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## **Rethinking land and religion:**

Examining the 'Power of Naming' through the concept of culture  
in the African Initiated Church in Zambia

**Bridget Nonde Masaiti Mukuka, PhD**

United Church of Zambia University

### **Abstract**

This article is a by-product of a missiological research that examined the power of naming some congregations in the local language, through the concept of culture in the *Mutima Walowa wa Makumbi*<sup>1</sup> Church popularly known as the *Mutima* Church of Zambia. The article examines how the founder of the *Mutima* Church acquired land in the name of religion in many parts of the country. Upon the death of the church founder in February 2015, some of the land has been repossessed by either his own relatives or by the Zambian government. To gain 'ownership' of the land, the church founder established some congregations across the country which he named under his own Bemba<sup>2</sup> cultural worldview. Critically important is the fact that this research was conducted in six congregations; and strongly indicates that due to lack of proper documentation, some acres of church land have been repossessed by the government and by some relatives of the church founder who donated it a couple of years ago. To make the research valid, thirty church members were interviewed. They comprised of eleven males, nine females, six male

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<sup>1</sup> *Mutima walowa wa Makumbi* is a Bemba term. *Mutima* means heart, *walowa* means sweet, *wa Makumbi* means of nimbus clouds. In English, this is called the Sweetheart of Nimbi. According to the participants, they stated that, "We have attributes of God that are good...God is sweet, literally, (*Lesa uwalowa*). Hence, the Sweetheart of Makumbi...means the Sweet clouds of God. Makumbi is Bemba word for clouds, (just in case you are not aware). The clouds we refer ourselves to are not just any other clouds, we belong to the nimbus clouds because they bring rain to earth and this benefits every human being, or every living thing", (Interview with some participants, *Namfumu*, 17<sup>th</sup> January 2020).

<sup>2</sup> In referring to "Bemba women and culture", this study uses Bemba as an umbrella term. The reason is that within the Church of Zambia there are different groups of Bemba people, coming from various provinces. For instance, the Luapula people(s) are also part of the large Bemba-speaking group in Zambia. The differences within the other groups are due mainly to the Luapula Bemba-speaking tribes being primarily fishermen. The Bemba people hold in common the feature of organization in matrilineal clans. They include the Bemba, Bisa, Aushi, Ngumbu, Chishinga, Mukulu, Kawendi, Shila, Tabwa and Lamba, to mention a few (Cunnison Ian, 1959:2). All these occupy much of North-Eastern Zambia and extend into South-Eastern Katanga. This also includes the whole of Kasama, Mpika, Chinsali, Luwingu and Mporokoso. To the west, south and east are the Bisa. To the west, further into the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), are the Aushi and their sub-groups. The Mambwe-Lungu are found in the northern provinces of North-Eastern Zambia (See Cunnison Ian. 1959 and Whiteley, W. 1951).

youths and four female youths. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, focus group approach, participant observation and document review. Consequently, guided by the feminist narrative methods of inquiry, the article adopts a qualitative approach to answer a key research question: How does the missional policy of the *Mutima* Church affect some members' understanding of land and religion in the power of naming? The above discourse is viewed through the lenses of Michel Foucault (1978) and Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza's (2009) respectively.

**Key Words:** Land, The power of naming, What is there in a name, African religion, African Initiated Churches in Zambia, Land as a contested space, The ecclesiastical contribution of Emilio Chishimba Mulolani in Zambia

## **Introduction**

The article examines the power of owning land and naming congregations using the Bemba cultural worldview, by one of the founders of an African Initiated Church in Zambia. The church in question is called the *Mutima walowa wa Makumbi* Church. This article argues that during the colonial era, it was possible for one to acquire land under the guise of religion. To this end, religion has power, just like culture and naming.

