

Chapter 3

Historical criticism of *Likota Iya Bankoya*

3.1. The apologetic intention of *Likota Iya Bankoya*

We have identified *Likota Iya Bankoya* as belonging to a rather flourishing genre of historiographic production in South Central Africa: that of literate ethno-history. We set out to identify the political and ethnic concerns which generally attend the production of such texts, within the context of colonial and post-colonial incorporation processes. Rev. Shimunika's intentions as the author of the book are very explicitly stated in the final chapter:

'Those who have written this history *Likota Iya Bankoya* and the earlier *Muhumpu* are asking all Nkoya to give their thoughts to the following problem. The people who have recently come from Angola say that they heard the Lozi say that the Nkoya are slaves. (...) 2 Is it true what the Lozi of today keep telling the strangers?' (56: 1f)

While we note the remarkably oblique and prudent way in which the allegation is phrased by Shimunika, his *Likota Iya Bankoya* has to make clear that the Nkoya are not the slaves of the Lozi, first by showing the splendour of the processes of state formation which have taken place in central western Zambia, in the Land of Nkoya, independently from the Lozi state; and secondly by showing the development of Nkoya/Lozi relations in the course of the nineteenth century.

The earliest mythical figures from Lozi dynastic traditions, like Mbuyu and Mboe, are absent from *Likota lya Bankoya*, but Mwanambinyi (whom tradition considers as Mboe's 'younger brother' — no doubt with all the implications of genealogical manipulation outlined above) is presented (4: 3) as a brother of that central figure of early Nkoya history, Shihoka Nalinanga (cf. Jalla 1921; Mutumba Mainga 1973: 26f). To the early-nineteenth-century Lozi ruler Mulambwa a crucial role in the argument has been assigned: rather than asserting Lozi overlordship over the Nkoya, he is depicted as the guest friend of the glorious Nkoya ruler Kayambila, and as begging from the latter the royal medicine and the royal drums. Thus the impression is created as if these central features of the kingship were, by that time, much more highly developed among the Nkoya than among the Lozi — in other words, as if the later splendour of the Lozi state was only due to early Nkoya generosity. Several generations later, with the Lozi ruler Sipopa, history repeats itself: Sipopa came to the Nkoya as a refugee from the Kololo who had taken over Barotseland, and

'Mwene Mutondo received him well, as it was the custom of the *Myene* of the Nkoya not to refuse strangers.' (32: 1)

The Nkoya/Lozi equality (or even Nkoya superiority) that is carefully evoked here constitutes one of the central arguments of *Likota lya Bankoya*. The fact that the Nkoya traditions contain so much information on the Lozi rulers is explicitly cited by Shimunika (56: 3) as if this in itself creates a hold on the Lozi and keeps them at bay.

Accessory to this argument is the linking up of the Nkoya kingship, not with Lozi overlordship at all, but with the highest source of authority the cosmos can provide: Mwene Nyambi, through the latter's child, the demiurge Mvula, i.e. Rain. Hence the proud Nkoya adage:

'Our kingship comes from the Raindrop' (4: 7; 28: 1).

The cosmological and ideological significance of this claim we shall further explore in chapter 4.

And finally, there is the claim of pan-Nkoya unity in the face of evident fragmentation:

' "Even though the fruits may be scattered, we come from one and the same *mukolwa* tree.' "

In other words we are all of the same stock.' (3: 3)

The present chapter will be devoted to an examination of the historiographic methods and techniques through which Rev. Shimunika sought to serve the central apologetic intention of *Likota lya Bankoya*. What the argument in this chapter amounts to, therefore, is historical criticism of the book, seeking to answer the following question: if the apologetic intentions of *Likota lya Bankoya* are clear and explicit, to

what extent can the author's handling of his material and construction of his argument be reduced to just such an intention (and hence be discarded as historically one-sided, biased, and void of genuine information content) — and, alternatively, to what extent does authentic, unadulterated historical information yet manage to filter through, despite these expressed intentions of the argument?

3.2. The quest for authority

The historiographic method in *Likota Iya Bankoya* largely revolves around the techniques by means of which the author sought to endow his text with the maximum amount of authority, thus enhancing its apologetic and identity-constructing potential.

identification of sources

Among these techniques the explicit identification of sources is remarkable in that it makes *Likota Iya Bankoya* stand out as a favourable exception amidst other representatives of the genre of literate ethnohistory. The first chapter is devoted to a listing of the principal informants, and there also the reasons are given (in terms of favourable genealogical position with regard of prominent characters in Nkoya history, or leadership of clans) why precisely these persons could be deemed to be so knowledgeable. In addition, at crucial points in his text Shimunika states the specific oral authorities he has consulted:

‘All these *indunas* built their villages at Litoya Iya Mbuma. They said that they were there in order to protect Mwene Kahare's kingdom from Lubanda attacks. 16 These *indunas* came when the Whitemen had just arrived in this land of Nkoya but before the tax had started; it was the time of Mwene Sipopa, before Mwene Kahare had arrived here in this land of Nkoya. Mwene Kahare came during the time of Lewanika in the year 1849. This information comes from Mwene Mishengo, and was passed on to us by Matiya Kapuka.’ (43: 15f)¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁷ The same Matiya was still my informant in the 1970s (oral source [12]); having arrived in Mankoya as one of the Mbundu moving from Angola to Luampa Mission, Matiya became a teacher at Njonjolo and there closely befriended Mwene Kahare Timuna, to the extent that Matiya's daughter was allowed to inherit the name of Timuna's mother (oral source [3] 11.10.1977); none the less Matiya continued to be considered to be a non-Nkoya until his death in the early 1980s. Incidentally, the specific historical contents of this passage from *Likota Iya Bankoya* happen to be entirely wrong, as we shall presently see.

dates

Another feature which Shimunika borrowed from the arsenal of professional academic historiography is the use of clear-cut dates, which of course — especially when reference is made to the precolonial past — is a major departure from the forms and logic of the oral-historical materials which he derived from his informants.

The date of 1849 for the arrival of Lozi representative *indunas* and of Mwene Kahare in the eastern part of Kaoma district is a case in point. Not that that date can be taken at face value. The arrival of the Whites in Nkoya, c. 1900, far from coincided with Sipopa's reign (1864-1876). The Yeke¹⁶⁸ invasions and Lewanika's Ila and Kaonde campaigns occurred in the fourth, not the second, quarter of the nineteenth century; also, it would be inconceivable that Shamamano was already an efficient and violent leader of his junior kinsmen in 1849, if his son Timuna only acceded to the kingship in 1921, and his grandson Kabambi in 1955. In 1849 the Kahare kingship was in all likelihood still established in the northern Kayimbu region, outside of Nkoyaland proper. Another reason¹⁶⁹ for criticism of this passage is that Lewanika did not rule Barotseland in 1849. That date is still in the middle of the Kololo episode in Barotseland (1840-1864), fifteen years before Sipopa ousted the Kololo and restored the Luyana kingship to which Lubosi Lewanika I succeeded in 1878 and again in 1885. In western Zambia, however, the name Lewanika is often used as a productive category to denote any Lozi king or (in the colonial and post-colonial context) Lozi Paramount Chief; so reference here is not necessarily to Lubosi Lewanika I.

Likota Iya Bankoya contains several other instances of specific dates being given:

'Mukamba Shingole was born in the year 1817 and he grew up in Nkoya.' (25: 3)

'From the year 1817 to this very day.' (24: 7)

Shimunika is so insistent on this date, because he claims it to be the first time that the Nkoya royal drums were taken to the Lozi capital — that time, he claims, still as free gifts from the independent and slightly superior Nkoya Mwene Kayambila to the Lozi ruler Mulambwa, and not as the humiliating abduction of the central symbols of autonomous kingship — as occurred a few decades later, under the Kololo. Al-

¹⁶⁸ After a few generations in Kayimbu, on the site of the present-day Kasempa boma, the Kahare presence there ended when Mwene Kahare Kabimba was chased by the Kaonde and met his death at the hands of Yeke warriors (42: 1f). On the Yeke or Nyamwezi, cf. Brelsford 1965: 122f; Reeve 1981: *passim*; Capello & Ivens 1886, ii: ch. xixf.

¹⁶⁹ Advanced, significantly, by Mr H.H. Mwene in the editing stage of *Likota Iya Bankoya*.

though the date appears to have been reconstructed by Shimunika personally, it must have been inspired by published accounts of Lozi history, such as the popular and widespread account by Jalla (1921), the brief discussion of the Nkoya in Brelsford's *Tribes of Zambia* (Brelsford 1965: 15-17), and Clay's (1945) *History of the Mankoya district*.

The year 1817 may well have fallen within Mulambwa's reign and therefore may be a fair estimate. Also some other dates given by Shimunika appear to be correct, e.g. those concerning the reign of Mwene Mutondo Munangisha, in so far as they tie in with Lozi historical dates which are well documented from the works of Livingstone, Jalla, Coillard and other missionaries and travellers:

'These were born before Mwene Mutondo Munangisha went to Loziland during the Kololo war in the year 1860.' (44: 5)

anachronisms

Before we proceed to a discussion of the phenomenon of the recycling of published historical accounts as a general feature of this genre of South Central African historiographic production, it is timely to point out that Shimunika's attempt to emulate academic history in the production of dates does not prevent anachronisms. Some of these we have discussed in chapter 2. There are other instances, such as:

'The Humbu had come to take the land of Mwene Luhamba.' (6: 2),

referring to a time when Luhamba was still a mere *Mwana Mwene* and other, female *Myene* were still holding the land (6: 3); or the use of the title 'Mwene Mutondo' above (44: 5) for a situation when Shibuyi Likambi could not possibly have acceded to the Mutondo kingship. Another example is when the Ladies *Myene* Libupe and Manenga are referred to as 'Grandmother of the Nkoya' or 'Mother of the Nkoya' as if those titles were bestowed upon them in their own time — long before the word Nkoya had developed from a mere toponym into the name of the dynastic group around the Mutondo title — which title did not yet exist in Libupe's and Manenga's times.

recycling of published historical texts

Likota lya Bankoya, like other such texts, has become contaminated with excerpts from published secondary sources. Wyatt MacGaffey (1970: 29), writing on the Lower Congo, was among the first scholars to draw attention to this disconcerting, but inevitable phenomenon. The literate ethno-historical texts draw on information referring to a precolonial past, but their very compilation, writing and publishing is

only meaningful in a colonial and post-colonial context of political incorporation, ethnic articulation, Christian missionary activity, and European cultural imperialism in general. In these contexts authority and truth are recognized to spring from new, literate, expatriate sources. Potential authors of the ethno-history genre are among the most avid readers of accounts of local history in Africa.

Such sources can then be handled in a number of ways. They could for instance be explicitly cited as offering the highest standard historiography could aspire to. This is not an option Rev. Shimunika took in the manuscript of *Likota Iya Bankoya*, although in our personal discussions he did make a point of referring to Gervase Clay's *History of the Mankoya district* as the highest conceivable authority on the subject.¹⁷⁰

Mr G. Clay was District Commissioner Mankoya district in the late 1930s, and in that capacity conducted oral historical research in order to ascertain the existence, if any, of a seniority structure among local 'chiefs', and the extent of Lozi overlordship in the region — all with a view to justifying the Mankoya Native Authority, Native Treasury, and the Naliele Appeal Court. A similar recording of district history was to form one of the decisive stages in Balovale district's secession from Barotseland in 1940. Mr Clay, who later was to serve on the colonial administration of Barotseland in an even more senior capacity and who is the author of a book on Lewanika I (Clay 1968), conducted his oral-historical exercise so well that Max Gluckman, the then director of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, invited him to submit his material for publication as a mimeographed Rhodes-Livingstone Paper (Clay 1945), since reprinted for local consumption mainly. While Clay's handling of the data was essentially unbiased and still meets with praise from contemporary Nkoya, in the light of the neo-traditional splendour and efficiency of the Barotse 'Native Administration' he was not impressed with the Nkoya kingship at the time, and particularly found that its lack of a centralized hierarchy binding the various *Myene* presented insurmountable problems when it came to legal appeal cases. He was therefore in favour of the creation of Naliele.¹⁷¹

In *Likota Iya Bankoya*, small parts from Clay's work appear to have been included without reference: particularly the passage on the flaying of Mwene Kabimba (42: 4) and the subsequent dispersal of the Mashasha (43: 1); and on Lewanika's hunting trip to Mwito (50: 13f; cf. Clay 1945: 7, 9), which is also included in *Muhumpu*. *Muhumpu* incidentally contains, on page 3, an explicit reference to Clay (1945). Admittedly, the overlap with Clay's text in *Likota Iya Bankoya* is slight. Conducting his own investigations in the course of a few decades both before and after Clay, it cannot be ruled out that Shimunika partly collected the same traditions independently from the European investigator. Most of the text of *Likota Iya Bankoya* unmistakably draws on original oral sources retaining their original

¹⁷⁰ Oral source [22].

¹⁷¹ G. Clay, personal communication to the author, 31.1.1975.

implications and symbolism. Interestingly, Rev. Shimunika along with his son Jackson later wrote an unpublished commentary on Clay's book, which entirely consists of excerpts from both *Muhumpu* and *Likota Iya Bankoya* and therefore, regrettably, does not add to our present argument.¹⁷²

From the perspective of academic scholarship we might postulate that, when finalizing *Likota Iya Bankoya*, Rev. Shimunika decided that omitting a reference to Clay's work would do greater credit to his own stature and originality. But I feel that such an interpretation misreads the nature of the genre of literate ethno-history. Recycling is endemic here, because such notions as copyright, an author's originality, and the non-existence of absolute historical truth are alien to the genre. Incorporating a published, European source simply means coming closer to established facts which, far from being the possession of individual authors, are looked upon as assets of universal mankind. Presenting these facts is what, from the point of view of this genre, history is all about.

Fortunately Mutumba Mainga's *Bulozi under the Luyana kings* (1973) was published too late to be recycled in *Likota Iya Bankoya*. But Rev. Shimunika made it very clear he had read the book when I interviewed him in 1977.¹⁷³

Nor does the recycling process end here. For instance, a more recent historical manuscript on Nkoya history written by Mr Makiyi (born c. 1945) turns out to be based on a mixture of generous borrowing from *Likota Iya Bankoya* (with its own bits of recycled material) in the form in which it circulated for years among Nkoya before being published, and Mr Makiyi's personal interviews with key informants.¹⁷⁴ One can only guess how subsequent oral interviews among the Nkoya will be contaminated by these and other texts including the present volume. During one of my historical interviews with Mwene Kahare in 1977, he constantly clutched a copy of Brelsford's popular account of the *Tribes of Zambia* (1965), and insisted on reading passages from this book, largely a compilation of such texts as Clay (1945), Jalla (1921), and other secondary sources generated in the context of missionary work and colonial administration in the first half of the twentieth century.

Soon, oral sources from the area will only remain useful for the study of the local construction of ethno-history as a socio-cultural process, and will no longer hold any uncontaminated historical information in their own right.

¹⁷² Jackson Shimunika [the name of the co-author Johasaphat Shimunika does not appear], *Mr Clay's history commentary. On the early [sic] of the Mankoya. (Kaoma)*, 2 pp., original typescript in my possession.

¹⁷³ Oral source [22].

¹⁷⁴ Oral source [10]; Dickson K. Makiyi, 'Nkoya History — Kaoma, Western Province, Zambia', 58 pp., manuscript in my possession.

dynastic numbers and the nature of the Nkoya royal titles: between ascription and achievement

Another attempt on Shimunika's part to produce 'real', academic historiography can be seen in his use of dynastic numbers, to denote and order the various incumbents particularly of the Mutondo kingship. In his own additions to the *Likota Iya Bankoya* manuscript, Mr H.H. Mwene makes extensive and fanciful use of such numbers, and my first impression was therefore that also in the main text they had all been added by him rather than by the original author. However, in a passage like the following they turn out to be entirely original, i.e. Shimunika's:

'Mwene Nankuwa wahemene bana bendi

- (1) Kazikwa,
- (2) Kabongo,
- (3) Kalumbwa,
- (4) Shihoka II' (12: 3)

Arabic, instead of Roman, figures may also be used for this purpose:

'WENE WA SHIHOKA 2¹⁷⁵ KU KALWIZI MWANA NYANGO' (13: 1).

