or for the girls.

During the 'mock' ceremonies, the first group of the instructresses showed and explained the make-up to me. However, with the second group of the instructresses, when we reached the *chingondo* day, they told me that it was a very secret thing that they could not talk about it. They assured me that I would observe everything during the actual ceremony, when they would explain the meaning as well. However, it was unfortunate that I could not observe the actual ritual during the ceremony due to the restrictions as to who should actually attend.

52. The white and red colours stand for purity and defilement respectively, while black stands for very dark blood which is very dangerous. The colours show that when a girl is menstruating, she is defiled, she is in red, and therefore dangerous. After her menses, she is pure, hence the white colour.

53. Many informants added that any piece from the *chingondo* can be used by traditional medicine men as activating agent (*chizimba*) for business people to use in order to attract more customers.

54. They are actually shown that the *nyau* structures are made of ordinary items such as maize cob husks, grass, and that it is people who do wear them; they are not real animals.

55. Nowadays, it is possible for the man to meet with the girl first upon payment of some money to ask her to marry him. The initiate is free to accept or not. In the past the girl had no choice but to accept whoever man the parents wanted.

56. Not everything concerning married life is explained in full at the girls' initiation ceremony, but is explained at the marriage ceremony when the young woman and the young man instructed by the *anamkungwi*.

57. The elongation of the *labia minora* is a physical act by pulling to make longer without any cutting.

58. The Chewa women use different terms to refer to the practice of elongating the *labia minora* such as *kutola nyerere* (picking ants), *kuphwanya nyini* (to break the *labia minora*), *kusewera kuchitsamba* (to play at the big leaf), or *kukuna* (to pull).

59. The mother should also abstain from sexual activity during every pregnancy of her daughter for at least seven months until the baby has undergone some rituals to 'make it strong' three to four months after the birth of the baby. However, the daughter also abstains when her mother is away from her home. In both cases, it is to avoid from suffering from *mdulo*. See Van Breugel (2001:181-184; 204-207).

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Chapter five

60. For Roman Catholic response to initiation rites in Southern Malawi, Chakanza, J C (1988:157-167) reveals a continuing tension that the church's persistent opposition to traditional rites has created among the clergy. He has shown that 'a good number among the clergy are of the opinion that these puberty initiation rites should be eliminated and the right way.. is by condemnations and by being as hard as possible with the people concerned.'

For the Presbyterian Church in the Southern Malawi, Chingota, F (1988:146-155) shows that although the Synod finally adopted a 'Christian' initiation rite and that some Christians do send their children, others prefer to continue sending their children to non-Christian initiation rites, than to the Christian 'watered-down version of the real ones.'

The Anglicans, under the Universities' Mission to Central Africa (UMCA) experienced a similar tension with the Chewa traditional beliefs, especially with *nyau* and *unamwali (chinamwali)*. Stuart, R 1974. 'Christianity and the Chewa: The Anglican case, 1885-1950' shows the continuing hostility of the Missionaries and the African Christians towards *chinamwali* and the eventual adaptation to the Christian rite.

61. This is a copy of the current *chilangizo* booklet. Although it does not give the date it was revised, the booklet has undergone a few revisions since the first copy. Unfortunately, the Synod does not have the original copy. Appendix B contains only the table of contents.

62. See endnote number 60.

63. See the Chewa reaction in Linden, I 1974. *Catholics, peasants and Chewa resistance in Nyasaland: 1889-1939*.

64. *Amayi Phiri* (nee Njolomole), apart from being a pastor's wife, was 'an influential national leader' whose husband was director of the Baptist Bible School. She was also 'elected' to the Baptist Women's Union of Southern Africa (BWUSA) committee as the chairperson' (Banda 2001:162). It is clear that her positions qualified her to be selected to the task of producing the booklet.

65. Although Nkhoma Synod do not have a copy of the original version of their instruction booklet, from the current Nkhoma copy (see Appendix B), the contents are slightly similar to the Baptist current copy, though re-written in a different form. It is also important to note that Nkhoma Synod acted as pace-setters in the development of *chilangizo* for the later churches. The Roman Catholic and Assemblies of God *chilangizo* booklets contain similar information, but in different form.

66. I obtained the English version of the booklet, in its draft form, from one of the early missionaries, Mr. Bickers.

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*Chapter six*

67. Although the pastor's wife is not included in the booklet, she works with the *alangizi* as a leader because of her position. The parents sometimes inform her instead of the *alangizi*.

68. I observed this ceremony on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2001. Chimenya Baptist church is about ten kilometres away from the city in TA Njewa. Its membership is predominantly Chewa ethnic group. It has a Bible School graduate pastor. He and his wife are of Lomwe ethnic group from Southern Malawi. The pastor is both pastor and village headman.

69. I observed this ceremony on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2001. Mphindo is also a rural church situated off the main road in the southern part of the district, about eight kilometres away from the city in TA Chadza. Mphindo church has a seminary graduate Chewa pastor. Its membership is predominantly Chewa.

70. Although the word 'knock' is used, traditionally a person announces his or her coming at the door with the word '*Odi!*' ('Excuse me!'). The person in the house is supposed to respond with the words '*Eee! Lowani!*' ('Yes! Come in!'). This is regardless of whether the door is made of wood or grass.

71. I attended this ceremony on 15<sup>th</sup> August 2001. Mtendere church is situated in the northern part of the city. It has a seminary graduate pastor who is a Chewa. It is a multi-ethnic urban church.

72. Howell's experience of the Kasena people who are a highly oral people is that they are also highly intelligent (2001 [1997]).

*Chapter seven*

73. Some Western scholars, like Moreau, have tended to use the general term 'spirits' to refer to a whole range of divinities, nature spirits, evil spirits, guardian spirits, and human or ancestral spirits.

74. Like in the case of Leah in Genesis 29:31 'When the Lord saw that Leah was not loved, he opened her womb.'

75. Like in the case of Hannah in 1 Samuel 11:5 '... and the Lord had closed her womb.'

76. Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 26 list God's blessings for his people .

77. An example from the story in Mark 5:21-43 is that the woman's faith healed her, or she was 'made well' (v.34). Another example is from Mark 10:46-52, when the blind Bartimaeus was also told that 'your faith has healed you.' The Greek word for 'made well' or 'made healthy' means both to save and to heal, thus both physical and spiritual healing, (see 'Σώζω' in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 1971:135.Vol. 7).

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78. Both Christian and non-Christian informants made this remark to me. In addition to remarks from the Baptist circles, one Presbyterian woman leader, Mrs. Mzandu, who is also a Women's Coordinator with the Evangelical Association of Malawi, remarked that she had witnessed more than two couples who divorced soon after marriage because the women did not have the elongated *labia minora*. She emphasized how serious the issue is in some ethnic groups in the country.

However, in my field work, when I asked the Chewa women as to what they think about the ethnic groups who do female circumcision (like the Agikuyu in Kenya, [Hinga 1998:168-179]), and those who do nothing to the *labia minora*; their reaction was that they thought elongation of the *labia minora* was a universal practice. They did not believe there is female circumcision.

79. This *communitas* in Lilongwe Association is also evidenced in the women's weekly Bible Study groups, monthly meetings for fellowship, prayer and encouragement; in weddings; and in funerals. Women, more than men, show their solidarity in many of the social interactions.

This will, to some degree, parallel the initiation of young girls before puberty as performed in Southern Malawi (see Banda 2001:193-227).

81. Pre-puberty instruction guide is given at the beginning of the second section.

82. The churches can utilise programmes that are already in use in the churches to teach the young people sexual abstinence until marriage, such as TRUE LOVE WAITS programme.

83. Banda (2001) shows that in the Southern Malawi there is also a lot of instruction on sex in marriage in addition to purity before marriage. However, the Church needs to be sensitive here on sex education to the young women before marriage.

84. Part of the ceremony was constructed by one of the *alangizi* groups and the rest is mine. It is in the process of being developed. But it has not yet been used at the actual *chinamwali*.

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## **GLOSSARY OF CHEWA WORDS<sup>1</sup>**

Abambo	father; title attached to a man's name
Abusa	pastor
Agogo	grandmother/father
Akunjira	Leader of the <i>nyau</i>
Alangizi	Christian instructresses for <i>chilangizo</i>
Amayi busa	pastor's wife
Amayi	mother; title attached to a woman's name
Amfumu	chief
Anamkungwi	elderly women in charge of initiations
Aphungu	tutors in initiations
Azimu	spirits that trouble people
Bwalo	ground or open space in the village for meetings and <i>nyau</i> dances
Chauta	name for God
Chikamwini	a marriage system whereby a husband settles at his wife's home
Chikudzu-kudzu	literary plucking out, but it is a quick initiation rite for women who married before going through the actual <i>chinamwali</i>
Chikule	the initial instruction given to a girl by her aunt or grandmother on her first menstruation
Chilangizo	advice; instruction; Christian initiation rite
Chimera	maize malt
Chimkoko	<i>nyau</i> in the shape of cattle
Chinamwali	traditional initiation rite
Chinkhoswe	traditional wedding ceremony
Chiputu	pre-puberty initiation for girls in the Southern Region
Chirombo	wild beast; <i>nyau</i> dancer
Chitengwa	marriage system whereby a husband takes his wife to live with him at his village upon the giving of a gift to the wife's parents.
Chiwale	gambling game using beads



Chiwanda	a roaming spirit of a deceased who is not received into the spirit world because of his misdeeds
Chizimba	activating agent in traditional medicine
Dambo	low lands with grass
Dambwe	place where <i>nyau</i> structures are made, usually at the graveyard
Fisi	hyena; a man called to perform ritual intercourse with a girl at the end of her first menstruation
Gule wamkulu	big dance; <i>nyau</i> dance
Khonde	veranda
Khundabwi	herbal mixture given to a girl upon her first menstruation
Kudika	to abstain from sexual intercourse for a ritual purpose
Kudula	to cut; causing illness or death by transgressing a sexual taboo
Kukhwima	to be magically protected
Kulangiza	to advise; to instruct
Kulaula/Zolaula	to mention the male or female private parts
Kumeta	to shave; to be initiated
Kutenga mwana	a ritual some weeks after the birth of a child to give it strength
Kutsilika	to protect with magic
Kuzulula	a ritual ceremony for a chief to own <i>nyau</i> and the <i>bwalo</i> (ground)
Likulu	headquarters
Liunde	meeting place of the <i>nyau</i> near the <i>bwalo</i>
Makolo	parents; ancestors
Mankhwala	medicine
Mayi/amayi	mother, madam, or Mrs.
Mbumba	women under the protection and authority of a maternal uncle or brother
Mdulo	mysterious disease caused by the transgression of a sexual taboo
Mfiti	witch
Mfumu	chief
Mkanda	beads
Mkangali	the last stage of a chief's initiation rite

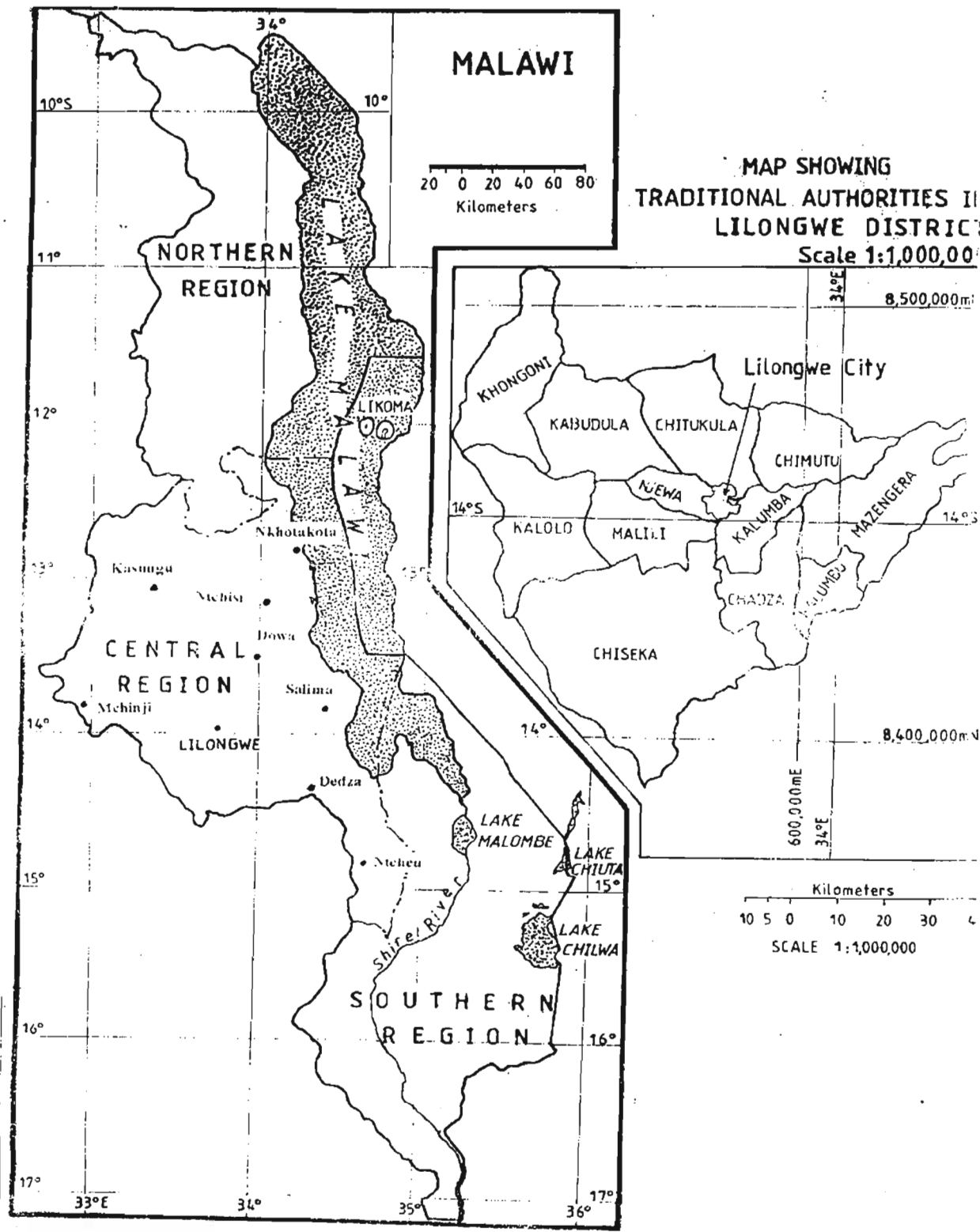
Mkuzi	string around the waist
Mlandu	a case or lawsuit
Mmeto	literally, a hair shaving, but it means an initiation rite
Mnjeza	a type of dance at a chief's installation or at <i>mkangali</i>
Mpalo	an annual ritual ceremony to remember those who died in the past year
Mtengo	tree
Mtsikana	girl
Mwambo, miyambo	custom(s)
Mzimu, mizimu	spirit(s) of the dead
Mzinda	the right granted to chiefs to own <i>nyau</i> and hold initiation for girls
Namwali	a girl; anyone undergoing initiation
Nchembere	an elderly woman or women who has/have had children.
Nkhoswe	a go-between to handle marriage negotiations and affairs
Nyau	masked secret society
Phungu	tutor at initiation
Sing'anga	medicine man; magician
Tsimba	seclusion house for initiates
Tsinde	ancestress through whom a lineage trace their descent
Ulemu	sign of respect shown to chiefs, elders and parents
Zachikunja	belonging outside, meaning 'unChristian'
Zirombo	wild beasts; <i>nyau</i> dancers
Zolaula	songs that mention the male or female private parts

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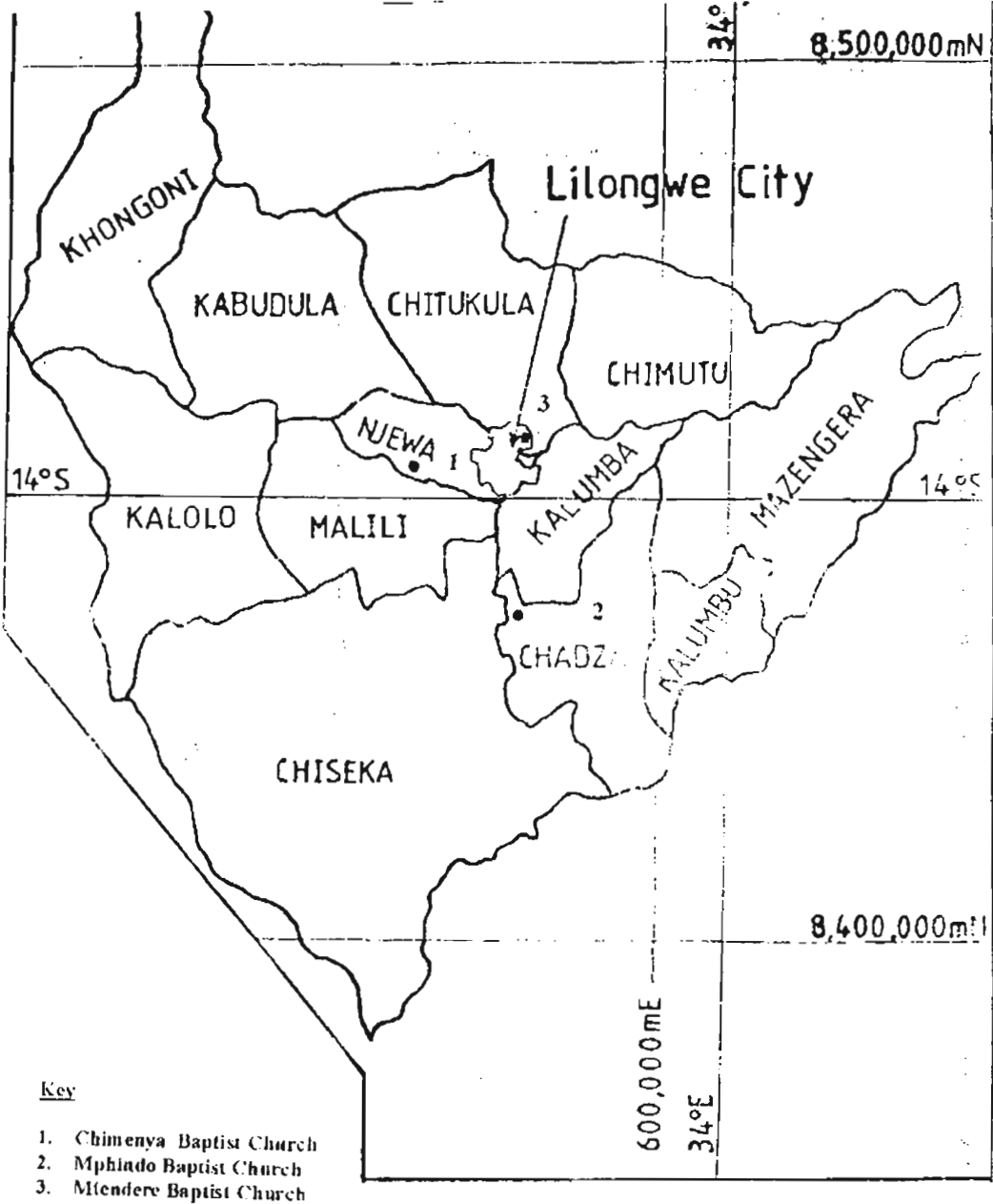
<sup>1</sup> The list was compiled from the following sources: (1) Phiri, I (1997:9) *Women, Presbyterianism and patriarchy*; (2) Van Breugel (2001:21-23) *Chewa traditional religion*; (3) Louw, J K 1987. *Chichewa: A practical course*; (4) *The student's English-Chichewa dictionary*, 1986 [1972]. Blantyre: CLAIM.