This article will employ some aspects of ethnological research design, as it examines the Bemba culture and religious practices within the Christian sphere. In light of this, Sidky, (2015:1) argues that the work of an anthropologist is to familiarize oneself with the inhabitants' values, logic, and beliefs, to allow oneself to understand the world from the participants' cultural point of view. The anthropologist has a variety of tasks to fulfill: building and broadening personal knowledge of cultural diversity and documenting certain religious traditions through field research. Sidky (2015:2) observes that this provides an in-depth, broad, comparative and cross-cultural analysis; a phenomenon where generalizations are based upon the entire spectrum of religions called ethnology. An enterprise of ethnology, is where the systematic comparison of related and unrelated cultures around the globe examines similarities and differences in order to answer particular questions and produce useful theoretical generalizations (Sidky, 2015:2). Since Bemba culture, customs and traditions constitute a critical component of the church's character, this article is also a missiological one, with ethnological dimensions which will be explored as the article advances. The *Mutima* Church, like any other African Initiated Church (AIC), operates within Bemba cultural settings and frameworks.

### **Background of the *Mutima* Church Founder**

The founder of the *Mutima* Church, named, Emilio Chishimba Mulolani was born in Ipusukilo in Luwingu district in 1921, from a family of Bemba parents. The mother of Emilio was called Chilufya and his father was known as Mulolani. Both were Roman Catholic converts. Clearly, they Christian devout, as they embraced Catholicism to the extent that Benadetta, Emilio's sister, joined the first Zambian religious congregation of Religious Sisters, the sisters of the Child of Jesus. Emilio joined the minor seminary at Lubushi when he was ten years old and was later sent to the major seminary of Kipalapala in Tanzania in 1940. He spent three years studying scholastic Philosophy and Theology. During that time, he was increasingly beset by the fear that he was not holy enough to receive the priesthood of Jesus Christ (Hinfelaar, 1994:102).

Hinfelaar (1994:102) argues that it was in the final year of Emilio's studies at the seminary of Kipalapala when problems arose between the staff and the students. The Bemba-speaking students were singled out as causing much trouble and were suspended from the seminary. Emilio was one of the suspended students. He then migrated to Lusaka in the early 1950s and found employment as a primary school teacher and catechist (Hinfelaar, 1994:102). Whilst in Lusaka, Emilio got married. He had two children. By then most of the Bemba-speaking people from the Northern Province of Zambia had received a Christian education from the Southern SMAs White Fathers. In Lusaka, they formed small Catholic communities where they could easily identify with the Jesuits from the Kasisi mission. By then, there were three parishes in Lusaka, namely: Matero, Kabwata and St. Francis in Northmead. The majority of members were Bemba and Chewa-speaking Christians (Hinfelaar, 1994:103). Emilio also started catechism classes and had discussions with the adult Christians in the homes of Catholics, teaching them about Mary, Mother of Jesus and God. Many adults would discuss problems with Emilio, especially on marital problems (Hinfelaar, 1994:105).

### **The Rise of the *Mutima* Church**

In some of the Bemba documents that he wrote for his Church members, Emilio explains how he caught the attention of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ. Gazing at the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ made Emilio see himself as a searcher for Truth, known in the Bemba language as *Ukufwaisha*

*ichishinka* (Chishimba, 1976:7). Emilio initiated families into the practice of gazing at the Sacred Heart that was found in most Christian homes. As Hinfelaar (1994:104) writes,

Emilio exhorted them [members] to fast from time to time, to abstain from alcohol, and amidst the noise of life in the compounds to spend long hours in deep silence in order to create an atmosphere of peace and harmony...The white missionaries, whose primary goal was to plant the visible church and had little time to introduce their neophytes to the mystical aspect of Christian prayer, had taught them to express their new religion through the recitation of long prayers and singing of hymns.

While the white missionaries taught the local people to recite long prayers and to sing hymns without drums, Emilio started to teach them the importance of fasting and to abstain from alcohol. Emilio was teaching the people using his own language, interpreting the scriptures in the language that people could understand. With this kind of approach, Emilio attracted a lot of people from the Northern, Eastern, Central, Luapula and Copperbelt Provinces of Zambia. However, this indigenous form of conversion to Christianity did not please the white missionaries at all. They became suspicious of Emilio's teachings and preaching to the extent that some Bishops such as the Italian Conventual Monsignor Francis Constantin and Monsignor (Mgr) Mazzieri started to enquire from other Bishops about Emilio's background (Hinfelaar, 1994:104). Mazzieri barred Emilio from preaching in the diocese of Ndola' and in October 1955, Emilio was sent back to his home village in the Northern part of Zambia by Monsignor Mazzieri (Hinfelaar, 1994:105). Emilio was ironically considered insane by his Bishops (Hinfelaar, 1994:105).

