

Chapter Title: Chiefs, Tricksters and Catholics: Bemba Tales and Orations

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economic pursuit, such as farming, hunting, or fishing. They have a rich and well-documented oral history, illustrating how they migrated into Zambia from the Luba kingdom in the Congo, then expanded in a way that brought most neighboring chiefdoms under their political domination. Not surprisingly, the various ethnic groups involved in these interactions all have their own versions of how they relate to the Bemba and these often do not coincide exactly with the details of the Bemba oral traditions.

The Bemba are among the most “studied” of Zambia’s groups, with a significant body of excellent scholarship documenting various levels of their cultural and economic history.⁹² Though I had for years lived and worked at least on the edges of the Bemba area, I’d rarely attempted to record their oral traditions. During my broader research swing through Northern Province in April through June 1989, one of my goals was to gather stories at villages of the three senior Bemba chiefs: Chitimukulu, Mwamba, and Nkula. The Bemba Paramount Chief, Chitimukulu (Mutale 30 Chitapankwa II), Mr. L.M. Ng’andu the Member of the Central Committee for Northern Province, met with me at his provincial office in Kasama and recommended that I see several elders in his village, providing me with a rather elaborate letter of introduction.

Malole

Research at Chitimukulus was done in conjunction with my stay at Malole, a neighboring village and the site of St. Francis Secondary School. My son Daniel and I began by visiting St. Francis’ headmaster, who introduced us to one of his teachers, Mr. S.M. Kalunga, who agreed to chaperone us around. We stopped in to see Fele, who was headman of the village nearest the school and was a member of the council of elders [*bacilolo*] who advised the Chitimukulu. Mr. Ng’andu had, in fact, included his name on the list of people I should contact. He turned out to be a gregarious man who remembered my old graduate school colleague, a Catholic nun working on her doctorate in African Languages and Literature, who had researched in the area nearly fifteen years earlier.⁹³ He agreed to summon some people

92 Among many resources, see Richards 1939; A. Roberts 1973; and Moore and Vaughan 1994.

93 Mary Frost collected hundreds of Bemba narratives and included some twenty or thirty in her dissertation. At the time of her efforts at Malole, a different man held the headman title of Fele. Frost concentrated her collecting efforts in or near villages of the three senior Bemba chiefs, at Malole, Ilondola and Mulobula. (1978)

together for the next morning so that I could record them. A bit later we traveled to the village of Chitimukulu and, stopping at the local courthouse, we were able to set up a time to come and record on the afternoon of the next day.

Later, in the afternoon, as we walked near Fele's village, I was trying to locate an elder whose name had been mentioned as a man who told good stories. Mr. Dismas Kampamba, who seemed to be in his mid or late sixties, had just returned from his farm in the bush and appeared to be rather tired. He wore work clothes, which included old patched trousers, a tan colored crocheted cap, a tan overall jacket and a brown short-sleeved buttoned cotton shirt with a collar. As we sat outside his verandah talking, he also recalled working with my old classmate, and this served as a good initial introduction for me. I showed him a brief video of a talking-drum performance by the Lunda bard, Mano, recorded months earlier in Mbereshi. This seemed to interest him enough to agree to tell us a story.

Bemba Storytelling 1 by Mr. Dismas Kampamba*



Robert

Cancel: Begin *mukwai*.

Dismas
Kampamba: A person had stayed; when he stayed, this is a *mulumbe*, it is a *mulumbe* with a parable. When he stayed, he had stayed like that. He had even borne children, how many?

RC: [I responded to four fingers held up by Mr. Kampamba by erroneously saying] Three...

DK: Four. And then he stayed, he even went and built temporary shelters in the bush. When he went and built there in the bush, his name was Fipindulule [one who influences or changes things or direction of things]. Then he went with his children, then he told his children and said, "My children, what you should be doing is that when the honeyguide [bird] comes, that one which leads you to the honey, you follow this side. That one that...that goes to the east. The one that goes to the west, don't dare to go there." And then there they stayed. Whichever went to the east, the children

* To watch a video of this story follow this link: <http://dx.doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0033.03/Bemba1>

followed, they removed honey from the beehive and brought it. Whichever went to the east, they went and got the honey and brought it.

Then one day the children said, "Let's go there...where the honeyguide is signaling, to the west." They followed it. They even found a very, very big tree. And then that tree, that one, his friend said, "What are we going to do?" The other one said, "We shall fell it," he even struck it with an axe. As he struck it with an axe like that, the thing that was there came out, Kashimweshimwe [an ogre]. When it came out, Kashimweshimwe, that one, said, "Who are you?" Said...they said, "I am the child of Fipindulule." It said, "You change things then so that we can see." He said, "If my father was here he would have changed things." Kashimweshimwe took these children, it swallowed them.

In the morning, their father and...he came back also from where he had gone into the bush alone. He came, he did what? He came and found the children were not there. "Oh these children! Perhaps they have gone to the west there." He did not bother. He slept. In the morning the honeyguide signaled his wife towards the western direction, she followed...

Audience: His wife?

DK: His wife. She went and even found an axe where it had stood like that. She, too, struck (the tree) with an axe. The ogre came out and said, "Who are you?" She said, "I am...am...am the wife of Fipindulule." It said, "You change (the direction of) things so that we see." She said, "If my husband was here, he would have changed things." It swallowed her.

And then there he stayed. He came back from where he had gone, Fipindulule. When he came and found that person, his wife, was not there, in the morning he dressed up, he even dressed up. He even took a very big belt and fastened it round his waist, it was made of leather. Then he started going, he started going. He himself just went straight there because he knew the place. And so he found axes, the axe, he struck the tree with it. Kashimweshimwe came out and said, "Who are you?" He said, "I am Fipindulule." It said, "You change things so that we see." He tied it, he tied a very big belt round it, mfya! Mpaa! [sound of very tight grip] He fastened it tightly. Kashimweshimwe cried out, saying, "Grandfather, let go of me, I beg for mercy. Grandfather, let go of me, I beg for mercy." And finally he managed to throw it onto the ground, then uhhh! He killed it, the ogre. When he killed it like that, he said, "What shall I do? My wife and the children? All right."

He went to a black ant. The black ant there told him and said, "Grandfather, go and heat a potsherd then rub it on top of the ogre's stomach." So, truly, he went and did just that, he heated a potsherd and rubbed it on its stomach. Kwaa! And then his children started coming out and people whom it had swallowed, all of them, came out. When all of them finished coming out, that man, Fipindulule now built a village. He now became the chief of the village. There was a little *mulumbe*, it ends.

RC: Very good, *mukwai*.

Before a small audience of a few children and a young mother with a baby in a sling, Mr. Kampamba told the story while seated on the small verandah that wound round his home, leaning back with his hands resting between his slightly open thighs. He mostly used his left hand to gesture, point, and indicate action, space and direction in the narrative. He also at times mimed actions, such as when characters used the axe or when the ogre, Kashimweshimwe, grabbed and devoured various victims. Twice Mr. Kampamba used a common gesture, tapping the palm of his right hand over the thumb and index finger side of his left fist, when indicating how tight Fipindulule tied the belt round his waist, then again to show how tightly he bound up the ogre. He also moved his right hand over his stomach, from top to bottom, to act out the drawing of the potsherd across the belly of the ogre. He then used both hands; spread at the bottom of his abdomen, to indicate how Kashimweshimwe was split open and all the people emerged.

Thematically, the narrative seemed less a cautionary tale than one about the extraordinary abilities of Fipindulule, whose very name is descriptive in the form of a praise epithet. While it is clear that the wife and children disobeyed the interdiction not to follow the honeyguide in a westward direction, there is never any admonishment of these indiscretions and the victims are in fact restored to life at the story's end. Rather, the narrative's events serve to create an expectation, based on the repetition of interactions with the ogre, with first the children then the wife claiming that Fipindulule would show his powers if present and Kashimweshimwe taunting them by saying, "...change things so that we can see." After he shows his power, Fipindulule also shows his wisdom by seeking out the advice of the lowly black ant. The image of cutting open the stomach of an ogre or monster is pan-traditional in this region, found in tales from the Lamba and Tabwa, among others.⁹⁴ Like many heroes of oral narratives who become leaders,

94 See Cancel, 1989, comparison of Lamba and Tabwa tales. Indeed, the motif is common throughout southern Africa, as evidenced in older collections such as Callaway 1868,

he possesses both destructive and restorative powers. After resurrecting the people in the ogre's stomach, he becomes their chief in a new village.⁹⁵

The young mother carrying a baby in a sling, who'd witnessed Mr. Kampamba's performance, offered to tell a story as well. She only gave her first name, Elizabeth. She was probably in her late teens, rather tall, with very close-cropped hair. Elizabeth wore a maroon, multi-colored *citenge* around her waist, over a light blue patterned, short-sleeved dress. Taking Mr. Kampamba's place on the verandah of his house, she arranged her sleeping baby in her lap, still in the sling, and began her narrative. Generically, the tale is a *lushimi*, a narrative that contains a song.⁹⁶

Bemba Storytelling 2 by Elizabeth*

Robert We can begin...

Cancel: uh...give me your name. [By now there were around ten adults, mostly women, witnessing the performance. This made for a rather noisy atmosphere and I had a hard time initially hearing Elizabeth's responses. She was also a bit shy at first, looking down, and speaking softly.]

Elizabeth: Elizabeth.

RC: Again...a...again.



reprinted 1970; and Theal 1970.

95 See my discussion of heroic power combined with wisdom as they pertain to a set of Tabwa narratives. (Cancel 1989, pp. 129–158)

96 Folklorists often use the term "*cantefable*" to describe this genre. Bauman treats the intersection of genres in verbal art in some detail in several studies. (Briggs and Bauman 1992; Bauman 2004) Sub-Saharan African oral narratives so often contain songs, sayings or chants, that the mixing of genres is almost definitive. Throughout this study, I've tried to use the local terms for genres and approximate their English and scholarly equivalents. Ruth Finnegan, after surveying all manner of terminology for oral narrative traditions and pointing to various scholarly disciplines says, I think quite sensibly, "None of the terminologies or approaches can be applied in any mechanical way to the African forms analyzed and celebrated in this volume. The final choice must be for individual scholars, weighing up the costs and benefits in the light of particular genres, settings, questions, or theoretical aims, while at the same time, recognizing the complexity of the subject matter that is too dynamic, subtle and multifaceted for single-line dogmatic reductionism." (2004, p. 313)

* To watch a video of this story follow this link: <http://dx.doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0033.03/Bemba2>

E: Elizabeth.

RC: Oh, It's all right. Let's go on.

E: There is a thing [Elizabeth was speaking very softly, and some women in the audience encouraged, or maybe admonished, her to speak up]... there is a thing. People had stayed. There was even a person, one. He had married women, there was Ntoole (meaning: Let me pick up) and Mweo (Life) and then Nunde (Let me stick or put pieces together). Then that young man was a very skilled hunter. Then he had told his wives to say, "Wherever I go, if I do not return, you should follow me." And those women, they had understood. They had all set out to go and live at a small village. And then the young man did just like that, he started off, he went hunting. Right there when he went hunting, he went and died. And then those women...they...they tried to follow where he went. They, the women, found their husband had died. And then their friend began to say, "Yah! And so our husband has died, what shall we say?"

Ntoole began, she said, "Begin to pick up my friend, you gather the bones (and put them in one place)." And so their friend started the song and said:

Let me pick up, let me pick up, yes let me pick up.

Let me pick up, let me pick up, yes let me pick up.

Let me pick up my husband,

Let me pick up, yes let me pick up.

Let me pick up my husband,

Let me pick up, yes let me pick up.

Nunde also began:

Let me join, let me join, yes let me join.

Let me join, let me join, yes let me join.

Let me join for my husband,

Let me join, yes let me join.

Let me just join my husband,

Let me join, yes let me join.

Mweo began:

Life, life yes life.

Let me put back, let me put back, yes let me put back.

Let me just put back my husband's life,

Yes let me put back.

