

Kungoni Newsletter

Vol 4 No 1

June 2008

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The 2008 Nc'wala Ceremony

Kungoni Centre was present at the 2008 Nc'wala ceremony which took place at Mtenguleni Village in Chipata, Eastern Province of Zambia, from the 20th till the 24th February. Inkosi ya Makosi Paramount Chief Mpezeni IV presided over this annual ceremony which attracted thousands of people. The present day Ngoni people of Eastern Zambia came from Ulundi in Kwazulu Natal in South Africa. Mpezeni reigned as Paramount Chief (Inkosi ya Makosi) immediately after the death of his father Zwangendaba in 1848 at a place called Ujiji on the border of nowadays Tanzania and Zambia.

Ntuntu, the first Mpezeni, was born in 1835 at Zumbo along the Zambezi River. There are so far ten Ngoni chiefs under Mpezeni in Zambia and two in Malawi around the Mchinji District. All of them are part of Nkosi Zulu and Nkosi Mlonyeni groups.



The Ngoni kingdom was divided in chiefdoms around 1898 after the Ngoni-English war which lasted for eight years. Nsingo, the son of Ntundu Mpezeni I and heir to the throne, was executed together with his two wives at Fyaya in Luangeni. But, his first born son Chilowa (Eatriel) ascended to the throne as Mpezeni II.



The Nc'wala traditional ceremony is part of a ritual cultural heritage celebrated annually on the last Saturday of February at which the Ngoni people pay homage to their ancestors through the Mnikelo rite. This consists of the slaughtering of a black bull whose blood is taken to be drunk by the Inkosi ya Makosi. The Mnikelo is the climax of the Nc'wala which commemorates also the victories of the Ngoni during tribal wars and brings thanksgiving to God for the fresh crops.

Banned by the British authorities in 1898, the Nc'wala ceremony was revived in 1980 by Mpezeni III. Ngoma dances are performed by Ngoni groups during the Nc'wala ceremony using a headgear made of skin (*chishutu*), a skirt also made of skin (*vidanga* or *vitewe*), a knobkerrie (*ndudu*) and a spear.



Installation of Inkosi ya Makosi Gomani IV

Another important ceremony took place at Lizulu near Dedza on the 21st June with the installation ceremony of retired **Colonel Kanjedza Alex Gomani to Inkosi ya Makosi Gomani IV**. The new Paramount chief of the Maseko Ngoni group has succeeded his father Gomani III, who died in 2006. He is married with four children. At this rare event, the Director of Kungoni Centre, father Claude Boucher Chisale was honoured with the **special award of 'Impl'** (the traditionally fighting regiment of the Inkosi) for his contribution towards the promotion of Maseko Ngoni culture and national development in Malawi.



Forthcoming publication

When animals sing and ghosts dance. Gule wamkulu: the great dance of the Chewa.

We invite you to be a patron of a major publication on *Gule wamkulu*, the 'great dance' of the Chewa people of Malawi. If you would like to be a supporter, please contact the administration.

The book represents the culmination of more than 30 years of research by Fr Claude Boucher Chisale. As an initiated member of the *Nyau* secret society, Fr Boucher has been privileged to see and document songs, dances and information that have not previously been revealed to any non-Malawian. This rich cultural heritage is in the process of being lost as *Gule wamkulu* continues to be pressured by western life style and urbanisation.

The *Gule wamkulu* dancers are the messengers of the spirit world, the ancestors incarnate come to visit and advise the living. This advice pertains to all aspects of life, and is set within a moral and value framework known as the *mwambo*. Much of this value system aligns closely to that of the Christian church, in so far as living together in peace and harmony, having respect for each other, faithfulness in marriage, sexual responsibility and care of children. There is considerable irony in this, given the open antagonism between the church and the *Gule wamkulu* in decades past and the brittle relationship that continues to this day.



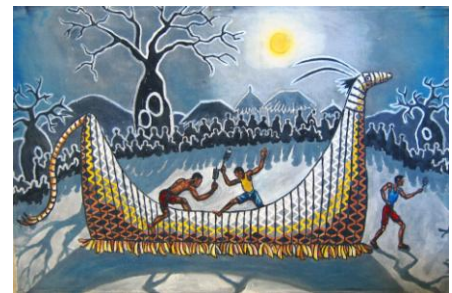
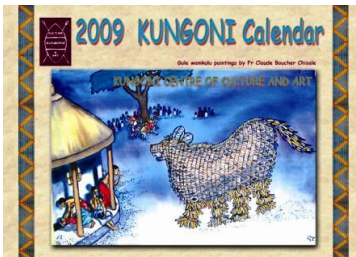
The book will include descriptions of over 150 *Gule* characters. It will be in full colour and lavishly illustrated with photographs, as well as original artworks by Fr Boucher. For Malawians, this book will be a cultural reservoir from which they can refresh and rediscover the richness of their own cultural heritage and take pride in their cultural roots. For people around the world, it will be a gateway to the spectacle, colour and pedagogy of the Chewa, as demonstrated in one of the world's most singular cultural expressions.

The publisher will be Wits University Press which has established a world wide reputation for the quality of its publications. The target date for release of the book is early 2009.

The 2009 Kungoni Calendar

The **2009 Kungoni Calendar** will be available soon. This calendar presents 12 *Gule wamkulu* characters which have disappeared over the last 20 years. A short explanation is given for each one of them. This calendar includes two pages of the history, the importance and significance of *Gule wamkulu*

in the life of the Chewa people.



Our new volunteers

From Germany through the Weltwaerts Programm:
Andrea Karin Beck as our new public relation officer
Alisa Isabel Koch as our new manager at *Pa Ntondo pa Namalikhate Village*
Katharina Schlumm, as our new agricultural adviser



From Australia through the Australian volunteers International (AVI):
Maureen Ann Boyle, as our new community development officer



Kungoni Open Day 2008

This year Open Day will take place on the 9th August. As usual, the day will begin with a morning Mass at 8 o'clock. Groups of local dancers will continue up to 4 o'clock. Kungoni stages the Open Day each year to encourage the continued and increased participation, enjoyment and pride of local Malawians in their traditional culture and performing arts.

Farewell to Gary Morgan

Soon, you will be going back home to Australia. Your two years contract is now over. I told you once, maybe twice, that your coming to Kungoni with your wife Sue was providential. Of course, you could argue about the meaning of that word as you have done by editing thousands of pages of *Gule wamkulu* descriptions and so many other publications. Your coming here coincided with the beginning of the Ambassador's Fund which provided the necessary tools to digitalized hundreds of videos professionally done through your dedication. Now that we know more about the beauty of Australia and its inhabitants through your skilled historical and panoramic descriptions, we truly wish to come to see you in Perth where you belong.



Dear friend Gary, you are a wonderful and talented person while still very humble. You have been an evangelical inspiration for us all with regard to the cultural heritage of Malawians and the faith of the Catholic Church.

We wish you a nice journey back home and good luck in your new life.
Kind regards to Sue. God bless you both,
Serge St-Arneault MAfr, Co-Director

From the *gule* character called Maria, Gary Morgan received the original copy of the painting made by Fr Boucher Chisale which will appear on the cover book of *When animals sing and ghosts dance*.

This event took place at the last meeting of the Friends of Kungoni on the 28th June.



Kungoni's New Publication

When water falls sand become crystal

By Fr Serge St-Arneault MAfr, 2007, 114 pages.

This book provides an easy to read summary of the history of Kungoni and Mua, and a description of the places of interest and historic sites in the area.