Here Shimunika's academic example was undoubtedly Clay (1945), who very generously allocates dynastic numbers to the various incumbents of the Mutondo and Kahare kingship from the earliest times onwards.

It is very important to realize that such dynastic numbering is much more than an innocent play at conventional academic models for the rendering of dynastic history. Essential to the Nkoya kingship is its flexible, inchoate dynamics, where (as we shall see below, chapters 4 and 5) the forms, structures and ideology of statehood are in a constant state of transformation and redefinition, and where the pressures between rival Nkoya states as well as those within royal families (clustering around a plurality of *Myene*) make for anything but a unified, stable and permanent dynastic structure which individual incumbents can then come to fill in endless succession. In this light the use of dynastic numbers is a radical departure from the logic of Nkoya kingship and the oral traditions that record it. It amounts to the imposition of a totally alien logic, in an attempt to glorify Nkoya kingship for the wrong reasons, rendering it more in line with international academic models as prevail in Zambia and internationally. It can even be seen as an attempt to present the Nkoya kingship as comparable, in splendour, to the Lozi kingship as expounded in so many academic and popular publications; the latter have often fallen

¹⁷⁵ The number was subsequently changed, by me, into a Roman one for editorial consistency.

victim to the same Sudanic images of exalted kingship and dynastic rigidity as now threatened to invade the Nkoya kingship. *Threatened* only — for contrary to Mr H.H. Mwene's treatment in the kings' lists included in Part II below as his independent and original contribution to Nkoya history, Rev. Shimunika uses the dynastic numbers only sparingly.

A more fundamental issue becomes manifest here. *Likota Iya Bankoya* presents the dynastic line from Mwene Libupe as one essentially unbroken chain of matrilineal royal succession, leading on to the four dynastic clusters of the Mutondo, Kahare, Kabulwebulwe and Momba titles, which survived into the twentieth century. Below we shall analyse in detail how along this chain (which turns out to be far from unbroken, whose time dimension we can only estimate in the order of magnitude of three to five centuries, and which is partly mythical anyway) the kingship underwent major transformations — and only by virtue of those radical breaks with the past could give rise to fully-fledged states. In the first quarter of the nineteenth century this process appears to have been sufficiently under wing to allow for the crystallization of the Mutondo title and the Kahare title, as the centres of gravity of states.

Now do we have reason to assume (as would be the rationale behind any assigning of dynastic numbers) that all incumbents of the kingship in Nkoyaland since the early nineteenth century laid claim to either the Mutondo or the Kahare title? Mwene Shakalongo and Mwene Liyoka obviously did not assume either title yet were unmistakably royal. Moreover, the Kahare name was dormant for a generation before Shambanjo Shamamano revived it again. Also in some of the other praise-names as recorded in *Likota Iya Bankoya* reference to the Mutondo title is conspicuously lacking, although they are presented as belonging to rulers in the dynastic line owning the Mutondo title; this suggests that certain royals succeeding to the Mutondo kingship after their senior kinswoman Shinkisha did not assume the Mutondo title as such. Additional information could be gleaned from oral traditions not captured in *Likota Iya Bankoya*, and from Clay (1945), where alleged incumbents of the Kahare title are mentioned whose link with that title is nowhere reflected in *Likota Iya Bankoya*. Mwene Kahare's subjects who have read *Likota Iya Bankoya* complain about this one-sidedness in the rendering of the precolonial Nkoya past. They suggested additional names of alleged incumbents of the Kahare kingship whom Shimunika should have discussed more extensively: Shilumelume, Likambi Mange, Shiwutulu, Kasholongombe, Katalanangenge and Ndendola.¹⁷⁶ These are precisely the *Myene* whom Mr H.H. Mwene added to those discussed in *Likota Iya Bankoya*, when compiling his kings' lists (as reproduced below, at the end of Part II) and with regard to whom Clay detected an apparently structural amnesia at the Kahare court in 1939 (Clay 1945: 7).

¹⁷⁶ Oral source [7] 21.10.1977.

The precolonial dynamics of hereditary royal titles among the Nkoya appear to follow the same logic, at a more exalted scale, as that which still largely governs the titles of village headmen in the area, discussed in chapter 1. Here lies much of the fundamental orientation of Nkoya village society. Such patterns, however responsive to major changes in the wider political, economic and cultural environment such as occurred in the course of the twentieth century, are likely to belong to that part of the cultural stock whose own change is only very gradual, to be measured in the time span of the *longue durée*, of hundreds of years.

Even although *Likota lya Bankoya's* central emphasis on a glorified and allegedly unitary institution of kingship tends to eclipse some of the underlying pattern, we can still detect many of the elements: individual residential mobility, individual achievement in the face of a flexible system of succession to high office, the shifting and uncertain nature of kin groups, the role of shrine ritual and of sorcery (e.g. 47: 5f), etc. The Nkoya kingship does have competitive, achievement orientated aspects particularly in its more recent, male-centred nineteenth-century form (see chapter 5).

Also from documentary sources on central western Zambia from around 1900 one gets the impression of small and relatively ephemeral polities revolving *more* on the achievement opportunities which the long-distance trade and the access to firearms were affording their leadership, than on the incarnation of time-honoured ascriptive royal statuses. Similar indications can be gleaned from such classics dealing with central western Zambia as Melland (1967) and Smith & Dale (1920).¹⁷⁷ The reports on the Hook of the Kafue as generated in the course of the Gielgud-Anderson expedition to that area in 1900-1901, depict political and economic leaders who are basically Big Men, seeking to use the economic and military resources available in the area at the time, for the building of a name for themselves in the context of the *Mwene*-centred political culture which offered the most readily available models for the expression and consolidation of high status. Val Gielgud, the first colonial officer stationed on the Kafue, implies in his description the relative weakness of chief's rule, of law and order:

'...the people living in the Hook of the Kafue (...) are the disintegrated units of a nation or nations which have fled on the northeast from the Angoni [Ngoni], on the West from the Basutos [Sotho] and later the Makololo [Kololo] and on the South from the Amandebele [Ndebele]. The same remark applies to the inhabitants of the Hook of the Kafue between Chipepo and Munyanga, especially those living under the induna Tshitanda [Shitanda]. (...) Very little stock is owned except by the Abatshukulumbwi [Mashukulumbwe], and if it is owned it is very carefully concealed for fear it may be raided. (...)

¹⁷⁷ Cf. Melland 1967: 273 and *passim* ('by the power of the sword'); Smith & Dale 1920: i, 40, 46-7 on Mwene Kayingu.

The above remarks do not apply so much to the people living in the neighbourhood of my camp (...) who being on the boundary with the Barotse have a better idea of a centralized form of government.¹⁷⁸

Anderson, Gielgud's companion, somewhat gullibly describes a visit to Mwene Kabulwebulwe (Mbulembule) in the following positive terms which would all fit in with the model of royal status through ascription:

'On my arrival opposite his island¹⁷⁹ the chief at once came to see me. He is an old man, and seems much more intelligent than the majority of the natives. The chief professed strong disapproval of the practice of slave-trading. He said that the Mambari do not visit his part of the country, but that, should they do so, he would at once send to inform you of their presence. The indunas of most of the neighbouring kraals are sons of Mbulembule, and the people seem to be on friendly terms. Without exception the people through whose villages I passed were well disposed, and showed no lack of confidence as to the friendliness of my intentions.'¹⁸⁰

Within a few months however the less benign aspects of Kabulwebulwe's rule, his wealth in guns and obvious, aggressive involvement in the slave trade would manifest themselves in a way that makes clear the entrepreneurial, achievement-orientated aspect of his rule:

'As previously reported Bulibuli [= Kabulwebulwe], a local chief of some note living about 40 miles north of my camp, having sent an impi of his people in conjunction with some Bakondi [Kaonde] to murder a man at Muloa's was summoned by me to explain his conduct. Of my summons he and his people took no notice, and so Mr Anderson and myself started on 31 August for his kraal, accompanied by twenty-five Matabele natives of my escort. Bulibuli and his people had retired to their island, but we managed to procure a boat, a boy swimming across a narrow arm of the Kafue, and directly we commanded the [access?...] to the island Bulibuli surrendered and came in with his principal headmen. As the murder was conclusively proven to have been committed with Bulibuli's sanction and connivance, I fined him 20 guns and detained him and his headmen until they were paid. (...) I also recovered some of the

178 Val Gielgud to Administrator Northeastern Rhodesia, 14.10.1900, enclosure in Zambia National Archives, BS 1/93, Gielgud-Anderson expedition.

179 Also the neighbouring chief Muyanga lives on an island, and in the same Zambia National Archives file BS 1/93 Gielgud describes Major Harding's arrival 'opposite Mbulembule's island'. These strategic island dwellings are an indication of the state of insecurity prevailing in the area at the time.

180 Anderson to Val Gielgud, 8.1.1901: enclosure in Zambia National Archives, BS 1/93, Gielgud-Anderson expedition.

murdered man's relations and returned them to their lawful guardian.'¹⁸¹

There is no doubt that these captives were destined to be sold as slaves. By and large, Kabulwebulwe's style of leadership at the time seems pretty well comparable to that of another leader, Kapandula, in the same area; however, Kapandula is identified as non-Nkoya, and he is openly called a slave-raider, not a chief — despite the fact that his defiance of the colonizing force shows a political, more than a commercial stance:

'Mr Lewis [the manager of Silver King mine, 35 miles southwest of Kapandula] had complained of Kapandula,¹⁸² and he was well known to me by name as a great slave raider; he is a Bakondi [Kaonde], and not of the same race as the majority of the inhabitants of the 'Hook'. (...) I remained for two days close to his kraal and on the third day marched on the kraal in two parties. We found the people had fled and removed all their belongings.'¹⁸³

One of Gielgud's parties was threatened with firearms, but subsequently the attackers slipped away in the bush; there had been no fire contact, but

'armed natives watched us from a distance. I was annoyed at this episode as I knew it would be exaggerated into a defiance of and check to my party at Kapandula, so after waiting at Kapandula's kraal for some hours and no one coming in (...) I burned some of the principal huts in the village, and some grain, to punish them for their hostility, and passed on. The natives who did not run away informed us that Kapandula had stated he would not submit to the white men, but all native reports are entirely unreliable and I give this for what it is worth. As I pointed out to them, unless Kapandula can do something better than run away, he had better submit with the others.'¹⁸⁴

Obviously Kapandula did not meet this challenge: while Kabulwebulwe continued as a recognized chief under the colonial and

¹⁸¹ Val Gielgud to Administrator Northeastern Rhodesia, 9.10.1901, enclosure in Zambia National Archives, BS 1/93, Gielgud-Anderson expedition.

¹⁸² Also see *Likota Iya Bankoya* (50: 12): the eastward journey of Wahila, where a character Kapandula is mentioned as a court jester; it is unlikely that this is the same person.

¹⁸³ Val Gielgud to Administrator Northeastern Rhodesia, 9.10.1901, enclosure in Zambia National Archives, BS 1/93, Gielgud-Anderson expedition.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibidem*.

post-colonial administration (although affected by the creation of the Kafue Game Reserve, later Kafue National Park, in his area),¹⁸⁵ Kapandula did not manage to assert himself as a chief. In the 1970s-1980s we meet his descendant Kapandula again as a Nkoya headman of Kaonde extraction in the Kazo valley, as subject now of Mwene Kahare.

The important point that these archival references make clear is that both the ascriptive, royal, aspect and the achievement-orientated, entrepreneurial, aspect can be detected in Nkoya kingship at the end of the nineteenth century, and that the two aspects stand in a certain tension to one another. The Kabulwebulwe of the archival sources would seem to have been one of the first incumbents of the name, and the fact that the name persisted seems due to his entrepreneurial success more than to an enacting of a perennial logic of dynastic succession.

It is likely that similar dynamics attended the creation and transmission of other royal names in that time as well.

The fact that the major title of Mutondo is claimed to have developed from the personal praise-name of one, far from mythical, *Mwene*, Shinkisha, points in the same direction. In the face of contemporary Nkoya village society, it is difficult to accept that titles, such as Mutondo and Kahare, could by their own impetus, in a precolonial setting, survive across centuries. Decades would be a more likely time scale — *unless there is an intervening, consolidating outside factor* in the form of the incorporation in a wider, less flexible administrative structure which is effectively detached from the vicissitudes of the face-to-face social process at the village and the *lukena*: a state structure like that of the Kololo, the Lozi under Sipopa and Lewanika, the colonial state of Northern Rhodesia, and the post-colonial state of Zambia.

It is therefore more likely that the Mutondo title became fixed and hereditary only at the incorporation of the rather fluent Nkoya political organization in the more hierarchical and bureaucratized administrations of the Kololo, Lozi state and the colonial state. This process started around 1860.¹⁸⁶ That would be the probable date of the death of the first Mwene Mutondo, Shinkisha (cf. Clay 1945: 2). From that point in time, and with the external state system of the Lozi as a frame-

¹⁸⁵ Zambia National Archives, enclosures in file KDB 1/2/1: 'Kafue Game Reserve'; also KDC 6/4/1 and KSA 8/3/1: Mumbwa tour report May 1930. Incidentally, a report on the ethnic composition of Mankoya district in 1935 mentions 30-40 Kaonde villages in that district, without a local chief of their own, 'the Kasempa/Mankoya boundary therefore cuts off this small outpost of Bakaonde *raiders* from their tribe.' (my italics) District Commissioner Mankoya to Provincial Commissioner Mongu, 30.4.1935, 'Tribal boundaries', enclosure in Zambia National Archives KSX 1/1/1/ Mankoya correspondence 1931-35.

¹⁸⁶ A quarter of a century later Holub found 'the Nkoya' to be tributary to Lewanika (Holy 1975: 28).

work and an anchorage point, the Mutondo title would then be projected backwards — as the name under which a relatively minor, subjected segment within the total Lozi state could be subsumed for internal administrative purposes. Similarly, the name of Mwene Kahare would have disappeared around the same time, had not Lewanika I's patronage and hence incorporation in the Lozi state enabled Shanga-mbo Shamamano to revive the name c. 1890 (see below, 5.1). It is in such incorporated form that the titles of Mwene Mutondo and Mwene Kahare appear in the Lozi-centred studies of Gluckman (1943, 1968b). The next step in this dynastic streamlining would then be that the incumbents became numbered, after the patterns of British or biblical dynastic history with which educated Nkoya and Lozi were beginning to become familiar.

Even though this process is still in an initial stage in the original *Likota Iya Bankoya* manuscript, one can already see how these received, external models of dynastic history are seeking to reshape the traditional data, in a way not unrelated to the recycling of published historiography — and tantalizing to the modern historian who seeks to get to the historical truth and to the proper logic of political and ideological patterns, underneath the accrued sediment of external models and set interpretations of a later period.

authoritative lists and biblical elements

The assigning of dynastic numbers and specific dates, and the insistence on identified traditional sources are not the only devices by which Shimunika enhanced the authority of his text. The frequent *listing* of names and other items must be seen in the same light. For surely, information which can be retrieved and produced so systematically could not have been made up but simply has to be true! Especially the lists of people participating in a certain decision, or people being the children of a prominent character, or accompanying someone somewhere, contribute highly to the suggestion of historical accuracy of the account. Again, this technique does not seem to spring from the conventions of oral traditions among the Nkoya, where I have seen it very rarely used; instead, it smacks of the school class, and particularly of the Bible class and the pulpit, where concise and ordered lists of articles of faith and biblical characters represent a common mnemonic and didactic devise.

