

**INVENTORY OF MALAWI'S  
INTANGIBLE CULTURAL  
HERITAGE  
VOLUME 1**

Compiled by: L.C.J. Mazibuko, C.J. Magomelo,



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For information address:

Malawi National Commission for UNESCO

P. O Box 30278

Lilongwe 3

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## PREFACE

The importance of preserving one's culture cannot be overemphasized. A nation is identified by its cultural values, beliefs, customs and tradition. Cultural practices are meant to preserve, unite and develop the practicing community. While culture is dynamic as it drops outdated practices and picks up new and sometimes foreign ones, this process must happen without complete loss of the identity of a people.

Elderly people are dying, thereby taking with them important cultural knowledge. We need to preserve these for the sake of future generations. Original dances, therapy, spiritual and harvesting festivities, marriages, funerals, initiations, installation, birth ceremonies, just to mention some, have to be documented and made known to the public. Besides, due to geographical and spatial separation, people living in different areas of the country are not knowledgeable of some cultural values, beliefs, customs and traditional dances, etc. as practiced by other ethnic groups. It is in recognition of this need that the Malawi National Commission for UNESCO in collaboration with Department of Culture embarked on the *Documentation of National Inventory of Malawi's Intangible Cultural Heritage*. The exercise was aimed at capturing different aspects of Malawi's Intangible Cultural Heritage with a view to raise public awareness on the same in order to safeguard them for national identity, unity in diversity and community development. Due to resource limitations the exercise targeted the common heritage of the nine out of 17 ethnic groups, namely: Lambya, Ngonde, Tumbuka, Ngoni, Tonga, Chewa, Yao, Lomwe and Sena. It is hoped that subsequent volumes will target the rest of the remaining ethnic groups.

This inventory though not representative of all the ethnic groups in Malawi will help raise public awareness on the importance of culture to the socio-economic life of the country and hence the need to preserve it. It shall assist stakeholders

and policy makers on the need to prioritize protection of cultural heritage and a basis for recognizing cultural identity among different ethnic groups in Malawi. Lastly, the inventory shall be permanent testimony of intangible cultural heritage of different ethnic groups in Malawi to future generations.

Francis R Mkandawire

**EXECUTIVE SECRETARY**

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Last but not least, **most sincere gratitude** also go to the custodians of our heritage, the traditional authorities, too numerous to mention each one, as well as men and women practitioners for their unwavering support and for organising themselves to share information on as well as demonstrate some of the heritage aspects documented in here.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

According to the UNESCO World Commission on Culture and Development, heritage is the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or a social group. It consists of both cultural and natural. Heritage is therefore, seen as what people have chosen to give and what the receiver wants to inherit. It can be natural or cultural, tangible or intangible. It includes not only arts and letters but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of a human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs. Cultural heritage will include things that have resulted from spiritual things e.g. churches, material evidence, emotional features such as graveyards etc. It also includes movable cultural objects e.g. ethnographic materials, archaeological objects, archival and library materials and works of art. Immovable cultural objects such as monuments, sacred/historical sites, prehistoric sites, structures like bridges, roads, cemeteries; expressive activities such as language, music and dance as well as drama and intangible heritage such as skills, folklores, rituals, intellectual property rights, beliefs, traditions and customs are all part of cultural heritage.

The natural heritage consists of both flora and fauna of the area plus the splendid spectacular features e.g. islands, mountains, canyons, waterfalls and geysers such as hot springs. In many societies, religious beliefs are shaped by the things found in an area such as water, mountains, rivers, etc.

The “Intangible Cultural Heritage” refers to the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural aspects associated thereof that communities, groups and in some cases individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible heritage, which is transmitted from one generation to another is constantly recreated by the communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction

with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity of human creativity.

## **2. IMPORTANCE OF INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE**

Intangible heritage have a crucial role to play in the development of the society and nation as a whole. Firstly, intangible heritage is used as medium of oral communication such as in singing and dancing. They are also a source of knowledge in cases where there is no written work. Oral performances are like moving libraries. Intangible heritage is a source of national or societal identity and prestige. Intangible heritage is also a very effective means of passing information on sensitive matters such as HIV/AIDS. Besides it is also used in the production of audio-visual teaching and training materials. Intangible heritage provides the moral code i.e. the laws that govern the behaviour of the society. This behaviour is normally covered by taboos that instill fear in the people not to do certain things for fear of misfortunes, diseases etc. Rituals provide medium for formal instructions on certain aspects of a particular society. Lastly but not least, intangible heritage promotes, protects and safeguards cultural heritage.

Despite the role intangible heritage plays in the development of the society, it took time for people to realize its importance and the need to safeguard it. Intangible heritage (oral tradition) was not regarded important because mostly this heritage is associated with poor nations. However, it is pleasing to note that the Convention on the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage was finally adopted by the General Assembly of UNESCO on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2003. This adoption came about as a result of realization that the value attached to an object is not meaningful unless the non-material aspects (intangible values) are also preserved. This project is about the development of national inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Malawi.

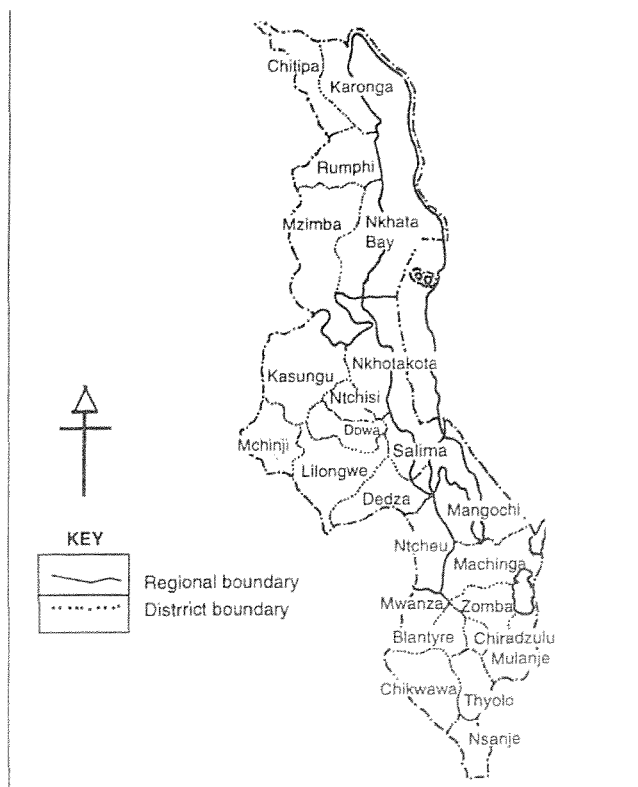


### 3. LIMITATIONS OF DOCUMENTATION EXERCISE

Due to limited time spent in the field owing to limited resources, it was not possible to visit every place among all the nine ethnic groups planned in order to have a wider coverage of the various aspects of our intangible heritage. Therefore, this inventory is by no means comprehensive or representative of all the rich cultural diversity that this country is endowed with. Nevertheless it will provide a starting point in our efforts to thoroughly document and safeguard Malawi's Intangible Cultural Heritage.

### 4. THE NINE TARGET ETHNIC GROUPS

There are about 17 different ethnic groups in Malawi found across the 28 districts of Malawi (see Figure 1). All groups belong to one major African group of people called the Bantu. The Bantu are also found in other countries such as Mozambique, Zambia, Tanzania, Kenya and others. Below are the 9 major ethnic cultural groups that were documented.



**Figure 1: Map of Malawi showing some districts.**

Source: *Malawi Primary Education Social Studies Pupils' Book 6. (1995)*

friends are doing or discussing. It is another form of back-biting. The gesture is used to express one's displeasure/disagreement over what someone has done. This practice is also common in many societies, particularly among idling women folks.

#### **5.1.4.6 Kuphathira Diso/Kuphinyizga Jiso**

This refers to winking of one's eye or face towards someone. The sign is meant to attract attention of someone. In some societies such as among the Yao or Lomwe, if a man winks his eyes to a woman, it is a sign that he is proposing love to her.

#### **5.1.4.7 Kuvomera/Kuzomera**

This is a form of gesture that is used as a sign of acceptance. It involves nodding of one's head. In most cases, this form of gesture is not accompanied by verbal expression. It is also common among many societies in Malawi.

#### **5.1.5 Folktales and myths**

Folk-tales are a genre of folklore consisting of popular stories handed down from generation to generation and whose origin is often unknown. In many societies in Malawi, grandparents or adults mobilize children together, usually around fire places and narrate stories to them. These stories serve two main purposes. Firstly, the stories offer entertainment to the children. Secondly, and perhaps more important, the stories are meant to advise children on how to become responsible citizens. For example, these stories teach children how to behave well and how to solve certain problems. Adults have also found these tales useful in their day to day lives. During these narrations, children are also involved through singing songs which accompany these stories. The singing helps the children to follow the stories to the end.

#### **4.1 Chewa**

The Chewa, previously known as the Malavi or Nyanja, came from Uluba in Katanga Province of Zaire. They left Zaire between 1200 and 1500 AD. There are several reasons that led to the migration of the Chewa from Zaire. These include tribal wars against their Bantu neighbours and secondly, they were in search of more land for grazing their animals. When the Chewa arrived in the present Malawi, they soon established themselves as rulers over the people they found because of their knowledge and influence in agriculture, traditional medicine, religion and a well-organised ruling system. As a result, their kingdom covered a wide area, from the Luangwa Valley in Zambia in the west; to the area beyond Ruo River in the east; then Dwangwa River in the north, and the Zambezi River in the south. Their language is known as *Chichewa*, which is also spoken in neighbouring countries of Zambia and Mozambique as *Chinyanja*. *Chichewa* is widely spoken in Malawi and assumes the role of a national language, though unofficially.

#### **4.2 Lambya**

The Lambya are a Bantu speaking people who came from the Bukinga in the Livingstone Mountains to South East of Tanzania. They might have migrated into Malawi after the 18<sup>th</sup> Century in search of more land and probably because they were running away from slave trade by the Arabs and Portuguese. Two groups entered Malawi independently, one headed by Mwaulambya and the other one headed by Sikwese. The language for Lambya is known as *Chilambya*. Today, the Lambya are found in the northern district of Chitipa.

#### **4.3 Lomwe**

The Lomwe came from an area between Lake Malawi and the Indian Ocean in the present day Mozambique. They entered Malawi from the east. The Lomwe did not have an overall leader as was the case with other tribes when they

entered Malawi because they came in small groups each with their own leader. They settled in the southern region of Malawi east of the Shire River. Their language is known as *Chilomwe*.

#### **4.4 Ngonde**

The Ngonde migrated together with the Nyakyusa from the north like all other Bantu tribes. The Ngonde were led by Syria, who was later known as Kyungu. They settled at the extreme area of northern Malawi in present day Karonga where they are still found today. The area was remote and as a result they did not suffer from Ngoni and Yao raids. The centre of Ngonde is the sacred Hill of Mbande, which stands in the bed of the Rukulu River, about 13 km from Lake Malawi. Their language is known as *Kyangonde*.

#### **4.5 Ngoni**

The Ngoni fled from Shaka Zulu who defeated many Ngoni Chiefs in South Africa. The Ngoni that entered Malawi came in two groups. One group was led by Zwangendaba Jere and the other was led by Ngwane Maseko. After their defeat in 1819, Zwangendaba Jere fled with his followers and settled at Mabiri in Mzimba District. After a short stay at Mabiri, they left for Ufipa in Tanzania where they lived for eight years before returning to Malawi after the death of Zwangendaba. They finally settled at Ng'onga in the Henga Valley in 1855 where M'mbelwa was installed as Chief in 1857. The group that was led by Ngwane Maseko arrived in Malawi and settled in Ntcheu in 1837. After a short stay, they left for Songea in southern Tanzania where they lived for some time before returning to Malawi. They finally settled in Ntcheu in 1867. Today, the Ngoni of Ntcheu have spread to other districts such as Mchinji and Dedza in the centre, and Mwanza and Neno in the south. The Ngoni have their language also known as *Chingoni*.

#### **4.6 Sena**

Just like the Lomwe, the Sena also came from Mozambique. They entered Malawi through the south and settled in Chikwawa and Nsanje Districts where they are still found today. Their language of communication is *Chisena*.

#### **4.7 Tonga**

The Tonga came from Viphya to settle along the shores of Lake Malawi. They are an offshoot of several tribes who split from Tumbuka settlement at Jenjewe on the banks of Lupachi River. Kabundulu, from one of the split groups, was the leader of the group that moved to the east and settled at the Lake. The Tonga covers the area from Dwangwa River in Nkhotakota to as far north as Usisya, beyond Nkhata-Bay Boma. Their language of communication is called *Chitonga*.

#### **4.8 Tumbuka**

The Tumbuka formerly known as the Nkhamanga are believed to have come from Congo. They entered Malawi through Tanzania. The people lived in family clans. Some of the most important clans were the Mkandawire, Luhanga, Kachali, Kumwenda, Msowoya, Harawa and many more. The Nkhamanga established their kingdom in northern Malawi. The kingdom was located between Nyika Plateau to the north, Dwangwa River to the south, Luangwa River to the west and Lake Malawi to the east. The main occupation of the Tumbuka was and still remains farming. They grow crops such as maize, millet. They also introduced iron smelting. The Tumbuka had no overall leader as was the case with the Chewa. But soon the Nkhamanga kingdom became popular with the coming in of the Balowoka. The Balowoka crossed Lake Malawi to enter Nkhamanga territory. They came from Ubena in the south of present Tanzania around 1850 AD. They soon became new leaders and formed a kingdom under Chikulamayembe.

Some of the contributions of Nkhamanga to present Malawi include farming, hunting, iron smelting, trade as well as language, *Tumbuka*, which is widely spoken in the northern Malawi and the neighbouring Zambia. The Nkhamanga kingdom declined because of the coming in of Europeans and Swahili traders who weakened their trade, rebellion by sub-chiefs and Ngoni attack who fought and defeated Chikulamayembe.

Today, the Tumbuka are under the Paramount Chief (Themba la Mathemba) Chikulamayembe whose Headquarters is in Bolero, Rumphi District.

#### **4.9 Yao**

Just like the Lomwe, the Yao are said to have come from Mozambique. They entered Malawi from the east. The Yao did not have an overall leader; they had several leaders when they entered Malawi. When they entered Malawi, they settled in areas along the lakeshore. The Yao speak their language known as *Chiyao*.

### **5. COMMON INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE**

The Intangible Cultural Heritage as defined in Article 2 of the 2003 Convention on the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage is manifested in the following domains:

- Oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage,
- Performing arts,
- Social practices, rituals and festive events,
- Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe,
- Traditional craftsmanship.

There are certain aspects of intangible heritage that are common across all cultural groups in Malawi. The following are some of the common Intangible Cultural Heritage found to be common across the 9 ethnic groups that were documented.

## **5.1 ORAL TRADITIONS AND EXPRESSIONS**

### **5.1.1 Mikuluwiko/Vinthanguni**

These are secret words or expressions that are used for communication among the elderly people when they are in the company of children. This is done in order to conceal the message so that children do not understand what their parents or elders are talking about. In almost every ethnic group found in Malawi, the locals have developed Mikuluwiko/Vinthanguni in their own language for this purpose

### **5.1.2 Nthabwala/Myati/Ntchezero**

These are mere jokes that are directed at somebody with the view of making people happy. In any society, there are people that are good at cracking jokes. Jokes are part and parcel of human lives. They are used at different forums such as weddings, beer parties and during communal work where these jokes help to ease burden.

### **5.1.3 Zilape/Ndagi/nthanthi**

These are riddles that require one to give an answer. Mikuluwiko or Nthalika are also used when proposing love to a girl. In this case, a girl may pose a question in form of riddles and if a man or boy fails to provide the correct answer, it is understood that he is still young and therefore his proposal is turned down.

#### **5.1.4 Gestures**

##### **5.1.4.1 Chasa**

This is a greeting gesture. It involves shaking hands between two people. The practice is common among all ethnic groups in the country. In other societies, it is understood that if a person offers a verbal greeting without an accompanying handshake, it is a sign that he/she is too rude and boastful.

##### **5.1.4.2 Kukodola/Cheuzga**

This is beckoning gesture. It is used to beckon someone to come forth. The gesture involves signalling someone using a hand. In certain society such as among the Ngoni, it is disrespectful to use beckoning gesture when inviting an elderly person. This practice is however common among many different ethnic groups.

##### **5.1.4.3 Kukana**

This is a gesture that implies refusal. It is displayed by the raising and falling of one's shoulder or shaking one's head side-ways. Sometimes, this form of gesture is accompanied by verbal expression. This form of communication is common among many ethnic groups in Malawi.

##### **5.1.4.4 Kukhuza Maliro**

This is a form of gesture that is used to convey condolence messages to the bereaved relatives who have lost their loved one. It involves shaking the believed person's hands using both hands, twisting them over and over again for a while. It is common among the Ngoni, Tumbuka as well as Ngonde people.

##### **5.1.4.5 Kunyogodola/Kung'ola**

This refers to screwing of one's face against someone. In most cases, this gesture is targeted at a third party who is usually not aware of what the other two



On the other hand, myths are traditional beliefs which may not be based on fact. They serve usually to explain some phenomenon, customs, happenings, etc. There are two categories of folktales. *Nthano* and *Visilili*.

**5.1.5.1.** **Nthano/Ndano/Vidokoni** are folktales that are narrated mostly to children. This is usually done at night around the fire place. The narration is accompanied by singing. The messages in the stories are meant to check out the behaviour of the younger generation. Nthano is a Chewa word but the practice is common among different ethnic tribes where it is known by different names. In Tumbuka, they call them Vidokoni.

**5.1.5.2** **Visilili** are folktales told to mostly teenaged children and the later generation. They differ from Nthano/Vidokoni in that they are told during the day and that they are not accompanied by singing as is the case in Nthano. The messages in the stories are also meant to monitor the behaviour of the younger generation.

Below are examples of some folktales and myths found among the Malawian societies:-

**5.1.5.2.1 Kamdothi**

Once upon a time there was a woman who had no child. She did everything humanly possible, with this man and that man in order to be blessed with a child but to no avail. One day, she conceived an idea. She collected enough clay from which to mould herself the figure of a boy. To her surprise, the clay figure became alive and behaved like any other human being. The mother named the boy Kamdothi - literally meaning the one made from clay.

Kamdothi was fond of playing with his friends from other families. Every day they played and his mother advised him to play near home all the time. Kamdothi was curious and asked his mother what she meant when she said Kamdothi should be playing near home. The mother explained that unlike his friends who are made of flesh, blood and bones, Kamdothi was different as he was made of clay, as such he was an enemy of rain. She went on to advise him that each time he sees rain he should run home as fast as he can or else he will die. Kamdothi was not convinced as he did not see any difference between his friends and himself.

But one day he went to play with his friends in the fields and it started to rain. Kamdothi's mother was heard singing, warning her son of the rain:

*Kamdothi'we thawa mvula*

*Kamdothi'we thawa mvula*

*Mai akuitana*

*Thawa mvula*

*Kunja kuli mitambo*

*Thawa mvula*

*Kamdothi'we thawa mvula*

In the song, the mother is heard warning her son to get out of rain quickly before he dies.

Kamdothi heard the song. He saw the rain clouds. He felt the first rain drop. He remembered his mother's words. He ran back home fast and arrived safely. Kamdothi's mother scolded him but he was still adamant.

In the subsequent incidences, he could go to play with his friends on the sand by the river side and each time there was rain, his mother could go on top of an ant

hill calling him to return home. On several occasions he managed to run away from the rain and could arrive at home safe and sound. Each time his mother could warn and scorn him for disobeying her orders but as usual Kamdothi was still adamant. But as usual, one day, Kamdothi went on the hill slopes too far away to collect *Masuku* (Uapaca kirkiana) fruits. Soon, however, Kamdothi noticed the thickening clouds coming. He remembered his mother's words. Kamdothi dropped the fruits and started running back home

His mother could sing again. The rains intensified. Kamdothi lost one arm, the other. Kamdothi remembered his mother's words: he was made of clay and therefore he was an enemy of rain. Kamdothi was now getting soaked. The mother continued singing. Kamdothi heard the song and cried in great fear. He soon lost the other leg. Only his trunk and head remained, rolling over the open ground like a drum, bumping into trees as he slowly made his way to the village. On the edge of the village the rain poured down so furiously. Kamdothi lost his trunk. Only his head was left as he rolled on home. The heartbreaking song could still be heard.

Kamdothi's head rolled on past the first few houses, granaries and the playground. It rolled and rolled, but alas it crumbled right in front of his mother's house. Only a handful of mud remained as the clay dissolved back to where it had come from. And that is how Kamdothi died, because he did not want to listen to his mother.

This story is one of the main stories that are narrated to the children in order to emphasize the point that children must listen from their parents as well as elders.

#### 5.1.5.2.2 Children Should Listen To What The Elders Say

Once upon a time, there lived a young girl called Msiya. She liked to play with her fellow little girls in the village. They learned how to cook okra; a relish that was the community's favourite dish, for the elder women took interest to ensure that the women's chores were properly imparted to the mothers of tomorrow.

During one afternoon, when the little girls were busy with the cooking, one of the girls, Chikondi, suggested that they needed groundnuts to make okra taste better. As a result, each girl went to ask her mother for the groundnuts. The girls were advised to fetch the groundnuts from the groundnut garden, some distance away from the village. However, before they left, they were instructed by the elders to pick up just one groundnut each.

All the girls followed the instructions except Msiya. She picked up two groundnuts instead. Immediately she did this, something strange happened. She found herself stuck in the middle of the garden and unable to move, not even an inch. When her friends discovered this, they tried to assist her but unfortunately, nothing happened. It was soon getting dark and the little girls had to leave for home without their friend Msiya. On arrival at the village, they reported the matter to the elders.

