

STORIES OF CONQUEST

OWNERS OF THE LAND AND MWATA KAZEMBE'S EMPIRE*

My first encounter with the story of Nachituti was during a visit to Lunde, the royal graveyard of the Eastern Lunda. The late Mwata Kazembe XVIII “Kafumbe” invited me to Lunde for a ceremony that he thought would introduce me to Lunda customs; he also wanted to make use of my services as a photographer and to use my vehicle to transport dignitaries. The ceremony itself was unprecedented. Before his death the Mwata wanted to pay respect to his ancestors and ensure that the graveyard was clean and well maintained. At the entrance to the graveyard we took off our shoes and tied white cloth on our arms to protect ourselves from the spirits. We proceeded from one grave to the next, pouring millet beer and throwing white clay called *impemba* (or *ulupemba*) on each grave mound. Mwata Kazembe then placed copper plaques on the 13 previously unmarked mounds (four kings are buried outside the royal graveyard). After a drenching thunderstorm, we trudged in the mud for about 100 feet to another grave mound on the outskirts of Lunde where the Mwata began to give offerings. There was no copper plaque for this grave, so I asked my research assistant to whom it belonged. “Nachituti,” I was told, “the Queen of the Lunda.”

The answer was unexpected. Although I knew that the Luapula Valley fell in the midst of a belt of matrilineal peoples where women had often attained positions of importance, I thought that royal descent in Mwata Kazembe's Eastern Lunda Kingdom was patrilineal, with women playing a relatively minor role in the affairs of state. Yet here was a woman important enough to be buried next the royal graveyard, the highest honour for anyone associated with the Eastern Lunda Kingdom. During that research trip, I heard more about Nachituti, especially when I asked elders how the Lunda came to rule Luapula. I returned to re-read the classic ethnographic and missionary texts about the Luapula Valley and indeed found that Nachituti featured in the idiosyncratic narratives of the missionary Dan Crawford, the articles and book by the Rhodes-Livingstone anthropologist Ian Cunnison, and the recorded oral history of

* This paper is intended as the first chapter of a manuscript entitled “Nachituti's Revenge: History, Gender and Eco-Politics in a Central African Fishery”. I'd appreciate any thoughts on this as a first chapter – although it will be preceded by an introductory theoretical and contextual piece, the chapter should be accessible (and hopefully interesting) to a reader who knows nothing about Mweru-Luapula.

the Lunda written by Mwata Kazembe XIV “Chinyanta Nankula”.¹ Yet her importance, and indeed that of the valley’s matrilineal clan traditions in general, were always submerged under the insistence of Mwata Kazembe’s patrilineal descent, first drawn by Ian Cunnison and since then frequently reproduced and much discussed (for an up-dated version see page10).²

I returned to the Luapula Valley two years later with new knowledge and new ambitions. I was convinced that my previous study had underestimated the importance of the stories of the valley, and especially that of Nachituti. I thought that such representations of history, oral traditions, could be mechanisms by which the people of Luapula explained the elusive rules that governed the politics of resource access of the land, rivers and lakes of the valley. To further explore these stories and their political impacts, I extended a study of patterns of production to consider how productive resources were embedded within cultural narratives. Specifically, I examined how the stories of clans and kingship provided a “constitution” that explained and legitimised resource access at least until the coming of the colonial states in the early 1900s and even afterwards.

Historians have long noted that stories, especially those that describe traditions of “genesis”, are ways of describing contemporary cultural and social realities rather than historical facts. Even Jan Vansina, who defends the historical validity of oral tradition against the many critiques of structural anthropologists, admits that such traditions “are expressions of present and past world views, that may reflect past events but do not necessarily do so.”³ Vansina describes oral traditions as

¹ Ian Cunnison deals with the story in Ian Cunnison, *History on the Luapula* (Cape Town: Rhodes-Livingstone papers, 1952). Dan Crawford, *Thinking Black* (London: George H. Doran Co, 1913), 234. Mwata Kazembe XIV, *Ifikolwe Fyandi na Bantu Bandi*, translated by Ian Cunnison as *Historical Traditions of the Eastern Lunda* (Lusaka: Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, 1961), 53-58.

² Ian Cunnison, *The Luapula Peoples of Northern Rhodesia: Custom and History in Tribal Politics* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1959). Much discussion has revolved around the exact dating of Mwata Kazembe’s reigns, especially in the nineteenth century. I have not entered the debate and simply indicate uncertainty in my diagram. See Ian Cunnison, “The Reigns of the Kazembes,” *Northern Rhodesian Journal* III(2), 1956: 131-138. Andrew Roberts, “Tippu Tip, Livingstone and the Chronology of Kazembe,” *Azania* II 1967: 115-131.

³ Jan Vansina, “Traditions of Genesis,” *Journal of African History* XV 2(1974): 317-322, 321. Discussion on the historical validity of oral traditions has been prolific and I would argue that rather than claim general conclusions we need to consider specific oral traditions. The most influential discussion of Luba and Lunda traditions include the structuralist view of Ruund oral traditions in Luc de Heusch, *Le Roi ivre ou l’origine de l’Etat* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972). For a defense of their historical value see James Jeffrey Hoover, “The Seduction of Ruwej: Reconstructing Ruund History (The Nuclear Lunda: Zaire, Angola, Zambia), Ph.D. Dissertation Yale University, 1978, 125-156. For Luba

“palimpsests” that do not “reflect exactly and necessarily the world view held now, but still incorporates elements of different ages.”⁴ Used with care, the intellectual or cultural historian can employ an oral tradition to explore changing cosmologies and socio-cultural realities over time.

The story of Nachituti provides an opportunity for such an exegesis. In telling Nachituti’s story, I am less concerned with historical accuracy than with the fiction that has provided the idiom and ideology that structured political relationships between the peoples of the valley and allotted "charters" of rule over the resources of the land and lakes. In the Luapula Valley a story about the past was of more than academic interest; it was an integral part of the present. Characters in historical narratives were not ossified in the past: ancestral personae were adopted in the present through “positional succession” and memories of kin relations kept alive by what Ian Cunnison called “perpetual kinship”.⁵ Details about identities and relationships between political offices were thus preserved as long as the ancestors continued to be "inherited" by the living; moreover, history had ongoing implications for contemporary life. Yet this process was two-way: contemporary conflicts impacted on the “history” that was told. For example, a fight between fictive relatives, say an “uncle” and “nephew”, might have transformed the emphasis of a story. Once we understand the dialectical interplay of past and present in Luapula, we can begin to explore the web of relationships between the telling of a story, the politics of the teller, and the making of history.

traditions see Thomas Q. Reefe, *The Rainbow and the Kings: A History of the Luba Empire to 1891* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 23-48.

⁴ Vansina, “Traditions”, 320. Unfortunately, in the case of the story of Nachituti and Kazembe’s conquest, Vansina treated the oral evidence as faithful renditions of the past. See Jan Vansina, *Kingdoms of the Savanna* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), 165-174.

⁵ Perpetual kinship has been explored in Ian Cunnison, “Perpetual Kinship: A Political Institution of the Luapula Peoples,” *Rhodes-Livingstone Journal*, 20, 1955, 28-48. On the use of history in Luapula in the 1940s see Ian Cunnison, *History on the Luapula* (Cape Town: Rhodes-Livingstone papers, 1952). Jeff Hoover describes “perpetual kinship” as “the constitutional idiom of Lunda political thought.” James Jeffrey Hoover, “The Seduction of Ruwej”, 114

Nachituti's Revenge

The events upon which the story of Nachituti is based occurred around forty years after the Eastern Lunda had first arrived in Luapula in about 1740. Chinyanta, a clan elder who had surrendered to Mwaant Yaav, the Lunda paramount, led an expedition to Luapula to find the Lunda blacksmith Lubanda who had fled some years earlier. Instead, Chinyanta found salt pans. When he attempted to inform Mwaant Yav of his lucrative discovery, Mutanda, the owner of the salt, murdered Chinyanta by drowning him. Mwaant Yav appointed Chinyanta's son, Nganda Bilonda as "Kazembe" and told him to avenge the death of his father by killing Mutanda and conquering Luapula.⁶ These were the mysterious beginnings of Lunda rule in Luapula; yet the most famous story of conquest, which is still told in the valley, is related to the period of Lunda expansion under Mwata Kazembe I Nganda Bilonda's son, Mwata Kazembe III Ilunga. The story, as recited to me, follows:

It was during the reign of Mwata Kazembe III "Ilunga" [approx. 1760 to 1805] The Lunda capital was at Kasankila near Mofwe lagoon. At that time, the Lunda did not cultivate land, they did not even catch fish. This is why they had to be in the middle of the Luapula Valley, where the Shila people could bring them food.

Nachituti and Nkuba stayed on Chisenga Island. Nkuba had many wives and among them he loved one greatly. One day he found his nephew, the son of Nachituti, with this most beloved wife. In a jealous rage, he killed his nephew, skinned him, carefully dried the skin, and kept it under his mat. Nachituti didn't know what had become of her son. She asked "Where's my son"?

One day a man came to her and said: "I will tell you where your son is if you promise not to tell who informed you."

"I promise," Nachituti replied.

"In the palace where your brother sits you will find the skin of your son."

