VI. Stories on Demand: A Performance Session Among the Bwile

Ubushiku bwaluba umukote, ne cimbwi cinye mfwi.
[The day an old person gets lost[in the bush], you will find white hairs in the hyena's dung.]

The discursive style of this study leans toward a combination of description, reflexive commentary, published scholarly data, consultation with colleagues and cautious analysis. In this chapter I will combine the description of how I arranged the session with my personal travel to and brief stay in the village of Chief Puta. I will also provide some of the Chief's background, details of our longer term interactions, some historical context for the Bwile people, and whatever else seems relevant for the consideration of the following performance session. More so than in earlier chapters, I will focus on description of specific techniques used by performers to shape their tales. As in the other chapters, a postscript will provide additional information and context gathered in October 2005.

The Bwile are a numerically small ethnic group living at the northern-most point of the Luapula Province, touching Zambia's border with the Democratic Republic of the Congo and bounded to the west by Lake Mweru.[174] Like most of the people living along the lakeshore, the Bwile's main economic activity is fishing and they also grow several

174 For several hundred years, the peoples of the Luapula Valley and the eastern shore of Lake Mweru have come under varying degrees of Lunda hegemony. This history has been documented in numerous studies, most of them by the colonial era scholar Ian G. Cunnison (1959). The Bwile themselves are more specifically situated in the history of the region in Musambachime 1976, and 1981.

DOI: 10.11647/OBP.0033.06

crops. Seasonally, many of them also process and sell salt that is found in several areas where hot springs bubble to the surface. Chief Puta's village is located just south of Chiengi, a district "sub-boma" [which since the time of this recording session has been given full district status] that was historically one of the earliest sites of British administration in the area.[175] In addition to a few administrative offices, the site also contains a government rest house. On June 3rd 1989, after reporting to the officials at the government offices, our family moved into a room at the Chiengi rest house. My wife and I had fond memories of the place that, in 1976, had been impressively kept up and was very comfortable when we'd first stayed there. By 1989, the water pump no longer worked, the generator wasn't operating, the formerly white walls inside and out had been covered with either dark blue or bright green enamel paint, and rats scurried across the rafters of the ceiling's crawl space for a good part of the night. However, the place was still situated on one of the loveliest spots in Zambia, overlooking Lake Mweru, the DRC, and the lake's northern shore that curved towards the Zambian border. Early administrators had named that shoreline "Livingstone's Bowl," since it is the spot where the famous explorer landed when crossing back from the Congo on his last journey in Africa. In a matter of weeks, debilitated by fever and often delirious, he would die in June 1873 south-east of what is now the provincial capital, Mansa, among the Bisa people [who are related to but not in the same location as the Bisa in the Luangwa Valley] in the village of Chitambo.[176]

The next morning, Saturday, I drove out to see Chief Puta, who I'd first met in 1985. At that time, his young wife was running a small business out of his compound, selling Simba beer, brewed in what was then Zaire, to bars and individuals. My traveling companion and I had the opportunity to spend time with the chief, purchase a crate of beer, and overall establish an initial relationship at court. His home, or *musumba*, was set near the lake and had a large courtyard and strong wooden pole fence around it. In 1989, he remembered me and had received my photos

175 Chiengi is well documented in the records of the early district notebooks. One of the earliest government officials at this boma was a fascinating and rather tragic character named A. Blair Watson. After his time at Chiengi, he led an expedition to remove the, by then weakened, forces of Msiri (Mushili) from Kilwa Island on Lake Mweru. (A. Watson 1957, pp. 70–74) Soon thereafter, Watson would die mysteriously, apparently by his own hand.

176 See Livingstone 1874.

from 1985 as well as a recent letter asking to record stories at his place. We chatted for a while and arranged to meet at the local school at around 2 PM. Driving back to the rest house, I bought some provisions for lunch and we settled in to walk along the lake and relax until it was time to eat and then to go to the primary school. Accompanied by Mr. Banda, from the Office of the President[177] and my son Daniel, I drove to the school, unloaded my gear, and sat with the chief and some of his colleagues. After a short time, I was asked to speak to the group, which by now consisted of some 30 or 35 men, a few boys, and a good number of people leaning into the open windows of the classroom. I explained my status as a lecturer/researcher at the University of Zambia, my background of recording stories among the Tabwa, and my current project and desire to record stories from other groups. Then Mr. Banda, as sometimes happens when people are not used to hearing my poorly accented Bemba, basically repeated what I'd said so that the participants were clear on what was going on. While I slipped outside to gather my equipment from the verandah, the group discussed the situation and its meaning. Some of the men felt I should stay until Monday, when a better-organized session could be put together. I explained that I was due at Kaputa on Monday, and everyone seemed ready to leave without performing any narratives. However, after I played for them a video sample from my Friday session at Mbereshi, they decided to give it a try.

Chief Puta began the session by telling a brief history of the Bwile area. Puta is an unusual example of longevity in local rulers.[178] He apparently succeeded to the title while still a young man, in the 1930s. At the time of our recording session, he was in his mid 70s, but still quite vigorous and sharp.

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177 "The Office of the President" had, for many Zambians, become synonymous with the term "secret police" by 1989. While I had never really had any unpleasant run-ins with members of this bureau, they were the entity most commonly associated with political surveillance and rooting out subversive elements among the citizenry. In my last visit to Chiengi, in 1985, my companion and I aroused the suspicions of the OP officer by simply showing up in such a remote place, near the Zairean border, for what must have seemed the flimsy reason of being on "holiday" and wanting to visit the chief. Mr. Banda, in 1989, was polite though also cautious in respect to my scholarly intentions. He simply accompanied me on my trip to record narrative performances, at one point being kind enough to clarify my request and requirements to the gathering of elders and headmen.

178 Chief Puta Kasoma was born in 1914 and took power in 1937. He died at the age of eighty-five. He had worked a bit on the Copperbelt as a businessman before succeeding his uncle, Chief Puta Chongo. Among the ritual specialists he brought to his court to help control attacks by crocodiles and lions, was a well-known practitioner named Chipongola.

Bwile Storytelling 1 by Chief Puta*

Chief Puta: We the Bwile, when they came here to this country, our origin, where the Bwile came from, is known as Kumwimba Kasongo. We were Mpweto, Chisabi, Kasama, Lambwe Chomba. They are the ones we came with from Kabwile. We were on the other side of...of Nkumwimba. Our original home is Nkumwimba Kasongo. Then the Kola [stream] went across the river, cutting it in half, on the other side were the Bwile of Kasongo Mwimba. Then on this side, the Lunda were there. The Lunda would go from their place to harass the Bwile where they were. They would burn their houses. So then they ran away from there; we ran away saying that the place was no good, our friends were too much [trouble].

So we came, as we came, arriving at...at Bwile, there was a stream known as Kabwile…a swamp with water lilies. That same place is where we settled. Then they told us that...[it was] the spirits that said that "This place you've arrived at is called Kabwile." That's where we settled. At Kabwile, right where we settled, we saw it was a nice place.

Ntinda Nchelenge...Nchelenge of Chitutu, the one sent by Chief Nkuba [for he (Ntinda) was the overseer of this place], as far as Kabwile there, including Lambwe. As for him [Ntinda], he was living at Chitutu. That is where he lived. Ntinda was Nkuba's *kapitao* [a borrowed word for "captain," or second in command]. When he found us staying at Kabwile, he fell in love with Queen Mwanto Ikolo, Puta's sister. After their marriage, he said he would take her with him, because he was a hunter, with dogs. He was piling up elephants in the bush, where he piled up elephants. Then when they gave him permission, the elders gave him permission, Mpweto and Puta agreed, saying, "It is alright to go with the queen so that she can know your place." So after taking her, they arrived there at Chitutu. There Ntinda killed lions. He would kill lions and crocodiles and pythons and monitor lizards. They were eating them. Then when he got there, he was a hunter with dogs, he killed a dog. The queen was newly pregnant. The queen was pregnant by Ntinda Nchelenge of Chitutu, the one who was sent as kapitao by Nkuba. When they cooked for the queen, they cut it up, they cut it up. They cooked for the queen. When the queen ate, she did not feel well at all, because we do not eat lions, we do not eat pythons, we do not eat crocodiles. So there, after the queen had eaten she started to get sick. When she got sick, she aborted her pregnancy. When she lost the pregnancy, they set off with her husband

* To watch a video of this story follow this link: http://dx.doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0033.06/Bwile1

> Ntinda. "Because you are so sick, let us go, I'll take you to the elders." Then he found Mpweto, Puta, Kasama and Chisabi. Then they told him that, "You have a case to answer. You served the queen that which she doesn't eat. You fed her lions, you fed her leopards, and you fed her crocodiles, including pythons and monitor lizards. This queen does not eat these [things]. And dog, we do not eat dogs. You see now the sort of problem you have brought? This is a real problem. You have brought a case." He said, they told him that, "You are going to compensate us."
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> He gave them ivory. He piled ivory on top of elephants for the chiefs. "That elephant, I will give you elephants." They refused, saying, "No, you will have to give us something bigger, you've brought a serious offense to our place." They set off together, he began to give them the country, giving Kasama, Chisabi and Pweto up to Lunchinda, and Puta here this land up to...what's it called...to Kalobwa...up to the Kalungwishi [River], not to Kalobwa. Up to the Kalungwishi. When they got to the Kalungwishi, that's where Puta's land ended. On this side was Mofwe, in Mukupa, here we arrived as far as Mukupa in the Mofwe. Then he acquitted himself. Nkuba gave him his approval, saying "You have done well, to have done something of this sort. We have freed ourselves of this kind of problem with the Bwile."
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> This is how we came to live here. Mpweto remained at Kansa. The boundary was at Luncinda. This side was mine, stretching as far as the Kalungwishi. That's how we have lived. This is the history of the Bwile people.