MAPS

MAP A Map of Malawi showing nine districts in Central Region



**MAP B. Map of Lilongwe showing Traditional Authorities and three Baptist Churches**

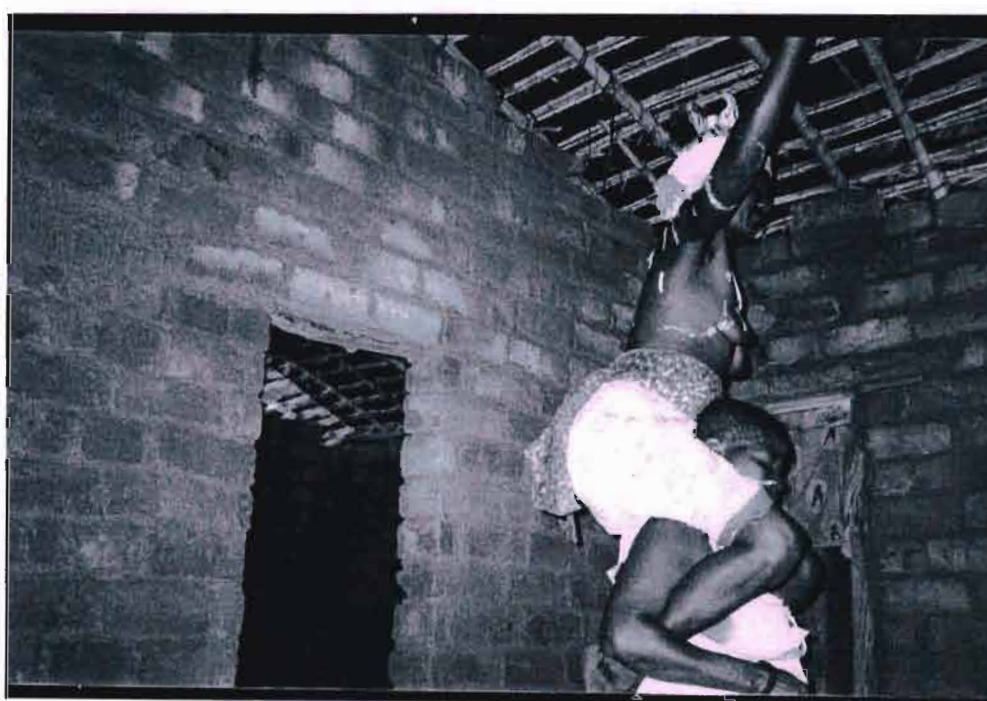


## PLATES

### PLATE 1     *Nyau*- The Heart of Chewa Religious Life and Thought



### PLATE 2     *Kuyangala* - An Initiate on the Shoulder of her *Phungu*





**PLATE 3**     *Chingondo* - On the Head of an Initiate



**PLATE 4**     *Chilangizo* at Chimenya Baptist Church





PLATE 5     *Chilangizo* at Mphindo Baptist Church



## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A *MKANGALI*: Documentation as observed by Molly Longwe from 4/09/01 to 8/09/01

The following explanation is a step-by-step description of the *Mkangali* ceremony according to the traditional beer brewing calendar, for that is how the Chewa people know what events take place on a particular day during the ceremony. Since I was not allowed to observe everything, the information from the mock ceremonies and interviews fill the gaps. More songs, sayings and variant teaching are also included. For discretion purposes, informants' names do not appear in the 'Sources Consulted' list while in the text I refer to them as 'my informants.'

#### DAY ONE: *TSIKU LOFULULA MOWA* (THE BEER BEGINNING DAY)

My main informant, her two relatives, and myself arrived at my informant's parents' home, about six kilometres away from Nathenje centre. The parents gladly welcomed us. After a few minutes rest we were given some lunch. When we finished we went to fetch water from a nearby *dambo* (brook). My informant disappeared and after about ten minutes we were summoned to go and fetch some firewood from the chief's house where the other women were also collecting firewood. The three of us rushed and collected our lot. My informant's mother (whom I will refer to as 'our mother' in this paper) told us to put the firewood in a house slightly away from hers (their niece's house). My informant's stepfather does not take part in the traditional initiation rites and does not drink beer. However, he permits the wife to participate and even brew beer.

In front of the chief's house was a tree, and about two metres away from the tree there was fire with a big clay pot on it. My informant told me that she came to check for the fire ritual, but it had already taken place, and that is why she just waited for the firewood collection. When we dropped the firewood, we went again to fetch more water from the *dambo*. Since the place was far away we made only two trips but filled a 210 litres metal drum which was already heating. I was very tired then. But my informant invited me to go and get some hot charcoal from the main fire at the

chief's house so that we could light a fire. Next to the chief's house was the *namkungwi's* (instructress's) house where women were busy lighting fires. Every fire was to be lit from the main one for that is where the protective deterrents were planted. At first there were only six big drums and six big clay pots called *mbiya* lined up on the fires. Later on, there were more pots and drums.

Facing the chief's house was a ground with few trees. Two larger trees seemed to be in the centre of the ground, and on the side of the ground twelve chiefs were seated on chairs, talking together, including the new chief. I was told that this was the *bwalo* (ground) for *gule wamkulu* (the big dance) and that was where public ceremonies were to be held.

### **Fortification of the Mkangali Ceremony**

I did not observe this ceremony, as they had already performed the ritual in the morning before we arrived. In other areas it is performed the night before. My informant said that the chief in charge of the ceremony plus one or two other chiefs, and the chief being initiated, go round planting deterrents at some strategic places – the ground, the main fire place, the seclusion house, *liunde*, and *mtengo wa namwali*. The purpose of the deterrents was for protection because '*anthu ambiri ndi achipongwe*' ('many people are evil'). 'It is therefore important that a chief protects his people (*mbumba*.)' There are various types of deterrents, each having its own instructions and taboos to be observed. However, the deterrents are for both benevolent and malevolent purposes.

### **Fire Ritual**

We also missed this ritual; it was done about noon. My informant said that the leading *namkungwi* (singular) summons the rest of the *anamkungwi* to go and fetch stones for the fireplace from a closeby area (three stones put in a triangle form the fire place). They drop the stones about six meters away from the fireplace at the chief's house. Then with large mats or pieces of cloth, they make some kind of a fence to shield all onlookers. Inside, the leading *namkungwi*, followed by the leading chief's wife (or wives), and the second *namkungwi* line up, lying flat on their tummies on the



ground. While crawling, each one pushes the stone with her head to the fireplace. They stand up after they are given some gift of money. After making the fire, all the *anamkungwi* carry the clay pot on to the fire, using not their whole hand, but one finger from both hands. The leading *namkungwi* then pours water into it using a cup. She follows the same brewing process with the rest of the beer. This beer is called *mowa wa njovu* (the elephant's beer). Only the chiefs and the *nyau* leaders drink this beer.

In the afternoon the atmosphere was quiet. Only women were seen busy around the fires. Some were pushing the firewood into the fire; some were putting flour into the drums while others were stirring; still others were seated and chatting. At our house my informant and her mother were also busy with their cooking. When the water was hot enough, the mother took maize flour and poured it into the drum while my informant was stirring with a long wooden spoon. We sat and chatted while the porridge was boiling.

As we sat we heard some noise and saw some children running towards us from the chief's house shouting '*zirombo! zirombo!*' ('animals! animals!'). When we looked, we saw four masked young men each carrying a stick and a small axe, moving up and down to where people were. When people ran away into their houses, the *zirombo* would also go away, and so on. This went on for a while since the children would run away and return inviting the *zirombo*, saying, 'come! come!' I saw some giving the *zirombo* money, which I learnt later was in small denominations of 10 or 20 Tambala coins. A few people would give them a note of five Kwacha.

The pots of porridge were then taken off the fires and poured into other drums/pots to cool down. After having our supper, my informant and I went to sleep in a smaller house (her brother's).<sup>1</sup> My informant explained the day's activities, especially what we had missed and what we were not going to see during the night. She did not know yet how many initiates there were, but indicated that the girls would sleep in one of the houses near the chief's house with other girls. The *zirombo*, *nkhandwe* (wild dogs) would be performing that night. They made all sorts of noise - knocking on doors from house to house around the village to be given money. The young men accompanying the *zirombo* were singing and clapping hands for the *zirombo*. After

going round the village they would go to make noise at the girls' house, where they would throw some leaves and/or ashes into the house at the girls. They would try to force open the door while the girls would scream and hold the door from inside. The *zirombo* would also make fire by the door and blow the smoke into the house; or they may burn tobacco leaves, or hot chillies in order to choke the girls. When the *aphungu* see that it is too much for the girls, they redeem them by giving the *zirombo* some money. Then the *zirombo* stop harassing the girls but continue to dance. I was told that many times the young *nyau* dancers (*zirombo*) get drunk before performing; therefore they can be quite rough and cruel. If any woman is found outside, the young men 'capture' her and send her to the men's initiation place (*dambwe*) where she is initiated into the men's rite. Many informants said that if a woman is initiated at the men's rite, she undergoes untold sexual ordeals.

The informant then indicated that the day's activities ended with *anamkungwi* preparing food for the *zirombo* late at night.

## **DAY TWO: TSIKU LOPHIKITSA MOWA (THE BEER RE-BOILING DAY)**

Early in the morning I heard women singing after they had cleaned the rubbish left by the *zirombo*:

*Bwera, bwera, udzamuone Popi  
Ali m'bwalomu!*

Come, come and see the Puppy  
He is in the ground!

In the meantime, my informant told me that the women would be drawing water very early in the morning because the *zirombo* would be staying at the water place, hence no one could draw water. I could see women carrying water containers on their heads and pouring into larger containers, while others were relighting the fires for boiling the beer.

While the beer was being reboiled as it was approaching noon, I heard remarks such as 'It means things are not well! The structures have not yet been completed!' This meant that the water place remained open for the *zirombo* did not go to the water place. They were still weaving the structures at the *dambwe*.

Later in the afternoon I heard singing and bell ringing, and I saw some of the people move towards the source of the sound. Soon I saw children running away. Then I saw a lion like *chirombo* (singular). The structure of the *chirombo* was woven with fine, combed grass and it looked like a puppy. A few women were singing the same song above for it while others were running away. The ‘puppy’ played around for a while then disappeared. I was about to take a nap when I heard another commotion and saw people rushing into houses. I knew it was another *chirombo*, and so I stayed indoor and peeped through a hole in the window. A group of young men were coming with a long *chirombo* called *chimboko*. It was artistically woven with maize husks and contained twelve people. Two smaller ones, containing only one person, joined it. The ‘puppy’ was also among them moving from one side to the other, playing around with the people. They were all heading to the ground, while the rest of us were cautiously following behind. A few women were singing closer to the *zirombo*, while many of the women and children would come closer, at the same time running away. At the ground they danced for a while then they disappeared.

On our way back to our home, I heard singing with drumming in the chief’s house. I was informed that those were the *anamkungwi* and the chiefs’ wives just practising, but also giving notice that ‘tonight’s programme is on!’ Then I saw some children and women moving towards the far back of the chief’s house. We followed, and my informant realised that they were going to *kumtengo wa namwali* (to the initiate’s tree). She said that she did not know at what time the girls were officially ‘captured.’ Nevertheless, she told me to follow her to the tree.

### **Kugwira anamwali (‘Capturing’ the initiates)**

The account of the ‘capturing’ of the girls and the ‘head cutting’ rituals is taken from the mock *chinamwali*.

The official ‘capturing’ of the initiates is usually done in the afternoon hours, although some carry it out in the morning. In the midst of the crowd, each *namkungwi*, takes a girl, covers her with a piece of cloth and announces: ‘*Lero ndiwe namwali, usatuluka kubwalo.*’ (‘Today you are an initiate, do not go outside’). They

all join in *ululating* and take the initiates into the seclusion house (*tsimba*). The tutors (*aphungu*) are then called to go inside and ‘cut the head’ (*kudula mutu*). The *phungu* (singular) is normally the one who named the girl at birth, or the mother may choose any trusted friend.<sup>2</sup> Then the leading *namkungwi* announces, ‘*dulani mutu!* (cut the head!). The tutors make the girls kneel and each tutor whispers a saying into one ear and another into the second ear of the girl. Although *kudula mutu* literary means ‘cutting the head’, its general meaning is that it is now *chiyambi choti namwali ayambe kumva mwambo* (it is now time to begin hearing the counsel). It involves whispering into the ears of the initiates. Any two of the following sayings are the usual ones to be said.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>1.     <i>Mzako akati tsegula</i><br/> <i>Kodi ntsegula bwa?</i><br/> <i>Uku phunthu uku phunthu</i><br/> <i>Pakati palenga dela</i><br/> <i>Tandiuza chalenga dela</i><br/> <i>Chalenga dela m'nkhole</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>Nkhole yanga ndi ukulu</i><br/> <i>Phungu liri ndi mwambo</i><br/> <i>Tsinkhinthi, mwambo m'nkhole</i><br/> <i>Kafunde, funda mwambo</i></p> | <p>When your friend says open<br/> How do I open?<br/> There is mount here and one here<br/> And a gap in the middle<br/> Tell me what has caused the gap<br/> The menses have caused the gap</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">My menses is adulthood<br/> The tutor has counsel<br/> The menses, counsel is secret<br/> Learning, learn the counsel</p> |
| <p>2.     <i>Mzako akati sendera</i><br/> <i>Kodi nsendera bwa?</i><br/> <i>Uku kuli bawe uku bawe</i><br/> <i>Pakati palenga dela</i><br/> <i>Tandiuza chalenga dela</i><br/> <i>Chalenga dela m'nkhole</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>Nkhole yanga ndi ukulu</i><br/> End as in 1 above</p>   | <p>When your friend says move closer<br/> How do I move closer?<br/> There is a mat here and one there<br/> And a gap in the middle<br/> Tell me what has caused the gap<br/> The menses have caused the gap</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">My menses is adulthood</p>   |
| <p>3.     <i>Mzako akati ndagona</i><br/> <i>Ndagona kalambilambi</i><br/> <i>Kalambilambi wamnjira</i><br/> <i>Uyo apita wampsyitikiza</i><br/> <i>Tandiuza wampsyitikiza</i><br/> <i>Wampsyitikiza m'nkhole</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>Nkhole yanga ndi ukulu</i><br/> End as in 1 above</p>  | <p>When a friend says I lie<br/> I lie flat<br/> Lying flat on the path<br/> Everyone passing steps on<br/> Tell me who steps on<br/> The menses steps on</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">My menses is adulthood</p>  |

Throughout the initiation period, the girls learn these sayings. The sayings also serve as a password after their initiation. To show that one was initiated, she must be able to respond correctly to the sayings. Even the newly wed couple test each other using the same sayings. To a couple the sayings are called *zakumphasa* (meaning ‘for the bedroom’). There are many other sayings with a similar ending whereby a new

initiate is tested by the old, either at the spring when she goes to draw water, on the way, or some woman may come to test her at her own home. The new initiate is expected to respond according to what the examiner does or says.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>4.     <i>Mzako akati madzi anga</i><br/> <i>Madzi anga mmatunga</i><br/> <i>Mmatunga kunkwapa</i><br/> <i>Kuli wana wa mikango</i><br/> <i>Aenda nalirima</i><br/> <i>Tandiuza chalirima</i><br/> <i>Chalirima m'nkhole</i></p> <p><i>Nkhole yanga ndi ukulu</i><br/> End as in 1 above</p>                | <p>When your friend says my water<br/> I was drawing my water<br/> I was drawing from the soil<br/> There are lion cubs<br/> They walk around roaring<br/> Tell me what has roared<br/> What has roared is menses</p> <p>My menses means maturity</p>              |
| <p>5.     <i>Mzako akati chikho changa</i><br/> <i>Chikho changa namatola</i><br/> <i>Chotunga kunkwapa</i><sup>3</sup><br/> <i>Kuli ana amikango</i><br/> <i>Aenda nalirima</i><br/> <i>Tandiuza chalilima</i><br/> <i>Chalilima m'nkhole</i></p> <p><i>Nkhole yanga ndi ukulu</i><br/> End as in 1 above</p> | <p>When your friend says my cup<br/> My cup, and (she) is picking (it up)<br/> It draws water from the soil<br/> There are lion cubs<br/> They walk around roaring<br/> Tell me what has roared<br/> What has roared is menses</p> <p>My menses means maturity</p> |
| <p>6.     <i>Mzako akati mphika wanga</i><br/> <i>Mphika wanga ndimapana</i><br/> <i>Ndimapana ndimakutu anyini</i><br/> <i>Mtu wambolo userereka</i><br/> <i>Tandiuza aserereka</i><br/> <i>Aserereka m'nkhole</i></p> <p><i>Nkhole yanga ndi ukulu</i><br/> End as in 1 above</p>                            | <p>When your friend says my pot<br/> My pot I was clasping<br/> I was clasping with the ears of the vagina<br/> The head of the penis is slipping<br/> Tell me what is slipping<br/> What is slipping is menses</p> <p>My menses means maturity</p>                |
| <p>7.     <i>Mzako akati ndaima</i><br/> <i>Ndaima mpholokoto</i><br/> <i>Ngati mtengo wakudambo</i><br/> <i>Pakubala ukuti wira</i><br/> <i>Pakugwa ukuti lakata</i><br/> <i>Tandiuza chalakata</i><br/> <i>Chalakata m'nkhole</i></p> <p><i>Nkhole yanga ndi ukulu</i><br/> End as in 1 above</p>            | <p>When your friend says I am standing<br/> Standing upright<br/> Like a tree at the brook<br/> When bearing fruit it dangles<br/> When falling, it does so heavily<br/> Tell me what has fallen down</p> <p>My menses means maturity</p>                          |

### **Kumtengo (Tree) Ritual**

With my informant we went to the initiate's tree (*mtengo wa namwali*) where about fifteen women were gathered, holding a mat to form a hedge. Inside the hedge two



girls, covered all round with cloth, were lying facing down in the middle of the circle. The tree was not at the very edge of the village, but was between two houses, and the women were busy chasing away the children, as well as some young men from one of the houses, who were trying to see what was going on. We joined the women who were not part of the circle. More than fifteen minutes passed while just standing. The women were asking each other, 'Who is to start a song?' Two women were ready with their drums.