Thus the listing technique can be said to shade over into the other biblical elements, both typographical and stylistic. Stressing the author's side of *Likota Iya Bankoya*, I have so far discussed them in terms of models for historiographic production; however, when we shift the perspective to the readership of *Likota Iya Bankoya*, the Christian elements also contain models of reception: a historical message which is clad in Christian forms has a greater chance of being taken as true and authoritative because Christianity in itself has come to

represent a dominant standard. In the course of a century, Christianity has spread widely throughout South Central Africa and has taken root — not so much uprooting and eclipsing historic forms of African religions and their contemporary transformations: cults of affliction and prophetic movements (cf. van Binsbergen 1981a), but upholding, in the consciousness of both the rural and the urban populations, the image of a more universal, ideal, Great Tradition that hovers above the autochthonous religious idioms. The knowledge of and implicit support for Christian forms and the authority they generate, extends far beyond the narrower circles of actual adherents of Christian churches. But the effect of Christian-derived sources of authority in *Likota lya Bankoya* would be even more specific than that, since the context of ethnic identity formation and inter-ethnic competition in modern Zambia is primarily that of the educated middle classes — whose members tend to participate much more actively and profoundly in Christianity than the national average. In contemporary Nkoya circles, the collective Christian prayer (into which some of the prayer style of the ancestral cult has been blended) is a major genre of ethnic self-expression: the prayer leader (usually a lay preacher who is also politically active) freely improvises to combine Christian clichés with ethnic and political topicality, mobilizing his audience and endowing the ethnic pathos with a measure of divine justification. In such a context *Likota lya Bankoya* literally amounts to a Bible, a Gospel, of Nkoya-ness, embodying the hope of ethnic rehabilitation and material betterment. It is for profound reasons that the apotheosis of *Likota lya Bankoya* is cast in a Christian mould:

‘Is it true what the Lozi of today keep telling the strangers? It is a pack of lies! When time comes Mwene Nyambi will reveal everything to His child.’ (56: 2)

the spurious insertion of a mainstream event

Our discussion in this section has identified Shimunika’s authority devices, but has also shown where his attempts to emulate academic conventions of historiographic production backfired, into sometimes nonsensical dates, anachronisms and excessively static dynastic models. In this respect the most bizarre episode in the book is that which evokes, with suggestive detail, a precolonial visitor of such stature that the mere mentioning of his name would have sufficed to plug in Nkoya traditions into the mainstream of African and world history:

‘Mwene Mutondo Wahila stayed in his Milombe capital with so many court priests. All the Bilolo said:

“When we were sitting in the court, hearing cases, we saw an Englishman (in other words a Whiteman from the tribe of the British) approaching along the road.”

The Bilolo went to welcome him, asking him who he was. He told them:

“I am Munali.” (50: 11)

Dr David Livingstone has been known in South Central Africa under the name of Munali; however, when Livingstone died, in 1873, the reign of Mwene Mutondo Wahila (whose *lukena* he is supposed to visit here) had not yet begun.¹⁸⁷ Moreover, Livingstone never seems to have travelled in the eastern fringes of Barotseland.¹⁸⁸ Most probably therefore, this lively story is an apocryphal invention on Rev. Shimunika’s part. Moreover, his insertion of Livingstone, far from unique, is rather a cliché of Central African historical traditions (cf. Roberts 1973: 25).

3.3. Shimunika’s possible biases

Now that we have come to appreciate the methods and techniques by means of which Rev. Shimunika sought to endow his message with the greatest possible authority, the next step is to ascertain to what extent the contents of his historical account can be demonstrated to have been influenced, and even biased, by the constraints of his personal situation. Rev. Shimunika’s idiosyncratic collation and transformation of the oral sources could be expected to suffer from a number of such biases: as a Nkoya nationalist, a Christian, a prominent member of the Mutondo family, and finally as a member of the male gender. Let us examine *Likota Iya Bankoya* in the light of these concerns. In the process we shall have occasion to consider the use of the name ‘Nkoya’ as a toponym, discuss Shimunika’s treatment of such rather sensitive topics as

¹⁸⁷ The same point is made by our Kaoma editorial committee.

¹⁸⁸ Cf. Clay 1945: 5. On an appendix map in Livingstone 1971, the latter indicates the ‘Bamasasa: they cultivate large quantities of Grain, Sweet Potatoes &c’. However, his itineraries as marked (also cf. Director 1964) never came near this people. Interestingly, Livingstone’s apparently hearsay information was subsequently copied, in a literal Portuguese translation and without reference to Livingstone, by Serpa Pinto when he, too, claimed that the *Machachas* [Mashasha] ‘cultivam cereaes em abundancia’ (Serpa Pinto 1881, i: end map). Mutumba Mainga’s treating, in the index of her book, the Naliele of Livingstone’s time (‘Naliele or Narielle, chief town of Barotse (...) 15° 24’ 17” S, 23° 5’ 54” E [i.e. at the eastern edge of the Zambezi flood plain]; Livingstone 1971: 730) as undifferentiated from the twentieth-century Naliele court near Kaoma, 200 km to the east (Mutumba Mainga 1973: 276), might lead the uninitiated reader to the assumption that Livingstone was in Nkoyaland after all, but no doubt this confusion is to be blamed on an anonymous indexer of Mutumba Mainga’s book.

slavery and firearms, and examine his representation of the colonial period.

Nkoya nationalism?

The nationalist concern is manifest and explicit. Shimunika's intention is to state the case of Nkoya identity, showing that today's Nkoya are all one, from a common stock and with a splendid history; and particularly to restore Nkoya pride in the face of Lozi overlordship.

Yet even here, at the very core of Shimunika's ethnic apology, we must admit that he shows himself a true historian, in that the data which he presents allow for a detailed check of his overall argument — and enable the reader even to reject the author's conclusions. The unity of the Nkoya people is argued — but the genealogical and historical data have not been pummelled into shape so as to conceal the actual underlying heterogeneity. This is never more manifest than when we attempt to construct genealogies on the basis of the information in *Likota Iya Bankoya*: one gets perhaps halfway in patching together the various strands, but the essential links between major dynastic branches cannot be traced with any degree of conviction, as I shall argue in detail in the later chapters. Likewise, the historical narrative starts with a plurality of clans which are not further reduced to a common unity other than that of an unnamed mythical ancestress (3: 2).

Turning to more recent historical periods, and particularly the extremely sensitive issue of Nkoya/Lozi relations, Shimunika's realism and love of historical accuracy very clearly outweighs whatever nationalist preferences he has. With tragic irony, a history that explicitly intends to show that the Nkoya stood their own vis-à-vis the Lozi right up to the imposition of colonial rule, turns out to contain numerous, detailed and convincing data on Lozi overlordship in the nineteenth century: the Lozi held on to the Nkoya royal drums as central symbols of kingship which the Kololo captured; they controlled royal succession of both the Mutondo and the Kahare kingship, in the cases of the accession of the following Myene: Shamamano (43: 10-12), Munangisha (46: 2), Wahila (49: 4) and Mushonto (53: 5).¹⁸⁹ The Lozi moreover forced Mwene Shakalongo to accept and be instrumental to this state of affairs; the Lozi arbitrated in succession

¹⁸⁹ Interestingly, the installation of Mushonto instead of the district officer's candidate Kanyinca hints at a certain tension between the Lozi indigenous administration and the colonial administration — a tension which can be found repeatedly in the archival sources dealing with Lozi influence in the outlying districts of Barotseland (including Mankoya district) and, beyond, in Namwala and Mumbwa district (Stokes 1966; van Binsbergen 1985c). The fact that Shimunika calls Kanyinca's actual accession, in 1917, his 'second kingship' shows that, in line with his pro-colonial and anti-Lozi attitude, he took the first irregular installation of Kanyinca at Mwene Wahila's funeral, which was rejected by the *Litunga* in favour of Mushonto (cf. 53: 2), yet as lawful and valid.

disputes, placed representative *indunas* all over the Land of Nkoya, and extracted a significant stream of tribute from the subdued Nkoya *zinkena* to the Lozi court at Lealui.

Even the Kololo, who for a quarter of a century (1840-1864) occupied the Lozi state, considerably transformed it, and left their Sotho language to become its lingua franca, are not merely remembered as the hideous abductors of the Nkoya royal drums, but also as just a neighbouring group which was called in to intervene when the Nduwe of Kataba were sighing under Mwene Liyoka's excessive repression (37: 4), and whose attack on the Kalimbata *lukena* was partly instigated by Mwene Mutondo Kashina's preposterous marriage legislation:

'All the people failed to appreciate his law, since it greatly corrupted the people in their hearts. At the time of his reign, the Kololo of Mwene Mbololo, the Mwene of the Kololo, sent an army to the Kalimbata capital, to Mwene Mutondo Kashina Shiyenge.' (28: 4)

Considering Rev. Shimunika's ethnic concerns, the most obvious, and rather to be expected, form of historical manipulation could have consisted in an attempt to project the Nkoya ethnic identity back into the past to the very origin of the history of central western Zambia. Ethnic groups (uninhibitedly called 'tribes' in Zambian English) are a conspicuous element in the everyday social discourse of contemporary Zambians, they are taken for granted, patterned into ethnic stereotypes and joking relations (van Binsbergen 1985a). On the popular level, the history of Zambia is perceived largely as the history of the ethnic groups that are distinguished within the Zambian nation today; but the fact that these ethnic categories in themselves have not been in existence ever since the beginning of time but have a — usually quite shallow — history, is not generally admitted to consciousness.

However, although Shimunika could have been forgiven for treating the ethnic category of Nkoya as perennial and going back to the earliest days, this is not precisely what he does. The word 'Nkoya' occurs very often in the text, but not as the pan-Nkoya ethnonym which it has become in the twentieth century, but on the contrary in either of the following meanings:

- (a) as a mere toponym; or
- (b) as the name of a dynastic group centring on the Mutondo kingship.

Nkoya as a toponym

In this connexion one would speak of 'the Land of Nkoya' (*Litunga Iya Nkoya*) — much in the way early European travelogues would discuss the Land of Cathay, or, in the Central African context, in the way the

Lunda or Musumba homeland called ‘Kola’ crops up in many traditions, from Angola to Malawi.¹⁹⁰

In fact, I am not convinced that as a toponym Nkoya is not simply a dialectical form of ‘Kola’. Some dynastic traditions among the Nkoya trace back to Musumba; moreover, it is, all over the world, a common feature that after migration toponyms from the homeland are being projected onto the new place of settlement. However, by contrast with Kola, the location of Nkoya in central western Zambia is fairly well defined: its centre was a forested area near the Kabompo/Zambezi confluence.¹⁹¹

With or without reference to this specific location, as a toponym the meaning or etymology of *Nkoya* remains obscure. I failed to identify other lexical roots with which it could be associated. Only one informant claimed to know what the word *Nkoya* means:

‘“Nkoya?” That means “soil” *litunga* (= land), “this country”’,¹⁹²

but the circularity of such a statement does not bring us much further.¹⁹³

The usage of *Nkoya* as a toponym in its own right, not secondarily derived from the ethnonym designating the people who proclaim to be Nkoya, is clear from many passages in the text of *Likota lya Bankoya*. Note, for instance, the careful phrasing in the following passage:

‘There are three sources from which the greatest Myene of the tribe of Nkoya spring’ (8: 1).

Here the Nkoya text has *mushobo wa Nkoya*: ‘tribe of [the land of] Nkoya’, and unmistakably Nkoya is here a toponym, not an ethnonym (otherwise the text would have read *mushobo wa Bankoya*). Further aspects of the use of the word Nkoya as a toponym will be discussed in chapter 4.

¹⁹⁰ Roberts 1973: 39, 50, and *passim*; and references cited there.

¹⁹¹ Oral source [9].

¹⁹² Oral source [22].

¹⁹³ Meanwhile, another oral source ([22]) clearly distinguishes between the words Nkoya and Kola; interpreting ‘Nkoya’ as referring not to an area but to a group of people (see main text immediately below), it states:

‘They were already called Nkoya when they came from Kola. The meaning of the name is unknown.’

Yet even this statement could be read as suggesting that the name ‘Nkoya’ derives from ‘*[N]Ko[l/y]a’.

Nkoya as the name of a dynastic group centring on the Mutondo kingship, and its emergence as an ethnonym

A transition to the second usage (Nkoya as a political group), to which we now turn, is clear in the title of chapter 18 of Shimunika's text, when the two meanings of the word are juxtaposed:

'SOME NKOYA LEFT FOR MULOBEZI AND OTHERS
REMAINED HERE IN NKOYA' (18: 1)

Here, the latter word *Nkoya* is clearly a toponym, but the former word *Nkoya* is used in the sense of a dynastic group, featuring, in the original text, the plural prefix *Ba-nkoya*, instead of the unmarked toponymical *Nkoya*. Such usage can be detected in a considerable number of passages in *Likota Iya Bankoya*:

- (1) 'She was also called "Grandmother of the Nkoya" or again "Mother of the Nkoya"' (2: 2).
- (2) 'They came from Mwantiyavwa following his order:
"Go and kill for me all the Nkoya Myene."' (6: 2)
- (3) 'When Mwene Mulambwa returned to his area in Loziland, he had a mind to scold his people, telling them:
"I want the drums of kingship of the Nkoya, for they are splendid."' (24: 3)
- (4) 'I am Mwene Komoka
Who has Surprised the Nkoya.' (27: 4)

Of course, for a contemporary Nkoya readership it is very tempting to project, onto these passages, presentday notions of the Nkoya ethnic group, with a fictitious corporate political identity encompassing the entire 'tribe'. But such a projection is unwarranted and is almost certainly not intended by Shimunika: in virtually all cases, the narrow dynastic cluster around the Mutondo kingship is the obvious referent of the word *Bankoya*.

These passages may even allow us to put a date to the emergence of the use of the name Nkoya for the dynastic group around the Mutondo kingship. For the quotations (1), (2) and (3) we have no way to assess whether the word *Bankoya* was projected back into time by the twentieth-century narrator, or (less likely) was already used in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century contexts that are evoked. Quotation (4) however is a different case altogether: here the word *Bankoya* is enshrined in a praise-name, and we have every reason to assume that these relatively hermetic and archaic emblems have been handed down in their original form. Komoka's accession would have been sometime

around 1850. This is then the oldest established date for the use of the word *Bankoya* for the dynastic group associated with the Mutondo kingship.

There may be exceptions to this consistency in Shimunika's usage of the term Nkoya. The passage where Mwene Libupe, as apical ancestress of all Nkoya dynasties and not just of the Mutondo kingship, is called 'Grandmother of the Nkoya' or again, 'Mother of the Nkoya' (2: 2), could be construed to constitute such an exception. So does the title of the same chapter 2:

'THE NKOYA CAME FROM THE LUBA'

But in the body of the text of *Likota Iya Bankoya* these are only two incidences. Their sheer paucity shows that Shimunika has not fallen victim to the temptation of projecting an ethnic myth of Nkoya-ness into the past.

As an ethnonym, encompassing all speakers of the Nkoya language and participants in the Nkoya culture, the name Nkoya only emerged in the course of the colonial period — as a Lozi 'subject tribe' and as the obvious referent of the Mankoya district and boma, Native Authority and Native Treasury. When Clay was writing, the name 'Nkoya' was apparently still largely reserved for the subjects of the Mutondo kingship (Clay 1945: 2). As was the case with so many other Central African ethnic identities, Nkoya-ness did not spring from the endogenous dynamics of cultural and political processes in the region, but from the incorporation of such processes in new, external arenas of domination, representation and mobilization.