Immediately Msiya's mother heard what had happened, she rushed to the garden to find out herself. On her way, somehow she realized her daughter had neglected to follow the instructions given by the elderly women earlier on during the day. She found her daughter seated in the middle of the garden but unable to either walk or stand.

In tears, she fell to the ground with sympathy. "Msiya, Msiya my daughter, what happened?" "I am sorry, mum, I picked two nuts instead of one," replied Msiya,

avoiding looking at her mother. "Why did you not do as you were told, my daughter?" lamented her mother. "Look at what has happened! What shall we do?" she continued.

On this note, both of them went silent, deep in thought. While still thinking, her mother recalled the circumstances that might have led to this incident and the reasons why the elderly women insisted on the girls to pick just one groundnut.

Some years ago, the villagers decided to consult the village witchdoctor to protect their groundnut garden against damage by wild animals as well as theft by people. For the charm to work, the villagers were instructed to observe a special taboo and that was to pick just one nut whenever they wanted groundnuts from this garden. Although one may wonder whether a nut was enough for a meal, however, through whatever was done by the witchdoctor, one nut was enough to prepare a meal.

Unfortunately for Msiya, when this incident happened, the witchdoctor had died the previous year and was the only one capable of making a charm to reverse Msiya's ordeal.

After the recollection, Msiya's mother rushed back to the village to seek assistance from the elders of the village. It was decided that the only thing they could do was to build a hut around Msiya at the groundnut garden. It was arranged that Msiya's mother would bring food and water everyday. Even then, there were still some conditions she was to follow.

"Listen carefully my daughter." Msiya's mother said after the hut had been built around her daughter.

“From now on, you will be living in this hut. I will be bringing you food and water everyday. However, bear in mind you are in the bush where wild animals can attack you. Before you open the door, listen carefully to my voice. I will sing a song and after you hear my voice in the song then you open the door for me. “Please remember to follow this carefully,” she concluded.

When Msiya’s mother came to visit her daughter, she would sing a song which went like this:

Leader: Msiya ati Msiya

Chorus: Dango la matete

Leader: Msiya ati Msiya

Chorus: Dango la matete

Leader: Uja n’dakuuza ati Msiya

Chorus: Dango la matete

Leader: Kakumbe shawa imodzi ati Msiya

Chorus: Dango la matete

Leader: Ukakumbe ziwiri wafa Msiya

Chorus: Dango la matete

Then Msiya would respond like this:

Leader: Nirimo ati amayi

Chorus: Dango la matete

The song simply reminded Msiya of the instructions she was given to dig for one nut but since she picked two, this has led to the tragedy she was now facing. As soon as the singing was done the door automatically opened and Msiya’s mother brought in the food and water.

“Here you are my daughter, eat this food,” she said.

“Thank you, mother,” replied Msiya.

“I am going back home now. Goodbye!” her mother said as she left the hut.

This arrangement went on for a long time. One day a hyena strolled by. The hyena noticed that there was a human being inside the hut. The hyena is a very greedy animal. After observing what had happened when Msiya’s mother came to the hut the hyena attempted to sing the song. The hyena sung in a loud croaky voice and licked its lips as it sang. The little girl realized that the singer was not her mother. She did not respond to the song and therefore, the door was not opened. The hyena then left but hid itself in nearby bush. It listened carefully how Msiya’s mother sang the song. After several trials, the hyena managed to imitate Msiya’s mother’s voice.

At midnight the hyena came close to the hut and sang the song. Msiya responded and the door opened. The hyena pounced on Msiya and tore her apart. The hyena then destroyed the hut and disappeared into the bush.

When Msiya’s mother came to the hut the next morning, she did not find her daughter. She fell to the ground, crying.

“Oh! My daughter, where are you? Have you been eaten by a wild animal? Oh Msiya! Why did you not listen carefully before responding to the song? Now I have lost you. What shall I do?”

The moral of this folktale is that children must heed the instructions of their parents or elders because their advice is to mould them into useful citizens. Being

devoured by a wild animal is a form of punishment traditionally applicable to a naughty child.

#### **5.1.5.2.3 The Unfaithful Servant**

Once upon a time there was a man who owned a groundnuts garden. He contracted a group of people to dig up the groundnuts in the garden. He chose Che Itimu to supervise the workers. Before work started he said to Che Itimu:

“No one among you should eat any of the nuts. If any one of you will be found to have eaten the nuts, that person shall forfeit his pay.”

Che Itimu promised the owner of the garden that he would follow the instructions and ensure that no one ate the nuts. The owner of the garden left Che Itimu and the other people to start working.

“Che Itimu called all the workers together and said: ladies and gentlemen, you might have heard that the owner of the garden came to give me instructions. He has instructed me to tell you that we are not allowed to eat the groundnuts. If the owner of the garden discovers someone who has eaten some nuts at the end of the digging, that person shall forfeit his pay, is that clear?”

All the workers said, “Yes, it is clear.”

Work commenced later. Everybody worked very hard and observed the rule. But as work progressed, Che Itimu failed to observe the rule. When no one was looking at him, he took some nuts, went behind a nearby ant-hill and ate them.



He did this on more than one occasion and nobody suspected that Che Itimu had eaten some of the nuts.

After the work was over, the owner of the garden came to pay the workers. But before any payment was made, he ordered each and every worker including Che Itimu to rinse his mouth with water and spit into a basin which contained more water. One by one all the workers rinsed their mouths and spat into the basin. None of them was found to have eaten any of the nuts. Then came Che Itimu's turn to rinse his mouth. To the surprise of everybody, the water from his mouth contained particles of groundnuts.

Che Itimu was very ashamed. The owner of the garden then proceeded to say that Che Itimu would not be paid while the rest of the workers were going to be paid because of their faithfulness. All the workers except Che Itimu were paid.

The moral of this folkstory is "Faithfulness bears fruits". Che Itimu lost his pay because he was unfaithful to his master. The folkstory also reminds us of the Chichewa proverb which says *Kumvera kuposa nsembe* (meaning - the observance of instructions surpasses offerings).

#### **5.1.5.2.4 Baza Dokowe's Myth**

This is the story or myth created by the Baza's Tumbuka followers that Baza had sneaked down the Hora Mountain where they had been driven by the Ngoni. His followers came down the Hora Mountain and told the Ngoni that Baza had escaped and had left the ivory which he had on the top of the mountain. Up to now many people still believe that there is ivory up the Hora Mountain.

#### **5.1.5.2.5 Sapitwa myth**

The word Sapitwa means a place where people do not go. This place is the highest point on Mulanje Mountain. Since time immemorial, there have been some beliefs to the effect that ancestral spirits of the people that once lived around Mulanje Mountain are found at Sapitwa. These spirits are manifested in different ways. For example, there are testimonies to the effect that people have found already prepared food on the Sapitwa and all one has to do if faced with such a situation is to just eat the food and never invite friends. There has also been mysterious missing of people at the Sapitwa Peak. This happens if a person angers the spirits and is disobeying instructions.

#### **5.1.6 Rituals**

##### **5.1.6.1 Bimbi cult**

The name Bimbi means - "Wobwebweta za Mvula". Bimbi Cult is derived from the leader of the Cult who is Bimbi. Bimbi Cult as a religious system has an intricate system of Agricultural rituals such as rainmaking ceremonies, a distinctive unwritten theology, elaborate liturgical observances, an organized inherited priesthood and a Charismatic leader. The Bimbi. The Bimbi cult is a hiring force, claiming a large following cutting across geographical, ethnic, family and faith boundaries. The Bimbi's carry out their duties in a trance-like state in a shrine - Bimbi's are this symbol of fertility as well as prophets representing God and the ancestors. They are also Semi Divine rulers. During the rainy season, the Bimbi's wear black cloth, which symbolises black clouds, which are believed to bring rain. By nature of their profession, they are also traditional healers. As prophets and prophetesses, they are also imbued with miraculous powers.

### **5.1.6.2 Mbona cult**

The official Cult of the Lundu Paramouncy of the Southern Region of Malawi based at Khulubvi – Rain making, fertility rites were administered by Mbona. The Shrine was a symbol of authority such that who ever was in control of the Shrine was also in control of all the people bound to this shrine so – it provided both religious and political authority to this rulers. The people of the Sena defined this identity in terms of the Mbona cult.

## **5.2 PERFORMING ARTS**

These are arts or skills such as dance, drama, music that an individual or groups of people perform before an audience.

### **5.2.5 Traditional dances**

Music and dancing is an important part of our culture. Like in other parts in Africa, the people of Malawi have several musical instruments for different dances. These dances are perfumed at different occasions such as weddings, funerals, initiations, entertainments etc. In Malawi there are over sixty (80) traditional dances that. But in this survey only about 34 of these traditional dances were documented. These are:

#### **5.2.5.1 Beni**

Beni dance originated from the two World Wars of 1914-1918 and 1939-1944. The dance was developed by ex-servicemen based on the old military parades performed during the war. In the Beni dance, the performers adorn tunics and khaki trousers and wear different types of medals and decorations as it used to be during the wars. Although women did not fight in the war, in the Beni dance women and young boys take part to give the dancers the necessary musical background. Beni is performed and most popular among the Yao of Mangochi, Machinga, Salima and Dedza Districts. It is also popular among Malawians

working in Zambia and Zimbabwe and there it is known as *Kalele* dance. Beni music is usually preceded by a harmonious duet, which is followed by a chorus. There are usually three drums and whistles to accompany the singing.

#### **5.2.5.2 Chakumbali**

This dance is popular among the Nsenga speaking Ngoni of Central Malawi. In this dance, both men and women participate. It is performed for entertainment during weddings, installation of Chiefs and other celebration occasions.

#### **5.2.5.3 Chilimika**

Chilimika (meaning year) is performed mostly by the young Tonga women of Nkhata-Bay District in the Northern Region. At each New Year's Day, young men and women congregate at the village arena to entertain the village with Chilimika. It is actually a very humorous dance. This dance hails the New Year and is performed at the beginning of each New Year. The dance is an imitation of Malipenga, which is mostly performed by men.

#### **5.2.5.4 Chimtali**

Chimtali is an exclusively women's dance that is widely performed in the Central and some parts of the Southern Malawi. It is a very enjoyable form of entertainment for both young and old, and today it is even taught in schools and colleges as part of the cultural appreciation by the students. Chimtali is an entertainment dance that is performed either by day or by moonlight, in the open yard. It is performed during wedding parties, but today it is also danced to mark a significant political event such as Republic Celebrations. When it is performed informally the dancers dress ordinarily, but when it is performed at political occasions they wear party colours. The dancers sometimes carry a piece of cloth which they swing here and there as they dance. The leader of a Chimtali group is chosen on the basis of her experience, ability to compose and lead in the singing

of the songs. There are three drums used in Chintali, one big one and two smaller ones. Some of the dancers carry whistles to provide the orchestration. The dancers form a circle round the drummers. The leader starts the singing, followed by the drums, and then the rest of the dancers join in the chorus. They dance by moving forward and backward, swinging their arms and hips from side to side. The tempo changes and the dancers briefly stop and then resume dancing. After a while, the dancers get excited; they stop singing and only dance to the accompaniment of the drums and whistles.

#### **5.2.5.5 Chisamba**

Chisamba is a dance that is performed by the Chewa of Central Region during female initiation ritual, which is a complement of the male initiation in *Gule Wamkulu*. It is performed by women, led by a senior woman, usually the Chief's sister known as *Nankungwi*. Chisamba dance is also performed at the funerals of Chiefs and important individuals in the village. It is also common to find Chisamba dance being performed for entertainment at important occasions.

#### **5.2.5.6 Chiterere**

This kind of traditional dance is known as Chiterere because when dancing, the dancers slide very fast, just like they are dancing on a slippery ground. The beauty of this dance is in the movement of the feet, body and the hand-clapping and there is no drumming. They dance in circles while two go inside to perform individually and show-off their art of this dance. It is performed in many occasions such as weddings, when dancers colour their hair white with corn flour and would throw the leaves in the dancing arena, just to make the occasion merrier. Very often there are competitions among the different villages where the winners are given a special treat during the feast which is usually the climax of the occasion at the end of the day. This traditional dance, like most dances unify the people more, because they get to know one another through these dances.

### 5.2.5.7 Chiwoda/Mbotosya

Chiwoda or Mbotosya is a dance that is popular among boys and girls of the lakeshore districts of in Karonga, Nkhata Bay, Nkhotakota, Salima and Mangochi. The name is from the English verb 'order'.



In the past men from Nkhata-Bay who went to Zimbabwe to seek employment used to 'order' by mail a girl from their homes through relatives. One such 'sent for' girl returned home from her supposed husband disgusted because she found him suffering from an

eye disease. The story spread around the neighbourhood and the woman was put to song and dance. Today, Chiwoda is danced at weddings, installations of chiefs, religious ceremonies and at political occasions. When the dance is performed at political gatherings, the songs express praise and support for the political party and ridicule its opponents. Chiwoda has lately adapted western styles of dance. Young men and women from different areas compete in groups. It has a very interesting organizational structure, which suggests its origins in the military organizations of the old colonial system. A Chiwoda organization does not conflict with the village administration but co-operates with it. In fact, the more successful a Chiwoda group is, the more talked about the village is.

### 5.2.5.8 Chokocha

Chokocha is a traditional dance that originated from Mozambique. It is mainly performed by men, eight in number, who wear grass skirts and rattles around necks and ankles. They dance in line with elaborate footworks. It was brought to Malawi by the Lomwe when they migrate to this country around 18<sup>th</sup> Century. It was originally performed during initiation ceremonies and when offering sacrifices to ancestral spirits for calamities such as drought and disease

epidermis. Today, Chokocha is performed by the Lomwe of Mulanje and the surrounding districts.

#### **5.2.5.9 Gule Wamkulu**

Also known as 'the Great Dance', *Gule Wamkulu* is performed at the request of the village headman on the occasion of funerals of village members, puberty initiations, and the installation of chief, and is part of the legacy of royal ritual inherited from the Chewa past. As such, *Gule Wamkulu* legitimates chieftainship by linking it to the old Chewa polities and by reproducing the symbolic elements of an older cultural order. *Gule Wamkulu* is today an essential feature of the Chewa people countryside. More than a dance forum, it is a men's organization and ritual system that is woven into the fabric of the community. As a men's organization, *Gule Wamkulu* manifests itself in two senses: - It is an ancestral dance performed by spirits and animals collectively called *Zilombo* (masked dancers) to perform at the chief's invitation in his village in a less restricted sense. *Gule Wamkulu* is the widest community of male initiates. Every Chewa boy undergoes initiation and considers himself a member of the *Gule Wamkulu* society. As a functional tradition, *Gule Wamkulu* provides the basic ritual needs of both men and women, both officiating at funerals, at puberty initiations and at the installation of chiefs. As a ritual system it consolidates a community around local chiefs and impresses on the community the conceptual categories that make its internal composition coherent.

#### **5.2.5.10 Honala**

Honala is a contemporary dance performed during wedding ceremonies, mainly as an escort for young couples from the village to the church. The dance is made of men and women who dance in three rows with a woman's row in the middle. The accordionist and rattle players lead the procession. The men dress in suits and hats and dance while holding sticks in their right hands. The dance got its

name from the accordion known as Honner, the brand name of this musical instrument. The dance is performed in various areas in Nkhata Bay.

#### **5.2.5.11 Indingala**

Indingala is a highly emotional and expressive dance performed by the Nyakyusa and Ngonde people of Karonga and Chitipa Districts. It is also performed in Tanzania where the Nyakyusa and Ngonde lived before migrating to Malawi. Indingala is a special drum, which was used for sending messages about the death of a chief, the presence of dangerous animals or an attack by enemy tribes in the neighbourhood. Indingala therefore developed as a warrior dance out of this practice. But today it is a peaceful dance in which people participate to express their emotional feelings either to release tension or simply to relax. Sometimes Indingala groups compete with each other. When it is performed for entertainment women and children participate. The men wear a long piece of cloth around the waist and adorn decorations of beads. They paint their bodies with clay and use flywhisks when dancing. There is very little singing in Indingala, otherwise the only music is provided by three drums and whistles. The dancers throw their bodies in different directions gracefully and majestically. In Indingala it is important to keep the movements of the arms and the legs coordinated.

#### **5.2.5.12 Ingoma/Ngoma**

Ingoma is a very famous dance among the Ngoni of Mzimba and Mchinji District. It is also performed in Ntcheu, Dedza, Mwanza and Neno Districts where it is referred to as Ngoma. Ingoma was originally a war dance performed after a successful battle. The men in Ingoma are elaborately decorated. Their costume includes a headgear made of feathers; ornaments





worn on the limbs, a network of beads wrapped across the chest and stomach, and around the neck hang various types of animals' skin. They carry a spear or club and a shield. The women wear ordinary *Chilundu* (cloth) from waist downwards, and a blouse and a headgear called *Duku*. In the Ingoma dance men dance in straight line while women form lines on the side of the men. Men sing and stamp their feet wielding their shields, spears and clubs symbolizing a war scene while the women sing, clap and ululate in unison with the men's dance performance. Today Ngoma is even performed at wedding ceremonies, funerals, as well as at national occasions, for entertainment.

The function of Ngoma is to celebrate. It is performed at various festive and joyous occasions such as; coronation of Chiefs, wedding ceremonies, national functions

Ngoma has been transmitted from generation to generation through continued performance.

The dance is under threat because of lack of interest by the youth to learn as well absence of local content in literature curriculum in schools

There are no specific safeguarding measures except the laws that protect cultural practices including Arts and Crafts Act, Copyright Act. However, Government also encourages the documentation of the folk tales and continued and regular performances through formulation and strengthening Ngoma dance groups.

#### **5.2.5.13 Kamchoma/Mchoma**

Kamchoma or Mchoma with sister dance Makhanya, is widely performed in the Central and Northern Regions of Malawi. It is usually performed to celebrate a

wedding, the birth of a new baby and installation of a new chief as well as the normal merry making to show happiness.

#### **5.2.5.14 Kazukuta**

This is a solo presentation dance, which is popular among the Chewa of Central Region. In most cases it forms a prelude to Gule Wamkulu.

#### **5.2.5.15 Khunju/Kunju**

This is an all female dance popular among the people of Southern Malawi in particular Mwanza District. The dance is performed for entertainment at various celebration occasions.

#### **5.2.5.16 Likhuba**

Likhuba is a dance performed to cure psychological illness by women. It is largely an acrobatic demonstration of male prowess by the Sena of Lower Shire in the Southern Region. These days, the dance is performed for entertainment.

#### **5.2.5.17 Likwata**

This is a very old Yao dance, which has now become popular among the women of Mangochi, Zomba, Chiradzulu, Thyolo, Mulanje and Blantyre Districts. Originally it was a dance performed at initiation ceremonies for boys, and as such it was a symbol of social change for the young men who had now entered adult life. Likwata was also performed at the installation of a chief and as a funeral dance. Only elderly women participated in the dance. The original functions of Likwata are now fading away and the dance is performed purely for entertainment. It is commonly performed at national or local celebrations and at political party meetings. To be an expert in Likwata demands a lot of practice. Today youngsters are allowed to participate and are given thorough practice so that by the time they are old, they become experts. There is no competition in

Likwata; every one dances for joy, and the gay atmosphere created by Likwata dancers is enhanced by their colourful uniforms which consist of a traditional 'Chirundu' and a 'Duku'. In addition to this, the dancers wear bangles around the ankles. The main instruments in Likwata are drums, whistles and an empty small tin which, when played with proper sticks, produces a shrill sound.

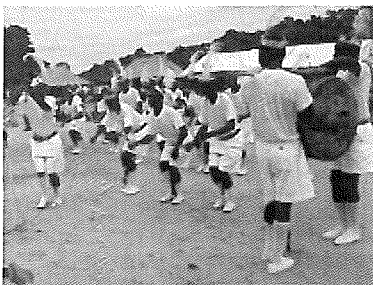
The entry signal of the dancers is the rhythm of drums, which is followed by singing and dancing, as the women enter the area to form a semi-circle. The clapping of hands together with the singing, whistle-blowing, drum-beating and ululating sets an exciting mood, following which the women swing, spin and twist. The spectators encourage the dancers by giving them gifts.

#### **5.2.5.18 Makhanya**

Makhanya is a sister dance to Kamchoma and performed in the Central and Northern Regions of Malawi. Just like Kamchoma, it is usually performed to celebrate a wedding, the birth of a new baby, installation of a new chief as well as the normal merry making to show happiness.

#### **5.2.5.19 Malipenga**

Malipenga is a modern dance for men. It is believed that it was started by ex-



servicemen who developed it from the military parades of the old Kings Rifles. Malipenga started in Nkhata Bay District and spread all over the Northern Region. In the Central Region, Mganda, which is variant of Malipenga, is performed in Kasungu, Nkhotakota, Salima, Ntchisi, Dowa and

Lilongwe Districts. A Malipenga group is known as a 'Boma' has its own administrative structure. The success of the Boma is the pride of the whole

The function of Msindo is to celebrate. It is performed at various festive and joyous occasions such as; coronation of Chiefs, wedding ceremonies, national functions

Msindo has been transmitted from generation to generation through continued performance.

The dance is under threat because of lack of interest by the youth to learn as well as absence of local content in schools curricular.

There are no specific safeguarding measures except the laws that protect cultural practices including Arts and Crafts Act, Copyright Act. However, Government also encourages the documentation of traditional heritage and continued and regular performances through formulation and strengthening traditional dance groups.

#### **5.2.5.26 Mtungo/Magali**

This dance originated from Nkhamanga and Hewe areas in Rumph District. It is performed at beer parties by both men and women. Songs in the dance are usually educative. Sound instrument is a guard with a small opening on top through small stones are put inside. The guards are shaken during the dance. The shaker covers the opening with a hand opens and closes it as he or she shakes it to produce sound variations which are accompanied by singing and hand clapping.