In trying to integrate Christianity and traditional religions, many Bemba and Chewa people acknowledged his preaching and admired Emilio's teaching. In this regard, Hinfelaar asserts that Emilio attracted the cream of society: the teachers, catechists, and other lay-leaders of the Catholic wing of the Church, who were trying to integrate their own religious background with the teaching of Christian belief and morality (Hinfelaar, 1994:105). Additionally, Garvey (1994:164) concedes that "during 1957 Emilio Chishimba Mulolani's League of the Sacred Heart gradually separated itself from the Roman Catholic community of Northern Rhodesia." Hastings (1994) suggests that Emilio Chishimba and his followers did not leave the RCC at their own will. He asserts that

Emilio's followers were forced out of the Catholic Church and became in 1958 the independent *Bana ba Mutima*, but his sister and close confidant for many years, Mother Bernadetta Stuart Chanda, became the first Mother-General of the Sisters of the Infant Jesus, and his brother, Leo Makumbi, President of the Third Order of St. Francis (Hastings, 1994:601).

Emilio's members were forced out of the Catholic Church, because they were contradicting the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church. Yet, Emilio's Church members still claimed that they were not Roman Catholics, but Catholics.<sup>3</sup> *Mutima* Church members would pray in their homes because homes were designed as links to divinity. Since his church's practices were considered to be illegal, and seemingly a secret society, they had no other option rather than converting their homes into churches. Emilio had no problem in teaching his followers to pray in their homes.

### **Land Acquisition**

Larmer (2003:130) is of the view that the establishment of colonial control led to a new influx of missionaries into Northern Rhodesia that is today known as Zambia. Many missionaries were welcomed by the Chartered Administration. They were given small grants of land, encouraging their presence in areas that had not yet experienced the missionary presence. Initially, most missions focused on evangelizing, "promoting Christian beliefs, and teaching literacy primarily to make the Bible available to Africans" (Larmer, 2003:130). Among other priests, Lavigerie's Society of the Missionaries of Africa [hereafter the SMA Fathers] and Comboni's priests were some of the most specialized of the new Catholic groups at work (Hastings, 1994:255). The SMA Fathers were more strategic in their mission work so that they could be placed even in harsh conditions. For instance, Hastings (1994:255) argues that "the Society of the Missionaries of Africa were based quite deliberately not in France but in North Africa—in Algiers and in Carthage, outside Tunis". These areas were densely populated by Muslims and it was this place that the SMA Fathers sought to evangelize.

From his Roman Catholic experience of acquiring land and establishing mission work or parishes, Emilio later started to acquire land in the remote areas of some provinces, such as Lusaka, Central, Northern, Luapula, Copperbelt, Eastern, Southern and Muchinga Provinces, (Hinfelaar, 1994:114). In many instances, many of his members gave out their own acres of land to the church so that they

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<sup>3</sup> The differences between the Roman Catholics and Catholics are that Roman Catholics, being a larger group, believe in papal authority. Catholics do not believe in papal authority and they are a smaller group. Catholics do not see the canons as laws, but Roman Catholics regard the canons as laws and give authority to the bishop to apply them. Roman Catholics believe in purgatory after death, while Catholics believe that souls are sent to the house of death after death. Catholics do not support the theory of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, but Roman Catholics support this theory. But both Roman Catholics and Catholics [including the *Mutima* Church members], imitate Mary's full completion of faith in God. They honour her and give reverence to Mary (See Sendapu, 2016, Garvey, 1994 and Hinfelaar, 1994).

could build parishes. He established some parishes which in Bemba language are known as *Namfumu* steads.

*Namfumu* in Bemba language literally means Mother of the King. With this approach, Emilio used the Bemba titles, where sisters of the Bemba chiefs and their girl-children are called *banamfumu*, meaning mothers of the kings (Whiteley, 1951 and Richards, 1940). The term *Namfumu* in the Bemba culture is referred to a girl or woman, who may be the chief's sister's children, or his nieces or sisters' daughters' children. The girl or woman has to be the chief's mother, or chief's sister, or chief's niece, since Bemba culture is matrilineal. The Bemba people not only respect and honour their paramount chiefs, they also respect the mothers of their chiefs and sisters of chiefs. Bemba Paramount Chiefs, just like many other chiefs, look after their mothers. Mothers are very important and significant because it is believed that they are the ones who gave birth and nurtured the chiefs. Mothers of the Bemba Chiefs hold leadership roles. Since they are consulted about carrying out some tasks, they have the final say and are honoured by their subjects. That is the reason they are regarded as Queen mothers.