Dressed in a dark green, short-sleeved "safari suit" with a light green t-shirt underneath, Chief Puta sat in a chair at the front of the classroom, with the blackboard and one of his advisors behind him. Like many men who have, or aspire to, a significant occupation or standing, Chief Puta had a ballpoint pen protruding from his shirt pocket, indicating his literacy. The advisor stood, overseeing the performance, and basically seemed to be keeping watch over the chief. The narrative is, like many histories, a migration story—naming important chiefs, leaders and locations—of how the Bwile people came to live in their current location. As most storytellers do, Puta used gestures such as pointing to either side to indicate where events occurred. Space and territory were established by these gestures so as to give form and substance to the main events of the account. For example, when he says "The Lunda would go from their place…" he points to his left with his left hand and then uses his right hand to point right as he continues "to harass the Bwile where they were." He continues pointing right as he elaborates, "They would burn their houses. So then they ran away saying that the place was no good, our friends were too much [trouble]." Employing the usual dynamics of storytelling, Chief Puta's

words and gestures create a rhythm of sound and movement to both frame and flesh out the performance.

One interesting counterpoint of the pointing and moving between several locations is that there are long moments when he held his hands on his knees or in his lap. This stasis seemed linked to elements of the story that described times of stability, either social harmony or physically staying in one place. For example, when Puta is describing events concerning the ancestor Ntinda, he keeps both hands on his knees while saying, "That is where he lived. Ntinda was Nkuba's *kapitao*. When he found us staying at Kabwile, he fell in love with Queen Mwanto Ikolo, Puta's sister." A bit later on, Puta again describes events by either keeping his hands on his knees or raising them both up at the same time to gesture in a kind of parallel or balanced manner: "When they cooked for the queen, they cut it up. They cooked for the queen. When the queen ate, she did not feel well at all, because we do not eat lions, we do not eat pythons, we do not eat crocodiles. So there, after the queen had eaten she started getting sick. When she got sick she aborted her pregnancy."

When Ntinda is confronted by the Bwile elders in the story, Chief Puta again keeps his hands on his knees or simply uses his left hand to subtly enumerate the kinds of food that Mwanta Ikolo was given to eat by her husband. "You have a case to answer. You served the queen that which she does not eat. You fed her lions, you fed her leopards, and you fed her crocodiles, including pythons and monitor lizards. This queen does not eat these [things]. And dog, we do not eat dogs. Now you see the sort of problem you have brought? This is a real problem. You have brought a case." He then uses his left hand to emphasize his next words, "You are going to compensate us." This negotiation results in the Bwile receiving the land on which they now live as compensation. Chief Puta ends the story by putting his hands on his knees and saying, "That's how we have lived. This is the history of the Bwile people." At these final words, he leans back and exhales a deep breath, indicating the end of the narrative. All in attendance applauded his efforts.

We replayed the audio recording of his words, and he seemed pleased enough to augment his remarks with a description of how the Bwile make their living and some of the things they've historically produced, such as salt.

Bwile Storytelling 2 by Chief Puta*

Chief Puta: We have salt at Katete, where our people process it. There at Ifuna at Kalembwe ['s area] is a salt pan where they make salt, and [also] here at Katete. And we live with people who are very good at making salt.

We also have men, and they too have nets and boats. They go on the lake, killing fish. Then the fish they catch, they take to the Copperbelt,[179] to go and feed those at the Copperbelt. That's where they go to sell them.

Long ago, crocodiles infested this lake. Those crocodiles were many and daring, it was incredible how...all the people they killed—those casting nets and those bathing—they grabbed. However, because of my concern, when I saw my people suffering in this manner, I invited those wise people who came. They came and protected my people from being caught.

Then again on the land lions suddenly appeared. Those lions too were taking people. They would come right into the middle of the village and catch people. [For] them too, I brought in wise people so that we...we would improve, make [things] better, to chase off the lions, to send them far away. Even the crocodiles have gone far away.

That's why now my people at this time live in peace.

This historical and cultural description was performed in a similar style as the previous narrative. The main difference is that Chief Puta was recalling events he'd seen and participated in. After he described two crucial economic activities, salt-making and fishing, he then talked about how dangerous wild animals came to plague his constituents. Things became so dire that he himself decided to consult experts and have them come to eradicate the problems. He is quite vague about whom the "wise people" were and what they did, but it's clear he was referring to ritual specialists who were able to prescribe the correct rites and activities to protect people from the crocodiles and lions.[180] This brief exposition also served, in its

179 As noted in earlier chapters, the Copperbelt is the region in north central Zambia that borders on the DRC where the nation's mineral wealth is concentrated, with many mines and dense urban populations. Historically, this has been a ready market for all manner of goods, particularly fish coming from many areas.

180 While details of these rites go unspoken, also unspoken is the widely held belief that attacks by crocodiles and lions on humans are, depending on their circumstances, not always the product of natural events. If people are attacked in or near their villages or

* To watch a video of this story follow this link: http://dx.doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0033.06/Bwile2

juxtaposition, to insert Chief Puta into the historical/mythological events he'd been earlier describing. The audience was once again pleased with his efforts and supported him with applause.

After the chief's performance, an elder, perhaps in his early sixties, named Fermit Indita, told a moderately long story of a brother, a sister and her evil serpent husband.[181]

Bwile Storytelling 3 by Fermit Indita*

Fermit Indita: There was a little thing. A chief ruled people in the country. So then the chief had decreed, "Whoever gives birth to a baby girl will be killed." Truly, one gave birth to a girl. His advisors went and confirmed that a baby girl was born. Truly, her brother went to see where his mother gave birth to his sister. He ran away with her, carrying her on his back. He went to the middle of the bush, with a pot and a spoon. Arriving at a marshy area, he cooked for the baby. A bird came to the middle of the bush. It came and found the young man cooking for his sister. It said, "How are you?" He said, "*Mukwai*, at the court of Puta they forbade giving birth to girl children. 'Who ever has a girl we will kill.' That's why I've abducted my sister." The bird said to him, saying, "Get on my back, along with your pot." Truly, that bird went up. It went into the middle of the wilderness, going far, going. It went and found houses there that were well-constructed and beautiful, and a large lake just like Mweru. Indeed he put...put him down, that bird. It led him away, saying, "Let's go so that I show you the house where you will raise your sister." It showed him the house. It had twelve rooms. He arrived; he opened this one [and] showed him. He opened this one [and] showed him. He finished. How many rooms remained? Only one. He said,

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in apparently safe places, that is, away from the usual hunting grounds of predators, then there is a suspicion of malevolent human intervention. The intervention can take several forms, from sorcerers directing crocodiles or lions to attack specific people, to killing people in a way that resembles attacks by these predators, or even transforming themselves into these deadly animals. (See Cancel 1986, p. 99, for a brief survey on scholarly literature on "lion-men" or "leopard-men," also a more extensive treatment in A.F. Roberts 1986; and, for a more detailed discussion of this phenomenon as framed in the discourse of "sorcery," see West 2008.)

181 Information gathered in 2005, claims that Mr. Indita's actual name is Feremu Chisongo Chilindi. He was known as a good, successful fisherman. He was physically impeded by a leg that was described as "not so straight," and he had a large family. He passed away in 1989 at around sixty years of age.

* To watch a video of this story follow this link: http://dx.doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0033.06/Bwile3

"This one you should never enter." He said, "Yes *mukwai*." "All the plants, and the bicycles, automobiles, whatever, are yours. The boats in Mweru are yours." That bird went away, it [finally] told him, "I will be visiting you."

They lived, they lived, they lived. That young girl grew up. He just took care of her. He just took care of her. She developed breasts. Eventually she came of age. So *mukwai*, her brother then set off, saying, "I am going fishing." So his sister who remained there opened all the rooms. Then she looked, "And what of this one they forbade to us?" Truly, she entered. She opened the door, it closed itself. Again, she opened another one, it closed itself. She went and found a large snake with twelve heads. It said to her, "Come in, do not run away." Truly, that young woman entered. So *mukwai*, all the things that men and women know about, she did. [Some laughter by men in audience.] She returned and opened [the doors], and she went outside.

Her brother, where he was fishing, returned. His eyes saw nothing unusual. Truly, his sister just continued going right over there. So eventually she would tell her brother, "I don't feel like eating fish, I feel nauseous." "What is it?" he would ask. "No, it's just nausea." "Fine." Eventually, her brother saw that she was pregnant. "Ala! You, my sister, where did this pregnancy come from?" She said, "I don't know where it came from. They just wished it on me." He said, "Really?" Finally, she gave birth. It had a spot here, here it was a snake, with a human head, but with a spot here. The day he was born the child said, "How are you uncle?" greeting the uncle. "How are you uncle?" "Ala! He was born today and he's come to greet me? Fine, no problem."