Nachituti did not know how to verify this old man's words since her brother Nkuba was always in his palace, sitting on his mat. Then, one day there was a party in the palace with much drinking. While her brother was drunk, Nachituti looked under the mat and there she found the skin of her son. Upon finding the skin, she decided to go to Mwata Kazembe who she knew to be a

⁶The early story of Lunda conquest is based on Mwata Kazembe XIV, *Ifikolwe Fyandi*, 1-52. This narrative forms the core of accounts by Cunnison and Labreque. Cunnison as translator and Labreque as editor/helper were both instrumental in the publication of Mwata Kazembe XIV's account. Ian Cunnison, *The Luapula Peoples*, 147-156; E. Labreque, "Histoire des Mwata Kazembe," *Lovania* XVI(1949): 9-33. Contemporary written sources are the journals of Almeida de Lacerda (1798), the Pombeiros (1806-10) and Gamitto (1831-2). The journals of De Lacerda and the Pombeiros are translated in R. F. Burton, *The Lands of Cazembe* (London: Royal Geographic Society, 1873) and Gamitto, trans Ian Cunnison, *King Kazembe and the Marave, Cheva, Bisa, Bemba, Lunda and Other Peoples of Southern Africa* (Lisbon: Junta de Investigações de Ultramar, 1960). These sources are used by Jan Vansina in *Kingdoms of the Savanna*, 165-174.

fierce warrior. At that time there was little water, so Nachituti could walk from Chisenga to Kasankila. There was only a little stream called *Kabunda* which she had to cross. The rest of the land was a forest where they dug caterpillars called *amonde* to eat.

When Nachituti arrived at *Kabunda* stream, the Lunda helped her across. When people in the *ichipango* palace saw a woman, they reported her to Mwata Kazembe. He told the guards to let her in. She went up to Mwata Kazembe, took her *ubukushi* menstruation cloth and threw it in his face. She said: "If you are a man, you will avenge the death of my son. I want you to kill this man, my brother Nkuba."

On hearing this Mwata Kazembe instructed his warriors Kalandala and Nswana Ntambo to find Nkuba and bring him back alive. They went to Chisenga, but upon arrival found that Nkuba had fled to his brother Mulumbwa's village. Since Kalandala couldn't find Nkuba at Chisenga, he was angry and started killing people. He killed many people, even the Abena Bwilile who couldn't run from Chisenga because they wanted to die in their own country. The Bwilile made porridge and slept under animal skins to escape Kalandala. They thought that when the Lunda found the porridge they would eat it and burn themselves. But the porridge cooled down by the time the Lunda arrived. While eating the porridge the Lunda pierced one of the animal skins with a spear and someone cried out. The Lunda thus knew that there were people under the animal skins and they killed them all.

After killing the Bwilile, they found other people who belonged to Nkuba and fought them, but still could not find Nkuba. They returned to Chisenga Island and were told that Nkuba had fled but that his people came to fetch food for him. They were told to wait for them and they would be led to Nkuba. When Nkuba's people came they rang bells to tell people to come with food. When they rang the bells, Kalandala captured them. "Please don't kill us," they pleaded, "We'll show you where to find Nkuba."

They led Kalandala to Nkuba. When they arrived at Nkuba's hiding place, they rang bells to tell Nkuba that food had arrived. Upon hearing the bells, Nkuba came to collect the food. Kalandala caught Nkuba and since he was angry with Nkuba for all the trouble he had put him through, he disregarded Mwata Kazembe's instructions and killed him. He decapitated Nkuba, put his head in the boat, and returned to Mwata Kazembe. On their way the head of Nkuba jumped out of the boat and into the river. The place where Nkuba's head jumped out is called *Pacalala Nkuba*, the place where Nkuba lies, and is still known by that name today.

When they arrived at Mwata Kazembe, they explained how the head had jumped out of the boat. But Nachituti knew her brother was dead and wanted to reward Mwata Kazembe. She took a basket, *akape*, filled it with soil, and a water jug, *umutondo*, and filled it with water. She gave the basket to Mwata Kazembe and said, "I give you the land"; and she gave the pot and said, "I give you all the water; the rivers and lagoons this side and the other side of the Luapula are yours". Mwata Kazembe told her that since she had instructed him to kill her brother, she should stay with him. Mwata Kazembe looked after Nachituti. When she died she was regarded as a chief and buried

in the royal graveyard, Lunde. Even if a chief is dead, upon his burial, the procession must stop and pay respect at the grave of Nachituti.⁷

A person recording the oral traditions of Luapula would be most frustrated if she tried to establish a single, authoritative narrative. Stories vary according to the teller, and the more important a story is to the present, the more diffuse the versions told. The story of Nachituti is as contested as access to the lands and lakes that Nachituti gave to Mwata Kazembe. I have heard the story from more than 20 different elders and read several more versions recorded by missionaries and researchers over the last century. The literate usually recite a story similar to the one written down in Mwata Kazembe XIV 's *Ifikolwe Fyandi na Bantu Bandi* (My ancestors and my people)⁸, which is a popular book in the valley and was once a school textbook. The story of Nachituti has thus been exposed to the much-discussed problem of feedback in oral traditions influenced by written versions.⁹ However, as Luise White points out, feedback can also be "manipulated for specific impact".¹⁰ Indeed, even with the dissemination of a written version, a single, authoritative story has not appeared. Instead, there is a clear generic story and then several variations in detail depending on the teller. The generic features of the story are clear. Nkuba killed his nephew. The mother of the murdered nephew, Nachituti, fled to Mwata Kazembe and pleaded for revenge. Mwata Kazembe sent his Generals, Kalandala and Nswana Ntombo, to capture or kill Nkuba. After they returned and reported that they had decapitated Nkuba, Nachituti gave Mwata a basket of earth representing the land and a pot of water representing the river and lakes. This core narrative is found in the versions before and after the publication of *Ifikolwe Fyandi*.

Prince Dyulu Kabeya, an important Lunda aristocrat, told the above detailed version of the story to me. He is learned and has no doubt read *Ifikolwe Fyandi*. Still,

⁷ Prince Dyulu Kabeya (Godwin Mwewa), Mwansabombwe, 30 Dec. 2000

⁸ Mwata Kazembe XIV, *Ifikolwe Fyandi*, 53-58.

⁹ David P. Henige, "'The Disease of Writing': Ganda and Nyoro Loyalists in a Newly Literate World," in Joseph C. Miller, ed., *the African Past Speaks: Essays on Oral Tradition and History* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1980): 240-261; Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press), 42-45.

¹⁰ Luise White, *Speaking with the Vampires: Rumor and History in Colonial Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 263.

there are several variations in detail. In the official version, Nachituti prostrates naked in front of the chief but there is no mention of a menstruation cloth. The bells that caught Nkuba were a trap laid by General Kalandala and not a signal by Nkuba that his people should bring food. And the head of Nkuba did not jump out of the boat; *Pacalala Nkuba* is simply named as the place where Nkuba was decapitated (other versions claim that Nkuba continued to speak after his head was cut off). The variation that struck me as most significant was that in Prince Dyulu Kabeya's version, Mwata Kazembe instructed Kalandala to bring Nkuba back alive, whereas in *Ifikolwe Fyandi*, and most other versions, Mwata Kazembe's explicit instructions were to kill Nkuba and bring back his head.

Why did Prince Dyulu Kabeya change the story? It was possible that he wanted Mwata Kazembe to appear merciful; concerned with life of those he conquered, especially in comparison to the brutal Nkuba. Yet this explanation was unconvincing. Prince Dyulu Kabeya told many stories of Mwata Kazembe conquering the land by force and killing his subjects. Indeed, the praise sung by Mwata Kazembe during his dance of conquest, the *Umutomboko*¹¹, when he received the land and lakes from Nachituti, is:

I love to seize the country by force
I who am given lands and peoples
While others are given goats and sheep¹²

Why, then, did Prince Dyulu Kabeya insist that Mwata Kazembe told Kalandala not to kill Nkuba? After several hours of discussing more recent political events, the answer emerged. Two years ago, after the death of Mwata Kazembe XVII "Kafumbe" in 1998, there had been a succession dispute. The details need not concern us; however, the end result was that the Lunda aristocrats (*abakalunda* or *abakalulwa*) asserted their authority and appointed a new Mwata Kazembe against the accepted rules of succession. There had been much discontent with this decision and even an

¹¹ The word and dance seems related to the Luba royal investiture dance, the *kutomboka*. Thomas Q. Reeve, *The Rainbow and the Kings*, 44.

¹² Newatemwa ukupoke fyalo mukucimfya; Neupelwa ifyalo na bantu; Abanandi bapelwa imbushi ne mikoko. Quoted in Jacques Chileya Chiwale, trans. and ann., *Royal Praises and Praise Names of the Lunda of Northern Rhodesia: Their Meaning and Historical Background* (Lusaka: Rhodes Livingstone Papers, 1961), 16. Also see Mwata Kazembe XIV *Ifikolwe Fyandi*, 37.

attempted coup. Nevertheless, the decision of aristocrats was respected and supported by the Zambian government.

The point of the altered story was not simply that Mwata Kazembe told Kalandala not to kill Nkuba, but that Kalandala *did* kill Nkuba. This demonstrated Kalandala's independence of action and that an aristocrat, not Mwata Kazembe, conquered the land and lakes. During the entire interview, Dyulu Kabeya was at pains to emphasize that Mwata Kazembe was powerless without the Lunda elders, of which Kalandala was one of the most important members. The Lunda throne did not belong to Mwata Kazembe but to the aristocrats who were the owners of the chief (*mwine wa mfumu*). Despite Mwata Kazembe's contrary instructions, it was Kalandala who killed Nkuba. After he returned with Nkuba's head, Kalandala danced the *Umutomboko* and sang:

I am the only Kalandala . . .
I who killed Nkuba and all his children
Nkuba the Owner of Chisenga Island
Together with his own brother.¹³

The lands and lakes, the gift of Nachituti, thus belonged to the Lunda aristocrats. Other versions of the story told by the aristocrats emphasize their agency in different ways. For example, the aristocrats frequently claim that Kalandala actually found Nachituti and brought her to Mwata Kazembe. Whether Kalandala brought Nachituti to Kazembe or Nkuba's head, the effect is the same: Kazembe is indebted to Kalandala, and by implication to the aristocrats in general for Nachituti's gift of the land and lakes. Thus, if we are to understand how the land and lakes are ruled, we need to turn to the aristocrats and their families, who in Luapula are called the *abacunuma*, those who stand behind the throne.

