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# V. Telling Tales While Keeping Secrets: Two Lunda Storytelling Sessions

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The collection of oral traditions is a process that usually combines simple electronic recording of living events with the more complicated elements of establishing relationships with the performers and their audience, negotiating the time, place and compensation for their efforts, and observing and noting information not readily obtained by videocamera or tape recorder. The process is rendered more difficult when the researcher is working with people, or in an area, that he or she does not know well. In this context and consistent with the overall format of this study, I want to consider two separate storytelling sessions I recorded in 1989, focusing on two kinds of observations. First, I will provide a detailed description of the performance context of the sessions, and then I will also look comparatively at the basic form, content and themes of the narratives. These two dimensions of description will lead to a consideration of what we can know about a specific set of performances and the possible intentions of the performers. As in earlier chapters, this analysis will detail the role played by the researcher in eliciting and paying for the performances.

The Lunda have ethnic ties over several regions of Zambia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This is mainly due to migration patterns and is partly the result of colonial boundary-drawing. I will focus only on the Lunda of the Luapula Province in Zambia. They live roughly in the area northwest of Mansa, the provincial capital, near the middle of the Luapula Valley to the small towns of Nchelenge and Kashikishi on the southern end

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of Lake Mweru in the north. The Lunda Senior Chief is Mwata Kazembe, and his village, Mwansbombwe, is located pretty much in the center of the region inhabited by his subjects.<sup>152</sup>

In 1988–89, my most direct contacts in the Lunda area consisted of relationships with two Zambian graduate students (Mr. Anthony Kafimbwa and Mr. Samuel Ng’andwe) and their families. Both students were conducting field projects in oral traditions for their MA degrees from the Department of Literature and Languages at the University of Zambia. As a visiting lecturer, I was doing a minimal amount of advising on these projects. On a January swing through the area, my son Michael and I traveled with Mr. Kafimbwa as far as his uncle’s home at Kashikishi, where he was hoping to develop contacts to do a project on the praise singing of one of Kazembe’s bards/advisors. We dropped him off there on our way to Kaputa District to visit old friends and conduct a bit of research among the Tabwa people.<sup>153</sup> On our way home, we accompanied Mr. Kafimbwa to the village of Mbereshi, where he visited a Lunda bard who treated us to an example of playing the *mondo*, or talking drum. The bard, Mano—an honorific title, meaning literally “(Mr.) Wisdom”—agreed to work with Kafimbwa on his project, and also agreed to sponsor me on my next trip through his village to record stories. On our way to Mansa, we stopped near the village of Kashiba to contact Mr. Ng’andwe, who was recording local oral narratives. We located his sister, Ms. Chishimba, at Mofwe Investments Bar—an extraordinary establishment that at the time, which was during ongoing national shortages of basic foods and goods, was well-stocked with Zambian and Congolese beer and served various types of food as well—where she worked as a waitress. She guided us to Kashiba, where Mr. Ng’andwe greeted us and said he’d arrange for some storytellers to work with me when I returned later in the academic year. We did not

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152 There is a lot of scholarship on Lunda history, and even broader scholarship on the larger group that migrated into Zambia with the Lunda, the Bemba people. Among the best sources of Lunda history, with an extensive bibliography, is Cunnison’s work, as listed below. His best-known and most detailed monograph is *The Luapula Peoples of Northern Rhodesia* (1959). Several well-known studies on Bemba culture and history provide details of their earlier migration and political structure. Most convenient, as far as having an extensive bibliography and developing a detailed history from oral and written sources, is A. Roberts 1973. There is, of course, more recent scholarship on these people and areas, notably Gordon 2006, but the earlier works provide a thorough grounding in culture, history and politics from the time of the migrations into Zambia.

153 On this trip, for example, I recorded the narratives from Mr. Chipioka Patrick that I discuss in the Tabwa chapter of this study.

stay long, as it was clouding up and we needed to drive at least another hour to reach Mansa before dark.

## **Kashiba/Mkomba**

On the last day of May, 1989, my family and I drove from Mansa to Kashiba and again located Mr. Ng'andwe's sister at Mofwe Investments. She agreed to help us set up in the village after lunch. We drove, with Mofwe's manager, Mr. Chola, further north to the town of Mwense, which was the district capital and had a government rest house, where we checked in. We drove back to Kashiba and, guided by Ms. Chishimba, we located Mr. Moffat Mulenga in Mkomba, a section of the larger Kashiba village, who was known for his storytelling; in particular his tales about Kalulu the trickster hare. Explanations were proffered, noting that I was a lecturer at the University of Zambia, working with Samuel Ng'andwe, and I wanted to collect narratives to preserve them at the University's library for future generations to appreciate. Mr. Mulenga, a soft-spoken, rather shy man, wanted to fix some sort of compensation, so I arbitrarily offered to pay twenty kwacha (at that time, a bit less than four dollars) for three stories. He agreed to the deal and we moved to the front of a nearby home, whose owner brought out two wooden chairs for Mr. Mulenga and me. After a few minutes setting up the tripod and camera, we began the session. I'd estimate there were around twenty-five people in the audience. Most of them were children, seated or standing around Mr. Mulenga, with a few adolescents standing near him within the camera frame, and a few adults as well. Moffat Mulenga was probably in his mid fifties, and was nearly six feet tall and very slim. He wore a gray v-neck sweater, that seemed a few sizes too large, since the sleeves reached down to the knuckles of his hands, with a white shirt whose collar was folded out over the sweater's neck, and a pair of tan trousers that were rolled midway up his calves, with holes worn at both knees. It's clear that these were clothes he wore when working at some task, perhaps cultivating his garden or fishing.<sup>154</sup>

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154 On a return visit to Mkomba, I learned a bit more about Moffat Mulenga. He was born in 1930, which meant he was just over fifty-eight years old when I taped his performance in 1989. He'd lived his whole life in the area, farming and fishing, as many men did. More commonly known as Bashi Mwenya ("Father of Mwenya") he had eight children and, by the time of my visit in 2005, many grandchildren. He passed away in 1993 at age sixty-three.

## Lunda Storytelling 1 and 2 by Moffat Mulenga\*

Moffat

Mulenga: So then Kalulu went to Mr. Elephant to say, "Grandfather, could we engage in a tug-of-war?" The elephant said, "Ala? You're just a youngster right there you've claimed, it's me you'll pull?" He said, "Yes, it's I who could pull you." "You?" He said, "Yes." He said, "Fine." He went and slept, that Kalulu, and that elephant, he went



and slept. In the morning, Kalulu set out in the morning to go to his uncle there. "How are you my uncle, Mr. Elephant?" He said, "You've come?" He said, "Yes." Little Kalulu had a large rope and he tied it around his (Elephant's) neck. He said, "Now, thus I'll go here, I'll go and I'll pull you. When you feel me tug you like this then begin pulling." He said, "Oh." He went far unfurling the rope; he went far unfurling the rope, going and arriving at the dambo (flood plain).

He found Mr. Hippopotamus. [Hippos live near water, so the dambo was a natural place to find one.] That Mr. Hippopotamus said, "Uncle, why have you come down to the dambo?" He said, "Yes, *mukwai*. I want to pull against you." "Oh, pull against you, can you pull me out of my place?" He said, "Yes, I can pull you, you'd come here to the bush." He said, "Fine, no problem." Ah, he tied him with the rope as he'd tied the elephant. So there he said, "Uncle, here I'm going to the rise, when I tug you then we can begin to pull." He said, "Ooh, that's fine."

So little Kalulu set out, he went, he went. So then he arrived at the middle of the rope and grasped and shook it there, at the one at the dambo, and he began to shake it towards that one who was in the bush. So there! So he jumped down, he went and sat there. So when the elephant returned the pressure, his friend pulled from the dambo over there. He said, "And what is it that pulls me towards that dambo? This Kalulu is the one who's pulling me towards the dambo?" So over there, this was the one who started all this. And that elephant, hmmn, they went on for a long time. Now they were tired. "Ala! So Kalulu's the one we've been pulling against? That very one who's so small? That's where we're pulling...it's that [one] that has me panting? Fine, we'll see." They shook their heads.

Again, he (Kalulu) went and shook it. Again he laughed. Now what to do, to run away, what did he do? He ran away. Over there the elephant came, he followed the rope, he said, [he] wanted to know if it was Kalulu pulling against him. And that hippopotamus there, he too came following the rope, to come and see if it's Kalulu pulling against him. Then over

\* To watch a video of this story follow this link: <http://dx.doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0033.05/Lunda1>

there, when they came and met this way, he said, "Ala! So it's you I've been pulling against?" He said, "Yes." "And where's Kalulu?" He said, "No *mukwai*, that one's not here. We didn't know it was that one, who did this thing to us?" He said, "Yes." "Aah." That one's done. [Referring to the narrative itself.]<sup>155</sup>

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I'm starting this *mulumbe*. It's that again, Kalulu himself built a very large house. So when he built the house, he said, "All the animals in the bush come to my place for a party." So th...the animals agreed. They agreed. So then some of them laughed hard, "Yes, yes, Kalulu, at your house?" He said, "Yes." The animals were very merry. Now then "What ni...ni... night shall we come?" He said, "No, tomorrow so that I'll go arrange things. All the animals who are in the bush come here." He had built a very large house. "Fine, tomorrow?" He said, "Tomorrow come to the house." So just all the animals, their wives prepared pots of beer. [He addressed the following question to me: "Do you understand? Speak up *mukwai*." I didn't catch this, so I did not answer his question.]

So what happened there? When all those animals gathered there, they went to...they...they...they all sat there filling the house to capacity. Then he told them, "Friends, there's no place to pee, there's no place to shit. If I catch you (doing this) you'll die?" He said, "Yes *mukwai*, grandfather, we understand." "Yes *mukwai*, grandfather we understand." So now, the animals in the house went to sleep. So now they slept, they slept, they slept, they slept. So now ten o'clock at night arrived, now he began to smear fermented millet [basis for millet beer, *katubi*, which looks like faeces] on the anus, on the anus, smearing the fermented millet on the anus, on the anus. So now there, when one woke up he said...because he soiled himself, "Oh my!" He said, "Oh my, I've shit." He said, "Oh my, we will die, oh my, we'll die." He said, "Have you shit, grandfather?" He said, "I've shit, truly." Just like that, he who woke up said, "Oh my, and me too I've shit." One over there said, "And me too!" He said, "Ala!" He said, "And what about you, the great elephant?" He said, "Ala! I've shit, I'm no longer great." So they just sat there speechless. So now over there, no *mukwai*, this had affected every one, just like that. It was the same thing, then, when the morning came. Little Kalulu said, "Let me go and see people [that] are in the house." All of them ran away, now finding just some, these are the ones he beat hard. All who remained ran away. Now this *mulumbe* is...is finished.

Robert

Cancel: That's good...

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155 This is a common Kalulu tale and is widely spread in other parts of Africa. Owomoyela summarizes the same tale with the Turtle as trickster for the Yoruba people and other West African groups (2004, p. 476). See also La Pin 1980, p. 336. A version of the tale is discussed in the previous chapter, as told by a Bisa storyteller, Mr. Paul Chandalube.

When Mr. Mulenga began his performance, it was apparent that he was a bit nervous. His hands were pressed together between his thighs, and he spoke softly and slowly. However, in a very short time, he became more animated. In fact, he proved to be a skilled performer, using his voice, gestures and acting skills to flesh out the narrative. He focused on the size and strength of the adversaries, providing their respective verbal responses to first Kalulu's challenge then their surprise at the difficulty of the contest. As the tug-of-war went on, Mr. Mulenga's pace and rhythm of speech and gestures became more rapid, using both miming of physical actions and stylized gestures—such as tamping down his palm over the fist of his other hand to indicate the initial setting of the contest and securing the ropes around each participant—to bring the narrative to life. The audience seemed engaged with the story, with a few children chuckling at some of the images. But the performance was also rather brief, quickly moving to resolution and ending with Mr. Mulenga saying "That one's done."