So that sister of his, now here with the husband, it was just like a marriage. She would go there every day. Now that sister of his spoke, "You, my husband, we should kill my brother." But that little nephew of his spoke. He said, "My uncle! They are planning to kill you," [he said] when he had gone fishing with his uncle. "Really?" He said, "Yes." "Alright." They came back. The next day they went again. Then his brother-in-law said, "I will follow him to the lake, that's where I'll kill him." Indeed, the snake uncoiled itself. That little nephew of his again said, "Uncle, let us make twelve machetes." Truly, his uncle agreed. They made twelve machetes. When they made those twelve, they took them out to the lake. And his uncle...his brother-in-law followed along to the lake, in order now to kill his brother-in-law, and they arrived in a steamboat. Truly, his young nephew dr...he dreamed. He said, "Uncle, father is coming. Let's get ready, because he's in a steamboat, and he's opened the windows." He said, "Father is coming." Truly, he thought and said, "Uncle." He said, "Yes?" "Father, there he comes, see him in the rainbow?" Then he said, "Uncle, you go to sleep, I'll kill father." The snake arrived right there, saying to himself, "Perhaps I'll now strike my brother-in-law." He [the nephew] cut off its head as it rose to strike. He cut off all the heads, until the twelve were finished.

> So he roused his uncle. And that large snake got itself inside. Now the uncle... that little nephew said, "Uncle, bring the steamboat for me to drive. Let's go." He drove the steamboat. He drove the steamboat fast, arriving at the shore. When he arrived at the shore, he said, "Uncle, I'm going to kill my mother because she...you are the one who cared for her. She now turns around trying to kill you. I will kill her." Truly, they took that snake and put it at the crossroads. He went into the bedroom and killed his mother.
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> He pondered. He said, "I tell you, uncle, I know where they brought you from. Let's go, I know the place. We will cross the middle of [Lake] Mweru." Truly they embarked with his uncle. He drove the steamboat fast, arriving at the harbor. "Uncle, you go across to your village. But I, I will remain in the steamboat. Go and move everyone, we will take them to nice houses." Truly, they arrived. So then, he said, "Uncle, there where you are going, do not tell people that you have a nephew with a spot on his neck. Don't you dare." Truly, that uncle disembarked and arrived at that village. So then the people saw him. "Yangu! The one who left! Yangu! The one who ran away! The one who escaped! The one who escaped!" So they gathered around him, so then he began to make his explanation. "Listen, listen, listen!" "Really?" He said, "Yes. I came to take you so that we will go where we have been living."
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> Truly, all the families squeezed into the steamboat and they...they set off. No one was allowed to sit where the nephew was, not a person. Just the uncle and the nephew sat together. They went driving the steamboat at full speed, arriving at the destination. He told them that, "If you find anything in the path, don't spit. Just keep going." Truly, they arrived. On getting there, they were shown those very beautiful houses.
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> *Mukwai*, this *kashimi* is over.

Mr. Indita seemed a shy and friendly man, judging from his mildly flustered smile and initial hesitancy in performance. He was dressed in a light tan jacket, something like a three quarter-length raincoat, a white buttoned shirt with the collar out over the jacket's collar, and faded blue jeans. The sleeves of the jacket were pushed around six inches up his forearms from his hands, and he wore a thin ivory bracelet on his left wrist. He began speaking with both hands together, between his knees. This compact posture looked as if it was an attempt to steady his initial nervousness. To emphasize the first few lines of the story, Mr. Indita rhythmically raised his hand up and down a few times. When he came to the point where he said, "His advisors went and confirmed that a baby girl was born…" he pointed to his left into the distance to indicate where the men went to find the baby. He gestures left again when saying, "Truly, her brother went to see where his mother gave birth…" When he says, "He ran away with

her, carrying her on his back" he mimes gathering belongings together from the ground then uses his two hands, in fists, to gesture, up and down, indicating the brother placed his sister on his back. Like Chief Puta, he often used his gestures to set the physical space of the narrative's events. In this case, when indicating the brother and sister "went to the middle of the bush," Mr. Indita points with his left hand almost directly behind his head, looking almost like a military salute.

As the story unfolded, Mr. Indita became more demonstrative with his gestures, acting out the parts of the various characters. He was particularly adept at slightly altering his voice for each character and also depicting certain actions, like the half-snake, half-human nephew humbly clapping his hands to greet his uncle, the narrative's main character. This scene elicits a bit of laughter from the all-male audience. There was even louder laughter earlier, when Mr. Indita describes the young woman's interaction with the twelve-headed snake by saying, "So *mukwai*, all the things that men and women know about, she did." Mr. Indita indicates what happened by putting his palms together near his left shoulder then sweeping them to his right, the top right hand sliding off the left in a gesture of finality, as if saying "That was it." The audience also laughed when the sister says to her naïve brother, "'I don't feel like eating fish, I feel nauseous.' 'What is it?' he would ask. 'No, it's just nausea.'" The implication that she was pregnant was not lost on the men listening to the tale. As often happens in narratives with rather fantastic events and relationships, Mr. Indita kept his narration rather understated, the effect being that there seemed nothing all that unusual about what was going on. He also—perhaps it was a characteristic of his performance style, since he did not seem nervous after getting into the story—almost never raised his eyes to look at the audience or the video camera.

It is clear that Mr. Indita's histrionics are closely tied to the story's various actions and characterizations. He uses numerous techniques of gesture or mime to create the various images of the tale. The description of the bird telling the brother and sister to enjoy all he has given them but not to go into the twelfth room is framed by some elaborate gesturing. The bird says, "All the plants, and the bicycles, automobiles, whatever, are yours." The performer looks to his left while saying this and uses his left hand and arm in sweeping gestures, stabbing a finger to indicate each thing he enumerates. He raises his voice as he ticks off the good things to be had there. He pauses briefly after saying, "whatever…"

puts his hands back in his lap and says in an emphatic voice, "*Fyobe*" [All (are yours)]. As he follows this by saying, "The boats in [Lake] Mweru…are yours," Mr. Indita uses both hands to indicate the enormity of the lake by twice sweeping them from below his chest outward. When he described how the young girl and her brother lived in that place after the magical bird left them there, he said "They lived, they lived, they lived" and clapped his hands quietly three times to punctuate each phrase and to indicate and emphasize the passage of time. Similarly, when Mr. Indita said, "He just took care of her. He just took care of her," he clapped his hands twice.

The story was shaped and moved along by the smooth, efficient and descriptive interaction between voice, physical gesture and mime, and the intricate elements of the plot as it unfolded. On one level, the tale's theme had to do with ingratitude on the part of the sister, who not only disobeyed the bird's warning about opening the twelfth door but also spurred her snake-husband to try to kill the brother who had saved her life.[182] The magical nephew, possessing traits from both human and animal realms, shows the proper respect for his uncle and uses his fantastic powers to save the story's protagonist, kill both the serpent and the treacherous sister, then, finally, move the original village across the great lake to the newer, more prosperous habitat. The protagonist's relationship to his nephew reflects the strong familial link between nephews and maternal uncles, referred to as "father" in a structural kinship sense. This relationship, at least in the narrative, supersedes the one between the nephew and his biological parents. The tale also establishes a link between the compassionate brother and the magical bird that assists him and his sister in moving to the magical house. Further, the bird's helpful nature and wondrous powers are echoed in the heroic nephew, a composite of animal and human. The narrative's main character is essentially a type of passive hero, whose goodness brings him aid from

182 In my collection of Tabwa narratives, there are tales that contain elements or motifs of this story. In one tale, recorded in 1983 from Mr. Wilson Katai, a brother and sister living alone are divided by the brother's violent ingratitude for the sister's unrelenting care and affection. As she wanders, at one point, wounded and scorned from human society, a magical fish appears from the river and transports her to a new place, where a large and prosperous village is conjured for her to rule. In another, longer narrative, a helpful demon aids the hero on his quest by employing a magical "steamer" a train that can transport them very rapidly from one place to another (on this latter narrative, see Cancel 1988–89, pp. 85–109). A similar version of this tale can be found in Mbele 1999, pp. 66–74.

other magical characters, leading him and his society into a positive transformation. While he breaks the chief's interdiction about killing girl infants, he obeys the warnings of the magical bird about the forbidden room and of his nephew about not telling others about the spot he has on his body. For exhibiting these positive traits, the protagonist not only prospers individually, but the village is physically moved to a new place of positive transformation.[183]

While more can be thematically discerned from this tale's imagery and character interactions, it also has a notable relationship to the two earlier historical narratives by Chief Puta. For one thing, Mr. Indita specifies that the initial interdiction against bearing female babies is given by the unnamed chief. Moreover, the place where all this occurs is identified by the heroic brother when he tells the bird that these things happened at Puta's seat of power [*musumba*]. Ironically, the draconian edict is proven to be correct, when the sister marries a twelve-headed snake and turns against her brother. In the end, the magical nephew moves the people of the chiefdom to a more prosperous and beautiful country, thereby validating the deserving nature of both the chief and his subjects. In several ways, the tale mythically replicates Chief Puta's "historical" version of how the Bwile came to be where they are. In his tale, the breaking of serious food prohibitions by the new in-law Ntinda, causing his Bwile wife to abort her pregnancy, leads to the compensation of large amounts of ivory and, most importantly, the expanses of territory that constitute the Bwile's land. In Mr. Indita's tale, an errant young woman ignores an interdiction, improperly marries a magical snake and bears a half-human, half-animal child. However, this impropriety eventually leads to the magical nephew instigating the move to a new and more prosperous territory. In the fictional story, the hero obeys the nephew's various instructions and the interdiction not to tell the people about him and, finally, the people arriving in the new land obey the interdiction not to spit if they find something in the path. The comparison of proper and improper behavior underscores the tale's themes.