The programme started by singing while going round the girls. Not all the women were expected to join the circle, and so the rest of us joined in singing. The following songs are sang on this first day at the tree:

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|------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. <i>Kuchidendene, chidendene</i> | At the heel, the heel |
| <i>Kuli mwankhula</i>              | There is speaking     |
| <i>Kuchidendene, chidendene</i>    | At the heel, the heel |
| <i>Kuli mwan'ana,</i>              | There is looking      |

While the girls were lying down, fully covered, the women danced round them, lifting their own heels.

Meaning: 'We have come to instruct you.'

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|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 2. <i>Chinyama, de de, chinyama</i> | The big animal, de de, the big animal |
| <i>Chinyama, ee! chinyama</i>       | The big animal, ee! The big animal    |

Meaning: 'You are now going to carry the animal' (referring to the head crown with an animal symbol that she will put on her head).

Women sang another song while still going round the girl.

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| 3. <i>Chalira, chalira, chalira</i> | It has cried, cried, cried   |
| <i>Chimndikiti, chalira</i>         | The heavy footstep has cried |
| <i>Chimndikiti chankhole</i>        | The heavy footstep of menses |

Meaning: 'We are making this heavy footstep (confidence) because of your menstruation.'

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|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 4. <i>Kanjoka kanga lele tate</i> | My small snake, <i>lele</i> , father |
| <i>Kakayenda were-were x 2</i>    | It was moving softly                 |

The women lay down and moved like a snake. In some places the girls crawled also.

5. *Insa<sup>4</sup>, maye, insa*  
*Insa yatukula*

A small antelope, hmm, antelope  
 An antelope has lifted itself up

The women, while kneeling, danced by shaking the tummy up and down.

Meaning: You are receiving the chief's counsel so that you should perform well in your marriage.

6. *Nchenje yalowa panyini*  
*Nchenje, yaonanji?*  
*Yaona n'nkhole*

A fly has entered the vagina  
 A fly, what has it seen?  
 It has seen the menstruation

While the women were rounding the girls, one woman pat the girls on their bottoms.

Meaning: When one is menstruating, she is rotten and she smells. Therefore, she should not have sex.

7. *Chagona, chagona apa nchiani*  
*Chimzenga, chimzenga*

What is lying here?  
 It is a *chimzenga* (animal)

The women pointed at the girls while singing and, at the end of the song, one woman shouted: *Tiyeni tigwire* (Let us capture!) Then they all responded: *Aaa! nyamaa!* (Yes! The animal!).

As they shouted, they all touched the girls and the girls were not supposed to be surprised (*kudzidzimuka*), for they should have been warned before.

The following was sang while four women, kneeling down, turned the girls from side to side. They were picking the money that the tutors had hidden under the girl's elbows and knees. They burst into another song.

8. *Namwali timsande de*  
*Tiwone icho chamluma*  
*Ngati wakula*

Initiate, let us search, de  
 Let us see what has bitten her  
 If she has matured

The song was repeated several times until they finished.

After collecting the money while still kneeling, they showed the money to each other and sang,

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| 9. <i>Mkanda de, mkanda wa mkamwa</i><br><i>Ndatola mkanda de, mkanda wamkamwa</i> | Beads, de, mouth beads<br>I have picked beads de, mouth beads |
| 10. <i>Taonani wanga mkanda</i><br><i>Mkanda wamkamwa</i>                          | Look at my beads<br>Mouth beads                               |
| 11. <i>Ndatola, ndatola, mphande</i><br><i>Ndatola mphande</i>                     | I have picked, picked money<br>I have picked money            |

Songs 9, 10 and 11 mean that this money (*mkanda and mphande*) is my gift for my mouth (speaking).

Then proudly one woman shows the money ('beads') to her friends to signify that the girls are all well. No one is pregnant, they sang.

In the following song they mentioned the names of the surrounding chiefs and each girl responded by pointing with her finger. But when the host chief's name was mentioned, each girl dropped her finger, showing that the ceremony is being held in this village.

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| 12. <i>Kalombo<sup>5</sup>, kalombo, walombola</i><br><i>Kwa a Kalumbu</i><br><i>Kwa a Phata</i> | A small beast, small beast,<br>At Kalumbu<br>At Phata |
|--|---|

After this song the girls were uncovered and seated upright.

Somebody mentioned that the drums were needed at the ground, and so the two drummers, together with some women, left for the ground. Only a few of us remained behind. A young girl brought mealie flour in a plate and a cup of water. As she came she covered herself with a cloth so that no one would see what she was carrying. She handed them to the kneeling women. One woman held the cup and poured water into the plate held by another woman, while two women made flour paste. These two women (one each) worked on the faces of the girls with the white mixture (*kulocha, or kutheka*). They started with a ring around the upper arm, then one dot on the forehead with three dots on each side of the face. They continued with two dots on the chest nearer the neck, two at the back nearer the neck also, and ended with a dot on the *paliombo* (upper forehead).

The girls were taught many songs and sayings at the tree by their friends to be said or performed before the instructresses. Some sayings are in the form of secret codes called *mikuluwiko* or *kamzunguze* (to go round), such as the following:

The instructress begins:

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|---|---|
| 13. <i>Mwana namwali tandiuza</i><br><i>Mkanda wamfumu, mayeee!</i><br><i>Mkanda wamfumu mayeee</i><br><i>Mwana namwali tandiuza</i><br><i>Mkanda wamfumu mayeee!</i> | Initiate tell me<br>The chief's bead, yee!<br>The chief's bead, yee!<br>Initiate, tell me<br>The chief's bead |
|---|---|

Then the girl goes and whispers to the instructress the correct meaning. In this case, she whispers: *M'machende* (It is testicles). If she is right, they sing (after every right response):

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| 14. <i>Uyuyu ndiye adameta</i><br><i>Uyuyu ndiye adameta</i><br><i>Lu lu lu lu</i> | This one is the initiated one<br>This one is the initiated oneee<br>Lu lu lu lu |
| 15. <i>Mwana namwali tandiuza</i><br><i>Mpando wamfumu</i>                         | Initiate tell me<br>The 'chief's chair'   |

She whispers: *bumbu* (It is the vagina)

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| 16. <i>Mwana namwali tandiuza</i><br><i>Sanza mphiri</i> | Initiate tell me<br>What is rugs in the hill |
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The girls responds: *Mmabvuzi* (Pubic hair)

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| 17. <i>Mwana namwali tandiuza</i><br><i>Sathyola ndiwo</i> | Initiate tell me<br>What is not picking relish |
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She whispers: *Nzama* (A nut)

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| 18. <i>Mwana namwali tandiuza</i><br><i>Maanga ankhanganga</i> | Initiate tell me<br>A guinea fowl's stripes |
|--|---|

The girls responds: *Chingondo* (the head crown)

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|---|---------------------------------------|
| 19. <i>Mwana namwali tandiuza</i><br><i>Kkapanda maso</i> | Initiate tell me<br>That without eyes |
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The girl's response: *Mbolo* (Penis)

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| 20. <i>Mwana namwali tandiuza</i><br><i>Nsawerengeka</i> | Initiate tell me<br>Countless |
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Her response: Hair

I left for the ground when a message came that the women should hurry up with the girls as the people were waiting for them.

### **The ceremony at the Ground**

At the ground I found the chiefs coming out of the chief's house entering the ground in a line for a dance called *mnjeza*. The men were holding either a stick or a branch, but the new chief was holding a flywhisk and had put on a hat, and a gown. The colour of the gown was same as that of his two wives traditional suits (sky blue). There were six men and sixteen women.

While the drumming continued, they danced in a circle, changed to a semi circle, then to a line, and so on. Sometimes they danced around the big tree or lined up in front of the drummers. Those who were seated went to give money gifts, especially to the new chief who was dancing vigorously. I did not record the songs for this dance.

Then the girls came in lined up with their tutors, but without the decorations on their faces. I noticed that the girls wore a piece of cloth on top of their skirts folded in a triangular way. I was informed that since they would be carried on the shoulders, the cloth would be like long pants. They joined the dancing crew for a while and went out running. They went back to the tree, and after a short while came back with the decorations on. I was informed that they had made a mistake to bring the girls already decorated at first. The girls joined the dancing, but were not dancing close to the men. The ground was packed with onlookers.

The *chipandamgaga* ceremony (stepping the soil) then commenced. In the midst of the crowd, all dancers moved a few meters away from the big tree to a spot where the magical deterrents were planted. The chief, his wives, the instructresses, and the girls were dancing with all their feet meeting at the spot.

21. *Chiponda mgaga, de de*  
*Wachiona chiponda mgaga*

The stepping of the soil, de de  
You have seen the stepping of the soil

Meaning: This is the initiation you were looking forward to, and this is the girl initiate that you were given. (Referring mainly to the first girl to be given to the chief).



After this ceremony, all the chiefs left for the house, leaving the girls to continue with the ceremony at the ground, but away from the spot for *chipondamgaga*.

The next phase of the ceremony is referred to as the *chiwulu-wulu* ceremony. The girls were again taken outside the ground on the shoulders of the tutors and they re-entered the ground while singing. The girls were not supposed to hold on to their tutors, but to dance according to the tune of the songs.

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| 22. <i>Taonani phwit<sup>6</sup>i maye</i> (solo)<br><i>Phwiti wasewera</i> (all) | Look at the bird (phwiti) mother<br>Phwiti is playing |
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The girls were shaking proudly only their shoulders. 'She is like this bird which plays closer to people without fear!' So it is also the girl's time to play for people to see.

Then followed another song:

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| 23. <i>Namwali penya m'mbuyomo de</i><br><i>Penya m'mbuyomo</i> | Initiate, look at the back, de<br>Look at the back |
|---|--|

The girls were also shaking while looking at the back.

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| 24. <i>Lumbe, lumbe, lumbe, lumbe<sup>7</sup></i><br><i>Lumbe sangalala</i> | Night-jar x 4<br>Night-jar be happy |
|---|-------------------------------------|

At this song the girls stretched their hands sideways and looked at the crowd from side to side (called *kuyangala* or display) and the crowd applauded them. Many came and gave them money.

The whole ceremony of the girls at the tree is called *chiwulu-wulu* from the verb *kuwuluka* (to fly). Sometimes this day is called *tsiku la chiwulu-wulu* (the 'flying' day). Like birds do fly, the girls were 'flying' on the shoulders, and that is why the girls were given names of birds. Another informant explained that this is a traditional way of displaying the girls to the men so that they can choose who they wish to marry.<sup>8</sup>

The girls danced for a while and then were dropped to the ground. They then formed a circle with their tutors while other *anamkungwi* continued to dance.

25. *Lelele kalambe* (repeated several times) Lelele, go and kneel

The following songs were from other sources:

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|---|--|
| 26. <i>Kaluluwe, kaluluwe</i><br><i>Kayende m'bwalomu</i>   | You hare, you hare<br>Go and walk in the ground  |
| 27. <i>Kudzakoko, kamsale<sup>9</sup></i><br><i>Komake namwali</i><br><i>Kuli nkhuku nkatenga</i> | Coming there, small millet<br>At the initiate's mother<br>There is chicken I will take |

The above two songs are sung while the girls enter the ground whether they come on their tutors' shoulders or not.

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| 28. <i>Chigumukire, kaya, de!</i><br><i>Chigumukire</i><br><i>Yaya lero, yaya lero</i><br><i>Kupanda mwana kutero</i><br><i>Chagumukiraaa!</i> | Falling apart, don't know, de!<br>Falling apart<br>Yaya today, yaya today<br>Being childless is like<br>It has fallen apart! |
| 29. <i>Kayalani mayi</i><br><i>Kayalani mphase</i><br><i>Kayalani namwali agonepo</i>  | Spread the mat mother<br>Spread the mat<br>Spread the mat for the girl to lie down   |
| 30. <i>Tindiwe, x 3</i><br><i>Wabvala mkanda wanji</i><br><i>Wabvala kaserekete</i>  | <i>Tindiwe</i> (Name of a bird)<br>What type of bead are you wearing<br>She is wearing the fine bead                         |

The girls lined up in front of the drummers, and while dancing and bowing a little, people came and gave them money. When they finished they walked away to the seclusion house. I was informed that only their tutors and a few trusted friends of their mothers are allowed there. We therefore left for our home.

In the evening the girls performed a door-to-door ritual. They went to each home in the village *kupala moto* (to take a hot piece of firewood). I observed as they came to our home with their heads covered. They lay flat at the door of the kitchen with their heads facing toward the kitchen. Their tutors covered the girls' entire bodies with a piece of cloth. The tutors stood singing until my informant's father gave them money. Then the girls stood up, went into the kitchen, picked a hot piece of firewood each, and walked away to another house.

The meaning of this ritual was that today is the day for the function to which you had contributed your money. They end the ritual by throwing the firewood pieces in the toilet for nothing should be carelessly disposed off.

### **Mchezo wa Mfumu (The Chief's Solemn Vigil)**

The night of this day was the solemn vigil for the new chief (*mchezo wa mfumu*). Since the ceremony begins after midnight, I slept during the first part of the night. My informant and her husband went to discuss with the chief in charge of the ceremony whether I could attend. They agreed that I attend as an observer upon the payment of the required amount payable by every initiate. I paid 200 Malawi Kwacha the next day. The two chiefs cautioned me not to raise any suspicion among the people, otherwise I was free to attend and write my notes afterwards.

In the meantime, the *zirombo* were performing their dances at the ground where all were welcome to attend, but I decided to sleep so that I would not miss the chief's vigil.

The chief's ceremony was attended only by the invited *mkangali* chiefs, their wives, and two *anamkungwi*. The initiates included the new chief, his two wives, his two *anamkungwi* and one other chief's wife whose husband had already been initiated. Since the details of the solemn vigil do not form part of this study, I will just highlight a few observations.

This ceremony was the climax of the Chewa initiation rites for the chiefs. At this ceremony the new chief is 'officially' given a 'certificate' in the form of a packet covered in either a blanket or sack cloth containing secret magical tools. The packet is called *chitamba* (the elephant's trunk). The chief in charge of the ceremony prepares this packet and hands it over to the new chief at this ceremony. It is the chief's property, and together with his wife (wives), they must observe all taboos surrounding it; otherwise he or she will die. It is to be kept in the first wife's house, never to be moved. When the chief dies, he will be buried with it. Failure to produce the trunk on the chief's death results in a big case (*mlandu*) for the wife.

Many informants called *mkangali* the last level of *kukhwima* for the chiefs. However, I learnt that the new chief is not told the actual magical herbs used in the *chitamba*. If he wants to know, he must buy such knowledge from the chief in charge, but informants told me it is costly. In the meantime the new chief would be performing the fortification rites together with the older chief without the knowledge of the actual herbs used. When the new chief pays for it, he would then be working independently when other new chiefs would hire him to fortify their initiation ceremonies.

**DAY THREE: TSIKU LOTANDAZA MOWA (DAY WHEN BEER JUST STAYS)**

The morning hours were spent just chatting, while others were cooking 'sweet beer' for those who do not drink beer. I, with my informant, was invited by a nearby Baptist family for lunch. Their pastor had informed them about my presence at the ceremony. In the afternoon a few *zirombo* went around the village 'playing' with women and children. Late in the afternoon, I heard some drumming and singing at the ground, so I rushed there, leaving my informant behind as she was busy. I missed observing the girls going to the tree (*mtengo*) and then to the ground. I arrived when they had already reached the ground. It was another *chiwulu-wulu* time, but the girls were not decorated. They were put on their tutors' shoulders and went round dancing. After being dropped, they danced for about thirty more minutes. Men and women kept on going in to give them money. It was getting dark. The singing stopped and all the girls went back to their seclusion house. In the evening the *zirombo* danced and the girls' vigil commenced after the *zirombo* had left.

**Mchezo wa Atsikana (The Girls' solemn vigil)**

As the previous night, we slept first so that we could attend the girls' night ceremony. It was about 1 o'clock in the morning when we heard the drumming. We arrived when the first song was being sung:

31. *Adayika pamnyendo*  
*Adaona opanda kanthu, odede!*  
*Adaika pamnyendo*

They put her on the legs  
 They saw she has nothing, odede!  
 They put her on the legs

*Adaona opanda nyini odede!*

They saw she has no vagina<sup>10</sup> odede!

Meaning: 'Since they say that you had not been counselled, now you sit here to receive counsel.'

About fifty women packed in the room. Closer to the door and window were three drummers – two women and one man. Facing the drummers on the opposite wall were seated three initiates – the two girls plus a woman (a chief's wife who had not been initiated before.) The other two opposite walls were packed with women and a small space was left in the middle of the room for dancing. Two small lit *nyali* (lamps) were put by the window. The floor was dusty. During the night the door was kept open and this gave a little bit of fresh air for those of us who were standing closer to the door. In the morning hours the door was kept closed.

