



Monze Education Fund and Guide to Monze



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Monze Meteorite

On October 5, 1950, at around 4:20 a.m., the Monze meteorite descended over two villages (Chiteba and Chizuni) in the area of Mwanachiwinda; Southern Province of Zambia (at that time called Northern Rhodesia). The meteorite was low enough and bright enough to wake up most of the neighbourhood, including many villagers who slept outside owing to the hot weather.



The sonic boom that followed woke up the remaining sleepers, and could be heard from Kafue to Kalomo. At first the locals were quite scared but after they realized the nature of the event they casually collected the meteorites for the authorities.

The meteorite first came to light when Chief Chongo brought three pieces to his District Commissioner with the following message:

"Please send a piece of the star to my King George, and tell him what has happened in my country and what has visited us for I know that he will be interested."

Eyewitness reports

Thomas Siganza, Chongo resident:

"We were sleeping outside our huts that night. Some of us were awake at this time and we saw a large star coming towards us from the east and going towards the moon. The star was a brilliant white

and it had a long thin tail which was also white. The head seemed many times larger than the moon and its brightness became so great that we could not see the moon.

We looked at the star with great fear for we did not know what it meant. It seemed to hit the moon and then went out with a terrific explosion. The voice seemed to go back from where the star had come."

Harrison Hajarika, Chongo resident:

"I was fast asleep outside my house when the meteorite passed over. I was then woken by a noise and my wife came and called me to see the star. When I looked up I saw only a trail like smoke across the sky. I was then aware of a great rumbling which seemed to pass overhead and died out in the distance."

Chiteaba Village Headman:

"Early in the morning of 5th October I was inside my house and I saw a very bright light outside. Whilst I was wondering what it was and getting up to see what it was all about. When I had taken about two steps outside my door there suddenly came a very very strong buffering wind from all directions and I heard the 'wing-wing' of falling stones. Again I was afraid and I ran back into my hut. It seemed as if the wind continued for two or three minutes and I could still hear the sound of stones falling. When it was all over I went outside and when the sun came up I picked up three pieces of the stones which fell and the same day I took them to my Chief to show him and tell him what had happened at our village."

There is to this day a thriving trade in specimens from the Monze meteorite. Try eBay and you will see!

Reference: The Northern Rhodesia Journal, Volume I - No. 4 - 1951
(visit www.nrzam.org.uk)

The Chief would later recall,

"At about 4:20 a.m. on the 5th October, 1950, I was awake inside my house and suddenly I noticed a bright light outside. I ran outside to



see what it was. When I got outside I saw that many others of my village were also running out to see what caused this great light. The light was as bright as midday. I looked up into the sky and saw a large star coming over us, from the East. It consisted of a head and tail. The head was a deep red in colour and very large - by comparison for size, if the moon appeared as big as my eyeball, the meteorite would be about the size of a motor car when seen very close by. It had a long thin tail which was white in colour and about five times as long as the diameter of the head.

It was approaching very fast and took only a few seconds to pass right overhead. When first seen by me it was about 50 degrees above the horizon. As it crossed the moon I noticed it was sending out many streamers of fire which crossed and zig-zagged in all directions.

Then the tail broke into three pieces which were about the same size, and which remained in the same line as the line of flight. When the star had passed overhead and was about 25 degrees above the horizon its light suddenly went out. It did not appear to land further on amongst the trees.

A short time after there was a violent explosion and the ground and my house shook. Following immediately upon the explosion came a strong reverberation such as violent thunder which came from the direction in which the star had gone and which passed over and behind me and died away in the distance. When the reverberation had died away there came a strong, constant and very cold wind which followed over in the direction from which the meteorite had come. Nothing happened after the wind had died away and all was silence again."

- Chief Congo