After Mr. Indita's well-received performance, Mr. Fred Kafankwa told a lengthy tale.

183 For a more detailed discussion of the "passive hero," see Cancel 1989, pp. 200–205.

Bwile Storytelling 4 by Fred Kafankwa*

Fred Kafankwa: There was a little thing, there was a person. His name was Mupita [One who carries on one side]. This person lived in the bush. In the bush he used to dig game pits. But in the pits he used to…at dawn, he would go to check his pits, to see if an animal had fallen in. In the pit, if he found an animal there, he would lift it and take it to make into relish [meat or fish] to eat in the bush where he was. He would be returning to the village like that, he would kill, in the bush, leaving his hut, dry the meat and then return to the village. But one day, that friend, there was a person who was walking in the bush. He passed by a pit. [indistinct word] He found Mupita Kumo. "Mupita Kumo, how are you doing here, friend?" "Well friend, it is just like this." "Relish[184] is a problem [i.e. scarce]." He took some food that he had and gave him. That person went back to the village.

Three days passed, [and] into the pit of the young man Mupita a lion had fallen.[185] Mupita, when it dawned, said, "I will not go to the pit. For many days I've been killing tiny animals, which are not good. Today I will rest perhaps for three days, I won't go there." He rested three days and the lion was in the pit. After it spent three days there, it felt hungry and it lost weight. On the third day, when Mupita went, the person went there in the morning; he went and looked into the pit. He saw there was a lion. He felt so frightened that he wanted to run. He went, but the thing had seen him. It called to him, saying, "You, grandfather, I beg you, don't be frightened of me, take me out. I am your brother. I am your relation, me, myself." But that person, as a human being, felt frightened to see this, saying, "No, you grandfather, you are difficult, if I take you out I will carry that which I can't throw away. Me, I can see that you have lost a lot of weight; I will be relish to you. You would eat me. No, I can't do it." But he pleaded a lot, he pleaded for a long time. The person cut a log, saying, "If after doing this you eat me, there I will be found, I am a man." He cut a log and threw it in there where the lion was. The lion climbed out. When he came out he said, "Grandfather, well done." No, he fell down and rolled. "I have never seen a chief like you. If it weren't for you I would have rotted in the pit. Grandfather, you are honorable and

184 "Relish" is a common English gloss for the Bemba word "*umunani*," a meal's main course of meat, fish or vegetable, usually cooked in a sauce. When people are saying that food is scarce or times are tough, they'll often say something like "*takuli munani*," "there is no relish."

185 In my collection of Tabwa narratives, there is a set of stories that contain similar images. (see Cancel 1989. In particular, NP14, pp. 136–139)

* To watch a video of this story follow this link: http://dx.doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0033.06/Bwile4

you have pity. But what I very much want from you is for you to tell me your name. Your name, what is your name?" "I am One-who-carries -on-one-side. What will make me carryon two sides is you, lion." "You are Carry-on-one-side?" "Yes." "O.K. I have heard grandfather. So you can go back to the village. If you hear me calling, 'Mupiita Kumo, Mupiita Kumo! Mupiita Kumo!' ['One who carries on one side, One who carries on one side'] [Audience laughs at the falsetto, powerful repetition of Mupita's name.] you should know that he [Lion] has slaughtered, my friend wants me."

And true enough, when one day passed, he tried to listen to what his friend had told him, he was not called at all. The following day, he heard "Mupiita Kumo!" His roar went "Ooooh." "My friend is calling me. You, my friend, are the one who carries, who will be difficult if he comes…" [Audience laughs at this image of Mupita's trepidation.] "Mupiita Kumo! Mupiita Kumo!" "Maama." He said, "Yes." "I'm going to the bush to get relish." He took his spear alone, and took it and went…[indistinct]…where he was coming from. "You man, you have come, you stay there…Ooh, you have come?" "Yes." He found he had killed four buffaloes. "Boy, this little relish, you can eat it." [Mupita claps in thanks] "My friend, truly you have done well." [Mr. Kafankwa uses hands and arms to indicate Mupita throwing carcasses over his right shoulder to carry all of them home.] He took all the carcasses and speared them on one side, behind, without putting them on the other side. He walked away to the village, he carried [them] and went… The lion looked as Mupita Kumo just went. "That Mupita Kumo, to just go there taking all those animals as big as buffaloes and pierce them on one side without putting [them] on this side!?" [Suggesting that it is insulting that Mupita does not carry the very heavy gift over both shoulders.] [Audience laughs at Lion's consternation, expressed in a falsetto voice.] So he went away annoyed. He [Mupita] went and arrived at the village. They [the people] ate. The following day, he [the lion] was annoyed and said, "Now I will follow, 'Mupiita Kumo, Mupiita Kumo, Mupiita Kumo!'" When he went there and found four elands, he pierced this side. "Aagh!," the Lion said, "No, I can't have a friendship with a person like this. Tomorrow and tomorrow I will not rest until I kill him." No, he [Mupita] was annoyed, "My friend, he can't even rest when I have not even finished drying the meat." "Mupiita Kumo! Mupiita Kumo!" He found he had knocked down many elephants right there. He pierced them at the back, not at the front. [Performer uses hands to indicate how Mupita carried the animals and also to suggest how he began walking.] As the person started going, he [the lion] also went and hid in a bush. As he was hiding there, the person was going, going. No, he was piercing here, to the front, to the front that is where he was piercing the animals. [Imitates sticking spear down into animals to pick them up.] He was not piercing them in the back, no, he was piercing them in the front. So as he was going there, the Lion said, "Now this time has passed." He said, "Wuuu! I have caught [you]." He knocked himself down on the side that was remaining [i.e. the other side]. He impaled himself on the spear from behind. On this side there are animals and he himself

was pierced on this side. He [Mupita] said, "You have brought me an evil omen. Since my birth from my mother's womb I have never carried [anything] on two sides. Now it is you who have done this, eh? It's you who've made me carry [on two sides]. That's what I told you, I said that I am One-who-carries-on-one-side, it is you who would make me carry on two sides, it's you Lion. No, you see now I am carrying on two sides." He started singing a song, he said,

You just provoked me…[pauses to remember words of song]
… you just provoked me…
he said…ah!...he said [trying to remember lyrics]
I felt pity for you, you just provoked me, myself.
You just provoked me.
I felt pity for you, you just provoked me, myself.
You just provoked me.

When Lion realized that, he said, [Pointing behind himself as if indicating where Lion was in relation to Mupita.] "Truly, my friend I beg you, I beg you." [Claps to indicate Lion's submissive, pleading attitude.] So, his friend said, "O.K., you can remain." He removed it [the spear] from him. When he removed it from him, he forgave him, "No, boy, don't worry, [Claps again] don't do this."

Two days passed, awaiting the wound from the spear to heal. He called again, "Mupiita Kumo. Mupiita Kumo. Mupiita Kumo!" Again he called with great force. He found six buffaloes. He pierced them right there. "Aagh! No, this person he's placing them one on the other." Like that the week passed. There followed five days, and he was killing for him like this. But on the sixth day, he again became annoyed. "No, no, this person can't be carrying animals in front as if he is ridiculing me who kills them. And these claws are painful and my arms are overworked in catching things, as if he is belittling me. Today he must die." Again he went ahead as if he were going to kill an animal. When he went ahead he hid. Just as he was about to pass, he pounced, "Wuuu." Onto the spear, kwa!!. He [Mupita] told him, "Again you brought me an evil omen. I am One-who-carries-on-one-side. What will make me carry on two sides is you. You see, now I have carried on two sides today."

Robert
Cancel: Wait *mukwai*. [Pause while video cassette is changed] Continue speaking.

FK: He sang a song:

You just provoked me, myself.
You just provoked me, myself.
You just provoked me, myself.
You just provoked me.

So at the village, he went and carried [the meat] himself [Mupita]. And the Lion that, that is where the enmity between people and the lion came from. People hunt lions, [and] lions kill people. It started with Mupita Kumo and the lion.

Fred Kafankwa was the youngest of the session's performers.[186] He was probably around forty years old, solidly built with a rather rounded paunch that suggested relatively good living. He was dressed in a long sleeved collared shirt, made of some kind of synthetic, bronze colored fabric that had a bit of a sheen to it. He wore light blue dress trousers and, like some of the other performers, had a ball pen visibly displayed, but clipped into the space between his top two buttons, due, I imagine, to the fact that the shirt had no pockets. Mr. Kafankwa sat at an angle to the camera, facing a bit to its right. He began the performance with his hands folded loosely in his lap, indicating location and action mostly with his head, either looking in the appropriate direction or tilting/nodding at various points in the narrative. His voice was clear and strong, and he often used a falsetto voices to portray agitation or anger in the story's characters.