When a song and the drumming began, the first set of three women went in and danced in front of, and facing, the drummers. They then turned and danced in front of and facing the initiates, while another set of three went in and danced facing the drummers. As the first set walked out, another set went in, and so on. One song would take fifteen to twenty minutes especially when the initiates were asked to join. There was a lot of talking and disagreements in between the songs. Sometimes it was about which song they should sing, or who should begin the song, or sometimes there was no volunteer drummers. (I heard later that the ceremony was not done well because people were not giving enough monetary gifts [*kusupa*]) to the performers. The usual type of dancing was the one shaking the front part of the waist. There was a lot of action and explanation. Singing went on like this:

32. *Usangoyamba nchiwale*  
*Mwana wange*  
*Anzako akuna nyini*  
*Kandochi!*

Do not begin gambling<sup>11</sup>  
My child  
Your friends are pulling the vagina<sup>12</sup>  
Seated legs up!

The women demonstrated by sitting with their legs up and the hands in front as if pulling the *labia minora*.

33. *Mwana wanamwali*  
*Usayambane ndi ine*  
*Ndikuuze mwambo*  
*Mwambo sinkhindi*  
*Mwambo m'nkhole*

You girl,  
Do not pick a quarrel with me  
Let me counsel you  
Counsel truly  
Counsel of the menses



Meaning: This is the time to be counselled concerning your menses.

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| 34. <i>Anzanu atere atere</i><br><i>Atere akakwatana</i><br><i>Nkhunda yanzambwe</i> | Your friends do like this, like this<br>Like this when in marriage<br>Like a male dove |
|--|--|

The style of dancing for the above song was different from the usual waist movements. They would start by clasping the hands, one on top of the other, and dancing while slowly kneeling down. When changing the hands, and while still going down with kneeling, they would turn the whole body. It is called *kuweya*.

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| 35. <i>Elelele, elelele, kaya</i><br><i>Chimbolo chikupeza</i><br><i>Kumeneko, kaya</i> | Elelele, elelele, may be<br>The penis will find you<br>There, may be |
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The women did not give any explanation, but it means: 'Do not rush, you will have sex when you are married.'

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| 36. <i>Mwanawe, mwananga</i><br><i>Usamantukane pantumbo</i><br><i>Pantumbo pa atate wako kukada</i><br><i>Mwananga</i> | You child, my child<br>Do not curse me mentioning my private parts.<br>They belong to your father at night<br>My child |
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Again, no explanation was given, but the meaning is that the girl should respect her parents by her speech, not using cursing language.

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| 37. <i>Inetu, ine x 2</i><br><i>Wansalatu ine</i><br><i>Woyalukatu ine</i><br><i>Chikhala Ophatawa</i><br><i>Okam'bereka, kam'bereka ine</i><br><i>Aeee!</i> | Me, me<br>I am mad, me<br>I am despised, me<br>If he were Mr Phata<br>He would put me on his back, on his back<br>Aeee! |
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There was no explanation for this one as well, but the women literally carried each other on their backs. My informant said the meaning is that the chief should thank the mother for giving him a girl for his initiation ceremony.

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| 38. <i>Amayi anga nkhondo de</i><br><i>Amayi anga nkhondo</i><br><i>Nkumpatsa mnchembere</i><br><i>Kuti mpande kugona</i><br><i>Mwanya, mwanya</i> | My mother, war, <i>de</i><br>My mother, war, <i>de</i><br>Indeed you gave me elderly women<br>For me not to sleep<br>You will see, you will see |
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No explanation was given but the women demonstrated two people fighting, a daughter and her mother. The meaning is that the rude girl who does not want to be initiated will go back and fight her mother, blaming her for sending her to be initiated by the elderly women.

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| 39. <i>Anga ine nkutere, nkutere x 2</i><br><i>Kukoleza moto ndi mtumbo</i><br><i>Nthiwatiwa</i> | How can I do this, this<br>Making fire with the anus<br><i>Nthiwatiwa</i> (name of a bird) |
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Again no explanation was given, but the women were kneeling backwards and shaking their waists (*kudikhula*) showing that having sex is a lot of work.

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| 40. <i>Kumana, kumana mmtsikana x 2</i><br><i>Mmati undipatse</i><br><i>Wabvundikira</i> | Refuse, refuse, the girl<br>I wanted you to give me<br>You have covered |
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Although there was no explanation, they were kneeling backwards and dancing as in 30 above, but in the end they closed the thighs tight together and laid to one side. It means 'refuse to have sex,

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| 41. <i>Iyeyeye, ndiye adaona</i><br><i>Iyeyeye ndiye adaona mwana</i> | This oneeee, is the one who saw<br>This oneeee, is the one who saw the child |
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No explanation was given to the girls, but it means that the woman who saw the girl's first menses is the one who reported to the chief.

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| 42. <i>Usakalawirire ko mako</i><br><i>Ukapeza chiri nganganga</i><br><i>Ukapeza nakwatana</i><br><i>Ukapeza chiri nganganga</i><br><i>Pamnyendo</i> | Do not go early at your mother's<br>You will find it tight there<br>You will find them having sex<br>You will find it tight there<br>On the leg |
|--|---|

The explanation to the initiates was that they should not just enter their mother's house without knocking first, for they may find their parents having sex, which is taboo. They must knock and wait for a response. If there is no response, they can just be cleaning outside the house.

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| 43. <i>Namwali ngwamwano uyu</i><br><i>Chikhala kwathu</i><br><i>Mkadaachita ngwandula</i> | This initiate is rude<br>If it was at my home<br>I would have punished her heavily |
|--|--|

Although no explanation was given, the song is self-explanatory. Many women said that if a girl is reported to be a rude one, then while singing the song, the women

would punish her in different ways, such as pinching her, rolling her on the ground, taking off all her clothes and passing her on to one another like a ball, and so on.

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| 44. <i>Sinkadabweratu ine</i><br><i>Sinkadabweratu pano</i><br><i>Yandiendetsa nnkhole yakoyi</i> | I would not have come, me<br>I would not have come here<br>It is your menses that have made me walk |
|---|---|

It is because the girl has reached puberty that 'I am found here for the rite.'

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| 45. <i>Bvulani tioneke, tioneke, kodi</i><br><i>Bvulani tioneke uchembere</i><br><i>Ati siuyu tioneke</i> | Undress so that we see, we see<br>Undress so that we see womanhood<br>They say, here it is we see |
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As the women sang the above song three women took off their own clothes, one by one until they were left with only big short pants, and continued to sing:

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| 46. <i>Uyo apande kubvula pano</i><br><i>Ali ngwala</i> | The one who does not take off clothes<br>It means she is in menses |
|---|--|

The women told the initiates, 'Now that you have been initiated, do not go out and tell others that you saw so and so's nakedness!' My informant said that if people were generous in their giving of the monetary gifts, even the male drummer would take off his clothes (except his underwear) and dance.

It was now in the morning and many women had walked out. About thirty were remaining and some women were saying 'let us do quickly for it is now clear.' I soon understood what they meant. It was sex education time. Three pairs of women demonstrated first, then three women would pair with the three initiates and perform also. The first rite was how to bath the husband:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 47. <i>Ukatere, ukatere,</i><br><i>Potsuka oMwale</i> | You go and do like this, like this<br>When cleaning Mr. Mwale (name) |
|---|--|

They showed the wife bathing the husband from the head, part by part, washing and stretching him, down to the feet. When the three pairs finished, one from each pair formed a pair with the initiate and did as shown.

Secondly, and using the same song, another three (sometimes the same women) pairs did the pubic hair shaving demonstration. This took more time for each pair had to shave each other. Unlike in the bathing ritual above, where it was only the wife who bathed the husband and not vice versa. The women folded a piece of cloth into a shape of a man's sexual organ on his body. The one being shaved sat with legs up and the one doing the shaving knelt in front with a razor blade in her hand. They then changed. However, when the husband was shaving the wife they ended up having sex. There was a lot of singing and *ululating* from the women.

The next was a demonstration on when a couple must abstain from sexual activity. A husband was making advances for sex to his wife who was lying down. The wife was refusing because she was having her period, the mother was away, or a child was sick. They showed that the man insisted and eventually succeeded and had sex with her. However, the teaching was that this should not happen that way. If it did, the mother or the child would suffer from *mdulo* disease.

A demonstration on how to caress a husband and perform sexual activity followed while singing this song:

48. *Tiye tiye*  
*Sewera naye*

Go ahead, go ahead  
Play with him

Singing softly and standing facing each other, one woman held a folded piece of cloth while the other caressed it. Then one woman sat with her legs stretched, while the other woman knelt facing the one seated. While kneeling, one started dancing and shaking her waist. She was then joined by the one seated, but now kneeling backwards. They both ended laying down on top of each other and simulating having sexual relations. When they had exchanged places, the women performed with the initiates, one acting like the husband and the other like a wife and vice versa. After this they and the room were very dusty. The girls were instructed not to shake off the dust, because the witches might 'catch' the dust and use it to bewitch the girls. Then they sang another song, while demonstrating how to clean the husband's private parts after having sex.

49. *Anzanu atere, atere, atere, atere*

Your friends do this, this, this

*Akakwatana.*

When in marriage.

A drama on a faithful and unfaithful wife was then performed in which the initiates acted the role of wives. Two couples performed. Each husband said to his wife, 'Since we have nothing in this house, I am going to look for work in the city.' The wives agreed and the husbands bid farewell to the mothers in law as well after explaining why they were going away. Upon their return, one husband found another man with his wife, who, of course fled. The angry husband then went and complained to the *namkungwi* asking her, 'Did you really counsel her well? Look at what she has done!' It was therefore the responsibility of the *namkungwi* to sort out the matter with the couple in order to preserve the marriage. The other husband found his wife without any problem. After she welcomed him, he went to thank the *namkungwi* that his wife really understood the *mwambo* (counsel) that she was given. 'Look we are together again!' the husband proudly commented. Although no explanation was given to the girls, the drama itself was self-explanatory.

The swearing in ceremony solemnized the rite. While the girls were seated, one *namkungwi* told them that this is very secret and should not be revealed to anyone. If revealed even their mothers would die. Then three *anamkungwi* and the three initiates formed a circle and knelt down in the middle of the room. They were very close to each other so that their heads were touching one another. It was difficult to hear or see most of what was being said or done. But while singing softly they were all beating the ground with their palms. Then I saw them swearing by pointing toward heaven, and mentioned *Leza* (literary, 'lightening,' but one of the Chewa names for God) (Breugel 2001:30). They beat the ground and swore several times.

Additional songs from the mock ceremonies included:

- |                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| 50. <i>Ukakatere x 3</i>      | If you do like this                      |
| <i>Siukadya ntu wambalame</i> | You are not going to eat the bird's head |
| <i>Ukakatere x 3</i>          | If you do like this,                     |
| <i>Siukamuona mwamuna</i>     | You will not see a man                   |

The women sang while half kneeling, and clasping hands, they danced in semi-circles, with closed legs.



Meaning: If you keep your legs closed like this, you will not see your husband (you will not have sex) but the teaching is that 'you should not refuse to have sex with your husband.'

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 51. <i>Amuna anga ee aa ee! x 2</i><br><i>Chikwatirire sanabwere x 2</i><br><i>Taitanani awo ndigona ndekha ine</i> | My husband ee aa ee!<br>Since we married does not come<br>Please call that one for I am sleeping alone |
|---|--|

Meaning: A wife's complaint that her husband is not fulfilling his conjugal duties. The teaching is that a couple must fulfil their conjugal rights.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 52. <i>O tate, O tate x 2</i><br><i>Omako ndi omanga kaya!</i><br><i>Omako sadapondane ndi omanga</i> | O father, O father<br>Your mother and my mother don't know!<br>Your mother and mine are not sisters |
|---|---|

Meaning: A complaint about a friend who does or talks evil of her. Why do or say this to me as if we are related. The teaching is that people should not slander one another.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 53. <i>Chimwele katiye, tiye</i><br><i>Ine ndabvala chaching'ono</i><br><i>Iwe wabvala chachikulu</i> | Menses linen let's go, let's go<br>Me, I am wearing a small one<br>You, you are wearing a big one |
|---|---|

Meaning: A husband is complaining that the wife is refusing to have sex because she is menstruating. And the teaching is that a couple must abstain from sexual relations when a wife is menstruating or when a child is sick.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 54. <i>Mwana wanga zaya, zaya x 2</i><br><i>S ukumva zamako zaya, zaya</i><br><i>Zaya pantumbo</i> | My child deep, they are deep<br>You do not listen to your mother deep, deep<br>Deep at the vagina |
|--|---|

The following songs are mainly for a rude girl. The women would strip her naked, and like a ball, pass her to each other while standing, or roll her on the floor, or pull her by the legs while she is seated. And the teaching obviously is for the initiate to change her bad behaviour.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 55. <i>Wadza, wadza,</i><br><i>Mwana wankhwaliyu,</i><br><i>Si uyu, kani wabwera!</i>                               | He has come, he has come,<br>This pigeon's child<br>Here he is, so he has come!  |
| 56. <i>Mwano, mwano, de</i><br><i>Namwali mwano uli pakamwa</i><br><i>Lero ukadanya</i><br><i>Siulemekeza anthu</i> | Rudeness, rudeness, de<br>Initiate, rudeness is at the mouth<br>Today you would have seen<br>You do not respect people |
| 57. <i>Ndamvera kwathu, yaya!</i><br><i>Mtsikana uyu ndammvera kwathu</i><br><i>Kuti atukwana amfumu</i>            | I have heard from my home, yee!<br>I have heard about this girl at home<br>That she is cursing the chief               |

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 58. <i>Ndamvera kwathu, yaya<br/>Mwana wanamwali uyu, yayade!<br/>Kuti atukwana anthu yayade!<br/>Tamfunsani ngati nzedi, yayade<br/>Ndamvera kwathuu</i> | I have heard from home, yea<br>This girl initiate, yeeea!<br>That she is cursing people, true<br>Please ask her if it is true<br>I have heard from my homeee |
| 59. <i>Timnyera, de x 3<br/>Timnyera adakana kumvera<br/>Timnyeraa!</i>   | We will excrete on her, de<br>She refused to obey<br>We will excrete on her!   |

With the following song the women dance while bending over, showing their bottoms to the girl's face.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 60. <i>Lololo mwana wanga wolongolola<br/>Padzuwa pati tinyini tiza<br/>Mwana iwe uziona<br/>Kalongolole</i> | Talkative my child is talkative<br>On the sun the small vaginas<br>You child, you are going to see<br>The talking |
|--|---|

In the following two songs a stick is put sideways in the girl's mouth, and one woman, using two small sticks, imitates drumming on the girl's stick.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 61. <i>Tomaye, tomaye x 2<br/>Usakawatukwane amnako iwe<br/>Usakawatukwane wadziwa panyini<br/><br/>Mwazi wa panyini uli ndi iwe</i> | You mother, you mother<br>You should not curse your husband you<br>Do not curse him now that you have known the<br>vagina<br>The blood of the vagina is with you |
| 62. <i>Bwera naeni namwali<br/>Mukaaninkhe machembere<br/>Bwera naeni namwali<br/>Malango abzola</i>                                 | Bring the initiate<br>Give to the elderly women<br>Bring the initiate<br>The counsel are passing   |

The following are general songs sung by the *zirombo* with the women responding. They are sung on any occasion the *zirombo* attend.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 63. <i>Mbiriyo toto<br/>KwaKudowa toto<br/>Mbiriyo njatonse</i>                          | The event no, no<br>At Kudowa no, no<br>The event is for us all   |
| 64. <i>A Kudowa agona mnyumba<br/>Maliro ali awo<br/>Mwandionongeratu gule</i>           | Mr Kudowa is sleeping in the house<br>While the funeral is his<br>You have spoiled my dance               |
| 65. <i>Jede! jede!,<br/>Eniake a mnyumba iyi<br/>Kodi adapita kuti?<br/>Kumandaa!</i>    | Jede! Jede!<br>The owners of this house<br>Where did they go?<br>To the grave!                            |
| 66. <i>Gule uyu sadzatha<br/>Adayamba ndi makolo<br/>Achimwene imbani ng'oma tibvine</i> | This dance will not cease<br>For it is the parents who started<br>Brother, beat the drum so that we dance |

67. *Amuna anga mtsegule x 3*  
*Nchiani ichi chaima mkhomo?*  
*Chaima mkhomo m'bokosi muli zobvala*  
*Ndicho mfunu ine*

My husband open  
 What is this standing in the doorway?  
 It is a box containing clothing  
 That is what I want.

After this ceremony the girls were seated again and one instructress was trying to speed up the process because one of the initiates, the chief's wife, had left small children alone at home. The instructress spread a piece of cloth near to where the woman initiate was seated. Then another instructress knelt closer to the initiate and threw some money on the cloth (I did not see how much, but they were coins) and started talking. I was very tired so that I left and went to sleep for a while.

#### **DAY FOUR: TSIKU LOKUNTHA MOWA (DAY OF SIEVING THE BEER)**

The fourth day is also called the *chingondo* or *thimbwiza* day. I woke up and had my bath around noon. I noticed that in almost every home there was a cluster of people drinking beer. When I enquired why the beer was being drunk on this particular day and not the next day, I was told that the beer was ready for drinking, although the official drinking day was the following day. It was also more readily available than the following day when it would be stored away and given to a few selected friends. Many people were drunk and consequently talking much.

In the afternoon I joined the people who were going to the ground. I arrived in time for an announcement from one of the chiefs. He said that the *zirombo* would not dance that day but the following day at the coronation of the new chief. He continued to say that in the meantime 'we would be drinking more beer and later on watch the girls performance.' I left to visit a Christian family in a nearby village who told me that the *njobvu* (elephant) *chirombo* was already going around the surrounding villages heading towards the ground. When I came back I found that the elephant had arrived and had already gone to the resting place (*liunde*) till the next day.

**The Chingondo (Headcrown) Ritual**

We missed the preparation of the headcrown but I observed it during one of the mock ceremonies. Two or three *anamkungwi* collect good quality soil (the type used to mould clay pots). Hiding the soil in a piece of cloth they bring it to the *mtengo* (tree). They also bring red brick, white maize flour, and charcoal. Each element is made into fine paste. The thick mud paste is moulded like a hat or helmet on the girl's head. Then the animal figure is moulded onto the hat. The leading girl wears a sculpture of an elephant , while the rest of the initiates wear *chinyau* (cattle-like carving). They paint the crown with white paste, so that no one recognizes it to be clay. Then they decorate it with black and red dots. The whole structure is called *chingondo*. The girls are also decorated on the face, the neck, the chest, the lower abdomen, and the upper arms, with white dots (*kulocha-locha*). They then wait for the crowns to dry before going to the *bwalo* to perform. When ready, the initiates, tutors, instructresses and the rest of the women line up and walk to the ground.