Of Goats and Kings

I have related the different emphases of Nachituti's story to tensions between Lunda aristocrats and the King, Mwata Kazembe. Up to this point we have considered Nachituti's story as told by the elders in the late twentieth century. Like ancestral

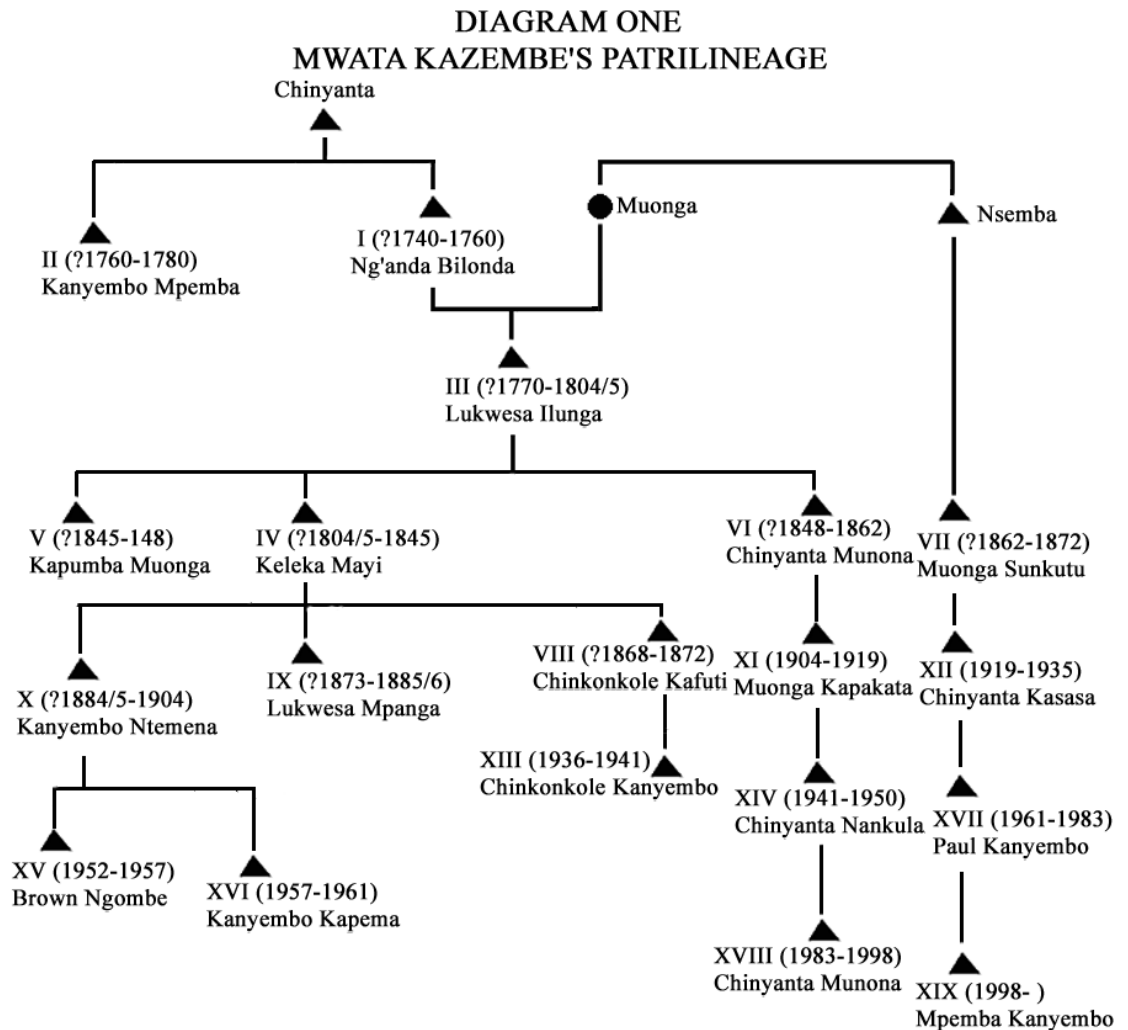
spirits, stories arose in response to the politics of an era; that they were part of popular memory in the late twentieth century indicates the continued importance of them for the people of Luapula. Nevertheless, stories did not only represent concerns of the late twentieth century. They were palimpsests that incorporated the views of past generations and superimposed them on previous versions. Deeply embedded in the story of Nachituti are past conflicts between matrilineal clans and patrilineal kings. If we turn our attention to the nineteenth century, after the conquest of Nkuba, we can begin to understand how the patrilineal kingship came to rest on matrilineal clans led by Lunda aristocrats.

Each Lunda aristocrat belonged to a clan (*umukowa* pl. *imikowa*), or more precisely a particular lineage (*icikota* pl. *ifikota*) within a clan. For example, Prince Dyulu Kabeya belonged to the Elephant Clan (*Abena Nsofu*) while Kalandala was of the Lion Clan (*Abena Nkalamo*). At the time of my research there were 20 aristocrats. Seven were from the Elephant Clan (*Nsofu*), four from the Goat (*Mbushi*), three from the Bird (*Nguni*), two from the Lion (*Nkalamo*) and the rest from the Fish (*Mpende*), Crocodile (*Ngandu*), Feather (*Ngula*) and Frog (*Kunda*) clans.¹⁴ The choice of successor was made by the matrilineal family (*ulupwa*) and usually inherited from the mother's brother (*bayama*); Mwata Kazembe then consented to the chosen appointment. Each aristocrat received a formal appointment or office in the Lunda Court, named after important ancestors (*ifikolwe* sg. *icikolwe*) like Prince Dyulu Kabeya or Kalandala, and each office had a distinct set of palace duties (*umwanso*). However, the most important duty of the aristocrats was to select the chief; that is why they considered themselves the owners of the chief. Yet the aristocrats also ensured that they were represented in the kingship by giving close kinswomen to the chief as *ntombo* wives. Since royal descent was patrilineal (see Diagram One page

¹³ Nine Kalandala nebo . . . Nwaipaye Nkuba nabamwana Nkuba bonse pamo pene; Ulya Nkuba umwine wa Chisenga; Namunyine wakwe pamo pene. Chiwale, *Royal Praises*, 14.

¹⁴ Ian Cunnison distinguishes between clans east and west of the Lualaba system, with Lunda clans originating west of the Lualaba. He recorded the tortoise *Kosa* (Tortoise) clan as common to Kazembe and *abakalunda*. My research did not find the *Kosa* of much importance; the Elephant Clan had replaced it. The transformation of the *Kosa* Clan into the Elephant Clan needs further investigation. It is possible that after 1940 the last remnants of the western clan system were incorporated into the eastern. Clans that existed in both eastern and western systems, such as the Goat Clan, managed to continue. Ian Cunnison, *The Luapula Peoples*, 156-164. However, Cunnison's classification of clans west of the Lualaba as "Lunda" is problematic, given that Jeff Hoover claims that the clan system was not significant among the Ruund. "Kosa" also might have been a generic term for Lunda aristocrats rather than a "Tortoise Clan." Hoover, "The Seduction of Ruwej", 257-265.

10), only the sons of kings (*umwana wa mfumu*) could become princes; clan and lineage membership, however, could be passed from the mother. Thus, if an aristocrat could ensure that the chief was married to his sister or sister's daughter, he stood a good chance of securing a prince as close matrilineal relative, preferably as sister's son (*mwipwa*).