### ***The Symbolic Significance of Mother of the King***

In one of the Church's unpublished documents, Emilio argues that if Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary, and God exalted Jesus to the highest place, then Mary's position is much higher than that of her Son, Jesus Christ, because Mary had never been tempted by Satan the way Jesus was tempted (Chishimba, 1974:8). Mary was created by God without sin. Mary did not have doubts about her role in the plan of God. She accepted her pregnancy without knowing any man (as the Bible puts it). Jesus had doubts when he cried out on the Cross: "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" Emilio calls Mary *theotokos*, meaning the "Mother of God." If the Roman Catholic Church gave titles to Mary such as *Mater Dei* the mother of God and *Mater Creatoris*, the mother of the Creator, then surely this puts Mary in a unique position visa-a-vis the human race (Chishimba, 1971; also Hinfelaaar, 1994:119).

Since in the *Mutima* Church, Mary is the door to Divinity, while Jesus carries the key to open the door. Emilio teaches that this does not mean that divine worship should be given to Mary, but that both Mary and Jesus had been given tasks by God. In order to form a symbol of Mary, mother of



Jesus, (or Mother of the King), Emilio and his members used the acquired land to build church parishes, or *Namfumu* steads (Chishimba, 1971:17).

*Namfumu* steads are parishes or congregations that Emilio formed whenever he was given land. Emilio named these parishes *Namfumu*, a Bemba word meaning Mother of the King. *Namfumu* steads are usually situated in the outskirts of the towns. This is so because Emilio attracted a lot of peasant farmers; and as he moved along to preach the Word of God, many peasant farmers had to offer him land where his church members could build big congregations and worship there. The *Namfumu* steads are also built in the outskirts because Emilio wanted his members to be in secluded places away from civilization and the things of the world that would easily distract his members from focusing on God. During holidays, these *Namfumu* steads are places where school-children go and are taught the *Mutima* Church's creeds and house chores. Training of those who want to be ordained to priesthood also take place in these *Namfumu* steads. Any member of the church can go and live there to do what is called "*ukubombela ishuko*" which means "serving for blessings" in order for one's life to be filled with blessings and favour. Just like the activities that are done in many mainline congregations, the *Mutima* Church has set up the *Namfumu* steads that carry out a lot of activities. The only difference with some mainline congregations is that the *Namfumu* steads are built in the outskirts of towns, and have massive acres of land. Subsistence farming is their major source of income. Hence, most of the food is farmed from the church members at the *Namfumu* steads.

Emilio urged his members to always be praying, fasting, working, evangelising and giving, especially in the *Namfumu* steads. In relation to *Bemba* society that practises communal life, one would not visit *Mutima* Church members without being offered something to eat, water to bath, no matter what time one gets there. According to Hinfelaar, (1994:102), "the movement also became famous for practicing kindness, giving and sharing. During the years that followed, the movement acquired a vast amount of land in the remote areas of different towns." The staple food of *Nshima* is usually provided to any visitor, regardless of how young or old one may be or how many they may be. Usually this is eaten by the visitor with some of the members of the church who are willing to join them.

There are no restrictions as to who should go to worship or to seek refuge at the *Namfumu* steads. Any person is allowed to interact with the members, as long as the person is willing to worship with them. There may be two or three *Namfumu* steads in one town, for example, on the Copperbelt Province of Zambia, in Kitwe Town, there is *Namfumu wa Mikoti*. In Ndola there is *Namfumu wa Nkama*, *Namfumu we Tuna* in Kasama and so on. The rule is that any stranded person or people may go there to seek refuge and worship with the members there. If one is happy with the way the members worship and wishes to join, one is most welcome. A reality in the *Mutima* Church is that Emilio has embraced the power that is in naming his *Namfumu* steads. Of much importance in the *Mutima* Church is the reference to Mother of Creation. This has been acknowledged in *Bembaland*, where motherhood is much appreciated and glorified in the royal family, and special respect is paid to mothers of the Bemba Paramount Chief[s] *Chitimukulu* (Badenberg, 2001:42). What is implied is that behind the issue of revealed knowledge that Emilio received, also lies the issue of power, since knowledge is an issue of power, and people with knowledge seem to possess power in many socio-religious domains. In this paper, we sought to see how Emilio has used his religious knowledge to engage power in naming his congregations.