Mr. Kafankwa set up his narrative by keeping his gestures minimal and subdued for most of the story. He mainly used his hands and arms to indicate when the story's hero, Mupita, speared the dead animals and carried them over his right shoulder. As the narrative's action picked up, so did his use of gesture. This is particularly evident when the lion hides in a bush looking to pounce on Mupita. Mr. Kafankwa uses both hands to indicate the position of the lion in the bush and Mupita's path as he's walking. When the lion jumps out at him, indicated verbally by the lion's cry "Wuu!," the performer shoots both hands up and wide, as if he's diving ahead. In a much calmer, confident manner, Mupita exclaims, with his hands spread low and palms up, that he's never seen such a thing. This causes laughter among audience members. He also gestures behind him, indicating how the lion's been impaled and stuck on the spear until Mupita frees him. When Mupita begins his song, Mr. Kafankwa is casting around, trying to recall the lyrics. He places his hands in his lap, palms up and fingers curled, and tries to establish a kind of rhythm, looking almost as if he's hoeing, moving hands down and back towards his waist, as he remembers the song. For the remainder of the narrative, the performer is quite animated, indicating most actions by the characters with some sort of mime or gesture. The audience members, including many of the young

186 Information gleaned in 2005 specified that Mr. Kafankwa was a farmer who had moved to the area from far away. He had died while still in his fifties, but no one could remember the year he passed away.

children looking in through the school house windows, clearly appreciated the humor and, at times, absurdity of the story.

The theme of the narrative, which given the inclusion of a song is technically a *lushimi*, is difficult to specify. On the one hand, it is like many other tales wherein someone whose life is saved turns against the person who rescues him or her, not unlike the ungrateful sister of the previous tale. Certainly the lion is guilty of ingratitude several times, as Mupita first extricates him from the pit and later on removes the spear that had impaled him. There is also a kind of arrogance displayed by Mupita, if not consciously, whereby he keeps carrying the large, heavy game carcasses with one arm and on only one shoulder. This causes the lion to feel it's being mocked. Mupita carrying "on two sides" is also a rather vague allusion, since it is not clearly stated why this distresses Mupita. It seems to be based on the power exhibited by someone who can carry such large loads over one, instead of the normal two, shoulders. In any event, this jealousy and boasting is given as the etiological reason for the enmity between humans and lions.

Mr. Kafankwa's performance was followed by that of Mr. Timothy Kachela.

Bwile Storytelling 5 by Timothy Kachela*

Timothy Kachela: There was a little person. The little person had how many children? Four. All girls. So three were having children and one was not. Now as that one went by, went through life, she would say, "God did not do well by me, because I've been unable to conceive a child." She said, "He is very bad." She just complained.

So she went to the bush. She heard an axe chopping, po, po. That's where she went. So she went and arrived and found [people] were gathering honey. So she arrived, "You, my brothers, give me some of your beeswax. So they fetched some of that beeswax and gave it to her. She said, "Truly, I'll collect some firewood, and I'll return to the village." She arrived at a place where she was collecting firewood, carrying the wax.

As soon as she got to the village she put it in the clay water pot. She put it in an empty one without water. As she went about her life, she

* To watch a video of this story follow this link: http://dx.doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0033.06/Bwile5

went on, in that pot is where the wax remained. So one day, she went and looked in there. There emerged a child who was all white, a girl. "I have a child!" She took her out from the pot, she put her aside. "God the savior you've given me a baby, God the almighty. I thank you very much, God the almighty." So they lived with the child. And we men, we do not miss much. The child was being admired. She developed breasts. She reached puberty. They said she was ready to marry. So when they sent a spokesman to negotiate with her mother, the mother said, "No, me, my child does not walk in the sun. Again, she does not open doors. I can't allow my daughter to marry anyone. As far as I'm concerned, this child is simply meant to stay by me, the mother." He said, "This one we will marry, she is such a radiant one."

So that was the end of the discussion. So the mother agreed. The brideprice was paid, they betrothed her. Then after the engagement, they wed. After the wedding, the groom was told by his mother-in-law, she said, "You, father, this child, the person you insisted on marrying, this one should not begin to touch doors. I beg you very much; you alone, when the sun rises you must open [the door]." "Yes *mukwai*, I understand." "Even closing the door, you should close it yourself, because you yourself have loved my daughter of your own free will."

So there at that place after each night's sleep, she [the girl's mother] would take warm water to her son-in-law to bathe. He got up and opened the door, and bathed and bathed. He finished. Each time, the wife remained in the house, that's where she would remain.

So now as the mother-in-law acted in this way, the son-in-law said, "Why is it that this woman can't open or close doors? I will see. I will see for myself." Now then at that place when night came they slept. Now the mother-in-law, when she heard the cockcrow, she started to heat water for her son-in-law to bathe. So when that water was hot, she carried it. Going to the door, nku-nku-nku. The son-in-law kept still. Nku-nku-nku. Now the daughter finally said,

You mother, I have heard you, me, the beeswax.
You mother, I have heard you, me, the beeswax.
The snoring man is still sleeping, me, the beeswax.
The snoring man is not yet awake, me, the beeswax.
Open for me man, so that I can go see mother, me, the beeswax.

So he lay still on the mat. He said, "I will see for myself today." "You do not begin to touch the door, don't dare, my child, just sit still on the mat." Nku-nku-nku. The son-in-law did not move at all.

You mother, I have heard you, me, the beeswax.
You mother, I have heard you, me, the beeswax.
The snoring man is still sleeping, me, the beeswax.
The snoring man is not yet awake, me, the beeswax.
Open for me man, so that I can go see mother, me, the beeswax.

So finally the daughter got up. She touched and froze onto the door. At that very moment she touched the door, she began to melt. "My child, don't touch the door."

You mother, I have heard you, me, the beeswax.
You mother, I have heard you, me, the beeswax.
The snoring man is still sleeping, me, the beeswax.
The snoring man is not yet awake, me, the beeswax.
Open for me man, so that I can go see mother, me, the beeswax.

To no avail. Now she melted this far, here, that's how far she got. Even the upper body had begun to melt. "Yah, this son-in-law will kill my daughter. Now what kind of sleep is this?" Nku-nku. "You father, get up and open up." No, that one did not move. The daughter said,

You mother, I have heard you, me, the beeswax.
You mother, I have heard you, me, the beeswax.
The snoring man is still sleeping, me, the beewsax.
The snoring man is not yet awake, me, the beeswax.
Open for me man, so that I can go see mother, me, the beeswax.

So now the wax went this far, this is as far as it got. She [the mother] said, "No, this is very sad news." Nku-nku-nku.

You mother, I have heard you, me, the beeswax.
You mother, I have heard you, me, the beeswax.
The snoring man is still sleeping, me, the beeswax.
The snoring man is not yet awake, me, the beeswax.
Open for me man, so that I can see mother, me, the beeswax.

No, now she melted all the way to the ground. Then she was quickly beaten down because of the tragedy of opening [the door]. Then when the mother-in-law picked up a stick, trying to hit him, he escaped and ran away. He went and went. There remained only a large puddle [of wax] right there.

Mr. Kachela was probably in his early sixties, slim with a few streaks of gray in his hair.[187] Like Mr. Indita, he had one of his upper front teeth missing, which became evident when he smiled. He wore a light green, weathered shirt that seemed several sizes too large. Neither sleeve was buttoned and the wide cloth around his wrists flapped as he gestured during the performance, making him seem even slimmer than he was. As we began the recording, some audience members encouraged him to fasten

187 Mr. Kachela was born around 1920, making him about sixty-nine years old when he performed this tale. He was born close by, in the Tabwa area, and grew up in the Bwile village of Shebele. He mostly made his living from farming and passed away in 1991, near the age of seventy-one.

the second from the top button of his shirt, which he did, with slightly embarrassed good humor.

Like the performers before him, Mr. Kachela used a set of gestures and mimes to give the story spatial dimension and to rhythmically punctuate the pacing of the verbal narrative. He began with his right hand holding his left bicep as he touched his chin and face with the index finger of his left hand. At the point in the tale when the woman encountered the people gathering honey, Mr. Kachela crossed his arms. The crossed arm position would center the set of gestures for most of the performance, with his body at times leaning in one direction or another, and his head indicating a similar direction or activity. When the woman receives the beeswax, he cupped his hands to mime her taking up the gift. As specific actions were described, Mr. Kachela used one hand or the other, at times both, to mime or indicate activity. He usually returned to his crossed-arms posture after such gestures. He used both hands to mime the mother removing the newborn child from the pot where she had put the beeswax. Both hands are again used to suggest the rounded shape of the young girl's breasts, "She developed breasts." His arms crossed again as he continued, "She reached puberty."

As the tale went on, Mr. Kachela gestured more frequently and emphatically. He also altered his voice when speaking as different characters. When he describes how the mother asked the new husband to respect her wishes, Mr. Kachela bent lower and clapped his hands in supplication, saying, "I beg you very much, you alone, when the sun rises you must open [the door]." While describing the habitual pattern of the mother warming water and delivering it for the husband's bath each morning, the performer rhythmically emphasizes his verbal pacing in the way he moves his hands. Beginning with his hands pressed together between his knees, Mr. Kachela said, "So there at that place after each night's sleep, she [the girl's mother]…" He continued by using his left hand to gesture at and indicate a place to his left, "…would take warm water to her son-in-law to bathe." With his right hand, Mr. Kachela mimed the son-in-law opening the door, "He got up and opened the door…" Then the storyteller used his left hand to move left to right, and his right hand took up where the left stopped and indicated the area where the bath water was placed, "…and bathed and bathed." Mr. Kachela drew his hands together at chest height, "He finished." Finally, he points down to his right to show where the wife stayed without moving, "Each time, the wife remained in the house. That's where she would remain."