With barely a pause, he moved on to the second narrative, saying "Now I'll begin another *mulumbe*." This performance revealed more of Moffat Mulenga's skills as a storyteller. The scatological elements of the tale were inherently funny for his mostly young audience. Many of the children delighted in the imagery of Kalulu spreading fermented grain (*fipote*) on the animals' anuses. Further, Mr. Mulenga took maximum advantage of portraying the various humiliated and despairing animals as they awoke to the signs of their apparent transgression. He acted out their reactions by holding his left hand to his buttock, as if trying to stem the flow of something that had already happened, and holding his right hand to the right side of his head and face, as if lamenting what had occurred and fearing what was to come. "*Mawe!* ("Oh my!") I've shit!"... "*Mawe*, we will die, oh my, we'll die." As another animal woke to find he too had violated the warning, Mr. Mulenga grabbed his right buttock with his right hand, again suggesting astonishment and a building panic. Not only the children, but several adults and adolescents began to chuckle at the developing scene. After several depictions of animals discovering their humiliation, Mulenga closed the story, almost anti-climactically, by describing how most of the animals ran away when Kalulu returned and took revenge on the remaining partygoers.

At this point, I asked Mr. Mulenga to wait a bit. Mostly, I was trying to keep him from simply appending another quick story to the two he'd

already told. I was then able to playback the audio of the tales and have everyone, especially Moffat Mulenga, hear what he sounded like. This technique had in the past proven effective in having performers evaluate their earlier efforts and gear up for future recording sessions. While I can't really guess what Mr. Mulenga's reactions were, he did begin to tell a longer, more nuanced story. This third Kalulu tale focused on how Kalulu tricks all the animals into killing their mothers.

## Lunda Storytelling 3 by Moffat Mulenga\*



Moffat Mulenga: There was a person, just like this. It was Kalulu himself. Kalulu over there gathered together all the animals. He said, "Friends, let us kill our mothers." "Ala! Kill our mothers?" He said, "Yes, and I myself will kill my mother." No, all the animals laughed, "Yes, let's kill our mothers. Let's kill our mothers. And you, Mr. Kalulu, you'll kill (her)?" He said, "Again, I'll kill my mother. As for me, I'll kill my mother." So all those animals began to kill their mothers, began bringing the blood to Kalulu, because he'd been lying, saying, "I've killed my mother." So then he who killed brought blood to Kalulu. He who killed brought blood to Kalulu. Just like that.

But one (Kalulu) played a trick; he took his mother and put her in a cave and closed it up. So all his friends finished killing their mothers. So now that one went out. So that one said, "As for me, friends, I'm going to kill my mother. If there's not... I will come show you the blood, that's what I will come to show you." He said, "Oh, fine." He went and spun around. "You stone, what is it? You stone, what is it?" He knocked at his mother's place. That Kalulu closed it up. He went to the *mulombwa*, the large *mulombwa* tree. He picked its sap, he picked, he picked. Then he smeared himself with that same blood—because it was like blood—then he went to his friends who'd killed their mothers. So, he cried falsely, "Mother, I've killed my mother, no it's very sad." Now seeing that, his friends said, "Really, he's already killed his mother, yes. He's covered in blood and rolling in the dust [an act of mourning], he's covered and rolling in the dust. So it's a bad thing to kill our mothers, how will we eat?"

So now he...he'd do this, when he went, he went and opened the stone. His mother made him *ubwali*, he ate, he closed it up. He'd go again to the *mulombwa* tree and smear himself [with the red sap], smear himself to return to his friends. They knew him, he said, "He went to mourn this mother he killed." Then he'd go to eat at his healthy mother's (place).

\* To watch a video of this story follow this link: <http://dx.doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0033.05/Lunda3>



So then one day, he did the same as usual, he was going. Now the tortoise followed him, he said, "Ala! Did he really kill his mother?" He went and she just cooked *ubwali* for him, she just cooked for him. So when Kalulu arrived here, tortoise also arrived. "Ala! Friend!" So now he stretched out his hands (beseeching him), "My friend, ala! I did not kill my mother. Don't go reveal the lie to those over there. I'll just die, I'll die. If you just go say, 'No, that one, so it's a lie he's told us, his mother is right there!' I'll just die, they'll just kill me." He said, "No, grandfather, again it's me who saw you." So, "You will eat, you'll be full. Let me open up my mother's (hiding place)." So, "Mother, mother, mother." So, he got the large rock, he opened up. So *mukwai*, (there was) a portion of *ubwali* and chicken. They just prepared a large chicken leg, they gave it to him. So with what was left, they began to eat. They ate, they ate, they ate. So they ate that leg, tortoise put it in his shell. He hid it. Then he said he finished. So, he hid it.

So now there, he [Kalulu] went there, he went and rolled and smeared himself, he rolled and smeared himself completely. So they went like that. So that tortoise, he went. So there Kalulu stayed and smeared himself in the same way he'd done. So he [the tortoise] went to pay his respects to Mr. Elephant. "Hmmm. So, that one just lied to us, he didn't kill his mother." He said, "Ala! That was no lie, you are lying." He said, "This is what's left of the chicken we ate." He said, "You, what a surprise. So how do you know so much?" So now they slept. Early in the morning they went with the elephant. They sharpened sticks, sharpening, sharpening. No, they just arrived, she said—again she didn't recognize them—she said, "My child has come." "Mother open up, mother open up." They came and got the door, one said, "Let me open up." They came and drove the sticks in here (at the base of her skull), po, po, po. No, they squeezed in. No, she died right there. They got the rock, they closed up, then they went.

So Kalulu who carried... hadn't been there to his mother's that day. In the morning he went there to find her. "Mother open this up. Mother open this up. Mother open up. Aah!? Where's my mother? Can you come open up? Yaa! Mother, they've killed you. Tortoise, it's the tortoise that caused this. Yangu! Father! Poor me, what'll I do? Mother, poor me, ee! It's tortoise. What can I do? There's no recourse here. So now, I can just wander aimlessly. What my friends did was not good. So I didn't kill my mother." So then his friend was the one who lied. So now Kalulu went wandering aimlessly. And the *mulumbe* is finished.

This last narrative was literally twice as long as either of the earlier two. In part, this was due to the way he developed the repeated actions of Kalulu going to visit his mother in the cave. The first visit was fairly detailed, and the second condensed the description, while the third

included the appearance of the Tortoise. Mr. Mulenga, as in the first tales but not so frantically, detailed Kalulu's several dramatic efforts, as he falsely lamented his mother's death, smeared himself with fake blood and recounted an action he never performed. This degree of duplicity, so common in the trickster's repertoire, has a kind of inborn power to elicit laughter from an audience. Coupled with Mr. Mulenga's histrionics and the inherent scatological humor of the imagery, the events make for satisfying entertainment. But the tale also differed from the earlier ones because it portrayed one of the instances where Kalulu's cleverness is bested by the even more inventive Tortoise. Though Kalulu tries to make a pact with the Tortoise, like hare himself is prone to do, the Tortoise proceeds to immediately break the agreement. As if allowing for a form of revenge built up over the previous two stories, Mr. Mulenga's narrative portrays the other animals tricking and killing Kalulu's mother. At the end of this tale, Kalulu is forced to flee and wander aimlessly [*ciyeyeye*] in some world away from the animals he'd deceived.

While the performance mostly elicited laughter when depicting Kalulu's feigned over-wrought lamentations, the second half of the story where Kalulu is bested brings the other narratives full-circle and adds another dimension of meaning and breadth to the range of tales featuring the trickster hare. Moreover, the narrative's plot intersects with another cluster of stories that feature the killing of the elders in a village or society. These usually have to do with the importance of elders when it comes to preserving and applying wisdom in the society and how the arrogance of youth or power can take that source of knowledge for granted.<sup>156</sup>

Before further discussion of the three Kalulu stories Mr. Mulenga performed, I will first describe the efforts of the second performer, Mr. Idon Pandwe, who owned the house in front of which the session took place. Mr. Pandwe took some interest in Mr. Mulenga's performance and, moreover, he'd been perusing sections of my soft-bound doctoral dissertation that I often brandished by way of introduction to potential storytellers. Mr. Pandwe spoke

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156 See Cancel 1989, pp. 43–45 for an example of this kind of story told among the Tabwa as well as references to versions/variants in other neighboring traditions. The narrative themes focusing on the importance of elders and the challenges that come from precocious adolescents are discussed above in the chapters on Tabwa and Bemba performances.

English very well, to the point of introducing his performance in English, as I answered in Bemba:

## Lunda Storytelling 4 by Idon Pandwe\*

Idon

Pandwe: **I've got three stories.**

Robert

Cancel: Uhhmm. Begin.

IP: **Can I speak all at once?**

RC: If you'd like.

IP: **O.K.**



People lived in a very large country. In one village was a chief who ruled the village. And that chief brought a proclamation, saying, "I don't want old people in my country, only young men and young women, alone, because elders go bald and have white hair and they don't dress well and are dirty. So I only want young men and young women who will have elegance in my village." So all the people killed their parents. Now there was one person, that one didn't kill his parent. He went and hid him in the bush in an ant hill, that's where he hid him. So, whenever he went for a walk, he brought *ubwali* and water to wash and drink, and all the things (he needed).

As the days go by, that chief had a small *nsaka* where he sat and ate his food. So then, one day that chief was in the *nsaka*. In the rear was a large snake. A **big snake**, a very large snake, entered. So it came and wound itself around the chief's neck. It wound, it wound, around and round [English borrowing, "**roundi, roundi**"], it wound and wound. It came and wound its neck and head around the chief's head. That chief (cried out), "I'm dying, ee! I'm dying, ee!" And what did people do when they came? No *mukwai*, the snake was just flicking its little tongue. Not even one person could come near, no. All of them were afraid.

Now that person who hid his father in the bush, then he ran quickly to the bush, to go and speak to his father, he said, "We here are in trouble." "What is it?" He said, "A snake's wrapped itself around the chief's neck, now we don't know what to do." So his father answered, "Let the chief die, he has no wisdom. The elders know what to do. So, now you go and catch a small rat. Tie it up with bark rope, the little rat. When you go and arrive near where the chief is, that's when the

\* To hear a recording of this story follow this link: <http://dx.doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0033.05/Lunda4>

rat will jump around, and the snake will go and unwind itself from the chief's neck." And truly, that young man carried a small rat, he tied it with bark rope, and arrived there. He placed it near where the chief lay. The large snake looked [at it]. It looked. It said, "What's that little thing jumping around? What'll I do? Let me catch it." When it said it would catch it, it unwound a bit [from the chief's neck]. It said, "Let me grab it." Again, it began, the snake unwound a bit. "Let me grab it." Again, it began, the snake unwound a bit. Finally that snake, it unwound itself, so that they killed it.

Now the chief asked him, "What of this wisdom, where did it come from?" He said, "No, I will not tell you the source, I just thought of it myself." He refused [to believe him], he said, "No, I just don't know where you got this wisdom, just speak up, just speak up." So that young man spoke, he said, "I, this wisdom, I hid my father in the bush, and it's he who told me this wisdom." He said, "So go and bring him to me." So when that young man went and got his father, the chief gave him the country, and told him, "As from today I will not revile elders in my village." So, it's this that was said now, "Where there are elders, they will provide a shield so that nobody is burned. Where there are elders, there are fewer cases of misconduct." The *mulumbe* is finished.

Mr. Pandwe was probably in his early fifties and well dressed; collared white shirt with a pen clipped to his pocket, clean and pressed tan trousers with a new-looking black leather belt, and polished black shoes.<sup>157</sup> When he began his performance he did something that was quite unusual, at least in my experience of sitting in an audience during story-performances. He held my bound dissertation on his lap with both hands and proceeded to hold on to the volume for all three of his narratives. From a stylistic point of view, he was curtailing virtually all the hand and arm gestures that comprise the repertoire of most performers. This meant that he'd convey the stories mostly with vocal skills and some rather subtle movements of his head, shoulders and upper body.

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157 Again, during my 2005 visit to Mkomba, I met some of Idon Pandwe's relatives and found out that he'd died in 2004, at the age of sixty-seven. His style of dress and use of English suggested that he was a bit wealthier and perhaps better educated than his neighbor. In fact, he'd spent a good deal of his life working as a heavy machinery operator on Zambia's Copperbelt. He came to live in the village after retiring and did a bit of farming and a good deal of fishing. He had a much smaller family than did Moffat Mulenga, and they seemed materially better off than Mr. Mulenga's.