#### 5.2.5.27 Mwinoghe

In the *Chisukwa* dialect, the word Mwinoghe literally means 'Let us enjoy



ourselves thoroughly'. Mwinoghe is an instrumental dance that is popular among people especially school children, in Chitipa District of the Northern Region. It has been derived from a ceremonial dance of the Karonga District called Indingala, which is originally

performed by men brandishing flywhisks during either the enthronement of a chief or feast over a dead marauding lion. Mwinoghe is relatively a recent dance, having been modified from Indingala between 1953 and 1955. In its original form, Mwinoghe was performed during inter-school competitions of traditional dances and as a form of entertainment for distinguished visitors to schools. These days it is also danced on days of international significance like the Annual Independence Anniversary celebrations. Mwinoghe has been developed to its present form and made popular since the attainment of Independence in 1964. Mwinoghe has been developed to its present form and made popular since the attainment of Independence. The main percussion instruments used in the dance are one big drum called *Ing'ina* and two smaller ones called *Twana*. Sometimes a whistle is used. The dancers line up in two straight lines, boys on one side and an equal number of girls on the other facing one another. While the girls continue dancing in a standing position with their hands raised up, the boys squat down wringing and twisting their bodies, all to the rhythm of the instruments. Mwinoghe is therefore a celebration dance. The girls wear a piece of cloth tied around the waist and reaching down the ankles with a blouse top, preferably orange or yellow in colour. The boys wear short-sleeved shirts and short trousers on top of which they also wear a piece of cloth tied around their waists. They dance bare foot.

village. The dance is performed for the entertainment on various occasions. This dance is transmitted through continued performances.

The function of Malipenga is to educate, inform, entertain and celebrate. It is performed at various festive and joyous occasions such as; installation of Chiefs, Wedding ceremonies, national functions

The dance is under threat because of lack of interest by the youth to learn as well absence of local content in literature curriculum in schools. There are no specific safeguarding measures except the laws that protect cultural practices including Arts and Crafts Act, Copyright Act. However, Government also encourages the documentation of the folk tales and continued and regular performances through formulation and strengthening 'Bomas'

#### 5.2.5.20 Manganje

Manganje is an initiation dance performed by the Yao of Machinga, Mangochi, Zomba, Chiradzulu and Blantyre Districts. It is performed at the initiation of boys. When boys (initiates) leave for and come out of the *Jando* (enclosure), Manganje dance is performed to celebrate the occasion. Today Manganje is also performed for entertainment.

#### 5.2.5.21 Masewe

This is a dance for men only among the Yao and Lomwe in Mangochi, Machinga and Zomba Districts. It was originally a dance performed at the funeral of chiefs, but today it is purely an entertainment dance. There is no competition in Masewe and very little individual creativity because everyone simply follows the instructions of the leader.



Masewe is a fast and lively dance full of acrobatics. It begins with drummers, four or five of them entering the arena and striking out a fanfare to call in the dancers. The dancers, men of all ages, come in from different directions, clad in grass skirts, beads, bangles and other decorations. They shake, twist, leap, somersault and display complicated footwork while the leader, a man who excels in organization and dancing, shouts out commands and checks a discordant step here and there. There is no singing in Masewe. The audience is kept captive by the fancy footwork and acrobatic feats in the arena. All in all, the dance can be an emotional experience for the participants.

The name of the dance 'Masewe' is derived from the Nsewa tree out of which rattles used in dance one made. The dance is commonly performed by the male youths.

Masewe is passed from generation to generation through continued practice by the community.

Threats to the transmission of Masewe include lack of continued practice modern education demands, and westernization. There are no specific safeguarding measures except the laws that protect cultural practices including Arts and Crafts.

The main function of Masewe is to provide entertainment during celebration at festive occasions as well as during the initiation of young boys into adulthood.

#### **5.2.5.22 Mazoma**

Mazoma is a popular dance for men among the Lomwe, especially those of Chiradzulu District. The dance originated in Mozambique and was brought to Malawi by the Lomwe migrations. It is performed at ceremonial events such as the installation of chiefs, the initiation of boys and girls and libation ceremonies. Mazoma was originally highly competitive and it was an occasion where men

displayed their prowess and bravery by performing strange acts which no other man could dare do. It is a fast exciting dance performed by 20 or more men, dressed in colourful skirts known as *Zibia* made from animal skins. The leader also wears a headgear of feathers. A complete Mazoma dance group includes eight drums for the tenor and bass sounds. Whistles and raffles are also used. The dance usually begins by drumming followed by a background of singing, which is started by the leader. When the chorus has been established, the leader isolates himself from the circle and watches his fellow dancers shaking, leaping and occasionally changing the step to suit the singing and drumming. When the mood has been established the leader leaps into the circle shouting out commands and at times using his whistle to give out instructions. Every dancer attends to the leader, picking up whatever step he displays. It is at this stage that the tempo changes. The dancers work themselves into frenzy and the singing stops, but the drumming, whistling and ululating increases and the dancers continue shaking their bodies while seated. The dance continues this way with spectators throwing gifts to their favourites. The performance makes the dancers as well as spectators get involved in it. Today Mazoma is merely a friendly dance, with competition taking place between groups and not among the individual members of a group. Mazoma is also an entertainment dance and can be performed at national celebrations.

#### **5.2.5.23 Mganda**

Mganda is another version of Malipenga and originated in Nkhata Bay, among the Tonga people. It is a modern dance in that it is copied from military procedure. The Chewa of Kasungu and Dowa and other districts in the Central Region copied the dance from the Tonga and in these areas it is called as Mganda. Two drums, one big and another small (known as *Perekete*), are played during the dance. The dancers whose number is not precise form several lines and face drummers. The best dancers are in the first line. The dancers in front use



sticks and perform elaborate foot movements, while others use gourds to produce bass and tenor sounds to the beating of the two drums. They usually wear uniforms of white shorts and stockings with matching shirts. Mganda is a competition dance with several teams competing but with apparent no outright winner. It is also performed at celebrations marking the installation of chiefs and other public gatherings. Each Mganda group has a headquarters where practices are done, songs composed and new steps created. A group pays some money to its headquarters for the training it receives.

#### **5.2.5.24 Mjiri**

M'jiri is a dance commonly performed by the Lomwe in Mulanje, Thyolo, Blantyre, Chiradzulu and Zomba but it is also known in some areas adjacent to these districts. It is mostly performed in the evening at some important occasion or as a pastime in the villages usually under the moonlight. Men line up on one side and women line up on the other with a distance of about fifteen or twenty yards between them. Then there is artistic hand clapping with on-the-spot happy mood body shaking by both men and women. M'jiri drums, usually two or three, start throbbing. Anyone from the women's or the men's side starts a folklore M'jiri song with the rest joining in the singing in unison.

Then anyone from one of the two sides moves dancing into the ground area separating them and on up to the other side. Once here he or she taps on the fellow he or she prefers to be escorted and dance along with. And on reaching the other side the escorting dancer taps on another fellow of his or her choice to continue the dance. This process is repeated in turns up to the last dancing persons on the two sides and the dance continues as more folklore songs are sung. Expert drum beating also enlivens performance in dancing M'jiri.

Mjiri dance came on the scene around 1946 through cross border cultural interaction with people from Yao in Mozambique. Both men and women participate in the dance during celebrations making a successful initiation ceremony.

Mjiri is passed from generation to generation through continued practice by the community. The traditional authority organises training/practice sessions with the youth.

Threats to the transmission of Mjiri include lack of continued practice modern education demands, and westernization. There are no specific safeguarding measures except the laws that protect cultural practices including Arts and Crafts. The main function of Mjiri is to provide entertainment during celebration at festive occasions as well as during the initiation of young boys into adulthood. It also functions as a courting dance.

#### 5.2.5.25 Msindo

Msindo is a dance for elderly Ngoni women of Ntcheu District. The dance was



originally performed during weddings of chiefs' sons and daughters only. But now it is performed at public meetings and celebrations including the installations of chiefs. When dancing, women wear very big hand woven white gear made from maize leaves or white plastic materials. The dancers hold

small shields in left hands and small sticks in right hands. They hit the shields with sticks in unison. No one is allowed to dance without the shield and stick, especially the stick. The women form several circles when dancing according to the number of dancers. As the dance is in progress the dancers move backwards and forwards without breaking the circles. Girls learn the dance from their mothers.

#### 5.2.5.28 Nakhuwale

Nakhuwale is a dance for all members of a community among the Mang'anja people of Thyolo, Mulanje and Chikwawa Districts. Originally Nakhuwale was performed after a successful battle and at the funeral of a chief or of a prominent Nakhuwale dancer. As such, it was an expensive affair since it involved heavy feasting designed to comfort the dead person's soul. The songs in Nakhuwale are imaginative, composed to suit the occasion. When it is a political occasion, Nakhuwale songs express praise for the government and the leadership. There are six drum, two big ones and four smaller ones. The singing and dancing is directed by the rhythm of the drums. Two leaders, usually a man and a woman dance outside the circle, which is formed by the others. They also check any discordant steps. One of the dancers leaves the group to dance before the drummers. Holding a spear or a stick, he suddenly jumps into the air and when he lands, all the drumming immediately stops. This is called *Nkhondo* and it originally signified that the enemy had been defeated in battle. Dancing in pairs, members of the group twist their bodies and display fancy footwork, changing their style according to the beat of the drums. Nakhuwale dancers wear skirts made of palm leaves and bangles on the knees and ankles. Men wear feathers on their heads. They hold spears or sticks and carry whistles, which they blow when the singing stops. In addition to this attire, the male leader wears a rugged coat and the female leader wears a sack cloth that resembles a bask cloth, which was the original attire. They both carry small tins filled with pebbles that make a rattling noise.

#### 5.2.5.29 Ndolo

Ndolo is an expressive dance for women. The dance is performed by the Ngonde people of Karonga District. The songs of Ndolo are about life. Women who take part in Ndolo often use it as a medium for expressing their feelings in rebuking bad husbands or other happenings in a village so as to instil change for the

better. In Ndolo, the women wear a uniform *Chirundu* and they dance in circles or in lines. There are three drums: a big drum called *Muhambo* and two smaller ones called *Mphoza*, which complement the singing. Everyone can take part in Ndolo such that there is no clear-cut division between a performer and a spectator. But sometimes, friendly competitions are organized between villages, when the groupings may become more clearly defined.

#### 5.2.5.30 Njano

This is a popular dance among the Lomwe of Thyolo and Mulanje Districts in southern Malawi. It was originally performed during tribal wars. But today, it is performed during offering ceremonies to appease spirits of the dead when a calamity struck a village. It is sister dance to Tchopa and Nantongwe.

#### 5.2.5.31 Njerero

Njerero is a sister dance to Chisamba. It is performed at the initiation of young girls into womanhood. It is very similar to Chisamba in many ways.

#### 5.2.5.32 Nkhwendo

Nkhwendo is a popular dance among Malawians in Mwanza, Ntcheu and Dedza Districts. It was originally danced to celebrate a successful harvest, the



installation or birthday of a chief and even to mourn his death. Thus the songs of Nkhwendo are both happy and sad ones, depending on the occasion. Therefore, Nkhwendo is a dance for all members of a community, since everyone is supposed to celebrate a happy occasion

or mourn the death of an important figure in the community. The participants dance in a line in front of their chief. The instruments used in Nkhwendo are bamboos and whistles. The bamboo is hollowed out and grooves cut on the

surface. It is played by rubbing a stick up and down these grooves producing a clacking sound. The tone and pitch varies according to the size of the bamboo.

#### **5.2.5.33 Sendemule**

Sendemule is a traditional dance performed by the Lambya people of Chitipa District. The dance is performed during funerals, chief installation ceremonies and for entertainment. When Sendemule is performed at funerals, the songs are appropriately mourning songs. But when it is performed at a chief's installation ceremony or when a dangerous animal like a lion is killed, the songs depict triumph. Today Sendemule is performed at most social gatherings where the dancers usually dress casually.

#### **5.2.5.34 Sisiliya**

This is a celebration dance in which both men and women participate. It is commonly performed during wedding ceremonies and other joyous occasions. The dance is widely performed by the people of Central Region.

#### **5.2.5.35 Tchopa/Soopa**

Tchopa is a dance originally performed by the Lomwe during tribal wars as well as during sacrificial ceremonies when a calamity has struck. During tribal wars



men used to dance informing the folks that they were back with news of victory. Tchopa is popular in Thyolo, Mulanje and Chiradzulu districts. It is now mostly performed for entertainment.

#### **5.2.5.36 Ulumba**

Ulumba is a popular dance among the Tumbuka people of Hewe and Nkhamanga in Rumphi. It is performed by men to celebrate the success of the village's brave hunter on his return to the village after killing big game or

marauding wild animals. In the dance other villagers mimic a charging wild animal with songs and hand clapping, while the brave hunter mimics killing the wild animals.

#### **5.2.5.37 Vimbuza**

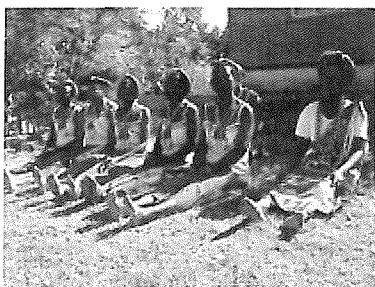
This is a healing dance popular among the Tumbuka people of Northern Malawi. It is performed to cure a number of mental and psychological illnesses. The name Vimbuza also signifies the disease, which is mostly widespread in the Northern and Central Region of Malawi and is very common among the women folk. The Vimbuza dance is performed by both men and women usually at night in the vicinity of the afflicted person. However, Vimbuza Dance is also performed purely for entertainment.

#### **5.2.5.38 Visekese**

Visekese is a sister dance to Chiwoda, and it is typical among women in many parts of the Northern Malawi. Although it was made popular by the women of the Usisya area of Nkhata Bay, its exact origin is not very clear. The name Visekese refers to the main instrument played in the performance. Visekese is a thin box the size of a fairly large book. Pebbles or dry grains are encased in it so that when it is shaken they make a rattling noise.

#### **5.2.5.39 Uyeni**

Uyeni is a social celebration dance performed by young and old Ngoni women. The dance is commonly performed at various festive occasions such as on the eve



of a wedding, when escorting a bride to her bridegroom. Uyeni songs normally contain messages pregnant with advice and counsel to married couples. In most cases songs are done to suit a particular event. Participants usually dance

in straight lines of five to six people each. The dance is basically choral in nature. Its beauty lies in the harmonious melodies

The function of Uyeni is to celebrate. It is performed at various festive and joyous occasions such as; coronation of Chiefs, wedding ceremonies, national functions



Uyeni has been transmitted from generation to generation through continued performance. The dance is under threat because of irregular performance and lack of interest by the youth to learn as well as absence of local content in schools curricular.

There are no specific safeguarding measures except the laws that protect cultural practices including Arts and Crafts Act, Copyright Act. However, Government also encourages the documentation of traditional heritage and continued and regular performances through formulation and strengthening traditional dance groups.

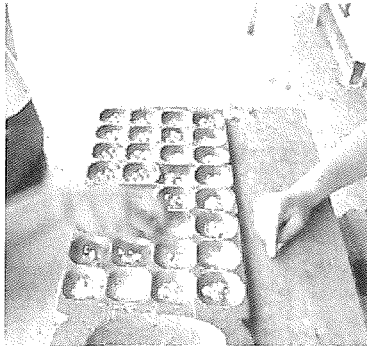
## **5.2.6 Traditional Games**

### **5.2.6.1 Balinkede**

*Balinkede* is a game played by both boys and girls. It is played throughout the year, usually during the day as a pass time activity. In this game, participants form a circle while holding each other's hands. This is more of a singing game. One of the participants leads in the singing while the rest respond. After the response, everyone taking part is supposed to stop at once in a unique style such as standing with one leg up, standing with hands akimbo, and so on. The ones whose styles are the same are out of the game. Only the ones who stand in a unique style go into the other round. This is repeated on and on until the winner is determined.

### 5.2.6.2 Bawo

This is the game that is usually played by men under a big fig tree. The game consists of a set of rectangular holes dug into the ground. There are placed a handful of pebbles in some of the holes. In turns, two contestants, one on each



side move their pebbles from one hole to the other, dropping one in each hole down the line. The winning move is the one that eliminates the pebbles in the other player's holes. That game is mostly found in the southern region of Malawi, among the Lomwe and Yao but it has also spread to most parts of the country.

This game has developed over the years so much that it is no longer played on the ground but on the wooden board on which the holes are grooved. Some computer experts have created a programme for Bawo which is increasingly becoming popular.

### 5.2.6.3 Changa

Changa is a children's game played while players squat in a circle with each one holding a small stone. The game is played in most parts of the Northern Region. Playing involves passing on the stone to the next person in the circle at a specific point in the accompanying song. If one misses the specific point in the song at which to pass on the stone, he/she risks accumulating more stones. At any point the game can be stopped abruptly at which those who have accumulated more stones are ridiculed. The game teaches mental alertness, fast thinking and quick response. The way the game is played is likened to an animal also called Changa (Bush baby in English), which cannot be caught by the tail because if one does that they will remain with the skin of the tail in their hands. Similarly if one cannot pass the stone at the specific point in the song they will accumulate stones.



#### 5.2.6.4 Chindondondo

Chindondondo is another famous moonlight game that is played by both boys and girls as a pastime activity. The game is played throughout the year. In this game, two participants hold each other hands and raise them straight up forming a gable-like shape. The other participants do the same and together they line up to form some kind of passage. Then other members walk through the passage from one end and come out through the other end while singing *Chindondondo*. As they cross, the participants holding hand abruptly traps one member and they start asking him/her questions. If he fails to answer the questions accordingly, he is commanded to join those that are forming the passage. This is repeated on and on until everyone has had his/her turn. This game is very popular and common in the central region districts of Lilongwe, Mchinji, Dedza, Salima and others.

#### 5.2.6.5 Chimwezimwezi

This is a game for girls only. However boys have also participated at time. The game is commonly played at night under the moonlight during any time of the year. The name of the game *Chimwezimwezi* is derived from the word moon, implying that the game is play during moonlight. The procedure for playing this game involves forming a big circle while participants hold each other's hands. The game is played as they sing the song *Chimwezimwezi*. As singing is in progress, the one leading in singing give instructions to other members while mentioning their names, to kneel down, seat with legs folded, seat with legs stretched or lie down. Every member of the circle takes their turn. When everybody has had his turn the song leader tells every member to sit down one by one. This game is played for competition in that whoever is slow in responding to the instructions is eliminated from the game until the overall

winner is determined. This game is also popular and mostly common in the central region districts of Lilongwe, Mchinji, Dedza, Salima and others.

#### **5.2.6.6 Chipako/Chijawo/Kabyali**

Chipako is a game played by both boys and girls in almost all the districts in the country. It is a form of pass-the-touch game. The game can end abruptly. It promotes leadership skills among children because there are no rules on starting hence it requires someone to initiate and lead others to begin playing. It also builds group solidarity. The game is known as Kabyali in the Tumbuka and Chijawo in Yao.

#### **5.2.6.7 Gando**

It involves two sides throwing Knobkerrie in the air. One side throws first and the other throws to aim at and hit the first knobkerrie. It exercises accuracy. The game is common among the Ngoni of Mzimba.

#### **5.2.6.8 Bwangulu/Jangulu**

The name of the game is derived from the tuber of a wild plant called Jangulu. Two holes are made close to each other through the centre of Jangulu, a string passed through one hole to the other side and back through the other hole. A circular motion of the hands winds the string. When the string is taught the winding is stopped and replaced by pulling by both hands setting the Jangulu into continuous clockwise and anticlockwise notions. Sometimes the Jangulu are crashed into each other and the one that stops is deemed to have been weaker.

#### **5.2.6.9 Kaimaima**

A social practice aimed at instilling in children discipline and respect of elders especially discouraging the attitude of standing while elders are seated. Kaimaima (meaning standing) is an imaginary object which the disrespectful

child is sent from one neighbour to the next in search of until one of the neighbours feels pity for the child and sends him or her back home advising the child to sit down in the presence of elders or else he or she will be sent again in search of Kaimaima.

#### **5.2.6.10 Kambuzi kalira M'khola**

*Kambuzi kaliranji m'khola* is another game that involves both boys and girls. It is played throughout the year, either during the day and night and is played as pass time activity. The phrase *Kambuzi kaliranji m'khola* is literally translated as “a goat is making noise in the kraal”. In this game, girls form a circle holding each other's hands. Once the circle has been formed, one member pretends to be a goat and is placed inside the circle. Another member is placed outside the circle to represent a hyena. Boys usually play the role of the hyena. The hyena then starts chasing the goat and the goat immediately dashes into the kraal (the circle) to hide from the marauding hyena. While the hyena tries to catch the goat, those forming the circle offer stiff resistance in order to protect the goat. The game ends when the hyena finally surmounts the defence and catches the goat. This game is also common in the central region, particularly among the Chewa.

#### **5.2.6.11 Kaphata**

A social practice by children whereby someone holding food in their hand and are not willing to share is forced by a slap on the hand to drop the food. The one who has forced the other to drop the food must quickly pick it up before the owner recovers it. The type of food is usually the solid foods such as cassava, banana, maize etc. When this is done in the spirit of *Kaphata* it does not raise any conflict because the society accepts and respects this as a way of sharing with each other's neighbour. It promotes sharing.

#### **5.2.6.12 Maungu**

*Maungu* is a game for both girls and boys. *Maungu* means pumpkin fruits (*Cucurbita maxima*). This game is played between February and April when pumpkin fruits are in season. In this game, participants form two rows adjacent to each other. They sit down with their legs stretched in such a manner that the person in front has his/her body trapped in between the other one's legs behind. The two rows represent ridges in the garden where *Maungu* (pumpkins) are grown. Participants in each row clasp their hands over their heads to represent *Maungu*. One of the participants, who plays the role of the owner of the garden, comes in accompanied by the dog. He/she frequently visits the garden to do some work but also to check if the pumpkins are ready for harvest.