Still returning to the crossed-arm position between gestures, Timothy Kachela moves the story to its central set of actions, the young wife's song that ends each line with the chorus "me, the beeswax." Preceding each rendition of the song, the performer mimes the mother knocking at the door, "Nku-nku-nku." As he leads the first four renditions of the song, Mr. Kachela keeps his arms crossed, uncrossing them to gesture or mime the actions that follow. When he sings the last repetition of the song, he holds his hands together in his lap. At song's end, he raises both hands over his head and swings them down to the ground in front of him, suggesting how the magical girl "melted all the way to the ground." When he ends the narrative, Mr. Kachela moves his hands from lying in his lap by flopping them down, palms-up on either side to indicate the finality of the tale's events.

While this *lushimi* may seem to have a somewhat tragic theme, wherein the barren woman miraculously receives a child originating in beeswax, the audience and performer were not particularly moved to sadness. There was a good deal of laughter elicited at various points of the story. For instance, when Mr. Kachela described the girl maturing, saying "And we men, we do not miss much. The child was being admired," the audience chuckled at the notion of a beautiful young girl drawing the attention of older men. They laughed louder when the young husband decides to find out what his mother-in-law was hiding by not opening the door himself, "I will see for myself today." Each time the young wife's song ended and the performer described how far her melting had progressed, the all male audience laughed, until they laughed hardest and longest after the song's fourth repetition, when Mr. Kachela indicated the girl had melted all the way up to her armpits, "…this is as far as it got." At this point he pauses, while he and everyone else chortles at the imagery. The narrative finally ends amidst more laughter and applause. Where, in most narratives, broken interdictions usually end badly for the person who breaks them, the husband who went back on his pledge to always open the door for his new wife managed to simply run away, escaping the angry mother-in-law's outraged but ineffectual attack.

As in two of the previous narratives, Timothy Kachela's story is about a marital relationship and the breaking of an important interdiction. This tale focuses on the mother-in-law and her ties to the magical daughter who was born of the beeswax. Clearly, Mr. Kachela and his audience were less concerned by the fragile circumstances of the new wife than they were in having the husband investigate the odd nature of

the relationship. While the new husband is not necessarily evil, he does break his agreement with his mother-in-law in order to discover the secret of the wife who seems incapable of carrying out ordinary marital duties. The humor with which the tale is received strongly suggests a lampooning of the pampering of a newly wedded wife by her mother, possibly connoting real tensions between in-laws. In actuality, at least traditionally, it is the husband who is usually obliged to live near and provide labor or service to his new in-laws at the start of a marriage.[188] Like the interdiction of the chief who ordered newborn girls to be killed, the mother-in-law imposes what seems to the new husband an unjust condition of marriage. Like the other narratives, this one emphasizes a decidedly male point of view regarding theme and plot development.

Mr. Samson Kapongwe was the last performer at this session. He seemed, aside from Chief Puta, the eldest man to tell a story.[189] He wore blue-gray trousers, a white long-sleeved shirt with the cuffs rolled up to just below his elbows, a white knit buttoned vest, with dark maroon trim and a checked pattern, and what looked a bit like a worn, white golf hat with the back brim turned up. On his left wrist, he wore both a watch and a thin ivory bracelet. His relaxed manner, facial features, and style of dress, particularly his hat, reminded me a bit of a Zambian embodiment of the famous American entertainer Bing Crosby.

Bwile Storytelling 6 by Samson Kapongwe*

Samson Kapongwe: There was a person, among people living in the middle of...of the bush. So then as they lived in the middle of the bush there, then they walked, they walked. Then they found, they found smoke rising. It was rising over there. So then he said, "So let us go there." But, when they went there to the huts, there was one person when he went there, a man. Because he was a hunter, then he found a woman. Then going and arriving, he said, "Odi, odi." She said, "Come in. Who are you?" He said, "It's me, a person." So...uhmn..."A human, is that all, without a name?" He said,

188 See Kalulu story told by Idon Pandwe in Chapter V, where Kalulu is being cheated of his ground nuts crop by his greedy in-laws.

189 According to information gathered in 2005, Mr. Kapongwe was born in 1908 and died in 1994, at the age of eighty-six.

* To watch a video of this story follow this link: http://dx.doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0033.06/Bwile6

"I am Kaly...Kalyaneka [I eat alone]." "You, you are Kalyaweka [you eat alone]?" He said, "Yes." "So where have you come from?" "I was just in the middle of the bush, where I am hunting. I'm a hunter." "Yes. So what have you come for?" "Me, because I'm a bachelor, I want, since I have found you, I want to marry you." Then she said to him, "Would you follow the rules which I have?" He said, "Yes, I can follow them." She said, "No, you, my father, go away." He said, "No, I won't go away. In fact, I'm Kalyaneka." "No, because you are Kalyaweka. No, then you must go." "No, it's just like that, I have to marry you."

So now then, that lady agreed. Then they...they lived, they lived. So, they had a child. So, they just lived on. This child grew. He was the first one. So, again, they just lived and lived. They just lived. Again they had another one, the second. Again that one grew. They just lived, again they had another one. Now they were three. Again, they just lived, just like that they were four, **folo**. So, now again they just lived on, they were **faifi**. Then they just lived, there were **sixi**.

Then he said, "You, woman, now among all these children we have produced, these, me, I have a method which I can give the children so that they are respected." Then she said, "No, just ask the children." So he asked this child, the first born. Then he said to him, saying, "You, my child, listen. I have respect, I have witchcraft which you can move with, any difficulty you can overcome [it]." So he said, "No, me I am a Christian, I would not want that." "You refuse?" He said, "Yes." He said, "Listen, my wife, this child of mine, what I want to give him he has refused." She said, "He himself does not want it." He spoke to another...this one...he who...one who followed again [the first]. And that one answered in the same way [when] he said, "You, my child, I want to give you what can give you respect. When you travel [with this] people will fear you." And that one said, "No." And that one refused. Again he went to another child. Again he said, "You, my child, I want to give you, listen, this respect." And that one refused. "You, my wife, so the children, what I am asking them now, that I give them respect. I could give them dignity. I am a hunter, I do all things, but the children are refusing." She said, "Ala, let me ask them." Again, he asked another who came after. Now there were four. No, and that one again refused, he said, "No, I, I am a Christian, you can't give me something like this. No father." "You refuse?" He said, "Yes." He said to his wife, again, she said the same thing, she said, "Ala, it's me, even if I ask them, can I enter into their hearts?" So, again he went and asked the one who followed, the youngest child. So that one remaining, he asked, he said, "You, my child, listen, I want to give you respect that...that even when people see you, no, it would be fine." That one refused. So then that one who remained there, the smallest child who was like this friend of ours [Note: I can't tell who he's referring to, though the circumstances of the performance session, suggests he was alluding to me], so, saying, "Listen, my child, listen my child, listen." He said, "Yes. You can give that to me." He agreed. So, "You agree?" He said, "Yes." So then he did to him that very magic. He bestowed [it] on him, bestowed him, bestowed him.

So then they set out on a journey. They went. They were walking. He said, "We're going to Mporokoso." So, as they went on the trip, that child, they reached half way, thirst for water gripped him, his throat became dry. Then he saw people bringing water from within the bush, where they went to draw water from far away. And the water in the water holes was dried up. Now he said, "Father, can I ask for water?" He said, "Yes, ask." So he said, "My mother, I want water." She said, "Ala! We are carrying water on our heads as if we were slaves. Where we went to draw water, it's very far, you too can go there." He said, "Yangwe! Father, now that magic you gave me, I'm going to bewitch them." "No, my child, it's not that, no." "Ah, so you've just given me a useless thing. You told me that the magic was mine, [that which] you now gave me. When they do not give me water, my throat is dry, [and] you are stopping me. I'm going to bewitch them." "Ala! No, be patient." He calmed him down. So they went, they went, they went. They found old millet fields. Others were digging cassava in the same way and they stacked it up. Then he said, "I'm going to ask for cassava, the hunger is strong." But when he went, he said, "My mother, give me cassava." She said, "Bring money." As you know, long ago money was difficult to find, so then they just went on their journey. They had nothing, no. That made him there again say to his father, he said, "Father, they refused me cassava, I'm going to bewitch them." He said, "No, my child, be patient." He said, "So then you've given me something useless. So the hunger should be just like this? You stopped me when I was thirsty there, you stopped me here." He said, "No, be patient my friend."

So they went, they just went on that journey. They went far. When they arrived, when it was just evening, they arrived in a village. All along they had walked through old millet fields and grass. As the sun went down, that's when they entered the village. They found an argument between relatives. Siblings were arguing. They said, "Unless I didn't see the hoes [before you]? [i.e. "I wasn't born first."]" He said, "No, we didn't see each other, I was not born with you." He said, "Listen my child, you who want to bewitch, want them to bewitch you." He said, "You must be joking. You try there so that we see." There those called, when he tried. "So then you intended that you will show [me]." So, these...these very ones, again, who kept talking, became quiet, both became quiet. That's where that thing says, "The day an old person gets lost, [said in unison with those in audience, who recite the second half of the proverb. This occurs each time the proverb is spoken.] you will find white hairs in the hyena's dung. The day an old person gets lost, you will find white hairs in the hyena's dung. The day an old person gets lost, you will find white hairs in the hyena's dung."