I mistakenly left the lens cap on the video camera for Mr. Pandwe's first narrative, so it's hard to discuss any but his vocal performance techniques. The narrative obviously echoes the preceding one, where Kalulu convinced all the other animals to kill their mothers. In this tale, a chief orders all elders to be killed because "I don't want old people in my country, only young men and young women, alone, because elders go bald and what's left is white hair and they don't dress well and are dirty." Given the unexpected opportunity to have only a verbal record of this narrative-performance, a few qualities of Mr. Pandwe's verbal technique were even more apparent. First, as already mentioned, he tried to establish an English language conduit between him and me as the collector of the narratives. He began the session by asking me questions in English. Then in the telling of the story itself, he qualified the Bemba word for a large snake, *icisoka*, "Big snake." At around the same point in the tale, he described how the snake wound itself around the chief's neck by combining Bemba and English verbs, "...*capomba*, *capomba*, **roundi, roundi**," "...it wound round, it wound round, **round, round**..." Second, Mr. Pandwe enunciated the language of his narratives very clearly and at a moderate, rather than slow or fast, pace. This made the story very easy to follow, particularly for me, and elucidated the various details and nuances quite clearly.

His second performance actually relates a narrative that is examined earlier in this study.<sup>158</sup>

## Lunda Storytelling 5 by Idon Pandwe\*



Idon

Pandwe: There was a little thing, all the animals lived in the bush, they lived in a very large area. Now, Lion also lived in a hut with his wife and children. Now one day Kalulu carried bark to bring to the lion so that he could make bark cloth for him. When he arrived there he found the lion and his wife had gone to the bush. He found only the children were there, that's all. Now Kalulu asked the lion's child, "And where did your father and mother go to?" The children answered, "They've gone to the bush to do a little work." That lio...Kalulu said, "You come and tell your father that this bark I've brought, he must make me a bark cloth garment, because your father is my nephew. I'm his uncle. If he doesn't make the bark cloth he will be like the

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158 See the two versions of this tale performed by Mr. Stanley Kalumba in the Tabwa area and discussed in Chapter III. It is worthwhile noting how each performer externalizes and shapes the familiar images of the tale.

\* To watch a video of this story follow this link: <http://dx.doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0033.05/Lunda5>

bushbuck with a year to live. And he won't be living here." Kalulu returned. The lions returned from the farm, and the cubs came to report the situation, "Father, your uncle came here but we didn't know him. He's even the one who left this bark and said, 'He must make bark cloth. If he refuses to make it, he won't be living here. He'll be like the bushbuck with a year to live.'"

Now the lion thought, "As for me, here in the bush, it's I alone who am the most powerful, there's no one greater than me. Now who is this uncle? Fine, let me go make the cloth, I'll see my uncle because when he comes to get the cloth, that's when I'll come see him." And in fact that lion pounded that bark cloth, and he sewed it, he put it down by a tree. Then one day Kalulu again came. He came and found the lions were not there, they'd gone to the bush. So he saw the bark cloth garment was on top of a large tree. He asked the children, "You children, and today your father is not here?" He said, "No he's not here." He said, "When he comes you tell him truly, I found the cloth he sewed, he pounded and sewed it. Now I thank him very much. When he comes tell him that his uncle has taken it. So I'll take it, I'm going, thanks very much." When the lions returned from the bush, they came to find the bark cloth was not there. He asked the children, "What about the cloth?" He said, "It was your uncle, he came and got it." "My uncle?" He said, "Yes." "Now this same uncle, how will I know him? So let me make a proclamation, I'll gather together all the animals. If I gather all the animals, that...that animal that comes wearing the bark cloth that I made, that's how I'll know him, he says, he's my uncle."

So Kalulu [Lion] made a proclamation, "Every one gather, all the animals come gather, all animals, so that not one remains." So *mukwai*, that little Kalulu said (to himself), "You, we've been summoned to the palace, that's the place they call us to." He took that bark cloth and wore it. "You know at that time the cloth was seen as a *suit* [English borrowing], if you're wearing it, you're even showing off." So *mukwai*, Kalulu went, Kalulu went, he found the bushbuck. The bushbuck wore rags. Then he questioned him, he said, "You bushbuck, where are you going?" He said, "Over here, they've called us to the lion's palace, that's where I'm going." He said, "But how can you go with rags like this? So since you are my elder, I'll give you the barkcloth. And since I'm your junior, I'll wear the rags. Let's go change." So they switched and switched. Kalulu took the bark cloth, he gave it to Bushbuck. Bushbuck took the rags, he gave them to Kalulu.

When they arrived at the palace there, no *mukwai*, all the kinds of animals were gathered. Now the lion, as he looked at all those animals, he saw his bark cloth was on the bushbuck, that's where it was. He said, "Ala! So Bushbuck is my uncle? This very one who's a useless person. Today he will see." So then that lion began (to explain) the case, "That's why I called you, my people. I received bark here, and I didn't know the one who brought it, he said he was my uncle. So I pounded the bark cloth and sewed it together. And when he came to take it I wasn't around. That's why I gathered you together, so that I could know my uncle. So my uncle is the bushbuck. He's the one who's wearing my bark cloth

garment. So, you bushbuck, you're my uncle? Grab him, we'll kill him." No, so they...little Kalulu himself leaped up and choked him round his neck. When he spoke, saying, "No *mukwai*, it's Kalulu!" He said, "Shut up, a slave dies with words in his mouth." No, that bushbuck, he was killed. This is a situation with many people, they do something then blame their friend, their friend is the one who dies. The *mulumbe* is finished.

Again, what stands out in Mr. Pandwe's performance style is his almost total reliance on verbal dramatic techniques. He enjoys speaking in a high pitched voice as he provides dialogue for various characters. His steady delivery of narration often punctuates the end of sentences or scenes by raising the intonation level of his voice. This pattern is one of several rhythmic elements that provide a vibrant verbal structure to the narrative. He noticeably quickens the pace of his narration when Bushbuck is grabbed and beaten by the animals. Several children laugh at this image of Bushbuck's desperate attempts to be heard and Kalulu's speedy retort, using the proverb about slaves dying with words in their mouths. He even laughs a bit himself, considering the absurdity of the situation. While Mr. Pandwe does not consistently elicit the easy laughter, or expectation of laughter, that Mr. Mulenga established, his storytelling is solid in its exposition, clear in its various plot developments, and effective in drawing audience involvement. Mr. Pandwe includes two of the proverbs found in Stanley Kalumba's Tabwa versions of the story, the warning about the bushbuck with a year to live and the truism of a slave dying with words in his mouth. The sayings seem linked to the preserved and transmitted images of the narrative. However, he also adds an explanatory note at the end, observing how people often blame their friends for things they themselves have done. This extends the connotations of the tales told by Mr. Kalumba in a different though obviously related way. There is a quotidian concern in Idon Pandwe's explanation, about people blaming others for their own misdeeds, while Stanley Kalumba evokes a broader message about the potentially subversive power of cleverness and loquaciousness.

## Lunda Storytelling 6 by Idon Pandwe\*



Idon

Pandwe: **Another?**

Robert

Cancel: If you'd like.

IP: Hhmm?

\* To watch a video of this story follow this link: <http://dx.doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0033.05/Lunda6>

RC: Yes.

IP: There remains one more *mulumbe*, it's the same Kalulu himself. Kalulu set out to marry. When he arrived there to marry, he got married. He lived with his wife. So the rainy season arrived. He went and requested a plot from his in-laws. That plot he asked for, his mother-in-law showed it to him; she showed him a very large plot. Then that little Kalulu, *mukwai*, he got a hoe. He hoed, hoed, hoed, hoed, hoed, hoed, hoed, hoed, hoed. He finished a very large garden. He planted a large crop: groundnuts [peanuts], ground peas, maize, cassava and all the things that remained (to be grown).

*Mukwai*, those things, the month these things ripened, Kalulu's mother-in-law and father-in-law began to harvest the groundnuts. As you know, those groundnuts when they're digging them up, that's when they eat them. When she harvested the groundnuts Kalulu's, mother-in-law, she did not cook them, saying she'd take them to the in-laws, not to the one who worked the garden. Only they would eat them. Now that Kalulu looked in expectation that the groundnuts will come, no, the groundnuts will [not] come, no. "So what will I do? Those groundnuts I grew, my mother-in-law is just eating without giving me some! No, really I'll formulate a plan of ensuring that I eat groundnuts also." So as days went by, Little Kalulu went to the bushbuck. He went there and said, "Friend, listen to me, my in-laws are refusing me the groundnuts I grew. Now, I want to make believe I'm sick. When I feign illness then you're the one who'll come diagnose me. When you come to diagnose me you also know the way things are." He said, "No, I understand my friend. I've got it, my colleague. I'll come to diagnose you. You just go and feign illness."

So little Kalulu returned. He began the next evening to pretend to be sick. "I'm dying, ee, I'm dying, ee, I'm dying, ee!" His wife started a fire. He began warming himself, he covered himself with a blanket, all pretense. He warmed himself and groaned heavily. "What is it?" So his wife went to her mother and said, "Ala! My husband is ill and hasn't slept today." "What is it?" No, the mother-in-law came, which is when Kalulu acted even sicker, feigning illness almost to the point of dying. That's when that father-in-law began to speak, "No, my in-law has just been bewitched by someone in the village. There have been so many years and..." Then that little Kalulu said, "You, my wife, go to my friend Bushbuck, so that he comes and finds medicine. I'm going to die." Very early, that little Kalulu...Kalulu's wife went to Bushbuck's over there, she arrived, she said, "Ala! Your friend there, Mr. Bushbuck, Mr. Kalulu is very ill. I've come to get you." "He's sick?" She said, "Yes." "So, that's what I noticed, these days he didn't visit me. So he's sick? I'll be right there, I'll come to find him medicine."



No, little...little Bushbuck went and dug some medicine/herbs, he carried them, he took them to Kalulu. When he gathered together the mother-in-law and father-in-law and everyone, and gave them medicine, he said, "This medicine, you grind the remains of an animal, when you grind these remains then add [them] to the groundnuts as you roast them. When you [put] these remains in the groundnuts, then you give them to Kalulu he'll begin to eat. So the special ingredient is groundnuts." So, this was the plan little Kalulu devised just so that he could eat his in-law's groundnuts. So now his mother-in-law went and got those groundnuts. She roasted them with the remains of an animal, she put [them] in with them. She mixed them and roasted them with salt and what have you. So she gave them to little Kalulu, he began to eat. Then he said to himself, "Are not these things I'm eating those they had denied me?" So, he ate slowly, slowly. Tomorrow at sunrise, "How did you awaken today, father?" He said, "No, *mukwai*, today, today I'm awakening feeling better. However, when roasting groundnuts today, put in more groundnuts. Ensure that there are more groundnuts." So, the mother-in-law opened the granary for more groundnuts, saying, "No, that's good father, he's getting better, so groundnuts are the medicine." She took out groundnuts, she roasted them, she roasted them. She took them to him, he ate, he ate, he ate, he ate. Tomorrow, like this, very early, he began to feel good, he said, "No *mukwai*, now I'll be fine as long as today they roast a dish full of groundnuts..." Then she went and got all the groundnuts from the granary. She roasted them, she roasted the dish to the brim. Little Kalulu ate, he ate, he ate, he ate. So he got better, that little Kalulu got better. So, that's how Little Kalulu ate his in-law's groundnuts. **This is the end of the stories.**

Mr. Pandwe ended the narrative as he began it, using English to affirm that "This is the end of the stories." In terms of performance style and overall framing of the story and his own persona, Mr. Pandwe was quite different from Moffat Mulenga. However there are other elements that link his efforts to those of Mr. Mulenga. Looking at this narrative in the context of the five that have come before it, there is an interesting reiteration of Kalulu's cleverness, but in this tale Bushbuck is his ally, not his dupe. Here, too, Kalulu is shown overcoming a built-in potential inequity of custom, the duties of labor a newly-wed owes his in-laws. The theme is a serious one that is handled with humor and hyperbole in the framework of a trickster tale. Five of the first six tales told at this session featured Kalulu as the main character. In all of them he exhibited degrees of cleverness and resourcefulness that characterize the trickster throughout Africa. Moreover, there is a range of thematic dimensions that emerges in the context of the

five tales. In Mr. Mulenga's three stories, Kalulu seems to simply want to antagonize and humiliate other animals, as he tricks Elephant into a tug-of-war with Hippo, fools animals into believing they've defecated in his new home, and convinces the animals to kill their mothers. Similarly, Mr. Pandwe's rendition of the hare includes Kalulu tricking Lion into making him a bark cloth garment and then gets the bushbuck unjustly killed. Both Mulenga and Pandwe also produce narratives where Kalulu has the tables turned on him, first by Tortoise who discovers the secret of Kalulu hiding his mother and contrives to have her killed, and, at least temporarily, by his in-laws who demand he follow the tenets of newly-weds in the matrilineal system. This web of narratives is also entwined with the only non-trickster story, where unadulterated wisdom, rather than self-serving guile, is celebrated in the person of the elder. In this latter tale, part of the basic plot of Mr. Mulenga's third Kalulu story is recycled, featuring only humans and pointing at the potential abuses of chiefly power and the counter force of elders' wisdom. In contrast to Mr. Mulenga's performances, Mr. Pandwe ended two of his stories with the didactic explanations that often characterize the *mulumbe* genre.