As soon as the owner leaves the garden one member, acting as a thief, comes to steal the pumpkins. One day, the thief gets caught in the act of stealing the *Maungu*. This game is not played for competition. But the game teaches children against bad practices such as stealing.

#### **5.2.6.13 Ndado/Nthuma**

Ndado/Nthuma is a game that is played in most parts of the country. The game involves drawing a circle on the ground with a depression in the middle. When playing this game, girls sit around a mound of small stones, their feet curled under them as they watch one of their friends playing. The number of stones involved varies but usually it is twelve. Initially the stones are placed inside the circle. One girl then picks up a pebble and throws it in the air. While it is still air-born, and with the same hand, she pushes the stones outside the circle in front of her. The player then throws the pebble in the air again and pushes the other stones one by one back into the circle. In the subsequent stages, she pushes them back in the circle in twos, threes, fours, etc as the game progresses until she has to put all of them back at once.

The player must succeed all the stages uninterrupted to be declared a winner. The game promotes dexterity, coordination and exercise of the brain.



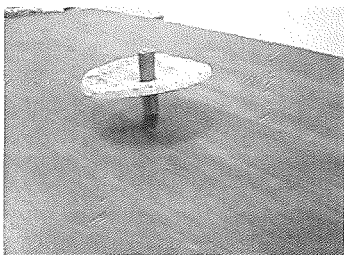
The boys' version of Ndado/Nthuma involves lining up ten Nthuma on each of two sides. A line is drawn behind the lines of Nthuma. Playing involves taking turns in hitting master Nthuma with a finger with the aim of hitting a Nthuma or more which when hit must cross the line behind. Winning means hitting more Nthuma that cross the line than the opponent.

#### 5.2.6.14 Nguli

This is another pastime game for children. Sometimes one can play alone. However, it can be competitive where it involves two sides of one player each. Each side has a Nguli, which is made of wood in conical shape. A stick with a rope tied at one end of it is used as a whip to hit the Nguli. When hit, the Nguli spins at same time aiming at felling the opponent's Nguli. The Nguli that outspins and knocks down the other Nguli is declared as the winner. This game is played in many parts of the country in all the three regions.

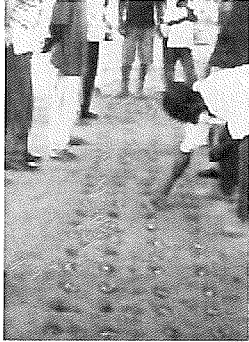
#### 5.2.6.15 Nsikwa

This is a competitive game, which also assists in mental development. A closed ring of gourd material is drilled to form a hole in the middle through which a reed is inserted. The ring is tossed on the floor in a spinning fashion with the aim of hitting the opponent's target called village. The game is played in most parts of the country. It is known as Sikwa some areas of the Northern Region.



#### 5.2.6.16 Ntchuwa (Changena)

This competitive game is played on the ground. It is almost similar to Bawo except that it has more holes and involves more players. Small holes called *godhi* are dug on the earth consisting of four in width and between 40 and 70 in length. Two teams of about four people each stand on each side of the holes to play



following specified rules. The two teams play by moving stones in the holes with the aim of win all the stones from the other side. While playing, they make sure that the other side does not out lay them. To start the game two stones are placed in each hole. There is process that is followed to agree on who should start the first move. In subsequent games those who win the first game starts the next game. The game promotes mental development. The game is played in most parts of northern region.

#### 5.2.6.17 Nthyama

Usually played by the Ngoni herd boys in Mzimba while they are relaxing, the game involves moulding of balls using sand and soil with aim of making them very hard. There are two sides of the game. Each side throws the ball on the ground simultaneously with the other side so that the balls crush into each other. The ball that destroys the other is the winning ball.

#### 5.2.6.18 Pali mbeta apa

*Pali mbeta apa* is another game that involves both boys and girls. It is played throughout the year, either during the day and night and is played as a pass time activity. The phrase *Pali mbeta apa?* is a question that is loosely translated as "Is there an unmarried girl here?" In playing this game, participants form two straight lines while facing each other. Boys form one line while girls form the other. The game involves singing and takes a form of question and answer where the boys ask the girls if among them there is an unmarried girl. The girls in a

chorus reply say there is none. Thereafter, follow up questions are posed by boys and girls provide answers. After this is repeated for several times, the game ends in some sort of a dance during which participants swap sides. As they display some dance antics, each one each one does it his/her own way. The game generally reflects how courtship was done in the past during which parents would identify a bride by asking the bride's parents whether they have unmarried girls.

### **5.2.7 Traditional Singing and Music Playing**

Singing and music playing are an important aspect in the development of any society. Malawi which has more than 13 ethnic groups is rich in singing and music playing. The kind of singing and music playing is cosmopolitan i.e. a mixture from different ethnic groups. The language used may be different but the content of the songs, tone, musical instruments and the entire harmony display a remarkable degree of similarities. Traditional music is original, pure and carries a message. Sometimes singing is accompanied by dancing. Since singing plays a role in socialisation process, it is an all time event. In many occasions, people sing and dance with excitement and emotion.

#### **5.2.7.1 Lululu mwana alira**

This is a form of singing that is sung for the child who is being carried on the back with the intention of wooing him/her to sleep. In the singing, the tone, melody as well as pitch accompanies the kicking of the child on his/her back. This practice is more of a cushion to the toddler in the sense of putting the child to comfort. The child in response would also mimic buuu!, and he/she stops crying.

#### 5.2.7.2 Mbiliwili

This is a practice of beating the drum to convey message to the village or community. Messages on such occasions are funeral; warning of a marauding animal, appeal for help, and during chief installation. The *Mbiliwili* drum is usually kept at the headman's hut. It is conical in shape and closed on both sides. The sound of *Mbiliwili* is distinct and is not supposed to be reproduced by any other drum. Reproducing the sound of *Mbiliwili* for any other purpose is a serious offence. *Mbiliwili* is a symbol of authority of the headman hence all headmen must have it. This practice is common all over the northern region but very common among the Ngonde, Lambya and Tumbuka people of Karonga, Rumphi and Chitipa, respectively.

#### 5.2.7.3 Mingoli/Vingolingo

These are part of music playing (village choruses) that are sung when people are coming from festive occasions such as beer drinking, and usually take place at night. The songs are created there and then and are mostly call and response type of songs. Sometimes a lone singer mimics different voices and they deceive by giving an impression that the song is being sung by a group of people when in fact it is only one person changing voices. The people sing *Vingolingo* to scare away other people who may have evil intentions of attacking someone. Sometimes, *Vingolingo* are also used to scare away animals such as monkeys from gardens during harvest season. The practice is common in most parts of the northern region.

#### 5.2.7.4 Mwezi uwale

This is some form of moonlight singing. In this dance and singing, there is theatrical effect in that even for a child who is introvert; he/she participates in the exercise. Therefore this activity is important as it helps in the socialisation.



#### **5.2.7.5 Nthungululu**

These are ululations and form part of singing. *Nthungululu* is done on special occasions such as at child birth, wedding, celebrations, thanks giving in church and during other occasions.

#### **5.2.7.6 Pamtondo**

This is the time women gather to pound grain to remove husks in readiness for milling. While they are pounding, songs are sung to ease the burden. The songs are used to make statements or send messages on various social issues of the village. Other women, although not involved in the actual pounding, gather around and join in the singing and other ancillary activities. This takes place in all parts of the country and can happen at any time of the year particularly when the food is in plenty.

#### **5.2.7.7 Wina ayimba wina athana**

These are oral singings in form of call and response aspect in the music discipline. This is done when the people are happy and they want to make social comment. The “wina ayimba wina athana” kind of singing is common among many ethnic groups in the country.

### **5.3 SOCIAL PRACTICES, RITUALS AND FESTIVALS**

#### **5.3.1 Social practices**

##### **5.3.1.1 Kadumuliro**

This is a judicial valley or place where people who had committed crime would be punished after trial in traditional court. People would be bound and set on fire alive. But this punishment was only applied on very serious offences such as murder, adultery and witchcraft. To curb adultery, girls would be examined to check on their virginity. If they are found to have lost their virginity, they would be forced to reveal the man who had slept with them. However, this practice is

no longer being followed. Nowadays, the place is currently used as meeting point for discussing pertinent issues such as HIV/AIDS.

#### **5.3.1.2 Kulimizga**

*Kulimizga* is an occasion where people are mobilized to help in ploughing somebody's field or during the time of harvest. During this occasion songs are sung to ease the burden. The songs are aimed at bringing unity and good morals among workers and village communities. The practice is common all over the northern region but it is also found in other parts of the southern and central regions where it is known by different names.

#### **5.3.1.3 Mtungu**

This is the time for merry making during beer parties or any occasion where traditional beer is consumed. It involves both male and female singing together, handclapping and dancing. The songs are also impregnated with messages on social issues of the village. In other places it is called Magali and Mwana Wamama. It is common in Rumphu District, among Tumbuka people.

### **5.3.2 Marriage practices**

#### **5.3.2.1 Kufunsira mbeta/ Kusonga**

This is the first stage for any normal marriage practice where by a boy proposes love to a girl and if the girl accepts, which is normally after some resistance, the relationship begins. This practice is common in all parts of the country. The Chewa call it *Kufunsira mbeta* while the Tumbuka call it *Kusonga*. It is known by different names in different ethnic groups. It is traditionally understood that if a woman accepts love proposal from a man with little resistance, then the woman is regarded to be of loose morals.

### 5.3.2.3 Chikhole

When a boy and a girl have agreed to marry, the boy is asked to pay a certain amount of money to the aunt of the girl. This is called *Chikhole*. The amount charged varies from one place to the other. The aim of *Chikhole* is for the aunt to buy bedroom paraphernalia when the two are married. The aunt as a marriage counsellor buys six pieces of cloth, two big ones and four small ones. The two big pieces are used to spread on the bed or mat where the couple sleeps. The small ones are given to both and usually placed under the pillow. During first sexual intercourse as a couple, the man is supposed to release some sperms on the big cloth, which will be assessed by the marriage counsellors for them to assess the potency of the man. The potency is determined by the thickness of the sperms and if it is sticky enough it a sign that the man is capable of producing children. One of the small cloths is used by the woman to wipe her husband's manhood of the sperminal and vaginal fluids after intercourse, while the other one is used to cover her vagina to block the sperm from flowing out while she is cleaning her man. After she has finished, she then cleans her vagina with the other small cloth. This cleaning is performed by the woman. These clothes are washed early in the morning and are never taken outside. This ritual is done throughout their marriage life. The marriage counsellors' responsibility is to monitor and teach how the couple conducts sex. This serves two purposes: 1) to make sure that the family does not break due to unsatisfactory sexual life, 2) to make sure that the couple produces children. Besides *Chikhole*, a small stool known as *Chitengo* is also purchased on which the two sit when shaving each other of the hair around their private parts. When doing so, they have to take great care so as not cut each other or else they will be punished by paying a goat each. *Mafuta* (oil) is also bought and is applied to the reproductive organs after shaving to avoid the growth of pimples. When the woman is menstruating, she puts a red bead/cloth on the bed to alert the man of her situation. When the period is over, she puts a

white bead or cloth to show that she is now clean and they can resume having sex.

#### 5.3.2.4 Thenga

After a boy and a girl have agreed to get married they inform their parents of their intention. The boy's relatives send a delegation to the girl's parents with a message to ask the girl's hand in marriage. The delegation is called *Thenga*. Before any discussions are conducted, the delegation pays some money to initiate the discussions. This is called *Chijula Mulomo* - literally meaning "The price for opening the mount". The delegation usually consists of the boy's uncle and other relatives, not the direct father. The delegation is met by the uncle of the girl who is also accompanied by other elderly men of his side. When it is established that indeed the two (a boy and a girl) are in a relationship negotiations for engagement start in earnest. The negotiations include: *Malowolo* (pride price - for those that follow this custom) until a reasonable amount has been agreed upon. Traditionally, this was usually paid in form of heads of cattle but nowadays, because of the scarcity of cattle in the village, this can be paid in form of cash. *Malowolo* is paid as token of appreciation to the parents for bringing up their daughter. Another price that is paid is known as *Mkhuzi*. The amount varies from one situation to another but traditionally; it used to be one cow or bull. The *Mkhuzi* - literally meaning a piece of cloth that is used for tying the stomach immediately after giving birth, is paid to the mother of the girl as compensation for the painful experiences she underwent when she was giving birth to this daughter who is getting married. *Chibanda* or *Fuko*, which is money or cattle, (usually a heifer) is also paid to the girl's side in appeasement of ancestral spirits so that the new family is not disturbed by the evil spirits. When the negotiations are completed a date is set for payment and wedding. At least half the amount must be paid before the wedding can take place.

#### 5.3.2.5 Chinkhoswe

This is the name that is used to refer to the traditional wedding and is a form of matrimonial marriage arrangement. During Chinkhoswe, the male side formally brings the boy to the girl's village. During this occasion traditional dances are performed and gifts are offered to the newly wed couple amidst celebration and feasting. This is also the occasion when the couple is counselled on marriage life by marriage counsellors. Chinkhoswe is mostly practiced by the Yao, Lomwe in the southern region.

#### 5.3.2.6 Malowolo / Lobola

This is the bride price that is charged and paid by the boy's side to the girl's side after marriage agreement has been finalised. The bride price is determined by the girl's side but if it is on the higher side, the boy's side engage their counterparts into some form of bargaining until a reasonable amount is reached and agreed upon. Traditionally the bride price was usually paid in form of heads of cattle) today this can translate into *Mkhuzi* which consist of money or cattle paid to the mother of the girl as compensation for the painful experiences of child bearing. *Chibadala/Fuko*, which is money or cattle (usually a heifer), is paid to the girl's side in appeasement of ancestral spirits so that the new family is not disturbed by the spirits. When the negotiations are completed a date is set for payment and wedding. At least half the amount must be paid before the wedding can take place.

#### 5.3.2.7 Ukwati / Zowala / Mthimba

This simply refers to the wedding ceremony. During the actual wedding day, the female side formally brings the girl to the man's village. During this occasion gifts are exchanged between the two sides amidst celebration and feasting. This is also the occasion when the couple is counselled on marriage life by marriage counsellors. This is done in a secluded room known as *Chipinda chomata*. In other

communities such as among the Tumbuka or Chewa, the newly married girl is also given a young girl by her side to stay with for the first days to avoid boredom since the people that she has found in this new village are probably not familiar to her. The Chewa call it *Ukwati*, the Tonga call it *Zowala* and the Tumbuka refer to it as *Mthimba*.

#### **5.3.2.8 Chiwona**

Prior to the wedding day, the girl's relatives organize a group of elderly women to accompany the girl to see where their daughter will be married. This is called *Chiwona*- literally meaning, "to see". The practice is common among the Tumbuka of Northern Malawi. Sometimes this group would carry some flour and other food items. This is a way of the two families knowing each other.

#### **5.3.2.9 Chilinda**

Usually, a normal wedding is very expensive because it is accompanied by feasts and pomp. When the male side cannot manage to meet such expenses, they arrange to take the girl to the man's house with all the traditional customs excluding the feasting. This is called *Chilinda* or *Chipeleka*.

#### **5.3.2.10 Chithula**

In cases where a boy impregnates a girl before marriage, elderly women ask the girl to reveal who is responsible. Once she has revealed, the girl is then escorted to the boy's home and left at the boy's house. This is called *Chithula*. The parents of the boy ask the boy if he is responsible for the pregnancy. If the boy accepts the pregnancy, his parents agree to pay for the damages called *Chibadala* to the girl's parents before the marriage is normalized.

#### **5.3.2.11 Chisomphola**

This is when the boy takes the girl for a wife without the knowledge of her parents. This usually takes place at night. This is pre-arranged between the boy and girl. Before the girl leaves the village, she places coins on doorways of every household within the vicinity. This is a sign that she has gone and in safe hands and that members of the village should not be worried that she has been attacked by wild animals. However the parents of the girl start investigating where the girl might have gone. After a day or two, the parents of the boy must send a delegation to the girl's family to inform them of the whereabouts of their daughter. Before any discussions are done, the delegation from the boy's side must pay chicken or some money called *Chijula mulomo*. After that, discussions take place, which will include charges for not following the normal procedure. This is known as *Chibadala*. After the damages have been paid, the normal marriage process is followed. This practice is common among many tribes in the northern region. It is also practiced in some parts of the central region.

#### **5.3.2.12 Kuphimbira**

This is a form of arranged marriage whereby when a parent is in debt with a rich person he gives up his daughter to him to become his wife when she grows up in exchange for his indebtedness. This practice is common among the Ngonde and Lambya in Karonga and Chitipa. Sometimes, due to poverty and eminent danger of hunger parents give up their daughter to a rich person who will be supporting the family with money and food until the daughter grows up to become his wife. This practice is known as *Kujalira*. These practices are being discouraged in the face of HIV and AIDS as they are believed to encourage the spread of the virus in addition to denying girls' rights to education and choice of marriage partner.

#### 5.3.2.13 Hlazi/Mbiliga

This is a practice where the husband is given a younger sister or niece of his wife to take as his second wife. The girl is sometimes enticed by the sister to join her in her marriage or encouraged by aunties and parents to enter the union. Sometimes the husband initiates the process himself. The purpose for this include: 1) if the husband has shown exemplary behaviour such as not beating the wife, supporting the wife and her family etc, 2) if it is established that the first wife is barren and 3) if the first wife dies the second wife is chosen to take care of the children, and 4) if the husband decides to get a second wife, the first wife may want to protect the wealth by letting her younger sister join her. This happens especially if the husband is a well to do person. The practice is common among the Ngoni and Tumbuka in northern Malawi.

#### 5.3.2.14 Mitala

This is a practice by which a man marries more than one wife with or without the consent of the first wife. This is practiced in all the three regions of the country. It is called *Chipali* among the Sena, *Impali* among the several ethnic groups in northern parts of Chitipa and as *Mitala* among most other ethnic groups in Malawi. The most common form of *Mitala* is to have two or three wives although in some areas in the northern region some men could have as many as eight wives. The wives may or may not stay in the same compound but they almost always live in different houses. People opt for *Mitala* or are found in such unions because of a number of reasons including the following: 1) the first wife might fail to bear children yet the husband desperately wants children, 2) having many wives is a sign of wealth and envy in the society, 3) for chiefs, having many wives creates an aura of respect around their chieftaincy, 4) The husband marries another woman or other women as a form of punishment to the first wife for her unruly behaviour. In other words, marital problems such as miscommunication, and problems due to the husband feeling that the wife no longer looks beautiful,



and/or is cunning, nagging or lazy, may force the man to marry other wives so that he has a peace of mind, 5) the tendency by some men of producing children out of wedlock which forces them to marry their mothers, 6) the need for a large labour force for their farms, 7) men failing to sexually restrain themselves for a year as might be required of them after a woman has delivered, 8) women who are barren are found in *Mitala* as a way of maintaining their marriages by going to the extent of wooing another lady to join them in the polygamous union. This second wife helps them in bearing children hence sustaining their marriages, 9) some religions such as Islam and some Christian denominations permit polygamy. It is apparent that religion has had a very strong influence on the way people look at polygamy. One advantage of polygamy is that a man is still able to exercise his conjugal rights when the other lady is either menstruating or has just given birth, or when she can not have sex for some other reasons.

#### **5.3.2.15 Chokolo**

This is the practice whereby when a husband dies, his brother, cousin, or nephew inherits the surviving wife. This is done in order to protect the children and property. In some cases the younger brother can actually live with the inherited wife in others he does not live with her but exercises all the authority of a husband and father. In the northern part of Chitipa, among the Sukwa, sometimes a man and his wife would agree in advance who would inherit her when he dies. This arrangement is called *Chilongo*. Today the practice is discouraged unless the woman to be inherited is given the choice to deny and the two agree to be tested for HIV and AIDS.

#### **5.3.2.16 Ludengere**

This is a form of damages that is paid when the bereaved woman gets pregnant before any *Chokolo* (wife inheritance) formalities are finalized even with a relative of the deceased husband. The damages are paid for “trespassing on a sacred

place” and usually it is in the form of a goat. After this incidence, the woman can be forgiven and allowed to stay on in the patrimonial home. If the woman wants to marry someone outside the husband’s family, she has to leave the village and often times *Lobola* (the bride price) and children have to be returned to the husband’s family. In a situation where the children are very young, she can be allowed to take them with her for a while and later return them to the family.

#### **5.3.2.17 Fisi**

Amongst different communities in Malawi, there are cases where a couple, after staying together for some time, fails to produce children of their own. If it is established that this is the problem of a man (either because a wife is known to have produced a child before) elders in the village sit down and agree to identify a man who should sleep with the wife of a “barren” husband in order to produce children. This man whom is introduced into another man’s house with the sole aim of producing children is known as *Fisi*. However, there are various situations/cases during which the services of *Fisi* could be sought. This including birth cleansing (*Kulimbitsa mwana*), which is done on behalf of the person who is away or who denied responsibility for pregnancy or who is dead. *Fisi* (literally meaning a hyena) is also used for death cleansing as done in Nsanje and parts of Chitipa. *Fisi* is also used for cleansing infidelity during mourning periods as found among the Yao in Mangochi. The word *Fisi* is also used to refer to a man who, anonymously and at night, performs ritual sex with an initiate at the end of her initiation or woman with an absentee husband.