Each Lunda clan had a distinct history that tied it to Mwata Kazembe's kingship and to the broader, more universal stories of Lunda conquest, such as the story of Nachituti. Take, for example, the history of the Luapula lineage of the Goat Clan, which is an important clan among the *abakalunda* aristocrats and is frequently found among the minor chiefs, headmen and owners of the land and lakes throughout the Luapula Valley.¹⁵ The story of the Goat Clan, like all of Luapula's stories,

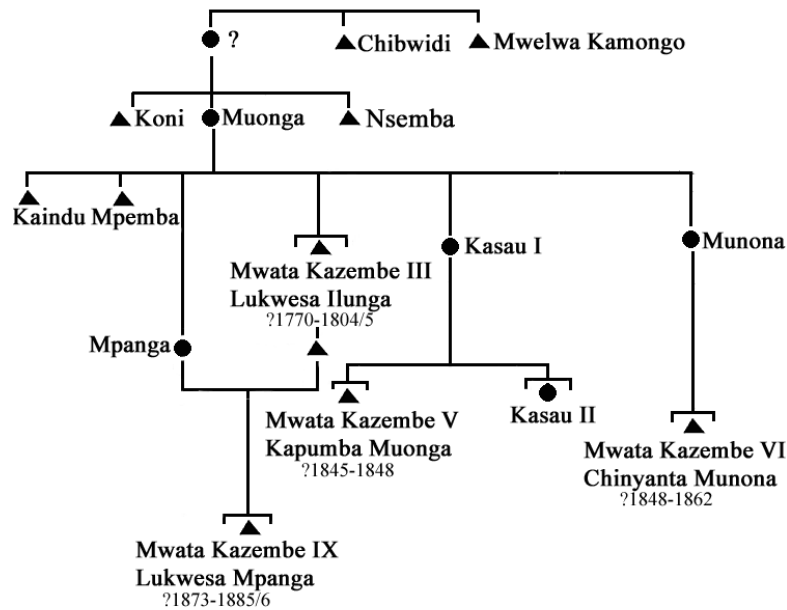
depends on the teller. Most clan members agree that the most senior ancestor is Chibwidi who was the owner of the salt pans of Lualaba which was conquered Chinyanta, the father of Mwata Kazembe I Nganda Bilonda. Chibwidi was the first to give Mwata Kazembe I a *ntombo* bride from the Goat Clan by the name of Muonga. She bore a child who became Mwata Kazembe III Ilunga. After Mwata Kazembe III Ilunga defeated Nkuba, he asked his mother, Makwe Muonga (meaning Queen Muonga), to leave her ancestral home and come to stay with him, contrary to the old matrilineal traditions. She arrived with her brother Koni and her daughter Mpanga. By then, Mwata Kazembe II Ilunga had already fathered a son who would become Mwata Kazembe IV Keleka Mayi. Since Mwata Kazembe III Ilunga wanted the kingship to remain within his mother's family, he insisted that his son, Keleka Mayi, marry his sister, Mpanga. Keleka Mayi and Mpanga conceived another Goat Clan prince who became Mwata Kazembe IX Lukwesa Mpanga. Mwata Kazembe III Ilunga also married two other Goat Clan wives, Kasau and Munona, who gave birth to two more princes who became Mwata Kazembe V Muonga Kapumba and Mwata Kazembe VI Chinyanta Munona. This is how the matrilineal Goat Clan became a force behind the patrilineal Lunda kingship.¹⁶

¹⁵ Henceforth I shall simply refer to the Luapula lineage of the Goat Clan as the Goat Clan. In present-day Luapula, there are several Goat Clan lineages not necessarily related to the one I detail here.

¹⁶ This history has been reconstructed from the sometimes-contradictory accounts of several different Goat Clan elders. Moses Mwelwa Kasau, Kasau's Village, 30 Dec. 2000; Chisami (Cosmos Ngoi Kaniembo Chinkonkole), Mbereshi, 2 Jan. 2001; Koni (Mwelwa Gosam), Koni Village, 3 Jan. 2001; Kanyemba (Achim Kabaso), Kanyemba's Village, 6 Jan. 2001; Chibwidi, Chibwidi's Village, 10 Jan. 2001; Banakamweka Dalas Mpanga, Mwansabombwe, 13 Jan. 2001; Chilalo (Ilunga John), Chilalo Village, 15 Jan. 2001; Shanyemba (Amon Mukobe), Shanyemba's Village, 16 Jan. 2001.

DIAGRAM TWO

MWATA KAZEMBE AND THE GOAT CLAN MATRILINEAGE



By giving birth to kings, the Goat Clan members ensured that they were appointed to important positions in the Lunda hierarchy and government. Chibwidi, his brother, Mwelwa Kamongo, and his nephew, Koni, all became aristocrats. Many were given land and lakes to rule; they became Owners of the Land (*mwine wa mpanga*) or Owners of the Lagoon (*mwinekabanda*). Koni, Kasau, Mpemba, Nsemba, Kanyemba, Shanyemba, Kaindu, and Chilalo were all important Goat Clan ancestors, descendants of Chibwidi, who were awarded with portions of land and lakes scattered across the Luapula Valley. At the time of my research, many Goat Clan elders still controlled access to much of the land and lagoons, although the exact position of their villages might have been altered during the early colonial period (see Map One on page 19 for details on the Lunda Goat Clan villages).

The lineage relations of the nineteenth-century Goat Clan elders survived colonialism and extended into the late twentieth century. The positions of the Goat Clan ancestors, such as Koni, Chibwidi, Nsemba etc., were inherited and kept within the Goat Clan according to a system of “positional succession”. Moreover, kin relations between members of the Goat Clan were maintained. Thus, for example, the present Koni calls himself Chibwidi’s nephew (sister’s son: *mwipwa*), even though they are far more distant relatives. The gender of the positions is not consistent.

Chibwidi, for example, is presently a woman while Kasau is a man. Nevertheless, Chibwidi remains Kasau's "uncle" (two generations are generally telescoped into one in perpetual kinship and thus there are few "grandchildren").

The stories of the Goat Clan that link the clan to both the king and to the land and lakes are celebrated in praises (*amalumbo* sg. *ilumbo*) learnt by the clan elders adopts. A clan has a generic praise, but each elder innovates; they adopt a phrase from the generic praise and then add lines that refer to their specific lineage section within the clan. For example, a common phrase found in almost all the Goat Clan praises celebrates the contribution of the Goat Clan to the kingship by boasting that the goat provides the leather for the belt (*nshipo* / *ulukanga*) worn by Kazembe and the Lunda royalty.¹⁷ Chibwidi's praise begins "Chibwidi, the belt worn by royalty (*Chibwidi lukanga ulufwele abakata*). Others make reference to the belt in a more oblique fashion. The praise of Kaindu, which is incorporated into many of the Goat Clan praises, is "Kaindu who watches the cow" (*Kaindu akamutamba ngombe*). Kaindu watches the cow because its leather can be used for Kazembe's belt instead the goat's leather.¹⁸ The praise then celebrates particular ancestors within the clan lineage. For example, Chilalo, the Goat Clan elder appointed to guard the harbor on the Luapula by Mwata Kazembe (Owner of the Harbor: *mwine wa cabu*), praises himself:

We belong to Kaindu who watches the cattle
While others watch an empty place
Ilunga who can reach far with hands
Mwata Kazembe found him
I am the sleep that can even attack the cunning.¹⁹

Ilunga was the name of the first Chilalo, the direct matrilineal ancestor of the current Chilalo. He boasts of his calling to guard the harbor and of his prowess in doing his duty with his long hands that reach his enemies and his magic ("the sleep that can even attack the cunning").

¹⁷ The belt is commonly known as *nshipo*; however, in many of the praises it is referred to as *chiseba* or *lukanga*.

¹⁸ Another variation on this praise begins "You can succeed a slave or a cow" (*Mwababimbile akasha namungombe*) since the belt can be taken from the skin of a slave or cow.

¹⁹ *Nifwebo baKaindu akamutamba ngombe; Beneba batamba chibundi; Ilunga wamusanga ulupele imikonso; Mwata Kazembe wamusanga; Ninebo tulo ulalika abacenjela*. This praise was recited by the current Chilalo, Gersham Mulonda Chema, Chilalo Village, 15 Jan. 2001.

Lunda aristocrats and appointments like Chilalo were part of the royal network; they considered themselves “true” Lunda, the descendents of the conquerors of the Valley. Their stories of conquest provided a stage upon which the politics of resource access could be articulated; they weaved the fabric of authority, the charters that secured Lunda rule in a web of matrilineal clan traditions. Yet stories of conquest also include the conquered. How, then, were those who were defeated incorporated into these networks of authority?

Nkuba’s People

After Nachituti gave Mwata Kazembe the land and lakes, Mwata requested that she stay with him. In some accounts, he married Nachituti. Nkuba became the perpetual “wife” to Mwata Kazembe; he was responsible for ensuring that Mwata Kazembe was well fed, meaning he had to bring Mwata Kazembe tribute from Chisenga Island which became Mwata Kazembe’s storehouse (*ubutala bwakwa Kazembe*).

When told by the Shila, the descendents and relatives of Nkuba, the story of Nachituti differs and is invested with new meaning. According to them, the murder of Chituti, the son of Nachituti, by Nkuba was justified since Chituti was allegedly practising witchcraft and killing women.²⁰ Moreover, the importance of Nachituti’s gift is emphasized. According to the Shila, if Nachituti had not given Mwata Kazembe the land and lakes, they would still be in their possession. She is praised by the Shila as *Nachituti uwaobwele uLunda*, Nachituti who invited the Lunda to stay.²¹ The Lunda, by contrast, frequently claim that the gift was of little significance since the Lunda had already conquered the land. The version recorded in *Ifikolwe Fyandi*, which was written by Mwata Kazembe XIV in collaboration with the elders, dismisses Nachituti’s gift because “the whole land was already conquered by their [the Lunda’s] own might, and they did not care for her words.”²²

²⁰ The fact that the son of Nachituti is given a name is significant. Nachituti means “mother of Chituti”, but in Lunda accounts the name of her son is unknown, even when questioned explicitly. The Lunda are simply not interested in the son Chituti; his name is irrelevant.

²¹ The best account of the story of Nachituti recorded from a Shila perspective is in Mwelwa C. Musambachime, “Changing Roles: The History of the Development and Disintegration of the Shila State to 1740,” MA Dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1976, 103-107. I have also heard the story from Mununga and Councillors, Mununga's Palace, 26 June 1998.