And certainly *mukwai*, the husband rose, he rose and they started going to the village. They had put his pieces together. And again, just like that on another day, just like that, on another day, just like that. And then on the following day, they refused Mweo *ubwali*, she just went on becoming thinner and thinner. And their husband started off, he went right there to hunt. Again, he went and died. Mweo also, that one, where she had remained she also died.

And then those two said, "Let that good-for-nothing woman die." They said, "We don't care about her." They said, "As if she is the one who ever does the work; in fact we are the ones who just do the work." She said, "Without us she...she would not have been doing anything. We shall go and do the work, we are going to try even to breathe in life itself, he is going to rise." And so, they set out, they went and arrived where their husband was. Then Ntoole started:

Let me pick up, let me pick up, yes let me pick up.
 Let me pick up, let me pick up, yes let me pick up.
 Let me pick up my husband,
 Let me pick up, yes let me pick up.
 Let me pick up my husband,
 Let me pick up, yes let me pick up.

Nunde also began:

Let me join, let me join, yes let me join.
 Let me join, let me join, yes let me join.
 Let me just join my husband,
 Let me join, yes let me join.
 Let me just join my husband,
 Let me join, yes let me join.

Her friend said, "Yah, no my friend, since we have finished, what shall we do? Now life, how shall we blow it in, since Mweo is not there?" She said, "Yah, we are going to try." She said, "Let's both begin, we try."

Let me put back, let me put back, yes let me put back.
 Let me put back, let me put back, yes let me put back.
 My husband's life,
 Let me put back, yes let me put back.
 Let me just put back my husband's life,
 Yes let me put back.

However, it couldn't work. Until they just took that corpse then they carried and took it to the village, they even found that Mweo had died; they then carried the two corpses and then went and buried (them). There was a little tale, it ends.

RC: Very good *mukwai*.

Elizabeth employed an understated performance style, possibly due to being somewhat inhibited by the video camera and the audience. She used her left hand to partially support her baby in her lap and kept her right hand resting on her right thigh and knee during most of the performance. Often, she rhythmically picked at the cloth of her *citenge* while telling the story. She also used the same hand to subtly gesture and keep time during the singing of the songs. Her main departure from this posture and set of movements was when the baby began to fret and she shifted it in the sling and drew her left breast from the dress to nurse the child. At that point, her

left forearm supported the baby and she moved to the story's end with her right hand holding onto the index finger of her left hand as the right forearm helped to secure the nursing infant.

Elizabeth's performance followed Mr. Kampamba's narrative about how a harmonious family, with only one wife/mother, is serially eaten by a monster then saved by their powerful husband/father. There is a shift in family structure and outcome in her story. Thematically, the tale focuses on both the strength and precarious nature of an initially harmonious polygamous family, endangered by the always looming threats of jealousy and pettiness in such households. Each of the three wives have names that reflect their talents, and these talents must be used together in order to resurrect their hunter husband and, by extension, form an effective and creative family. Little is known of the husband, or even how he meets his death in the bush. It is the wives who are the center of the narrative, first emphasizing their life-giving skills, then pointing to the divisive tendencies that bring disaster to their family. Each of the wives' songs stresses their life-affirming abilities, and when the third song (the song of the wife named "Life") is missing from the second instance of trying to resurrect the husband, it is clear that enmity between wives has broken up the family in an irreversible way. To emphasize this sad situation, the remaining two wives try twice to bring their husband back by singing their individual songs, pointing to the glaring absence of the third wife, Mweo. As in Mr. Kampamba's story, the action is focused by repeating a similar action; in this case a successful then an unsuccessful attempt to resurrect the husband. Like the previous story, a character that travels out from the homestead leaves instructions or orders for those at home to obey. Where in the first narrative, the orders are disobeyed, in Elizabeth's tale, they are followed. What brings disjunction or trouble is the way the co-wives treat each other. The husband's well-being, therefore, becomes a metaphor or marker for harmonious marital relations in the polygamous home, while his death signals the disjunction and negative consequences brought on by jealousy and selfishness.

The narrative is performed by a young nursing mother and witnessed by older women. It has an interesting resonance for the audience, though I did not ascertain Elizabeth's actual marital status and whether or not she was part of a polygamous household.⁹⁷ It is not uncommon, however, for the youngest co-wives, who are often the most attractive and fertile, to be disparaged by older co-wives for being inexperienced or lazy. Whether or

97 I recorded one more performance at this session, by a young boy who had witnessed the earlier two. While the narrative was of some interest, I'm opting not to include performances by children in the present study.

not there was an actual personal reference involved in the tale, it did connote common social tensions that must be negotiated if households are to remain harmonious and productive. On taking my leave, I paid Mr. Kampamba a bit of money (around two or three US dollars) for his efforts, with the understanding, made in front of everyone, that he'd share some of it with Elizabeth. We returned to the mission for a meal and to spend the night.

The next day we passed by Mr. Kalunga's home to pick him up then made the very short drive to Fele's place. We arrived at around 9 AM, and found that he had gathered five or six elders next to his verandah. There were a handful of children present as well. Fele described my work to the group and I played back Mr. Kampamba's performance on the video monitor so that people could see what I was doing. I also assured everyone that I wanted to record whatever kinds of stories or commentaries they cared to offer. I had set up one of Fele's wooden chairs in front of his verandah, partly in the shade and partly in the morning sun, allowing performers to choose between warm and cool. My small television monitor and some other gear were set up on a table on the verandah. Some of the performers opted to lean or rest an arm on the table as they spoke.

A woman named Elizabeth Chama was the first to speak. I'd estimate her age as over seventy. Her eyes appeared to have fairly advanced cataracts. Ms. Chama wore a light green kerchief tied behind her head, possibly indicating that she belonged to some kind of Catholic women's group. Her red blouse had very short sleeves, just covering her shoulders, and she began the performance wearing a tan loose-fitting jacket, which she removed near the end. Her *citenge* was cream colored with green flowers printed on the cloth. Ms. Chama had long, wrinkled, very slim arms and large hands, reflecting her advanced age. She chose to discuss traditional forms of honoring the chief, explaining three ways in which the chief was praised by panegyric poetry, and how these forms are adapted to the Catholic mass and beliefs.

Bemba Storytelling 3 by Elizabeth Chama

Robert Cancel: Before you begin, give me your name...name.

Elizabeth Chama: Elizabeth.

RC: Yes, Eli...OK

Audience (Fele): You should say "Elizabeth Chama."



* To watch a video of this story follow this link: <http://dx.doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0033.03/Bemba3>

- EC: Elizabeth Chama.
 RC: Yes, *mukwai*, begin.
- EC: Let me begin with a jesting oration [praise poetry] used in church; the one...the one used to eulogize chiefs.
- Audience (Fele): Anyone, even the oration used to eulogize chiefs, you can begin with that one.
- EC: That is so! They traveled, the tall one and the other one; especially covering a long distance. The brave, fearless ones, when we find them we become submissive to them [i.e. we talk to them very meekly]. One open rest-hut has its own limitations. The chief's food [*ubwali*] is eaten by the wise ones. The ones who grab their own things while their attention is called elsewhere; the first ones to arrive receive the best gifts, certainly, they receive the best gifts. The people of Chief Ntalasha [Chitimukulu] deliver. The chief's councilor humbles himself. The child who experiences difficulties even in the presence of his father. He is a servant; he is a humble, poor servant. Chief Ntalasha [Chitimukulu] and Sampa and Chikwanda have left us in misery. We are in abject poverty.
- RC: Uhm, it is alright *mukwai*; now is it...is this Bemba [as opposed to an older form, possibly of Luba origin]:
- Audience: It is Bemba, yes.
- Audience (Fele): Yes, those are compliments or praises [i.e. *Indyombo*]; let her sing the praises of the chief, the chief's compliments.
- RC: Oh.
- Audience: Or, we can listen. Let's listen.
 [I then played the audiocassette of Ms. Chama's remarks, while the video camera kept recording, and everyone listened closely to them.]
- Audience (Fele): Start again.
- EC: They traveled, the tall one and the other one; especially covering a long distance. When they find the chief seated [i.e. resting]; now when they greet him, they say "*Bendele umutali no wanu.*" This is how they greet the chief, saying, "Greetings to you, your Royal Highness Chief Chitimukulu." They say, "When we find the chief, because he is a brave, fearless person [implying a difficult man] we must speak to him meekly; we cannot be insolent to him or disagree with him." When you find the chief and you treat him with a lot of respect—to be given food by the chief you have to speak, you have to speak meekly because some people are too proud, when they go to the chief they do not humble themselves. The chief's food is certainly eaten by the wise ones. The one who grabs their things while their attention is called elsewhere, you grab from all those who arrive first. This means, "Those who grab things have grabbed the chieftainship of the land."

RC: Hmm.

EC: Therefore, you should be careful. You should not be frustrating things.

Audience: You should even ululate, you say...alalalalalala!

EC: When they lift bread [during Communion], the oration [praises] of Jesus, when they lift bread we clap our hands [claps hands] then we clap. At this time they lift bread. When they lift cups of wine we ululate, we say, "Ululululu."

Audience (Fele): Even clapping, you clap! [ululates a bit]. And then God the Almighty, the King, the wealthy one, His Majesty, God Almighty the wealthy one, the overseer, creator of everything. When he comes, He who is the owner of heaven and earth. When He comes, He who rose from the dead, the truthful one who never lies; we praise you, we thank you, God Almighty.

Audience

(Fele): ...and so you should have ululated again.

EC: No, we ululate once.

Elizabeth Chama sat quite straight in the wooden chair as she performed, using her hands minimally to describe things. She began by first informing Fele, who was seated on her right, what she intended to do, then went on with her recitation of the praises or epithets. Because the audience was aware that her words were being recorded, one member asked that her initial set of praises be replayed. After listening to her remarks, Ms. Chama slightly altered some of the allusions and added some explanatory comments. As with other examples of this genre I'd witnessed, the vocabulary was highly allusive and dense with esoteric words and phrases. The explanation, therefore, was meant less for the audience than for my own understanding. This attitude of didacticism pervaded the entire session. Moreover, this first performance set another interesting pattern for the ones that were to follow. Clearly, Ms. Chama wanted to share what she felt was an important traditional activity and how it had been merged with contemporary Christian practice; we were sitting, after all, less than half a mile from a Catholic mission and church. Catholicism, historically, has been very strong in this immediate area.⁹⁸ Further, being a white man

98 The story of how Catholicism came to this part of Zambia and to the Bemba in particular is well known locally and is tied into the broader history of the colonial era in Zambia. The "White Father" missionary Bishop Dupont arrived in the northernmost region of Northern Rhodesia in the late Nineteenth Century by way of the Tanganyika colony.

who clearly had links to the Catholic missionaries in the area, people often assumed I was interested in religious ideas or forms of worship. A direct link was made between these kinds of chiefly praises and their use in Catholic rites, explaining that even the very common practice of ululation, mostly by women, was incorporated into the Mass. The audience also felt comfortable with commenting on and augmenting her oration. While Ms. Chama spoke, there were times when she stopped for long periods, either waiting for me to comment or for some reaction from her cohorts. Since I found it difficult to follow a lot of the specialized vocabulary and deep allusions of the praises, I left it up to the audience to move the performance on or to decide when it was over. This approach elicited commentaries during virtually every performance, particularly from Fele, who continually spurred further discussion of various topics raised by the performers. At one point in his commentary, echoing the form of the traditional panegyric, Fele set out a string of praises for God: "...the Almighty, the King, the wealthy one, His Majesty, God Almighty the wealthy one, the overseer, creator of everything. When he comes, He who is the owner of heaven and earth. When He comes, He who rose from the dead, the truthful one who never lies; we praise you, we thank you, God Almighty."