#### **5.3.2.18 Unkhoswe**

This is the social organization of the Chewa, a matrilineal tribe in the central region. It is characterized by a system of guardianship called *Unkhoswe* by which the integrity of the members of the same matrilineage is stressed. These matrilineages comprise male and female members reckoning descent through a

classification system of kinship from a common ancestress. Within the matrilineage, male members act as guardians, especially in regard to women and their children. The guardianship is referred to as *Unkhoswe*. The guardian himself is the *Ankhoswe*, and those coming under his auspices are called his *Mbumba*.

The structural framework of the matrilineage is conceptualised in the form of a hierarchical system in which rank and status permeate through females and are projected on to males, in both cases according to sequence of birth. Within each sibling group, male members divide responsibility in regard to their sisters and the children of these, but the guardianship of the entire matrilineage remains vested in the senior male member. Guardianship is of permanent nature and also functions within marriage units. The inheritance of property and succession to official positions are still traced through the line of mothers.

### **5.3.3 Birth rituals**

#### **5.3.3.1 Chiwulira**

This is when a woman who has just given birth gets pregnant again before she resumes her menstruation. This is thought very serious and calls for critical observation of customs and taboos by the parents. All the steps as outlined in *Mavunika* apply to *Chiwulira* i.e. from isolation to administration of medicine for cleansing.

The Ngonde are deeply religious. They offer prayers for material goods, such as health and good fortune, for rain and crops as well as for protection against pestilence.

#### **5.3.3.2 Kupembeza mizimu**

On all great occasions, prayer and offerings are made; but also when spirits are believed to be angry. If there is quarrelling in the family; if a man beats his wife;

if a girl has arrived at puberty, or a marriage has been arranged, without their being consulted; if a woman has been unfaithful to her husband; if a man neglects his parents; if ceremonies are neglected; or the spirits themselves forgotten; that is enough reason for the spirits to be angry. Their wrath is shown very specially by a disease of the lips breaking out on the guilty person, and by fever; but also in many other ways; by the failure of the beer to ferment, by sickness, by a storm in which some one is drowned, by failure of crop, or increase of livestock, of children, by too little or too much rain, or by ill-success in hunting or fishing; and, very emphatically, by a sudden death.

#### **5.3.3.3 Kutenga mwana**

This is a rite whereby after having effected intercourse the first time, the husband has to withdraw in time so that his wife can take some semen and anoint with it the face and body of the child. Thereafter, the father has to take the child, if it is a boy, and the mother, if it is a girl, and jump across the fire. This symbolizes that the child is now "warm". Until this is done, the child is considered to be cold and therefore she is vulnerable to all forms of diseases. This rite is performed some weeks after the birth of a child. The rite, which is common among many ethnic groups in Malawi, is intended to give strength to the child.

#### **5.3.3.4 Kuyowoyera mwana**

This is the prayer and ceremony conducted at the presentation of a newly born child to the ancestral spirits. It is common among the Ngonde community. When offering such prayers, parents and the elders stand at the sacred banana grove. A family representative prays:

“... and now this little one, whom I hold in my hands, be gracious to him/her. He (she) has come into a world of sickness, of cold, of all the troubles that you yourselves are

familiar with. Let him lie in peace. Let no one in the spirit world be angry with him. Tomorrow he will be fully grown, and he will bring you beer, flesh and flour. I pray to God for him. Oh! God, who is Lord of all, let your breath be cool upon him”.

Then, spitting on the child’s breast and back, he says:

“And you child, may there be life in you. God be gracious to you. Live in peace and you should not be troubled.”

Not all diseases are due to the anger of the spirits; a natural illness is one that yields to treatment. It is the act of God, and when the right medicine has been used, cure will follow, for God does not need to be entreated as the spirits do. Yet the spirits carry their petitions to God, as if He did need to be entreated.

#### **5.3.3.5 Makhumbi**

This is when a woman delivers twins. This too is believed to affect the village hence medicine has to be administered to the mother and the child. The mother is not allowed to cook or put salt in relish until such a time when medicine has been administered. Unlike in *Mavunika* and *Chiwulira*, the parents here are not isolated. This practice is found among the Tumbuka in northern Malawi.

#### **5.3.3.6 Mavunika**

*Mavunika* is the name word which is used to describe a condition whereby during child delivery, the child comes out with legs/buttocks first or faces downwards. This is regarded as abnormal and it is believed that this could bring bad omen to the village. The bad omen could be in form of an outbreak of disease to the whole village. The solution to this is to isolate the parents together

with the child for one month. They are taken to the bush. During this time, they are not allowed to cook or put salt in relish until the woman has gone through two menstruation periods called *Kusaula*. During the second menstrual period, medicine is administered to the parents, the child and the whole village. The mother's hair is also cut and she is then given new clothes to wear. It is only after all these processes have taken place that the couple can be allowed back into the village and his wife starts cooking and putting salt in relish.

#### 5.3.3.7 Mdulo

*Mdulo* is a mysterious disease caused by the transgression of a taboo on sexual intercourse. Another mysterious disease related to *Mdulo* is called *Tsempho*, which literally means to miss. *Tsempho* refers to a disease or condition of the newly born child arising from parental failure to undergo the *Kutenga mwana* sexual cleansing ritual.

The following are some of the acts that bring about *Mdulo*: When a woman is pregnant, the man is strongly advised not to sleep with other women apart from his wife. It is believed that when one or both of them violates this norm, the woman experiences a lot of pregnancy complications such as miscarriage, problems during delivery, etc.

In some cases, when the pregnant woman is experiencing complications and it is established that it was her husband who committed adultery, the husband is instructed to wash his manhood in a cup of water and the water is given to the woman to drink. This, it is believed, immediately helps reverse the complications and the woman delivers the baby normally. When it is the woman who had sex elsewhere during her pregnancy period, she is asked to mention the name (names) of the man (men) she had sex with. Once she mentions the names, it is said that the complications cease and she delivers the baby normally. A woman

is also told not to kill a snake to avoid producing a child that will crawl like a snake for the rest of its life; drink water while standing because she might produce a baby who will choke when suckling; put her hands on her back or back of her head. It is a sign of misery and the child born will also be miserable. She should also not sit with her legs folded to avoid hurting the baby, sleep on her belly nor carry heavy load so that she does not affect the forthcoming baby. In addition to these taboos, a woman who has just delivered is not allowed to cook food nor put salt in food after 2 to 3 months or until she gets her second menstrual period after giving birth. She is expected not to put salt in food for hygienic purposes and for her husband to know that at this time she is out of bounds for sex. The other belief related to birth is that when a child's teeth come out on the upper gum first, the child will be a witch/wizard. These beliefs are common in northern region among the Tumbuka, Tonga and Ngoni.

Amongst the Chewa and Ngoni, it is taboo for a pregnant woman to do the following: watch *Gule Wamkulu* as this will make her deliver a baby who will look like one; eat eggs because the baby will be bald; eat twin bananas (*zophatikizana*) because she will deliver a baby with joined parts of the body that normally are not joined; sit on a mortar, otherwise the husband will die.

In the south among the Lomwe, Yao or even Sena, a pregnant woman is advised against the following: wearing a bra, necklace, or a belt because this makes the baby inside to be entangled by the umbilical cord and this leads to unsafe and complicated delivery; wearing a wrist watch for fear of long delivery period; eating or drinking hot food or tea, for fear of scalding the unborn child; eat eggs for fear of having a baby born without hair; arguing with elderly people for fear that these people might bring bad omen through witchcraft that might result in complications during birth; eating already prepared food from the market because when she eats the food that was prepared by a person who had sex, she might miscarry; closing the door of her house herself, because by doing that she

is also blocking the baby's way out, and this leads to delayed and complicated delivery.

#### 5.3.3.8 Kubowola mwana pamutu

Among the Lomwe people, when the couple knows that the wife is expectant, the husband goes to tell their parents that the woman is no longer having her monthly periods. When the pregnancy reaches five months, the councillors (*Anankungwi*) are summoned to tell the young lady certain basic rules that she should follow during the whole pregnancy period. For example, during the eighth month, the woman is supposed to stop sleeping with his husband for fear of delivering a sickly child. This is known as *Kubowola mwana pamutu*. The woman is forbidden from wearing tight clothes but more importantly, she is also forbidden from menial work such as chopping firewood, carrying heavy buckets of water. However, during the ninth month, she is encouraged to do light jobs just to keep her body active and fit in order to have an easy delivery. The procedure is that when the woman is due for deliver, she is taken to a seclude place (*Mbuto*) surrounded by thick vegetation. If delivery is at night, it may take place near the house or in the kitchen for fear of wild animals. The girl sits on a cushion of folded pieces of cloth and two or three elderly women, known as *Azamba*, assists in the delivery. When the baby is nearly out, the woman is urged to push hard so that the baby could quickly come out. This is known as *Kutchima*. When the baby is finally out, the umbilical cord is immediately cut and buried in the soil deep enough to avoid animals such as dogs from exposing it to the people. In case of a tear during delivery, the two parts of the skin are glued together using traditional medicine. The woman is encouraged to wash her wound with salty water.

In case of death of stillbirths, burial is arranged and this is strictly conducted by women; the reason being that the baby was not yet a full human being – *Adakali*



*Mchikuta*. Possible reasons for stillbirths include: witchcraft and breaking taboos that were meant to be strictly adhered to, among others.

In case of successful delivery, a woman is given some Dos and Don'ts. These included not having sex with the husband at least for six to nine months after birth. The woman is not allowed to cook or even prepare bath water for her husband for at least three months after giving birth. If she does not follow these rules she is putting the lives of people in danger, fall sick herself from an illness characterized by severe coughing, diarrhoea, and loss of weight. This condition is known as *Kanyera*.

If it is birth of a girl, the woman's family goes to the husband's village carrying a hen with some foodstuffs for the man's relatives. But if it is a boy, they to carry a cock and the celebrations are accompanied by much singing and dancing just to express their happiness.

The name of first-born child comes from the man's side but that of the second-born child comes from the woman's family. Names given have meanings that corresponded to the circumstances in which the birth took place. For a girl, the ones to make the announcement would carry utensils that a woman uses in the home such as pestle, mortar, winnowing basket, etc., while ululating as they approached the village. For a boy, they carry an axe, knife, hoe, etc., and they would be throwing or shooting arrows towards the man's village.

#### **5.3.4 Transitional rites**

##### **5.3.4.1 Chinamwali**

This is a traditional initiation rite that transforms a girl from her childhood into becoming an adult. Once a girl has been initiated, she not only becomes a member of her family but also of the whole community and takes community

responsibility, including that of bearing children. According to Chewa tradition, there are three stages/forms of Chinamwali as outlined below:

#### **5.3.4.2 Chikule**

This is the first initiation ceremony that the girl undergoes after experiencing her first menstruation. It is performed to ensure smooth transition from childhood to adulthood. It is accompanied by observance of all taboos such as sexual abstinence for the girl's parents so that nothing endangers the life of the girl. If the parents break this taboo, the girl suffers from a disease known as *Mdulo*, whose symptoms include swollen cheeks, vomiting of bloods, etc.

#### **5.3.4.3 Chimbwinda/Chikudzukudzu**

This refers to a quick one day initiation ceremony that girls undergo when they get married before being initiated. During this initiation, even husbands to the girls are initiated but separately. The main instruction to both the husband and wife relates to the marriage life. Since this initiation is like a crash programme, initiates themselves need to take initiative to continue learning by attending other initiation ceremonies.

#### **5.3.4.4 Mkangali**

This is the highest level of Chewa initiation rite for both boys and girls. In actual sense, *Mkangali* is the last stage in the initiation of a chief (*M'meto wa mfumu*). When a man is chosen to become a new chief of the village, he undergoes the first initiation ceremony. Thereafter another ceremony known as *Kuzulula mfumu* is organised during which the chief is given the right to own *Mzinda*. The final stage of initiating a chief in *Mkangali* which is dubbed as the highest level in terms of acquiring of magical protection. It is during this stage that a similar initiation rite for boys and girls is organised. This ceremony is also known as *Mkangali* since it takes place during the *Mkangali* ceremony of the chief. During

*Mkangali*, magic powers are at work to protect the subjects as initiation rites are vulnerable occasions where enemies can come and harm the initiates mysteriously. During this period, the initiates are kept at a secluded house known as Simba where they sleep and take their meals. On every *Mkangali* ceremony, a tree outside the compound is identified where the girls receive instructions. This tree is known as *Mtengo wa Namwali*. During *Mkangali* girls initiates are taught a number of things, including matters of life, sex, marriage, procreation, family, and well as community responsibility. The messages to the initiates are passed on through songs, demonstrations, and instructions. The Chewa initiation rites are therefore occasions where social, cultural and religious values are taught to the girls. The last day of *Mkangali* ceremony is marked by feasting, drinking and dancing. This is known as *Mnjedza*. Unlike the first two ceremonies, *Mkangali* is accompanied by *Gule Wamkulu* performances.

#### 5.3.4.5 Chiputu

Whereas the Chewa consider that a girl is ripe for initiation when her breasts begin to for, the Yao hold the view that the right age is earlier, about nine or ten years. At this age, communal instruction is given then it is supplemented by individual instruction at first menstruation and again as also in the Chewa at first pregnancy. The actual age in particular cases varies since the dance ceremonies are not held every year. There must be a sizeable number of girls to make the event worthwhile and their parents must feel that they can afford the fee due to *Anankungwi* or mistress of ceremonies, and that they have enough grain for the beer. The girls that are initiated are called *Anamwali*. Each *Namwali* has a counsellor (*Phungu*) who takes responsibility for her during the entire initiation period. The counsellors are women already initiated; an elder sister or woman who named the girl at her birth is suitable for this task. The preparations include building a rough grass shelter (*Masasa*) for the girls to sleep in during the period of instruction, and the brewing of beer. The girls wear the prescribed costume

consisting of strings of beads round the waist or woven bead belt, a piece of cloth between the legs with the two ends passed through the lower rows of beads and hanging down in front and behind, and another tied round the waist above the beads and knotted in front. The complete ceremony involves two public rites, one at the beginning of the seclusion period and another when the girls return to the village.

#### 5.3.4.6 Chisamba

*Chisamba* is a female initiation ritual, which is compliment of male initiation in Gule Wamkulu. Its purpose is to train girls into sexually satisfying women. This takes places at a tree of maiden hood, *Mtengo wa Anamwali*. Here girls receive instructions on the protocols of womanhood. This includes many warnings of the presence of 'predatory males' i.e. men who would look up to them for sexual satisfaction. During *Chisamba* girls undergo their own transformation into women. They are stripped of their clothes in the insignia of *Gule Wamkulu*. The most important insignia is the animal figurine; *Chingondo* placed on their heads, representation of a hare, a serpent or an elephant, the three most prestigious beasts of the night. The dance that accompanies this process is also known as *Chisamba*. It is performed by women, led by a senior woman, usually the Chief's sister known as Nankungwi. During *Chisamba*, both the initiation and the dance, women who act as the instructions of the young girls snare at them and escort them to the community. Here everyone descends on the Chief's courtyard to witness the ceremony. *Chisamba* is performed by the Chewa and is very popular in the Central Region of Malawi where the Chewa are found. *Chisamba* dance is also performed at the funerals of chiefs and important individuals in the village. It is also common to find *Chisamba* dance being performed for entertainment at important occasions.

#### 5.3.4.7 Jando

*Jando* is an important initiation rite for boys among the Yao in Malawi. It is a transitional rite among the boys aged between ten and above, from childhood to adulthood. *Jando* is an important ritual among the Yao since it is where children are taught morals of their society to make them conform to the accepted moral codes of conduct. The process of *Jando* is elaborate and takes some time from preparations to the graduation of the initiated candidates. This rite usually takes places along riverbanks literally named *Kumadzi* intended for easy access to the waters for bathing purposes. When the two parents agree that their child should be initiated, the Chief is informed of their intention and money is paid, as a kind of tribute and this is literally known as *Kugula Bwalo*. After approval by the Chief, the *Ngaliba* who is the overall organizer of the whole *Jando* ceremony is informed. The *Ngaliba* keeps a list of candidates to be initiated on specific times. When the entrance day for *Jando* ceremony is due, the candidates have their hair cut short and they assemble at the Chief's house waiting for the *Ngaliba*. The *Ngaliba* takes the initiates to the *Simba*, a place where initiation takes place. Among other things, the *Ngaliba* is responsible for protecting the *Simba* from witches. There is belief that if the *Simba* is not well protected, in some instances, the initiates may die while at the *Simba* due to being bewitched.

The process of circumcision involves removing the foreskin of the initiates. Circumcision symbolizes a number of things, which include: breaking out ritual of separation from society of boys into that of adults, union with the whole society, getting rid of period of childhood and ready to enjoy full privileges of various responsibilities both in his family and in the whole community, making a covenant of a solemn agreement between him and the people. It is stated that once an initiate has shed his blood, he joins the stream of his people and becomes truly one of them. There is a belief among the Yao that if a person does not undergo circumcision, he is a child and possibly an outcast. Candidates are

instructed mostly by means of songs, which have specific meanings depending on what lessons to be delivered.

Another important aspect of the *Jando* initiation is the ceremony associated with the coming out of the initiates from the *Simba*. During the graduation day, there is a lot of singing, dancing and feasting.

#### 5.3.4.8 Kasimba

This is the girl's initiation among the Lomwe of Mulanje, Phalombe and Thyolo Districts. In the past, young girls aged between 10 to 13 years who had not yet started having their menstruation cycles were targeted for initiation. The targeting of such girls was known as *Kugwira* - Literally meaning to catch. The main aim of initiating girls is to teach young girls *Mwambo* - on how to live as responsible adults in the society. The aspects of life imparted to them include: respect for their parents and the elders, how to take care of their husbands needs in bed once they got married, how to handle death in the family and to stop certain bad habits which they might have had such as stealing, rudeness and laziness. Girls were particularly encouraged to be pulling their *labia minora* (lip shaped folds of the female genitals) as many time as possible with the aid of traditional herbs locally known as *Nsatsi* (*Ricinus communis*). According to Lomwe culture, a woman without extended *labia minora* is useless and there is no way she can excite a man. The extended *labia minora* play an important role in the fore play because a man would pull these in order to get aroused. To emphasize the importance of women having well developed *labia minora*, there have been cases of women who have been chased by their husbands for not having extended *labia minora*, which Lomwe men treasure very much. Use of non-verbal forms of communication is also very much emphasized during initiations for girls. For example, if a woman is having her menstruation cycle, she is supposed to hang a string of red beads on the wall to be conspicuous to the husband that

they can not make love. After her periods are over she hangs a string of white beads signifying that everything is fine, and that they can now resume having sex.

Just like in other forms of initiations practiced by other ethnic groups, in Kasimba the whole process revolves around the Nankungwi who makes sure that things go as planned. Nankungwi is usually an elderly woman who act as a counsellor for the girls on many life issues and she usually has one or two women who act as her assistants during the whole initiation process. The activities at the initiation place usually takes place in the bush at a special place chosen at an earlier time by their ancestors who had put some charms there. This special place is called *Mukonga*.

Once girls have been graduated after being initiated, they usually undergo a post initiation ritual of cleansing where each girl finds a man to have sexual intercourse with her just to cleanse her of the dust she had gathered during the initiation. This is called *Kuchotsa Fumbi* - Literally meaning to clear or knock off the dust. The man who is called upon to perform this ritual is known as *Fisi* - literally meaning hyena because everything is done in hiding at night. In the event that the girl is already married before she started having her menstrual cycles then it is her husband who performs the cleansing ritual.

#### **5.3.4.9 Kumeta Gule**

This is the initiation of mainly boys among the Chewa communities into a society of masked dancers called *Gule Wamkulu* - literally translated as Great Dance. The practice, which is also known as *Kulowa Gule*, is common among the Chewa people in the Central Region and some parts of the Southern Region. The headman whose village practices *Gule Wamkulu* is said to own *Mzinda* - meaning he heads *Gule Wamkulu*. However, not all Chewa villages practice *Gule Wamkulu*.

The boys are taken to *Dambwe* (sacred place), normally it is a graveyard, where they are taught how to conduct themselves in the society. Once they are taken there, a guide, known as *Phungu* (counsellor), is identified for each boy. The role of the *Phungu* is to offer protection to the boy while at the *Dambwe*. During this period, the boys eat chicken, which is roasted and mixed with herbs called *Phundabwi* (*Ocimum canum*). Among other things, the boys are advised not to: enter sleeping quarters of their parents for fear of dying by vomiting blood, eat straight from the pot for fear of dying, share fireside stories with their parents, share bathing quarters (bath rooms) with their parents and most importantly reveal the secrets of the Gule Wamkulu society. The boys are also taught about such skills as building a house, hoe-handle making, and mat-weaving, so that when they get married they should not face difficulties in running their families. Therefore, the Gule Wamkulu cult is a deep-rooted Chewa culture that teaches good morals to initiates for the betterment of the society.

#### 5.3.4.10 Kusaula

When a girl notices menstrual blood for the first time, she reports to her female in-laws or other elderly people known as *Anankungwi* within the village, but not her parents. The *Anankungwi* will take the girl to a scheduled house where they check and confirm. When this is done they quarantine her and then go to report to her parents. The procedure for reporting to the girl's parents is that they put some money in a plate, cover it and then tell her parents that your daughter has "insulted" you. The parents take the coins and then also put money in the same plate. This process is repeated to all her relatives. By this they announce the girls' transition to adulthood. The girl is not allowed to go outside nor is she allowed to cook or put salt in relish. The *Anankungwi* also give the girl some medicine for her to start eating salty food. This medicine is called *Mlumizga*. After 7 days, the girl is released and given new clothes and the menstrual clothes are taken to the bush and placed under *Mlama wanakazi* tree (*Combretum molle*). Then she is



brought home to her parents. She is not supposed to talk to anybody unless he or she gives her some money called *Mbongozgo* for her to open her mouth.