According to oral traditions collected by Mwelwa C. Musambachime, Nkuba had once ruled an extensive Shila Kingdom.²³ Yet, at the time of Lunda conquest, it seems that Nkuba's authority was limited to Chisenga Island and its immediate surroundings. Other Shila chiefs, like Mununga, Mukamba or Nkuba Bukongolo (alternatively known as Nkuba Chimbala), were independent and reacted to Nkuba's defeat in different ways. Nkuba Bukongolo fled from Kilwa Island to the western banks of the Congo. He praised himself as "Nkuba, the easterly wind that does not fear Kazembe" (*Nkuba, mulumbi ushitina Kazembe*) and refused to pay tribute to Kazembe (although he was later conquered by the Lunda aristocrat Musanda).²⁴ Mwata Kazembe III Ilunga defeated Mukamba, another southern Shila ruler, in a separate battle.²⁵

Two different forms of incorporation into the Lunda state developed. Near the heartland of the new capital, next to Mofwe lagoon, where Shila chiefs such as Nkuba and Mukamba were decisively defeated, Mwata Kazembe appointed successors to the Shila rulers. Each successor retained the title of the original chief, Nkuba or Mukamba, and became known as an Owner of the Land (*mwine wa mpanga*) or Owner of the Lagoon (*mwinekabanda*), depending on whether their area fell next to the river or towards the plateau. The Owners of the Land and Lagoons were instructed to look after the land in the name of Mwata Kazembe – to become the eyes of Kazembe (*ameenso ya kwaMwata*) – and to ensure that Mwata Kazembe was never without food. The positions of Owners of Land/Lagoons were not restricted to those conquered by Mwata Kazembe. In some cases, such as that of the Goat Clan elders Koni and Kasau, Mwata Kazembe gave land and portions of the lagoon as a reward or simply to satisfy demanding kin: Kasau and Koni became Owners of the Land and Lakes respectively.²⁶

²² Mwata Kazembe XIV, *Ifikolwe Fyandi*, 58.

²³ Musambachime, "Changing Roles," 27-65.

²⁴ Dyulu Kabeya (Godwin Mwewa), Mwansabombwe, 30 Dec.2000. Musanda (Lukwesa Alam), Musanda's Village, 15 Jan. 2001. Mwata Kazembe, *Ifikolwe Fyandi*, 62. *Mulumbi* is the easterly wind feared by the fishermen of Lake Mweru.

²⁵ Edward Mukamba, Kabalenge, 5 Jan. 2001.

²⁶ Moses Mwelwa Kasau, Kasau's Village, 30 Dec. 2000. Koni (Mwelwa Gosam), 02 Feb. 2001. Owners of the Lands and Lagoons seems to be an adaptation of Luba political traditions which incorporated local house or village heads into the Luba Empire as earth-priests. Reeve, *The*

The conquest of the land and the establishment of titles of the Owners of the Land and Lagoons were rehearsed through traditions that surrounded the flow of tribute between the Owners and Mwata Kazembe. In the same way as the Lunda aristocrat provided the Mwata with wives, the Owner of the Land and Lagoons ensured that the Mwata was fed. A set rituals, part of what the Lunda term *ulutambi* (custom), surrounded Mwata Kazembe's eating habits.²⁷ He had a special kitchen (*mbala*) where a virgin (*mwadyambalala*) prepared his food. No one was allowed to eat with him or observe him eating. There was one exception to this rule, when the former Shila ruler and Owner of the Lagoon, Mukamba came to the palace with the first sweet papyrus, *iminkono*. He washed his hands, peeled the *umunkono*, and placed it in the Mwata's mouth. After eating, the Mwata said, "I have tasted *umunkono*. Now, let your people eat."²⁸ The Owner of the Lagoon also had to be careful when bringing food to the palace, for if it was brought during the day the Mwata would have to share it with that aristocrats and any other important functionaries; instead it was better to give food to Mwata at night.²⁹ In exchange for the upward flow of tribute, Mwata Kazembe recognized the Owners as arbitrators in the conflicts over access to the land and lagoons. These rituals and traditions were not ossified; nevertheless, like the raising of a flag for a nation-state, they provided an opportunity for the enactment and articulation of the valley's political traditions.

The second type of incorporation into the Eastern Lunda Empire occurred where conquest was incomplete. On the fringes of the Empire chiefs did not become Owners of the Land/Lagoons; rather, they remained as independent rulers. Mununga, Nkuba's nephew who lived to north of the Lunda heartland, surrendered to the Lunda and agreed to pay tribute to the aristocrat Kasumpa.³⁰ And to the south, the Rat Clan Chiefs (*Abena Mbeba*), Mulundu, Malebe and Lubunda, offered tribute to Mwata

Rainbow and the Kings, 46. The Lunda tradition of *mwant agand* described by Jeff Hoover is more centralized than that found in Luapula. Hoover, "The Seduction of Ruwej", 103.

²⁷ For a description of *ulutambi* custom see Ian Cunnison, "A Note on the Lunda Concept of Custom," *Rhodes-Livingstone Journal* 14, 1954: 20-29.

²⁸ Edward Mukamba, Kabalenge, 05 Jan. 2001. *Iminkono* is the name of the papyrus *uluko* when it becomes sweet.

²⁹ William Katwe Chishala, Makandwe River, 30 Dec. 2000.

³⁰ Mununga acknowledged that he was conquered by the Lunda.. Mununga and Councilors, Mununga, 27 Aug. 1998. Mwata Kazembe, *Ifikolwe Fyandi*, 64.

Kazembe after hearing of Nkuba's defeat. Yet these rulers retained their independence from Mwata Kazembe. Although conquered, they often refused to acknowledge that they paid Mwata Kazembe tribute. They did not consider themselves as subordinate Owners of the Land, but rather as independent rulers who recognized Lunda suzerainty. They retained traditions of matrilineal succession and Mwata Kazembe played no role in the choice of successors.³¹

In addition to the conquered, many of Luapula's clans consisted of migrant groups. Some of these migrants arrived in the colonial period to take advantage of the fishing business; many, however, date their migration to the late nineteenth century when Mwata Kazembe X Kanyembo Ntemena (or the Lunda aristocrat Chipepa) recruited them to fight against the BaYeke and Swahili who had allied with his brother, Lukwesa Mpanga. Mwata Kazembe X recruited Mwaba Mukupa from Mwamba's area on the Bemba plateau; as reward for his mercenary services, Mwata Kazembe gave him land in the middle of the valley, where the Mbereshi mission was established some years later. These migrant groups were then incorporated into the local political structure as semi-independent rulers. Although they did not have the same ties to the land as Nkuba's people, and were not considered Owners of the Land/Lagoons, they were integrated into the Lunda political structure as client villages.³²

My description of the Eastern Lunda Empire differs to that found in Jan Vansina's influential *Kingdoms of the Savanna*.³³ Instead of a centralized Lunda state ruled by appointed Lunda aristocrats, the Lunda state rested on the incorporation of older political structures and the payment of tribute through sparsely distributed

³¹ The Lunda version claims the Chishinga/ Rat Clan chiefs were conquered in Musambachime, *Changing Roles*, 54 and Mwata Kazembe, *Ifikolwe Fyandi*, 65-66. Both Lubunda and Mulundu denied having paid tribute to Mwata Kazembe and declared that Mwata Kazembe was not allowed to enter their palaces. Mulundu acknowledges giving Kazembe ivory as a peace offering. Chief Lubunda (Joseph Myape), Lubunda's palace, 8 October, 1997. Mulundu, Mambilima, 9 Jan., 1998.

³² The best record of Mwaba Mukupa's history is "Interview with Wapanyambwa," Mbereshi, 1 Nov. 1971," Robert Bates Collection, UNZA Special Collections. Also see Robert Bates, *Rural Responses to Industrialization: A Study of Village Zambia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), 10-12. Songs recall the Lunda aristocrat Chipepa going to Mwamba's area to recruit fighters. Leon Verbeek, *L'Histoire dans le chants et les danses populaires: la zone culturelle Bemba du Haut-Shaba (Zaire)* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Centre d'Histoire de l'Afrique, 1992), 79-82. Mulalami led another group from Chief Tangat's area (Luwingu) during the same expedition. James Mulalami, *Mulalami's Village*, 15 Jan. 2001.

³³ Jan Vansina, *Kingdoms of the Savanna*, 165-174

Lunda aristocrats. Those closest to the Lunda heartland became known as Owners of the Land or Lagoons and were integrated into the Lunda political structure as mediators with the ancestral spirits associated with the land and lagoons. Although the title of Owner of the Land/Lagoons was initially restricted to the conquered, Mwata Kazembe began to give land and lakes to kin or clan elders who also adopted the title of Owner of the Land or Lagoons. Those further from the Eastern Lunda capital remained independent rulers who recognized Lunda suzerainty but were not closely integrated into the Lunda political structure. They paid tribute to Mwata Kazembe, often through a Lunda aristocrat who acted as an intermediary or an overseer for the Lunda court. What remains is to see how this basic political structure became embedded in Luapula's land and lakes through the stories of conquest.