The mixing of genres here is notable and not the only time it happened in this session. There is a good deal of what Bauman calls "decontextualization," (2004), or removing oral texts from their previous and more common uses, as not only royal panegyric but also citations from parts of the Catholic Mass are combined in this exposition. In its use by Ms. Chama, the material is clearly "recontextualized" for the purposes of the recording session. That there are intertextual and generic manipulations and associations brought to bear seems clear. One intention of the narrator is to educate me on these important esoteric praises, as well as reveal their recontextualization, or

Eventually he won the trust of the powerful Bemba Chief Mwamba who, on his death bed, ceded the regency of his chiefship to Dupont, in hopes of fending off incursions of the neighboring Ngoni, slave traders, and the British government. This led to a strong and long-lasting relationship between the Bemba people and the Catholic Church. See A. Roberts 1973 and B. Garvey 1994. The evangelical efforts of Christians in this part of Zambia entail a long and complicated history. In the area near Chief Nkula's village, Lubwa, there was a direct competition that at times bordered on violence between Catholic and Church of Scotland missionaries. This is in part covered in Oger 1991 and in Roberts (ibid.) and Garvey (ibid.). Comaroff and Comaroff 1991, especially pp. 252-308, produced a wide-ranging study of evangelical efforts in southern Africa at the advent of colonial expansion, and many of the dynamics they identify can be found to some degree in the Bemba and neighboring territories.

in another sense their appropriation, in the context of Catholic religious ceremonies. The other important dimension of this performance is the near antiphonal commentary of Fele, which continues in varying degrees in the other performances of this session. When he asks that the tape of the initial panegyric be replayed, it also serves as an opportunity for Ms. Chama to sharpen her initial allusions and interpretations when she comments on her first set of remarks.

Ms. Chama was followed by Mr. Peter Mutale, another elder around seventy years-old. He sat in the same chair, and wore a long, oversized tan rain coat that he kept tightly wrapped around him to ward off the morning chill. On his head, he wore a brim-less multi-colored cloth cap of green and black, that resembled what, in older American parlance, used to be called a “beanie.” Mostly, he kept his hands in his lap, moving them a bit to make his points and, occasionally, bending a bit lower and using them to indicate places or actions, and at times crossing his arms as he spoke. He preferred to look right or left to indicate which animals were speaking or where the father of the roan antelope stood in relation to the others. Mr. Mutale related what he called a *lushimi*, but the fact that it did not include a song and required an explanation at the end suggests it was actually a *mulumbe*.⁹⁹

Bemba Storytelling 4 by Peter Mutale*

Robert
Cancel: You can begin *mukwai*.
Audience: You say...
RC: Begin *mukwai*.
Audience: I am Mutale.
Peter
Mutale: They say to begin, with what?



99 See Cancel 1989, on definitions of two fictional narrative genres found in Bemba-speaking groups, but more specifically among the Tabwa. Basically, a *mulumbe* does not contain a song and a *lushimi* does. During my four weeks at Ilondola in 2005, brushing up on my Bemba language skills, it became clear to me that the people living in the Bemba heartland tend to have a broader view of the stories called *inshimi*, associating them more commonly with didactic storytelling, often adapted to the type found in church preaching orations. It may have to do with a fairly literal application with the root verb for storytelling, *-shimika*.

* To watch a video of this story follow this link: <http://dx.doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0033.03/Bemba4>

Audience: Yes, you should say, "I am so and so, the one who will tell this story [*ulushimi*]. I am Peter Mutale.

RC: Yes *mukwai*.

PM: The story I am going to narrate, I say there was a little thing, as it started. There were problems in the world. Lions arose in the country. They caught all the people and even the animals. Then the animal which remained, which animal is that? It is the roan antelope with its child and wife. Three. When they started off, they ran away; now there where they used to stay, now they went and climbed the mountain. Then he reached the top of the mountain, and there was water there. Then he told his child, he said, "My child, do not dare to go to the bottom of this mountain [i.e. descend the mountain], where we came from. If you have ears to hear with, listen to this advice: you should just be eating right here on top of the mountain when we go out looking for food." And then, certainly for two days he stayed and said, "Let me observe my parents' advice." However, on the third day the roan antelope's child left the top of the mountain when his mother and father had gone away. He went to the foot of the mountain, there in...the plain. Then he began to eat, to eat... The lion's child was also looking in that direction where the roan antelope's child was. When he saw him, they began playing on the plain. They played and played and played. Roan antelope's child said, "Uhm uhm, as for me, the sun is about to set." He knew that, "my mother is about to come." Then the lion also said...then lion's child, when he went to his father, he said, "Oh father, where I went I made friends with someone who has white spots around the mouth and had horns." "Didn't it look like something we can eat?" He replied, "It did, we can go...we can go and eat." He even said, "It is all right; so we shall go with you tomorrow."

They set off one morning. When they reached the place, his father remained behind creeping along [i.e. stalking game]. His child quickly met his friend; because they were playing he could not delay. They were playing right there. His father was just creeping along. Hmm! He caught the child of the lion...the child of the roan antelope. That antelope which was caught, said...said...said... [the lion said] "I feel thirsty...my child, what is it?"

Kalulu came. They said, "Kalulu, guard this animal for us, as we go to the river to drink water." Certainly, they went to the river to drink water. Kalulu even took both ears [of the young antelope] and did what? Cut them; he even removed them. When the lion

came back, he looked, "Aah! This animal, it had ears, doesn't it really have ears?" Kalulu said, "Inquire about this from its father at the mountain." Then lion called loudly, "Roan antelope! Roan antelope!" "Hello!" responded the roan antelope. "Does your child have ears?" His father refused, he said, "No, if he had ears he would have been able to listen." Kalulu said, "Have you heard? You have heard, am I lying to you? Well ask again." Again Lion called loudly, "Roan antelope! Does your child have ears?" Roan antelope said, "He has no ears. If he had ears he would have been able to listen." Right there and then again...again, Lion even carried roan antelope's child, and did what? He took him to his house where they went to eat. Therefore, as things could be, this is how the whole episode ended. If he had ears, he would have been able to listen.

Audience: These are the children who do not listen.

RC: Ehn!

Audience: I said these are the children who do not listen, they just know... [lots of laughter from children in audience].

Audience (Fele): Say, that is certainly the case, they are helping you, that any parable [*mulumbe*] if...if you narrate it like that...

Audience (Women): Yes, you interpret it.

Audience (Fele): Teaching comes about through interpretation. You say according to the way you put it, as Mrs. Chitupa (audience member) said, you say the moral lesson in this parable is that most of us do not take advice [i.e. we do not listen to what other people say].

RC: Oh yes.

Audience (Fele): That is why we many times get into trouble [another voice obscures some of his words]...If we paid attention to what the elders said, or if we obeyed the rules, we would not get into trouble...You see, nowadays, when you tell boys and girls, you say, "You youngsters look after yourselves properly," they do not want to listen to your advice. They say, "For us it is Zambia, for us it is Zambia." They further say, "What you are saying is old fashioned." "What about this reckless immorality?" They say, "For us it is Zambia." But the following day he/she contracts this disease they call AIDS for which there is no cure. His/Her end is to do what? To go into the ground! Just as roan antelope taught his child, he said, "Do not graze at the foot of the mountain because you will get into trouble." Therefore, even nowadays...

Audience: There are such people...

- Audience (Fele): There are many people who do not want to obey the general rules and regulations spelt out by you [the] elders [or adults]; you who began seeing things a long time ago. Therefore, this gets them into trouble. And some of them lose life.
- Audience (Woman): These things are uncouth [or barbaric]. They say, "Those things are uncouth, one should not pay attention to them."
- Audience (Fele): They say that's paganism but they are getting themselves into trouble, now again, the ones who claim to believe in God, they do not do the right things at all.
- Audience (Group): Uhunn.
- Audience (Woman): When you have your fill [i.e. when you have eaten enough food] you come to bother me as if you are the one who begat me.
- Audience (Fele): You say...you should say, "This is where my narrative ends."
- PM: This is where I end *mukwai*, my narrative ends here.
- Audience: Oh yes...because it [referring to red light on video camera] flashes repeatedly.
- Audience: Aren't you feeling the heat from the sun...can't you move into the shade? [Addressed to me]
- RC: I should switch it off, shouldn't I?

When audience members call on Mr. Mutale to interpret the tale, he hesitates, and others jump in, at least in part to attempt to educate me, the stranger, and possibly the children in the audience, on the importance of tales that elicit wisdom by interpretation and discussion. The commentaries that emerge concern young people who do not listen to elders. Fele says of the tale, "Teaching comes about through interpretation...the moral of the lesson in this story is that most of us do not take advice." The conversation and commentaries move back and forth between people, adding their own slant to the theme, including how young people disregard traditions and rites. More than once in this performance session, participants cite the callous ignorance of young people, who answer calls for proper behavior by evoking "Zambia" as a marker for nationhood, modernity and secular beliefs. Mostly, Mr. Mutale listened to the interpretations of his colleagues, particularly Fele's remarks, at times nodding in agreement or supplying a supportive grunt or sound. That the old narrative is applied to contemporary times is not surprising, though associating it with the specific problem of HIV/AIDS

and promiscuity is notable for how relatively early this comes (1989) in the identification, or acknowledgment, of the disease as a social problem in Zambia. On the prompting of Fele, Mr. Mutale finally concludes the performance by applying the formulaic ending that signifies he's finished the story.

It is notable that Kalulu, the trickster hare, takes a rather minor role in this tale. Usually the center of action and attention, the hare in this instance uses his wits in order to emphasize the lesson of the narrative. When he cuts off the young antelope's ears, he spurs the lion to question its father up on the mountain. The father's answer is comical but instructive, as he asserts that his child, at least figuratively, has no ears. As is sometimes, and not very often, the case, Kalulu is a supporting player in this story, serving mainly to underline the key themes and make the antelope see how he erred by not listening to his parents. Formally, the theme is emphasized by twice repeating the scene where the young antelope plays with the young lion. Besides showing how the antelope is foolishly moving towards his fate, there is an implicit comparison between the young lion who listens to its father and the young roan that does not. Kalulu also spurs repetition when he encourages the older lion to twice question the elder antelope on whether or not his child has ears. Below I'll return to Kalulu and how he is employed in somewhat atypical ways in other performances.

A woman named Densa Kangwa, who I'd guess was in her early fifties and probably the youngest performer in the session, then proceeded to take up the same theme of young people no longer knowing much of the older ways and ideas. She wore a brown and white head-tie, with the ends knotted near the top of her head, and a wide v-necked, white short-sleeved dress that was covered from the waist down with a multi-colored *citenge*. Unlike the other speakers, Ms. Kangwa leaned back in a casual manner of repose as she spoke. She eventually sat straighter and put her hands in her lap, mostly keeping them folded, lifting both as she occasionally emphasized a point. As she got into her discourse she became more demonstrative, using her separated hands to emphasize ideas as she responded to comments by the audience, even acting out a few elements, such as wrapping a baby in a cloth. The non-fiction narrative was clearly a straightforward exposition of real concerns in the village.

Bemba Storytelling 5 by Densa Kangwa*



Robert

Cancel: Let's go, *mukwai*.

Densa Me, the one who will start talking,

Kangwa: I am Densa Kangwa of Fele's village.

Audience Give way [move] friends so
(Woman): that I can pass.

RC: What?

DK: Our observation is that the biggest problem among our own children is disobedience; their failure to follow Bemba traditions or customs. As for us, we followed traditions or customs but nowadays, these children we have don't observe the traditions at all. Because when you begin explaining to him/her, saying, "Young one, listen to the way we used to spend time with elders at the *nsaka*."¹⁰⁰ They used to tell us: "Child, listen, the way the world is..." we used to listen to them carefully. But nowadays, these modern children, you cannot tell them anything; they retort: "That is paganism, as for us we are Zambians."

But this very Zambia, I don't know are the people found in it today different from those who were there in the past? I can see that they are descendants of our ancestors. But nowadays these very children we have begotten, they are a very big problem. Now, we do not know how we shall teach them. They have rebelled against us, and what has contributed to their rebellion is these things which have been brought, things like films [i.e. cinema]. These are the things that have made children rebel against their parents. Because after they have watched these films, when you tell them about our old traditions they refuse and say, "Don't waste our time, we are even going away."

As for us, certainly, we used to listen to this kind of advice; that's why we grew up and are able to beget children, people...people of

100 Used in this context, *nsaka* indicates both the common structure that is often found in someone's yard but also, in this case, a larger version in public space in the village. It is often simply constructed of four or five wood poles, supporting a conical thatched roof. Stools, benches or chairs comprise the furniture, and it is a place where people relax out of the heat of the sun. The term is also used here to refer to its institutional purpose, which is not only a place for elders to gather and talk, but also a place where young people were expected to sit and listen.