In some cases, the tutors carry the girls on their shoulders just before entering the ground while singing and dance for a while before setting them down. At this ceremony, they entered the ground all just walking and singing and were not put on the shoulders.

68.	<i>Ayeli, yeli</i> <i>Uyo apande kumeta</i> <i>Akhumbira nyama.</i>	Yeli (name), The one who will not be initiated Will admire the animal
69.	<i>Chingondole maye!</i> <i>Khuda nzanga de</i> <i>Chakuyenela de,</i> <i>Khuda nzanga</i> <i>Akutheka chingondo</i>	The headcrown, Mmmm! You my friend It has fitted you well You my friend They have prepared <i>chingondo</i>

After singing, they stood at the ground for more than ten minutes. There was a high level of noise, and the drumming and the singing were not correlating well. In the midst of the noise from the onlookers, many of whom were children, the girls and their tutors started moving and dancing slowly in front of the chiefs. Then they went round the tree and moved away from the ground. With the initiates kneeling, the tutors tied and covered the initiates' heads with a head towel, thus hiding the crown,

as well as preventing it from falling down when dancing.<sup>13</sup> It took some time for the music and the drumming to resume in order for the girls to continue dancing. After a few rounds of dancing they stopped again, and three *anamkungwi* went to the middle of the ground and danced. They ended in a line in front of the chiefs and performed a few displays – dance, bow, and slightly kneeling down. The chiefs gave them some money. As the women walked away from the ground, the girls and their tutors also came in and did likewise, performing in front of the chiefs, and in the end they were also given money. That marked the end of the afternoon's event. All the people were leaving, but the initiates were kneeling at one place with their tutors standing by. A group of about ten *anamkungwi* were also standing in one place. I stayed to see what was next. It was getting darker and I did not want to raise any suspicion, so I moved to the chief's house and sat on a verandah overlooking the ground. Then I saw the girls move to where the women were standing. I could not see nor hear anything. I knew they wanted to take off the crowns from the girls' heads. Eventually I gave up and went home. I was then told that they were waiting to make sure it is quite safe for them to remove the head crowns from the girls.

It was also at the mock *chinamwali* that I observed how they take off the crown from the head. They put a cloth on clear ground and let the girl lie down and roll her head on the cloth, dropping every bit of the artefacts on it. The tutor rolls the cloth and gives it to the girl's mother, who, while covering herself with a cloth, carries it and hides it for disposal later. She would have to be careful with it for evil people may steal it or any piece from it and use as *chizimba* (an activating agent.) The belief is that if any piece from the artefacts is picked up and used by evil men, the girl may become sick, barren, or die. Hence every precaution is taken to make sure that initiates are protected. Many informants testified that the *mkangali* ceremony is very dangerous because girls can become barren if the deterrents are not strong enough to protect them from witchcraft.

The fourth day's activities ended with another vigil for the girls with the *zirombo*. All the information concerning this ceremony was from oral sources. Since the *nyau* dance is an integral part of the Chewa culture and represent the ancestral spirits, the initiates must learn from them too. The *zirombo*, called *anamkanya* (representing spirits who come to punish people'), spend the night with the girls, instructing them,



frightening them, or punishing them, especially if any of the initiates is reported to be rude. The tutors stay close and rescue the girls by giving money to the *zirombo*. It really depends on the *zirombo* themselves to decide what to do with the initiates.

The initiates may be buried in the ground, and the *zirombo* dance around them until their tutors redeem them. They may be told to climb a tree, while the *zirombo* light a fire underneath and put either tobacco leaves, or chillies on the fire. The girls are not supposed to run away but to persevere, again until they are redeemed. Sometimes the *zirombo* hold a rope or a stick and the girls hold the other end and pull against each other. The *zirombo* then pull hard until the girls fall down. They continue pulling them until they are redeemed.

During the same night the girls are taken to *liunde* and shown the *nyau* structures. They are taken into the elephant structure (*njobvu*) to see what it is made of but severely warned never to reveal what they have seen and been taught. In the past, the vigil would end early in the morning when the *zirombo* would go with the girls to a nearby dam. The *zirombo* begin to dip themselves in the water, followed by the girls and their tutors. After the ritual bath, the *zirombo* would go their way back to the *dambwe*, and the girls would go back to the *tsimba*.

On this particular day I heard some singing early in the morning. I was informed that another *chirombo*, Sara had came to the ground. As soon as the *zirombo*, *anamkanya* saw Sara coming, they ran to the *liunde*, and the girls were also to run to their *tsimba*. Then the Sara went to where the beer was to be drunk. The song was:

70. Sara kuendera mowa de, de  
Kuendera gule wamaliro, e

Sarah go and visit the beer, de, de,  
Go and visit the funeral 'dance'

They went round the village to every home that had beer to collect monetary gifts.

#### **DAY FIVE: TSIKU LAKUMWA MOWA (THE FINAL DAY)**

The last day of the *Mkangali* ceremony was marked by feasting - eating and drinking, and dancing - *mnjeza* by the chiefs and their wives and instructresses, and *gule*

*wamkulu* by *zirombo*. In almost every home I saw a goat being slaughtered and clusters of people drinking or chatting. There were many young men and women who had come home for the closing ceremony. At my informant's home, there were three more new families that came on this particular day.

The *njobvu* (elephant) ceremony began early in the afternoon. We rushed to the ground when we heard the drumming and the commotion of the people. The *popi* was busy 'playing' with people and then the elephant came out of the *liunde*. It was accompanied by another smaller *nyau*. The elephant danced for a short time in the ground and then went to the chief's house. I saw two women holding the two initiates from the tree and showing them the elephant. The women covered the initiates quickly and returned with them to the tree. Only men surrounded the elephant while women and children were watching from a distance, except for those who were singing. The elephant lay down in front of the chief's house and the person making announcements called for order. He asked people to give their monetary gifts towards the ceremony. He mentioned group by group and in the end he called upon all visitors to give their gifts. Closer to where I was a piece of cloth was spread on the ground for the money. A couple of men were busy collecting it, and handing it over to the person who was in charge.

In the end he announced the amounts that were collected, and the total amount was just over three thousand Kwacha (about US\$45). After a few words the elephant rose and walked to the ground. Women were singing and covering it with their cloths, while others were waving their cloths over it. It danced for a while and started off on its way back to their place called *dambwe*. The *popi* danced mainly on the sides. We followed to the end of the village closer to our home and then came back. Only a few women singers continued with them and returned later.

We went back to the ground for the *mnjedza*. Three different groups danced, but the new chief and his entourage joined and led in every group. The women were also waving their cloths at the new chief as he vigorously danced, while he was waving his *lichowa* (flywhisk) at the people. The women who were dancing were shaking their buttocks briskly. People applauded and gave them monetary gifts. Apparently, the male initiates were carried on the back of their tutors and brought inside to join the

dancing team. After dancing for a while, they all dispersed. The chiefs went to the chief's house while the male initiates went back to their *tsimba*.

The *zirombo* dance (*gule wamkulu*) marked the end of the chief's initiation ceremony. While waiting to enter the ground, I saw some *nyau* dancers smearing themselves with ashes from a closeby fireplace.<sup>14</sup> Some *zirombo* danced in threes, others in doubles, and others alone. People came close to give them monetary gifts. It was around five o'clock in the afternoon when everything came to an end, and many people dispersed

While the afternoon's activities were going on at the ground, the girls were at the *mtengo* where their tutors and friends continued to teach them all the things they had been learning (especially sayings and songs).

The hair shaving ritual (*kumeta*) ends the girls' five-day seclusion period of the *chinamwali*. At the *tsimba* the girls' hair is cut short (in the past all the hair was shaved). People believe that the hair should never enter the parent's home for fear that witches might steal the hair for *chizimba* (activating agent in magic. It must therefore be disposed of in a pit latrine. After the hair shaving ritual, the girls wait at the *mtengo*, where their friends continue to teach them all the things they have been learning.

After the public activities, the girls, dressed smartly (not necessarily new clothes) with their heads covered, are taken to the chief's house. In some cases this is done the following day. The mothers are supposed to 'redeem' their daughters by giving the chief the required amount per girl. Any man who wants to marry an initiate would have given the redeeming fee to the girl's mother so she becomes his wife soon after the initiation. When all the dues are paid to the chief and with the leading girl in front, they all proceed to the home of the first girl while singing. After performing all the necessary rites discussed below, they proceed to the home of the next one, and so on until all the girls are finished.

The mother welcomes them and shows them which house the girl should enter (usually it is the girl's own house, or it may be her mother's house, in which case she

sleeps at a friend's house during the night, for it is impolite for a mature girl to sleep in the same house with the parents). At the door, the *namkungwi* tells the girl to kneel while the other girls wait standing. The *namkungwi* puts a small stick below the first stair into the house. She helps the girl to stand and lets her jump over the stick (*kumuolotsa*), and she enters the house without looking back. The girl's tutor must stand beside her so that they both enter into the house. Before they enter the house, the girl's mother gives them some money. Then the *namkungwi* picks up the stick and the rest continue to the second girl's home where the ritual is repeated. This goes on until all the girls are taken to their respective homes. To reinforce each girl's memory, the tutor repeats instructions on some important issues at the house, such as respecting her parents and elderly people, helping with house chores, and observing taboos. Each girl is instructed to stay close to her house during the following week until she undergoes the *dulira* (cut the small hairs round the face) ritual so that she avoids meeting the chief before the *dulira* ceremony is performed.

After one week, the tutors (*aphungu*) collect the girls from their homes to take them back to the seclusion house, while the *anamkungwi* assemble in another house. Then they all go to the *bwalo* (ground). The girls sit on mats with their tutors. Each tutor brings a razor blade for her initiate. While the girls are seated, the tutor unwraps the razor blade and puts it on the girl's head and places money on top of the razor blade. Then the *anamkungwi* collects the money from all the girls. When she has finished, each tutor neatly shaves the hair round the face of the girl. The mothers dispose of their daughter's hair. The *anamkungwi* assists any tutor who is not doing well. The mothers just look on. When all are through, the *anamkungwi* asks anyone to begin counselling again. The mothers begin by throwing money first then they speak. After the mothers, anyone else is free to give advice. When all are finished, the mother takes a plate of flour or some money and gives it to the *anamkungwi* to share with her colleagues as a token of appreciation.

The tutors take the girls back to their respective homes. They repeat to the girls what their mothers had rebuked them about at the *bwalo* and exhort them to change to adulthood behaviour. These activities mark the end of the *chinamwali* ceremony. If the girls attend school, they are then free to return there.

They are however, reminded that after the initiation, when a girl meets with the chief, she must kneel at the far side of the road (*kupatuka*). Then the chief will give her money. If she is alone, he will put the money on the ground and tell her to pick it up. But if she is with a friend, the chief will give the money through the friend.

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1. This provided me the opportunity to write down the observations and ask my informant further questions.

2. The *phungu* (singular) is normally the one who named the girl at birth, or the mother may choose any trusted friend. She stays with the girl and attends to her during the whole period of the initiation. The tutor continues to mentor the initiate even after the initiation to make sure that her initiate is living according to the expected lifestyle of one *wometa* (who has been initiated). Since people are very suspicious about each other, the friend must really be a very good friend who cannot harm the girl

3. *Mkwapa* also means armpit.

4. *Insa*, a small antelope.

5. *Kalombo*, a wild beast, useless thing, a weed, as *chirombo*, or a little beast; what is not used for food; a hurtful insect (Scott and Heatherwick).

6. *Phwiti*, a very small bird, living in the village fence (Scott and Heatherwick)

7. *Lumbe*, the night-jar, with long wing feathers.

8. This can be likened to the Christian churches' youth camps being occasions where some youths choose a spouse.

9. *Kamsale*, sweet stalk of a kind of millet

10. Meaning that she has no *labia minora*.

11. Gambling using beads instead of money.

12. It means to elongate the *labia minora*.

13. My informant told me of a young woman whose head crown fell during the initiation ceremony several years ago. She stopped talking, but later on she could only stammer. Apparently, I met this woman on my way back home, as my informant was escorting me to board a bus. My informant introduced her to me as 'this is the one I was telling you about!, look, she cannot talk properly'. I did not ask her questions, but she admitted that she was hurt on her *mkangali*, and indeed she was stammering.

14 Ash, according to the *nyau* tradition, is their body ointment.

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## APPENDIX B: Nkhoma CCAP Booklet Outline

### Helpful words for *Alangizi* of Nkhoma Synod C.C.A.P.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>. This is the latest version of the *Alangizi* booklet. It was also revised in the 1990's to include lessons on AIDS in Heading six. (Interview, Manager, Nkhoma Printing Press, 27/8/2002).

## APPENDIX C

### BUKU LA ALANGIZI ZA MKATIMU

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### MAWU OYAMBA

"Akazi akulamba akhale nawo makhalidwe  
ayenera anchi ayera, asandiyeketa, asakondwa  
ndi chikondi cha vinyo, akaphwasa zabwino,  
kui akalange akazi ang'oo kusi asikonda  
amuna awo, pamodzi ndi ana awo. Akhale  
adilika, adilika, ochika m'nyumba mwao  
achika zabwino, akoma muna, akawera  
amuna awo kusi Mwana a Mulungu  
angachidwe mwana."

Tito 2:3-5

### KODI ALANGIZI NDANI?

Alangizi ndi amayi amene amasankhidwa ndi mpingo kuti  
alangize stikana pa njira ya Chikristu. Ayenera kukhala  
Akristu okhulupirika amene amasankhidwa chifukwa chakukula  
kwavo mu Chikristu, ndi kum'uvetsetsa. Nchito yowu  
yeniyeni kuti kutogolera stikana amene sadziwa Kristu, ndi  
kurwenzela iye kuti ndi Mpulumutsi wawo ndi kutogolera  
stikana a Chikristu kukula mu Mzimu wwa Kristu. Iyo  
amachitanso monga aphungu kwa stikana pamene atatha  
msinkhu.

Peyenera kukhala alangizi ayiri osankhidwa pa mpingo  
uliwone. Alangizi sayenera kulandira mphato liyonse imene  
angapatsidwe. Mphato yao ndi chizwemwe chomwe  
amachipeza potatumikira Ambuye.

### TINGASANKHE BWANJI ALANGIZI?

Potankha alangizi, makolo amumpingomo ayenera  
kusankha Mkhristu wakale amene wakhala mumpingo zaka  
zisana kapena kupitilapo, ngati kuti kotheka. Iwowa ayenera  
kukhala wokwatwa omwe asabereka kale. Kukadakhala  
kwabwino ngati alangizi akadziwa kuwera ndi kulamba.  
Iwo ayenera kumakwanitsa kubwera kumsonkhano wa alangizi  
umene udzichitika kamodzi kapena kawiri pa chaka ku  
asosiyeshoni yawo.

### UDINDO WA ALANGIZI

Alangizi ayenera kudziwa kuti iwo amasankhidwa ndi  
mpingo, kugwira achito ya Mulungu. Iwo ayenera kuphunzitsa  
stikana makhalidwe a Chikristu.

Ukado wawu ndi wawu:

1. Kupereka chitsanzo ndi makhalidwe a Chikristu ndi  
kufanekisa umboni wabwino.
2. Kutogolera stikana amene sadziwa Kristu kuti alandire  
Yesu Kristu kukhala Mpulumutsi wawo.

Ndime zalembedwa pansizi ndi zomwe muyenere  
kuzigwiritsa achito pokambirana ndi stikana za chipulumutso  
chawo.

**Aroma 3:23** "Fakuti ose anachimwa, naperewera pa  
ulmerero wa Mulungu."

**Aroma 6:23** "Fakuti mphoto yake ya uchimo ndi imfa;  
koma mphato yanlere ya Mulungu ndiyo  
moyo wosatha wa mwana Yesu Kristu  
Ambuye wathu."

**Aroma 5:8** "Koma Mulungu atsimikiza kwa ife  
chikondi chake cha mwini yekha  
m'menemo, kuti pokhala ife chikhalire  
ochizwa Kristu adalifera ife."

**Yohane 1:12** "Koma ose amene anamlandira ife, kwa  
tuo anapatsa mphamvu yakukhala ana a  
Mulungu, kwa ifetu, akukhulupirira dzina  
lake."

**Aroma 10:9,10**

"Kuti ngati adzavomereza m'kamwa  
mwako 'Yesu' ndiye Ambuye, ndi  
kukhulupirira smuntima mwako kuti  
Mulungu anamukhala kwa akufa,  
udzapulumuka.  
Fakuti ndi mitima smuntima akhulupira  
kutsogapo chidungano; ndi m'kamwa  
avomereza kutsogapo chipulumutso."

**Aroma 10:13**

"Fakuti, amene ali yense adzitanza pa  
dzina la Ambuye udzapulumuka."

3. Lembani maina a stikana amene abwera kudzapumirira.  
Lembani tiku koba kwa ndi tiku imene anatha msinkhu.
4. Apbanzitseni Chikristu za kukala kwa thupi kwa stikana  
amene atha msinkhu.
5. Apbanzitseni Chikristu stikana panthawi imene ali ndi  
bwenzi, atakwatira, atasenga mimba yoyamba ndipo  
pamene atabela mwana woyamba.
6. Perekani makalata a umboni pamene mwana wabwera  
mbenjamu.
7. Adzibwitseni stikana chilichonse chimene sichigwirizana  
ndi Mwana a Mulungu.

### CHINAMWALI (KUTHA MSINKHU)

Pamene alangizi adzibwitsidwa kuti mtikana watha  
msinkhu, alangizi swiri adzikomana ndi mtikanyo, ndi mayi  
ndi phungu wake. Atapemphera pamodzi, alangizi ayambe  
tumanga kwambwa.