Nachituti's Gift: The Lakes

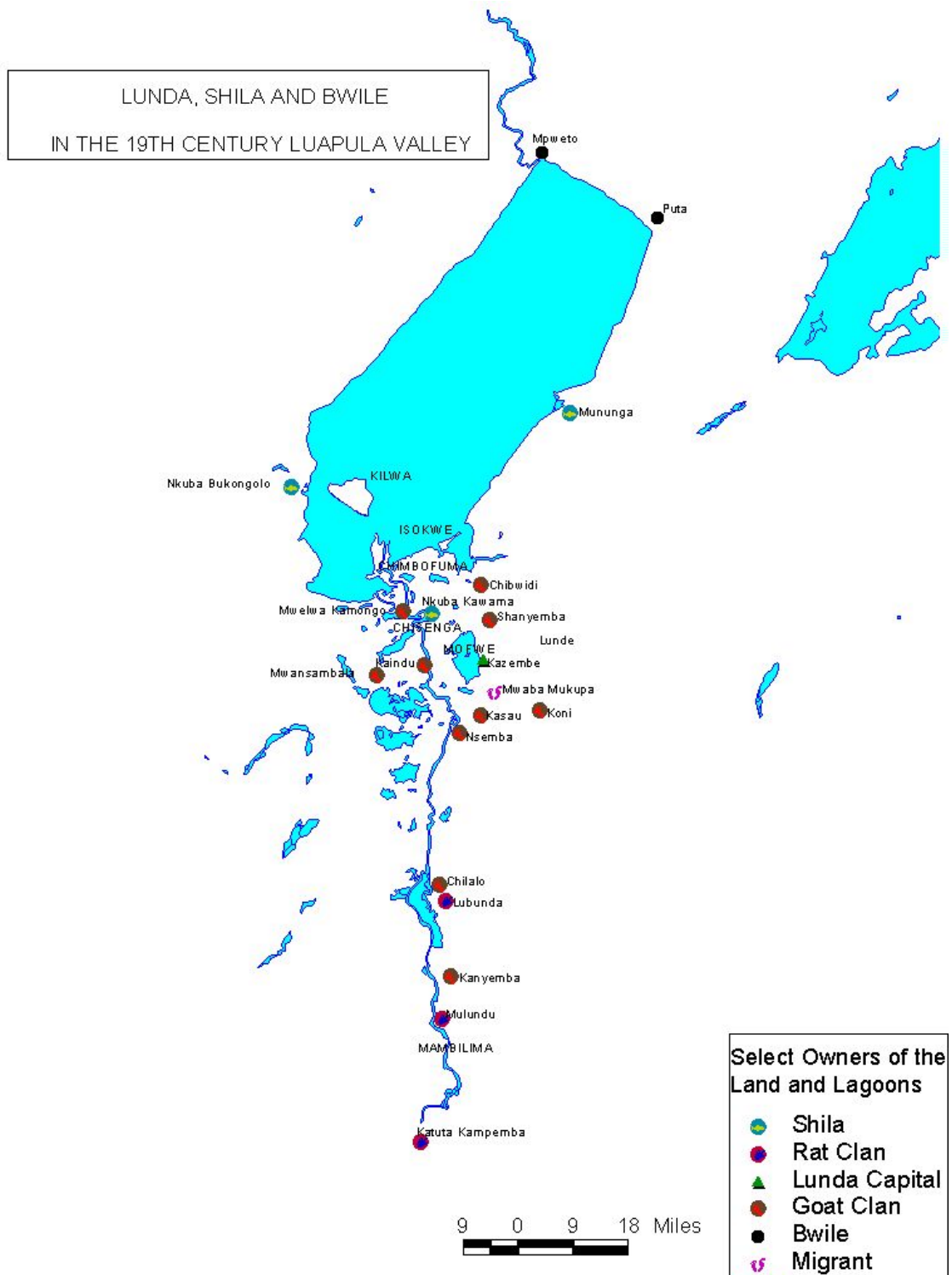
Stories of conquest did not determine the shape of political authority; they were expressions of political relationships that emerged through the interaction of people with their resources, in the case of the Luapula Valley, Nachituti's gift of the lands and lakes. The value of the land and lakes rested with the produce created by human labor. The story of Nachituti's revenge is not only about Lunda conquest; it also tells of how people learned to cultivate the land and catch fish, to harvest the wealth of the land and lakes. Before Nachituti gave the land and lakes to Kazembe, people lived on the caterpillars they found in the forest. It was only after Nachituti's gift that the Lunda planted their gardens, laid their nets and set their fish traps. The land and the lakes present two interconnected but distinct productive spheres; the fishery and the farm. Each had distinct gendered relations of production and each interacted with the local political and cultural landscape in a particular way.

The lake and river system that Nachituti surrendered to the Lunda began at Mambilima Falls in the south, home to the Rat Clan ruler Mulundu. It extended north, past the Mofwe lagoon where the Lunda established their capital. They called this area *Kanaya* from the verb *ukunaya*, meaning to make porridge, since it provided the people with food. As the river flows north it passes "Kazembe's storehouse", Chisenga Island, where Nkuba had lived and where his head still rested (*Pacalala Nkuba*). Then, where the Luapula opens out into Lake Mweru, a large island called

Kilwa (meaning dry place) appears.³⁴ According to legend, this had been home to some of the original Abatwa before the Bwilile leader called Kaponto drove them away.³⁵ It is also where Nkuba Bukongolo fled after the Lunda defeated his brother. The length of the river, from the Mambilima Falls to the Chimbofuma Bay where Lake Mweru begins, is about 100 miles long and extends in width from a few hundred feet in the dry season to a few miles during the annual rainy season from November to March.

³⁴ The full name of Mweru is *Mwelu mukata mukandanshe*, which means the wide expanse of water which the locusts cannot cross." Few of my informants, and no Lunda, remembered this name; they did not know the origin of the name "Mweru". Musambachime, "Development and Growth", 28. The island Kilwa on Lake Mweru has no links with the East African entrepot. Mwelwa Musambachime, "Ubutwa: A Study of the Role and Function of a Secret Society in Eastern Zaire and North-East Zambia to the 1920s," Unpublished Paper, nd ?1991-1993, 8.

³⁵ The story of Kaponto settling the land and creating Lake Mweru by burning the plains is not remembered in the Lunda heartland. Mununga and his councilors knew the story. It is best recorded in Ian Cunnison, *The Luapula Peoples*, 34-5. Mununga and Councillors, Mambilima, 26 June 1998



The lake itself is 80 miles long from north to south and between 25 to 30 miles wide. On its western shores, near the mouth of the Kalungwishi River, Nkuba's nephew, Mununga, ruled and paid tribute to Mwata Kazembe. And on the northern and north-eastern shores, a migrant Luba group under Mpweto and his brothers settled. They called themselves "Bwile", meaning dark place since they arrived in Luapula at

night.³⁶ Here the lake empties into the Luvua River, known locally as the Lualaba, and probably the ancestral home of the Goat Clan. The Luvua flows north until it meets the Congo River

This expanse of river and lake contained distinct but interconnected ecologies that offered different bounties to villagers. Parts of the lake were inaccessible to fishers with limited equipment, while the lagoons offered rich fishing grounds. Moreover, the ecology of the lake changed with season, year and human intervention. During the annual floods certain fish species migrated to lagoon areas like Mofwe and Chimbofuma; during the dry season they retreated to the deep waters of the lake. If one species was heavily fished another might prosper to the detriment of some producers and the advantage of others. There were three general ecological zones with differing levels of human exploitation and types of authority. In the first zone, the relatively deep (forty to fifty feet) open waters of the lake, especially off the rocky north-western shores, provided an ideal habitat for large adult fish like pale and mpumbu (see page ??? for a list of fish). Here most fishers remained close to the shore and the vast open areas on the lake were relatively unexploited.

The second zone was the southern, sandy shore and the northern section of the lake. This area supported a diverse range of adult and juvenile fish and acted as a nesting ground for many of them, especially pale. Fishermen used dugout canoes and nets to fish the shallow lake areas. The nets were made from the fibers of local plants, called *kaboko*, and fishermen either left them overnight (*amalalika*) or chased fish into them by the beating of surrounding water (*kutumpula*).³⁷ On the beaches, women caught small sardine-like fish called chisense by dragging long pieces of cloth through the shallows. The fishing technology was relatively simple and the fish plentiful. In this area, the Shila lords, Mununga and Nkuba, controlled access to the fishery. Where the Kalungwishi river flowed into the lake, Mununga conducted an annual ceremony to “open” the fishery after the fish spawning season.³⁸

³⁶ The Bwile should not be confused with Kaponto's people, Bwilile, called Bwilile by the Lunda and Shila because they ate themselves, meaning they did not pay tribute to any chief. For an account of Bwile migration see Musambachime, "Changing Roles", 97-101. Puta and Councilors, Chiengi, 27 July 1998

³⁷ For an overview of all the different fishing techniques see Musambachime, "Development and Growth", 48-73.

The third zone ran along the Luapula River for about 100 miles from the village of Mulundu at the Mambilima rapids north to the Chimbofuma lagoon where the river emptied into Lake Mweru. A few months into the rainy season, the Luapula flooded its banks and the width of the river extended from a few hundred feet to a few miles. These flood plains provided especially good feeding grounds for young fish; thus adult fish regularly spawned during this time. The villagers took advantage of the inundation. Fishermen in canoes caught spawning fish with floating nets in the river, Nearer the rapids and falls of Mambilima, villagers built dams and weirs (*amaamba* sg. *ubwaamba*) and installed traps (*imyoono* sg. *umoono*) to catch fish as the flood waters receded. Through the careful construction of such dams and weirs, villagers continued to catch fish well into the dry season.