* To watch a video of this story follow this link: <http://dx.doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0033.03/Bemba5>

our own image, we have even grown old. If the same old traditions are emphasized or brought back, children will be brought up well, but I doubt if this will happen. *Mukwai*, this is where I end.

RC: Yes.

Audience (Woman): How can they be brought up well when you accept and look after the children they beget outside wedlock? It is you, their mothers, to blame; if you disdained their illegitimate children, as our ancestors used to, such things would not be there; they would stop. But you even carry their babies on your backs. There is no disapproval, so even the remaining ones [those who have not yet involved themselves in this kind of mischief] hmm! [They follow suit]

Audience: Yes, certainly, what has been said is true; we are the ones who are receiving, because whenever she brings money you receive it. When she conceives you cannot send her away from home. You just begin saying, "No, no, the child, the child..." As soon as she gives birth, you will be the first person to surrender your wrapping cloth [*citenge*], saying, "You wrap your baby in it, the child should not complain." Even next time she will bring another baby. However, if we were acting decisively, as soon as she conceives we say, "Leave this house to go live with the man who has made you pregnant." You chase her from home; they would be avoiding such mischief.

Audience: That would have put things straight.

RC: Now what should we do?

DK: *Mukwai*?

RC: What should we do?

DK: If we could start chasing them when they conceive. You chase her from home, you say, "Go to the person who made you pregnant." Things would be straightened up.

RC: Yes *mukwai*.

DK: However, if she conceives and when she delivers a baby, you take your wrapping cloth, which you are wearing, you quickly wrap the baby in it, you receive the baby, you have encouraged your child to misbehave. Even next time she will bring another baby. And then you break your back tilling the land [trying to fend for the baby], you don't even know the father of those children [your daughter is bringing].

Audience: That is true.

An initial emphasis in Ms. Kangwa's commentary is the importance of traditions, especially as practiced at the *nsaka*. There are several dimensions

to this notion of the *nsaka* as an actual place or location and as a concept. What she meant, I think, is that in times past children often sat in the shade of these shelters with elders and listened to their conversations and the posing and settling of difficult social and legal situations.¹⁰¹ In this manner they learned the ways to understand and order their society. Today, with formal schools and other pastimes, the young people no longer take part in this important way of learning. There is, obviously, a general allusion to what seem to be the very common conflicts between generations in this and neighboring societies. On a broader level, the *nsaka* is the concept of wisdom and its exchange in a communal way. Moreover, these commentaries are infused with a general disdain for certain elements of modernity, such as urban/rural migration and the resulting non-traditional sexual relationships between men and women that often result in unmarried pregnancies and leaving children to be raised by relatives in the villages. At the same time, evident in the other performances in this session, Christianity and its concepts seem to fit more seamlessly into what is usually thought of as older tradition. Ms. Kangwa's concluding remarks are rather poignant in the way she describes how a maternal instinct overrides what should be the practical response to unmarried pregnancies. She uses the image of how a woman would take the *citenge* wrap from her own waist in order to swaddle her daughter's new born. Further, the same woman would carry out "back-breaking" cultivation in order to feed that child.

Mr. Katongo Soolo, probably in his seventies, began his performance by giving examples of some royal praises. A tall, slim man, he wore a white crocheted cap, possibly originally meant for a woman, with a loose-fitting tan tunic that had sleeves down to his elbows, and a light green pair of trousers. His face was lined and he had a short, Charlie Chaplin-like mustache and rather intense eyes. He began with his hands clasped between his knees, then abruptly stood as he recited the beginning of his praise, then sat down as he continued it. When he began his narrative he clapped his hands together to indicate the change in genre/tonal, then

101 In this respect, the *nsaka* tradition is very similar to what the Tswana call *kgotla*. See Shapera 1953 and Landau 1995. Landau's study particularly deals with changes wrought on traditional systems of thought and power by colonial and Christian-evangelizing incursions. Rather than simply making a dichotomy between tradition and modernity, the study looks at the complexities of how these forces interacted in differing ways in a Botswana society. In a Tabwa narrative, a father says of his young son who just rescued his sister from evil lion-man husbands, "That is the meaning of the thing they say, 'A small man in the house is good. It is that young man who always sits at the ready.'" (Cancel 1989, p. 103)

became a bit more animated with his hands and arms, pointing out spaces and actions. They were, initially, repetitive and symmetrical, as he described the human's and then the lion's actions.

Bemba Storytelling 6 by Katongo Soolo*



Robert

Cancel: Begin, *mukwai*. Give me your name.

Audience: Your name.

Katongo

Soolo: I am Katongo Soolo...

Audience: Begin speaking, won't you?

KS: In order to show respect to every elderly person, they used to call him, saying, "Let's listen to Chitimukulu." So that everyone knows that the person being addressed is so and so, in...in olden days [begins to shout a praise in a loud, rapid delivery...takes some audience members by surprise] "Parent of Kalumbu Kayombe whose name is as famous as a beautiful horned animal! Even the bed is too small for you. The bed is small, which is from afar; you, who are...[has a coughing spell for a few minutes]...the keeper who knows no segregation; looking after women is a laborious task just like conquering an illness.

Audience: How many have you taken? [Refers to number of wives he has.]
[Has another long coughing spell, while audience remarks about his coughing and praise singing efforts. Eventually, he begins a story.]

Audience: Oh! Now the youngsters have moved the thing [so and so] [a child has accidentally bumped the camera while carrying something], don't take it nearer to the machine [video camera] there...you put it on the other side.

Audience [Referring to Mr. Soolo's coughing spell.] Well, that's
(Woman): what happens when you try to speak loudly if your voice is hoarse, you can cough like, like the roan antelope.

Audience: Like a bushbuck [laughs].

KS: Bushbuck.

Audience

(Fele): You say you can cough like a bushbuck.

Audience: Hmm! Surely, if you have a voice you should be speaking in a low tone.

Audience: We have given an opening [for him to speak].

* To watch a video of this story follow this link: <http://dx.doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0033.03/Bemba6>

Audience

(Woman): Well, he has something, now he has choked.

Audience: Oh!

Audience He who has swallowed meat sauce. [Possibly a

(Woman): reference to a proverb?]

Audience: Oh!

Audience

(Woman): He will visit. [Answer to or second part of the proverb?]

KS: He will visit. (?)

Audience: Yes!

Audience: You have untied it...[Referring to correctly applying the proverb?]

KS: Looking after women is a laborious task. It is like conquering a severe illness.

Audience: Don't men also have the same problem!

KS: Well, this is a word of praise to the chief, praising any wealthy person who regularly supplies you with food, he who is respected. It [the words of praise] says, well this person is a revered man; he is a lion. This means you regard him with a lot of respect, so you give him this kind of praise. He, too, acknowledges. If you err in presenting your praise, you are pronounced guilty. If he is listening attentively, the honorable chief, where he is sitting and is convinced that these people are praising the chief...this is where we temporarily end.

[Sits up abruptly and claps his hands together] A little thing was said [formulaic story opening, marks shift in genre], a long long time ago, it was time to start cutting trees in order to prepare gardens. "Tomorrow we shall go and start cutting trees." Lion was also planning, saying, "Tomorrow we shall start cutting trees to prepare our garden." They even found a big forest that stretched over a big area. A human being swung his axe and said, "I will be cutting trees here." Lion also came [from his home]. He, too, swung his axe there and said, "I will be cutting trees here."

The human being used to come and clear his area while Lion also came and cleared his area. The human being cleared his area, Lion also cleared his area. It was time to drag the branches and pile them up in thick layers. Lion's wife [performer, given the parallel actions he is developing, probably meant to say "The man's wife"] used to drag the branches and piled them up; when she left, Lion's children also gathered and...and did the same. They did this until all the branches were gathered, and they were burnt.

Lion also came and burnt the remaining part of the piled up thick layers of branches. The whole place was thoroughly prepared. It was time to sow the seed. The human beings came to sow but the

field was too big for them to finish. Lion also came in the morn... at night. They, too, sowed the seed and finished the whole field. Millet sprouted up. The human being said, "Now we should go and construct temporary huts near the garden so that we could scare away birds that may want to eat our millet." The man came to cut poles near the garden. Lion, the great one, also took...he, too, came in the evening to cut poles.

Lion...the human being said, "Today I will shift to my temporary hut near the garden." The man [the Lion?] also said, "Even me, today I will shift." His friend said, "But who is building this other house here?" The other one also said, "Who is building this other house here? We shall see them." The day of shifting...just found [them] in the garden there..."What! So it is Lion who comes to work in my field here?" The human being also said, "So it is Lion..." Hmm! The human being left; he went to consult the giant black ant... to divine what had happened. He said, "Listen my lord...my lord, what I have. As soon as I shifted to the forest here, the Lion also moved to the same place." [Aside to audience] "I am lisping out my words because there are no teeth here. Look." [Laughter]

Audience: Continue! Continue!

KS: Then *mukwai*, then Lion the great also came and said, "So it is a human being?" That human being also said, "So it is a lion?" He went to consult a diviner. He went to consult a diviner who said, "Ah, my friend, since you have come to divine what has happened, you go and see the Hornbill; invite him and say, 'You should come and see things which are at home,' while the lion is away."

Early in the morning, Hornbill arrived and said...His beak was even aglow; it was extremely red! He went straight to Lion and said, "Give me some water, if there isn't...what, yes, as you see me here, I am the one who has finished killing all the people in the world. [The beak looks as if it's been saturated in blood.] If you stop your children from fetching me water, you will be in big trouble. I have killed all the people in the world; I have finished all of them; you are the only one left in the entire world." And then Lion prepared himself and said, "Hmm! For me to survive I should start talking to my children, one at a time." He sent one child to the river and said, "Go and draw some water but when you get there don't come back, go and never come back." That's how the child went forever. He sent another child who, also, went forever. He sent another who didn't return as well. Even his wife left in the same way. He, too, as a father said, "Oh dear. It has taken my children such a long time without coming back. Even my wife, let me just follow and check what's happening." So even the father followed. He (Hornbill) saw all of them go to the

river and he followed them. "With my beak" he said, "I am the one who has finished killing [all] the people in the world."

Then, Lion there and then finally ran away from the man's garden. The garden was finally owned by the man alone, and Lion did... he even deserted the place. Who is lisping out words? Don't you realize it is the teeth which make people speak properly? [Laughter]

Audience (Woman): What do you want to speak with? And you even have teeth, those are your health.

KS: *Mukwai*, unless the tongue is touching the teeth you can't...

Audience

(Same woman): Yes, we have grown old, [all] the teeth are gone.

KS: Now there are no teeth.

Audience: Oh dear! This is the problem with the young ones; they do not pay attention to what is being said.

Audience (Same woman): Yes, they [teeth] have dispersed; they have gone back where they came from...

Audience

(Man): Continue narrating *mukwai*.

KS: It is over *mukwai*.

Audience: Is that the end?

KS: Hmmm.

Audience: Explain the meaning.

KS: Even nowadays such things are here in Malole. Some people would find where their friend has cleared trees [in preparation for planting a garden]; they, too, start making a garden there. The following morning his friend is cultivating here [there]. He who is strong as the human being or man [in the story] even encroaches upon his friend's field. After three days, the one who is more aggressive outwits his friend and says, "You have encroached upon my field, you have encroached upon my field."

Therefore, *mukwai*, this is where it ends; it is difficult to predict what is going to happen. I am a farmer.

RC: That's it *mukwai*. Well done *mukwai*.

Audience: You have finished...you have ended.

[[KS: That is a chief. That is to say, now we have reached a very important/rich person...oh!]]¹⁰²

102 Mr. Soolo did not explain this last remark. He seemed to be using a stock phrase or saying to mark the ending of the discussion, but no one responded to it and I haven't been able to find a clear explanation from colleagues who've viewed the video recording.