What remains to be explained is why in this heterogeneous linguistic and cultural cluster of central western Zambia, where initially the name 'Nkoya' was only associated with a constituent fragment, that name evolved to ultimately become the label under which the entire cluster, in a twentieth-century process of ethnicization, sought to create its identity. What explains the transition from a term denoting a small polity, to one denoting an ethnic group (in *statu nascendi*) the great majority of whose claimed members, nor their ancestors, were never subjects of the historic polity around the Mutondo title? The answer lies partly (cf. chapter 5) in the geographical diaspora and politico-military decline of such other constituent fragments: the people of Momba, Shakalongo, Kahare, Kabulwebulwe, Shihoka; and partly in a rather accidental colonial nomenclature for an outlying part of Barotseland at the turn of the twentieth century: among the Nkoya *zinkena* the Mutondo *lukena* was relatively close to Lealui and Mongu, a relatively important source of tribute, and the site of the new boma was within the area of Mwene Mutondo. So the boma was named Mankoya, 'Mankoya' became the name under which the people of the district engaged in colonial politics at the level of the district and the Barotseland Protectorate as a whole, and it is in that struggle that the name of Nkoya spilled over from Mutondo's area to encompass all the

Myene, and their subjects, who culturally, linguistically and politically stood in a similar relationship with the centre of the Lozi administration.

Christian bias?

The fact that Shimunika was the first Nkoya pastor and principal Bible translator, who spent more than three decades (as from 1950) at Luampa Mission, did not prevent the author from describing Nkoya High God ritual (1: 6f), royal and ancestral ritual (47: 5; 47: 3), sorcery threats and actual attacks (33: 1; 47: 6), circumcision (6: 1; 48: 6), cases of extreme violence (47: 9), even human sacrifices to royal drums (36: 2), with a detachment that is amazingly free from Christian bigotry and moralizing. His remarkable career (from diviner-priest, via teacher, to Christian leader) made him treat African religious forms with an amazing lack of Christian prejudice, and with the pride of a Nkoya nationalist. Against the background of the prevailing, immensely strong Christian rejection of African medicine as diabolical, it is truly remarkable that Rev. Shimunika manages to bring out the vital role of royal medicine, not only in the upkeep of the Nkoya royal court (50: 10), but also as an essential aspect of Nkoya-Lozi relations.¹⁹⁴ Even when Nkoya religious ideas come in collision with central Christian dogma, particularly when God's (Mwene Nyambi's) Child is equated not with Jesus Christ but with Mvula (Rain), not the slightest attempt to recast these ideas into a Christian mould can be detected. Were they perhaps Christian projections to begin with, disguised as Nkoya ones in order to further glorify the Nkoya heritage? The answer is negative, as we shall see in chapter 4 — however prominent God's Child is in Christianity.

However, Christianity does seem to create a slight decency bias in Shimunika: he obviously did not want to dwell at length on the shifting amorous and marital relations for which Nkoya Lady *Myene* were well-known, as documented from oral sources.¹⁹⁵ All Shimunika says on this count is that Mwene Manenga, his own ancestress, was an exception to this pattern: all her children are said to have been begotten by one father... (4: 7; 27: 7).

bias in favour of the Mutondo kingship and the aristocratic perspective, and against earlier occupancy by other ethnic groups

As we have seen, Shimunika's earlier pamphlet *Muhumpu* created havoc among Mwene Kahare's subjects because of its allegedly biased

¹⁹⁴ Notably, the exchanges between Kayambila and Mulambwa, (27: 6; 56: 5).

¹⁹⁵ E.g. oral source [3] 19.11.1973.

view of the dealings between Mwene Kahare Timuna and the Lozi central court at Lealui in 1947-48, at the time when Mwene Mutondo was subject to Lozi harassment. Such bias as a member of the Mutondo royal family is absent from *Likota Iya Bankoya*. On the other hand, there is a marked imbalance in that the passages on the Mutondo kingship are much more extensive. Perhaps Shimunika's precolonial data on Kahare were lacking, but this could hardly have been the case for the twentieth century. Considering the wealth of detail concerning the history of the Mutondo kingship in the early twentieth century, one would have expected some of the most salient aspects of the Kahare kingship since 1900 to have been included. In fact, after Shamamano not even one of the four twentieth-century incumbents of the Kahare title is mentioned in *Likota Iya Bankoya*: Mpelembe (1914-1921), Kubama (1921-1921), Timuna (1921-1952) and Kabambi (acting 1952-1955, reigned 1955-). In chapter 1 we have seen how Kubama's haste to reach Lealui and be recognized as the lawful heir revealed a succession dispute inside the chief's family (for a striking Mutondo parallel see 53: 4f). However, Timuna's accession also involved a succession dispute between Shamamano's descendants as a whole, and a kin faction clustering on the Kambotwe title, who claimed that they had been the owners of the Kahare kingship before Shamamano had revived it under Lewanika's protection. Below (chapter 5) we shall pay attention to this dispute in the context of the change from matrilineal to patrilineal dynastic succession among the Nkoya. At the present juncture it is important that Shimunika was clearly aware of the Kambotwe/Shamamano issue, but failed to discuss it in *Likota Iya Bankoya*, and even in a personal interview was only prepared to touch on the subject in the most reticent manner.¹⁹⁶ Apparently the conflict over the 1947-48 episode in *Muhumpu* had made him very reluctant to discuss any further the Kahare kingship in the twentieth century.

Still, the coverage that *Likota Iya Bankoya* gives to the precolonial history of the Kahare kingship and of the dynastic line leading on to it, although patchy as compared to that of the Mutondo kingship, is far more extensive than the discussion of the many other royal titles which circulated in the district up to the nineteenth century (cf. *Appendix 7*), and which were eclipsed by the Lozi representative *indunas* in the manner discussed in chapter 1. The moiety-like structure of the Nkoya in Kaoma district, hinging on the two major chiefs, although largely an accident of Lozi and colonial incorporation, yet now has become an important aspect of Nkoya ethnicity. The effect of this state of affairs for Nkoya ethno-history appears to be that the Mutondo/Kahare opposition is projected back into the past, and endowed with perennial connotations which it most certainly does not deserve. In *Likota Iya Bankoya*, other kingships, such as Shakalongo's and Kambotwe's, are largely ignored. And a dynastic illusion of fixed permanent titles and a clear-cut pattern of succession is maintained, while in fact a much more

¹⁹⁶ Oral source [22].

likely image would have been that of a structure of shifting and rivalling polities, each centring on a ruler whose title and royal status was often as much achieved, and ephemeral, as it was ascribed via the lawful inheritance of high office.

More in general, Shimunika's personal fixation on the Mutondo kingship made him fall into the common trap of popular historiographic production in Africa: the idea that 'real history' deals with kings and states only, while subjects and commoners do not really seem to have a history. As a result, we hear about the early migration from Lubaland, the transformation of kingship into statehood, and the vicissitudes of royal courts, but we are hardly allowed a glimpse of the processes of subjugation and extortion through which ordinary villagers were made to serve the establishment and reproduction of essentially non-productive royal courts in the Land of Nkoya. The flow of tribute, largely in the form of forest-derived produce, is presented as a matter of course, and justified by reference to the time-honoured redistributive and ecologico-ritual functions of the institutions of *Wene* — without admitting the fact that in the later, violent, male-dominated states this institution had been transformed almost beyond recognition, retaining mainly its name and symbolism. In the case of Mwene Liyoka's dealings with the local Nduwe people popular resentment of royal appropriation is admitted, and his reign is explicitly called cruel (37: 4f). But for the rest the flow of tribute even from non-Nkoya people, like the Ila paying tribute to Mwene Kayambila (23: 3), triggers no critical comment from Shimunika but obviously constitutes a source of pride also to him. *Likota Iya Bankoya* contains information on nineteenth-century popular resentment and on the possibility of articulating this in a more or less democratic way, through impeachment of the *Mwene* and even through regicide. But first this is presented in a political and legislative context,¹⁹⁷ rather than an economic context of exploitation of village surplus product and labour; and secondly, we may suspect that what is involved in this 'popular' protest is really rival factions within the dynastic group itself. The latter is also suggested to be the case with the regicide of Mwene Mukamba (21: 3). As a result, the clearest statement of popular resentment and rebellion in *Likota Iya Bankoya* comes to us in an oblique, mythical form: the subjects of the legendary Mwene Kapesi (= Ladder) refusing to put in more labour towards his prestige object, the ladder into heaven (40: 4f).

That the ordinary producers of the Land of Nkoya were thus reduced to form a muted group is far from surprising and constitutes, in fact, a cliché of the literate ethno-history genre. Underneath is an attempt to negotiate a disunity which cannot be accommodated within contemporary claims of ethnic unity: *not the genealogical heterogeneity of various dynastic branches and matrilineages, but the distinction between rather immobile local commoner inhabitants, and immigrant ruling*

¹⁹⁷ Mwene Kashina Shiyenge is pictured as a bad ruler, who fails to unite the people and declares unattractive marriage legislation (28: 2-4; 34: 5-6).

groups. Admittedly, the distinction is relative: the clan segments which claimed ecologico-ritual control of the land and developed ruler status in the Land of Nkoya — immigrating at probably a slightly later date — initially may have had much in common with other such tiny demographic fragments leaving — at probably a slightly earlier date — southern Zaïre and gradually crossing the Zambezi/Congo watershed. We do not know if these earlier immigrants (arriving from perhaps 1500 A.D.) were already speakers of Nkoya — perhaps more likely, they learned that language, as the local tongue, upon their arrival in northwestern Zambia, influencing it by their own Lunda background in the process. Such elements of the contemporary Nkoya culture as hunting and agricultural patterns, and female initiation, also may have a much longer history locally that predates the arrival of the dynastic groups.

The more original inhabitants are absent not only from *Likota Iya Bankoya*, but also from the great majority of oral sources from the area. What remains is an extremely fragmented and contradictory picture. Two sources¹⁹⁸ explicitly deny that there were any earlier occupants before ‘the Nkoya’, even though we shall have to consider, below, what traces Khoi-San culture appears to have left upon the culture of central western Zambia. Other sources however admit previous occupation of the Land of Nkoya by such relatively (as compared to the Khoi-San) related groups as the Kwangwa¹⁹⁹ and the Lenje.²⁰⁰ The absence of previous occupants appears to be an ideological claim, part of the building of a Nkoya ethnic consciousness. As such it does not correspond with accepted local traditions in so far as these predate Nkoya ethnicization. Archaeological evidence also suggests that there were in fact such previous occupants, and so does the fact that such puzzling ethnic pockets as the Lushange and the Lima, usually considered as clans or subgroups of the Nkoya, are recognized even in documentary sources to go back much longer, locally, than the other constituent groups of the Nkoya cluster.²⁰¹ The most uninhibited of sources in this respect is Sandasanda (whose own status as a recent immigrant Luchazi in Kasempa district may make him particularly

198 Oral sources [20] and [3] 11.10.1977; the latter source explicitly and emphatically denies previous occupation of the area by Khoi-San (Ba-Tushekele).

199 Oral source [14].

200 Oral source [3] 19.11.1973, according to which source the name Mbwela, said to mean ‘Westerners’, was given to the ancestors of the Nkoya when the latter came to chase the Lenje from their original territory. It is true that today the Lenje are among the eastern neighbours of the Nkoya. Cf. however the contradictory statement by the same oral source [3] on 11.10.1977 as cited above.

201 District Commissioner Mankoya to Provincial Commissioner Mongu, 30.4.1935, ‘Tribal boundaries’, enclosure in Zambia National Archives KSX 1/1/1/ Mankoya correspondence 1931-35; also cf. Clay 1945; Brelsford 1965.

prone to explode local myths of continuous occupancy of the other groups in his new home); as we have seen, he lists Mbwela, Khoi-San, Busangu Mashasha and even Subiya (now on both banks of the Zambezi around Kazangula on the border with Botswana and Namibia) as the pre-Nkoya inhabitants of central western Zambia (Sandasanda 1972) — at the same time implying that the names Mbwela, Mashasha and Nkoya originally were more distinct than we are led to believe on the grounds of their present merging under the pan-Nkoya umbrella.

The relatively immobile commoner occupants — not so much those of Khoi-San but certainly those of Bantu stock — of the Land of Nkoya left their traces outside the aristocratic oral traditions: their pottery has been dug up, and as Brown (1984: 104; cf. Roberts 1976: 39f) points out, it shows a remarkable continuity over almost two millennia. While much more historical, linguistic and archaeological research is needed before we can appreciate the admixture of local and immigrant patterns in the Land of Nkoya as from the sixteenth century, it is clear that some process of immigrant imposition and accommodation has gone on, involving the subjugation of local villagers of hunters, fishermen and perhaps incipient agriculturalists — to northern groups aspiring to ecologico-ritual and subsequently political domination. In *Likota lya Bankoya* as well as in Nkoya oral traditions in general, this process has been effectively suppressed from consciousness as a threat to contemporary ideas of unity and legitimate kingship. In this connexion it is useful to remember that the contemporary concerns of ethnic identity and a redefinition of Nkoya/Lozi relations, while perhaps capable of mobilizing people from all walks of life identifying as Nkoya, yet essentially are cherished by an educated middle class, who normally combines a measure of success in the wider modern Zambian society, and adherence to Christianity, *with close links with the Nkoya lukena milieus*.

Another such apparently history-less social category reduced to muteness is formed by women. Below we shall carefully explore the wealth of information that *Likota lya Bankoya* has to offer on gender relations and their impact on state formation. Yet this information will turn out to have crept in inadvertently: women, their reproductive and productive work and their rituals (particularly the female initiation that binds them to solidarity and that for many Nkoya today constitutes the hallmark of Nkoya culture; cf. van Binsbergen 1987a) are absent from the scene of history as Shimunika conceived it.

bias in the treatment of slavery

Closely related to the aristocratic and pan-Nkoya bias is the reticence, in *Likota lya Bankoya*, concerning the issue of slavery. Intending to state the case for the oneness of all Nkoya people today, Shimunika, himself of royal stock, could hardly afford to touch on this question,

except by disclaiming the Lozi view that the Nkoya as a people are the Lozi's slaves.

So prominent a feature was slavery that to this day Nkoya parents justify the spacing of children by reference to the fact that in the past a mother should never have more than one infant to carry when slave-raiders came. Many arguments among kinsmen and neighbours in Nkoya villages today still contain insults and allusions referring to alleged slave origin.

Oral sources are considerably less reticent than *Likota Iya Bankoya* on the issue of slavery.²⁰² They specify — albeit not unequivocally — the conditions under which 'slaves' could lawfully be taken in compensation for major offences. The standard punishment for adultery with a *Lihano* (a likely offence considering the fact that the nineteenth-century *Myene* were highly polygamous)²⁰³ was the payment of a slave.²⁰⁴ In the case of adultery between commoners, the customary punishment was even to kill the offender, burn down his village and sell his fellow-villagers as slaves;²⁰⁵ the slave-raiding episode of Kabulwebulwe as discussed above appears to have been a case in point. Interestingly the *Mwene* was entitled to the payment of a slave and/or a gun in case of adultery, sorcery, the killing of a sorcerer, and murder, even if the injured party was not the *Mwene* himself or herself.²⁰⁶ Another oral source however²⁰⁷ denies that in cases of murder any compensation could be paid: the only penalty was killing the offender.

While thus a certain flow of slaves was generated as a result of compensatory payments made in the context of a general rule of law in nineteenth-century Nkoya society, it could also be the failure of such rule of law which resulted in people being committed to slavery. Feuding between villages is frequently reported as an alternative to the payment of compensation. In such conflicts, village A would team up with village C in order to slave-raid village B with which A had its quarrel. Also, one could betray the village security system to professional slave-raiders. The *Mwene* would have spies and slave-raiders in his service; they were called *makombe*.²⁰⁸

The commercialization of slavery even entered into close kin relationships; it would not be exceptional for a man to sell his sister's son into slavery to the Mbali (Mbundu traders from Angola) in order to

202 E.g. oral sources [8] and the oral sources specifically mentioned below, and Nkoya songs in: Davison Kawanga, 'Nkoya songs as taped by Wim van Binsbergen: translations and notes', songs no. 37 (slave trade) and 38 (slave marriage), manuscript in my possession.