So that is the source of the *mulumbe* that says, "The day an old person gets lost, you will find white hairs in the hyena's dung." It is there where those who were talking now, is the one who sets out with magic and he bewitched that one, he died.

This narrative was the last of the afternoon and was well received by the audience. Mr. Kapongwe, like the performers before him, used a mostly subtle set of gestures and mime to tell the story. He kept his hands, palms together, in his lap for most of the performance. He often used his head or bent slightly at the waist to emphasize points or to simply move rhythmically with his words at various times. He often looked left or right when approximating a conversation between characters. Early in the narrative, he mostly used his right hand to provide significant information, especially subtly enumerating the six children as they were born. He moved between Bwile and English, as many people do, in his enumeration: "wanu" (1), "*babili*" (2), "*batatu*" (3), "folo" (4), "faifi" (5), and "sixi" (6).

When he depicted the attempts by the father to entice a child to take up sorcery, Mr. Kapongwe created a sense of space and action in a clearly discernable way. He looked down and to his right when talking to a child. He emphasized the great power the magic would bring by using his right hand in a sweeping gesture, from left to right, "…I have witchcraft which you can move with, any difficulty you can overcome [it]." When he spoke to his wife, usually to complain about the unresponsiveness of the children, he looked to his left. At one point, after several refusals, Mr. Kapongwe mimes the main character's frustration by using both hands in a helpless gesture, raising them outward from his lap then dipping them downward, "Tch! Agh! Ala! I'm asking them [with no response]!"

When, finally, the protagonist and his youngest son set out on the journey, Mr. Kapongwe's frequency and complexity of gestures and mime increases. He generally sets most of the action of the people they encounter to his left. He mimes the son being thirsty, after being refused water, by speaking the son's dialogue while also pointing to his throat. Similarly, when refused food and complaining about it, the son touches his stomach to indicate hunger. At both occasions, the audience laughs at the ingenuousness of the son, who keeps asking his father if he should use magic against those who refused him. The laughter was partly due to the implicit understanding that the boy did not comprehend the nature of such power, and he also naively had no real conception of what he was getting himself into. Mr. Kapongwe verbally gave form to the son's confusion and anger, in the way he spoke his dialogue. The father's responses were uniformly quieter and calmer, assuring the son that he would understand eventually.

As the narrative wound down to its somewhat macabre conclusion, the proverb took center stage, obviously eliciting strong responses from

the audience. Like most proverbs, this one had two parts. Mr. Kapongwe uttering the first part spurred the audience's response of providing the second part: "*Ubushiku bwaluba umukote…ne cimbwi cinye mfwi*." [The day an old person gets lost…you will find white hairs in the hyena's dung.] When Mr. Kapongwe first pronounces the proverb, the audience response is a bit slow and quiet. He then repeats the proverb two times, each time more quickly, and the audience responds immediately and loudly. Mr. Kapongwe ends the story by saying, "So, to end the *mulumbe*, he said, 'The day an old person gets lost, you will find white hairs in the hyena's dung.' It is there where those who were talking now is the one who sets out with magic and he bewitched that one, he died." The audience responds with supportive applause and obvious delight in the overall performance.

While this proverb is not an uncommon one, I have, even consulting with some Zambian friends and colleagues, not been able to definitively mine its complete meaning. The most common interpretation stresses that the proverb was employed to suggest coincidence. This would imply that if an elder loses his or her way in the bush and white hairs are found in the hyena's droppings, there would not necessarily be a direct connection; the deduction or supposition that the hyena ate the elder is not the same as absolute proof. The danger in such a situation would be jumping to the wrong conclusion. Another interpretation, that I am tempted to embrace because it seems relevant to the contents of the narrative, is that an elder rarely gets lost in the bush, knowing the paths to walk on and those to avoid. If that person does not show up, then something has gone seriously wrong, as is evidenced by the hyena's dung. The sad or tragic deduction thereby indicates some kind of unexpected event or reversal of fortune. This interpretation would suggest the mysterious nature of the father, the gullibility of the son, and the overall danger of fooling with powerful and dangerous forces. The rather allusive last scene where the father and son come across two apparent siblings arguing is not clearly rendered and adds to the mysterious nature of the uses of magic and its human practitioners. There is an ultimately sinister quality to the encounter and it does not end well for the ambitious youngest child. In any event, the narrative thematically seems to serve as a cautionary tale about the unstable and potentially fatal nature of practicing or embracing witchcraft. This theme is further textured by the knowledge that the tale's main character is also a hunter, someone who commonly employs forms of *muti* [medicines, charms, ritual acts] to ensure both protection in the wild and success in

the hunt. Information provided to me by two Bwile elders in 2005 also added a very salient dimension to both the narrative and the performance context, specifying that among other occupations Mr. Kapongwe was also a practicing "witchfinder" (*mucapi*).

After playing back this last narrative, the gathering pretty much broke up. The session had run over two hours and afterwards I took photos of the group, and explained that I'd visit the chief the next day. Though clearly somewhat fatigued, people seemed gratified by the quality of the performances and I had the overall sense that they felt they'd fulfilled Chief Puta's request. I paid the previously negotiated compensation—around ten or twelve dollars—to the Chief, who, ostensibly, would parcel out the money to the performers. I packed up the gear and, accompanied by Daniel and Mr. Banda, drove back to Chiengi and the rest house.

Even though I had no opportunity to discuss it further with the participants, an overall evaluation of the session can be put forward. Certainly the frame of the event was the Chief's summons and the stature of those in attendance. The performers and audience were clearly elders or men of some status. This was evident in their being summoned and also in the way they carried themselves during the session. Most of them wore thin ivory bracelets, often denoting an elevated social status. After Chief Puta set the tone with his brief historical narratives, the performances explored some related and some broader themes. Mr. Indita's tale focuses mostly on the ingratitude of a sister and the loyalty of a half-human nephew. In a matrilineal society, the alliance, through "marriage," between the sister and the twelve-headed snake, yields a magical son who has the special link that nephews have to their mother's brother. Moreover, this relationship supersedes the brother-sister link. In fact, at least in this story, it also supersedes the son-parents link, and leads to the formation of a new, more prosperous resituating of the society. This fictional tale parallels the earlier historical narrative of the founding of the Bwile territory.

Mr. Kachela's story of the girl made from beeswax brings up another unusual form of birth. The barren woman is embittered by her condition and consistently complains about how God has ignored her pleas. She will soon change her tune when the magical daughter is born of the beeswax gestating in a clay pot. The image of a product of nature, and the cultural practice of gathering honey, coming to life inside a womb-like artifact, is a powerful, evocative one. Yet, the unnatural source of the birth, and the mother's unreasonable expectations that the girl must not marry, then later

on that she avoid ordinary domestic duties, will turn out to render these circumstances unacceptable to the society. This is not surprising, given the gender of all the performers and their audience. As in Mr. Indita's tale, women are potential sources of problems and instability, and men must be wary of their machinations.

Fred Kafankwa's story of Mupita and the lion stands out from all the others in the sense that it does not seem to jibe with the themes of women and/or male power. Rather, the narrative focuses on the prodigious nature of the hunter and the origin of humans' antagonistic relationship with lions. There is, however, the sense of ingratitude on the part of the lion, echoing the sister's ingratitude in Mr. Indita's narrative. Further, the rather deadpan humor of Mupita casually carting off what seems to be thousands of pounds of game meat with one arm creates a sense of hyperbole that also underscores the power of certain heroic figures. Overall, the performance seemed to be among the most entertaining of the narratives, if audience reaction is to be an accurate barometer.

Finally, partly returning to earlier themes, Mr. Kapongwe's narrative is about another odd or unnatural marriage. In this case, the husband is the dangerous element in the story. As in Mr. Kafankwa's narrative, the protagonist is a powerful "hunter." His mysterious origins in the bush and his suspicious name, "I eat alone," casts doubt on his suitability as a husband as well as his very identity as a human being. Yet, the tale is more about power than marital relationships. By bringing in the dimension of witchcraft, the performer sets the tale on a serious level of contention. In Chief Puta's second historical narrative, he told how he had brought in specialists to rid the lakeshore of its troublesome crocodiles and lions. He did not specify the actions these "specialists" took. In a way, this overlooking of details glosses over the kinds of protective practices that probably included forms of preventive magic. In Mr. Kapongwe's story, sorcery will be countered by Christian beliefs that will, in the long run, save the siblings who refuse their father's overtures. This kind of parable about competing systems of belief or spirituality lends the overall session a broader depth of thematic exploration that is underscored by ambivalence over the efficacy of magic, and its broader relationship to social power. The proverb that ends the story seems both an enigmatic and appropriate way to close the session.

Though the performers each had their own styles of putting a story across, they created thematically related narratives. Moreover, they seemed

to compete with one another in telling the most valued or appreciated story. The overall themes mostly framed an assertion of male power, linked to a matrilineal system of descent and inheritance. Power, as it pertained to this session, was most obviously displayed by Chief Puta, who within a matter of a few hours on a Saturday afternoon, summoned a large group of notables and led them in performing a series of engaging tales. Obviously, compensation for these efforts was another spur to action, as this was part of my initial remarks to the gathering and, earlier, to the Chief.

We stopped at the *musumba* on Sunday morning, and found Chief Puta in a nicely cut grey suit. We took photos of him and his family, and for most of these he changed into what looked to be a black academic, or perhaps a legal, gown over his suit. He also wore an ornate cap I'd never seen before. I assume it was a new addition to his regalia. Before we took our leave, I gave him a small gift of cash and he presented us with a chicken—always an appreciated addition when one is traveling and has only meager food resources.