Mr. Soolo's initial efforts at praise poetry were interrupted for some minutes by a very deep and persistent cough. I could not tell if this was caused by a dry throat, a cold or something more debilitating and long-lasting. As he paused to catch his breath and clear his throat, audience members at first speculated as to the cause of his coughing, and then jokingly related the noise he was making to that of the roan antelope, then to the bushbuck. They also raised an image of swallowing meat sauce, as part of a proverbial expression that predicts someone will soon visit, having to do with posing then explaining a story or proverb, concluding that "*Wakakula...*" ("You have untied [literal]/solved it...") When he was able to speak again, Mr. Soolo explained the praises he'd recited initially, then said, "...this is where we temporarily end." He then goes on to tell the story of the lion, farmer and hornbill, regarding a potential land dispute.

Audience members, further, asked him to explain the narrative and he said that "Even nowadays such things are around here in Malole... Therefore *mukwai*, this is where it ends; it is difficult to predict what is going to happen. I am a farmer." Mr. Soolo's tale focuses on the theme of people trying to take what is not theirs. While the lion is in some respects mimicking or duplicating the farmer's efforts, the man understands that when the crops come the lion will use his physical advantage to take everything for himself.¹⁰³ By following the proper procedures of consulting a diviner,¹⁰⁴ then asking help from the Hornbill, the human is able to drive out his lion competitor and reap the fruits of his own labors. At least part of the imagery portraying the Hornbill relates to similar actions in the traditional context whereby smaller animals use their fearsome voices or forms of trickery to defeat larger, deadly animals.¹⁰⁵ Mr. Soolo relates the

103 The question of a potentially deadly lion following or mirroring a human's action is found in several variations in a number of Tabwa stories. In most of them the lion proves to be a well-meaning benefactor (Cancel 1989, pp. 129–160). In a Bwile tale in Chapter VI of this book, the lion turns out to be much more hostile. A wider spectrum of narrative images speculates on the wisdom or folly of trusting animals to assist humans in their tasks or predicaments in tales.

104 Consulting an ant as a diviner is found in a Tabwa narrative about a lion-man husband who keeps devouring the children he has with his human wife (Cancel 1989), as well as in a narrative from the Lamba collection by C.M. Doke, wherein an arrogant chief has all the elders killed then is himself endangered by an ogre who only an elder can outwit. In fact, the character is utilized in the tale about Fipindulule, told by Mr. Kampamba earlier in this chapter.

105 A Bisa narrative in Chapter IV reveals how a small animal scares off a lion threatening a human family using only its voice. This version is told by George Mwampatisha at

narrative to actual situations that he, as a farmer, has witnessed in his home area of Malole. These conflicts could involve land disputes or even simply taking crops from someone else's plot.¹⁰⁶

A humorous and rather telling set of audience interactions play out around the narrative and its theme. Initially, as Mr. Soolo was wracked by a coughing spell, his cohort spent time good-naturedly speculating on what was causing the coughs and how he should more properly modulate his voice in order to avoid this reaction. Further, they joked about how his coughs sounded like the calls of first the roan antelope then the bushbuck. Half way through his tale, Mr. Soolo notes how he has begun to lisp because he has no upper teeth. Women in the audience egg him on, saying things like, "Yes, we have grown old, [all] teeth are gone," or "Yes, they have dispersed, they have gone back where they came from..." which seems to allude to the absence of teeth in infants when they are born. As most of the session suggested, audience members were of the same age group and felt comfortable joking with and insulting one another. No longer of an age where sexual tension or socio-economic competition came between them, they exhibited an easy camaraderie that comes with growing old together. This comfort level did not keep one woman from questioning Mr. Soolo about some of his statements regarding women, though, again, the exchange was friendly.

Much of their concern was directed at the younger generation, which did not, in their view, adhere to the wisdom of elders and traditions. While comments on the relationship between old age, the lack of teeth and the ability to speak properly were being exchanged, one audience member injected the somewhat anomalous observation, "Oh dear! This is the problem with the young ones; they do not pay attention to what is being said." Even one of Mr. Soolo's earlier observations regarding praise poetry alluded to the importance of eloquence and paying proper respect to authority when he notes, "If you err in presenting your praise, you are pronounced guilty. If he is listening attentively, the honorable chief, where he is sitting, and is convinced that these people are praising

Nabwalya, while another is told fourteen years later by Kangwa Samson as a way to give a better sense of what he thought the correct version of the narrative *should* have been, in 2005.

106 The latter situation is portrayed in a different and complex manner in a Lunda tale performed by Ms. Emeliya Muleya in Chapter V. The stealing of neighbors' crops, depicted in a humorous vein, is often a subject of trickster tales in many African traditions.

the chief..."¹⁰⁷ Words and respect are venerated even to the point of danger if one falters in the quality of how one addresses someone of high status. So, although his narrative was directed at a more common problem of land use and access, Mr. Soolo's performance was framed by these broader concerns of unity, humor, eloquence and correct behavior that permeated the overall session.

Finally, Fele, whose actual name is Stephen Komakoma, discoursed at length on Bemba history and other matters. He was most likely in his mid or late sixties, still strongly though slimly built, with close-cropped grey hair. He wore a loose, light grey, short-sleeved buttoned shirt with a collar and black trousers. Fele rested his left elbow on the table that held the video monitor and kept both his hands on his thighs as he spoke and, mostly, used subtle gestures, barely lifting his hands, to make his points. He seemed comfortable with speaking publicly about matters of cultural significance.

Bemba Storytelling 7 by Stephen Komakoma*

Robert

Cancel: Let's begin.

Stephen

Komakoma: I am Masaku. My names are Stephen Komakoma. I am the one who has succeeded Fulendiko Kafula here in Malole. I am a councilor and friend of Chief Chitimukulu. I work with the Chief in the highest council or court at the royal palace. I just want to say a few things about the way of life among the Bemba people, our group, starting from the way we used to live a long time ago [or, in the past].



107 Interestingly, the problem of improper, inaccurate, or disrespectful praises was raised by Chitimukulu in Chapter I, as he listened to the tape of Ng'ongo Yuba's performance. He felt compelled, even years later, to try to have the bard rectify this problem. Similarly, when Chief Puta watched the video of the performance of his predecessor, he was moved to have his advisors come in to record an addendum or correction to the earlier narrative. In the pan-traditional narrative context there are often chiefs portrayed in various tales who do not exhibit much wisdom in understanding the cases being brought before them. An obvious example is the Kalulu tale performed by Mr. Stanley Kalumba in the previous chapter, where the trickster manipulates the chief/lion into first making the bark cloth garment then pronouncing a rash and unfair judgment on the bushbuck.

* To watch a video of this story follow this link: <http://dx.doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0033.03/Bemba7>

The Bemba people, as you might know and have heard and read from books, [that] the Bemba people are not original inhabitants of this country, Zambia. This people came from a country of...which used to be called Congo, or let's say these days it is called Zaire.¹⁰⁸ It is a group that broke away from the Luba people, even these who came here were being referred to as the Luba people. The chiefs who are well known are very many. I will mention their names towards the end. When they arrived in this country they found people of different ethnicities, but they defeated them and drove them out of this land. They gained control of this land and became famous as the Bemba people. I am just summarizing, eh...it is not my intention to say everything about the life of the Bemba people, not at all.

I just want to pick a few points. The Bemba's way of life, they used to live in ordinary villages and the chiefs' villages. And these villages, just as they look nowadays, after they had built the village they used to live in harmony as a family. However, there were some problems that used to disturb their harmony. There was danger of wild animals, lions and others. These things hindered their development because many times they failed to go out to work [in the fields]. They were afraid of these animals. There were other things which disturbed their stay; these tribal wars. In these wars, they often fought with the groups they found in this land. Therefore, their story was not peaceful. There were other people who came from far away countries, as you have heard of the Ngoni people. They came from the country called...South Africa. They conquered many lands and finally entered the country...of Zambia. Even there they defeated some peoples. However, they often struggled with the Bemba because they were equally strong. The Bemba were aggressive, and the Ngoni were also aggressive.

Lions and wars were not the only things which made life difficult for the people; not at all. Locusts used to give people a lot of problems. Therefore, whatever people wanted to do in terms of development, these three things I have mentioned frustrated their progress. According to the way they lived, they were ruled by chiefs. The Bemba land was divided into different parts. The biggest part was controlled by Chitimukulu. The other part was under Chief Mwamba, while the other was controlled by Chief Nkula. Other areas were controlled by their sons.¹⁰⁹ For example, Makasa's area, Munkonge's chiefdom, Chief Mporokoso's area, and... and...other smaller chiefs who were below their sons. Therefore, all these chiefs ruled people who belonged to one group called "Bemba." In their running of their affairs they worked together; they were not leaving things

108 The name has reverted to (the Democratic Republic of) Congo since this session was taped.

109 "Sons" is used here in a positional manner, since succession of Bemba chiefs is, strictly speaking, through nephews, sons of the chiefs' sisters. Actual succession is obviously more complicated in actuality than this matrilineal model suggests.

in the hands of one chief, so that he could do everything alone, not at all. They used to help each other. They were united just like this that you are nowadays calling "Humanism."¹¹⁰ Even in the past, they had their own humanism.

For example, in the village, as I was narrating, they used to have the *nsaka*, as things are nowadays there are schools or welfare halls where people meet to discuss issues and do certain things. At the *nsaka* people learned a lot or gained a lot of knowledge that they imparted to others who did not have this knowledge. It was also at the *nsaka*, as I heard Mrs. Chitupa say something about bringing about development such as farming, that they used to plan things, saying, "Friends, how shall we work this year? In which area shall we work?" Counseling of certain people who didn't know certain things was done at the *nsaka*; as you can see nowadays that's why some people are ignorant of a number of things [because there are no regular gatherings at the *nsaka*]. Some people cannot even make axe or hoe handles; others cannot even...make a basket; others don't know how to make winnowing baskets. In the past we used to have people at the *nsaka* who knew how to make such things. These were the ones who used to teach their friends such skills. Even nowadays, inhabitants of this place [the Bemba area] want to revive those good old practices because people used to learn a lot of things at the *nsaka*, just as they are learning things from welfare societies or schools or any other place where people gather. That's the same way the *nsaka* used to work. Even organization used to start from *nsaka*. "Friends, you have seen the way we are living here...at this village. Calamities are befalling us every now and then. There are fierce animals—lions and all the other things. What shall we do?"

Other messages would come. "Ah friends, have you heard the message from the chief's palace? We are being warned thus: 'You people of village so and so, take care. Yes, there are rumors that the Ngoni or enemies will attack us in this land.'" People used to get all this information from the *nsaka*. Therefore, this "Humanism" which has been taught to us by the party and its government, that this is what we should follow but it hasn't worked the way it used to work in the past. In the kind of humanism that was practiced at the *nsaka*, there was mercy—helping those who were not fortunate enough to get their basic needs. Those who were at the *nsaka* consulted and planned how to help such needy persons. Although there were many obstacles that hindered development and generally made people's lives unpleasant, there were certain things that they did very well.

110 Humanism is the term given to the political philosophy originated, espoused and applied by Zambia's first president, Kenneth D. Kaunda. It put forth a program that was ostensibly a combination of western capitalism and African socialism. Over the years, in effect, it took on the trappings of socialism that had evolved in many third world nations.

I can give one example of these things. They had started mining although they were not digging very deep. They were just scooping out soil from the anthills or near the river. This is what they used to call iron ore. It was right there at the *nsaka* where the blacksmiths were also found, let me say, those people who were very skilled workmen. Those very skilled workmen could scoop out soil from an anthill to build a very big smelting furnace. These are the things that are nowadays called "smelters." These are used in smelting ... eh, that soil so that it is heated to extract the things they want. When they melt, slag goes this way, that waste matter goes this way. Then the metal, which is called iron ore or the real metal remains. This is what they would take. After doing such things, they used to teach each other at the *nsaka*; that's where blacksmiths, who could process these things, were. These were usually very few [in number]. It was at the *nsaka* that people learned different ways of making garments to wear. Some were wearing hides of sheep, wild animals; others were wearing bark cloths which even today... [Videotape ends here, rest of narrative is recorded on an audiotape of the session.]