Further, based on how they were dressed and how they handled their performances, at least subtle differences in class were evident between Moffat Mulenga and Idon Pandwe. Mr. Pandwe had been thumbing through a copy of my dissertation, suggesting his level of literacy, then held the volume in both hands like some sort of literary talisman while he told his stories, thereby, atypically, privileging voice over physical gesture in the performance of the tales. It may well have been that his understanding of what the session meant was very different from Mr. Mulenga's. Certainly, Mr. Pandwe's slower paced narration, attention to detail, and explanatory conclusions suggest that he was making sure I was clear on the meanings of his tales. He was most likely aware that the narratives were being recorded for posterity, and less concerned with the monetary transaction.<sup>159</sup>

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159 I've made this a recurring assertion in this project. It speaks to the notion of performers seeing beyond an immediate situation to something broader, perhaps more oriented towards the preservation of the event and the individual for future appreciation. A telling incident took place in 2005 when I stayed a night at a guest house in the Luapula town of Kashikishi. It was my second time there, following up on my 2003 trip, and the first time I'd met the owner of the place, as I sat outside on a chair drinking a beer at around 7 PM. He was originally from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and had come to Zambia with enough money to start some businesses and build and run this rather pleasant place. His English was not overly good, so we spoke in a combination of Bemba and French. My notebook details part of this encounter: "He was fixated on my book;

When Mr. Pandwe finished his performance, the audience had grown to probably fifty people. After I played back the last narrative, we all sat around looking at each other, with a few people trying to goad others onto the wooden chair to take a turn at performance. Finally, a woman, perhaps in her mid forties, named Luva Kombe took a seat in order to tell a story. Ms. Kombe was of average height and slim build. She had close-cropped hair and, somewhat unusual in women her age, did not wear a headscarf. Her violet dress only showed from the waist up, since she also wore a long, patterned *citenge* wrapped around her lower body and knotted above her hips. Unfortunately, somehow the video camera malfunctioned—or, more likely, I malfunctioned—and it was not turned on for the first minute or so of Ms. Kombe’s performance. However, the tale was a good one and I choose to discuss it here even in its slightly truncated form.

The first words caught on video are describing the interaction of an older co-wife and her aggressive younger co-wife. At this point, Ms. Kombe is laughing uncomfortably, somewhat nervous about being videotaped. As she expresses her nervousness, she is admonished by women in the audience not to laugh and to tell the story properly. She quickly recovers and continues.

## Lunda Storytelling 7 by Luva Kombe\*



[Beginning of the story, a minute or two, is lost]

...now there...there they slighted that elder (wife), there she went to whom?...to the junior wife.

Audience: Don’t laugh. [Addressed to people noting Ms. Kombe’s initial discomfort]

Luva Kombe: That’s where they went, right there to the junior wife. That’s where they lived. That’s where they lived. That’s where they lived. That’s

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skimming parts and asking a lot of questions. Finally he wanted to know how he could get into the new book. He said he’s read a lot of books but never met anyone who’d actually written one. He says he’s going to write down a really good *mulumbe* to send me. He wanted to know if I wanted stories of animals or humans and I said either was fine.” I never received anything from him and, ironically, had he given me his name I’d have been able to provide at least a little of the notoriety he was seeking.

\* To watch a video of this story follow this link: <http://dx.doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0033.05/Lunda7>

where they lived. Now the elder said, "Why do they despise me? Let me go ask my husband." He said, "Go back where you came, I just despise you, that's all." She went to her friend [co-wife], and she ridiculed her, she just ridiculed her. She said, "You, ala! I have taken your husband." She said, "No, no problem, let me just go live [alone], like that." She just lived alone, that elder wife, she just lived. That elder wife died. Now when she died, they buried her. Now when they buried her, it ended there. He [her husband] went to her family, they said, "No, we will give you a replacement wife, it is not difficult." So they performed the rite, they gave him a substitute wife. He even stuck to the new wife. Now that wife he stuck to...Ala! [Pauses as if she's forgotten something in the story, some audience members giggle.] Lale! No, I've forgotten—that new wife, they stuck to, now even to live, they lived there.<sup>160</sup> That one had even died. So then, over there he even forgot that one he'd been given as a substitute wife, he left her. Now he did [this], he the husband said, he's the one who said, "What about that garden you haven't been weeding?" She said, "Ala! No, I'll weed it sometime." He said, "No, go and weed it, it's a very large garden. Don't neglect it."

Now that companion, the one who remained, when she went off to the bush, she went and looked at the garden, all weeds, her desire was lacking [for that task]. She just went to the graveyard to go and fight with the one who was despised. That's where she went to pick a fight. She found her, "Tuu! Come out, let's fight! Come out, let's fight." And that companion said, "Friend, I left your husband. Why do you come following me to fight with me here at the grave?" She said, "No, my husband still keeps coming here to your grave." Now she said, "Ala! No, he's your husband entirely, they even gave him a substitute. Now why do you keep coming here to fight with me at my grave?" She said, "No, my husband's coming here." Now there, that's it. She summoned these companions in the graveyard. Then, they all just rose, *tupu!* They said, "You, you left her husband long ago, so why does she keep following you here? Let's team up and teach her a lesson." So they joined in the attack, they took her to the village. Now she began, her companions began a song. [To the audience: "Will you help me?" "Yes."] She began:

Ridicule, ridicule, mother.

Ridicule, ridicule, mother.

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160 Ms. Kombe seems to first indicate that the family of the dead wife has provided a new wife and performed a rite to absolve the husband of any hand in his spouse's death. Then she realizes that it's important that the husband be alone with his younger wife, so that she can continue to harass his first wife, even in death.

Your jealousy causes you to fight [What sort of jealousy is this?]  
 Ridicule, ridicule, mother.  
 It causes you to fight those already dead.  
 Ridicule, ridicule, mother.  
 Residents of this neighborhood are not here.  
 Ridicule, ridicule, mother.  
 So they can come watch their friend.  
 Ridicule, ridicule, mother.

Audience: They escorted you...They escorted you..."

LK: "They escorted her to what? ... they escorted her near where? ... near to the village. They said, "You dog, what sort of fighting is this? And yesterday you came to fight, and the day before. Is this the way your friends fight? They don't fight this way, no. You end up fighting with what? ... with a ghost. You fight because of jealousy. Go away, **come on**, go to the village." She returned to the village. They teamed up against her.

Now she arrived in the village with dust and grass all over her. Her husband asked, "My wife, is that how they go to the bush? You've gone there since sunrise, and now you return in the afternoon. No, I refuse to allow you to go to that difficult place." She said, "No, I go to weed and I'm almost done." He said, "No, and what of all this dust?" "No." He relented. He relented. Now another day, she again went. She looked at the garden. She looked at it carefully. Carefully, carefully, carefully. "I won't weed, no." This young woman was very persistent. "And even today, my husband may have come by here. He didn't go to the what? ... to the dambo [marsh], no. It's right here he's passed, to the grave yard." She went to the graveyard there. Now she went to find her friends and they were surprised. They hid themselves, they hid, they hid, they hid, they hid. She said, "This person, now as she comes today, her jealousy which has not been witnessed by all her friends. How can you come to fight over a man so often, and every day? Today we will go escort her to? ... to the village, so that she's disgraced, because her jealousy is too much." Now uhm! ... they waited, this one hid himself, this one hid. Now she knocked on the tomb... she wouldn't go to weed [the garden], her heart was not in it, she just went to fight over her husband. She knocked on the tomb, *tuu!* "Just come out, let's fight. Let's fight." Her companion refused, she said, "I won't come out. I left your husband long ago; long ago I left that husband for you. Now why do you keep coming to fight with me, I left your husband to you. Me, I died long ago, but you keep following me. My friend, I beg you, I refuse. Today I won't come out." She said, "Ala! Just come out. Let's fight." Ahh!

Before she realized it, her friend came out. "Oo, so you are strong? Because I left your husband long ago, now you keep coming back to fight with me everyday. Now today, let me come and we'll confront each other." She said ... she spat [performer spits on the ground]. She spit on the ground. She spit. "You, it's you...it's you, you want to fight me, you won't beat me, you won't punch me. You won't beat me, no." And that one said, "Friend, here where I have come, there are many rushes [used for whips], where you come from there are no rushes." She said, "No, let's just confront each other, if you want, I have these whips." "You don't come to garden. You just follow me. I've left your husband."

So right there, they went at each other, they went at each other, they fought, they went at each other, they fought. So the...the companion, yes ... that companion... those companions now descended on her, now the companions said, "Really, you go escort her to the village so that her jealousy can end." No, hmh! Now they rolled her on the ground, they rolled her, they rolled her, they rolled her. It was like this: her companion beat her, this other one beat her, this one beat her, this one beat her until she grew tired. When she was exhausted, they forced her to the village. "There!" Those companions of hers were pushing her along, and she jumped on to her back. Before she realized it, she was struggling. "Leave me alone. Leave me alone." She said, "It's me you keep following. You are a strong person. You come here to fight. Why do you come out from the village where the living are? Why do you always follow me? So, she tried to shake her off, she tried to shake her off...as if...her friends just followed, pushing her, pushing her. Finally, they arrived at the village, at the side of the village. They started to sing.

Ridicule, ridicule, mother. Ridicule, ridicule, mother.  
Your jealousy causes you to fight. [What kind of jealousy is this?]  
Ridicule, ridicule, mother.  
It causes you to fight those already dead.  
Ridicule, ridicule, mother.  
Residents of this neighborhood are not here.  
Ridicule, ridicule, mother.  
So they can come watch her friend.  
Ridicule, ridicule, mother.

And in the village of Sofia, now the chief said, "Alaale! Alaale! Isn't this the woman they married there, this one? It's this one who's come. No, I'm surprised. Listen to her co-wife." "This one, that's why this one comes to the garden, so that she'll go fight." "Her husband has told her to stay." [The husband said,] "As you

see, me I was widowed and was given a substitute woman, I was given [one]. 'You should just go weeding in the garden.' But she did this, when she went there, she returned to the grave yard to go fight that one who remained there, her co-wife...she didn't mind me, no. She's always going to fight, all the time. So that's why today, it's all beyond me." Now the chief said, "I've never seen this in the land, this kind of jealousy. Of all here in the land, where there is jealousy, the **"number one"** is this one. Now what will you do to ... to get her off your back?" As for the husband, he said, "Alaale! I thought, 'Maybe she's where? ... she goes to weed the garden.' But you go fighting your friend, who you go to fight with every day, every day, and she's even died. And I've been cleansed, they cleansed me and gave me a substitute wife. You are obsessed, young woman. Ahh, today you're going to see." So, now there, what did they do? The chief came. He said, "This is very difficult." "Chief, what will you do?" He said, "No, this person, let's plead with these who are dead." So the chief began to plead, he begged, he begged, he begged. "What to do?" He said, "Perform some rituals." They performed rites, they performed, they performed. "Go back, she won't return again to come and fight. This person is obsessed." So they pacified her [the dead wife]. What did they do? They pacified her. And what did she do? She went away.

