

Lubunga¹-Leadership: An Afro-Biblical Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the African traditional value of *Ubuntu* as embedded in the Bembe² concept of *lubunga*. In our attempt to develop a practical contextual leadership model, we have deliberately avoided to make use of the concept of *Ubuntu* seen by some as purely philosophical, academic, in favour of a more “institutional” and practical concept of *lubunga* (or its Xhosa equivalent, *ikundla/lekogla*). Seeing that these concepts are not only African but also carries values validated in the Bible as strongly expressed in the Old Testament, making them both social and biblical imperatives, their receptivity will be made easier. The use of *lubunga*, thus, serves as a self-defining concept for Africa’s leadership. This is the value we want integrated into our theology. By grounding our theological leadership construct in African social values we are “balancing leadership and followership” (Malunga 2006:12) as the African people see themselves as both givers and recipients of life shaping values.

Managing life in society as a *lubunga* has the advantage of creating “a holistic community in which everyone involved becomes an active member who participates in all its activities and who thus shares in its success and failures” (Prinsloo 1998:48), with a more likely effective outcome.

¹ Lubunga is a communal governing system used by the Bembe people to regulate life in society. It is used primarily for conflict resolution, but its function extends to the general running of the affairs of the community. It is a participatory, collegial leadership system.

² The Bembe are a tribal people from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Kivu Province, Territory of Fizi. They are an agrarian pastoral people who –according to oral tradition- have originated from Uganda before settling in the mountainous region of Fizi and later along Tanganyinkalake. The Bembe do not have an absolute monarch. They are organized in clans with the heads of those clans assuming the spiritual, social and political leadership (Emedi 2005:133).