#### 5.3.4.11 Msondo

This is the first type of initiation that girls in some parts of the Southern Region particularly among the Yao communities undergo in their lives. In other areas, this practice is also known as *Dzoma*. Girls aged from 6 and above are taken to an isolated place, which is usually a house within the village for confinement for a period of two to four weeks, for purposes of counselling them. In the case of the initiation organized by Christian/Islamic beliefs, the place of confinement is a church or a mosque.

During the evening of the day before the girls are taken to this isolated place, the *Nankungwi*, accompanied by the former initiates perform a dance through which a number of pieces of advice is given to the girls. This includes teaching the girls on how to satisfy their husbands once they get married. During this time, the songs are sung. Each song has a particular message to convey to the girls.

After the four weeks or so at the secluded place, the girls first converge at the Chief's house where a ceremony is organized for the girls. Here, the purpose of this ceremony is to display what the girls learnt. Some of the demonstrations include dancing by the girls. Every one is allowed to watch the dance and there is ululation for the best dancers. Any person is free to touch the breasts of any girl during this dance upon giving her a gift, which may be in the form of money. At the end, the girls are advised to identify any boy to have sex with to avoid *Kutuwa* (getting pale). This practice is known as *Kusasa Fumbi* or *Kuchotsa Fumbi* – literally meaning “knocking off or removing dust”.

### 5.3.5 Death rituals

#### 5.3.5.1 Kupereka Chiliro

In the Northern Region, when husband dies a woman is taken home and asked to put on rags. Usually she is asked to choose two or three of such clothes so that she may be able to change. She is told how to cry i.e. *Mfumu wane* - meaning my husband. After the burial of the husband, the woman is made to shave her hair and then she has to wrap her head with a piece of cloth. This cloth is called *Chinwazi*. Some small pieces are also cut and distributed to relatives who wear them on their wrists. During this period a chicken is slaughtered and the liver and gizzard are cooked and cut into small pieces. One of these pieces is shared with the deceased wife, which she takes together with some medicines. The rest of the people in the house also have a share of the same. This is called *Chiphuluphuska*. After five (5) days of mourning, an animal is slaughtered and part of its skin is given to the woman to wear on her wrist. This is called *Chikhowa*. At this point, the woman is taken to her home to show her people this *Chikhowa*. This is done when they take the funeral to her home. During this period, the woman is termed *Mfelekazi*. Before they reach home, she is covered with a cloth called *Chibudu*. At her home, if her parents are rich people, they may also give her another *Chikhowa*. The woman is then taken back to her husband's home. After thirty (30) days, the ritual of shaving hair is conducted. This is called *Kumeta*. In other parts of the country, the practice is more or less similar although there are some differences here and there. For example, among the Lomwe, the property of the deceased is destroyed after the burial.

#### 5.3.5.2 Kutola mizimu

After the burial of the dead person elderly people cut a stick from *Kawinga Azimu* tree (*Galium chloroionanthus*) and take it with them to the deceased grave. There, they present some prayers and eulogies while pleading with the deceased spirit not to trouble the people in the village. Using the stick they put it at the

grave and walk with it while touching the ground all the way following the route they used when going to the grave, into the house. The stick is placed at the corner of the deceased bedroom or at the roof. In this way they believe that the Azimu (the spirits) of the deceased is contained and can not go to trouble other people.

#### **5.3.5.3 Maliro a mwana**

Also called *Maliro a Mchikuta* in the Central Region of Malawi. When a stillborn child or one, which has not yet been ritually introduced into the lineage dies, it is carried by womenfolk alone on a site separate from the normal graveyard. The grave is very shallow and the burial is without any special rituals. Afterwards, the women go to bathe at the river. The reason for involving women only is because the little corpse was not yet a human being but unripe. There is no wailing, except by the mother herself who weeps silently so as not to be heard. In this case, only the mother is shaved and there is no second shaving. If child dies at about one month old, men may do the digging but they do not attend the burial. The bereaved are consoled by a handshake.

#### **5.3.5.4 Maliro a mfumu**

This refers to the burial of a chief. In the past among the Lomwe the burial of a chief was accompanied by administration of medicine by a traditional doctor to assuage the chief's spirits to prevent the spirit from tormenting the village. Also a young slave girl was buried alive with the chief's body to act as his attendants in the after life. This is an indication of the belief in life after death. But today the ceremony is practiced without having an innocent soul accompanying the dead.

#### **5.3.5.5 Chivumbi**

When death occurs, villagers are supposed to gather at the deceased house. And when burial takes place, villagers are supposed to remain for a while to comfort

the deceased. This period is known as *Chivumbi*. During *Chivumbi*, the place is not supposed to be cleaned or swept and people should not bathe. While at *Chivumbi*, the food is brought to the people without covering it. But on the last day of *Chivumbi*, people clean the compound very early in the morning and fire place is also cleaned. The deceased are now allowed to take a bath and they are also shelved. If it was a husband's death, the widow puts on a head band. Some medicinal plants such as *Kawinga azimu* tree (*Galium chloroionanthus*) are then administered to the house to protect the inhabitants from being tormented by the departed spirits. After prayers are taken, the crowd disperse.

#### **5.3.5.6 Kumeta/Chimeta/Sadaka**

This is the final cleansing ceremony after the burial of a person. It takes place 30 days after the *Chivumbi*. On this day, there is feasting and beer is consumed to mark the end of the mourning period. The distribution of the deceased's wealth, issues of wife inheritance and other pertinent issues are tackled on this particular day. This practice is found among the Chewa and Tumbuka tribes among others. The only difference is that unlike the Tumbuka, among the Chewa there is no wife inheritance. It should be noted that the period of *Kumeta* these days has reduced and it varies from place to place among different tribes.

#### **5.3.5.7 Kumanga Chiliza/Nkhwichi**

On the day of burial following the death of a person in the village, elderly ladies bring stones that are laid on a tomb. This is called *Kumanga chiliza*. The significance of laying stones are: firstly to act as identification of the site where one was buried and secondly to prevent the wild beasts from tampering with the grave. But nowadays, most people prefer using cement to make cemeteries for the departed loved ones. The *Nkhwichi* is the act of memorialization. During *Nkhwichi*, prayers are offered and there is recount of the departed person's history, his/her successes, losses, etc.

#### **5.3.5.8 Kutola mizimu**

When death occurs, elderly people go to the graveyard to contend the spirits to avoid more deaths from taking place. This is called Kutola Mizimu. It is common among the Tumbuka in Rumphu District.

#### **5.3.5.9 Rituals and festivals**

These are occasions or beliefs that are determined by particular chieftaincy based on social and belief systems.

#### **5.3.5.10 Chilimika festivals**

These are celebrations marking the birth of a new year. *Chilimika* (meaning year) is performed mostly by the young Tonga women of Nkhata-Bay District in the Northern Region. At each New Year's Day, young men and women congregate at the village arena to entertain the villagers with *Chilimika*, which is also the name of the dance performed during this occasion.

#### **5.3.5.11 Chikunkhu**

This refers to an out break of diseases in the village. When a village is experiencing never-ending diseases, it is a sign that the village is full of immorality and the spirits are angry and have decided to inflict it with diseases. In order to cleanse the village of the bad spirits, herbal mixtures known as *Chikunkhu* are used. Before sun rise, every woman is asked to sweep is places which are believed to be originator of the diseases and ashes are collected and dumped at one place. Thereafter, the elder of the village talks to the spirits to ask for new lease of life. This practice is found among the Ngonde in Karonga District and other surrounding areas.

#### **5.3.5.12 Chipoka baboli**

*Chipoka baboli* is the mysterious missing of wives a result of their husbands' wrong doing. This happens at a designated place where spirits are believed to be found. For the man to ask for a safe passage, one has to plead with the spirits at *Chipoka baboli* site by throwing coins, white cloth or beads. The practice is found among the Tumbuka people.

#### **5.3.5.13 Chizangala festival**

This is practiced among the Chewa of Central Region of Malawi. During Chizangala festival, villages organise inter-village dance performances culminating into Gule Wamkulu performances. On this occasion, various groups of people take the opportunity to meet over traditional rites observance. Some of the rites observed include *Mpalo* and *M'meto*. *Mpalo* is the rite that is observed to signal the commencement of the harvesting season. *M'meto* is the death ritual that involves shelving the hair of the deceased relatives.

#### **5.3.5.14 Kuthira nsembe/Kupembeza Mizimu**

This is a practice whereby offerings are given to the ancestral spirits either to please them or when the spirits have been wronged and the people would like to beg for forgiveness. It is believed that when the spirits are aggrieved, their anger is manifested in different ways such as disease out break, drought, famine and other misfortunes. In the event of rain failure, the Chief summons all his people to a *Bwalo* (open space in the village). The elders sweep around the village, while the women clean the wells in anticipation of the coming shower. The refuse is thrown away in the bush. The Chief then explains the reason for the meeting and with the consent of the people; he drops flour little by little on the ground in front of *Kachisi* (Prayer House) while calling upon the spirits of his predecessors. The people stand up and clap, drink beer and pour it on the ground. Only those who are past procreation may come near the *Kachisi*. Menstruating women and

persons who have recently indulged in sexual intercourse must remain at great distance. In the event of this ceremony failing to produce the desired rain, the *Sing'anga* (Medicine man) is called in. Having previously abstained from sexual intercourse, he makes a hole in the ground in the *Bwalo*, places a pot in the hole; and puts medicine in the pot. He then calls upon a barren or menstruating woman to pour water on the spot. She is chosen because of her continual flow of moisture; and before pouring water; she must remove her cloth in order not to interfere with the flow of rain. The *Sing'anga* involves the aid of the spirits. Each person present brings a small contribution, which is handed over to the Chief and duly paid to the *Sing'anga* after the fall of rain. If the *Sing'anga* is unsuccessful, it becomes clear that some evil person is stopping the rain by witchcraft.

Among the Tumbuka community, there are places where sacrifices take place even today when villages have been infested with evil spirits. These include Lake Kaulime near Chelinda Camp in Nyika National Park, Mwanda and Chikhang'ombe. It is believed that the ancestral spirits are harboured there and that God hears problems through these spirits. Sacrifices are in form of beer, chicken, etc.

#### **5.3.5.15 Zikhulupiliro/Mizibizgo**

These are taboos that have to be observed during particular occasions such as hunting, raising a child, iron smelting and many more. For example when preparing for hunting, the leader of delegation is supposed to abstain from having sex with his wife. This is so because charms are used in order to have a successful hunting spree. Therefore, if taboos are not followed, the charms get diluted and the people participating in the hunting become prone to certain calamities, such as attack by wild animals and fights or accidents that may result to death of a person.

In other societies such as among the Chewa, a woman who is pregnant is not supposed to add salt to relish. If she does, the person who eats the food suffers from a mysterious disease known as *Mdulo*, whose symptoms include swelling of the cheeks and vomiting of blood. Therefore, one has to always remain pure so as not to lose protection.

#### **5.3.5.16 Gonapamuhanya festival**

*Gonapamuhanya* is an annual event during which the Tumbuka people of Nkhamanga Area in Rumphi commemorate the first Chikulamayembe. *Gonapamuhanya* was the first Chikulamayembe to settle in the area where the Chikulamayembe chieftaincy is today at Bolero in Rumphi District in Northern Malawi. It is commemorated through recounting of the history, economic activities and lineage of Chikulamayembe as well as traditional dances.

#### **5.3.5.17 Kulamba ceremony**

The Kulamba ceremony is an annual festival which takes place on the last Saturday of August at Mkaika Headquarters of the Chewa Kingdom located in Katete District in Zambia. The ceremony involves participation of Chewa from Malawi, Zambia and Mozambique, who gather at Mkaika to pay tribute to their King Kalonga Gawa Undi. During the ceremony, lesser chiefs take turns to give reports on the state of affairs in the Chewa chiefdoms as well as presenting gifts to their King. The Chiefs also display traditional dances performed by the Chewa people.

#### **5.3.5.18 Installation of Ngoni Chief**

Ngoni, like many ethnic groups follow their own traditionally way of installing Chiefs. Installation of Ngoni Chief involves anointing by pouring a bull's bile on his forehead. Thereafter the anointed is given a spear, a shield and iron bangle as



sign of authority. A lion's skin is worn and a leopard skin is used as headgear. Usually, the first son of the sitting Chief becomes the heir to the throne.

#### **5.3.5.19 Mulindafwa**

Mulindafwa is a festival event during which the Tumbuka people of Hewe in Rumphi commemorate the day that their great grand father, the first Katumbi, crossed Lake Malawi to settle in Hewe. During this day, the Tumbuka re-count their history and how they came to Malawi. Katumbi was recognized as Chief on his own and not under Chikulamayembe. Some of the events observed during the ceremony include display of the stone, which Katumbi collected from Kapiri Nthemba. It is believed that Katumbi rested on this stone when he climbed the hill, which he later named Themba Hill. The hill was originally called Homani Hill. This stone is believed to be the symbol of authority among the Tumbuka people of Hewe.

#### **5.3.6 Myths and Taboos**

Among many ethnic groups in Malawi, myths and taboos continue to play an important role in regulating and checking the behaviour the people. Below are some of the myths and taboos observed by different ethnic groups: -

##### **5.3.6.1 Myth about Food**

Food keeps the communities together. However, food can also be a source of so many complications if taken without following certain rules. In most Malawian society, certain foods are culturally associated with specific occasions within the given community. Equally, food consumption is based on age, personal health as well as sex. For example, in certain society like among the Tumbuka, a pregnant woman is not allowed to eat eggs. If she ignores this rule dire consequences may happen to her which would include possibility of miscarriage. And then there is what is known as Mtedza wa khwangwala - literally meaning the crow's

groundnut). It is believed among the Chewa that if a person eats this groundnut, he/she becomes so forgetful.

#### **5.3.6.2 Vimbuza spirits myth**

Vimbuza is a psychological disease caused by spirits possession that attack people. Spirits are believed to be people who have since died and are trying to communicate with the living through the patient. The myth behind Vimbuza is that the disease is hereditary and therefore it can pass on from parent to child. It is also believed that Vimbuza can start by imitation. Those that are fond of imitating Vimbuza dance suddenly develop the disease. A person can also suffer from Vimbuza if the dead spirits are upset with him/her. It is traditionally thought that when one wrongs the dead; he or she can suffer from the disease. Worries and other problems are believed to be other sources of the disease. A Vimbuza patient can also be a can also be a diviner or healer.

To placate Vimbuza spirits, the patient is supposed to either perform the Vimbuza dance of a specific beat and rhythm or a traditional Vimbuza doctor is invited to dance and administer treatment to the patient. The songs, dances and actions are prayers to the ancestors beseeching them to help fight the spirits. In this way, the spirits leaves the patient.

Vimbuza come in different forms and it is believed that it is those that have been inflicted by the most dangerous form of Vimbuza who may end up becoming witchdoctors, healers or diviners themselves. This belief is found among the Tumbuka communities in northern Malawi.

## **5.4 KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICES CONCERNING NATURE**

Indigenous people throughout the world occupying different agro-ecological zones have generated vast bodies of knowledge related to utilization and management of their environment. This store of knowledge is known by many names or terminologies such as indigenous knowledge or traditional knowledge or local knowledge. This knowledge is distinct or unique to a particular culture or society. Local knowledge contrasts with international knowledge that is commonly generated by universities, research institutions and private firms.

Local knowledge is basis for decision making in different sectors as in agriculture, health, food production and preparation, education, conflict resolution, peace making, sports and natural resource management. Local knowledge is trusted because it has been tested and proven through generations. Below are some of the knowledge systems that have been generated and/or used by Malawian people which form part of Malawi's Intangible Cultural Heritage.

### **5.4.1 Traditional medicine**

African traditional medicine is holistic in nature and attempts to go beyond the boundary of the physical body into spiritual and/or mind. The following are some of the examples of how local knowledge has helped in solving health problems and related issues among the Malawian communities.

#### **5.4.1.1 Chimika**

In many Malawian societies, there have been cases where married couples have been together for a long time without having children of their own. Since children are very much treasured in the African culture, marriage dissolutions have been on the increase. To counter the problem, the indigenous people have come up with traditional medicine for re-installing a man or woman's fertility. In most Malawian societies, this is called *Chimika*.

#### **5.4.1.2 Gondolosi**

This is traditional medicine that is believed to increase sexual desire and performance. The medicine is administered by chewing the barks of a Tree. Another medicinal plant that is used for similar function is known as *Mvunguti* but that this is mainly used to enlarge a man's penis to a desirable size. The procedure involves extracting cell sap from the fruit of this tree (while it is still small) and administering it to the intended person through the mouth. It should be emphasized that the fruit is not plucked from the tree but rather, only the sap is extracted from it. As the fruit increases in size, it is believed, so too does the penis. The person is then told to monitor the size of his penis and when he is satisfied that it has reached the right size, he should immediately pluck the fruit or else his penis will continue growing up to the size of a fully grown *Mvunguti* fruit. This practice is common among many tribes in Malawi.

#### **5.4.1.3 Mankwala a mpira (Juju used in soccer)**

The Flap-necked Chameleon (*Chamaeleo dilepis*) is used as juju for goalkeepers in soccer. The charm is administered by mixing the long sticky tongue of a chameleon with other herbs. The mixed is then burnt and crushed into powder. This powder is applied to small cuts made with a razor blade on the back of each hand between the thumb and forefinger, and likewise on the feet. It is believed that the Juju brings the best reflexes out of the goalkeeper in the similar manner that the long sticky tongue of a chameleon traps prey into its month.

#### **5.4.1.4 Khunyu/Vizilisi**

This is a falling sickness. The herbs are administered by specialized traditional doctors. This form of disease is common in all the ethnic groups in the country.

#### **5.4.1.5 Kuchapa thupi (Mchape)**

This is literally translated as cleaning/purifying the blood. This is done by administering, through the mouth, a concoction of bitter herbs such as Kayunga Mzobara, and Muwawani.

#### **5.4.1.6 Kulapizgana**

This is when a person has sworn against somebody and they want to reconcile. For them to come back to terms, they use a bark of Mphamba tree. If reconciliation has taken place without taking Mphamba, one of the person involved may die or grow blisters (Mathunu) which would result in festering wounds.

#### **5.4.1.7 Kuluwuka**

When a village has grown food crops, before they can harvest the village head must prepare a mixture of some green herbs which is called *Kulima*. Each member in the village is then made to take the concoction. After that, the people can now start harvesting the crops. This practice is done among the Tumbuka people in the northern region.

#### **5.4.1.8 Kupanikizgana**

The normal procedure among most ethnic groups when any person is charged with a crime was for the accused person to attempt to prove his innocence by vomiting a concoction of *Mwabvi*, the bark of tree (*Erythrophloeum guineense*). But it is essential that when it is administered, a formula must be; making it clear that it is being given as a test of innocence or guilt otherwise it will have no effect. It is firmly believed that if a person has done nothing wrong, he/she cannot die.

#### 5.4.1.9 Kusinkha

Most people in Malawi believe that witchcraft does exist. There are some men and women who are believed to have magical forces at their disposal and can bring harm to others when they are unkindly disposed. For example, these magicians may send magical forces in form of strong winds/cyclones, terrestrial rains and even lightening to deal with those that they perceive as being their enemies. Besides, it is also believed that some people practice theft by superstition. They use animals such as snakes, hyenas, rats and cats to steal from others. Safeguarding the house against these evils forces is what is known as *Kusinkha*. Some locations of the house where these amulets and charms are planted include the entrance to the house, corners, roof, door sill and hearth. Safeguarding of the house can also be done in advance at the site where the house will be constructed.

#### 5.4.1.10 Ludengere

Sometimes, it happens that a wife commits adultery while her husband is away. When the husband realises that his wife has been cheating on him the marriage is usually dissolved. But if the husband insists that he still loves his wife and does not want to divorce her, she is ordered to pay a cow or money equivalent of the price of a cow. This is called *Ludengere*. Before the two could start to stay together as a couple, the wife is given some medicine to take so that she does not inflict harm (*Tsempho*) on her husband. This is practiced among the Tumbuka in northern Malawi.

#### 5.4.1.11 Mankhwala a bizinesi

Puff Adder (*Bitis arietans*) is used as charm for boosting business. The charm is made by mixing portion of the animal skin with other herbs. This mixture is said to possess the magic of attracting customers to one's business.

#### **5.4.1.12 Mankhwala a konda ine (Love charm)**

Among many societies in Malawi, it is believed that love can sometimes be induced using traditional means. Sometimes a husband who is rarely found at home can be made to spend most of his time at home. Among the Chewa people, there is charm that is used to keep husbands at home. The charm is prepared by getting a skin from the lizard (the Striped Skink) and mixing it with other herbs. The charm is administered through food. The treatment is said to be effective in keeping men around their homes. People associate this lizard to the above function because it is associated with human habitation and therefore it is believed to possess the magic of increasing the intimacy between married couples.

#### **5.4.1.13 Mankhwala a njoka**

Black Mamba, (Dendroaspis polylepis) is used as an effective anti-snake bite. The head of this snake is burnt together with other herbs and then crushed into powder. This powder is applied to a small cut made with a razor blade on the back of each hand between the thumb and forefinger, and likewise on the feet. Most people regard this as preventive measure and it is believed that no snake (irrespective of race or species) will attempt to bite any person equipped with this defence. This traditional cure is found within the Chewa community but other communities have their own treatments for the snake bites.

#### **5.4.1.14 Mankhwala a nyamakazi**

This is traditional medicine given to patient to cure general body pains and rheumatism. The African Python (Python sebae) or sometimes Puff Adder (Bitis arietans) forms part of the cure or treatment. The cure is made by mixing a portion of the backbone of an African Python or Puff Adder with other herbs. The mixture is then burnt and crushed into powder. The powder is administered

to a patient by rubbing it onto open small cuts made on the skin along the spinal with a razor blade.