Now the husband said, "How come? This is the one I first married long ago, then you kept fighting with her until she died. You are cast out." That's where they drove her out, *mukwai*, cast her out and threw her belongings after her, throwing her belongings after her. She went to her family. Now the husband remained a bachelor. That's where I've finished *mukwai*. [Ms. Kombe then quickly stands up and walks away but is brought back by the audience's demand that she "Sit down!" I think the intention was to be sure she held her place at the center of attention to receive proper acknowledgement of her efforts.]

Ms. Kombe's performance differed from the earlier two storytellers' efforts. First, she was more dramatically engaged in the tale's events, using broader and exaggerated gestures and verbal description. Further, she provided dialogue for the story's principal characters in a very engaged manner, illustrating the loud and aggressive nature of the young wife and the more righteous character of the older wife. When she keeps referring to how the husband asks the younger wife to go weed the garden, Ms. Kombe is also suggesting that this woman is not only combative but lazy and/or negligent of her wifely duties. Structurally, the story revolved around the repeated visits to the graveyard and the song that the ghosts sang about the young woman.<sup>161</sup> Ms. Kombe actually pauses before singing the song the first time

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161 A Tabwa narrative with a different plot but a similar repeated scene of ghosts singing

in order to ask the audience if they are prepared to help her sing. When they answer affirmatively, she goes on to lead them in the song, where they repeat the chorus and she fills in the one-line verses. Through the lyrics, there is a commentary on the young co-wife's improper, even extreme behavior. Generically, then, this narrative is closer to what the Lunda and other Bemba-speaking groups call a *lushimi*, generally connoting a tale with at least one song in it and often not containing the literal didactic elements of tales called *mulumbe*. Obviously, didacticism is not absent from this tale, since the final images depict the discussion and action taken by the society to correct the problems brought on by the jealous young wife's actions.

The narrative is thematically more complex than the earlier stories. It does have a relationship to Mr. Pandwe's last narrative about Kalulu being bound to provide labor for his in-laws. In this tale, the problem revolves around marital relations, especially as they pertain to a polygamous household, where the co-wives do not get along. Clearly, a woman willing to drive her co-wife out of the marriage then continue to fight with her after the older woman dies, is carrying rivalry to unwarranted extremes. The fact that the situation must be remedied by the village performing special rites to appease the angry ghosts suggests the serious nature of this kind of jealousy and marital dissonance. It is also obvious that Ms. Kombe is of the age of someone who may, in fact, be an elder co-wife in a polygamous home. Though I had no proof, or even any inkling, that this was the case, Ms. Kombe's narrative is still all the more effective for having been performed by a woman who is at least aware of these possible conflicts.<sup>162</sup>

It is notable that a story about jealous co-wives was told by the young Bemba mother Elizabeth at Malole (Chapter III) from a different view point. The three co-wives who resurrect their husband are portrayed as initially harmonious until two plot against the other. While it is not specified, the targeted wife was most likely the youngest, since there were accusations of laziness and not helping the others. From the point of view of Elizabeth, then, the more difficult position in a polygamous household is that of the youngest wife, clearly inverting the situation decryd by Ms. Kombe.

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a song to arrogant and combative wives is included in my 1989 monograph. A similar thematic point emerged, whereby ghosts imparted both wisdom and justice regarding improper domestic behavior (Cancel 1989, pp. 45–48).

162 Of the four performers I taped at Mkomba in 1989, Ms. Kombe, Bana Luka [Mother of Luka], was the only one still living in 2005. Born in 1936, at the time of our recording session she was fifty-three years old. She had indeed been the elder of two co-wives and managed, it seems, to outlive her husband.



On a broader level, questions about women performing in public before a mixed audience are raised by Ms. Kombe's efforts. While the women performing in the Bemba contexts examined earlier were elders and among a small mixed group of age-mates, Luva Kombe stepped into a situation where men had been performing and setting the tone of themes and discourse before a large group. She exhibited nervousness when she began, and was encouraged by other women to calm down and do a good job. When she finished the story, Ms. Kombe quickly jumped up to vacate the seat where the previous performers had been sitting, only to be instructed, again by other women, to remain in place. Generally, women tell stories most commonly in the more intimate settings around the hearth in the evenings, populated by small groups of children and relatives or when gathered with other women doing chores or relaxing. The choice to speak out in the form of a narrative about the potential inequities of polygamy, in the form of a fictional narrative, had wider resonances than simply one performance session. Due in large part to the nature of how sessions were organized and carried out, most of the performances documented in this study did not allow for women to break into male-centered events. The potential for tension and the expression of these tensions is suggested by Ms. Kombe's performance, as well as the session discussed earlier at Chitimukulu's village, wherein women insisted on performing *their* songs and taking over the playing of drums from the men.

While not a central part of this study, it is important to acknowledge that the groups recorded were matrilineal in most respects, though no less patriarchal when it comes to gender politics and overt expressions of power. That older men and women seem to get on comfortably in friendly and cooperative ways does not suggest that this is the case for all neighbors and for men and women of younger, more competitive age groups. Feminist scholars of folklore and cultural expressions make it clear that women perform themselves in complex ways within patriarchal societies and within the frames of creative activities. Among Bemba-speaking societies, the gender divide is complicated by the fact that women undergo formal initiation into adulthood while men do not. Instruction and solidarity are imparted by elder women in various symbolic activities within these rites.<sup>163</sup>

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163 Women's initiation in the north of Zambia is most famously detailed in Audrey Richards' landmark study of Bemba rites, *Chisungu* (1988). Meagan Vaughan also provides an important contemporary contextualization of Richards' work on gender

Further, communal norms are always shifting when it comes to actual familial and social positions held by men and women. Mostly speaking of western societies, Patricia Sawin asks, “[i]n what ways might a woman’s performance challenge male privilege or hegemonic structures that support male dominance?” (2002, p. 41)<sup>164</sup> While Ms. Kombe and Elizabeth depict situations in which it is the women who break the norms of harmony, the deeper connotations have to do with a polygamous system that is often fraught with tension and the potential for discord.

After Ms. Kombe’s performance, the audience had grown in size to seventy or eighty people. My young sons were becoming real objects of interest to a good number of children, and the noise level of the gathering was making it hard to be heard, particularly for the last performer, Ms. Daria Mwape.<sup>165</sup> We decided to leave after settling the compensation of the storytellers. It was difficult to try to justify to the two women, who had each told one story, that they were receiving half of what the men received—five, versus ten kwacha. However, they eventually seemed to accept that the original agreement was three stories for ten kwacha and that this was why the men were paid more. Obviously, pondering such matters in retrospect, it’s continually embarrassing to consider how little compensation I actually paid out in comparison to what the performers provided me. What I’ve done historically, especially working with Tabwa performers who I visit more than once, is to bring monetary or material gifts when I return, but this was not the case in the brief contact I had with most of the performers in this study. My family and I returned to Mwense to spend the night at the rest house and start out again the next morning for the large village of Mbereshi.

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- in the 1930s (1992). Corbeil contributes a detailed pictorial volume on the symbolic emblems/art works used in the *chisungu* rites (1982).
- 164 Sawin lists three possibilities: “First, a female performer might persuasively depict or enact an image of women at odds with the society’s naturalized vision of ‘woman’s role.’” (p. 41); Second, the female performer might take on a role or perform a genre conventionally reserved for men, thus claiming for a woman a role that confers prestige and controls ritual knowledge.” (p. 41) “The third possible threat...explores the emotional dimension of the performer/audience relationship. A successful performance *moves* the audience.” (p. 42)
- 165 In fact, the noise level drowned out around 40% of Ms. Mwape’s words on the video and audio tapes. I’ve chosen to omit her story from this study because of the difficulty in trying to transcribe and translate it. On my return visit in 2005, I found out that Daria Mwape was the wife of Moffat Mulenga, Bana Mwenya.

## Postscript

I returned to Kashiba in October 2005, taking a minibus from Mansa, where I was staying with friends. Getting off near the local shops, I showed around photos of the performers until someone recognized Idon Pandwe and directed me about a mile back down the road to the village of Mkomba. I dropped by the home of the village headman, who was not home, but one of the men sitting at the *nsaka*, Mr. Lawrence Chita, guided me across the street to the home of Moffat Mulenga, aka Bashi Mwenya. There were several homes in the compound and there were a lot of children and adolescents in the immediate area. At least two adolescent women bore a striking resemblance to their father, Mr. Mulenga. After I explained who I was, a few people remembered my earlier visit. We walked across to an area shaded by a tree and I set up the DVD player on a chair someone provided. Within minutes there were thirty or forty people, mostly children, watching the playback of the performances. Word also spread around that I was asking about the families of Mr. Pandwe and Ms. Kombe, and their relatives also came around. I showed the photos and transcripts of the narratives and, with the help of Mr. Chita, managed to identify then speak to the sons of Mr. Mulenga and Ms. Kombe and a daughter of Mr. Pandwe. They filled me in on some details of their parents' lives, mostly consisting of birth years, employment history, and year of death. Of the three, Ms. Kombe was still alive. Known as Bana Luka ("Mother of Luka"), Ms. Kombe was suffering from some sort of mental illness, wherein she was quite withdrawn, not often aware of things going on around her, and had virtually no reaction to my visit, other than, perhaps, fear and discomfort at all the activity around the event. She'd had six children and some of them still lived near her home. Clearly, Ms. Kombe was being cared for by at least two of them.

After around two hours, I took some photos of the families. If it were possible to judge by the number of people who posed for the pictures, I'd say that Mr. Mulenga had a lot of his relatives still living in the village, Ms. Kombe's was second in number, and Mr. Pandwe's third. I collected names and addresses of where to send the photos, then pushed on, with Mr. Chita, back to the headman's compound, where I took a few more pictures, then walked back to the shops for something cold to drink before a bus for Mansa arrived at the stop.

In retrospect, most of my impressions regarding the performers at that 1989 session seemed accurate. Mr. Pandwe was better educated, well-traveled and wealthier than Mr. Mulenga. Ms. Kombe had indeed been a first wife in a polygamous marriage. Like most of my return visits on this 2005 tour, my inquiries simply elicited more questions than answers, as the few meager dates and biographical bits really did little to explain a life or verify intent when it came to the stories performed. As in most of the other instances, my sixteen years of observation of moments frozen in time were butting against a larger and more complex reality.

## Mbereshi

The next day, leaving the rest house at Mwense, we hoped to find some kind of lodging at the Mabel Shore Girls Secondary School. The headmistress of the school, Mrs. P. Ngalande, was kind enough to allow us to stay in a room in her home. I visited Mano that afternoon and we agreed to meet in the morning, when he would gather together a few of his friends for a recording session. The rest of the late afternoon was spent trying to track down diesel fuel for my Land Rover, since there was a shortage in the region and we were trying at all locations to keep topping up the tank. We spent the evening with Mrs. Ngalande, then I set out a little before eight in the morning, along with the school's bursar Mr. Kapampa, to record the session at Mano's, whose full name is Chipolobwe Madya Misenga.

When we arrived, no one had yet come, so we sat in Mano's *nsaka* and chatted for around a half-hour until his colleagues showed up. Mano proceeded to discuss his health and some problems he was having with his eyes. I promised to come by later and give him a small bottle of eye drops I had. Eventually, two elder men and a woman arrived and we set up some chairs and stools outside of the *nsaka*, where the sun was much warmer than sitting in the shade.

After we took turns explaining what I was doing, the woman, named Emeliya Muleya, began by performing a *lushimi* that contained a song. The context of this session was very different from the conditions of the previous day at Kashiba. We comprised an audience of about six people, sitting quietly at Mano's homestead, with only the noise of a few chickens filling the background. Ms. Muleya was probably in her late sixties or

early seventies, with graying close-cropped hair, and a sturdy though not overweight build. She wore a sleeveless white blouse, with horizontal red stripes along its lower half, and had a blue and white tie-dyed patterned *citenge* around her waist and legs. On her left wrist and forearm she wore five simple plastic bracelets of various colors.