203 E.g., according to oral source [6], *Mwene* Shamamano had ten wives.

204 Oral source [6].

205 Oral source [18] 14.10.1977.

206 Oral sources [6], [19] 18.10.1977.

207 Oral source [20].

208 Oral source [20].

obtain the gunpowder and blankets necessary for the payment of bridewealth.²⁰⁹

With reference to the period around 1900, Mrs Katambula, a daughter of Mwene Shamamano, describes²¹⁰ the Kahare court as largely depending upon slave labour in agriculture: nearly half the people at the *lukena* were slaves, mainly of Lunda and Kaonde origin, and they would have been bought from white slavers in Angola in exchange for tusks. By that time, slaves would mix freely with freemen, and children would not realize they were slaves; however, they were forbidden to take up residence in another village. Marital and sexual ties between female members of the royal family, and male slaves, appear to have been common: in a society where maternal and paternal relatives were (and are) rivals constantly battling for kin support, such links produced offspring that was — deprived from any of the usual residential alternatives whose manipulation is so central to Nkoya social organization — bound to their mother's home, since the father had nowhere he could call his own any more. *Myene* themselves would sometimes marry slaves. The children from such a marriage could not inherit the throne.²¹¹ But this was only a relative hardship: formally speaking any children born before accession could not inherit the throne either.

Katambula's account does seem to be somewhat affected by contemporary rejection of slavery and the attempt to deny African part responsibility for it: although she denies that slaves were *sold* by Nkoya *Myene*, other sources however claim that this did happen. War captives were sold by Nkoya *Myene* in exchange for gunpowder, guns and cloth, and in this context the Mbundu and Swahili middlemen are explicitly mentioned.²¹²

The three statuses of domestic worker, pawn and commodity are all covered by the same Nkoya term: *ndungo*. *Likota lya Bankoya* does acknowledge the distinct pawnship pattern in passing: a domestic servant of the early Lady Mwene Likambi Mange is said to have been a *shiyumba*, 'human pawn' (10: 7); but that term is far from common. What seems to be involved here is a gradual transformation (under the impact of state formation and peripheral mercantile capitalism) of a more original, pre-state form of pawnship, into both domestic slavery and slave trading, after which the three types lived on, one superimposed upon, and shading over into, the other (cf. Douglas 1964; Roberts 1976). A rigorous distinction between the three forms appears to honour contemporary academic sensitivities more than historical patterns.

²⁰⁹ Oral source [3] 19.11.1973. According to Holub, the Nkoya were among several local ethnic groups allowing a husband to sell his wife into slavery (Holy 1975: 124).

²¹⁰ Oral source [6].

²¹¹ Oral source [6]; also [18] 13.10.1977.

²¹² Oral source [18] 13.10.1977.

In surrounding groups a similar pattern obtained. To the few archival sources discussed above, on slave-raiding and the slave trade on the Hook of the Kafue around 1900, we could easily add scores of similar references from the Gielgud-Anderson expedition alone. The same holds for the region north and northeast of Nkoyaland, which in the nineteenth century was the arena of slaving and trade operations by the Kaonde,²¹³ Yeke, Mambari and Swahili. The role of slavery among the Ila is discussed by Tuden (1958). The role of slaves in the Lozi state, whose economy also largely revolved on them, was analysed by Clarence-Smith (1979; also cf. Frankenberg 1978). And although slavery was abolished as part of the later agreements between the Lozi Litunga and the colonial administration,²¹⁴ the colonial files abound with documents on slavery in Barotseland including Mankoya district up to the late 1930s.²¹⁵

It is especially at the Nkoya *zinkena* that accusations of having slave ancestry have been standard elements in verbal disputes to this very

213 Cf. Melland 1967. In an extensive discussion of the ethnic composition of Mankoya district, 1935, the District Commissioner pointed out the existence, in the district, of 30-40 Kaonde villages, while the Kaonde do not have a chief in this district. 'The Kasempa/Mankoya boundary therefore cuts off this small outpost of Bakaonde raiders from their tribe. But it is unlikely that they want to go back to Kasempa.' District Commissioner Mankoya to Provincial Commissioner Mongu, 30.4.1935, 'Tribal boundaries', Zambia National Archives, KSX 1/1/1 Mankoya correspondence 1931-35.

214 Stokes 1966; Gann 1958, 1964.

215 Zambia National Archives, enclosures in Zambia National Archives, KSX 1/1/1 Mankoya correspondence 1931-35. Also see U1/2 Slavery. Among the enclosures are letters from the Assistant Magistrate Namwala to Native Commissioner Nalolo, 1917, concerning two slaves who had fled from Barotseland and had subsequently settled in Namwala without the required removal permit.

'One of the slaves hails from Kayingo [Kayingu]. (...) Both state they would never be allowed to return to their original homes unless they paid the slave owners compensation' etc. (Assistant Magistrate Namwala to Native Commissioner Nalolo, 1917, enclosures No. N351/2.0/1917, 30.6.1917).

Also in the same file is a letter from 1917 in which the Native Commissioner Mankoya posed the question:

'If a so-called slave left his owner without payment of £2, and (as sometimes happens) the owner comes to ask me if I can retrieve that slave, I should be glad to know if I have the power to do this? I take it that the request of the Paramount Chief that I should punish all unauthorized removals would cover this' etc.

The Native Commissioner, in other words, seemed quite willing to oblige and act on the slave-owner's behalf. Native Commissioner Mankoya to Resident Magistrate Mongu, 24.10.1917; enclosure in Zambia National Archives, U1/2 Slavery. He was flatly rebuked by the Resident Magistrate Mongu: Resident Magistrate Mongu to Native Commissioner Mankoya: 2.11.1917, enclosure in Zambia National Archives, U1/2 Slavery.

day. Being from slave stock, or being considered as such, carries an enormous stigma in this region (as in many other parts of South Central Africa).²¹⁶ It is not something one readily discusses in writing. It is therefore perfectly understandable that Shimunika limited his references to a few instances when a slave or human pawn was paid for compensation, or to broad general statements like

‘The Kabompo of whom people say:

‘‘The Kabompo has many canoes
Just like the Mwene has many slaves,’’

because the Mwene does have many slaves. The explanation of this expression is that here in the Land of Nkoya there are two things truly plentiful: the Kabompo with its canoes, and the Mwene with his subjects.’ (10: 1f)

His main reason to refrain from a discussion of slavery is of course the fact, so central in the argument of *Likota lya Bankoya*, that the Lozi people consider the Nkoya to have been their slaves (56: 1f). Shimunika passionately denies any truth to this allegation, and so do other oral sources from the area.²¹⁷ Obviously, at the point in the construction of their ethnic identity the Nkoya had reached at the time of my research in the 1970s they could simply not afford to admit that there was an element of truth in the Lozi view of inter-ethnic relations.

However, the Lozi claim is not so easily dismissed. Holub uninhibitedly speaks of

‘the king’s slaves, i.e. those subjugated (e.g. Masupia [Subiya], Mankoë [Nkoya] etc.)’ (Holub 1879: 70; my translation).

Also Selous (1893: 249) mentions the Lozi’s ‘slave tribes’. And these statements are not merely European impositions. One of my most trusted informants not only admitted that Nkoya slaves went to Lealui, but described in detail how his own brother underwent such a fate, as late as the 1910s.²¹⁸ One archival source is quite explicit concerning a similar event in the same period:

‘...the following information was given to me by Messengers who had been making a tour of the Western border:

‘‘Two Barotse named Mutoka and Sinamali had visited Kahali’s [Kahare’s] village in Mankoya subdistrict and had demanded tribute 10/- from the headman Kahali and tribute from others of the village according to their means in the name of Yeta for

²¹⁶ For a comparative perspective, cf. Miller 1981.

²¹⁷ E.g. oral source [15].

²¹⁸ Oral source [8].

Lewanika's Funeral Tributes. Kahali and many of his people paid according to demand. *But those who could not were taken by these two Barotse to villages to the West there they were exchanged for the required tribute — remaining, apparently, as slaves or to work off the debt...*'²¹⁹

When the matter was further investigated

'No evidence was to be obtained of the rumoured slave-taking. Perhaps something more of this could be obtained from Mutonga, a village headman in Mankoya. There are said to have been some transactions between or about Silama and Nianike of his village.'²²⁰

The detailed statements by the witnesses, besides mentioning names which are still those of village headmen in the Kahare area, give a good impression of the type of tribute Nkoya courts used to pay to Lealui, and of the distribution of wealth within the local society — but they fail to confirm the original statement that triggered the investigation:

'I saw the Barotse (...) They asked for pots — iron saucepans of the whiteman and skins. Kahali [Kahare] said he had no money but they could take a lion skin and a pot. And Kangombe and Livumina each gave them a pot. Mukotoka gave a shell (= *mpande*). And the youths of the village gave skins. I was present at Kumbula's [Nkumbula's] village when Sikasakala killed an ox for the Indunas and also gave them a cow for Kumbula who was absent. And Kumbula's people also paid tribute in pots and skins. *I did not see any men taken because they had no goods to give.*'²²¹

The statement by the second witness is remarkably similar:

²¹⁹ Anon. (probably Acting Magistrate Mwangwa District) to Tagart, Secretary Native Affairs, Livingstone, 29.7.1919, letter 242/1.F/'19, enclosure in Zambia National Archives, ZA 1/13 Barotse influence; my italics.

²²⁰ Acting Magistrate to Secretary of Native Affairs, 20.9.1919, 'Barotse exactions', enclosure in Zambia National Archives, ZA 1/13 Barotse influence. Nianika is probably Yanika — Mwene Kahare Mpelembe was his close matrilineal relative, which made Yanika an eligible — but unsuccessful — pretender to the Kahare throne; Yanika is still the title of a village headman on the Njonjolo near the Kahare *lukena*. Mutonga was a close affine of Mpelembe, and is likewise still a headman title on the Njonjolo. The name of Silama I have not been able to trace.

²²¹ Acting Magistrate to Secretary of Native Affairs, 20.9.1919, 'Barotse exaction: *Statement by Chipazo*', enclosure in Zambia National Archives, ZA 1/13 Barotse influence; my italics. The witness is said to be from Kahare's village, but I have failed to identify him. The then Livumina was the heir to Shamamano's brother of that name. For Kangombe, see below, diagram 6 and discussion there. Livumina, Mukotoka and Nkumbula (= Simuliankumba) are still headman titles on the Njonjolo; I have not been able to identify Sikasakala.

'About 6 months ago²²² I was visiting at Kahali's [Kahare's] village. (...) Three Barotse who said they were indunas bearing the word of Lewanika [Yeta]. Their names were Mutoka, Sinamali and Chilambeka (...) to collect funeral tribute for the deceased Lewanika. They took from Kahali a lion skin and an iron pot of European manufacture. Kangombe gave them a European pot. Mukotoka a shell, Livumina a European pot. These things I saw given to them. Younger men who had no pots paid tribute in small skins. At Kumbula's [Nkumbula's] village close to Kahali — Kumbula was absent — they told Kumbula's son to kill an ox for them — and this he (Sikasakala) did — and the 'Indunas' ate the meat, [appropriating] also a beast to take, iron pots and skins. *I do not know anything about these indunas taking away any men who had no goods to give them.*'²²³

However, the important issue is not whether slaves were taken by the Lozi on that particular occasion in 1919, but that at that late date such taking was still considered so likely that it deserved ample investigation. We can safely assume that in the second half of the nineteenth century, and well into the twentieth century, slaves were part and parcel of the tribute relations between Nkoya *zinkena* and the Lozi state.

bias in the treatment of firearms?

One is tempted to interpret Shimunika's treatment of firearms in the light of his systematic biases. While praising the Nkoya's skills of fighting and hunting, *Likota lya Bankoya* consistently mentions poisoned arrows as their main weapons. Firearms are mentioned only twice: in a twentieth-century context (53: 1) and as part of a compensatory payment made by Shamamano to Mwene Kayingu (43: 6). Nowadays firearms function as paraphernalia of traditional office, among both royal *Myene* and headmen, and they have constituted labour migrants' principle investment for retirement. Only three decades after the imposition of colonial rule as many as 1,157 firearms were registered in the district.²²⁴ The preponderance of muzzle-loaders among this number suggests that most of these guns were not

²²² The present statement is dated 8.9.1919.

²²³ Acting Magistrate to Secretary of Native Affairs, 20.9.1919, 'Barotse exactions: *Statement by Liboma*', enclosure in Zambia National Archives, ZA 1/13 Barotse influence; this witness is said to be from Lishimbika's, Mwengwa, on which I have no data. My italics.

²²⁴ Barotse Annual Report 1932, enclosure in Zambia National Archives ZA/7/1/15/2; of this number, 22 were modern rifles, and 1,135 were muzzle-loading guns. The district population at the time was 35,311, which means one gun to every five or six men above thirty years of age!

purchased outside from the proceeds of labour migration during the colonial period, but dated from before 1900. Clay related how Kaonde raids were withstood within the fortified *lukena* of Mwene Mutondo, 'shooting with *guns*, bows and arrows' (Clay 1945: 14; my italics). Other sources²²⁵ claim that there were gun manufacturers among the Nkoya; still others however maintain (at variance with *Likota Iya Bankoya*) that the Nkoya had no blacksmiths and had to import iron implements from the Totela (Miracle 1959).

The Nkoya people whom Capello and Ivens came across near the Kabompo/Zambezi confluence in 1884 were those of an otherwise undocumented '*Muene Chingocella*'. They had no firearms:

'This narrow corner of the lands of Ianvo [Mwaat Yaamv] to the east is pressed against an area occupied by a tribe of horrible appearance, with no fire-arms but only spears and bows; we were told they are called the Mangoia [Nkoya]. Here we made a short-cut with the intention of reaching the Kabompo at a higher longitude than [i.e. east of] [Mwene] Chilembi, avoiding as quickly as possible the tsetse fly and the muddy banks of other [rivers]...' (Capello & Ivens 1886, i: 419; my translation).

These Nkoya, although near Mwene Chilembi's Lunda outpost, were clearly under Lozi rule: a minor local Mwene met the expedition in Nkoya style, with his retinue in single file headed by his orchestra, and claimed allegiance to

'Mwene Oianda, the brother of Lobossi [Lubosi Lewanika I] of the Genji [Mwenyi, i.e. Lozi]' (Capello & Ivens 1886, i: 419; my translation).

Nearly 200 kilometres upstream along the Kabompo the expedition came across *caçadores Vam-Booé*, i.e. 'hunters identifying by the ethnic label of Mbowe'. This group's scanty coverage in the literature²²⁶ stresses hunting and affinities with 'the Luba language', and although they do not feature in the lists of Nkoya subgroups and clans this is where they probably belong. Although Capello and Ivens suggest, for the Mbowe, an affinity with the *Luinas* (i.e. Luena: Luvale and Mbunda), the use of the plural personal prefix *ba-*, and fragmentary ethnographic details also point in the Nkoya direction: teeth filed to a pointed shape, tobacco addiction, insertion of a large bead in the *labia maiora*, tying down of women's breasts. These Mbowe were clearly not without firearms, since their Mwene Kaheta charged the explorers, who were starving for vegetable food after weeks of a carnivorous diet,

²²⁵ E.g. Mr Dickson K. Makiyi, *Nkoya history — Kaoma, Western Province, Zambia*, 58 pp., manuscript in my possession.

²²⁶ Brelsford 1965: 12, 18, 34 and references cited there.

twelve Snider cartridges for a handful of groundnuts (Capello & Ivens 1886, i: 443f).²²⁷

The limited data are contradictory. At any rate, it is well established that — despite the general paucity of firearms in much of Zambia in the nineteenth century (Roberts 1971) — in the second half of the nineteenth century some of the enemies of the Nkoya possessed firearms, and one would be tempted to attribute the downfall of Nkoya states partly to a relative disadvantage in this respect. In that case the paucity of firearms among the Nkoya, as implied by Shimunika, would reflect a historical reality.