### ***The Missional Policy of the Mutima Church: The Power of Naming***

In the *Mutima* Church, missional policy entails the transmission of doctrinal teachings and beliefs to the members. In one of the *Sabbath Lessons documents*, as an example, Mary is called “Oh Precious Mother of the King, the Parent of Power, our Redeemer who loves us so much...” (Chishimba, 1976:10). This is one of the doctrinal teachings that members recite in reverence to Mary, Mother of Jesus, every Saturday. It is from this perspective that the concept of Mariology<sup>4</sup> is preached and taught in the *Mutima* Church. What is entailed by the missional policy of teaching, in this case, is the *Mutima* Church’s transmission of its enshrined Roman Catholic values, rituals and traditions, and how it engages these in a cross-cultural missional praxis amongst the Bemba people.

### ***Namfumu Steads: The Power of Naming in the Mutima Church***

There is power in naming. Gasque (2001:2) argues that “one of the powers of naming is to evoke the past.” A name is an essential part in a particular place because it gives identity and also honors

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<sup>4</sup> Mariology is the study of Mary, Mother of Jesus.



the place. Gasque (2001:2) continues that the names of the people who have gone before evoke the traditions of some certain places in the way that many of these 'given names' become woven into the name texture of those places. For instance, instead of referring to certain names like St. John's, St. Mary's or St. Augustine's, Emilio chose to use Bemba names for his parishes. Most of them are names of certain places that have been woven into the name texture of the designated places.

For example, names such as, *Namfumu we Sunga*; *Namfumu wa Nkama*; *Namfumu wa Bulubwa*; *Namfumu we Tuna* and so on and so forth. In Bemba language, all these names have literal meanings. *Namfumu we Sunga* would mean Mother of the King that accommodates everyone; *Namfumu wa Nkama* literally means a Mother of the King who is the keeper of secrets; *Namfumu wa Bulubwa* means Mother of the King who is the liberator. Mother of the King who is the liberator simply refers to liberating the Zambian people from the jaws of colonial powers (Chishimba. 1976:16). *Namfumu we Tuna* is found in Kasama District, in the Northern Province of Zambia, and it is named after that particular place called *Ituna*. Hence, this is in line with Mbonu's (2010: xiv-xv) statement that:

In most African societies, a name functions as a place-holder, social location, and a part of belonging...in some sense, a name represents the essential characters or circumstances surrounding individuals at the time of their birth. Thus a pejorative or an inane designation can damage one's psyche, just as a positive or affirmative name can foster personal creativity (p. xiv-xv).

Mbonu is of the view that naming places or individuals concedes attachment to that particular place. For a name to 'function as a place-holder', Mbonu realizes that many people have named some places, so that the place can easily be identified and also that the owners may feel an attachment to that place. Naming has power that gives ownership. While Mbonu realizes that in Africa certain names represents the essential characters or circumstances that surrounds individuals at the time of birth, I argue that there are certain circumstances that surround some places, or social locations. An example that may be given is Emilio's idea of naming some of his *Namfumu* steads. Many of the *Namfumu* steads have been named according to the places they are found in, such as *Namfumu we Tuna*. *Ituna* is a place or location in Kasama. According to Gasque (2001:16-17),

What we call people and what we call places reveal the ways that we feel about ourselves and how we relate to other people and our environment. These feelings intensify when the names apply to those parts of our lives in which we have the greatest emotional involvement.

Gasque (2001) is of the view that many people feel as if they ‘own’ the places when they give names to some parts of their lives such as places where they were born or a place where an important event takes place. As human beings, we also feel or have the greatest emotional attachment when we give names of those who have gone before us to our newly born relatives. To this end, I concur with Mbonu (2010: xiv:xv) who states that the names we bear can either foster personal creativity, if it is ‘a positive name or damage one’s psyche’, that is, if it is ‘an inane designation’. Therefore, it is important to note that naming has some power connotations that are attached to it. In the case of Emilio, naming the *Namfumu* steads intensified and revealed his own feelings and how he related to his church members, and to the local chiefs that accepted the *Mutima* Church in their locations. In some rural areas, people refer to them as ‘*banamfumu*’ literally meaning mothers of kings.