Mtikana akamakhala thupi lake limasinthika. Mulungu  
adapanga thupi lake kuti lidzitero. "Fakuti imu masalanga  
imo munga; masalanga adzazabwera ife. Ndikuyamkani  
chifukwa kuti chipangidwe changa uchopoya ndi chodabwira.  
Nchito yowu mubodwa moyo wanga uchidziwa kufi bwino  
adika." (Masalamo 139:13,14). Thupi lake limasinthika  
mmagikhu ndi msonkedwe, ndipo pootseta kuti mtikana  
watha msinkhu, mtikana amayamba kusamba. Kusambaku  
kumachitika pamwera kamodzi ndi kwa masiku ochepa.  
Chindidiro chimenechi chimasonka kwa akazi ose, ndipo  
pachifukwa cha chimenechi uzimadetsa nkhwira kuti ndi  
maseda. Koma zimasonka za mtigolo. Imeneyi ndi njira  
yomwe anakonzira Mulungu potuna kutipatsa ana.

Alangizi anayenera kum'phunzitsa mtikana kuti  
adzisamalira thupi pamodzi ndi sovala zake kukhala za  
ukhondo athawi sone. Mtikana adzamalira kwenikweni  
thupi lake ndi naru zake somwe panthawi. Iwowa ali kumwera.  
Nthambi kwambiri kusamalira thupi kwenikweni panthawi  
imoneyi.

Monga zomwe mtikana amasamalira thupi lake,  
adzyenera kusamalira thupi lake kuti likhale langwira.  
Alangizi ayenera kumbambira mtikana kuti pokhala iye ndi  
Mkhristu thupi lake liki kachisi wa Mzimu Woyera. Chifukwa  
cha chimenechi iye adzyenera kulemetsa Mulungu m'osome  
zimene iye akuchitika. "Kapena smadziwa kuti thupi lamu liki  
kachiisi wa Mzimu Woyera, smene ali mwana lamu, smene muli  
saye kwa Mulungu? Ndipo smakhala a lamu nokha. Fakuti  
smagikidwe ndi mungu wake wopatsa; chifukwa chake  
kumachitika Mulungu m'ndi lamu." (1 Akorinto 6:19,20).

Ziwalo za chimenechi zili ndi nchito zwo zapadera.  
Ziyenera kuzungidwa bwino. Atikana asizungidwe nchito za  
manyazi zomwe zidabweretsa chisoni potulira. Kudzidetsa  
kumagobweretsa, chisoni kwa Mtikana chifukwa:

1. Iye amawo masalamu a Mulungu.
2. Akhosa kukhala ndi nyama wopanda bumbo.
3. Akhosa kutenga chiponono kapena chidoko.
4. Amachitika manyazi makolo aye.
5. Akhosa kutenga EDZI.

Mtikana anolowera kudalika osomonga pena kuchimwira  
thupi lake. Iye amakukhala Mulungu mwana kumwera thupi  
lake moyenera. "Koma thupi liki la chigololo, koma la  
Ambuye, ndi Ambuye wa thupi." (1 Akorinto 6:13).  
"Chifukwa chake ndikuponophani lamu, abele, mwa mufundo wa  
Mulungu, kuti smapereka masipi ana sombe yanyoyo,  
yopatsika yopambweretsa Mulungu, ndipo kupambweretsa kwamu  
koyenera." (Aroma 12:1).

Kewirikwiri makolo amakamiza ana zwo akali ang'oo  
kupelana abwenzi ndi smawana. Nthawi zina makolo  
amasankhira mwana wawo. Teono banja lotere limapasuka  
smasankhira chifukwa limakhala banja kopanda chikondi.  
Alangizi smu mayi kuti asamalira mwana kuti akwitswe  
pamene iye akali wochepa msinkhu. Mtikana ayenera  
kudikira upaka stikwanitsa mika khamu ndi stikana ndi stiri  
(17) kapena khamu ndi stikana ndi stiri (18). Mnyamata  
akhale wopitilira zaka makumi awiri kuzidzi stiri (22).

Ziphanzitsa zina zomwe alangizi ayenera kupereka  
panthawi ya alangizi ndi izi. Amu stikanyo kuti:

1. Usamaswera ndi ana ochepa msinkhu.
2. Udrilemeketa makolo, mafumu ndi akulu.
3. Udrikhala womwera.
4. Udzipewa smaboda, kuba, ndi ndetu.
5. Udrikhala wolimbikira pa kugwira stichito.
6. Usamachula dzina la Mulungu pachabe.
7. Siwawino kulambira.
8. Udzisunga tiku la sabata.
9. Udzichitira slemu nyumba ya Mulungu.
10. Mndalo ulibe mphamvu ya kupweteka munthu.

## APPENDIX D (Translated with permission)

### THE ALANGIZI BOOKLET<sup>1</sup> CONTENTS

Who are <i>alangizi</i> ?	1
How do we choose <i>alangizi</i> ?	1
The role of <i>alangizi</i>	2
<i>Chinamwali</i> (Puberty)	4
Courtship	6
Wedding	9
First pregnancy	14
Birth of a child	16

#### FOREWORD

Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God.

(Titus 2:3-5)

#### WHO ARE ALANGIZI?

*Alangizi* are women chosen by the church to instruct girls in a Christian way. They must be faithful Christians who are chosen because of their maturity and understanding in their Christian life. Their main work is to lead girls who do not know Christ to receive Him as their personal Saviour; and to lead the girls to grow spiritually in Christ. The *alangizi* will also act as *aphungu* (tutors) when the girls have their first menstruation.

Two women must be chosen in every local church. *Alangizi* should not receive any gift in their work for their gift is in the joy they get in serving the Lord.

#### HOW CAN WE CHOOSE ALANGIZI?

As the girl takes care of her body, she must keep it pure. *Alangizi* should remind her that since she is a Christian, her body is the Temple of the Holy Spirit. Because of this, she must therefore honour God with her body and in all that she does. 'Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own, you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.' (1 Corinthians 6:19,20).

The private parts of the body have their own special role. They must be kept pure. Girls should not use them in immoral way that will bring sorrow in the end. Defilement only brings regret to the girl because:

1. She breaks God's command.
2. She can have a fatherless child.
3. She can contract venereal diseases like syphilis or gonorrhoea.
4. She brings shame to the parents.
5. She can contract AIDS.

A girl should have self-control and not defile or sin against her body. But that God is honoured by her chastity. '... The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord

When choosing *alangizi*, parents in the church must look for longstanding Christians who have been in the church for not less than five years if possible. The *alangizi* must be married with children. It would be advantageous if the *alangizi* would be able to read and write. They should also be able to attend *alangizi* meetings which are held once or twice per year at their associations.

#### THE ROLE OF ALANGIZI

*Alangizi* should know that they were chosen by the church to serve God. They must teach the girls Christian values.

##### Their role is:

1. The *alangizi* must show exemplary Christian lifestyle and witness.
2. They are to lead those who do not know Christ to receive Jesus as their personal Saviour.

They must use the Scripture verses below to lead the girls to salvation:

Romans 3:23 "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

Romans 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Romans 5:8 "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

John 1:12 "Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."

Romans 10:9, 10 "That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with

for the body.' (1 Cor. 6:13). 'Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship.' Romans 12:1).

Very often parents force their children to have 'boy friends' while they are still young. Sometimes parents choose husbands for their children. Such a marriage does not last long because there is no love. The *alangizi* should instruct the parents not to marry off their daughters at an early age. A girl should wait until she reaches a good marriageable age of 17 or 18 years, while the young man should be over 22.

Some of the things the *alangizi* need to tell the girl at the time of puberty are the following: They must tell her that:

1. She should not play with children.
2. She must respect parents, the chief and elders.
3. She must be obedient.
4. She should avoid lying, stealing, and fighting.
5. She must be industrious.

your mouth that you confess and are saved."

Romans 10:13. "for, Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

3. Write the names of the girls who come for lessons. Write their dates of birth and the date of their first menses.

4. Teach them the anatomy of the body from the biblical perspective.

5. Continue to teach the girls when they are dating; on their marriage, during their first pregnancy, and when the first baby is born.

6. Issue a letter of confirmation when a baby is born.

7. Instruct the girls in all that is not compatible with the Word of God.

#### CHINAMWALI (PUBERTY)

When the *alangizi* are informed about a girl's first menses, they should meet with the girl together with her mother and *phungu*. After praying together, the *alangizi* should begin teaching *mwambo* (counsel).

When a girl matures her body changes. That is how God made it. 'For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.' (Psalm 139:13,14). Her body changes both physically as well as how it looks like. Blood from the girl's private parts is a sign of puberty and this blood flow happens once every month for a few days. Since every woman experiences this sign, so no one should worry that it is some illness. It foretells the future. This is God's own way in order for us to have children

The *alangizi* must instruct the girl on how to care for her body and her clothing. She must be more hygienic particularly when she is in menses.

6. She should not mention God's name in vain
7. It is not good to swear (misprinted in Chichewa *kulambira* [to worship] instead of *kulumbira* [to swear an oath]).
8. She must keep the Sabbath.
9. She must honour God's house.
10. The disease of *mdulo* (cutting) has no power to harm anyone.

The rest of the booklet contains instruction on courtship, marriage, first pregnancy, and the birth of a baby.

<sup>1</sup> This is the revised version. Since its first print, in 1974/75, the booklet has been reprinted several times to replenish the stock. However, it was revised in the 1990s just by adding the statement "Can contract AIDS" (Int. Mr. Kaluwa, Manager, Baptist Publications, 25/4/2001).

## APPENDIX E

### PROPOSED MAPHUNZIRO A ALANGIZI

#### MUMPINGO WA BAPTIST

#### GAWO LOYAMBA

##### THE FIRST PART

Momwemonso akazi okalamba akhale nao akhalidwe oyenera anthu oyera...kuti akalangize akazi ang'ono akonde amuna ao, akonde ana ao, akhale odziletsa, odekha, ocita m'nyumba mwwao, okoma, akumvera amuna a iwo okha, kuti mau a Mulungu angacitidwe mwano.

Tito 2:3-5

Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live... Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no-one will malign the word of God.

Titus 2:3-5

#### UDINDO WA MPINGO

##### THE ROLE OF THE CONGREGATION

Mpingo uli wonse uzikonza kawiri kawiri maphunziro aulangizi ndikuphunzitsa alangizi ngakhalenso mpingo wonse. Ulangizi umene uli mkatimu ndiokhuzana ndi amayi osati amuna ayi.

Each congregation must frequently arrange training sessions on *ulangizi* for her members. The instruction in this booklet is for female, and not male, initiation.

#### ULANGIZI NDI CHİYANI?

##### WHAT IS *ULANGIZI*?

Kuti timvetsetse tanthauzo la **ulangizi**, tiyenera tiyambe tawona tanthauzo lochokera kuchikhalidwe chathu chakumakolo, kenaka ndikuona kuti Bukhu Loyera likuti bwanji.

In order for us to understand the meaning of *ulangizi* we need first of all to look at the meaning from the traditional initiation rites and then the biblical interpretation.



Mitundu yambiri ya anthu makamaka muno mu Africa, imakhulupirira kuti munthu amadutsa magawo osiyana-siyana paumoyo wake kuyambira kubadwa mpaka kumwalira. Magawo ake monga kubadwa mwana, kuturutsa chikuta, kucha dzina mwana, kutha msinkhu, kulowa m'banja, kulowa ufumu kapena mabungwe ena, ndi maliro. Gawo lirilonse liri ndi mwambo wake woyenera kuti munthu uja auzidwe (abvinidwe kapena alangizidwe) mmene angakhali bwino m'gawo limenelo. Kubvinidwa (kulangizidwa) kumeneku ndikumene kumapangitsa munthu kudziwika kuti ndiwa mtundu kwakuti kwakuti. Ndipo wosabvinidwa amakhala munthu wakunja. Koma akabvinidwa munthu uja amadutsanso mumiyaambo ina yonse yamtundu wake mosabvuta. Miyambo imeneyi ndi imene imachedwa kuti ndi miyambo ya makolo, imene aliyense ayenera kuitsata ndikuisunga. Kupanda kutero, pamakhala zobvuta zosiyana-siyana mmudzi, kapena m'banja, ngakhale kwa iye amene sanatsateyo.

Many societies especially in Africa believe that a person passes through different stages in life from birth to death such as birth of a child, naming of a child, puberty, marriage, chieftaincy or other groups, and death. Each stage has got its own rite to which a person undergoes (is initiated) in order to make a safe transition. Such rites make the initiated person to be identified with the particular society. All uninitiated are regarded as outsiders (*wakunja*). Once initiated the person is eligible for all other rites as appropriate. The rites are passed on from one generation to the next and are usually referred to as ancestral customs which must be kept and followed. Failure to observe such customs brings instability and misfortune in the community, in a family, and even to the law-breaker.

Kuno kwathu ku Malawi, ngakhale liri dziko laling'ono, kuli mitundu ya anthu osiyana-siyana monga aChewa, aNgoni, aSena, aTumbuka, aTonga, aYao, aLomwe, ndi ena. Ndipo mtundu uli wonse uli ndi miyambo yawo. Miyambo ina imafanana-fanana, koma ina imasiyana ndithu. Kuno kuMalawi kubvinidwa kumeneku kumachedwa kuti '**chinamwali**' (**zinamwali** zambiri). Koma kuno ku Lilongwe amati *mmeto*. Ndipo wobvinidwayo ndi **namwali** (anamwali ambiri). Akatswiri ake olangiza anamwali ndi amai achikulire odziwa bwino ntchito yawo, **anamkungwi**.

Here in Malawi, although it is a small country, there are many ethnic groups such as the Chewa, the Ngoni, the Sena, the Tumbuka, the Tonga, the Yao, the Lomwe, and many more. Every tribe has its own customs. Some customs are similar, while others are different. In Malawi, the general term in Chichewa for initiation ceremony is *chinamwali* (*zinamwali* plural). However, the Chewa of Lilongwe usually use the term *mmeto* (shaving). The initiate is called *namwali* (*anamwali*, many). The elderly women who instruct the initiates in the ancestral customs are called *anamkungwi*.

Zinamwali chimachitika mosiyana-siyana. Zina za amuna okhaokha kapena akazi okha; ana kapena akulu; zina za tsiku limodzi kapena masiku ambiri, ngakhale miyezi ingapo; zina zimakhala ndi anthu ochepa pomwe zina pafupi fupi mudzi onse. Zinamwali zambiri zimakhala nthawi ya chizangala. Ndipo miyambo imaperekedwa kwa anamwali munjira zosiyana-siyana. Kawiri kawiri chilangizo chimaperekedwa mu kuimba, kubvina, ndakatulo, masewero, ndi zina zotero, pofuna kuti namwaliyo amvetsetse bwino. Nthawi zambiri zinamwali zimatsirizira ndi kudyerana ndi kumwerera pamodzi. Ndiye mwachidule **chinamwali** ndi nthawi imene yapatulidwa kuti anamwali alandire mwambo woyenera (abvinidwe/alangizidwe) kuti akhale akhalidwe labwino lobvomerezeka pamtundu wawo. Miyambo yamakolo imeneyi imaperekedwa ku mbadwo uliwonse kudzera mu chinamwali.

Initiation ceremonies are done in different ways. Some are for men only, or women only. Some initiations are for one day or for many days, or even for months. Some involve few people while others involve a whole village. Many initiation rites are happy occasions. Usually the instruction is given through singing and dancing, poems, acting, and so on for the initiates to learn well. Many times initiations are occasions for feasting, eating and drinking. Briefly therefore, *chinamwali* is an initiation rite whereby the initiate is separated



for a while from normal life and put into seclusion to receive instruction or mwambo in order to live according to the accepted standards of the society. These ancestral customs are passed on from generation to generation through the *chinamwali* rite.

Kuyambira kale Chikhristu chakhala chikufika kwa anthu amene akhazikika mumiyambo yamakolo awo. Ndipo pakuona kuti chinamwali ndichofunika kumitundu ya anthu ambiri, Akhristu adaona kuti ndikofunika kukonza zinamwali zachikhristu kuti zilowe m'malo mwa zamakolo. Kuno ku Malawi aKhristu adaika **chilangizo** mmalo mwa chinamwali. Ndiye kuti **chilangizo** ndi chiphunzitso cha chiKhristu chimene namwali amalandira pamene watha msinkhu, pakukwatiwa, mimba yoyamba ndi kubadwa kwa mwana. Koma mwambo weni- weni womubvinira mtsikiana uchedwebe ndi dzina loti **chinamwali**. **Alangizi** (**mlangizi**, mmodzi) ndiwo adalowa mmalo mwa anamkungwi.

Christianity has always come to a people who believe in the ancestral customs. Initiation is very important to many societies. It is therefore important for Christianity to take initiation very seriously. Here in Malawi *chilangizo* was introduced to take the place of *chinamwali*. *Chilangizo* is therefore a general term referring to the Christian instruction or teaching that is given to a girl upon her first menstruation, on marriage, during the first pregnancy, and the birth of the first baby. *Alangizi* took the place of *anamkungwi*. However, the actual ceremony retains the term *chinamwali*. The instructresses are called *alangizi* (*mlangizi*, singular).

Popeza anthu onse adalengedwa ndi Mulungu, muchifaniziro chake ndi mchikhalidwe chake (Genesis 1:26), ndiye kuti mwambo wa Mulungu ndi umene upatsa munthu khalidwe loyenera, osati makolo adafa kale. Uwu tiupeza mBukhu lake Lopatulika.. Ndi chifukwa chake Chikhristu chiyenera kuphunzitsa anthu ache chikonzero cha Mulungu pa kutha msinkhu, ukwati, mimba, komanso kubereka ndi kulera mwana, kuti aliyense akhale monga Mulungu afunira. Mau a Mulungu akhale otisonyeza zoyenera, kuti anthu azimvera ndi kuchita zomwe Bible likubvomereza.

Since all people were created by God, in his own image and in his likeness (Genesis 1:26), it is God's *mwambo* (instruction/teaching) that gives us true *chikhalidwe* (character). We find God's *mwambo* in his Holy Bible. That is why it is important for the Christian tradition to teach its people God's purpose for puberty, marriage, pregnancy, child-birth, and upbringing. The Bible must therefore be the people's life map. They must obey only what the Bible affirms from their cultures.

Ndi udindo wa mpingo uliwonse kuphunzitsa anthu ake mwambo wa Chikhristu kupyolera muzinamwali, popeza ndi njira imene mitundu yambiri imaphunzirira miyambo.

It is the responsibility of every congregation to teach her members the Christian customs through *chinamwali* for that is the method through which many societies learn well.