A case in point is the rendering, by the Kasempa District Commissioner Copeman in the first decade of this century, of Chief Kasempa's account of the military operation which caused Mwene Kahare to give up the *lukena* in Kayimbu, on the spot where throughout the twentieth century Kasempa boma has been situated:

'Chief Kasempa came to pay his respects (...) [He] has crossed into Northern Rhodesia with most of his people. Here he encountered the Mankoya whose chief Kahari [Kahare] had his kraal on the site of the present Kasempa, and after a fight drove them some two hundred miles to the south into what is now the Mankoya district. Lewanika, who was Kahari's suzerain, then sent a force to deal with Kasempa, but owing to the superiority of the Kaonde in guns it was forced to retire.'²²⁸ (...) At this time the western portion of the Kasempa district was the happy hunting ground of the Mambunda or Mambari, half-caste Portuguese traders of guns, powder and slaves.'²²⁹

227 In the main text of their book, nor on the map of the relevant section of their itinerary (1886, i: opposite 333), Capello & Ivens offer hardly any more information relating to the Nkoya. We would of course have hoped the Lukwakwa *lukena* to be identified along the Maniinga, but no locality is mentioned except, c. 70 km from the Kabompo/Maniinga confluence, the capital named *M'Pire*; the main ethnic groups marked alongside *M'Pire* are *Man-Bunda* [Mbunda] and *Ba-Lui* [Lozi], which tallies with Sipopa's association with Lukwakwa (cf. Mutumba Mainga 1973: *passim*), but is not enough to identify *M'Pire* with the Lukwakwa *lukena* of *Likota Iya Bankoya* (31: 1f and Appendix 7). Other ethnic groups along Capello & Ivens's itinerary near Nkoyaland are *Amboella* [Mbwela] (notably the locations *Canganhama*, 40 km east of the Zambezi/Kabompo confluence, and *Furumana*, 90 km upstream from the Kabompo/Maniinga confluence). However, their only ethnographic description of Mbwela refers to eastern Angola (Capello & Ivens 1886, i: 267f). Finally relevant for our present context is that the ethnic group of the *Ba-Sanga* [Sanga] is indicated, on the sources of the Mulando, Kamikamo, Kabako: tributaries of the Lunga river; the Sanga (cf. Brelsford 1965: 59, 122) are most likely the ultimate referents of the Nkoya toponym *Wushanga*, 'Shangaland' or more appropriately 'Sangaland', although the Nkoya situate this area much more to the south (cf. diagram 15a).

228 Obviously, this is the Kaonde war also mentioned in *Likota Iya Bankoya* (37: 1; 41f).

229 Zambia National Archives, CO 3/4/2, box 6 of Copeman's papers. There is still a village of gravekeepers near Kasempa, attending to the grave of

By the same token, the Gielgud-Anderson expedition revealed the abundance of firearms in the Hook of the Kafue and surrounding areas, particularly to the northeast. Gielgud refers to a Mr Lewis, working for the Bulawayo Mining Company, and living on the Kafue, who

‘also speaks of the activity of slave traders in his vicinity, about Kayimbu’s,²³⁰ and the great quantity of powder and guns they have already brought and are bringing into the country. Mr Lewis’s camp is not so far from the junction of the Lukanga and Kafue...’²³¹

Somewhat later Gielgud discusses the

‘natives to the East, in the vicinity of Lukanga and Kafue junction who are under Mombari [Mambari] influence and appear to be what can be concisely termed “a hard lot”. (...) I am at present of the opinion that when it is decided to establish an effectual government post in the Hook of the Kafue, to make it effective it will be found necessary to station military police here...’²³²

‘One of the most beneficial measures that could be taken in this country would be the disarmament of the natives.’²³³

But there is a snag here. Above we have already discussed some of the relevant references in the Gielgud-Anderson reports, and they reveal that around 1900 not only the enemies of the Nkoya, but also a Nkoya *Mwene* like Kabulwebulwe, and a Nkoya-related trader like Kapandula, possessed impressive quantities of guns.

Shimunika’s descriptions of the military aspects of Nkoya states in the nineteenth century do have, in their absence of firearms, a consistency which cannot easily be dismissed. Even when he describes how the first colonial officer enters the Mutondo *lukena*, he makes a point of stating that the *Mwene* meets this representative of the new

‘Kahare-with-One-Hair’; oral source [2]. The flight from Kasempa is also discussed in many other sources, including Smith & Dale (1920); Melland 1967; Chibanza 1961; below we shall come back to this topic.

230 Note that here this word is used as the name of a headman or chief on the Kafue, and not (as in *Likota Iya Bankoya*) as a toponym denoting the area of the latterday Kasempa boma.

231 Val Gielgud to Administrator Northeastern Rhodesia, 21.11.1900, enclosure in Zambia National Archives, BS 1/93, Gielgud-Anderson expedition.

232 Val Gielgud to Administrator Northeastern Rhodesia, 26.1.1901, enclosure in Zambia National Archives, KTJ 1/1 Mumbwa outletters [copy of reports Gielgud-Anderson Hook of the Kafue expedition — cf. Zambia National Archives, BS 1/93].

233 Val Gielgud to Administrator Northeastern Rhodesia, 14.10.1900, enclosure in Zambia National Archives, BS 1/93, Gielgud-Anderson expedition.

political order not with his royal guns, but with a ceremonial bow and arrow! When ownership of the land had to assert itself in the face of rival claims on the part of the colonial power, guns are either truly absent or (because of their recent introduction?) fail to meet the symbolic requirements of the situation:

‘When the Mwene saw the Whiteman entering the capital, Mwene Mutondo came forward with his drums and his bow, and with many people, men as well as women. 2 He came to formally welcome Mubushishi; and when Mubushishi saw that the Mwene had brought his drums and xylophones and his bow, Mubushishi was greatly pleased. 3 He asked the Mwene:

‘Mwene, shoot with your bow so that we can see it.’

Mwene Mutondo Wahila then shot an arrow into a tree, before the eyes of Mubushishi.’ (51: 1f)

Another source claims:

‘The people had no firearms, only spears, when Shipungu and Kamotwe were still living in Wushanga, under the name of Mashasha, before they were chased by the Kaonde.’²³⁴

One interpretation could be that the firearms were in fact there, but that Shimunika’s desire to depict the Nkoya as innocent victims of Lozi expansion did not allow him to describe the Nkoya as equally well equipped; but this is unconvincing, since he repeatedly boasts of the effectiveness of Nkoya poisoned arrows, and (as translator of the Old Testament) is not exactly prone to prudishly denouncing violence in general.

A more likely explanation is arrived at when we take the geopolitics of the situation into account. Since the mid-nineteenth century, the Mutondo *lukena* was effectively incorporated in a network of tribute centred on Lealui (50: 4f). This certainly limited, as from that point in time, the Nkoya opportunities to engage in long-distance trade.

²³⁴ Oral source [11]. Also for Holub a superior type of bow and arrows was — along with matted hair — the hallmark of Nkoya-ness, and a main item of Nkoya regional trade: Holy 1975: 5, 184f, 191 and *passim*.

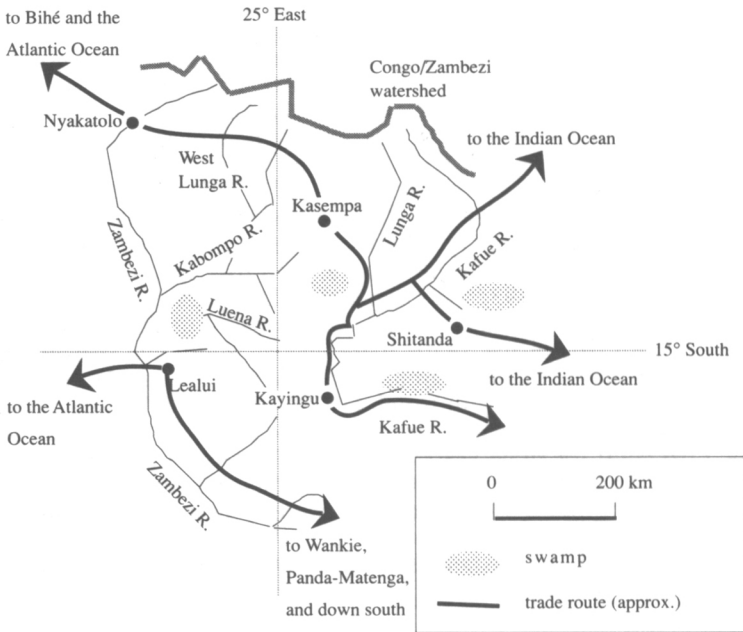


Diagram 5. Approximate trade routes in central western Zambia, second half of the nineteenth century²³⁵

The Lozi state was relatively closed to the Mambari and Swahili traders. The slave trade to the Atlantic and Indian coast which prevailed at the fringes of the Lozi state and outside, in Barotseland had its counterpart in the flow of slaves from the outlying areas to the Zambezi flood plain where they provided the labour essential for the Lozi economy. In addition to the direct west-east trade route to Lealui, there was a more northerly one which bypassed Barotseland and met with the trade route from the east, via the Kafue, in the capital of Mwene Kayingu, just outside the Lozi sphere of influence (cf. diagram 5). Such trade goods as the Nkoya *Myene* under effective Lozi control could none the less obtain, were likely to be subsequently claimed as tribute and whisked off to the centre of the Lozi empire. Guns were items of wealth *par excellence*, and it would be little surprising if only

²³⁵ Sources include: Burton 1873; Capello & Ivens (1886, i: 397f); Flint 1970; Director 1964; Holub (1879: 166f); Serpa Pinto (1881); Smith & Dale (1920, i: 47, n. 1); Zimbabwe National Archives, Harare, map collection: [114] BSACo. Territories (1901), and AC Rhodesia (1895).

a few of them arrived and fewer still were retained in the *zinkena* of Mutondo and Kahare. Holub (1879: 174) sees the firearms in Barotseland as concentrated in the hands of the state elite and of the groups on the banks of the Zambezi; these groups he specifically enumerates, and of course the Nkoya, who live up-country, are not included. Selous (1893: 237) comments on the paucity of firearms among the Ila at the time (1880s), as compared to their abundance among the Lozi. In the 1870s there was an additional reason why firearms should be extracted from the tributary *zinkena* to the centre of the Lozi state: according to Holub (1879: 171f), after Sipopa's death (1876) most of his guns were thrown into the Zambezi, which²³⁶ denied the Lozi court for some years the principal means of procuring ivory for trade. Remarkably, guns were not among the many specifically enumerated articles of wealth that were claimed as Lewanika's funerary tribute at Kahare's *lukena* in 1919 (see above). Guns were even absent at the distant Kayimbu *lukena* which, by several accounts,²³⁷ was well under Lozi influence until the advent of the Kaonde.

In the light of this evidence we can partly reconcile the contradiction between the paucity of guns according to Shimunika, and the abundance of guns at the Hook of the Kafue also in the hands of the Nkoya Mwene Kabulwebulwe: Kabulwebulwe was on the very edge of the Lozi sphere of influence, at the eastern boundary of Lewanika's sphere of influence which has been subject to considerable academic discussion.²³⁸ The extent to which this boundary created ambiguities can also be gauged from Gielgud's reports:

'The above remarks [on the relative lawlessness of the Hook of the Kafue society] do not apply so much to the people living in the neighbourhood of my camp (...) who being on the boundary with the Barotse have a better idea of a centralized form of government.'²³⁹

On the other hand, the Ila in the same area were practically outside Lozi control:

²³⁶ Apart from representing a massive destruction of royal wealth whose parallel in Nkoya royal funerary practices would be the burial alive of royal slaves: a slave was thought of as equivalent to a gun.

²³⁷ Cf. the above archival source on Chief Kasempa, and *Likota Iya Bankoya* (29: 1f); also cf. Shaloff 1972.

²³⁸ Cf. Coillard 1971; Mutumba Mainga 1973; Prins 1980. Cf. E.M. Shimantale, 'The history of the Mbwela people', photocopy of typescript of an interview by J.K. Rennie, 6 pp., s.l., 1976, author's collection; Shimantale claims that Kabulwebulwe only came under Lozi control after settling at Mayukuyulo-'Makuji', an island in the Kafue river, shortly before 1900.

²³⁹ Val Gielgud to Administrator Northeastern Rhodesia, 14.10.1900, enclosure in Zambia National Archives, BS1/93, Gielgud-Anderson expedition.

‘the Abatshukulumbwi [Mashukulumbwe], although perfectly friendly,²⁴⁰ shewed in their behaviour a marked contrast to their neighbours above mentioned (...). I feel convinced that he [the Abatshukulumbwi, sing.] does not believe or is ever able to conceive that the white man will be able or even attempt to enforce a new regime in his country and refuses to regard him seriously. This I am of opinion (*sic*) also partly arises from the fact that a section of the Abatshukulumbwi nation after three years indecisive fighting tendered submission to Lewanika who has however been content with receiving a nominal tribute of skins and no attempt to govern them has been made, the Barotse, I imagine, fearing to provoke further hostilities.’²⁴¹

The situation was unclear, and shifting. Only a few years later the colonial officer Nicholls was to report on Kabulwebulwe’s area that

‘Every man possesses a gun and is a hunter, and a good deal of the ivory which finds its way to Lealui comes from the Bankoya.’²⁴²

In other words, there were guns, but the local people were subservient to Lozi overlordship none the less.

What appeared to be a bias on Shimunika’s part, most likely is a faithful rendering of the historical situation concerning the distribution of firearms, even if the underlying causes escape Shimunika’s awareness.

Shimunika as a laudator temporis (colonialis) acti

At first glance, the image of Nkoya society as evoked by *Likota Iya Bankoya* is one-sided: not only in its emphasis on dynastic history (as if the precolonial past, especially the early nineteenth century, was the only time when the Nkoya really lived and commanded respect) but also in its suggestion of essential continuity between the nineteenth and the twentieth century, as if the advent of colonialism and capitalism did not produce a total transformation which in fact dealt a formidable blow to Nkoya culture and Nkoya political institutions. Colonialism and the English language form positive reference points in *Likota Iya*

²⁴⁰ Ironically, within a few years the Ila would stage a minor uprising leading to bloodshed among the local Europeans; Rotberg 1967: 73f.

²⁴¹ Val Gielgud to Administrator Northeastern Rhodesia, 26.1.1901, enclosure in Zambia National Archives, KTJ 1/1 Mumbwa outletters (copy of reports of Gielgud-Anderson Hook of the Kafue expedition — cf. Zambia National Archives, BS 1/93).

²⁴² G.H. Nicholls [Collector, Baluba sub-district, March 1906], ‘Notes on natives inhabiting the Baluba sub-district’, 22 pp., enclosure in Zambia National Archives, KTJ 2/1 Mumbwa — Some important papers.

Bankoya, association with which is thought to enhance prestige. On closer scrutiny however the treatment of the colonial period is more adequate than the limited space allotted to it would suggest; moreover, there is in this respect a simple division of labour between *Likota lya Bankoya* and the earlier pamphlet *Muhumpu*, half of which is devoted to neo-traditional political conflicts in the colonial period. Within these limitations, the colonial administration and the changing patterns of economic circulation through the creation of trading stores can be said to be reflected in the argument of *Likota lya Bankoya*. The fact that the author takes the colonial life-world for granted and makes it his principal frame of reference is of course not conducive to an analysis of the radical transformation of Nkoya political institutions under colonial rule. But the disrupting influence of labour migration (for many decades the Nkoya's principal source of cash) is eloquently stated (chapters 51 and 52). The main omission appears to concern cash crops, whose cultivation however gained some impetus (mainly in the western part of the district) after World War II, outside the period covered by the book.

male sexist bias?

Along with a larger number of male informants, Shimunika explicitly mentioned a number of women as sources for *Likota lya Bankoya*; of other named informants it is said that they married a chief's daughter, implying that this fact enhanced their value as a historical source. Shimunika thus implicitly acknowledges the importance of the female perspective for Nkoya history. On the other hand, he shares in the male perspective of Nkoya *Wene* which leads to such distortion and translation difficulties in the face of the predominance of women among early *Myene*, and nowhere in his account he explicitly raises the question as to why presentday *Myene* should be all male.