However, the missional policy in the *Mutima* Church has affected some members’ understanding of land and religion in the power of naming. Since the death of Emilio in February 2015, the church has had no succession. To this end, there has been some divisions in the church. The following section highlights some of the divisions in the *Mutima* Church. Some differences among the members have led to some of the original owners repossessing the land where some *Namfumu* steads are built. Some of Emilio’s children have also repossessed some *Namfumu* steads and given them to their relatives. Because Emilio’s children are also involved, the conceptual frameworks of power are discussed in the following section to highlight how it has been utilized.

### **Conceptual Frameworks**

Foucault (1978:94) admits that some relations of power can be acquired by physical strength. But once it is acquired in this manner, it is exercised in an invisible way. According to Foucault (1978:94), power can be obtained by force, and it can be shared among human beings, for instance, those in the dominant positions. It is likely that one group or an individual may decide to take control of others. With regard to human beings, Foucault’s view is that the concept of power plays a role in relationships. Once power is obtained by force, it is preserved in the same way. For example, power can be shared among relatives. It can be passed on from one generation to another, thereby being maintained and preserved. But one cannot easily foresee the dynamic of power relations in various groups. For this reason, Foucault (1978:94) contends that “relations of power are not in a position of exteriority with respect to other types of relationships (economic processes, land

acquisition, knowledge relationships, sexual relations...)”. In this case, the issue of exerting power over land in the *Mutima* Church cannot be ignored. The issues of land in the church have risen where some members are taking back the land that they had given to the church. Members of the Church who have higher positions are failing to stop people from taking the land because they do not possess powers of exteriority with respect to land acquisitions and knowledge relationships. The only thing that makes members feel ownership is that the naming of the parishes in the *Mutima* Church have given them identities. This is because the power of naming has been ideologically constructed by Emilio.

Fiorenza, (2009:108) states that theories of identity are ideologically constructed in the sense that they reinvigorate issues of race, sex, gender, class and imperialism which are driving forces for dominating power issues. Within these versions, issues of race, sex, gender, class and imperialism are vectors of dominating power that create constitutive social processes that engender the differential simultaneity of dominations and subordinations (Fiorenza, 2009:108). She argues that there are three versions. The first version is the theory of marginalized subjectivity, but this intersectional theory refers only to multiply the number of marginalized subjects. The second version seeks to illuminate how identity is constructed at the intersections of race, gender, class, sexuality, and imperialism. The third version stresses intersectional theory as a theory of structures and sites of oppression (Fiorenza, 2009:108). It is the second theory of Fiorenza that I seek to adopt and use as the conceptual framework in this article because there are issues of class and imperialism.

Thus, in comparison to the issue of naming the parishes or *Namfumu* steads in the *Mutima* Church, some feminist theologians such as Fiorenza caution us to interrogate the forms of knowledge structures that oppress other human beings. For instance, by examining the issue of naming in the *Mutima* Church, I argue that with his cultural background, for instance, coming from the lineage of the Bemba Chief *Chitimukulu*, coupled with his Roman Catholic training, Emilio has used knowledge structures to acquire massive of land for his church. But this has contributed to causing divisions in the church after his death.

### **Land Repossessions**

It has been after the demise of Emilio that the Church members, some relatives of those who offered land to Emilio, as well as the government of Zambia, (lands department), in some areas started to

repossess land from the *Mutima* Church, especially in rural areas. For example, upon asking the question: ‘*Since the death of your leader, where does the church stand in relation to land issues?*’ Some participants, who are members of the *Mutima* Church, explained that,

There have been some instances where some older male children of our late spiritual Father approached us. They asked us to leave the *Namfumu* steads because this was land that was acquired by their Father (Emilio); (Interview with some members of the *Mutima* Church. January, 2020).

Others stated that:

Other *Namfumu* steads such as the ones in Mpika District have been repossessed by the lands Department. The reasons for the repossession are that some of the *Namfumu* steads have no title deeds. These are the land portions that were only given by some members of the church who felt they could do something for the church. But upon the deaths of these members who contributed to the church, their relatives and children started to demand the land or farms back. One such case is on the Copperbelt Province of Zambia (Interview with members of the *Mutima* Church. January, 2020).