## WOYENERA KULANGIZIDWA NDANI?

### WHO SHOULD BE COUNSELLED?

Potsatira chinamwali chamakolo, ndikofuna kuti ulangizi wachiKhristu utsatirensa magawo onse a paumoyo wa munthu. Ndiye amene ayenera kulangizidwa ndi mwana, msungwana, komanso mayi. Ndiye ulangizi umene uli m'kabukhumu ndi wa msungwana asanathe msinkhu, pamene watha msinkhu, pamene wapeza bwenzi lokwatirana naye, ukwati wake, mimba yoyamba, kubadwa mwana woyamba, komanso wa amayi onse. Popeza imfa irinso ndi mwambo wake, Mpingo uyenera kukonza malangizo ndi ziphunzitso zosiyana-siyana zokhuzana ndi imfa.

Following the traditional way, the Christian initiation should follow the person's life from birth to death. So a child, a girl, and a woman or mother should receive counsel. The instruction in this booklet therefore is for a girl before her puberty, upon her puberty, in courtship, at her marriage, at her first pregnancy, after the birth of

the first baby, as well as to all women. Since death is also a type of initiation, the church must prepare appropriate instructions and teachings concerning death.

## **TISANKHE BWANJI ALANGIZI?**

### **HOW TO CHOOSE *ALANGIZI***

Posankha alangizi, makolo amumpingomo ayenera kusankha amayi awiri, atatu, kapena anayi amene akhala mumpingo zaka zisanu kapena kupitilapo ngati kuli kotheka. Ayenera kukhala amayi okhulupirika ndiokula muuzimu, ndikuwonetsa zitsanzo zabwino pamakhalidwe awo (Tito 2:3-5). Amayiwa akhoza kukhala pamabanja kapena ai, koma ambiri yabwino. Alangizi asankhidwe chaka ndi chaka, kapena zaka ziwiri ziri zonse, ndipo akale awiri kapena mmodzi ayenera kupitiriza pamodzi ndi alangizi osankhidwa atsopano.

When choosing *alangizi*, all parents in the congregation should choose two, three or four women who have been members for five or more years if possible. *Alangizi* should be faithful and mature Christian women of exemplary lifestyle (Titus 2:3-5). They can be married or not as long as they are of good repute. The *alangizi* should be chosen every year or every two years, making sure there is an old one with the new ones.

## **UDINDO WA ALANGIZI**

### **THE ROLE OF THE INSTRUCTRESSES**

Ulangizi ndiwofunika kwambiri pakati pa anthu onse. Mwana ngakhale munthu wamkulu kuti akhale wa makhalidwe abwino, ayenera kulangizidwa nthawi ndi nthawi. Tikayang'ana muBukhu Lopatulika tiona kuti mwazaza ndi ulangizi wosiyana-siyana wokhudza munthu mmene angakhalire ndi khalidwe labwino lokondweretsa Mulungu amene anamulenga. Mau a Mulungu amati:

Malemba Oyera onse ndi Mulungu amene adawalembetsa mochita ngati kuwauzira, ndipo amathandiza pakuphunzitsa choona, pakutsutsa zolakwa, pakuwongola zokhota, ndi pakuphunzitsa anthu za kukhala olungama.

2 Timoteo 3:16

Counsel or advice is important for all people. For a young person or an adult to live well he or she must be counselled all the time. Scripture is full of God's counsel on how people can live lives pleasing to God. Scripture says:

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.

2 Timothy 3:16

Alangizi ayenera kudziwa kuti iwo anasankhidwa ndi mpingo kugwira ntchito ya Mulungu. Chomwecho ayenera kukhala ophunzira Mau a Mulungu nthawi zonse kuti akakhoze kulangiza bwino. Ntchito ya alangizi iri pawiri motere:

The instructresses should realize that the congregation has chosen them to serve God. Therefore they must study the Word of God all the time so that they are able to counsel properly. The role of the instructresses is two-fold:

1. Kuphunzitsa atsikana njira ndi makhalidwe a Chikristu. Alangizi ayenera kutsogolera atsikana amene sadziwa Khristu kubvomereza Iye monga Mbuye ndi Mpulumutsi wawo.

Gwiritsani ntchito ndime zalembedwa kotsirilizira kwa kabukhu aka pokambirana ndi atsikana za chipulumutso chao. Alangizi ayenera kuwatsogolera atsikanawo kukula ndi makhalidwe a chiKhristu, mpaka akalowe mbanja.

Teaching the girls the Christian way of life. The instructresses should lead the girls who do not know Christ to receive Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. They can use the verses which are at the back of this booklet. It is the instructresses' responsibility to mature the girls in their faith until they are married.

2. Kulangiza. Alangizi ayenera kulangiza mtsikana pamene watha msinkhu; ayenera kumulangiza mmene angakhalire ndi bwezi lake; amulangize paukwati wake, pamimba yoyamba, ndi pamene mwana wabadwa. Alangizi ayeneranso kupitiriza kulangiza azimayi magawo osiyanasiyana.

Counsel. The instructresses should give appropriate counsel when a girl has matured, when she is dating someone, on her wedding, at her first pregnancy, and when the first baby is born. The instructresses should also give continuous counsel to the women in their congregation.

## **MAPHUNZIRO A ALANGIZI**

### **TRAINING FOR THE INSTRUCTRESSES**

Alangizi, monga anamkungwi, ayenera kukhala odziwa bwino ntchito yao. Chomwecho ndi udindo wampingo kukonza maphunziro a alangizi pamene angosankhidwwa, komanso nthawi ndi nthawi. Kawiri kawiri m'busa ndi mai busa ndi atsogoleri ena ayenera kuphunzitsa alangizi awo.

Atsogoleri a Association naonso ayenera kukonza maphunziro a alangizi kamodzi ngakhale kawiri pachaka.

Like the *anamkungwi*, *alangizi* should know their work well. Therefore, it is the responsibility of every congregation to arrange training sessions for her instructresses as soon as they are chosen, and from time to time. Normally it is the pastor, or his wife, or other church elders who should conduct the training.

## **MAU KWA ALANGIZI ONSE**

### **WORD TO ALL THE INSTRUCTRESSES**

Ambuye akutsogolereni pamene mwabvomera kutumikira Ambuye mugawo la ulangizi iri! Zinthu zina zimene muyenera kuzindikira ndi izi:

May God guide you in this ministry which you have accepted to do. Some of the things you need to know are:

- Musaziderere, Mulungu ndi amene wakusankhani, ndipo akuthandizani.

You should not undermine yourself. God is the one who has chosen you and he will help you.

- Onenetsetsani kuti mwalandira maphunziro a ulangizi pampingo panu, komanso pitani kumaphunziro a Association a zaulangizi. Musayambe ntchito pamene simunaphunzitsidwe.

Make sure that you have received the necessary training for your job. You must also attend the Association's leadership training. Do not start to work when you have not been trained.

- Muyenera kudzipereka ndi kukhala wokhulupirika pantchito imene Mulungu wakudalirani nayo. Dziwitsani mpingo ngati pali zifukwa zimene zikulepheretseni kutumikira.

You must be committed to faithfully carry out the work God has entrusted to you. Inform your congregation if you are unable to continue with *ulangizi*.

- Muyenera kukhala chitsanzo chabwino kwa atsikana ndi amayi anzanu pa umoyo wanu wa tsiku ndi tsiku,, kubanja kwanu ndi pakutumikira kwanu.

You must be exemplary to the girls and your fellow women in your daily life, in your family, and in the way you serve God.

- Mukhale mai wophunzira mau a Mulungu ndi kupemphera nthawi zonse.

Be diligent in learning the Word of God and in prayer all the time.

- Khalani a luntha popanga nyimbo, ndakatulo, masewero, ndi zina zotere zimene zingapangitse mwambo wa chinamwali chanu kukhala wopambana. Chinamwali chizikhala mwambo wopambana ndi wosaiwalika kwa namwali wanu.

Be creative in coming up with songs, poems, drama, and so on. These are the things that make the *chinamwali* ceremony to have a lasting impact on the initiate.

- Musawerenge kabukhu aka pamaso pa anamwali. Konzekani mokwana zimene mukukalangiza. Ngati ndikotheka gawanani magawo pakati panu.

Do not read the booklet at the ceremony. You must prepare well in advance the things you are going to counsel. If possible, practise before and share the parts.

## **GAWO LACHIWIRI**

### **SECOND PART**

#### **ATSIKANA OSATHA MSINKHU (ABUTHU)**

##### **PRE-PUBERTY INSTRUCTION**

Pali zinthu zambiri zimene mtsikana amene sanathe msinkhu ayenera kuphunzira. Popeza ntchito ya alangizi ndikuphunzitsanso atsikana njira ndi makhalidwe a Chikhristu, nthawi yabwino ndi pamene sianathe msinkhu. Zina zimene atsikana ayenera kuphunzitsidwa ndi:

There are many things that a girl should learn even before puberty. One of the jobs of the instructresses is to teach the girls the Christian way of living, and this stage is the best time to teach them. Some of the things that the *alangizi* can teach the girls as follows:

**Kudzisamala popewa chiwerewere**

Taking care of herself by not indulging in sexual immorality

**Kuchitira ulemu makolo, mafumu ndi akulu**

Showing respect to the parents, chiefs, and the elders

**Kumvera**

Obedience

**Kupewa maboza, kuba, ndi ndeu**

Avoid lying, stealing, and fighting

**Kukhala wolimbika pa kugwira ntchito kunyumba, mmudzi, ndi kumpingo**

To be industrious at home, in society, and in the church

**Kulimbika pakupembeza**

To be diligent in attending worship services

Ndi udindo wa alangizi kukonza maphunziro a atsikana onsewa kamodzi pamwezi.  
It is the responsibility of the instructresses to arrange meeting with the girls once every month.

## **CHINAMWALI (KUTHA MSINKHU)** PUBERTY RITE CEREMONY

### **Malangizo kwa Alangizi** For the Instructresses

Pamene alangizi mwadziwitsidwa kuti mtsikana watha msinkhu, muyenera mukumane ndi mtsikanayo mwansanga. Mumuuzze mwachidule tanthauzo la zimene zamuchitikirazo. Mumuphunzitsenso kabvalidwe ndi kasamalidwe ka mwele. Mtsikanayo asagwire ntchito yolemetsa, komanso asayende yende mpaka atabvinidwa potsirizira pa msambowo.

When you have been informed that a girl has matured, you must meet with the girl as soon as possible. Briefly, instruct her on the meaning of the menses, how to wear and take care of the linen. She must do light work and should remain in seclusion until the *chinamwali* ceremony at the end of her menses.

Muyenera kudziwitsa amayi busa anu amene adziwitsanso abusa. Dziwitsaninso anamkungwi popeza ndiwo amene ayenera kukanena kwa mfumu. Mayi wa mtsikana apereka nkhuu yokanenera kwa mfumu.

You must inform the pastor's wife who should inform the pastor. Inform also the traditional *anamkungwi* who will inform the chief. The girl's mother must pay the chief's dues.

Alangizi ndi mpingo, mogwirizana ndi makolo mukonzekere kumubvinira namwaliyo usiku wonse potha pa msambo wakewo. Simba labwino ndi kunyumba kwa mlangizi, komabe mukhoza kusankha malo ena opangira chinamwalicho. Alangizi, machembere a mumpingo, makolo a mtsikana (osati mai ake), ndi atsikana olangizidwa kale a mumpingo (koma awiri akhale aphungu), ayenera kudza kuchinamwalicho.

The instructresses and the church, together with the parents, should prepare for the night's vigil *chinamwali* at the end of the girl's menses at the instructress' house, or any other house. The instructresses, the elderly women of the church, the girl's aunt or grandmother, and the younger women of the church should be invited to attend the *chinamwali*. Let two of them be tutors.

Anthu onse oitanidwawo atatha kudya chakudya chamadzulo pamodzi, abusa kapena akulu a mpingo ayenera kutsegula mwambo ndi pemphero ndi mawu apang'ono achilimbikitso.

Chonde onenetsetsani kuti kuimba, kubvina, ndakatulo, ngakhale masewero, ziyenera kutenga gawo lalikulu pachinamwali, kuti namwaliyo amvetse mwambo. Baibulo mukhoza kuwerenga koma osati Bukhu la alangizi ayi.

When all the invited people have taken their evening meal, let the pastor or an elder begin with prayer and a word of exhortation from the vernacular Bible.

Please note that singing, dancing, and acting should be used in instructing the girl. You can use the Bible but not the instructresses' booklet.

Mwambo wa usiku ukhoza kukhala motere. (Ichi ndi chitsanzo chimodzi, koma alangizi muyenera kukonza nyimbo zambiri ngakhalenso maseweero ndi mau ochokera m'Bukhu Loyera kuti chinamwali chikhale chopambana kwa namwali.)



The night's ceremony may be as follows. (This is just one example of *chinamwali*. The instructresses should come up with many songs and drama with words from the Scriptures to make the rite more meaningful and interesting to the young women.)

Machemebere ayimbe nyimbo (ziwiri ngakhale zitatu) kuti namwali adziwe chimene anthu abwerera, monga,

The women should sing two or three songs concerning the purpose for the vigil, such as,

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| 1. <i>M'Baibulo, m'Baibulo</i><br><i>Muli mwambooo</i><br><i>M'Baibulo, m'Baibulo</i><br><i>Muli mwalankhula</i> | In the Bible, in the Bible<br>There is counsel<br>In the Bible, in the Bible<br>There is speaking |
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Machembere aziimba akumuzungulira mtsikana atakhala. Ena a amayiwo atanyamula maBaibulo kumanja kwawo ndikumamusonyeza namwaliyo. Tanthauzo lake ndikuti ulangizi umene apatsidwe tsikanayo ndiochokera m'Baibulo. Popeza baibulo ndi Mau a Mulungu, ndipo Mulungu ndi amene adatilenga. Mwambo wa Mulungu ndiye wotiyenera ife.

The women should be singing while going round in a circle with the initiate seated. Some of the women can hold a Bible in their hands and show it to the initiate. The meaning is that their counsel is from the Word of God, who is our Creator. It is God's counsel which we must follow.

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| 2. <i>Sinkadabweratu ine</i><br><i>Sinkadabweratu pano</i><br><i>Yandiendetsa mnkhole yakoyi</i> | I would not have come me<br>I would not have come here<br>It is your menses that have made me walk |
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Mtsikana ali chikhalire ndi phungu wake pambali, onse adziimba attachita bwalo. Azizungulira, koma ena atayerekeza kubvala mwele, koma osabvula zobvala zawo.

Atanthauza kuti onse abwera chifukwa cha mtsikana amene wakula. 'Tsopanotu walowa mbungwe la anthu akulu.'

While the girl is seated with her tutors, the others should be dancing in a circle while wearing something like the menses linen, but not actually taking off their clothes.

They should explain the meaning that 'now you are mature, you are no more a child!'

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| 3. <i>Mukatere, mukatere</i><br><i>Ndiko kukula kumeneku</i> | What you have done, you have done<br>This is what maturity is |
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Zimene zikuchitika panozi ndichifukwa chakuti mwakula ndipo mulandire mwambo woyenera.

What is happening here is because you have now come of age and you need to be instructed.

Tsapano ndi nthawi yakuti atsikana akale aperekere maumboni a khalidwe lawo kupyolera mu nyimbo ndi kubvina. Popezatu iwo tsapano ndi anthu akhalidwe labwino kunyumba kwawo, mmudzi, komanso kumpingo kwawo.

After singing and dancing, the older girls should take the floor. The aim is to give their testimonies through songs and dancing that it is because they received the same teaching they are now good girls in their community, in their homes, even at church.

Machembere ayenera kumawafupa atsikanawa pamene akuimba ndi kubvina.

The women should give monetary gifts to the girls as they dance.

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| 4. <i>Yeli yelele, tandiona mzako lero</i> | Joy yaaa, look at me today             |
| <i>Yeli, nkakumana ndi amfumu, yelele!</i> | Joy, when I meet with the chief, yaaa! |
| <i>Mpo mmagwada lero yelele!</i>           | I kneel down today yaaa!               |
| <i>Mwambo wake ngomwewu, Yeli yelele!</i>  | It is the same counsel, Joy yaaa!      |

Mizere yachiwiri ndi chitatu ya nyimboyi kumasintha nkumachula zimene adasintha munga, anzanga akandiputa, mpo simbwezera; nkaona agogo asinja, mpo mmawalandira; nkapita kuchalichi, mpo mmasesa lero, and so on. Mtsikana aliyense adzilowa mbwalo kuchula ndikusonyeza chomwe adasiyacho, munga kugwada, kusinja, ndi zina. Akatha apitilire kuyimba nyimbo iyi:

Tanthauzo ndi lakuti, mwambo wake ndiomwewu umene tonse tinasinthikira khalidwe lathu loipa kutsata labwino.

In the second and third lines, one girl at a time goes inside and mentions the thing she has changed from, such as 'I do not pay back evil for evil;' I now help the elderly;' I now clean the church building;' and so on. They should continue to sing the following song:

The meaning is that this is the counsel we all receive which changes us from bad behaviour to good conduct. It is only Jesus who can change our bad behaviour.

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| 5. <i>Kodi n'ndani adakusintha khalidwe?</i>    | Who changed your behaviour?           |
| <i>Ndiye Yesu, ndiye Yesu yekha, Yelele!</i>    | It is Jesus, it is only Jesus, Yaaa   |
| <i>Chikondi cha Yesu nchopambana, Yelele!</i>   | The love of Jesus is great, Yaaa!     |
| <i>Yesu, Kholo lathu, tasintha ife, Yelele!</i> | Jesus, our Ancestor, we have changed! |
| <i>Tidzamvera ndikukonda inu Yesu!</i>          | We shall love and obey you, Jesus!    |
| <i>Yelele! Yelele!</i>                          | Yaa! Yaa!                             |

Tanthauzo la nyimboyi ndi kuti anthu akuyamikira kusintha kwa khalidwe lamtsikanayu. Yankho lake akuti popeza iye adasiya kuopa mizimu, lero akukonda Kholo lenileni, Yesu Khristu amene akukangelika kumukondweretsa ndi kumumvera.

The meaning is that other people are admiring the girl's changed behaviour; the response is that it is because of her moving from dread of ancestors to love of The Ancestor, Jesus Christ, that her concern is now to please and obey him.

Potsiriza gawo limeneli payenera kukhala kupuma panthawi yochepa, pamene anthu amwe chakumwa chimene chakonzedwa.

At break time some drinks are served.