When I questioned him personally on this point at Luampa Mission in 1977,²⁴³ his only answer was the story of the male incumbent of the Kahare kingship who took over from his mother when people suddenly and to their dismay realized that the chief's drums had to be silent when the female *Mwene* was menstruating... It took me hours of arguing before even a fine historical mind like Shimunika was prepared to accept (and even then only perfunctorily?) that, since female *Myene* had always menstruated, this explanation of the shift to male kingship was hardly convincing, and that behind the mythical explanation lay historical changes of a political, economic, military and ideological nature — such as we shall explore in chapters 5 and 6.

Another indication of Shimunika's male bias is the complete absence, in *Likota lya Bankoya*, of any references to female puberty rites which form, however, a very central institution of Nkoya society, the

²⁴³ Oral source [22].

very basis of female identity, solidarity, symbolism and power, and whose history appears to be older than state formation in western Zambia.²⁴⁴ In view of the very liberal treatment of other non-Christian elements in *Likota Iya Bankoya*, however despised and persecuted by Christianity, it is unlikely that the omission of female initiation ritual from *Likota Iya Bankoya* is due to any Christian prejudice. Instead, other systematic factors influencing Shimunika's perception and historical argument are involved here. Perhaps that for ideological reasons deriving from the aristocratic perspective and the insistence on ethnic unity in the face of the *local commoner/immigrant ruler* opposition, Shimunika could not afford to enter into his historical account the totality of contemporary Nkoya culture (assuming that female initiation belongs to the 'local-commoner' pole of the opposition), but had to concentrate on such elements as could be accommodated in the perspective of male-centred dynastic history. I shall come back to this selectivity in chapter 6, where I attempt to develop a systematic, structuralist-inspired method to retrieve the historical information from *Likota Iya Bankoya*.

I would maintain that although *Likota Iya Bankoya* does provide remarkable insights into the female dimension of Nkoya kingship in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, the relevant information has crept in *despite* the author's male bias. Rev. Shimunika was in every respect as much a supporter of male dominance as contemporary Nkoya culture and Christianity allowed him to be. His text was written for totally different purposes than stating the case for female rights past or present. This state of affairs could only enhance the value of such glimpses of female power as are to be found in his book, but of course does not facilitate our task of decoding these bits of information. Whatever vision of gender relations crept in, must be attributed to unconscious mechanisms stemming from the author's subconsciously sharing in the Nkoya culture and collective historical experience.

Thus the historical criticism of *Likota Iya Bankoya* yields an uneven, but by and large positive assessment of Rev. Shimunika as a historian. His historiographic techniques have their weaknesses, but these can be detected and compensated for. His intentions lead to specific identifiable biases, but other biases that lie well in the line of expectation are reasonably avoided, and his handling of the data never becomes totally determined by them. Although clearly not a professional contribution to academic historiography, *Likota Iya Bankoya* is genuinely historical and could not be considered as merely an empty expression of ethnic,

²⁴⁴ Considering both oral sources at my disposal, and the extremely wide distribution of this institution all over South Central Africa — including the pre-Lunda, Tonga-Ila substratum. In *Likota Iya Bankoya*, female *Myene* are obliquely associated with fish symbolism. Fish taboos dominate presentday Nkoya menarche and female puberty training. This suggests some historical link, through intermediate symbolic transformations, between female *Myene* and female puberty rites, but the precise nature of this link requires further research.

aristocratic and sexist preconceptions. It deserves to be taken seriously. But there is still a more fundamental test which *Likota Iya Bankoya* is now to undergo.

3.4. The ultimate test: the confrontation of *Likota Iya Bankoya* with unprocessed oral data from central western Zambia

If in the course of this chapter we have identified Shimunika's method and possible biases, and have reached the conclusion that he shows himself to be a genuine historian of remarkably sound judgment even if sometimes given to biases and literary excursions, there remains of course one final test to which we should subject the material presented in *Likota Iya Bankoya*: the wealth of unprocessed oral data from central western Zambia and surrounding areas. Shimunika was shown to be careful, dextrous and rather consistent in the handling of his raw oral data — enabling us for instance to draw skeleton genealogies on the basis of his discursive text, yet without over-stressing and over-streamlining the data from various kingships and subgroups. But even the most intelligent handling of data cannot in itself change the nature and the quality of these data. Therefore it is useful to reconsider, in this section, the type of data that served Shimunika as his raw materials.

Remaining within the overall argument of *Likota Iya Bankoya*, one of the results of such a confrontation could be greater historical precision, particularly where sensitive issues are concerned. Above we have already seen how the sketchy treatment of slavery in the book can be much enlightened by the considerable evidence on nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century slavery in raw oral data. Similarly, the oral traditions help us to interpret specific details in the text of *Likota Iya Bankoya*. For instance, the fact that the phrase *ka matunga* features in the praise-name not only of Kayambila but also of Kabimba, and then is specifically explained as an expression of territorial control,²⁴⁵ rules out the possible interpretation of *ka matunga* as a parental epithet ('son of Matunga').

More important is that an appraisal of the nature and quality of the historical information in raw oral data from central western Zambia can help us to pinpoint the extent, and the limits, of historical information in *Likota Iya Bankoya*. Shimunika spent a lifetime collecting oral evidence, rethinking the history of central western Zambia, and building, out of it, the history which that newly-emerging ethnic group, the Nkoya, needed most. What qualitative changes did the material undergo under his hands? Is the relative convergence and consistence as found in *Likota Iya Bankoya*, a reflection of the historical potential as contained in the unprocessed sources, or simply the result of Shimunika's intellectual efforts?

²⁴⁵ Oral source [1].

The nature of the problem is contained in the following amusing passage from Ernest Brown's excellent study of Nkoya music:

'Once while visiting [the *lukena* of Mwene Mutondo] (...) I asked, "Who was the first chief of the Nkoya?" Present were the chief's Prime Minister, some of the royal musicians, a translator, and a Mr Shaukalo, an excellent singer from another village who had travelled there to record some songs with the royal musicians earlier in the day. Mr Shaukalo owned a copy of the Nkoya history written by Reverend Shimunika.²⁴⁶ When I posed my question, at the same instant Mr Shaukalo said, "Libupe," while the Prime Minister said, "Shihoka." Then Mr Shaukalo left, saying that if the others were going to promote incorrect history, he could not be part of it and would have to leave, which he did. The difference of opinion on this point is very real and it is very widespread within Nkoya society. If Nkoya society was originally decentralized, much like Lozi society was, this difference of opinion might reflect the existence of rival centers of political power among the Nkoya.' (Brown 1984: 99f)

Making a creative and illuminating use of such generalizations on Nkoya history and society as are contained in my earlier publications, Brown (1984: 100f) pinpoints the large amount of divergence in Nkoya royal traditions and genealogies, and explains such convergence as occurs after the establishment of the Mutondo dynasty (starting with Mwene Mutondo Shinkisha) by the increasing political centralization:

'These oral traditions are themselves part of systems of symbols tied to the political and economic relationships existing at specific points in time. Therefore, the high degree of correspondence may be a reflection of the political unification of the Nkoya people. The above differences in Nkoya royal traditions seem to reflect ancient political cleavages within Nkoya society.' (Brown 1984: 101; my italics)

It is important to realize that with Mwene Shinkisha we are well into the nineteenth century — that Mwene's reign would have been sometime around 1830. This would mean that before that period, Nkoya royal traditions are so contradictory as to be devoid of specific historical information — unless we could manage to reconstruct the cleavages in Nkoya society before 1830, and on the basis of that reconstruction decode the contemporary contradictory evidence by compensating for group bias.

²⁴⁶ Probably *Muhumpu*, since *Likota Iya Bankoya* had not yet been published. *Muhumpu* was indeed circulating at the village level in Kaoma district in the 1970s. Note that this is another instance of recycling!

My own oral historical research corroborates Brown's views,²⁴⁷ and makes me very pessimistic as to the possibility to use the area's oral traditions referring to periods before the second quarter of the nineteenth century for the reconstruction of specific historical information — names, events, in short for anything but the most generalized pattern of political and economic structural relationships.

While Brown's oral-historical research concentrated on the Mutondo dynasty, mine did on the Kahare line. My informants in this connexion were mainly people in eastern Kaoma district, or inhabitants of Lusaka but originating from that part of the district. In general genealogical knowledge among these eastern Nkoya, or Mashasha, did not go back further than one or two generations immediately preceding Mwene Kahare Shamamano, who died on the Kamano river, just east of Kaoma district, in 1913. The parents of Shamamano and of his brothers Shibanda, Livumina, Shalunganda, his sister Nahonge, and others, were Mishengo Kabambi, male, and Mutolwa or Mutolo. From that generation down to the present, genealogical information is in general fragmented, but fairly consistent. Above that generation, however, the genealogies do little but offer *free permutations and variations of virtually all possible genealogical links between a handful of protagonists* (such as Shihoka, Manenga, Shakalongo, Kahare), often with less well-known characters thrown in who feature prominently in the contemporary informant's own specific family traditions without having attained general historical significance throughout the district.

A typical genealogy of this sort is presented in diagram 6 below. The informant himself is a collateral descendant of Kangombe.²⁴⁸ We see how Kapeshi, in line with the centrality of the Ladder story as discussed above, is placed at the apex of the royal genealogy, and both the Kahare and the Mutondo line (with four major *Myene* of the late eighteenth/ early nineteenth century) are combined in one elegant genealogical statement: through the figure of Shihoka.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁷ It has to be admitted that Brown (1984) is not a totally independent study from mine in this respect that much of his view on precolonial Nkoya society is based on, duly acknowledged, passages in my own publications on the subject.

²⁴⁸ Because of slave connotations of part of his ancestry information as to the exact genealogical link was not volunteered but had to be ascertained from other sources.

²⁴⁹ A similar argument is repeated in the same informant's contribution to the group interview with the Royal Council of Mwene Kahare, oral source [18] 13.10.1977. Incidentally, [16] is the one occasion in my oral sources that Mwene Shikanda was claimed to have been male, contrary to my reconstructions in chapter 2.

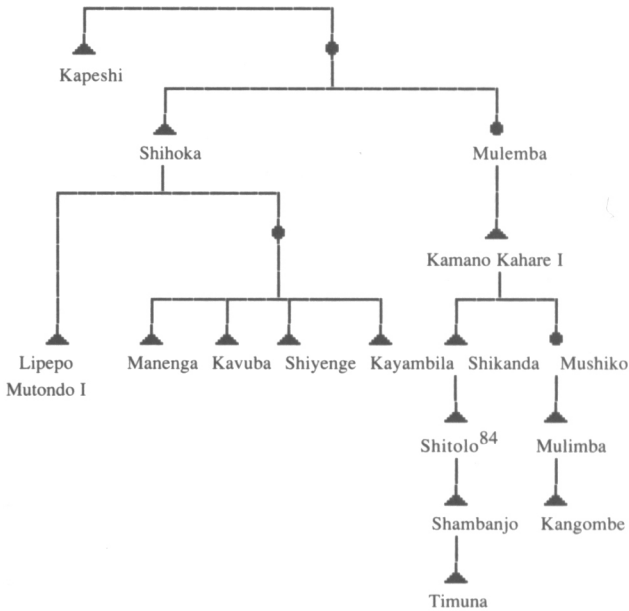


Diagram 6. One oral source's genealogy of Nkoya Myene.²⁵¹

Genealogical convergence of the Kahare and the Mutondo kingships is also found in the modern official version of Nkoya royal history, as compiled at the district headquarters on the basis of information made available to the District Secretary by the royal councils of Mwene Mutondo and Mwene Kahare, and represented in diagram 7.²⁵²

In other genealogies, Shakalongo is made into the mother's brother of Shihoka so as to express the former's seniority.²⁵³ In yet another variant,²⁵⁴ an otherwise unknown Lady Mwene Tete²⁵⁵ is called upon to form the apex of a genealogy once again uniting most protagonists into one genealogical scheme as in diagram 8.

²⁵⁰ Most probably equivalent to Mutolwa or Mutolo.

²⁵¹ Oral source [16].

²⁵² District Secretary Kaoma to Permanent Secretary Western Province, 10.5.1974, Kaoma district files, ADM/12 'Chiefs and headmen'.

²⁵³ E.g. oral source [14].

²⁵⁴ Oral source [20].

²⁵⁵ Perhaps her name lives on in that of the headman Mwanatete, one of the unrecognized Nkoya chief's titles now subject to petitioning for official state recognition and promotion to full chief's status; cf. oral source [4].

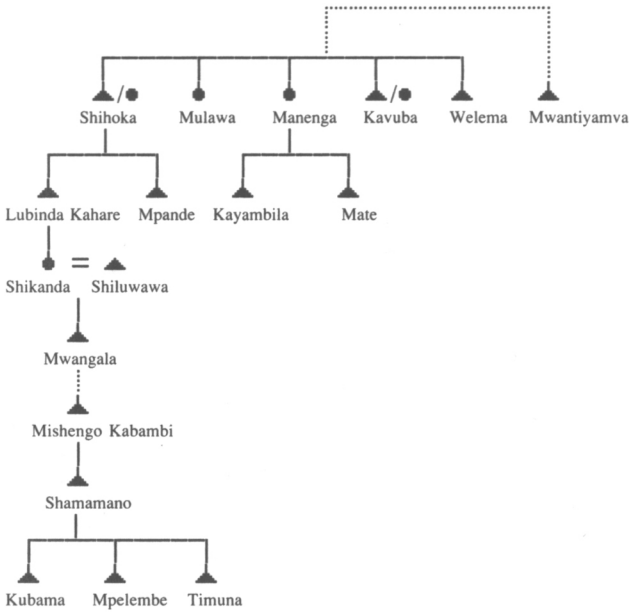


Diagram 7. Official royal genealogy of the Nkoya Myene.²⁵⁶

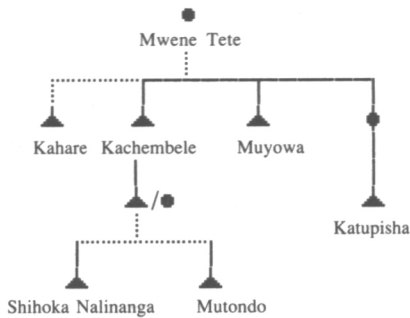


Diagram 8. Nkoya royal genealogy according to elders in Lusaka.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁶ District Secretary Kaoma to Permanent Secretary Western Province, 10.5.1974, Kaoma district files, ADM/12 'Chiefs and headmen'. In this source, Shihoka's gender is claimed to be uncertain, but 'probably male since Shihoka travelled over such large distances'! Kavuba's gender is likewise claimed to be uncertain. Mate's (Lushiku Shinkisha, the first Mwene Mutondo) gender is here claimed to be male, contrary to my

The variation as is already clear in these examples goes to show that here we are not really dealing with historical information, but with the informants' intellectual attempts to create links of unity and seniority between political titles whose referents, in the last analysis, are *contemporary*.

Scores of similar examples could be cited. The permutational principle is clearly seen at work when we compare the Nkoya kings' lists as given by Brown (1984: 101 and 509-510) with those implied in *Likota lya Bankoya* and written out in full (and again with a great number of additions and alterations of his own) by Mr H.H. Mwene; the latter are included in the present volume at the end of Part II below, with my extensive analytical footnotes. Radical deviations from the dynastic order and the connecting genealogical relationship as given by Shimunika in *Likota lya Bankoya* can also be found in a short manuscript Nkoya history by Mr Moses Masheka, who puts the following three *Myene* at the apex of the Mutondo dynastic list:

- (1) Lyovu lya Mbuwa;²⁵⁸ succeeded by
- (2) Libupe, whose gender is claimed not to be female but male;
- (3) Shilayi, who is claimed to be a sister's son of Libupe, and by implication is also suggested to be male!²⁵⁹

Finally, as some of the footnotes to Mr H.H. Mwene's kings' lists below will demonstrate, the principle of free permutation operates not only between sources, but also between various statements derived from the same source at different times. This effect can even be seen in such a meticulously consistent statement as Rev. Shimunika's himself. In an interview in 1977 he placed Shiwutulu at quite a different position from the one occupied by that figure in *Likota lya Bankoya* (11: 1): in the former case belonging to the Mutondo line, Shiwutulu is in the latter case situated more to the Kahare/Kapeshi side.²⁶⁰

reconstructions. Shikanda is here claimed to be female. In *Likota lya Bankoya* (43: 2), Mpelembe is claimed to be a younger brother of Shamamano, but no mention is made of the historical fact of his accession to the Kahare kingship in 1914. Oral source [6] states that the Mpelembe who preceded Timuna as Mwene Kahare was Timuna's younger brother. The contradiction is immaterial however with regard to the present argument.