## Lunda Storytelling 8 by Emeliya Muleya\*



Robert

Cancel: Your name?

EM: Emeliya Muleya.

RC: OK. You can begin *mukwai*.

EM: Yes. There was a little thing, *mukwai*. People lived like this in a country. There was a child of a common man; her name was Rose. Her father was a hunter. They went into the bush. They walked and walked and walked; they walked and walked. She became pregnant. She begot two children, twins, a boy and a girl. When she gave birth to two children, they grew up. When they grew up the boy said, "Father, Mother, I want to marry." They answered, "Where?" He said, "I myself, I know." They answered, "You know?" He said, "Yes."

He went to the house, entered and shut the door. As he shut himself inside the house, his father said, "Where has this boy gone? Well, I don't know." Then his sister said, "Well, he is sleeping and he has shut the door." They called him, "You, let's go and eat *ubwali*." He answered, "I do not want to." Uhm! His mother prepared *ubwali*. She took it to him. He said, "Who are you?" "I am your mother," she answered. He began,

"I want Rose 'of the crocodile clan' [lit. 'spouse of the crocodile']...

My voice is off-key? [To audience]

Audience: That's fine.

EM: Oh yes, 'of the crocodile clan'.  
Off key, yes the tune is off key.  
I want Rose of the crocodile clan.  
Oh yes, of the crocodile clan.  
The one my mother gave me,  
Of the crocodile clan.

\* To watch a video of this story follow this link: <http://dx.doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0033.05/Lunda8>

Oh yes, of the crocodile clan.  
When we went to dig cassava tubers,  
Of the crocodile clan,  
Oh yes, of the crocodile clan.  
She is the desired one,  
Of the crocodile clan.  
Oh yes, of the crocodile clan.

He has refused. He wants Rose. Whoever came, he refused, he wanted Rose. Rose arrived with her *ubwali*. Knock, knock! "Who are you?" he asked. "I am Rose," she replied. He opened the door. The stubborn lad ate *ubwali*. It went on like that. And here ends the story.

Ms. Muleya had a very relaxed, casual style of performing. Her hands were mostly in her lap, with the left hand loosely set on her right wrist. The few times she gestured, she raised one or both of her hands slightly off her lap in order to illustrate some kind of movement or situation. Her most emphatic gesture was the stylized sign of tapping the side of her right fist with the palm of her left hand to indicate the young man had firmly closed the door behind him when he entered the house. When she began her song, Ms. Muleya sang the first verse then paused to ask the audience and me if she could sing, and I answered yes, "Uh hmm." She sang softly and unhurriedly, and used only one rendition of the song, which is unusual for most performances. Songs are commonly repeated at least once in order to set up a relationship or establish a certain kind of repetition of action, motive or situation that will be broken when a significant conclusion is reached. When Rose arrives with food for the protagonist, and he eats, Ms. Muleya simply states, "And it went on that way," and ends the story by lightly putting her hands together in the common gesture of finality that often marks a performance's conclusion.

The theme of this narrative was not particularly clear. It seems the initial young woman Rose travels with her father and becomes pregnant. Without any reference to marriage or any other characters, there is at least the implication of incest. When twins are born to Rose and grow up, it seems the son will only marry a woman named Rose. This might, again, connote incest or, if there is a less deviant theme implied, that the son is very selective and chooses to marry someone who is as good or as beautiful as his own mother. The resolution of the problem is reached when he finally chooses to eat the *ubwali* brought by the "Rose" of his desires which also seems to be his mother. The song refers to Rose as

being of the crocodile clan, which is the royal lineage of the Bemba but not the Lunda. There seems a lot in the narrative that goes unsaid, and Ms. Muleya seemed in no hurry to provide an explanation. Formally, the initial scenes of the mother getting pregnant after traveling in the bush is being compared with the son's refusal of any woman other than Rose. The tale may, in fact, have been an unstated or unasked conundrum narrative, but the mystery remained unremarked. This disinclination towards interpretation or clarification would continue in her next story.

I played back the video of the performance for all to see. Ms. Muleya at first did not notice the video images on the small screen of the monitor, but then saw herself telling the story and seemed a bit surprised and uncomfortable. The men in the audience suggested she tell another story, but she seemed hesitant, even unwilling to do so. When they eventually prevailed, they also tried to coach her before she began: "To look well, and the voice...because you have to look well in the photographs, you should sit properly without shaking, and empty your voice." I think this last bit of advice was meant to have her speak clearly, but her answer was, "I have no voice." Ms. Muleya seemed to be saying she did not have much to say or offer, but she then began the story.

## Lunda Storytelling 9 by Emeliya Muleya\*



Robert

Cancel: Give me your name.

Audience: To look well, and the voice...because you have to look well on the photographs, you should sit properly without shaking, and empty your voice.

Emeliya

Muleya: I have no voice.

Audience: Begin, will you?

EM: The people, one was in, say, Kawambwa and the other one was here. He had made a very big garden. After making his garden, pigs used to eat his crop. One day he found that the sweet potatoes had been eaten by the pigs. It is not the ordinary pigs at all, it is human being-like pigs which ate the sweet potatoes. Now, there were only how many potatoes? [Holds up one finger.]

RC: One.

\* To watch a video of this story follow this link: <http://dx.doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0033.05/Lunda9>

EM: One. It was the only one left. He arrived. "What about this potato? Who has dug it up? I will see him." He even sat in the *cifumbe* shrub, that's where he sat. As he sat in the *cifumbe* shrub like that, he had put aside his calabash of water. He stayed and stayed there until sunset. This man had thought, as he thought, he arrived at the *nsaka*, left his parcel and went away. He went to his house and stayed and stayed. He returned. He found that nobody had eaten that sweet potato. Then he spoke, he said, "Hmmm! My friends! I left the sweet potato here but nobody ate it!" Then he left the *nsaka*, and he did not want to remain in that village at all. He left and he went to make another garden in a different place. He grew all sorts of crops. Surprisingly, as people passed by they used to dig potatoes. When he found that potato again, he sat in the *cifumbe* shrub. He waited and waited, but nobody showed up. He went. He even found people sitting in the *nsaka*. He left his potato there and went to his house and stayed. He stayed...

Audience: You should speak up [raise your voice].

EM: ...stayed and stayed!!! [says this last word very loudly] He stayed and stayed. He returned to the *nsaka*. When he returned to the *nsaka*, what was he told? You elderly ones? [To the audience] I have even ended my story.

Audience: Explain what it means.

EM: Should I explain? I will explain later. When he returned to the *nsaka*, he found the potato had been eaten. After they had eaten it he said, "My friends, you like me." This is how it was, *mukwai*.

RC: It is all right *mukwai*.

At this point, I simply replayed the story for all to see and there was little discussion of the tale's meaning. This seemed puzzling at the time, but as with the first performance, I assumed I'd missed some details that would be revealed when I worked on the material. If anything, the story's meaning is less obvious to me now. It can be conjectured that the farmer's crops and his relationships with his neighbors was the thematic focus of the narrative. There seemed to be a lesson about sharing, hospitality, and community that was linked to both the way the last sweet potato was not taken and the way people in the man's *nsaka* ate that last potato in the end. The man's reaction to this, "My friends, you like me," suggests that he understood that people would only take his food if he could afford it, but not eat his last bit of sustenance. Yet, the protagonist seemed to feel that a true friend would, indeed, take and eat his last potato. In any event, after her brief explanatory



epilogue, Ms. Muleya had nothing else to say on the subject, and neither did her audience.

The second person to perform was a man named Peter Bwalya. Mr. Bwalya was probably in his late fifties or early sixties, and had a thick-set build. He wore a rumpled, chocolate-brown collared shirt, with the sleeves rolled up on his thick forearms, and pea-green trousers. He had a deep voice and an easy manner of speaking. The only sign of nervousness was that he initially began the story holding his chin with his left hand, in a contemplative manner, as if trying to remember the details of the narrative.

## Lunda Storytelling 10 by Peter Bwalya\*



Robert

Cancel: You begin *mukwai*. Give me your name.

PB: Peter Bwalya.

RC: OK.

PB: A *mulumbe*. There was one village where people lived. The chief had begotten a female child. Then this female child grew up. Then this girl was abducted. After she had been abducted, the chief made an announcement. "Friends, my daughter has been abducted. What shall we do?" And then four persons stood up. There was a hunter and a thief. And there was... even the one who repaired boats and the...the...they...the one who was in charge of the boat engine. All together, four. Then when they set out like that, they went to look for that person [the chief's daughter]. They found that person where she had been taken. The thief stole that woman and put her in the boat. They set out. That demon which had abducted the girl said, "Ah! The woman has been taken." It set out and followed those people. That hunter also said, "This is now my turn to show my expertise." He killed that beast, and they even took that woman across the river, that's where she was taken. Among these four persons, who married that woman? We can interpret that the one who married that woman among those four persons is her father. He is the one who married that woman.

RC: How?

\* To watch a video of this story follow this link: <http://dx.doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0033.05/Lunda10>

- Audience: [Ms. Muleya wonders about who married whom, and Mano supplies the thought, "Because all of them had failed..." and Mr. Bwalya seems to echo that remark.]
- PB: Because all of them had failed. They had found it difficult.
- RC: Is it a *mulumbe*?
- PB: It is a *mulumbe*, yes. This is where I end *mukwai*. This is the only one I know.
- RC: Oh.
- Audience: [Ms. Muleya] Bring a song...

It was, in fact, a very brief story, told in the style of a conundrum, wherein a chief's daughter is kidnapped by a demon and four men set out to bring her back. When audience members seem to call for an interpretation of the conclusion, Mr. Bwalya echoes the opinion offered by Mr. Mano, that the four had failed and that's why the chief married the girl. When I asked Mr. Bwalya if this was a *mulumbe*, he said that it was and claimed, in a good-humored and mildly embarrassed way, that it was the only one he knew. He stood up to signal he'd finished his performance.

As in the preceding narrative, it is difficult to draw a clear thematic conclusion from this performance. A couple of elements of the tale add to this uncertainty. First, there was not a lot of detail provided for the actions of the story. It is not clear why the demon kidnapped the chief's daughter. It is not clear what each of the potential rescuers did to save the girl. Second, even the characters themselves are not well delineated. Usually in this kind of conundrum story, the rescuers each have a notable skill that will be used to complete their mission.<sup>166</sup> While the hunter and thief are clearly drawn, Mr. Bwalya hesitated while enumerating the

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166 In the Bemba narrative told by Elizabeth, the three co-wives each had a certain skill that was used to bring their husband back to life. It would not be difficult to rework this tale into a conundrum narrative, asking at the end which wife had the most important skill or, if the plot was slightly reworked, which of the women deserved to marry the man. In the brief Tabwa conundrum told by Cipioka Patrick, the question centered on the meaning of how a man could marry a woman, have the fetus grow in the mother-in-law's womb, then have his own mother give birth to the baby. Laudon Ndalazi poses the conundrum about the parts of the buffalo in the Bisa village of Nabwalya. Also at Nabwalya, Lenox Paimolo sets three men's skills against one another and explains that the farmer was "superior." Similarly, Kabuswe Nabwalya in his Bisa *mulumbe*, focuses on four points of advice a father provides his son, then explains what each one means.

other two rescuers. He even asks himself if he can remember the others, finally listing two rather vague characters: someone who was the boat's "engineer" and someone who repaired boats. So, audience expectations as to what each character will contribute to the mission are not clearly set up. Third, in the action of the story, the rescue is only vaguely described, with the thief and hunter contributing their skills in a forthright manner, but the two other characters do not emerge in well-defined images. Finally, it is not clear why the chief marries his daughter, just as it is not clear, in the explanation, why it was interpreted that the rescuers had failed. It is notable that the incest theme carries over from Ms. Muleya's first story. In some respects, it may be easiest to see the narrative as one in a larger corpus of stories that the audience had heard before, and they were simply supplying the details from their memories of earlier versions of the tale. In any event, if the theme was clear in a wider context of narratives, it was neither explained nor pursued in a way that would have helped me understand its meaning.