Gawi lachiwiriri, amayi busa kapena mlangizi atsegule ndi pemphero lakuthokoza Mulungu:

The pastor's wife or one instructress should begin the second part with a prayer of thanksgiving to God.

Zikomo Ambuye chifukwa chakutitsogolera gawo loyambali. Zikomo chifukwa cha umboni wa atsikana awa amene atamva mwambo wanu,

anausunga ndikumvera konse monga mwa mau anu akuti ‘Mwana wanga, usaiwale malangizo angawa, koma mtima wako usunge malamulo anga’ (Miyambo 3:1). Tsono mutitsogolerebe pamene tikupitiriza mwambo wathu. Amen.

Thank you Lord for guiding us through the first part. Thank you for the testimonies of these girls who have kept the counsel they were given according to your Word ‘My child, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart’ (Proverbs 3:1). Now we ask you to lead us as we continue with our ceremony. Amen

Onse pamodzi ndi namwali aimirire kupanga bwalo nkumaimba nyimbo iyi akubvina mozungulira.

All, including the initiate, should stand and dance in a circle.

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| 6. <i>Yohani fotini, twenty wanii x 4</i><br><i>Iye wondikonda ine x 4</i><br><i>Amvera lamulo langa</i>   | John fourteen, twenty one x 4<br>One who loves me x 4<br>Obey my command                               |
| 7. <i>Popanda Mulungu kundikonda ine</i><br><i>Nkadakhala yanii lero?</i><br><i>Popanda Yesu kundisintha ine</i><br><i>Nkadakhala ndiri kuti lero?</i> | Without God loving me<br>Who would I be today?<br>Without Jesus changing me<br>Where would I be today? |

Onse atakhala pansi, mlangizi abwereze kufotokoza za chikondi cha Mulungu kwa ife mwa Yesu Khristu, ifetu tiyenera kumumvera iye. Tiyenera kumvera malamulo ake chifukwa timamukonda. Onse ayimbe nyimbo yotsatirayi polimbikitsa kuti pamene timvera Yesu, iye adzatimangira mabanja athu, mpingo wathu, ngakhale mudzi wathu, ndi china chilli chonse.

While all are seated, one instructress should stress the fact that since God loved us through his Son, Jesus Christ, we respond to his love by obeying God’s commands. Sing the following song to emphasize that when we obey Jesus, he will build our families, our church, our community, and so on.

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| 8. <i>Limanga banja o dzina la Yesu</i><br><i>Limanga banjaa dzina la Yesu</i> | It builds marriage o the name of Jesus<br>It builds marriagee the name of Jesus    |
| <i>Limanga mpingo o dzina la Yesu</i><br><i>Limanga mpingoo dzina la Yesu</i>  | It builds the church o the name of Jesus<br>It builds the church the name of Jesus |
| <i>Limanga mudzi o dzina la Yesu</i><br><i>Limanga mudzii dzina la Yesu</i>    | It builds society o the name of Jesus<br>It builds society the name of Jesus       |

Onse atakhala pansi, amayi awiri asonyeze sewero lamtsikana amene wakula koma akuganiza kuti waphweteka.

While all are seated two women act showing a girl who has matured but knows nothing about it and thinks that she is hurt. She therefore tells her dad who takes her to the hospital.

*Mtsikana:* Adadi, taonani ine ndaphweteka, kaya ndi chiyani chandicheka!

*Abambo:* Aaa! Kodi mumasewera bwanji? Taonani tsopano waphweteka eeh! Onani magazi! Tiyeni kuchipatala!

Anthu onse nkuseka. Ndipo anamkungwi aimirire nayambitse nyimbo (Masalimo 139:13-14):

*Girl:* Dad, look, I have hurt myself; I do not know what has cut me!

*Father:* O, No! How do you play? Look now you have hurt yourself, eh! Look at the blood! Let's go to the hospital!

They all laugh. Then the instructresses stand and begin to sing a song from Psalm 139:13-14.

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| 9. <i>Ndinu mudanlenga inetu eee!</i>      | You created me yaa!                 |
| <i>Mudandiumba bwino tu eee!</i>           | You moulded me well yaa!            |
| <i>Ntchito zanu zonse nzodabwitsa eee!</i> | Your works are wonderful yaa!       |
| <i>Onani lero ndakula</i>                  | Look today I have matured           |
| <i>Ndakulatu, ndakulaa.</i>                | I have matured, I have matured yee! |

Akatha kubvina, amulongosolele mtsikana kuti:

Mulungu adatilenga kuti thupi lamunthu likamakula limasinthika mumsinkhu ndi mmaonekedwe. Akafika msinkhu wina mtsikana amayamba kusamba kwa masiku seven kapena kucheperako (kutuluka magazi kokozera). Kusambaku kumapitiria kamodzi pamwezi. Chizindikiro chimenechi chimaoneka kwa akazi onse. Chomwecho sizodetsa nkhawa kuti ndi matenda.

Kusambaku kumalozera zamtsogolo. Imeneyi ndi njira yomwe anakonza Mulungu pofuna kutipatsa mphatso za ana.

Apitirize kuyimba,

After dancing the instructresses should give the following explanation to the girl:

God created us so that as we grow our bodies change both physically and in how we look. At a certain point the girl begins to menstruate for about seven days or less (blood coming out of the private parts). This blood flow happens once a month to all women. It is not any illness to worry about. Menstruation foretells the future role. This is God's own way for us to have children.

They should continue singing,

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| 10. <i>Mwateremu dzisamalen i a Joyce x 3</i> | Now with this, take care of yourself Joyce |
| <i>Bvalani mwele</i>                          | Wear menses linen                          |
| 11. <i>Nchenje, nchenje, taona</i>            | Fly, fly, look                             |
| <i>Nchenje, yaonanji?</i>                     | Fly, what has it seen                      |
| <i>Yaona n'nkhole</i>                         | It has seen the menses                     |

Kutanthauza kwa nyimboyi ndiye kuti namwaliyo adzizisamalira maka maka akamasamba kuopa kununkha.

The meaning of the song is that the girl should take care of herself whenever she is menstruating so that she does not smell.

Anamkungwi amuonetse mtsikana kabvalidwe ka mwele bwino-bwino. Amupatse nayenso achite monga waonera mpakana akhonze ndipo anthu alulutire. Amuonetsenso kachapidwe ndi kasungidwe kache pamene nyimbo ikuimbidwabe. Potsiriza abwereze kumulungosolela kuti:

While still singing, the instructresses should demonstrate and teach her well how to wear the menses linen and how to clean and take care of them. They should then explain the following to her:

Tsopanotu iye ayenera kudzisamalira thupi lake koposa kale. Akhale waukhondo nthawi zonse ndi thupi ndi zobvala zake. Mtsikana adzisamalire kwenikweni thupi lake ndi nsaru zake panthawi imene ali mumsambo kuti asapezeke akutulutsa fungo loipa. Komanso asakhetsere paliponse mwazi wamsambo, popeza zimachititsa manyazi kuti ena aone mwazi umenewu. Kuyimba kupitirire.

Now she must take care of her body more than before. She needs to keep her body and her clothes clean at all times, particularly when she is menstruating so that no bad smell comes out. She needs to make sure that no blood stains remain anywhere for is it a shameful thing for people to see the stains. The singing continues.

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| 12. <i>Kumana, kumana mtsikana x 2</i><br><i>Mmati undipatse</i><br><i>Wabvundikira</i> | Refuse, refuse the girl<br>I wanted you to give me<br>You have covered |
| 13. <i>Mulungu adawauza Adamu nda aHava</i><br><i>Muberekane, muchurukane</i>           | God told Adam and Eve<br>Be fruitful, and increase in number           |

Longosolani kuti njira imene amatipatsira ana Mulungu ndi yakugonana mwamuna ndi mkazi amene ali pabanja. Kugonana kwa mwamuna ndi mkazi amene sali pabanja ndi chimo la chigololo pamaso pa Mulungu ('Usachite chigololo' Eksodo 20:14; 1 Akorinto 6:13, 19).

Explain that God gives us children through sexual activity in a marriage. Therefore sex outside marriage is adultery to God ('Do not commit adultery' Exodus 20:14; 1 Corinthians 6:13, 19).

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| 14. <i>Kodi lamulo la Mulungu likuti chiani?</i><br><i>Likuti Usachite chigololo</i><br><i>Thupiri silili la chigololo</i>   | What does God's law say?<br>It says do not commit adultery<br>The body is not for adultery   |
| 15. <i>Kodi abale simudziwa ee!</i><br><i>Simudziwaaa ee!</i><br><i>Kodi abale simudziwa ee!</i><br><i>Simudziwaa ee!</i><br><i>Thupi lanu liri kachisi, liri kachisi</i><br><i>Wa Mzimu Woyeraaa!</i> | Friends, do you not know eh!<br>Do you not know eh!<br>Friends, do you not know eh!<br>Do you not know eh!<br>Your body is a temple, is a temple<br>Of the Holy Spiritiii! |

Onse azibvina akugwira thupi lao ndikusonyeza kumwamba kokhala Mzimu Woyera.

They should be dancing while touching their bodies and pointing towards heaven where the Holy Spirit is.

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| 16. <i>Mwendo, mwendo nkuyendera</i><br><i>Maso, maso nkupenyera</i><br><i>Chimodzimodzi, ziwalo zachinsinsi</i><br><i>Ntchito yake m'banja</i> | Leg, leg is for walking<br>Eyes, eyes are for looking<br>Similarly, private parts<br>Their job is in marriage |
|---|---|



Amayiwo ayenera kusonyeza ntchito yake ya chiwalo chochulidwacho. Koma akachula ziwalo za chinsinsi, azisonyeza pongodikhula mwaubwino. Ayenera kumubvinitanso namwaliyo.

Chiphunzitso chake ndi chomwecho chakudzisunga osadzidetsa mpaka adzakwatiwe. Chiwalo chiri chonse chiyenera kugwiritsidwa ntchito molemekeza Mulungu.

The women demonstrate the use of the part that is mentioned, such as leg for walking. But for the private parts, they should demonstrate by shaking their waist up and down. They should let the initiate dance also.

The teaching is still on sexual purity until marriage. Each part of the body should be used to honour God.

Chiphunzitso chotsatirachi chipangidwe musewero. Ndilokhuza atsikana awiri kapena atatu amene akuphunzira kumachokera pakhomo pamakolo awo.

The following instruction should be acted by two to three girls who are day schooling and are staying with their parents.

Atsikanawo akaweruka kusukulu, mmodzi amabwerera kunyumba, koma enawo amayamba kucheza ndi anyamata nkumakafika mochedwa kunyumba. Makolo awo akawafunsa amati amagwira ntchito tasukulu. Patapita nthawi, mmodzi wapezeka ali ndi pakati nasiya sukulu. Mnyamata wake adaikana mimbayo. Mtsikanayo anabvutika nayo mimbayo popezanso makolo amtsikanayo anaipidwa nazo. Mwana atabadwa, mtsikanayo amangodwala dwala ndipo mayi wake analibe nthawi yomuthandiza, popeza anali mayi wa bizinesi. Mtsikanayo amangosilira mzake uja atatsiriza sukulu mpaka kumanga ukwati ku mpingo. Kudwala kudapitirira mpaka kumwalira, kusiya mwana wakhandu. Pamaliropo anthu amangofunsana kuti ‘Kodi ameneyu sadamwalire ndi matenda amasiku anowa a EDZI?’

After school, one girl goes straight home while the other two go somewhere else with their boyfriends and reach home later. When their mothers ask them why they always come later, they say they were doing some work at school. After sometime, one girl becomes pregnant and stops school. The boy refuses responsibility and gets away with it. The girl is very upset and sad about it but she can’t do anything. Her parents also are angry with her. After having a baby, she is always sick, and her mother, a business woman, has no time to take care of her and the baby. She envies her friend who finished school and wedded in church. Her health deteriorates and she dies, leaving the baby. At the funeral people were asking each other ‘Did she not die of this deadly disease called HIV/AIDS?’

Potsiriza atsikana onse adaimba, akuzungulira, ndikugwedeza mapewa kusonyeza kukana. They end by singing while going round and moving their shoulders demonstrating refusal:

17. *Ine toto, ine toto*  
*Ine, toto AIDS ndaikana*  
*Mankhwala sikondomu, ine toto*  
*AIDS ndaikana*  
*Mankhwala nkuziletsa,*  
*Kudziletsa annanu, kudziletsa*  
*AIDS ndaikana.*

Me no no, me no no  
 Me, no no AIDS I have refused it  
 Medicine is not condom, me no no  
 AIDS I have refused it  
 Medicine is self-control,  
 Self-control children, self-control  
 AIDS I have refused it.

Alangizi alongosolele bwino bwino za kuopsya kwake kwa matenda opatsirana kudzera muchiwere-were monga chizonono kapena chindoko. Koma maka maka matenda a masiku

ano a HIV/AIDS amene alibe mankhwala ochiritsa. Mankhwala abwino ochinjiriza ndiwo a kudziletsa, osachita chigololo. Osalolanso kugwiritsa ntchito makondomu. Ayenera kulemekeza Mulungu mwa kusunga thupi lake moyenera.

The instructresses should explain well the danger of contracting venereal diseases like syphilis or gonorrhoea. The most deadly disease is HIV/AIDS which has no cure. The best remedy is a self-controlled lifestyle, not indulging in sexual immorality. Unmarried girls should not even agree to sleep with men who use condoms. The girls must honour God by keeping their bodies pure.

Potsiriza nthawi yammamawa alangizi amusambitse mtsikanayo ndi madzi ofunda, abvale zobvala zabwino. Musimbamo ayenera kukonza bwino. Ndi nthawi yoti atsirize kumulanga akumusupa mtsikanayo. Mai a mwanayo ayenera kuyamba gawo limeneli. Adzimuyamikira kapena kumuzuzula uku akuponya ndalama pamtsikanayo. Onse achibale akatha, alangizi aonjezere ndi kutsirira ndemanga pa mau a makolo. Wena wonse achitenso chimodzimodzi, kuponya ndalama pamene akumulangiza. Alangizi berezenso ziphunzitso ziri mmunsimu.

At the end in the early morning hours the instructresses should bath the initiate with warm water and let her wear nice clothes. They should clean the room, ready for the last section of the instruction and gift-giving time. While all are seated, the mother should begin commending and rebuking the initiate while throwing her gifts to the girl. Other relatives should follow. The instructresses should repeat for emphasis where necessary. The rest do likewise while throwing their gifts. The instructresses should repeat instruction on the following points:

Lero mwakula chifukwa cha chikondi cha Mulungu. Yesu adanena kuti lamulo lalikulu ndi 'kukonda Mulungu ndi mtima wako wonse, ndi moyo wako wonse, ndi nzeru zako zonse, ndi mphamvu yako yonse, ndi kukonda mzako monga udzikonda mwini' (Marko 12:30-31). Apitirire kumuuzza mtsikanayo kuti:

Today you are now an adult because of God's love. Jesus said that the greatest command is 'to love God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength,' followed by 'loving your friend as you love yourself' (Mark 12:30-31). Continue instructing the young woman that:

Asamasewere ndi ana ochepa msinkhu popeza iye wateremu wakula tsopano.

Not to play with children since she has now matured.

Adzilemekeza makolo, mafumu ndi akulu.

To respect parents, chiefs and elders.

Adzikhala womvera.

To be obedient.

Adzipewa mabodza, kuba, ndi ndeu.

To avoid lying, stealing, and fighting.

Adzikhala wolimbikira pa kugwira ntchito pakhomo, mmudzi, ndi kumpingo.

To be industrious in the home, in the village, and in the church.

Adzilimbika kupita kuchalichi kukapemphera.

To be committed in attending church services.

Asamalumbira ndi kutchula dzina la Mulungu pachabe.

Not to swear and mention God's name in vain.

Adzichitira ulemu nyumba ya Mulungu.

To respect God's house.

Alangizi apitirize kulimbikitsa kuti kubvinidwa kotereku kukukhadzikitsa uChewa wake komanso chiKhristu chake. Ndipo khalidwe lake losinthika lidzakhala umboni kwa atsikana ena kuti nawonso afune kubwera kwa Yesu ndi ku mpingo wake.

The instructresses need to emphasize to the initiate that going through this Christian *chinamwali* establishes her identity as a Chewa woman, and as a Christian. Her changed behaviour should be a testimony to her friends so that they will also desire to come to Jesus, to join his church, and to go through the Christian *chinamwali*.

Potsiriza peni peni apempherere namwali kuti Mulungu amuteteze ndi kumuthandiza adzisunge mpaka akalowe m'banja. Wopemphera amusanjike manja namwaliyo pomupempherera. Kudya ndi kumwa onse pamodzi ndi kubalalikana zitseke zonse. Alangizi ndi aphungu amuperekeze namwaliyo kwawo nthawi yakummawa, ndipo amwaliyo atafundira nsalu kumutu kwache. Adziyimba nyimbo iyi:

At the end the initiate should be prayed for that God should protect her and help her to remain pure until marriage. The one praying should lay hands on the initiate. Eating and drinking together should end the ceremony after which people can disperse. The instructresses and the tutors should escort the girl home while singing:

18. *Mtetezi wanga Yesu*  
*Mtetezi wanga*

My protector is Jesus  
My protector

Wotsogolera nyimbo adzisintha sintha mawu ndikuikira wena monga 'momboli wanga,' 'mchiritsi wanga,' 'ndimbuye wanga.' Akalandiridwa kunyumba alangizi apempherenso mtsikana pamodzi ndi makolo ake, kuyamika Mulungu chifukwa cha mwambo wonse umene mtsikana walandira.

The leader should be mentioning all that Jesus is, such as 'my saviour,' 'my healer,' 'my lord,' and so on. At home the instructress should pray with the girl and her parents thanking God for the ceremony and the instruction the girl has received.

Sabata yotsatira, panthawi yamapemphero payenera kukhala kamwambo kochepea kumulandira mtsikana ku mpingo. Amfumu aitanidwe kudzaonerera. Potsiriza mapemphero pakhale chiyanjano ndi kumwa thobwa pamodzi kusonyeza umodzi wa anthu.

The following Sunday, during the worship service, there could be a small ceremony to introduce and incorporate the young woman to the wider society. The chief or his representative should be invited to the worship. A drink of sweet beer should be served at the end of the service to symbolize an act of fellowship while embracing into the corporate body of faith.