Mr. Komakoma began by sketching out the migration of the Bemba from the Congo into what is now Zambia, and describing their militaristic conquest of new lands and peoples. He talks about how lion attacks, ongoing wars, and even locusts regularly plagued the efforts of people to live and work peacefully. These problems were addressed by the cooperation of the numerous Bemba chiefs and their constituents. Here Fele refers to the older practices resembling what was at the time of the performance the national philosophy known as "Humanism," something vaguely akin to but never as celebrated as Julius Nyerere's Tanzanian "Ujamaa." From this contemporary analogy, he moves back to the concept of the *nsaka* and, although he had initially stated he only had a few remarks with which to conclude the session, he produced the longest of the orations, covering many topics. He enumerates and describes the many instances whereby this central meeting space served as a site of educating young people, communicating urgent news, learning various skills and crafts. There is a brief but thorough description of how people use the soil from anthills to construct traditional ovens to smelt iron. Most of his remarks add more details to the viability of that traditional place of wisdom, and he returns more than once to the secular modernity of the younger generation.

One interesting dimension of his performance was that he was rarely interrupted, even by a sound of ascent, such as "Uh huh," or "Yes." In many ways, he was summarizing a lot of what had been said thematically during

the session, as well as asserting his role as village headman, owner of the house we were at, the convener of the session, and the main discussant during each performance. In a sense, Mr. Komakoma speaks as a rural “company man,” asserting both the importance of Bemba traditions and church, lauding the powers of Bemba chiefs and the nation’s philosophy and practices.

I had been playing back the audio after each person’s efforts, so they were quite aware of what I was recording and what they sounded like. It was overall a very hospitable situation. Living in Malole and a few miles from the compound of the Paramount Chief, they’d all had a fair amount of contact with European missionaries, teachers, aid workers and some researchers as well. They did not appear to find my presence all that unusual and seemed to be quite at ease. Comparatively speaking, this particular session both paralleled and differed from others I’d recorded among other Bemba-speaking groups, particularly those involving elders. Perhaps the most dramatic difference was the continual interaction between performers and audience and the ways in which the themes of different oral genres were intertwined: praise poetry, fictional oral narrative, historical descriptions, proverbs, humorous verbal sparring, and outright didactic exposition. The themes of wisdom, respect, piety, power, cooperation, education, sexuality, and generational contestation interwove liberally and produced a dense insight into the ways people gave artistic and verbal form to the things that concerned them. It was particularly instructive for me at that point in the research, because it was a reminder of the broad canvas that an oral tradition occupies, and how generic categories are constantly tested, redefined or completely ignored in favor of the ongoing communicative experience, manipulated in performance, especially by elders.¹¹¹

Although he initially refused to take payment, I convinced Fele to accept a small amount of money [around \$8] to compensate people for their time. We returned to the secondary school for some lunch then drove out to Chitimukulu’s village at around 1:45 PM, arriving around 2:10. I’ve described this occasion in some detail in the first chapter of this study. We ended our session shortly before sunset, amidst the

111 See Briggs and Bauman 1992 on genre in oral traditions. Their notion of intertextuality and power are apposite for the discussion of how people mix and cross generic boundaries in order to strengthen their arguments or make broader statements or connections in their discourses.

rather chaotic energy of that increasingly spontaneous gathering. After promising to send photos of the event, Daniel and I dropped Mr. Kalunga at his home then drove back to Kasama. While the long recording session at Chitimukulu's was decidedly different from the earlier two, involving as it did a preponderance of music, dance and praise singing, it also exhibited the ways in which performance can be both emergent and transcendent. At the same time that men were putting forward their individual performance personas, women demanded a share of the stage and expressed their own, more communal, selves. This competitive relationship differed markedly from the more relaxed and shared atmosphere at Fele's compound. Gendered elements of performance, of presence and power, will be further considered in the next chapter on Lunda performance.

Postscript

In late October 2005 I made a brief return to the Malole area and, in particular, to Fele's village. It had been difficult to get there, spending five hours in Kasama waiting for a minibus to fill up before we could leave for the forty minute trip to Malole. Once at the village, I had to ask help from a schoolboy to take me to Fele's village, where I met the successor to Stephen Komakoma. Though polite and hospitable, the new Fele evidenced little interest in my project and less in my intention to find or find out about the people who'd performed stories for me in 1989. With the help of the schoolboy, I tried to track down the family of Dismas Kampamba, but no one was home. In fact, there was a funeral in a distant part of Malole that had drawn most people. In over three decades of rural research, I'd learned that one of the best reasons to spend a good amount of time in any one place was to account for the very common occurrence of funerals and the responsibility felt by local residents to attend these rites. A half-day visit to Malole was clearly not going to be sufficient to locate the performers, or their families, that I was looking for. Eventually, we were able to find the home of Ms. Densa Kangwa, and she was sitting outside on her verandah scraping the husks off of large cassava tubers. Dressed in older working clothes and headscarf, Ms. Kangwa had clearly aged since my first visit, having become noticeably thinner and greyer. After an initial introduction and reminder of when I'd come and of our recording session, Ms. Kangwa smiled and seemed delighted to see me again, even remembering that I'd come that time with my young son.

We sat in front of her small home and chatted a bit then I set up my DVD player on a small table so that she could see the stories that were told at Malole in 1989.

While her memory was quite good, she could supply only a few details on the performers, most of who had since died. Ms. Kangwa clearly enjoyed seeing the performances again, noting the importance of the themes explored at Fele's session. She had been born in 1938, which made her around fifty-one at our original session and near sixty-seven in 2005. She'd had ten children, and nine were still living. Of the performers we were watching, she could only recall that Elizabeth Chama was in her eighties when she died. Peter Mutale, she said, was also known as Telensa Shula, and had died in 1995. Fele, Stephen Komakoma, was nearly ninety years old when he passed away in 1995. She also recognized the young Elizabeth, who'd told a story after Mr. Kampamba, as Bana Chinondo, mother of Chinondo. While Bana Chinondo was away at that moment, her adolescent son, Chinondo, soon arrived in time to see his mother telling a story while holding and nursing him on her knee. Ms. Kangwa spoke to the two young men sitting on her verandah in order to enlist their help to later on distribute the photos and transcriptions of the tales I'd brought to the appropriate relatives of the performers.

One notable event that occurred as we sat and watched the performances was the arrival of three young women, none of whom seemed older than sixteen years old. Two had babies on their backs or hips and they wandered over in a very proprietary and somewhat aggressive manner, demanding to know who I was and what was going on. Ms. Kangwa explained my presence, at the same time she indicated that she was performing on the video at that particular moment. The young women watched for a while, feigning the kind of disinterest that seems universal for adolescents, taking cassava from Ms. Kangwa's stack, even though she asked them not to, and biting off and chewing the raw pieces. One of the young women kept looking me up and down while she alternately ate cassava and picked her teeth with a piece of straw. They eventually tired of standing there watching us do nothing, laughed at me and then sauntered away. I think I was the only one to notice the irony of the themes of the performances preserved by the DVD video—about how young people no longer paid attention, how girls bore children for their parents to raise, or how the young no longer spent time learning at the *nsaka*—and the current behavior of these young women.

I took some photos of Ms. Kangwa, after she'd gone into her home to change into a newer dress and headscarf, and promised to send them as soon as I could. I also gave her the equivalent of \$5 as compensation for her time. It was nearing 5 PM and I was going to have to find a ride back to Kasama before it got dark or try to secure a place to spend the night at Malole, possibly at St. Francis Secondary School. So I took my leave. This was the last stop in my two-month stay in Northern Province trying to find more contextual information on the sessions and performers from my 1988–89 visits. The researcher in me wanted to spend more time in Malole to track down additional data on the lives of these narrators, while the practical side realized that spending the night would have entailed a lot more work for perhaps meager results. The practical and world-weary side won out, not the first time this happened during my 2005 time in the north. I then walked to the road and waited almost an hour before the first vehicle going west passed by. The car contained four union organizers, returning from a meeting with school teachers in a nearby town. After some interesting conversation on the ride to Kasama, they dropped me near some shops, where I could walk back to the rest house where I was staying.

Ilondola

My efforts to record stories at or near Chief Nkula's village in 1989 pretty much typified the things that come up in field research. Initially, I'd hoped to find Father Louis Oger at Ilondola mission and secure his cooperation in my recording plans. Originally from France, Fr. Oger had lived and worked in Zambia for many years and had written articles on Bemba language, history and culture.¹¹² He was one of the chief organizers and teachers at the Bemba language school based at Ilondola. Fr. Oger also has authored many of the language study texts published by the White Fathers for use by students in these courses. As my son Michael and I drove out of Chinsali, on the road to Ilondola, we met a Toyota pickup truck going the other way. Inside were two white men who looked like Catholic priests—after a while it really isn't too difficult to identify them, especially knowing that Toyota pickups were often the vehicle of

112 Fr. Oger has written a detailed history of the establishment of the Catholic mission at Ilondola in 1934 (1991). See also Garvey 1994.

choice for the White Fathers in Zambia. We waved them down as we came abreast of their truck and indeed it turned out to be Fr. Oger. He was on his way to Lwitikila Secondary School at Mpika, around 60 or so miles away, to watch Pope John Paul II's visit to Zambia on television. While I was disappointed, he encouraged me to go on to the mission and seek the help of Fr. Michel Genelot, or "Father Mike."

We pushed on, stopping on the way at the village of Chief Nkula. This area of Zambia has an important history in the nationalist struggle. Near Nkula's is the Protestant mission at Lubwa, where the nation's first president, Kenneth D. Kaunda, was raised by his cleric parents.¹¹³ Years after independence, it was also the initial site of the Zambian government's dispute with the charismatic religious leader Alice Lenshina.¹¹⁴ In any event, we were led to Nkula's by a couple of local men we'd picked up along the road. The chief was out, but several young women explained that he'd return that evening. I left one of my several official letters of introduction and said we'd come by the next day. We drove on to Ilondola and found Father Genelot outside the church. He was most cordial and agreed to show me around the village and introduce us to some potential storytellers.

Father Genelot was soon to leave Zambia for a post in Canada, where one of the White Fathers' headquarters is located. He was interested in our work, and we shared stories of people we knew in common. We first visited the home of a man known as a fine storyteller, but the 87 year-old had left for his gardens and would be spending a few nights at his *mutanda* or temporary bush shelter. We moved on to find Mr. Stephen Chipalo at home. He was a retired schoolteacher who currently worked as a teacher for the mission's language courses. He was very hospitable and spoke Bemba, at least to me, in a very clear and deliberate way. It was apparent that students would benefit from this kind of articulation and enunciation of the language. We made arrangements for me to

113 Much has been written about and by Zambia's first head of state. Several informative works include Hall 1973 and Kaunda 1963.

114 Lenshina's Lumpa Church rose in the mid-1950s as a charismatic movement that was thought to threaten government power in the area. For a discussion of her influence and the complex confrontation between her Lumpa movement and the national government see A. Roberts 1972 and 1973, and a more recent study by van Binsbergen 1981. Only recently, ca. 2006, have a good number of the church's adherents returned to Zambia from exile in the Congo. Gordon 2008, has written the most recent historical evaluation of this seminal period in Zambia.

return in the morning to record some stories. We walked on to another man's house. Mr. Makombe was quite old, one of the oldest converts who actually traveled to Ilondola with the first Catholic missionaries (Oger 1991). I arranged to come for him in the morning and take him to Mr. Chipalo's house for a recording session. By this time it was getting dark, so we returned to the mission to settle in for the night, observing the pleasant rituals of a meal with Father Mike and more conversation about his twenty-two years in Zambia and some of the people we both knew.

At around 7:20 AM, I drove over to pick up Mr. Makombe at his home and we arrived at Mr. Chipalo's at around 7:40. Also attending the session was Mr. Chakobe, the headman of a nearby section of the village. The first story was told by our host, Mr. Chipalo.¹¹⁵

Bemba Storytelling 8 by Stephen Chanda Chipalo*

Robert: Have you prepared? OK, can
Cancel: you mention your name?

Henry
Chakobe: Your name.