The next performer was Mano, and he had prepared a selection of royal praises to Chief Kazembe, along with explanations of each.

## Lunda Storytelling 11 by Chipolobwe Mwadya Misenga [Mano]\*



Robert  
Cancel: Your name?

Chipolobwe  
Mwadya I am "Wisdom is obtained from  
Misenga: people, not wisdom from oneself."  
This means, as for me, I should be led by my friends out there. One should not say, "I have my own wisdom." This is my praise name; it is not the name I was given at birth. My birth name, the name of my ancestors whose royal chieftainship I have inherited here in Mbereshi, is Chipolobwe Mwadya Misenga. These are the praises we use to praise ourselves or to praise Mwata Kazembe when he is at a meeting or among people.

**Number one:** *Sensele* [a kind of elephant grass] the grass which farmers fail to conquer. This means that Mwata Kazembe does not have any challenger. Is that clear?

RC: Uh huhn.

\* To watch a video of this story follow this link: <http://dx.doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0033.05/Lunda11>

- CM: **Number two:** We praise Mwata thus, "One may die in one's wanderings but one cannot sprout." This means even if Chief Mwata Kazembe dies in the bush, he cannot blossom or flourish like a flower [he can't rise again, living] just as the Chief who dies in his own village can't gain his life. Even a common person cannot gain his life, whether he dies in the bush or in the village. He who dies in the bush will be just as dead as the one who dies in the village. He will not blossom like a flower at all. The same thing applies to the one who dies in Europe and he or she who dies in Africa; it is the same death. Is it clear?
- RC: Yes *mukwai*.
- CM: **Number three:** Wagtail, the great one, the bird that is covered with plumes, child of John, he who will be victimized for the splendor of his plume which his father John gave him. This means Chief Mwata Kazembe will die as His Royal Highness because he is on the throne of chieftainship left by his father. Is that clear?
- RC: Uh huhm. I see.
- CM: **Number four:** Large head which has filled the palace of Mwanabombwe. This means Mwata Kazembe is the over all ruler of the whole respectable, rich Lunda kingdom.
- Number five:** The mischievous moth [*sumbalala*] brought trouble upon the innocent ones. This means wickedness leads to death.
- RC: Uh huhn.
- CM: Is it clear? The mischievous moth brought trouble upon the innocent ones. Wickedness brings death or trouble, you bring trouble upon elders. *Sumbalala* is an insect, a small animal, it brings trouble upon larger species of its kind. This is clear, isn't it?
- Audience: Yes, *mukwai*.
- CM: **Number six:** The beast that withdraws its claws in its hiding place. This means when the leopard is in a tree its sharp nails are withdrawn, but when it sees a human being, it pushes out the sharp nails and attacks him or her. This is the same way a human being behaves. He/She doesn't reveal the anger or bitterness that may be in his or her heart.
- Number seven:** The double-tongued one before the crowds will betray you. Two persons could be discussing certain matters but when such matters become known to the public, one of these two persons betrays his or her friend; his/her friend gets into trouble and ends in prison while he himself/she herself escapes the noose though both of them committed the offence. This is the meaning

of “the double-tongued one before the crowds will betray you.” In front of the crowd he/she betrays his/her friend; he/she refuses to testify in his/her favor. We are teaching now, eh? [Referring to me.]

Audience: I am learning something from...

CM: **Number eight:** Pay homage and be endeared. These are the people who are called “informers” in English. They work towards making their friends lose employment. The two of them could be employed in one company, one of them goes to their boss and says, “My friend has gone to such and such a place, he has gone to such and such a place,” until his friend is dismissed from employment. This is treachery!

Eh, eight...uh, nine.

**Number nine:** He/She who looks small is as heavy as a stone. Someone may look simple but deep in his/her heart, he/she is a dignified person. This is as it is with Kazembe. Kazembe, especially the current one, looks small but nobody can challenge him.

I finished with what number?

Audience: Nine.

RC: You’ve arrived at ten.

CM: **Number ten:** Elders used to say, “People make up the world, without people it is a wilderness.” This is to say it is the people who rule the world. If there are no people for the chief to rule over, then he is presiding over a desert. That is why they say, “People make up the world, without people it is a wilderness.”

[pauses for a minute as he looks through his notebook]

**Number eleven:** Giant hawk who went to plead with god to kill him. Through mischievous deeds one can bring death upon oneself. This is what we mean when we say, “Giant hawk who went to plead with god to kill him.” We are talking about mischievous acts.

**Number twelve:** Wisdom is obtained from people...that’s what I said earlier on. One cannot pretend to be “all-knowing” at all. One should be assisted by one’s friends [in making important decisions]. This is where I end.

RC: You have done a good job.

I was immediately struck by several elements of Mano’s performance. First, he was an imposing figure, somewhere around his late sixties or early seventies, standing nearly six feet three inches tall, and quite slim. For the occasion, he’d dressed in the ceremonial regalia of Lunda nobles: a cloth headdress [frilled cloth in four stripes colored red, white, green and blue] sitting high on the back of his head, a dark green/brown suit jacket, a

pressed collared shirt with rust colored vertical stripes, and a light-colored waist wrap that went from his hips to his ankles, worn over his trousers.<sup>167</sup> He also wore round steel-framed eyeglasses, which gave him a decidedly scholarly look. This impression was underscored when he began to recite the praises by reading them from a sheet of paper where he had written them out. The genres of oral praises—sometimes called *ngoma* [drum poetry] or *imishikakulo* [praise poetry] or, as Mano refers to them here, *malumbo* [which is a generic term for praise names or poetry]—usually involves singing and, often, some kind of instrumentation. Some months earlier, Mano had demonstrated a version of the art form by playing the talking drum, *mondo*, for us. So it seemed rather anomalous when he opted to simply read the texts instead of using the oral memory postulated by scholars such as Albert Lord and Walter Ong, who at times even claimed this kind of memory and performance does not co-exist with written literacy.<sup>168</sup> He even used English language numbers to identify each praise, “Number one,” “Number two,” etc. Mano elaborated on each praise without further consulting the text, which suggested that he was spontaneously explicating the material. The language of the praises was difficult to follow, at times archaic,<sup>169</sup> but even the explanations were a bit dense for me to take in at that point, though when he’d periodically ask me if I understood his points, not wanting to interrupt the flow of this discussion and, admittedly, not wanting to seem more ignorant than I actually was, I’d usually answer yes. He recited twelve praises along with their explanations.

After we listened to and watched the playback, Mano opted to recite a praise and eulogy for “Mwata Kazembe **number four**, Keleka Msosi Kanyembo **number two**.”

## Lunda Storytelling 12

### by Chipolobwe Mwadya Misenga [Mano]\*



Robert  
Cancel: All right, you can begin.  
Chipolobwe  
Mwadya Misenga: What?  
Audience: He says you can begin.

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167 For a broader discussion of Lunda royalty and customs, see Cunnison 1959. See, also, Cancel 2006.

168 See Lord 1960 and Ong 1982.

169 Sometimes the language draws on forms of the Luba language or what Chiwale and Chinyanta refer to as “Lubanized Bemba.” (1989)

\* To watch a video of this story follow this link: <http://dx.doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0033.05/Lunda12>

CM: This is a eulogy for Mwata Kazembe **number four**, Keleka Msosi, Kanyembo **number two**. Mother of Chibangu the ancient one who outlives the rest, Kashekele passed away. You are the one who has assumed leadership. Great one, you are the remnant of the ancient Royal Highness. The sovereign ruler who is as firmly planted as a banana tree. The strong one, you walk over the weak ones and subdue even those who resist your firm control. You are Keleka Msosi, Keleka the chief, we long to be protected, we have suffered a lot. You are the supplier of our daily needs, you even take care of the destitute. You have even overcome foreign influence. You conquer territory after territory. You cannot be defeated. You, son of Ilunga, the one who is one of the founding fathers of this chieftainship.

Although he consulted a hard-bound notebook to make sure of the exact name of the deceased chief, Mano proceeded to recite the entire string of praise epithets without looking at the text. The language of the praises was quite allusive, taking many angles and paths to create laudatory images. As with most praises, numerous tropes in the form of allusions, metaphors, similes and comparisons were employed. He finished by referring to the late Kazembe as “You, son of Ilunga, the one who is one of the founding fathers of this chieftainship.” This last reference links him to one of the early chiefs who led the Lunda migration to the Luapula region and who are still recognized as a vital part of the history of the region and the ruling lineage.

The last performer of the morning was Mr. Paolo Kaoma.

## Lunda Storytelling 13 by Paolo Kaoma\*

Robert	
Cancel:	Give me your name and begin.
Audience:	The name.
PK:	Paolo Kaoma.
RC:	You can begin.
PK:	The <i>mulumbe</i> states that the world is cruel. The dictum [that] the world is cruel has become our...our common saying, we the Bemba [-speaking] people. Many don't know what we mean when we say the world is



\*To watch a video of this story follow this link: <http://dx.doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0033.05/Lunda13>

cruel. There were people who lived like this, some in Kawambwa others in Kazembe. Then someone died and the relatives said, "We shall not bury this person here. We shall take his body. They took the corpse and mid-way on their journey they stopped to rest. And then a woman also...that woman who was pregnant, left Mbereshi to go there [probably to Kawambwa]. Mid-way on her journey she met those people who were carrying a corpse. That woman stopped briefly to mourn that dead person. When these people lifted the corpse so that they could continue their journey, this woman also started off. The child in the woman's womb told that one who was in the womb, [rather] the corpse told the child in the woman's womb, "When you are born, don't speak. You should be a dumb child so that you see how cruel the world is." That pregnant woman left. Those who were carrying the corpse went to bury it. I think she just stayed two days. She gave birth. That child lived and started making sounds that babies make, "Ng'a, ng'a." When he began sitting unaided, he still couldn't say "Daddy." "Ah! What's the problem? This child is dumb." They tried traditional Bemba medicine, but it didn't work.

He started crawling, but was still unable to speak. He started walking, but was still dumb. When he reached the age of four – five, his friends started taking him to the surrounding bushes and dambos [wetlands] to set bird and rat traps. They set rat traps, they set some traps in places where birds liked resting. The dumb child's trap caught a bird, but the other boys got his and took it home. They reported that they were the ones who killed it. The dumb boy, hmm, he remained silent. They lived like that. They stopped setting bird traps and began going far into the bush to set animal traps [using ropes]. The dumb boy's trap caught an animal. The other children who were able to speak got that animal from the dumb child's rope. They took it home and reported that they were the ones who killed it. His mother beat him and entreated him not to go into the bush, but he continued going with his friends.

Then they resolved to stop using ropes to trap animals because, so they argued, they were only able to kill small animals such as duikers. Therefore, they began digging game pits right in the bush. They made fences [barriers] and left openings where they dug game pits. When they went back they found an animal had fallen into the dumb child's [*Chibulu's*] game pit. The other children got it.

RC: Which...which animal?

Audience: What kind of animal?

PK: The roan antelope.

RC: Oh.



PK: They took it home and ate [it]. They went back the following day and found the bushbuck had fallen into Chibulu's game pit. The ones who were able to speak took it home and ate [it]. Chibulu was again beaten by his mother but he did not stop going with his friends. It went on like that. They continued killing animals. The following day, they killed the roan...the eland in Chibulu's game pit. They got it. They killed animals, many animals like that. Now the child of the chief, like Chief Mano or Mwata Kazembe, the child of the chief said, "Let me go and fetch firewood from the bush." Those game pits, you know they used to cover them up with soil don't you? Now as she went "*pwa*"...the chief's daughter fell into the game pit and died. She didn't return home at all up to sunset. People began looking for her. They discovered that she had fallen into the game pit. They exclaimed, "Ah! You...you people of this village, who has dug these game pits?" Others said, "It is these boys and Chibulu." These people took the boys there. The boys said, "It is Chibulu. It is Chibulu's game pit that has killed this animal. He is the one who has killed this person."