#### **5.4.1.15 Mgoneko**

This is a form of drugs that is used to induce sleep. This kind of drug is mostly used by thieves who intend to break into other people's house to steal. The drug is then prepared and disposed off, targeting someone to oversleep with the aim of giving room to thieves to steal from the house.

#### **5.4.1.16 Mtsiriko/Chambu**

Mtsiliko is the act of protecting one's house against witchcraft, thieves or any form of evil things. To perform Mtsiliko, a witch doctor is called upon and buries his medicine on either side of the doorway and also on every corner. If the witchdoctor is called before work on the house is started, the medicines are buried around the intended site of the house. Sometimes if a person suspects a neighbour of harbouring evil intentions against him and he is afraid that he might be poisoned, he will ask a witchdoctor for medicine to protect himself. This medicine is often in form of powder that is rubbed into cuts in the skin made of razor blade. Apart from protecting a house, and oneself, Mtsiliko is also used to protect grain stores, fields and cattle kraal against thieves. Wives are also protected against committing adultery and if anyone commits adultery with such a woman, he would contract a disease. Newly born babies and small children are also protected against *Mdulo* in a case where any other woman who has had sex with her husband touches the baby. It is believed that when a woman has just had sex with her husband, she is "hot" and therefore, she is not supposed to touch a baby or else the baby will die of *Mdulo*.



#### 5.4.1.17 Mphinjiri/Chinthumwa

These are charms and they occupy a large place in the lives of many Malawians. They are sought for many different purposes. These include: prevention or curing of diseases, to obtain good luck, to protect against enemies and wild animals, to prevent conception, to make oneself loved, to gain the favour of an employer, to be successful in business, examinations and hunting, just to mention some.

#### 5.4.1.18 Mwavi

For most ethnic groups in Malawi, illness and death are rarely due to natural forces but to spirits and enemies. When any of these happen in the village, the Chief invites a diviner to interpret by means of his lots what has caused the death or illness. This is called *Kuombedza Ula*. This is one of the most fundamental themes in traditional religion of most ethnic groups in Malawi, notably the Chewa and Tumbuka of central and northern Malawi, respectively. Mwavi is administered when there is an epidemic in the village and it is suspected that someone within the village is bewitching people. When this happens, the Chief orders everybody to drink a concoction of Mwavi so as to find out who is causing death in the village. In this regard, Mwavi is intended to renounce witchcraft and purify oneself from anger. Those people that are suspected of practicing witchcraft are ordered to drink a solution of Mwavi, a poison made from the bark of *Mwabvi* tree (*Erythroplaeum guineense*). This is usually done in the bush, far away from water and the village, so that the victim should not drink water or eat anything to spoil the effect of the medicine. After taking Mwavi concoction, those that have not killed or eaten human flesh are served but those that have eaten human flesh die instantly. Guilt is shown by inability to vomit the poison while the innocent readily vomit the poison and are served.

People want to discover who is a witch but they also want to clear themselves of all possible suspicion of witchcraft. The fear of being suspected of being a witch results in a code of behaviour in which politeness and meekness are singularly valued and aggressive behaviour and ambition are discouraged thereby resulting in a just society.

#### **5.4.1.19 Palijekanthu**

Palijekanthu is a lucky charm that is made from an undisclosed tree. It is administered by putting a small potion under the tongue and the medicine has to be swallowed before the one seeking luck speaks to the one who would be the bringer of that luck. Palijekanthu has been used to win various favours such as passing interviews, winning a judicial process, love, etc. Palijekanthu is a Tumbuka word. However, other ethnic groups also believe that Palijekanthu can bring luck where there is no hope. The Chewa also refer to this medicinal plant by the same name, Palijekanthu.

#### **5.4.1.20 Phundabwi/Khundabwi**

This is medicine given to Gule Wamkulu initiates. Phundabwi is made from a special tree called *Chadzera* tree. The medicine is taken together with roasted chicken. It is argued that Phundabwi helps the initiates not to forget the instructions that he had been given during his initiation. It is also believed that if the initiate refuses to eat Phundabwi, he is supposed to become mad if he dances Gule Wamkulu.

*Sira* is a condition that signifies that a boy has reached maturity or when a boy has slept with an elderly woman. Symptoms of *Sira* include fever, general body pain, headache and loss of weight.

#### **5.4.1.21 Tsempho**

This is a condition which is subjected to someone (usually babies) when his or her parents have transgressed certain taboos. *Tsempho* taboos are always related to sexual immorality. This is to say that *Tsempho* is a form of malnourishment in newly born babies, especially in cases where the mother or father was suspected to be flirting around with other men or women during or after pregnancy. When this happens, some other disaster could happen to a third person. In extreme cases, this could even lead to death. There is traditional cure for *Tsempho*. The medicine is administered by tying a portion of Puff Adder skin together with other herbs in a rope around the baby's waist.

In connection with family life, *Tsempho* therefore appears to be the supernatural sanction enforcing the two main duties of husband and wife, namely; the obligation to avoid adultery and the obligation to favour procreation and to care for their children. In other words, *Tsempho* presents the basic law governing family morality. The practice is common among almost all the ethnic groups in the country. However, it is more pronounced among the Chewa society.

#### **5.4.2 Traditional Food Preservation and Preparation**

Indigenous food processing is well defined and localized in every community. The following are some food processing techniques which are found with minor variations among most ethnic communities in Malawi and are on the verge of disappearing because only the typical villagers practice them:

##### **5.4.2.1 Chibumuntha**

This is a name that is used to refer to the African bread. Processing of Chibumuntha involves crushing ripe banana fruits and mixing it with water and flour. A small portion of the mixture is then wrapped in a clean banana leaf. It is then baked to come up with Chibumuntha.

#### **5.4.2.2 Chidulo**

This is a locally made *Soda* that is added to vegetables to improve tenderness. *Chidulo* is made from burnt out cassava or maize stems. Groundnut remains are also known to be good materials for making *Chidulo*. The procedure for making *Chidulo* involves burning these remains and sieving them in water to get a suspension that tastes sour. The suspension is natural *Soda* for *Cheve*, *Chilezi*, *Nathungwi*, *Limanda*, (okra varieties) and other vegetables such as pumpkin leaves.

#### **5.4.2.3 Chinaka**

These are wild vegetable tubers that are usually harvested during the rainy season. The tubers grow in Dambos. The tubers have to be processed first before eaten and they are usually taken together with Nsima. It should be noted that if Chinaka is not well prepared, it can even poison someone resulting in death. This is therefore a classic example how traditional knowledge has been used to make food out of a tuber that is otherwise poisonous.

#### **5.4.2.4 Chiphunya**

Chiphunya is the cassava that has been peeled soaked and dried in the sun. Once it is dried, it is taken either raw or after cooking it. The process of soaking and drying the cassava is one way of preserving the food so that it is cooked even during the time when cassava is not in season.

#### **5.4.2.5 Chiponde/Bwandila**

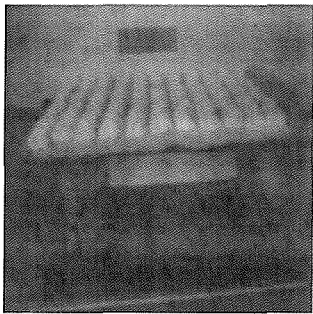
This is locally made peanut butter. The procedure for making Chiponde involves roasting the groundnuts. After that small amount of salt is added before crushing the nuts into powder for. Water is added to make the flour stick together. This is called Chiponde or Bwandila. This form of food is common among all the ethnic groups in the country.

#### 5.4.2.6 Chiwamba

Chiwamba is a form of food preservation whereby food, mainly meat is roasted and salted for use in future. Chiwamba is popular among schooling goers, particularly those in boarding who usually complain about poor diet in schools. It is also practiced in many communities.

#### 5.4.2.7 Kondowole

*Kondowole* is a thick porridge made of cassava flour and is eaten together with relish. The procedure for making *Kondowole* involves getting cassava tubers



which are peeled and soaked in water. The cassava is then crushed into smaller pieces and dried on mats or on a clean rock. When completely dry, the cassava is pounded in mortars into flour, which is cooked into thick porridge called *Kondowole*. This is the main staple food

among the Tonga people of Nkhata Bay District and the surrounding communities. The Tonga are largely fishermen eat *Kondowole* together with fish.

#### 5.4.2.8 Masuku

These are wild fruits of the Msuku tree (*Uapaca kirkiana*). They are exceedingly common in most parts of the country. The fruits are spherical, about 30cm in diameter and assume a reddish brown colour when ripe. They are collected from the forests in large amounts when they are ripen in October and November and are well liked by old and young alike.

#### 5.4.2.9 Maungu and Mphonda

These are pumpkin fruits (*Cucurbita maxima*). They are universally grown both for their leaves and fruits. The latter ripen from about February onwards to July. Large numbers of those ripening late in the season are stored for use later in the

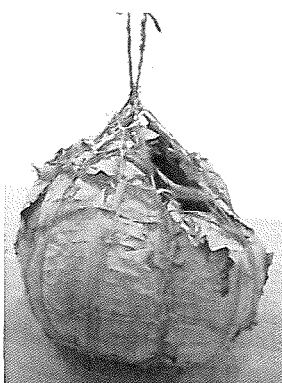
year. There are many varieties that are grown. Mphonda are edible gourds. They are far less commonly grown than pumpkins. Some kinds of gourds are edible while other are used as drinking utensils. The fruits are usually green with whitish flesh, the shape is very variable.

Pumpkins or gourds are usually cut into two or four pieces and then boiled with a little water until soft. They are eaten thus with no added salt and in no circumstances are they served with Ndiwo (relish).

#### 5.4.2.10 Mbatata ndi Chinangwa

There are also extra foods that are consumed over and above the main food, which is Nsima. These are tubers such as *Mbatata* (Sweet potatoes) and *Chinangwa* (Cassava). These two are both important foods; sweet potatoes are the more popular and the more widely grown but cassava tubers are well liked, both raw or cooked, and are eaten in large amounts in some areas.

#### 5.4.2.11 Mfutso



The food that has been cooked, dried and preserved for future is called *Mfutso*. The most commonly dried leaf is that of the Cowpea, *Mtambe*, bean leaves, *Khwanyana*, and pumpkin leaves *Mkhwani*. Mushroom, *Bowa*, when harvested in large quantities is also dried for use later in the year. The method employed is much the same as for leaves. It involves cooking the foods and drying them in the sun. *Mfutso* is made towards the end of the rains in April and May when vegetables are still fresh and plentiful. In both dried vegetables and mushrooms, storage is either in pots or in balls, *Zikwatu*, made of *Masuku* (*Uapaca kirkiana*) leaves. The dried product is cooked in the same way as the fresh and its taste is a little different. During the long dry season, which prevails in most of the country,

people rely on dried vegetables for their relish. Cooked green maize could just be hung over a fire place. In so doing, these foods could be preserved for a long time and used later in the year when they are not in season. This practice of preserving food is common in many communities in Malawi.

#### **5.4.2.12 Mondokwa/Dowe/Chimanga chachiwisi**

These are all native names that are used to refer the green maize. As soon as the grains are well filled and firm, the cobs are picked. Usually they are boiled but also may be roasted. They are very popular and are eaten in large quantities particularly if there has been a shortage of food in the previous year. Where roasting is the mode of preparation, the whole cob is roasted in the ashes, or the grain is stripped off and roasted on a tin or crock. Sometimes the grains are covered with ashes, when certain kinds swell up and burst their skins to form popcorn. Large amounts of maize are eaten in these forms throughout the year by all who have strong and enough teeth to cope with it. Sometimes, the green maize (cobs) may be boiled for a long time (about 2 - 3 hours) until soft or the separate grains may be boiled alone or mixed with beans (haricots or cowpeas).

During pounding various fractions are sifted off by the women, they are known by different names according to the fraction and to the district. *Chindongwa*, *Misere* and *Mitama* (*Mtama*) are general names. These fractions consist of small broken bits of grain, they are boiled till soft. They are eaten almost daily by women and children in maize growing districts.

#### **5.4.2.13 Mowa/Phere/Chindongwa/Kabanga**

These are all native beers and are a very important extra food among different ethnic tribes across the country. The procedure for brewing is generally the same throughout the country, although there are endless minor variations here and there depending on the ingredients used. First, maize grain or millet is soaked in

water for a day or two. After the grains have started germinating, they are taken out of water and dried. Then the dried grains are pound into flour. The flour is used to cook porridge. The actual process of preparing beer consists of the fermentation of a thin gruel made of flour or maize bran with the help of the malt (*Chimera*). The latter has also the function of sweetening the brew. Very large amounts are brewed each year. During hoeing season, which is normally from November to March, beer parties are held continuously in most parts of the country. Beer is brewed for a variety of other reasons such as for mere pleasure of drinking and giving to one's friends, for work such as building hut or grain stores, for feasts or as tribute to the spirits of the ancestors or to the living, and most important of all for selling to enable the women earn cash. Beer can be made from flour of any of the cereals or from cassava. Malt can be made from any of the cereals but throughout the country finger millet is preferred for this purpose. The most commonly used beer is probably one made from maize flour with finger fillet as malt. There is another form of beer which is in the slightly fermented form. This is known as Thobwa. Thobwa is basically non-alcoholic and even children are allowed to partake.

#### **5.4.2.14 Nsima**

This is traditional food for most people in Malawi and indeed Bantu people made from maize meal. There are slight variations on how the food is prepared but the method most commonly used is that a pot is first half-filled with water and then it is put on the fire. When the water has warmed (not boiled), one or two handfuls of flour are added and well stirred in to make a thin porridge known as *Phala*. This is allowed to boil and thicken up for about five to ten minutes. The bulk of the flour is now added a handful at a time, accompanied with very vigorous stirring by means of the long porridge stick, (*Mthiko*), until the mixture is of the right consistency. If *Phala* has previously been removed it is now added and this helps to ensure that the product is of suitably soft and



smooth texture. The final consistency differs considerably from tribe to tribe, some preferring a harder product than others. The whole cooking process from the time that the water is added takes about twenty minutes but time varies depending on the amount of Nsima to be cooked. Serving of Nsima is done by dividing it out using a large wooden spoon known, as *Chipande*, into the food bowls or baskets. Its surface is very carefully rounded and smoothed over by means of a wetted spoon and immediately covered with a second bowl or basket. Nsima, if well prepared, is almost tasteless and of a slightly granular consistency. It is taken together with *Ndiwo* (food used for the side dish).

#### **5.4.2.15 Nsomba**

This refers to fish and a great variety is available in the lake but only a few kinds are caught in large amounts. The most commonly eaten are the many different kinds of Tilapia species, *Chambo*; Clarias species, *Milamba*; while other common kinds are *Sanjika* and *Mpasa* both a species of Barilius, *Ntchila* (*Labeo* spp.), *Kampango* (*Bagrus* spp) and the small fish known collectively as *Matemba* or the still smaller whitebait-like *Usipa*. Fresh fish are boiled till very soft leaving sufficient liquor to serve as gravy (*Msuzi*). When fish is caught in abundance some of it is smoked, or dried and is taken to villages in the rest of the country. There is a body of traditional knowledge associated with different ways of preparing *Nsomba*.

#### **5.4.2.16 Nyama**

There is a body of knowledge associated with different ways of preparing *Nyama*. This is meat from either domesticated or wild animals. Domestic animals such as cattle, goats and sheep are major sources of meat in most communities in Malawi. In the village, animals are rarely killed unless for a very good reason

such as feast for wedding or funeral. Hence, villagers in most parts of the country probably only eat meat occasionally.

### **5.4.3 Traditional Calendar**

#### **5.4.3.1 Liwondwe**

This is the season of the year which is characterised by shedding of plat leaves and their subsequent regeneration. This period comes in between the cold and wet seasons. It is important to the people in the village as it signifies that time has come for people to start preparing their gardens. Most of the field activities such as clearing, ridging and in some cases the setting of bush fires are done during this time in readiness for the first good rains. Bush fires induce the growth of new and tender grass which is good for grazing animals. This period is also characterised by early rains commonly referred to as *Chizima luphya*.

#### **5.4.3.2 Mwezi**

This is the calendar month from the time of new moon to the time of another new moon. It is of particular significance to women as it is connected to the woman's menstrual cycle. This is why the word *Mwezi* is used to describe a woman who is undergoing her menstruation period. It is applied throughout the country among all the ethnic tribes.

## **5.5 TRADITIONAL CRAFTSMANSHIP**

Since time immemorial man everywhere has been faced with the task of survival by meeting fundamental material needs and services. The provision of such requirements has demanded the production and usage of tools and objects we call crafts. The majority of household effects during pre-industrial period and during our own contemporary traditional setup were and are still products of craftsmanship. In the Malawi society, where the highest percentage of our people still lives in rural areas, these crafts continue to serve the people in various

ways. These appliances are used in different fields such as in agriculture, as domestic appliances, in hunting as well as in music.

Not all arts and crafts of Malawi can be documented here. This is so because range of activities is very wide and secondly because arts and crafts are broadening our minds and imagination so much so that we continue to think of making improvements. The following are some of the crafts that Malawians have used and continues to use from which we can build on.

## **5.5.1 Agricultural implements**

### **5.5.1.1 Chitatanga**

This is a carrying box that is made from sticks that can be made into rings. Three or four rings are needed which are placed around each other and are plaited with ropes leaving a small opening to be used as door. A handle made from ropes is also made to facilitate easy carrying.

### **5.5.1.2 Khasu**

This is one of the metal products that is used for ploughing in the field. In the past, various techniques and scientific principles were used by Africans such as excavation, ore identification and separation of ore from non-ore bearing rocks. Through the processes of smelting by heating and application of smithing, refined metals were produced. Today most Malawian tribes have the technique of producing hoes from various metal products (already made) through the process of smelting.

### **5.5.1.3 Kholo/Chitupa**

This is a kraal for chickens and other domesticated birds. It is made from small sticks, reeds or bamboos with a closed roof. It is perched on four or more straight poles dug in then ground with a base made of straight poles.

#### **5.5.1.4 Mpini/Chaka**

This is a wooden hoe or axe handle. It is made of hard wood. It is cut with an adze and smoothed with a knife. It is called Mpini by the Chewa and other tribes and Chaka by the Tumbuka.

#### **5.5.1.5 Tuku**

This is a name that refers to groundnut granary. It is made from soft sticks, reeds, bamboos, depending on the geographical location. It is oval in shape with small opening for collecting groundnuts. The outside is smeared with soil to control temperature and pests. It is common among the Chewa, Tumbuka and other ethnic tribes.

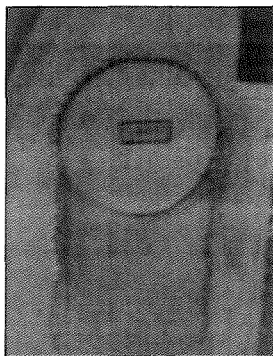
### **5.5.2 Decoratives and attire**

#### **5.5.2.1 Chipini**

This is a small piece of wood that is inserted on the nose of a woman. It is for beauty. This practice is mainly found among the Chewa community.

#### **5.5.2.2 Chiwale/Nthunda**

It is a loop of beads worn around the woman's or girl's waist. The beads come in different sizes and colour. They are worn for beauty but most importantly, they are used for sexuality. They are used to stimulate a male member as the couple prepares to go to bed. There is range of other products made from beads a tradition that is associated with the Ngoni of Dedza, Mchinji, Mwanza Mzimba and Ntcheu.



### 5.5.2.3 **Kulowa nyumba**

These are motifs applied on house walls to beautify them. They are common among girls dormitory known as *Gowelo* or *Nthanganeni* and elderly women. They are found all over the country among different ethnic groups.

### 5.5.2.4 **Mphini/Simbo**

These are marking that are made on the face of a woman also for beauty. This practice is widespread all over the country, particularly among elderly women. Very few girls do it nowadays.

### 5.5.2.5 **Nyanda**

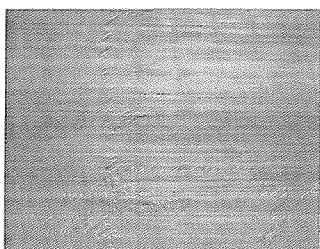
This is a bark cloth. It is made from the bark of *Brachystegia* species. The process of making Nyanda involves crushing the bark to smoothen it and thereafter Castro oil is added to the bark to make it smooth. Then a cloth is made of different size to suit one's body. In the past many people used to wear bark cloth to cover their bodies before the introduction of cotton cloth manufacturing industries in the country.

### 5.5.2.6 **Domestic appliances and other materials**

Most rural areas in Malawi still use traditionally made utensils for preparing, storage and serving food. These utensils are at present are supplemented with modern pots and plates especially in urban areas.

### 5.5.2.7 **Bunyasa**

This is mat made from a special grass found along the lake shore areas. It is used during funeral to cover the dead body. It is common among the Ngonde.



#### **5.5.2.8 Chibwatiko/Chitengo**

A small wooden stool usually used for sitting on, mostly by women in the kitchen. Sometimes, it is used by men to sit on around fire place. A stool is made from a suitable tree trunk which is cut and adzed to the required shape. It is later smoothed and dried before use. The stool is used by almost all the ethnic groups but that they come in different shapes and are known by different names.

#### **5.5.2.9 Chidunga**

This is a name given to a basket made from bamboo to store maize meal. It is used by many ethnic groups in Malawi.

#### **5.5.2.10 Chipande**

This is a big wooden spoon for sharing Nsima (local staple maize meal). It is widespread across the country.

#### **5.5.2.11 Chipewa cha mlaza**

This is a hat that is made by plaiting soft grass, maize husks or strings. The plaited strands are then sewed. The height of the hat is bended and the brim is added to the required size.