RC: That's it.

Stephen
Chipalo: First? On...before?

RC: Yes *mukwai*.

SC: I, the one who is about to start speaking, am Stephen Chanda Chipalo.

RC: Uhn hum. You can begin *mukwai*.

SC: There goes the *mulumbe*; there was a very big stone in the bush. And that big stone stood forever. In the bush there was a small animal, a lemur [*canga*]. This lemur used to leap in the tree. He used to jump in a tree [from branch to branch]. All the other animals saw how



115 Stephen Chanda Chipalo was born around 1926 and died in July 2001 at the age of 75. His home is less than half a mile from Ilondola mission. I visited his widow, Mrs. Sarafina Chipalo in September 2005. She told me they'd married around 1941 and had fifteen children, eight of whom were still alive. Mr. Chipalo had taught at around five primary schools and retired in 1974. He'd been an elder in the local Catholic church; at different times holding the positions of church council chairman and also the council's bursar.

* To watch a video of this story follow this link: <http://dx.doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0033.03/Bemba8>

the lemur used to play in the tree. One day the lemur fell on a big stone. He fell on the stone and died. All the other animals sat still and said, "What's the matter?!" They began arguing. One animal said, "Me, even if I fell on a stone I could not die at all." The elephant, the buffalo, the roan antelope, the lion, the small antelope [Sharpe's steenbok], the duiker... Then one day the elephant was taking a stroll. It stumbled against something. It fell on...it fell near the stone, it hit its head against the...the stone. It even died. The buffalo and other animals said, "Oh dear! This is beyond comprehension! No, me I can't die at all. Even if I fall onto the stone I can't die."

Then one day the buffalo also set out, it was taking a stroll, it hit its foot against a stone, hit its head against a stone; it even died. The hippopotamus said, "You young ones, the way you walk is childish, you walk like a young boy." Then the hippo also took a stroll; it took a stroll. Within a short time it also stumbled, it also hit its head against the stone and died. The duiker said, "Poor fellows! Perhaps these fellows have met this fate because they are heavy." Because the duiker is quick, it hopped about. It hopped about. It also stumbled; it hit against the stone. Then it also died.

Kalulu [the hare] said, "You hopeless animals, you all lack wisdom! Why do you jump about like this, you just crawl, the giant elephants just crawl? Even the hippo also crawls, Mr. Duiker was also crawling. How foolish! This is the way I, the hare, do things." It began hopping about, it hopped about, it hopped about. Well! Poor thing, it jumped high and hit against the stone, mpa! And then the hare's head was what?...was cut off.

How terrible! All the animals were gripped by fear. However, there were some which were not scared at all. They went round the stone, but they were afraid of hitting against the stone. Some of them said, "We shouldn't be afraid. Let us just hit ourselves against this very stone."

Therefore, this *mulumbe* means that...I will explain. The king who came from heaven is Christ, Jesus Christ. He came to this earth and taught us, and suffered for us. When he finished his work, as he was about to return to his father, he gathered his workers. Then he said to Simon, "Now you are not Simon at all. Your name is Peter, you are the stone. You are the foundation on which I will build my church, which will go...which will stand forever." Therefore, the name Peter is "the rock." And the one who has taken Peter's place especially at this time is Pope John Paul the Second. Therefore, he, too, has ascended to the place of the Disciples of Christ. Even Pope John Paul is the rock. Therefore, this rock is the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church will never break at all. Therefore, every

person should get closer to the rock so that they may find salvation. If we human beings do not draw closer, if we do not hide in the everlasting rock, we will not find salvation. This is the end of this *mulumbe*.

RC: Very good *mukwai*.

Stephen Chipalo was at that time in his mid sixties, though he looked to be much younger. He was slim and held himself quite erect, sitting or standing. He wore a thin black turtle neck sweater and dark trousers, both of which accentuated his thin frame. As he began the performance, he had his arms crossed with his hands rubbing his elbows. He kept his arms crossed for the first part of the story, slowly and subtly rocking back and forth, and using his head to nod and sway in accentuating his words. At the point where the hippo dies in the narrative, he moved his hands between his legs, forearms resting on his thighs. His main gesture, aside from the continued rocking and use of his head to make his points, was to use his hands to imitate the prancing of the duiker, as described by Kalulu, and Kalulu's own prancing over the rock. Then he leaned back and interlaced his fingers over his right knee for most of the remainder of the narrative. Overall, his voice and inflections, along with the rocking of body and head, carried most of the performance's non-verbal techniques, giving form to the words of the narrative. Speaking clearly, almost deliberately, Mr. Chipalo first depicted the tale's events then explained them carefully at the end.

There seems little coincidence that the narrative had a Christian, indeed a Catholic, thematic thrust. Living virtually in the shadow of the venerable mission and church at Ilondola, and engaged as a teacher at the Language Center, Mr. Chipalo emphasized the power of the rock in the story as standing for St. Peter, the first in a line of popes that ended, at that time, in John Paul II, who happened to be visiting Zambia on that same day. It is interesting to note that Kalulu, as was the case in a Bemba narrative performed at Malole by Peter Mutale, plays a relatively small role in this *mulumbe*. While expectations may have been raised when the trickster hare appeared in the narrative, these were quickly channeled to the overall pattern of animals declaring they would overcome the deadly power of the rock, only to immediately fall victim to it. Mr. Chipalo reveals that even the clever Kalulu cannot stand before the power of the church. This tale may easily have been the kind of story told as a homily during Mass, by a priest or a lay lector.

When Mr. Chakobe took his turn at performance, he turned out to be one of the most animated and engaging storytellers I'd recorded in a long time.

Bemba Storytelling 9 by Mr. Henry Chakobe*

Robert

Cancel: All right *mukwai*.

Henry Chakobe: I, the one who will be speaking this time, am Henry Chakobe. My home is right here at Ilondola. In fact, I am the village headman. The cleverness of the roan antelope, its burden is on the back. [proverb]



A little thing was said. Kalulu and Bushbuck lived in temporary huts [*mitanda*] in the gardens. They liked each other very much. They used to eat together, even sleeping, they used to sleep in the same house. One day they went...Kalulu took a stroll in the bush. He found the *musongwa*¹¹⁶ tree that was heavy with ripe *nsongwa* fruit. However, the *musongwa* tree was very tall. Kalulu could not climb this *musongwa* at all. Then he thought, "What shall I do?" He said, "I will go and get my friend Bushbuck. He himself [Bushbuck] will be able to climb this *musongwa*." He returned home and told Bushbuck. He said, "My friend, where I went I saw a *musongwa* tree that was bearing the fruit very well. However, it is very tall. Since it is night time now, we shall go together tomorrow so that we go and eat the fruit because there is famine in this land." Bushbuck was very happy. And so, they almost failed to fall into deep sleep because of the excitement and anxiety. Very early in the morning they set out. Kalulu led the way to the *musongwa* tree. Then he...they arrived. He said, "See my friend?" As could be expected, Bushbuck was so happy that he started salivating. He enquired, "Who will climb this fruit tree my friend?" Kalulu said, "Well, you are the one who will climb it my friend."

Bushbuck certainly got hold of the tree and climbed. As he got up into the tree, Kalulu decided to leave. He said, "My friend, I will be

116 The *musongwa* tree bears the *lusongwa* fruit, identified in the dictionary and by local people as the "Cape Gooseberry." While this fruit seems mostly to grow in shrubs rather than trees, the narrative clearly locates the fruit atop a very tall tree.

* To watch a video of this story follow this link: <http://dx.doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0033.03/Bemba9>

back soon, I am going somewhere." He stood and left. As he hid behind some objects, he saw Bushbuck shaking the *nsongwa* fruit. He shook the branches, he shook, he shook; the fruit fell down in big quantities. Finally he saw that they were plenty. Hare took his skin...he removed it from his body. He just remained exposed flesh, red! He set out, he began going [back]. Then he stood under the *musongwa* tree and looked up. He said, "You fellow, who is shaking off my *nsongwa* fruit, who are you?" As Bushbuck was up in the tree, he looked down, he saw the...hare who looked red! And then *mukwai*, he said, "Come down. Who told you to climb this tree?" "Well *mukwai*, it is Kalulu who brought me." He was saying this because he didn't know that he was actually talking to Kalulu. Bushbuck quickly tumbled down from the tree, pulululululu. As soon as he tumbled down the tree, Kalulu began beating him with a whip, lopoo! lopoo! Bushbuck cried a lot and ran away.

Hare remained there and ate the *nsongwa* fruit. He ate and ate until he had his fill. He even carried a few *nsongwa*. He started going to the temporary huts. He found his friend Bushbuck and said, "Oh! My friend, when I returned from where I had gone I found you were not there. Where did you go?" Bushbuck said, "Can you see how swollen I am? Something red came, it beat me thoroughly." "Why didn't you call me?" said Kalulu. Bushbuck said, "Certainly my friend, I called for help from you." Kalulu even gave him some of the few *nsongwa* fruit he had carried. Bushbuck ate but he did not eat enough, he didn't have his fill at all.

The following morning again Kalulu said, "Let's go. Today I will keep an eye on the thing that beat you." Again Bushbuck climbed the tree. Hare said, "Just go up, I am watching." He looked all around; he looked sideways. He said, "My friend, I have a stomach ache, I will be back soon." Again he went to the same place. He did the same thing; he removed his skin exposing his flesh, red! Again he came back. He found Bushbuck in the tree. He said, "You! You have again come back here today after that beating I gave you yesterday? You are a very stubborn person? Even today you have come back here!" "Well *mukwai*, even today it is Kalulu who led me to this place, even today it is Kalulu..." He said, "Come down, today you will take me where Kalulu is." Bushbuck replied, "*Mukwai*, today he went in the same direction." Kalulu answered, "You just come down." Just as Bushbuck was coming down, Kalulu began as he did previously; he began beating him, "Oh dear!" Bushbuck jumped down and ran away very quickly. He reached the huts. He sat down and thought, he said, "Oh no!" His friend Kalulu, there he came, he ate the *nsongwa* fruit. He ate a lot of them; he was satiated. Again he carried a few. "My friend, what demon has entered you,

are you mad?" Bushbuck said, "My friend, even today come and see what this thing has done to me. It has beaten me a lot, come and see. Look! I am swollen, even in my eyes, see?" "Oh! I even came with...I...I even have...a knobkerrie [fighting stick]. I said that today we will kill this thing." Then that was all. He said, "Oh, it's all right." Therefore, my friend, let's go there again tomorrow." But Bushbuck began thinking, he said, "How strange. Huhm. Tch. This friend of mine is not a good person at all."

The following morning, they went back to the *musongwa* again. Let me say they continued going there a number of times like that. Then that morning they went; Bushbuck climbed the *musongwa* tree. Hare said, "Excuse me for a moment." Bushbuck also kept an eye on him as he went and stood somewhere. Hare removed his skin in the same way he used to do it; he removed it and put it somewhere. He came back red, carrying whipping sticks. "Who told you to climb this tree?" "Well my friend, well...!" As his friend was beating him with whips, Bushbuck ran away, but he went straight to the spot where Kalulu had left his skin. And he found the skin Kalulu had left. Bushbuck...ahn [slaps hands]! He snatched it with his mouth; he carried it with his teeth. He quickly ran away. Kalulu saw that and said, "Heh! He's taken away my skin. My friend! My friend!" Bushbuck kept on running. Kalulu followed him, "My friend! My friend! I beseech you!" This was to no avail. Bushbuck just continued running. Now Kalulu became dry, his body became dry, he was dry. Even grass hurt him. And then Kalulu failed to run; he ran briefly... he fell down, mpaai! He even died.

Therefore, deceit is not good because if you are cunning in dealing with your friend, he, too, will deal cunningly with you. These things are seen even nowadays in this world. This is my *mulumbe mukwai*, this is where I end. [claps and wipes hands].