They took this person [the chief's dead daughter]. They said, "Call Chibulu's mother." They got her and made her sit in the center [of the crowd] just like this, and said, "You too will die today. Bring a sword." Chibulu still remained silent. Some people went to get the sword from the house so that they could kill his mother. As he sat there, he said, "Hmm. Certainly I was told that the world is cruel." "Friends, Chibulu has spoken!" "Well, *mukwai*, let me explain," he said. "When we began trapping birds, my friends used to steal my birds. When we switched to trapping animals using ropes, my friends who are able to speak began stealing my animals. I was physically disadvantaged because I was unable to speak. And now, in that place where we dug game pits, I have been killing all the animals people eat in this village. My friends don't kill anything. Then this chief's daughter who is dead, the game pit she fell into was dug by this boy." "What a surprise! He has spoken! Chibulu! Chibulu has spoken! Chibulu has spoken!" Chibulu continued, "So let's go to the place where we dug game pits so that I show the owners to prove what I am talking about." The whole group left for the bush.

Chibulu began, "Whose game pit is this?" One boy said, "It's mine." "What about this one?" One boy said, "It is yours." "What about this one?" Another said, "It's for this one." "And this one?" "It's for this one." "What about the game pit the chief's daughter fell into and died?" Someone said, "It's this one." People even started going back to the village. "Your Royal Highness, Chief, this is what happened, this is what happened, this is what happened.

The game pit your daughter fell into and died belongs to...it is for this one. It is the game pit in which your daughter died."

This is the origin of the *mulumbe* [linked to the] saying that the world, therefore, the world is cruel.

Mr. Kaoma seemed to be in his late fifties or early sixties, medium height and slim. He had very short, graying hair, a mustache and a small "patch" of beard under his lower lip. Mr. Kaoma wore a gray sport coat, slightly ruffled white collared shirt, and blue/green trousers. Most of the time he spoke he would occasionally move a crumpled red handkerchief from one hand to the other. His overall bearing was not so much grave as serious, a no-nonsense attitude. Mr. Kaoma told the lengthiest tale of the session, beginning by saying, "This *mulumbe* states that the world is cruel. The dictum [that] the world is cruel has become our...our common saying, we the Bemba [-speaking] people. Many don't know what we mean when we say the world is cruel."<sup>170</sup>

Mr. Kaoma's rather restrained gestures, framed his story, which was told at a slow, deliberate pace. His hands mostly remained in his lap, while occasionally pointing with one arm or the other in the direction of action or indicating where characters were located or were moving to. He fixed me and the other members of the audience with a serious countenance and even as he acted out some moments of high excitement, such as when people discovered that Chibulu could talk, he remained restrained and deliberate. Overall, Mr. Kaoma kept control of the various details of the story and similarly kept his focus on elaborating on the saying with which he began the performance. Of the other three narratives, this one most successfully foregrounded and gave depth to the events and theme of the tale. The fatalistic saying was well-illustrated by the ill-treatment of the seemingly mute and passive hero. It was a saying that was passed on, in an inversion of the usual expression, from the grave to the cradle, from a dead person to a baby not yet born. The image involving the death of the chief's daughter in a game pit is found in numerous other narratives I've recorded among the neighboring Tabwa people.<sup>171</sup>

After a bit of commiserating, I paid Mano around twenty kwacha, who in turn would distribute the money to his friends, and the session broke

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170 A Tabwa storyteller, Mr. Datson Kaselekela, performed a tale that similarly explored a saying that pointed to the darker side of humanity, "A human is evil in this world." The phrase recurred throughout the narrative, as the various characters illustrated the truth of this claim (Cancel 1989, pp. 149–153).

171 See Cancel 1989, pp. 129–158.

up. I drove the session's participants to a PTA meeting at the local primary school, stopped at the hospital to buy some diesel—arranged by a British doctor we'd met the night before—and returned to Mabel Shore to gather up my family, bid Mrs. Ngalande farewell, and set out for Kashikishi and, later that day, Puta.

The performances by these four elders formed a range of thematic concerns and dramaturgical strategies. Ms. Muleya's two tales focused on two kinds of human relationships, marriage and community/friendship, respectively. The details were sparse, and she offered a sketchy explanation of the second story, about the man who grew the sweet potatoes. Both narratives contained images that seemed quite allusive, perhaps related to other versions that had broader, more detailed exposition in the telling. The performer also used food as important images in both tales. While Ms. Muleya displayed relaxed and confident performance skills, she was not interested in revealing the meaning of either tale, providing only minimal explication. Mr. Bwalya's performance, truncated and rather vague, seemed more the result of nervousness or uneven storytelling proficiency. The evidence suggests that he simply had not worked out the details of the tale in his mind before or during his performance. Yet this narrative is probably the most intriguing of the four, mostly due to the strange ending and interpretation, particularly the notion that the chief would marry his own daughter. There is at least a remnant of a theme found in other narratives in the broader traditional context whereby a father, sometimes a chief, cannot bring himself to give his beautiful daughter to a suitor and therefore sets seemingly impossible tasks as conditions of courtship. Similarly, Ms. Muleya's tale of the young man who refused to eat and secluded himself in his mother's house suggests another kind of extreme when it comes to courtship.

Mano was actually working in a vein opposite to that of the storytellers who preceded him. He was taking what are intended to be esoteric compositions and explaining them to me. He clearly felt it important to impart this knowledge and to exhibit his own depth of understanding of the praises. Lunda praises are actually unusually well-documented and explained in several published works. This links into a wider tradition, written and oral, of Lunda history and the documentation of the first Lunda chiefs' arrival and ongoing prevalence in the Luapula area.<sup>172</sup> Similarly,

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172 Lunda praise songs have been collected, annotated and published by Mr. Chileya J. Chiwale. See, for example, Chiwale 1989. Lunda ethnography and history was

Mr. Kaoma's entire tale focused on the explanation of an old truism, "the world is cruel" [literally, "the country/land is difficult" (*icalo caayafya*)]. Paolo Kaoma made sure that the pessimistic sentiment was established at the beginning of the narrative and emphasized it by describing the difficult life of Chibulu, repeating the saying through the mouth of Chibulu, and finally underscored it by literally linking the notion to the explanation of the story.

The performances in this session, therefore, pulled in two different directions, but like the elephant and hippo in the well-known trickster tale, the overall effect was a kind of balance or stasis between mystery or deep allusion, and a didactic and emphatic turn towards detailed explication. In some ways, we can see the earlier session at Kashiba in the same way, with Mr. Mulenga simply spinning trickster tales as fast as he could in order to get it over with and get paid, and Mr. Pandwe trying to fulfill the promise of the *mulumbe* form by detailing and explaining his narratives for the edification of his immediate audience and me in particular. Ms. Kombe was similarly looking to explore the theme of the difficulties of a polygamous household when principles of respect and cooperation are not upheld.

Part of what we can conclude in considering these sessions is that each performer, indeed each session, had his, her, or its own characteristics. How these emerged, or perhaps were withheld, in performance is part of what is continually being negotiated and created in any living enactment. In both sessions, I have to take the credit or blame, or maybe both, for initiating the events. The overall focus of this project is to describe how this complex relationship plays out in any one instance.

## Postscript

Although I'd returned to the Lunda area several times since my initial 1989 visit, I never had the opportunity to follow up on my earlier recorded data. Instead, I began a long project of attending and videotaping the annual

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seminally compiled and published by Ian Cunnison in the late 1940s and 1950s. There is also the impressive Bemba-language historical text compiled by Mwata Kazembe XIV Chinyanta Nankula, a team of Lunda elders and a "White Father" Catholic priest named Labrecque in the late 1930s and 1940s, Kazembe XIV Chinyanta Nankula and Labrecque 1951. This was published in Bemba and later translated by Ian Cunnison under the title of "History on the Luapula" (Cunnison 1951). Macola develops a thorough discussion of the historical and social circumstances behind this influential text (2001).

Lunda kingship festival known as the Mutomboko. (Cancel 2004, 2006) In the course of my visits, I usually ran into Mano, who was playing his role as both a respected Lunda elder and the court bard who invariably used a string of praises to introduce the Lunda king, Mwata Kazembe, on the last day of the festival, right before the Mwata performed the culminating Mutomboko dance. When the then current Mwata passed away in 1998, Mano was implicated in an intense succession dispute and within a year or two had been more or less demoted by the new Lunda king.<sup>173</sup> He moved his compound to a small village between Mbereshi and Mwansabombwe, the royal capital.

When I arrived at Mbereshi in 2005, I asked about finding information on the earlier performers at the guest house I was staying at. The caretaker directed me to the section of the village where Mano had been headman and suggested I speak to an elder who'd lived there for many years, Mr. Job Kachingwe. As I asked around to locate the proper house, a young man named Daniel Chiwele volunteered to steer me to the right place. On hearing of what I was looking for and perusing the photos and transcription texts I carried, Mr. Kachingwe invited me to sit in his home as we watched the DVD of the performances from both Mkomba and Mbereshi.

Mr. Kachingwe, consulting with four young men who sat with us in the house, claimed that Emeliya Muleya was still alive the last time they'd heard of her, and had moved to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. No one could offer an accurate estimate of her age other than she was very old. They also estimated that Peter Bwalya, who still lived nearby, had been born in 1931 and had done a stint in the British colonial army. They described him as a tin smith and all-round handyman. They noted that Mano, Chipolobwe Mwandya Misenga, had originally come to Mbereshi from Congo, where he'd been previously dispatched by an earlier Kazembe, Paulo Kanyembo. Paulo Kaoma was a builder and carpenter who'd also worked as a cook, and had lived and worked for a brief time on the Copperbelt. He'd passed away in 1997. Finally, Mr. Kachingwe agreed to interpret Ms. Muleya's story about the protagonist and his sweet potatoes. Basically, he said the man was using what appeared to be his last potato as a test to identify the people who were truly his friends, and this was the case in the final location where they did not hesitate to eat the potato. I thanked Job Kachingwe, paid him around \$5 (K20,000), took some photos

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173 See stories depicting an attempted "palace coup" in the *Times of Zambia* and the *Zambian Daily Mail* after the 1998 succession of the new Kazembe.

all around, left him with Ms. Muleya's and Mr. Kaoma's photos and texts to pass on to their families, then walked with Daniel Chiwele the short distance to Mr. Bwalya's home.

We found him sitting on a low stool on his verandah, with a young boy who was one of his children. He'd gone gray and was considerably slimmer. Gauging by the birth date I'd just written down, I'd estimate his age at around the early seventies. After a bit of explanation, he remembered my visit, if only in vague terms. I gave him a photo of his performance and the transcription, then showed him the DVD, and he did not have a lot to add to what was already there. He confirmed that he was mostly a *panga fyela* [blacksmith] and had moved to Mbereshi in 1977, the year he'd married. He and his wife had eleven children, of whom six were still alive. He posed for a couple of photos with his son and I promised to send them to him.

Mr. Chiwele and I took our leave and, on the way to his compound for another photo session, we passed the home of Imelda Kapambwe, Chipolobwe Mwadya Misenga's daughter. Like her father, she was tall, though more broadly built. After some explanation, I gave her the photograph I'd taken of Mano in 1989, along with the texts of his praises and poetry. She said he'd been born in 1914 at Mwansabombwe and in 1981 he became headman Mano at Mbereshi. He'd previously been a school teacher, a clerk and businessman at Kawambwa, some twenty or so miles away. Ms. Kapambwe also seemed to be saying he'd briefly served as chief, or more probably a regent, when the former Kazembe died in 1998. She confirmed that he was living in a subsection of Mwansabombwe, near a stream, around five miles from Mbereshi. I gave Ms. Kapambwe a couple of dollars, photographed her with her young daughter, sitting with a woman neighbor, and wrote down the address where to send them. We then crossed the road and I took some pictures of Mr. Chiwele and his family and gave him around \$2 (K10,000) to compensate him for his time. In the end, due to time constraints, the inconvenient location of his new compound, and, I have to admit, the awkward situation of visiting Mr. Misenga in what was more or less a place of exile and diminished status, I did not make the effort to visit him when I left the next morning.