Postscript

In October 2005 I returned to the village of Puta, on Lake Mweru. After spending the night at a recently constructed guest house, I walked to the *musumba* of Chief Puta, who had succeeded the man I knew and recorded in 1989. I had been following the activities of the current chief in the Zambian newspapers for a year or two. He has been very active in the newly reconstituted "Council of Chiefs," which is a group consisting of the traditional heads of Zambia's largest ethnic polities. Chief Puta has spoken out more than once on the slow pace of development in his constituency as well as about real or perceived slights to his and other chiefs' positions by the national government. The Chief's activist stance on raising the level of investment and infrastructure in his area ran parallel to the proactive work of the district's dynamic Member of Parliament, who relentlessly pushed for this somewhat isolated corner of the country to get its share of the national pie. While a main bone of contention, the poor quality of the road that ran from the town of Kashikishi, on Lake Mweru to Puta had not been addressed by the government, it was clear to me that there'd been substantial development in the Chief's village since my last visit. Village houses had been generally upgraded with paint, freshly thatched roofs, carefully tended yards, and well-kept, very straight dirt streets divided the homes into a neat neighborhood grid of households or compounds. Chief

Puta had moved into the large, impressive home of his predecessor, and this too had been upgraded and fenced with newer materials.

Inside the *musumba*, the chief greeted me politely but in a reserved manner. He seemed to be in his early forties, compactly built, with a shaved head. His English was very good, so we opted to use it in most of our discussion. He watched the various performances on DVD and then told me that the information provided by his predecessor on Bwile history was not entirely accurate or complete. He told me to come back in the afternoon so that he could enlist the assistance of some of his elder advisors in responding to the material and providing accurate biographical information on the performers.

In the afternoon, joined by Mr. T.D. Koti, a former MP from the area, and Mr. Ferry Chansa, a local headman, we once again viewed the video material from the 1989 session. Chief Puta charged Mr. Koti with updating or correcting several issues raised by his predecessor, and I then proceeded to record his comments on audiocassette.

Bwile Storytelling 7 by Mr. T.D. Koti, 2005

Robert Cancel: Begin *mukwai.*

T.D. Koti: When we came from Kasongo wa Kumwimba, we were not called Babwile, no. We were called Baluba Kati. Our chief was Kasongo wa Kumwimba. Abaluba Kati. When we arrived at Kaansa, at a small river, at a tributary called Kaansa, that is where we settled. And our friends the Lunda were on the other side. They began going behind our backs and would burn our houses, burn our livestock, grab our livestock. Then we said, "What shall we do?" That is when we decided to fashion sculptures, made from carvings, which we erected to look like soldiers. They erected [here], they erected there. The men praised the leader we were with on the trek, saying, "Mpweto, the crowd-erector. He has excreted troops. He has [multiplied] troops. He has increased the number of troops in our group. He has increased the number of troops."

And now when the fighting was over, we got rid of those Lunda, to defeat them. Then the Lunda came back as if they were just passing by, ostensibly to come and see the area where we fought, only to find that there were no troops. There were sculptures. They were still standing. Then they said, "These people, so it was a hoax."

Hence the group came to be the Bwile. They started referring to us as Babwile because there a trick had succeeded. [At this point Mr. Koti switches to English (marked in bold type)—I assume it was an attempt to be sure I understood the main point of the story] **[It was a] trick to defeat those Lunda people, yes. We made some… some carve[ing]s of…in the form of soldiers…**

RC: **Uh hmn.**

TDK: **Yes, with their bows and arrows. Pretending. Now the Lunda people ran away.** They ran away, saying, "We are dying. Those [people] are too many." When all there was were mere carvings that had been erected. Erected here and erected there. [They were] saying, "We are dying."

That is how we defeated those Lunda. We then crossed over. Crossed on the other side [of the river]. The Lunda also went over there further down where they originated from. We crossed the Lualaba River [coming back]. Coming across the river. The Lunda, too, ran away, settling where they are today. As for us, the boundary of our domain continued as far as the Kalungwishi [River] [to the south]. That's as far as our boundary went. As time went by, it [the boundary] somehow returned to the Kalobwa [River]. That is where it is today.

Mr. Koti's brief narrative was focused on augmenting the historical overview provided by the elder Chief Puta in the 1989 recording session. He provides some important details such as the successful turning away of the attack of the numerically superior and historically more militant Lunda people. More specifically, by carving statues that looked like warriors, the Bwile were able to deceive their attackers into believing their defense force was much larger than it actually was. This claim is significant in part because the Lunda of the Luapula area are the best known and largest group in the region, with a longstanding written historical and cultural presence in scholarship. Defeating such a powerful enemy is thus a clear assertion of Bwile prowess and significance. The claim also leads to the etiological importance of the word *bwile* itself, which Mr. Koti claims means "trick."[190] While he was narrating the account, Chief Puta was obviously concerned that this information be recorded and preserved

190 The *White Father– English Dictionary* has several definitions for the word, including "2. a string trick played by children…"; "3. mystery, unaccountable thing; enigma, riddle, puzzle…"; and "4. a small net which pulls the trigger of a trap…"

as an important dimension of the polity's history. He was so intent on this goal that he immediately began to emphasize these details to me after I turned off the recorder. After about a minute or two, I suggested that he make his case more forcefully and indelibly by allowing me to record his explanation.

Bwile Storytelling 8 by Chief Puta, 2005

Chief Puta: When Ntinda Munchelenge offended [the Bwile] by feeding the [Bwile] princess meat from animals with claws, which we did not eat, such as monitor lizard, crocodile…

Audience: Pythons.

CP: Pythons, snakes. That's how when he brought the princess to the Bwile elders, those who came included: Mpweto, Puta, Kasama and Chisabi. They told Ntinda that "Actually, this matter you have brought [before us] is very serious; is a very big one. And so we do not know even what to do to you." So, what do you call him, Ntinda went back to his family to Mununga at Chititu, to Chief Nkuba. When they sat down he said, "I would like to compensate you for the case concerning the princess, whom I impregnated. Whose constant sickness, due to what we made her eat, what she used to eat is forbidden to consume at…at the Bwile where she comes from, no. So this is a very serious matter facing us."

So they told him that, "OK. You take those elephant tusks. Take elephant tusks as compensation." So Ntinda took elephant tusks, lots of them, and brought them there to the Bwile, the Bwile chiefs, saying it should settle the matter. The chiefs refused to accept [them], saying "What you did was too serious and it was worth more than tusks." He went back and they sat again. "What shall we do? They have refused. They keep saying that it is a very serious offense that you committed. So now how shall we vindicate ourselves?" Then they said, "So what happens is this: Let us give them part of our domain." So they partitioned their domain. Up to the Kalungwishi River from the Lualaba, up to the Kalungwishi. He said, "This territory belongs to me, the Bwile. We have given it to them as compensation."

So when they saw this they said, "Yes, now you've appeased us. Because you have paid, we accept." That's how they accepted.

Our land, of the Bwile, went as far as the Kalungwishi. And the Shila, they're from the Kalungwishi, going there where they share a boundary with the Lunda. Very far away there, on the other side are the Lunda, the entire [Lake] Mweru area. Because this territory belongs to Nkuba of Lubemba, that Ntinda was like the captain of…what's his name, of Nkuba, who was overseeing the land on the other side. In addition, he was a hunter, hunting with dogs. He would wander about in their area, wandering about. It is during his wanderings that he came across the princess [in question]. He liked her when he saw her. He said that, "This one is suitable for me to marry. They allowed him to take her. That is when he fed her such things. This is the reason for the case I have just explained. They made him pay accordingly. Then here to the Lualaba, reaching as far as the Kalungwishi.

Now as days went by it…

Audience: Aah.

CP: He was Lambwe Mutumpa. He was nicknamed "The foolish one" because he gave up the land. This is where the name "Mutumpa" came to be. He what do you call it…at the Shila people, he committed adultery with a princess there.

Audience: At the Shila, there.

CP: At the Shila there. So they said [to the Bwile], "We too will penalize you for this one's misbehavior, you Bwile." So they apportioned part of our land. This time they took land from the Kalungwishi River up to the Kalobwa River. Now this became our boundary. Our portion that extended as far as the…what do you call it, the Kalungwishi, it now became theirs, up to today. As for us, our territory extends as far as the Kalobwa River, because of what transpired.

Chief Puta not only felt it important to have his counselors recount the battle with the Lunda and the trickery that ensued, he himself essentially repeated what had been said in 1989 by his predecessor then added a bit about Mutumpa's indiscretion that led to ceding part of the Bwile territory.[191] Clearly, there was a desire to put his stamp on the kind of

191 He asserts an etiological relationship between Mutumpa's indiscretion and the actual Bemba/Bwile word for a stupid person, *mutumpa* [root word: *-tumpa*].

information I had recorded then and now (2005) in order to emphasize his role as ruler and owner of his polity's history.

After our session with Chief Puta, Mr. Koti and Mr. Chansa accompanied me to a small church building across from the *musumba* so that they could watch the other performances and provide information on the storytellers and, in a few cases, the tales' themes. We finished our meeting in the late afternoon and I compensated them for their time and walked back to the rest house to spend one more night in Puta before traveling on to Kaputa the next morning.