Mr. Chakobe¹¹⁷ was a heavy-set man, with a friendly and humorous bent in his performance style. His head was balding and round, matched by his stocky body. He wore a long-sleeved, brown knit shirt, with a thick white stripe and smaller black and brown stripes encircling him around the chest, with all its three buttons fastened. His humorous story about the trickster

117 Henry Chakobe was around 67 years old when he performed the tale included in this collection. He was born in 1922 around the village of Chief Nkula. He did his primary schooling at Ilondola and ended his teacher training at the college at Malole. He basically taught in many of the primary schools in the Chinsali area, most of which were parochial schools, and most of these Catholic. He married Sarafina Puta the same year he began his teaching career, 1945. Soon after he retired in 1975, he became the headman of the village sector that is still known by his surname, Chakobe.

hare Kalulu included his acting out of various roles and generally causing his audience to laugh, at times uncontrollably. His technique and energy were notable for successfully engaging the audience. He began the narrative a bit stiffly, with his hands in his lap, like Mr. Chipalo before him, rocking back and forth a bit with his head nodding to emphasize his words. As he warmed to his task, Mr. Chakobe began to gesture, take on different voices and more directly delineate the narrative's actions. His first clear gestures helped him describe the way the bushbuck was shaking the tree so that the *nsongwa* dropped to the ground. Each time he used the ideophone "Cee!" to emphasize how red Kalulu had become, he also marked it with his hands, briefly spread apart and dipping down once as if making a parenthesis around the red character. When depicting the conversation between the red Kalulu and the bushbuck in the tree, Mr. Chakobe alternately looked up then down, depending on the point of view of the character who was speaking. The most laughs were elicited from the audience when he mimed the creature whipping the bushbuck mercilessly, a stereotypical gesture of whipping his hand and arm down from way up and behind the head and snapping his fingers at the point of impact. The children especially, but also Mr. Chipalo himself, spent a lot of the performance tittering or laughing out loud.

The narrative has an interesting thematic focus. Whereas Kalulu most often wins out over his adversaries, large and small, friend or foe, there certainly are tales in which he falls victim to his own greed or excess. Mr. Chakobe prefaces the tale with a saying, "The cleverness of the roan antelope, its burden is on its back." [*Ubucenjeshi bwa mpelembe, icifulukutu cili pa numa*]. The "burden" refers to the hump on the roan's back, which is thought to be the site of the antelope's intelligence. The saying is a warning against being "too" clever. This story will thereby bear out the truth of the saying. The proverb also echoes the theme of Peter Mutale's narrative, earlier in this chapter, about the ears of the roan antelope and its warning about not following good advice. While most Kalulu stories are enjoyed for his humorous flaunting of most rules of decency and decorum, as well as exercising his almost unrivaled wit, this tale combines the delight of these traits while at the same time bringing Kalulu to ground for his greediness and cruelty. When the bushbuck finally catches on to his friend's machinations, he manages to have the last laugh by running off with Kalulu's skin, leaving him to die a rather unpleasant death. Mr. Chakobe ends the performance by saying, "Therefore, deceit is not good because if you are cunning in dealing with your friend, he, too, will deal cunningly with you."

These things are seen even nowadays in this world." The tale becomes a moral or cautionary lesson, and this is congruent with Mr. Chipalo's story that preceded it. There too, Kalulu was an actor that in the end succumbed to the greater power of the Catholic faith. In Mr. Chakobe's tale, trickery and greediness are marked as unworthy traits, in spite of the delightful humor to be enjoyed in the story. Again, in the shadow of Ilondola Mission, the erstwhile headman of a village sector and noted member of the church is trying to focus the story he provides a stranger on what is at least in part a Christian message.

Finally, Mr. Makombe performed several praise songs, *imishikakulo*. After we chatted for a while, I paid the three men around five dollars, took some photos, and arranged to send them through Fr. Oger. We took our leave, also, of Fr. Genelot and headed for Nkula's village. We arrived to find that the Chief had come and gone, leaving word for us to return on Friday or Sunday, possibly utilizing a strategy or ploy chiefs have employed to put off unwanted visitors since the days of the early exploration of Africa by Europe. In any event, we had to push on to Mpika that day, so we left the area without recording at the *musumba*, the chief's home or village.

Poscript:

I spent most of September of 2005 living at Ilondola mission, doing some advanced Bemba study at the Language Center. The mission was still run by White Fathers, whose order is officially known as Missionaries of Africa. I lived in a small room in the complex, along with two other students who were in the midst of taking the standard three-month beginning course. It was overall a very positive experience, with a lot of time spent speaking Bemba with the priests and mission staff as well as taking long walks through the village with one of my fellow students. Moreover, my Bemba tutor, Evans Bwalya, and I had a chance to watch all of my DVD recordings of the performances that are the focus of this study, and discuss obscure or fine points of both content and storyteller styles. During this period, I was able to arrange to visit with the families of two of the men who'd performed narratives for me in 1989, Mr. Chipalo and Mr. Chakobe. Most of the biographical information I've included in footnotes here was gathered at that time. How I gathered the information is worth noting.

Apparently, my arrival at Ilondola had already been known by local residents, as the priest who ran the program had spoken to a few elders about my possibly wanting to record some traditional material. Further,

after we began working together, Evans Bwalya, had let the relevant families know that I was hoping to augment my knowledge of the two performers' lives. So it was Evans who arranged for me to visit the home of Stephen Chanda Chipalo's widow and her children. There were actually a few small houses in a compound that housed not only Mrs. Chipalo but also her daughters' families. I was received in her home and, having just changed into a better quality dress and *citenge*, Mrs. Chipalo sat on a bamboo mat (*butanda*) and chatted with me for a while, noting she'd been having problems with her eyes and that her legs were also troubling her. I promised to bring some simple eye drops I had in my room to see if they'd be helpful. I handed them a photo of a freeze frame of Mr. Chipalo's performance and a printed transcription of the story in its original Bemba-language form. After the usual polite but not entirely convincing compliments about the quality of my Bemba, I played both Mr. Chipalo's performance and that of Mr. Chakobe for the family. Almost all of them took to reacting to the performances as if they were in the audience; predicting lines before they were spoken, responding to what was being said, and laughing aloud at Mr. Chakobe's story. Then I asked some questions concerning Mr. Chipalo's background and recorded their answers on audiocassette.¹¹⁸ I promised to return in a couple of days to take some photos then called it a day.

One interesting dimension that emerged was that Stephen Chipalo was thoroughly involved in the local Catholic Church. He held leadership positions in the church council and was an extremely devout and regular church-goer. His wife was, similarly, very active in the local women's league and other religious organizations. The sense I got from some of the priests who'd been at Ilondola for at least a decade was that Mr. Chipalo was very enthusiastic in his piety, in the sense that he was rather dogmatic in his approach to others and his interpretations of scripture. Similarly, Evans Bwalya, though very respectful of Mr. Chipalo's memory, felt that perhaps the tale he told was not as well-formed and focused as it might have been, and that the final explanation was somewhat forced and did not necessarily follow from the narrative's preceding details. While this does not detract from his original hospitable and cooperative response to my

118 Besides gathering relevant biographical information, I was left, in retrospect, with some conflicting information on Mr. Chipalo's age. While his family put his date of birth at 1926, they also said he died in 2001 at the age of 87. One or the other date/age does not add up, so for the purposes of this study I've set his birth date as the starting point and have marked his age at death in 2001 as 75.

request for a story, it is simply another dimension of his character and how it might have shaped that particular performance that is worth adding to other observations and interpretations of his efforts.

Mr. Chakobe's nephew, Mr. Jones Chibesa, the District Commissioner of Chinsali, lived in Chakobe village but had his office in town, some thirty or forty kilometers from Ilondola. After several near misses, I was able to briefly visit with Mr. Chibesa at his office in Chinsali. I gave him a photo of Mr. Chakobe and the text of his narrative and then he provided me with details of his uncle's life and accomplishments. As was the case with Stephen Chipalo's family, the focus was on simple information such as birth date, schooling and employment history, and date of death. Mr. Chibesa also spoke briefly about one of Mr. Chakobe's daughters, who'd married and moved to Botswana but, sadly, died of AIDS there. It seems her children had been adopted by a European missionary family, and the Zambian relatives were hoping to regain custody of them. He gave no indication of how this would eventually be resolved. After about twenty minutes, my companion, who had provided my ride to Chinsali, and I took our leave of Mr. Chibesa.

It is significant to note that Stephen Chanda Chipalo and Henry Chakobe were both school teachers and active in their churches. Both roles demand effective public speaking, often framed by traditional discourse in the form of proverbs or storytelling. This also meant that they had good proficiency in English as well as a good deal of higher education. The fact that neither ever chose to employ English in our interactions suggests their comfort with interacting with certain white visitors in the Bemba language and, thereby, maintaining a kind of easy distance or even control when it came to asking or answering questions. The stranger would have to be quite skilled in language in order to go much further than soliciting the stories, asking a few questions about the tales, offering basic greetings and conversation and, having little more to say, leaving.

Recording sessions among the Bemba, though in some ways different in each instance, had a number of common characteristics. All performers save one were elders, at least fifty some odd years old, and they were recorded in areas that were strongly influenced by the Catholic Church. Counting the performances at Chitimukulu's village, three of the four sessions included the singing of praise poetry, mostly *imishikakulo* and some *ngoma* forms. Elder practitioners of these genres included women as well as men. The knowledge of and ability to perform praise poetry seems, even in these small samples, rather widespread. One assertion I'd make here is

that, compared to the four other groups I recorded, Bemba elders tended to more commonly learn and utilize these rather esoteric forms.¹¹⁹ This is partly due to the fact that the areas where I recorded were near the *misumba* of major chiefs, Chitimukulu and Nkula. It also seems that historically, the praise forms were adapted and applied to various dimensions of Christian worship, even employed in parts of the Catholic Mass. At Ilondola, in particular, influences of the coming of Catholic missionaries in the early Twentieth Century seemed to be an ongoing and powerful local presence. The two narratives I collected there were at least partially shaped by Christian concerns, particularly the tale told by Mr. Chipalo, who quite literally tied it to Catholic theology and history by focusing on “the rock” that was the center of the story and an allegorical representation of the faith.

The most obvious assertion of gender politics took place in the session described in Chapter I, wherein women literally appropriated an event that began under male control. Some few hundred yards from the *musumba* of Chitimukulu, first one, then several women insinuated themselves into the performance of *ng’oma*, eventually pushing out all the men who’d been the focus of the recording session and asserting themselves in the form of drumming, song and dance, evoking imagery from several areas of their lives, including initiation [*cisungu*] songs. In a more understated, and perhaps more subversive, manner, the young mother Elizabeth examined the potential drawbacks of the polygamous marriage gone wrong. While not specifically identified as the youngest wife, Mweo is isolated, persecuted and eventually starved to death by her two co-wives. The taunts they threw at her, basically charging her with being lazy and worthless, are commonly directed at most junior wives, who are perceived as being the favorite and most pampered by the husband. The performer, clearly very young, with a newborn, nursing child, could easily be pointing to concerns that are familiar to her, even if she is not actually in a polygamous household. The other session involving women and men was the gathering at Fele’s compound, where the competitive, sometimes tense, relationships between the sexes had been muted by age. The good natured taunting and sharing of wisdom and concerns for the

119 The only other praise poetry I encountered in the performances collected for this study was at the home of the Lunda elder and bard “Mano.” Here, in an unusual example of access, the performer actually read praises from a notebook and interpreted them for me. Even when he moved to a set of praises that he simply presented orally from memory, he did not sing them as he would in a more formal occasion. This performance is detailed in Chapter V.

younger generation seemed not at all to be marked by gender as much as camaraderie. These shifting levels of gender interaction provide a spectrum of concerns that emerged in only a few performance sessions. They are nonetheless revealing in the social relationships they connote.

Overall, my recording sessions among the Bemba were marked by an unusual level of good-natured cooperation and engagement. The group of elders at Fele's village was particularly interested in sharing their thoughts and views of their immediate world, fashioning a set of overlapping observations that reinforced their views about age, wisdom, religion and their place in the order of things. While in many ways performing "their selves," this close-knit group was just as concerned to present a broader, more social snapshot of their beliefs and culture. At least for this small amount of time, a harmonious front was presented to the foreign visitor and, by extension of the video record, to the wider world.