#### **5.5.2.12 Chitala**

This is a traditional bed made from wooden poles. The bed is fixed on the ground. It is made from four or six forked straight poles that are dug into the ground. On the forks rest straight poles which support other smaller poles placed

#### **5.5.2.13 Chitete**

A basket made from reed usually used for harvesting e.g. maize, groundnuts, sweet potatoes, etc. To make this basket, reeds are first broken into strips.

Thereafter, the strips are plaited up to the required size of the base. Then all ends are bent up and plaiting continues until a certain desired height is reached. The brim is made by twisting the ends of the strips and tied together. This home tool is used throughout the country among different tribes.

#### **5.5.2.14 Chiwiya/ Mbiya**

This is a clay pot for storing flour, water, etc. Pots are made from good clay. The clay is first coiled into a round base as thick as a thumb. Several coils are added one on top of the other making sure that every coil is worked well down into the previous one before continuing. When it has got its final shape, it is smoothen well outside and is ready for decorations. Decorations can be made by pressing patterns into the pot using one's fingers or use different bits and pieces. Thereafter, the pot is dried first in the air and in the sun before it is burnt. Drying in the sun straight away make the pot develop cracks. The pot is used for preparing beer. It is widespread but comes in different shapes depending on geographical locations.

#### **5.5.2.15 Dila/Ngwembe**

These are traditional wooden plates mostly found among the Ngoni and Tumbuka people in Mzimba and Rumphi Districts. They are mostly used for serving food.

#### **5.5.2.16 Kunthu/Khuntho/Guntho**

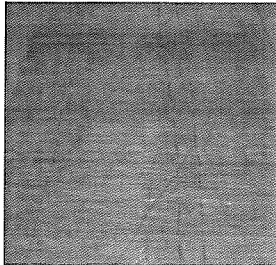
Small basket made of thinly cut reeds for storage. It is also used for sieving especially when preparing traditional beer made from millet.

#### **5.5.2.17 Lichero/Chihengo/Dengu**

A winnowing basket made of bamboo. It is used for storing maize or flour, carrying things as well as removing husks after pounding the maize.

#### 5.5.2.17 Lutefu

Mat made from banana leaves. They are soft and act as mattress especially for newly wed couple. This form of mat is common in among the Ngonde, Sukwa, Lambya and Ndali people in Karonga and Chitipa.



#### 5.5.2.18 Luzi

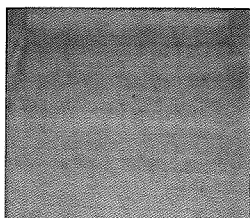
Many activities in handcraft require the use of ropes. This is commonly known as *Luzi*. Common trees where *Luzi* is extracted include Miombo tree (*Brachystegia species*) and Msekese (*Bauhinia thonningii*), just to mention a few. Sometimes, these materials are seasoned before they are put to use. The Seasoning involves dipping the poles in water for a specific period of time after which the poles are left to dry. This treatment helps to absorb water from the cells and drive out cell sap which is usually cherished by woodborers and other insects thereby rendering some resistance and protection to the *Luzi*. *Luzi* is commonly used in many parts of the country by different tribes.

#### 5.5.2.19 Mjavi

Name that refers to a mat made of palm leaves. It is used for sleeping, sitting. It is found and common among the Ngonde people in Karonga.

#### 5.5.2.20 Mkeka

This is another form of mat that is made from palm trees. Palm leaves are first plaited and later sewed together to make mats. Patterns may be introduced to decorate the mats. Mkeka is used for sitting, sleeping and for drying flour. It is commonly found

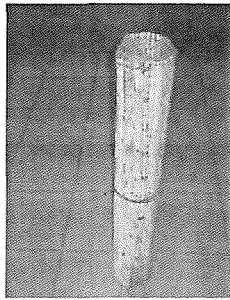




along the lakeshore districts of the country and the Shire Valley among the Ngonde, Tonga, Yao and Sena communities where palm trees usually grow.

#### 5.5.2.21 Mphasa

A mat made from reeds. The reeds are sliced into pieces. The sliced reeds are then dried in the sun for some days. When they are completely dry, they are



soaked in water for at least 24hrs. The sliced reeds are then sewed together with strings to form a carpet like form. Patterns are introduced to decorate the mats. Mats are used for sleeping on, during burial ceremonies, drying maize flour, etc. This is one of the most useful tools in the village. Most people in the villages use various types of mats for sleeping

on but this is the commonest and is found among many tribes.

#### 5.5.2.22 M'phika

Relish cooking pot made of clay. It is also widespread throughout the country among different tribes.



#### 5.5.2.23 Mthiko

This is a cooking stick made of wood. It is using for cooking relish or Nsima (meal made of maize flour) depending on the size. This tool is found in almost every household

#### **5.5.2.24 Mtondo ndi Musi**

This is a pounding mortar. It is made from a log of about 75cm long. A hole of 22.5cm deep and 30cm in diameter is made on one end of the log. It is then smoothed inside and outside. The mortar is then left to dry before use. Burnt decorations can be added. Mtondo is one of the most important appliances at household level and is widespread throughout the country. In most rural areas, it is used for pounding maize to remove husks before taking milling is done. It is also used for crushing groundnuts into groundnut flour. In certain cases, a mortar is used for crushing charred herbs into powder which is applied to the body through incision. Working hand in hand with *Mtondo* is *Musi*, which is a tool, used to grind or pound substance in a mortar.

#### **5.5.2.25 Nkhali**

This is the name given to a bathing pot made of clay. Sometimes, Nkhali is also used to refer to a pot for cooking food. It is very common among the Chewa, Ngoni and Tumbuka.

#### **5.5.2.26 Nkholombi**

A wooden spoon made by first drawing the shape of the spoon on the soft wood that has been split into two halves. Thereafter, a hollow is made before cutting it out from the block. Sometimes, burnt decorations are made to the spoon for it to look good.

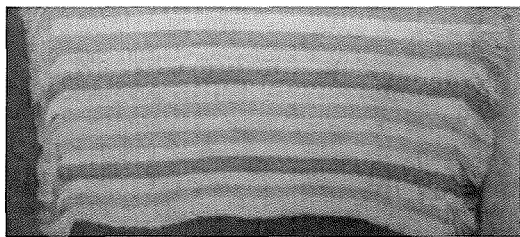
#### **5.5.2.27 Weaving Traditions**

##### **5.5.2.27.1 Traditional Chitenje Weaving**

The Lower Shire had flourishing cotton weaving industry prior to colonisation (Mandala 1990). Its produce was traded to remote areas including that of the Mutapa Kingdom in what is now Zimbabwe (Monclaro 1572). The cotton cloth was widely known for its fine quality. It is sad to observe that the knowledge of

this great tradition is rapidly fading from memory; locally, nationally and internationally.

The spinning process consists of the following steps. First, the separation of the cotton from the seeds, the cleaning of cotton lint using a small bow by plucking the string continuously through the cotton fluff to remove dust and align the fibres. It is then turned into a roving by hand – twisting and is spun into yarn by a wooden drop spindle. If need be stronger double ply yarn can be produced by twisting the cotton yarn obtained after the spinning. All of this is a very tedious and time consuming process. Understandably with the availability of industrial yarn, the local product was quick to be replaced. An added advantage of the industrial yarn was the wide range of colours available. Most of the natural dyes used in the past just gave various shades of brown.

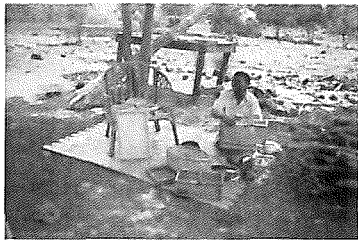


The weaving is done on a single heddle ground loom (cf. Davison & Harries 1991). That is to say yarn with alternative colours is stretched between two horizontal sticks that are attached to four wooden pecks some four meters apart. These lines form the warps. The weaver moves the shuttle with additional yarn back and forth through the warps, thus producing the weft. The weaver, sitting along side the warp thus starts at one end and slowly moving to the other as cloth is being produced. In this way, any length of cloth could be made. If two people work together, passing the shuttle back and forth, the width can be two arm lengths. The designs consisted mostly of stripes but also checkered designs were made, an example of which can be found in the repository of the British Museum, London which holds a total of 4 pieces of cloth and one loom collect by Sir Harry Johnston, the first British Consul to what is now Malawi. The pieces in the British museum are mostly large pieces (*chitenje*) meant to be wrapped

around the waist. In order to economize on the expensive local yarn they are so loosely woven that they are see-through.

#### 5.5.2.27.2 Lake-Shore Cane, Reed and Bamboo Weaving

The lake shore districts of Mangochi, Salima and Nkhotakota are known for the



cane, reed and bamboo weaving traditions which produce an assortment of wares ranging from baskets, trays to chairs and tables.

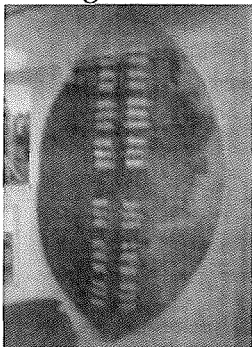
#### 5.5.3 Hunting/defence tools

##### 5.5.3.1 Chibonga/Nthungo/Nthonga/Mbonga

This is a knobcarry for hunting animals and for defence. It is made a roundish knob and a stick. The head is made from a hardwood (Mahogany tree and other related species) and the handle is made from any other straight thin stick. The head of the club is shaped with the help of an adze using only the brown part of wood. A hole is then made through the head with an axe fixed to a thick stick known as *Chikumbo*. After the hole has been made, the handle is then fixed to the head to make a club.

##### 5.5.3.2 Chihlango

This is a shield that is made of skin of a cow and is used for defence mainly by the Ngoni of Mzimba, Ntcheu, Dedza and Mchinji Districts. But nowadays,



Chihlango is mainly for dancing Ingoma. It is carried by men in their hands as they whistle, throw their heads back and vigorously stamping their feet on the ground in unison.

### 5.5.3.3 Chisale

*Chisale* is a rat or mice trap that is made from a special root of *Buwa* or



*Chigwenembe* tree of about 15 cm long and 7.5m in diameter. In one end of the root, a hole is made about 5cm diameter and 7.5cm deep. In the other end, a small hole is made where a piece of supple wood (*Thombozi*) is fixed. With a nail or wire, four holes are made near the

edge of the mouth. The trap is set by using string which is made into a knot and embedded round the mouth of the trap. The *Thombozi* stick is tied to the thin end and the other end is allowed to go into the trap through one hole and follows the bottom of the trap and out through another hole at the base. A knot is tied to that the string can not go back. To catch a rat or mouse, a piece of food is placed at the back of the large hole. To get the food, the rat or mouse will have to cut the string that blocks its way to the food and in so doing the *Thombozi* will draw the string up tight round the rat's neck. This trap is common throughout the country and is use by different tribes.

### 5.5.3.4 Diwa

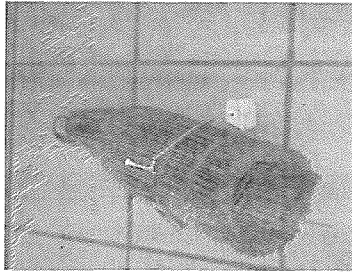
A traditional trap for mice made of flat stone, string and a small stick. The trap is set in such a way that the flat stone rests on the small stick which is tied to the string. The string is hooked to the bait. When an animal attempts to eat the bait, it triggers the string which supports the stone and the stone captures the animal by squashing it.

### 5.5.3.5 Mkondo/Ngwewo

This is a combination of sharp-tipped iron and the wooden stick. It is traditionally made from smelting. It is used for hunting and defence. The Ngoni and Chewa call it *Mkondo* while the Ngonde call it *Ngwewo*. It is known by other names in other ethnic groups.

#### 5.5.3.6 Mono/Chono

This is a trap that is used for catching fish. The fish trap is made from a large bamboo that is split into long thin strips. A knife is used to scrape these thin strings to make them round and smooth. Then, about 120 pieces of 90 cm long and the thickness of a match stick are made. These bamboo sticks are joined with rope made from climbers known as *Chilambe*. Then the edges of this mat are joined at one end to form a cylindrical shape. Rings of springy wood such as *Thombozi*. or bamboo are placed inside the cylinder at 22.5cm intervals. These rings are fastened with ropes (*Chilambe*). The sticks are fixed to bamboo rings into a cylindrical shape. The one end is closed and the other end is fixed with a trap such that when the fish enters the trap, they are unable to come out. Mono is found everywhere in Malawi among almost all the ethnic tribes.



#### 5.5.3.7 Ulimbo

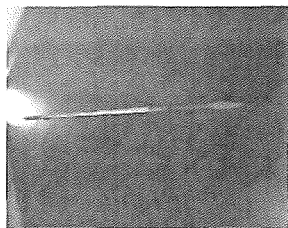
This is the substance (Bird-lime) that boys use to catch birds. This substance is extracted from special trees. Once the substance has been extracted, it is cooked. Other substance such as oil Castro oil tree (*Ricinus communis*) is added to make it more thick and sticky. It is then wrapped around a small stick, which is displayed where birds usually perch. When birds perch on this stick equipped with *Ulimbo*, they get stuck and they are unable to fly away.

#### 5.5.3.8 Uta

This is a hunting tool made from a wooden frame and animal skin string. There are special tree from where a wooden frame is made. These include *Matowo* and *Thombozi*. A string is prepared from the rope or skin which is tied on the frame to give it tension necessary for firing the arrow at the target.

#### **5.5.3.9 Muvi/Muvwi**

This is a barbed arrow head fixed to a reed stalk or a bamboo. It is for hunting and it is used along side the bow.



#### **5.5.3.10 Vipingo**

These are traditional traps for catching animals and birds. Sometimes, they are made of strings and sticks. This form of animal trap is common among all the tribes in Malawi.

### **5.5.4 Musical instruments**

Like in many parts of Africa, the people of Malawi have several musical instruments for different dances. The following are some of the musical instruments used:

#### **5.5.4.1 Bango**

A musical instrument usually played by men. It is made from a wooden board with strings running on top tied on each end made of wire from the underbelly of a cow. It is played by plucking at the strings.

#### **5.5.4.2 Bangwe**

Bangwe is a musical instrument that is made of a flat wooden board. It uses fibre strings, nylon thread or wire tied to the wooden board. These strings are plucked to produce sound.

#### 5.5.4.3 Kalimba

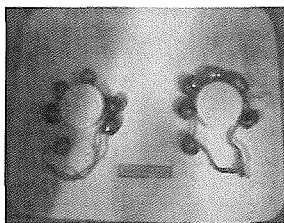
Kalimba is another musical instrument that is made from a piece of wood and old nails. The nails are of different protruding lengths and are tied to a wooden board. The sound is better if the wood is hollow or if a gourd is put underneath. Burnt decorations are sometimes made on the Kalimba.

#### 5.5.4.4 Mangolongondo / Ulimba

*Mangolongondo* (xylophone) is made from two long poles which are placed parallel on the ground. Across them are put some pieces of hard wood (Mbwabwa). A scale is then made by varying the shape of the pieces. The shorter the piece of wood, the higher the note. Wooden pegs are put in between to keep the distance. *Mangolongondo* is used in the gardens to scare away birds and animals from eating crops particularly in maize field when it is ripen. Where *Mangolongondo* are used to scare away birds, the sound of the instrument is accompanied by singing. There is another version of *Mangolongondo* which is played during funerals or wedding. This is called *Ulimba*. *Mangolongondo* and *Ulimba* are mostly used by the Sena in the districts of Chikwawa and Nsanje.

#### 5.5.4.5 Mangwanda/Njulu/Mangenjeza

These are rattles made of iron tied together by a string and striped round the ankles. They produce rattling sound and are used in such traditional dances as Vimbuza, Tchopa, Ingoma/Ngoma and others.



#### 5.5.4.6 Mphenenga

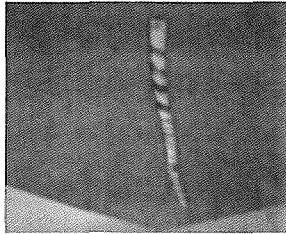
This is a musical instrument that is made from pumpkin outer shell which has a long handle. A small opening is made on the handle for blowing. It is used in



dances such as Malipenga and Mganda. It is common in most parts of the northern region.

#### 5.5.4.7 Mtyangala/Mkangala

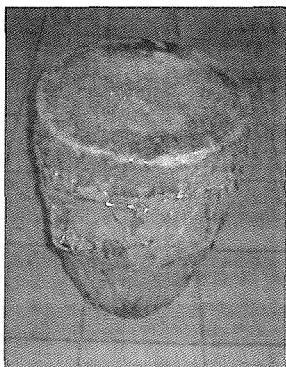
This single stringed instrument is usually played by single unmarried woman to



express their feelings. The string is plucked while one end of the reed is in the mouth for resonance.

#### 5.5.4.8 Ng'oma

This is a traditional musical instrument known as drum. It is made from a suitable tree trunk which is cut and adzed to the required shape. The drum

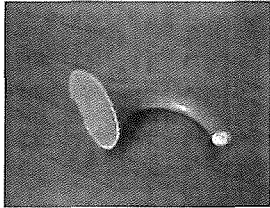


tapers off from top to bottom. Thereafter, pith is removed on one end of the trunk using an adze and the hole is covered with a piece of animal skin which is held to the drum by pegs or nails. To tune them, the skins are warmed by the fire. They are played by the palms of the hands while being placed between the legs with the small end placed on the ground at an angle. In the other end, a

smaller hole is made. The depth and diameter of the hole depends on the size of the drum. Other drums resemble those of the army or police bands except that they are made from local material, wood and animal skins. Both ends are covered with animal skin and are lifted by straps. Smaller ones take the same shape. Sticks with rubber knobs are used to play the large drum while plain sticks are used to play the smaller drums.

#### 5.5.4.9 Tenala

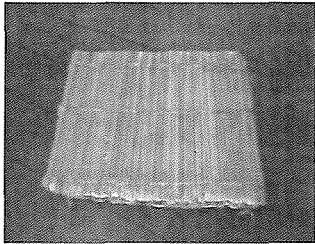
This is a musical instrument that is made from gourds (Lagenaria vulgaris). It is



used when performing traditional dances such as Mganda.

#### 5.5.4.10 Visekese

This is a musical instrument made from grass with seeds of maize or beans



enclosed/trapped between two layers of grass to give it rattling sound. This type of musical instrument is common among the Tonga in Nkhata-Bay, particularly around Usisya areas and the Sena in Nsanje.

## APPENDIX

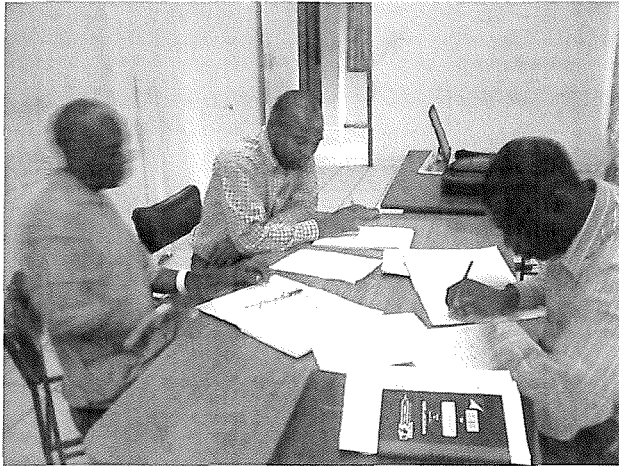
### 1. Process and Personnel Involved

#### a. Objectives

The specific objectives of the study were as follows:

- i. To draw up the list of selected intangible heritage for Malawi
- ii. To prepare a brief description of each intangible heritage.

#### b. Methodology



Left to right: Mr. Aupson Thole, Mr. Gaiyayi Mfuné and Mr. Lovemore Mazibuko working on the short descriptions (Picture by CJ Magomelo)

To achieve the objectives of the exercise, the following methodology was used:

#### i. Desk research

The survey team first conducted a desk, archival and library search of Malawi's intangible Heritage in the following categories:

##### Oral Traditions and Expressions

- Languages
- Performing Arts
- Traditional Dances
- Traditional Games

##### Social Practices, Rituals and Festivals

- Social practices
- Marriage practices
- Birth rituals

- Transitional rites
- Death rituals
- Festivals

### **Knowledge and Practices Concerning Nature**

- Traditional medicine
- Traditional food preparation and preservation
- Traditional calendar

### **Traditional Craftsmanship**

- Agricultural implements
- Decorative attire
- Domestic appliances and other materials
- Hunting/Defensive tools
- Musical instruments

#### **ii. Community Consultations**

After identifying some gaps in the desk search the survey team traveled from the Central Region of Malawi to the Northern Region and the Southern Region to consult experts and selected communities on different aspects of Malawi's intangible heritage. The field visit provided visual support of the list and interviews with practitioners were made for appropriate descriptions.

#### **iii. Arrangement and Inventory Making**

After being satisfied with the information they had collected, the survey team sat down for one week from to arrange the list and prepare a brief description of each intangible heritage. The full text of the list is in Appendix 3.

### **C. Survey Team**

Christopher J. Magomelo : B. Soc. Sc; PGD (Cultural Projects for Development); MA. Soc. Sc (Dev. Studies); Senior Programme Officer (Culture), Malawi National Commission for UNESCO

Lovemore C.J. Mazibuko : B.Ed, PGD (Heritage Management), MSc (Ethno-zoology); Senior Ethnographer, National Museums of Malawi.

Gayiyayi M. Mfunne : B.Ed, PGD (Heritage Studies); Senior Arts Officer, Department of Arts and Crafts

Aupson W. Thole : Malawi School Certificate of Education (MSCE), Professional Teaching Certificate; Assistant Conservation Officer, Mzuzu Regional Museum

### **Supervisors**

Francis R Mkandawire : B. Ed, MBA, PhD, Executive Secretary, Malawi National Commission for UNESCO

Bernard Kwilimbe : Diploma in Education (Music), Deputy Director for Culture, Arts and Crafts

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