The Mutumwa churches' movement is a medico-religious healing movement which has been growing and spreading in Zambia ever since the early decades of this century. The word Mutumwa means "the one sent" or "apostle" and is firmly rooted in the Christian Bible. In the early years of its history, Mutumwa Church was associated with nchimi (meaning "diviner") and only became formally registered as Mutumwa in 1966, two years after Zambian Independence in 1964. At this time, Peter Mulenga had been working closely with one John Sikapizye, a Namwanga from Nakonde village in Isoka. Both had previously become members of Watch Tower for a time but had been expelled for their witch-finding activities. In 1973, Mulenga parted amicably from Sikapizye and began to move southwards. He stayed in Kabwe from 1974-1976 and finally established the headquarters of his church at Mutendere in Lusaka in 1977. His church was formally registered as "Mutumwa Church" thereby acknowledging its link with its sister church on the Copperbelt. While Sikapizye continued to be recognized as formal head of the church on the Copperbelt and in the northern parts of Zambia, Mulenga now became recognized as formal head in the Lusaka district as well as in the southern parts of Zambia. In spite of the friendly relations that continue to exist between Mulenga and Sikapizye, their original conversion experiences were quite different and their initial coming together was more a matter of convenience in view of the common nature of their healing work rather than anything else. Formal registration under the same name may also be seen as a matter of convenience at present for both Mutumwa churches are already beginning to exhibit clear signs of separate development.
This paper intends to restrict itself to the conversion experience of Peter Mulenga and to the belief system of the church founded by him. Such beliefs will be seen to exhibit a fascinating and creative blend of traditional Bemba and biblical thought patterns which have built upon the core visionary experience of the founder. It will also be seen that any clear separation between the religious and the medical as manifested in the traditional Bemba belief system (as, indeed, in Central African belief systems in general) is untenable and that central importance must be given to the role of the shing'anga or healer who is also an intermediary between God and humans.

Peter Chileshe Mulenga, a Bemba, was born in 1939 and was the son of Jonas Walulumba Mwaushi. His father had been a teacher at the Church of Scotland Mission at Lubwa in the Chinsali district of Zambia (then Northern Rhodesia). Peter claims to have been given the name of "Mulenga" on account of the special intervention of "Mulenga wamphanga" (Mulenga of the bush) in the circumstances of his birth. This was to be the beginning of a series of mysterious happenings which were to set Peter apart in his own eyes as someone specially chosen for a special work. Although not directly related to Alice Lenshina Mulenga, foundress of the Lumpa Church in Zambia, it is worthy of note that she also came from the Chinsali district where her church became very powerful. As a boy, Peter had lived with his grandmother, Margaret Kabwe, who was a member of the Roman Catholic Church. He used to accompany her to church regularly at Mulobola Mission. Although registered for baptism as "Peter", he claims that he was forbidden to come to church by one of the catechists there on account of his peculiar behaviour which resulted in his not being baptized. The catechist had purportedly accused him of having evil spirits (fibanda) for he apparently used to spend regular periods in the bush, act like a madman and sing unusual songs in the church. For Peter, of course, these were clearly recognized traditional signs of a special call from the spirit world to carry out a special work. It was not until 1958, however, when Peter was nineteen years old, that his definitive visionary experience took place which was to determine the course of his life's work from then on. The day is precisely identified as November 26. In view of the central importance of this vision/dream to Peter's understanding of his own role and of the