In the swamps and lagoons south of Lake Mweru political and spiritual authority over the control of the fishery was most developed. Most of this area fell within the heartland of the Eastern Lunda Empire, where local leaders had been incorporated into the local political structure as Owners of the Lagoon. Here fishers and their elders made offerings like sorghum meal, the old food of the valley, to the ancestors. Sometimes they visited the graveyards of the ancestors and offered beer and white clay. They placed charms on their nets to attract fish and to protect themselves and their nets from crocodiles. In most cases, the Owners of the Lagoons were responsible for the rituals of the fishery. Thus, while the Lunda were accepted as the secular rulers of the valley, the Owners of the Lagoons had the responsibility of mediating the relationship between fishers and the fishery through the ancestral spirits. They had privileged access to ancestral power and were thereby responsible for the success of the seasonal catch, the safety of the fishers and control over the limited fishing grounds. The most important duty of the Owners of the Lagoon was the annual "opening" of the fishery (*ukufungule sabi*) after gaining consent from their ancestors every year.³⁹

³⁸ Mununga and Councilors, Mununga's Palace, 26 June 1998. Puta and Councilors, Puta's Palace, 27 July 1998. Livingstone reports on the fish spawning in the Kalungwishi in Livingstone, *The Last Journals*, v.1, 244.

³⁹ Moses Mwelwa Kasau, Kasau's Village, 30 Dec. 2000; Kanyemba (Achim Kabaso), Kanyemba's Village, 6 Jan. 2001. Musambachime, "Development and Growth" Vol. 2, "Interview with Kashiba elders", 13; "Interview with Fisto Mulongo 18 April 1974", and "Interview with Mwilwa Calwe Kashimoto", 2. Leon Verbeek, *Le monde des esprits au sud-est du Shaba et au nord de la Zambie* (Rome: Centro Studi Missioni Salesiane, 1990), 177-198. Cunnison, *The Luapula Peoples*, 218-9.

One typical example was the Rat Clan leader, Mulundu. Although Mulundu was an independent ruler and not a Lunda Owner of the Lagoon, his duties closely resembled those of the Owners of the Lagoon. In fact, Mulundu was of crucial importance to the economic livelihood of the southern Valley since he was responsible for the mpumbu fish that spawned every year after the first heavy floods. During the mpumbu spawning season, fish were caught in abundance, smoked and stored or exported to the plateau areas. Before catching commenced, Mulundu made a pilgrimage to a shrine or house of spirits (*nganda ya imipashi*) which housed a relic called *masombwe*. Here he prayed and offered beer and white clay to the spirits (*imipashi* sg. *umupashi*) named after his ancestors: "We have rested. Now permit us to catch fish. Give us relish, you spirits."⁴⁰ The *masombwe* then informed him if the ancestral spirits had accepted the gifts, for as long as the ancestors remained content the mpumbu continued to spawn. Mulundu then went with his villagers to the river and speared the first fish. The women ululated and the catching began. The opening of the fishery on the correct date was also of economic and ecological significance. If Mulundu authorized the catching of fish too early the shoals took fright and the season's catch would be poor. Moreover, their breeding patterns could be disturbed and this would lead to disappointing catches in years to come.⁴¹

The closure of the fishery during select periods provided opportunity for the spawning of fish and also ensured that sufficient supplies of fish reached the villagers deep in the swamps. But once open, there was little moderation in the catching of fish. This Luapula song compares a fishing net to a village hen:

You are the hen who searches in the rubbish pits
look from one side to the other.
You are the pecking beak of a hen
that leaves nothing in the way⁴²

⁴⁰ *Twaliitalile twaatusha; Nomba twalaafungwila abantu ukwipaya isabi. Tupeni umunani memipashi.*

⁴¹ Mulundu and Councilor, Mambilima, 9 Jan. 1998. NAZ SEC 2/252 Dept. of Native Affairs, Report on the Native Fishing Industry 3 Dec. 1929.

⁴² Niwe nankoko kapala mashala; Cibule ku cabaku; Niwe tola tola mulomo wa nkoko; Utasha kalembe Quoted and trans. in Musambachime, "Development and Growth," 53.

The mother hen pecks at every last scrap of food left in the village, just as the net should catch all fish that came across its path (fishermen even attached parts of a hen to their nets to invoke the spirit of a hungry hen). However, although fishermen caught as much as they could, certain technological limitations and ecological conditions checked levels of exploitation. The *kaboko* fibers out of which nets were made were not as durable as nylon and broke easily. Crocodiles and hippos often destroyed nets that took weeks to manufacture. Levels of exploitation in the fishery thereby remained sustainable.

Excessive catches on the part of any individual fisher signalled an imbalance and other fishers would claim that spirits had intervened on behalf of the fortunate. Frequently, they would accuse him of witchcraft, of using his dead relatives to chase fish into his net, or of killing his relatives to use their spirits.⁴³ In the pre-colonial era, such accusations were rare. Fishing technology was evenly spread and thus one fisher did not catch significantly more than another. Moreover, with limited markets, there was little reason to catch more than could be consumed and traded. In terms of our scientific discourse, there had been little vertical growth in fishing effort.⁴⁴ This would change with new technologies and new markets. As catches became concentrated in a few large nets, the spiritual economy would rupture; dead relatives and their spirits would haunt the land.

Let us not pre-empt our story; before the arrival of the colonial regimes, a dynamic ancestral tradition dictated patterns of authority and resource management in the fishery. The nature of this authority depended on the type of incorporation into the Lunda Court, on local ecology, and on levels of exploitation. From the rapids of Mambilima where the mpumbu spawned to the lagoon areas of Mofwe and Chimbofuma where pale bred, fishermen competed for the most prosperous fishing grounds. Conquered village leaders were integrated into the Lunda Empire as Owners of the Lagoon. They developed systems of ritual and political control over contested fishing resources. However, even in the lagoons, villagers could not live on fish alone;

⁴³ Such stories were told to me in a number of interviews throughout the valley. Also see Verbeek, *Le monde des esprits*, 189.

⁴⁴ Based on Ottar Brox's argument that we can distinguish between growth in vertical effort (level of capital investment) and horizontal effort (the number of fishers). Ottar Brox, "The Common Property Theory: Epistemological Status and Analytical Utility," *Human Organization* 49(3), 1990: 227-235.

agricultural production on the land also contributed to distinct types of village authority.

The Land

As one ascends the plateau, where most of the farms are located, a hill called Nakafwaya appears. Nakafwaya, meaning “the one who desires”, was another powerful women in Lunda stories of conquest and is often associated with Nachituti.⁴⁵ She is praised as “Nakafwaya who wants to marry many different lineages” (*Nakafwaya uwafwaya ukupwa kubaume milongo*) because she married three successive Mwatas. During the reign of Mwata Kazembe VI Chinyanta Munona (1854-1862), the brother of the Mwata, Kabwebwe, married a young women called Yamfwa Kafuti. When the Mwata saw his sister-in-law, he decided to marry her and give his brother land as compensation. When Mwata Chinyanta died, Kafuti married Mwata Kazembe VII Muonga Sunkutu (1862-1868), only to abandon him for the challenger to the throne, Mwata Kazembe VIII Chinkonkole (1868-1872). Yamfwa Kafuti then became known as Nakafwaya, the “one who desires chiefs”; her name became a title succeeded by her younger sisters and sister’s daughters.⁴⁶

Luapulans are unsure why the hill is named after Nakafwaya. According to one elder, when Mwata Kazembe went on his tours of the countryside he would rest at a place on this hill prepared by Nakafwaya.⁴⁷ Yet, on another level, Nakafwaya is associated with the favorite food of the valley, cassava or *tute*.⁴⁸ Indeed, the original Nakafwaya was reputed to have been proud of her cassava fields. In the 1860s David Livingstone observed six to twelve men carrying Nakafwaya to her garden where she

⁴⁵ Elders will sometimes claim that Nachituti *became* Nakfwaya when she married Mwata Kazembe. They are thus imposing a title that emerged in a later period on an earlier historical event. Kanyemba (Achim Kabaso) Kanyemba's Village, 6 Jan. 2001.

⁴⁶ The story of Nakafwaya was told by the most recent of Nakafwaya's "sisters", Lafwe Kashobwe, Mwansabombwe, 2 Jan. 2001; Prince Dyulu Kabeya, Mwansabombwe, 30 Dec. 2000. A fragmented version can be reconstructed from Mwata Kazembe, *Ifikolwe Fyandi*, 72, 83, 90, 113, 117.

⁴⁷ Prince Dyulu Kabeya, Mwansabombwe, 30 Dec. 2000.

⁴⁸ The more common ichiBemba word for cassava is *kalundwe*. I am unable to find the origin of the word *tute*. The White Fathers dictionary lists them as synonyms. White Fathers, *Bemba-English Dictionary* (Ndola: Mission Press, 1991).

was "very attentive" to her cassava crop.⁴⁹ The richest lagoon area known as Kanaya, meaning the making of porridge, is also referred to as Nakafwaya. By naming the hill Nakfwaya, people were reminded that the cultivation of the land that emerges from the swamps and the lagoons is largely the privileged task of women.

The people of Mweru-Luapula claim that cassava first arrived with Mwata Kazembe and took over from the older staples, sorghum and millet.⁵⁰ When de Lacerda's expedition visited the valley in 1798, cassava was the most important food of the valley, prepared in exactly the same way as in the 1990s, indicating historical continuity through at least two hundred years. "They soak the roots, peel them and sun-dry them whole: they pound and grind them on a stone when wanted for use, and then make the so-called massa dough, or unleavened bread."⁵¹ "Cassava is very extensively cultivated indeed," reported Livingstone in 1867, "so generally is this plant grown that it is impossible to know which is town and which is country: every hut has a plantation around it . . ."⁵² The cultivation of cassava differed from the finger millet still found on the Bemba plateau by the end of the nineteenth century, which lends credence to local claims that cassava came with migrants from the west.⁵³

While lacking in vitamins, cassava was high in calorie yield and offered certain advantages as a crop. The roots could grow without much fertilizer in the poor soils of Luapula and were relatively drought resistant.⁵⁴ Once mound agriculture had been perfected, the crop withstood the heavy rainy season. Moreover, the root could remain in the ground for up to four years, harvested only when needed, thus eliminating the need for storage. Cassava cultivated on prepared mounds did not

⁴⁹ Livingstone, *The Last Journals*, v. 1, 251.