From the onset, it seems that Emilio and his church members did not get many title deeds for some of his *Namfumu* steads. He did not even leave any shares for his own children. As a result, this has caused some divisions in the church. Some of Emilio’s older children have used ‘physical strength’ to repossess the land from the church members. Even portions of land that were given as part of an offering by some church members have been repossessed. Despite using his knowledge and power to name the *Namfumu* steads, Emilio did not leave any written Will as to who should take over his title. This has caused divisions in the church that have costed many of the church’s land.

## **Analysis**

Foucault’s (1978) argument that when power is obtained by force, it is preserved in a way that it is exercised invisibly. In the case of the church in question, power is being passed on to the relatives of Emilio. Because of this, the church members have been unable to choose the successor. As a result of this, there are divisions in the church because Emilio failed to select the person who can run the church after his death.

However, basing on Fiorenza’s conceptual framework which discusses issues of identity that are constructed at the intersection of race, gender, class, sexuality, and imperialism, I will argue here that Emilio’s children are also aiming at expanding their father’s empire. Moreover, using Fiorenza’s theory of structures and sites of oppression, both Emilio’s children and the department of land in

Zambia are now acting as sites of oppression. They are oppressing the *Mutima* Church members who have nowhere else to go because they have lived their lives believing that the *Namfumu* steads are their original homes. To this end, the *Mutima* Church members fail to leave the *Namfumu* steads because they have been taught that they are places where they find comfort. As stated earlier, Emilio taught his members to venerate Mary, because she is the 'Mother of the King', hence the *Namfumu* steads symbolize or are custodians of 'Holy Mary Mother of God'.

Such conceptions are ideological. Fiorenza (2011:199) argues that "it is overlooked that these ideologizing and mythologizing forms of *kyriarchal* Mariology often go hand in hand with a conservative politics of ecclesiastical and societal restoration that is contrary to the vision of the discipleship of equals". The concept of *Namfumu* steads to be called 'Mothers of the King' came from the Roman Catholic where Mary mother of Jesus is also referred to as 'Mother of the King', and Emilio used the Bemba matrilineal ideology that believes that mothers, sisters, nieces and daughters of Bemba chiefs are referred to as *Banamfumu*. This, is also a political conservation of the *Mutima* Church and societal norm that was resistant to the vision of the colonial era.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this article was thus to establish the need to explore issues of land and religion. To narrow this down, the article used the qualitative approach with the interviews that were done with the members of the *Mutima* Church of Zambia. The *Mutima* Church is an African Initiated Church founded by Emilio Chishimba Mulolani. He studied at the Roman Catholic Seminary in Tanzania. Emilio was a Bemba man and he founded his church using his Bemba, colonial as well as his Roman Catholic background. To this end, the article argues that since Emilio acquired massive land under the influence of religion, and established parishes which he named using Bemba names, known as *Namfumu* steads, therefore, religion, culture and naming have power.

In this article, I have argued that religion has power, because the founder of the *Mutima* Church used his own understanding of the word of God, understanding the biblical concept in his own language which is Bemba to establish his own church. He further used his own language to preach to the multitudes and influence them to accept naming their respective parishes in their local Bemba language. Hence, I argue that naming has power because it gives us identities. It is because the *Mutima* Church members, feel ownership of the *Namfumu* steads, that many of them do not leave

their parishes to go and stay in their original homes. To the *Mutima* Church members, the *Namfumu* steads are their original homes.

I used the conceptual frameworks on power from Michel Foucault (1978) and Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza (2009) respectively. In one hand, Fiorenza is of the view that there are divisions of versions such as race, gender, class and imperialism that contribute to power dominance. With these versions, dominating power create constitutive social processes that foster different types of dominant structures. Foucault on the other hand is of the view that relations of power operate within a position of other types of relationships, such as economic, land acquisition, knowledge relationships and so on. It is from this that I used the concept of power to argue that Emilio used his knowledge from the Bemba culture and from the Roman Catholic backgrounds to acquire land for his church. Therefore, culture, religion, naming, and knowledge all have power.

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