⁵⁰ Kazembe probably brought cassava from Mwaant Yav, who had acquired cassava through contact with the Portuguese on the West Coast. See Mwelwa Musambachime, "The Agricultural History of the Mweru-Luapula Area to 1940," in *Zambian Land and Labour Studies Vol. III*, edited by Robin Palmer (Lusaka: National Archives, 1996): 1-27, 3-6. Also see Cunnison, *The Luapula Peoples*, 6; Mwata Kazembe XIV, *Ifikolwe Fyandi*, 34.

⁵¹ He also reports that some millet could be found. *Lacerda's Journal*, 100-101, 129.

⁵² Livingstone, *The Last Journals*, v.1, 248.

⁵³ By the end of the nineteenth century the Bemba had adopted cassava production from the Bisa who had probably learnt it from Kazembe's Lunda. Andrew Roberts, *A History of the Bemba*, 211.

⁵⁴ Trapnell C. G, *The Soils, Vegetation and Agriculture*, 70-71.

require the *citemene* system common to the plateau cultivation of finger millet.⁵⁵ Finally, in addition to the calorie yield of the root, women used the leaves of young cassava plants to make a spinach-like dish (*katapa*).

The advantages of cassava production were not evident to all farmers. At least fifty years or more after it was introduced to the Bemba plateau it had still to gain widespread use, despite the fact that the plateau soils are in some cases worse than the valley soils and the plateau inhabitants would have supposedly gained from the hardy crop. Why, then, did cassava gain dominance in Luapula, but not on the Muchinga plateau to the west? The advantages of cassava only become obvious if the gendered division of labor and the respective costs of male and female labor are considered. Millet and sorghum farming required more involvement by men in the preparation of the *citemene* fields, in particular in cutting and burning the branches. By contrast, cassava did not require new *citemene* fields and the burden of production fell on women, who cultivated, harvested and prepared the root. Cassava was easier to plant and harvest than millet and sorghum, but intensive labor was needed to transform the root into an edible food. This involved soaking and drying the root for several days before it could be pounded into flour used for making the thick porridge called *ubwali*.

When male migrant labor left the Bemba plateau for the copperbelt mining towns in the twentieth century, many women turned to cassava production. Cassava cultivation thus emerged on the plateau when male labor became involved in activities other than farming.⁵⁶ The withdrawal of male labor from agriculture in the Luapula Valley, however, occurred long before the onset of the copper mines. Men took advantages of Nachituti's gifts and spent much time fishing and hunting. The capture of hippos for their delicious meat was an especially popular pursuit. Shila fishermen gave names to individual hippos and thought of them as their "goats".⁵⁷ Men had to hunt elephant to secure the ivory that Mwata Kazembe required as trade good in the

⁵⁵ The best account of *citemene* cultivation of finger millet is the classic Audrey Richards, *Land, Labor and Diet in Northern Rhodesia: An Economic Study of the Bemba Tribe* (London: Oxford University Press, 1939). A re-study that historicizes Audrey Richard's analysis of *citemene* is Henrietta L. Moore and Megan Vaughan, *Cutting Down Trees: Gender, Nutrition and Agricultural Change in the Northern Province of Zambia* (London: Heineman, 1994).

⁵⁶ Henrietta L. Moore and Megan Vaughan, *Cutting Down Trees*, 87.

⁵⁷ Dan Crawford reports that the Shila were even able to summon the hippos by calling to them. Dan Crawford, *Thinking Black*, 463-6.

nineteenth century. Although women undertook certain forms of trap and chisense fishing, men set the nets and fished in canoes on the river and lake.⁵⁸ Finally, especially in the nineteenth century, men were involved in warfare, either as conscripts in Mwata Kazembe's army or in defending their villages. As men took to other tasks, women cultivated and prepared the necessary crops. Instead of crops that required male labor to prepare *citemene* fields, women preferred cassava that could be planted in mounds, harvested and prepared when needed. Cassava was less suited to Mweru-Luapula's ecological conditions than to its gendered political economy. In the nineteenth century the fishermen and hunters contributed to the tribute required by the Mwata Kazembe; women looked after the fields and plantations.

In the same way as Owners of the Lagoon mediated access to the fishery, Owners of the Land supervised access to limited land. In the valley, fertile areas near the river's edge were limited and highly sought-after by the nineteenth century.⁵⁹ The relatively high population density in the valley contributed to the importance of Owners of the Land. Koni, the Goat Clan elder, was an Owner of the Land; his area surrounded the sacred waterfall called *ichitutawile* (music without rhythm) and Nakafwaya's hill.⁶⁰ He paid tribute to Mwata Kazembe with natural produce like honey and mushrooms as well as millet and cassava. Moreover, he would bring thatch or timber on the Mwata's request. There were spiritual duties as well; every year he would cover himself in white cloth and clay and go to the sacred waterfall to offer a sacrifice of goats and chickens to the ancestral spirits.⁶¹ Such ceremonies were considered duties to the ancestors who had lived and died on the land. They were not rain-making ceremonies and seemed more closely related to hunting and the collection of natural produce than to the growing of cassava. While uncultivated land – the bush: *mpanga* -- had its own spiritual economy, cultivated land was the domain of the living household and not spirit ancestors.⁶²

⁵⁸ BanaKalifungwe, Kashiba, 19 July 1998. BanaNkomba, Nkomba's Village, 30 July 1998.

⁵⁹ When de Lacerda arrived in the valley in 1798 he found it clear of trees. *Journal of de Lacerda's expedition*, 100. In the 1850s Livingstone reported that the valley was "thickly studded" with villages only 100 to 200 yards apart. Livingstone, *The Last Journals*, v. 1, 247.

⁶⁰ The waterfall *ichitutawile* became known as *Ntumba Chushi* in the colonial period.

⁶¹ Koni (Mwelwa Gosam), Koni's Village, 2 Jan. 2001.

Unlike the sparsely populated plateau areas, the people of the valley had to secure access to limited land. There was not much uninhabited, forested land that could be used for *citemene* agriculture. Combined with limited land was a shortage of male labor. These two factors led to the popularity of cassava, which could be cultivated and prepared without men and forests. The shortage of land further contributed to the importance of Owners of the Land who were responsible for assigning land for cultivation and for mediation with the ancestral spirits of the bush. The offices and duties of the Owners of the Land vis-à-vis the land and the Lunda state were articulated in stories of conquest that placed them within a network of fictive kin and made them part of the Lunda family. Finally, by imbuing physical resources with meaning, the land and lakes became monuments to the stories of conquest.

Conclusions

Conquerors and conquered, women and men, negotiated their roles through the telling of stories of conquest. Identity was embedded in this narrative landscape. Nachituti's betrayal of her brother Nkuba was a linchpin of relations between conquerors and conquered and between men and women. "To this day," the missionary Dan Crawford reported in 1889, "the common ruse of a crushed wife is to make a gracefully turned allusion to that revolutionary deed of a negress long ago, the covert threat in her hint being that what woman has done, woman can and will do".⁶³ Nachituti's revenge both explained Lunda relations with Owners of the Land and Lagoons and reminded men of the power of women and of their matrilineal clan traditions. Moreover, gender relations and conquest were intimately connected: Shila men still claim that the Lunda conquered the valley by marrying their women.

Stories of conquest translated ancestral rights over the land and its resources into the present. "Certes," Dan Crawford wrote, "nothing can move a drowsy old

⁶² Verbeek suggests that the veneration of the ancestor *Shakapanga* should be associated with the word for bush, *mpanga*, rather than the Luba word *kapanga* meaning creator. Although *Shakapanga* was not spirit ancestor among my informants, the ceremonies of the bush were similar. Verbeek, *Le monde des esprits*, 16, 37-50.

⁶³ Dan Crawford, *Thinking Black*, 234.

African like a jag from past history."⁶⁴ Ian Cunnison also emphasized the importance of stories of the past: "History and interest in the past are here so all-pervading that they merit a somewhat wider treatment than they normally receive in studies of primitive peoples."⁶⁵ Indeed, history was the constitution that governed people in the present. However, observers like Crawford and Cunnison underestimated the dynamism of a historiography that formed new stories and changed or forgot old ones. The stories of the past incorporated the present; the people of the valley even included Cunnison and Crawford in new stories that came to constitute the fabric of local authority.

In the 1890s the officials of King Leopold II and the British South African Company descended on the valley in increasing numbers and with increasing firepower. The new conquerors of Luapula did not respect the old stories of conquest and the centuries-old government of the Owners of the Land and Lagoons. They attempted to establish administrations that functioned according to the exigencies of their "modern" world and an increasingly global capitalist economy. Missionaries came to convert the people, administrators to civilise, and anthropologists to study them. Ichthyologists instructed fishers on rules that accorded with new, scientific discourses. As colonialism became entrenched, older stories of conquest would become entwined with colonial fables. The remainder of the book shall consider how the people of the valley, with their stories, political traditions and resources, confronted and incorporated the new conquerors and their coterie of commercial, religious and scientific agents to remake the political ecology of the valley.

⁶⁴ Dan Crawford, *Thinking Black*, 234.

⁶⁵ Ian Cunnison, *History on the Luapula* (Cape Town: Rhodes-Livingstone papers, 1952), v.