²⁵⁷ Oral source [20].

²⁵⁸ The manuscript has: *Lyopu Lyambuwa*.

²⁵⁹ Untitled manuscript (B) on Nkoya history by Moses Masheka Munangisha, Mutondo Royal Establishment, dated 1.1.1977 and later entries dated 10.8.1977, 24.8.1977, 10.4.1956, 14 unnumbered pages of which 4 are blank, no title, first line runs: 'Shihemwa. Biheka bya Mwene Mutondo Mashiku 2.1.1942'.

²⁶⁰ Oral source [22]. Note that (11: 2) makes mention of 'another Lady Mwene Shiwutulu'; however, in 1977 reference was made to the one in (11: 1).

The detection of the principle of free genealogical permutation also lends a new perspective to the fact, as discussed above, that in a group interview with the Kahare royal council, a very emotional and confusing discussion which reiterated the entire history of Mutondo/Kahare rivalry throughout the colonial period, finally reached but one general agreement: *that between the kingship of Kahare and Mutondo there is absolutely no genealogical connexion whatsoever!*²⁶¹ The pressures at the district and provincial level necessitating Nkoya unity to be expressed in terms of genealogical links between the major contemporary Nkoya *Myene*, were obviously not present in that situation where I, an outsider researcher whose Nkoya contacts so far had been almost entirely Mashasha, was interviewing a uniquely Mashasha group of elders. Then the genealogical fictions were irrelevant and could be dropped.

What type of conclusions do we arrive at when we confront the argument in *Likota lya Bankoya* with the raw oral data from central western Zambia?

In the first place, the oral traditions are richer and less restrictive than *Likota lya Bankoya* with regard to the less ceremonious aspects of nineteenth-century Nkoya life: slavery, violence, trade. As far as the reconstruction of specific historical events and relationships between actual individuals is concerned, the raw oral data make us deeply distrust the apparent consistency which *Likota lya Bankoya* has managed to retain, e.g. in its genealogies.

There is no reason to assume that the raw oral data Shimunika collected as from the 1920s, were of a fundamentally different nature from those Brown and I myself collected in the 1970s, or which Mutumba Mainga collected in the 1960s. The fact that surprisingly consistent genealogies can be drawn on the basis of the information offered in *Likota lya Bankoya*, far from suffices to consider that information factual and historical in the objective sense; it only indicates Shimunika's powers of reasoning and synthesis. Of the thousands of possible genealogical combinations that could be made between the protagonists of Nkoya history, Shimunika has chosen to adopt a few, — no doubt with sound reasons as far as the internal contradictions of his data were concerned, but *ignoring the fact that his data did not lend themselves to any such genealogical reconstructions in the first place*. In other words, Shimunika applied an impressive historical method and intuition upon material that by its very nature did not deserve such treatment. The transition from myth to history cannot be made by simply ordering and streamlining the traditional material, without breaking its built-in codes and symbolism, and by doing so radically transforming the data into something new, into an academic statement. It is here that we reach the limits of Shimunika as a historian; and that the need for a far more sophisticated method of

²⁶¹ Oral source [18] 14.10.1977.

historical analysis, such as will be sketched in the remaining chapters of my argument, becomes eminently clear.

The extreme divergence of genealogical information in the raw data shows us that political and ideological factors have been at work for too long a time than to enable us any longer to compensate for them and to trace back such historical facts as may underlie them. The genealogies, both in and outside of *Likota lya Bankoya*, largely belong to the realm of politically-inspired fiction, and even when they happen to relate to real people, the latter's actual relationships cannot be reconstructed further back than beyond the relatively recent past of the mid-nineteenth century.

Finally, the confrontation with the raw traditions helps us understand *the extent to which the images of Nkoya history* as propounded by contemporary informants including Shimunika, *are greatly censored, transformed and endowed with strong ethnic emotions in the light of the political history of Kaoma district in the twentieth century*. To a large extent the survival of the royal titles of Kahare and Mutondo in the late-colonial and post-colonial state was an accident of modern history — yet the Nkoya precolonial past is presented as if these two titles have dominated the history of central western Zambia for centuries. One can only wonder what sort of precolonial Nkoya history might have been produced by someone like Shimunika if the creation of Kafue National Park had not forced Mwene Kabulwebulwe to move away from his area, or if the move had been westward, into Mankoya district, rather than eastward; would we have had a tripartite Nkoya precolonial history? What central part would Shimunika have reserved in *Likota lya Bankoya* for Shakalongo, or Kambotwe, with reference to the nineteenth century, had not these titles been eclipsed in the process of Lozi incorporation?

Thus *Likota lya Bankoya* turns out to form a half-product, between raw oral data and scholarly analysis. The further back it goes into the past, the less historical in the academic sense it becomes, and the other way around. As a statement on concrete specific protagonists and their exploits it only becomes more or less reliable as from the middle of the nineteenth century; but on a more abstract level than Rev. Shimunika himself envisaged, as a statement-yet-to-be-decoded on structures and their dynamics, its significance extends also over the earlier periods of state formation in central western Zambia, and even before. Our main task then would be to find a level of discourse, method and analysis where we can benefit from Shimunika's synthesis without naïvely taking his text at face value.

3.5. *Likota lya Bankoya* as literature and as myth

Likota lya Bankoya, however much a remarkable piece of historiographic production, is at the same time a work based on African oral

literature. It contains folk etymologies ('the Basket Which Could Hear' (7: 1f), the name Kaoma which from the generic term for a royal drum (*liwoma*) became that of a river (36: 3), etc.; hermetic royal praise-names that in their archaic phrasing and esoteric symbolism appear to be unadulterated pieces of ancient rhetoric art;²⁶² myths of origin (the story of the Big Pot of Game Meat (4: 1f)); and a myth evoking a ruler's quest to retrieve the moon as a *mpande* pendant for his child (41: 1f). Finally, underlying the book is a consistent and dynamic symbolic structure, whose outline and significance will keep us occupied in the remaining chapters. No historical criticism of *Likota Iya Bankoya* could be complete without an examination of this literary aspect. For even if our inspection of historiographic methods and biases has largely vindicated the author as a genuine historian (albeit that he remained the prisoner of the limitations of his data), it remains possible that the input of oral-literature elements in the book is so large that it cannot be treated as a contribution to history but must be accorded the — equally lofty — status of a work of art.

Kapeshi ka Munungampanda

The literary and mythical aspect of *Likota Iya Bankoya* is nowhere clearer than in the passage that deals with Mwene Kapeshi ka Munungampanda — apparently an incumbent of the Kahare kingship as recent as the early nineteenth century, but bearing a name which means 'Ladder consisting of Joined Forked Poles', and said to have engaged in the entirely unrealistic exploit of building precisely such a ladder into heaven...

Kapeshi's gender is not defined in the text. The interpretation as male in our English translation derives from the symbolic analysis of the story: Kapeshi acquires male connotations because, in the story, the Ladder is the means through which violent males (as represented by Kapeshi's father) seek to usurp the cosmological legitimation underlying female kingship. However, given the wide spread, throughout South Central Africa, of the story of the cosmic ladder or tower into heaven,²⁶³ it would appear as if Mwene Kapeshi's historical status is altogether different from that of the dynastic figures that surround Kapeshi as parents and children, within the Kahare dynastic line. One has the strong impression of the insertion of much older mythical material, the Kapeshi/Ladder theme, into a dynastic account which, referring to the first half of the nineteenth century, otherwise could be considered as fairly factual: the migration of what was to become the Kahare dynastic line from the Maniinga river to the Tumba plain, the subsequent move to Kayimbu, the confrontation with the Yeke, etc. Significantly, Mr H.H. Mwene in his discursive account of the burial

²⁶² E.g. 2: 2; 9: 2; 9: 3; 23: 2; 26: 1; 27: 4; 32: 2; 33: 1; 37: 1; 50: 12; 52: 10.

²⁶³ Roberts 1973: 346 and references cited there.

sites of Nkoya *Myene* admits that Kapeshi's grave is nowhere to be found.²⁶⁴ When Kapeshi is so clearly a mythical character, it would be meaningless to seek and reconstruct Kapeshi's gender — except for the syntactic requirements of English translation. That Kapeshi is an alien insertion in this otherwise perhaps quite factual genealogy relating to the mid-nineteenth century, is also clear from the fact that he is made to bridge the gap between Kahare I and Kahare II, but is claimed to do so through two instances of patrilineal succession — whereas matrilineal succession is dominant in Nkoya precolonial dynastic relations as reflected in *Likota lya Bankoya*. On the other hand, the contemporary succession practice has come to be patrilineal, which might lead us to assume that Kapeshi's insertion dates not from the original traditional sources, but was effected in the twentieth century, by Rev. Shimunika among others.²⁶⁵ In this way he could make use of a beautiful story, and at the same time brush up his account of the Kahare kingship which otherwise was quite meagre as compared to the rich data he had on the Mutondo kingship.

The situation is only made more complicated and enigmatic by the fact that Sandasanda, in his Kaonde history cited above, discusses a Chief Kapeshi Kamununga Mpande [*sic*], of the ants totem, whose reign extended from 1922 to 1937 (Sandasanda 1972: 12). Nothing in that discussion suggests (but nothing contradicts either) that this chief revived a title that had been in existence for a long time.²⁶⁶

Perhaps more is involved here than merely an anachronistic play of the imagination. In the version of the tower story as quoted by Schecter,²⁶⁷ the location of the story is Musumba — the Lunda capital —, the requesting child is not Mwana Mwene Kapeshi but the first Mwaat Yaamv, and instead the tower itself is called *Kaposhi*. The entire episode is presented as the occasion for the exodus of humiliated

²⁶⁴ See his kings' lists below and footnotes there.

²⁶⁵ If the insertion was *entirely* Shimunika's work, the apical position as given to Kapeshi in oral source [16] and other sources to be cited below, could only be explained as a case of recycling of *Likota lya Bankoya* back into Kaoma rural society, which I think is unlikely.

²⁶⁶ In July 1989, when this book was already written but theft of the manuscript forced me to write it again, I interviewed a Mwe Kapeshi in Shipungu village, Kabanga stream, Kaoma district (oral source [25]). Of obviously very advanced age, the informant claimed to be a contemporary of Mwene Munangisha (died 1898, cf. 48: 2). This informant's fellow-villagers consider him to be a close relative of the Kapeshi who had the tower built, or even as that very same person himself, suggesting (perhaps with symbolic implications of dynastic conflict) that merely 'by stepping aside had he escaped death when the tower collapsed'. But despite the great expectations which the identification of this informant kindled, extensive questioning could not penetrate the mists of time and senility. As was perhaps to be expected, the informant's link with Kapeshi ka Munungampanda turned out to be more and more distant and mythical as the interview proceeded.

²⁶⁷ Schecter 1980a: 41; collected outside a contemporary Nkoya context.

Mbwela from Musumba — perhaps the very first phase in the dispersal of Lunda offshoots all over South Central Africa. The Nkoya today claim for themselves a glorious, central place in the history of Zambia; is it possible, after all, that this claim is more than merely a megalomaniac compensation for the historical trauma the Nkoya have suffered at the hands of the Kololo and their political heirs the Lozi, since the middle of the nineteenth century? Particularly the analogy between the titles of Mwaat Yaamv and Kahare is intriguing. Do the seemingly preposterous transformations (especially ‘Kaposhi as tower’/ ‘Kapesi as requester’) point to just a literary, rather than a historical, link between the two versions? The emphatic mention of the Mbwela in the Schecter version suggests otherwise. Is it at all possible that the ancestors of the later dynastic group around the Kahare kingship, in ways lost to contemporary Nkoya collective memory, did play an exceptional key role in Musumban out-migration and the early spread of the Lunda political culture south across the Zambezi/Congo watershed? In that case Shimunika’s insertion of this mythical element in the nineteenth-century history of the Kahare kingship, however anachronistic, would suggest a significance for Nkoya history beyond the wildest ethnic dreams of the Nkoya today.

The story of the ladder or tower into heaven is of great significance, not only because it has a link with traditions of early Musumban history, but also because throughout South Central Africa it is associated with the origin of ethnic heterogeneity: a widespread variant of the story has it that mankind formed only one ethnic group when the Ladder was built, and that only after the Ladder’s downfall, when the people dispersed in discord and confusion, the many languages and ethnic groups of the present came into being.

Even though this point is not made explicitly in the *Likota Iya Bankoya* rendering of the Kapesi myth, contemporary Nkoya readers yet see that account as proof that ‘the Nkoya’ were actually the first of the ethnic groups to arrive in Zambia from the Zairean homeland, and perhaps the origin of all the other ethnic groups.²⁶⁸ As one oral source puts it:

‘Before Kapesi there were only Nkoya. Through the episode of the Ladder all the other tribes came into being.’²⁶⁹

Moreover, contemporary Nkoya readers who are subjects of Mwene Kahare see the myth, as situated by Shimunika in the history of the Kahare kingship, as proof that, among the Nkoya *Myene*, Mwene Kahare was certainly the most senior and ancient, particularly taking precedence over his contemporary counterpart Mwene Mutondo.²⁷⁰ The

²⁶⁸ Oral source [18] 13.10.1977.

²⁶⁹ Oral source [22].

²⁷⁰ Oral source [7] 22.10.1977.

story and its interpretation thus becomes charged with the political rivalry between the contemporary Nkoya 'moieties' — the subjects of Mwene Kahare and Mwene Mutondo. To streamline this type of argument, informants are inclined to disagree with Shimunika as to the specific genealogical position of Mwene Kapeshi: they tend to situate him at the top of the Kahare dynastic genealogy.²⁷¹

Towards the end of chapter 5, when we shall have gained far greater understanding of Nkoya history, we shall come back to this point and bring it to bear on the question of the seniority contest between the Mutondo and the Kahare kingship.

symbolism and history: the case of gender relations

It is the attention for the literary and symbolic dimension that marks the increasing sophistication in the treatment of oral sources, from the first naïve assumptions of more or less literal truth (as in Vansina's highly seminal early statements: Vansina 1965, 1966), through the severe criticism by researchers only too aware of the symbolic structure underlying the traditions (de Heusch 1972, 1984; Henige 1982), to recent attempts to salvage, with the aid of a complex and explicit methodology, what little remnants of history the traditions might yet contain, while acknowledging the amount of a-historical cosmological projections therein (Miller 1980; Schoffeleers 1985; Willis 1976).²⁷² Much of recent precolonial historiography of Zambia and neighbouring areas can be seen to struggle with this problem.²⁷³ However, in these works another dominant concern is: to subject both oral and documentary data to a historical criticism that stresses the latter-day functioning of historical knowledge in a changing political and ethnic context, — a line of analysis that (more than the sophisticated handling of oral sources against the background of a-historical cosmological and semantic structures) has been a constant in Zambian historiography ever since the early days of Rhodes-Livingstone research (cf. Cunnison 1951, 1959).

For a proper reading of *Likota Iya Bankoya*'s mythical contents, we shall need all the inspiration which this scholarly literature can offer us. For underneath such surface mythical and literary material as the story

²⁷¹ Cf. oral source [16].

²⁷² Similar attempts to thresh history out of data which initially would appear to be a-historical or synchronic reflections of structure, and to confront the methodological problems inherent in such a task, can be found in my own work, e.g. van Binsbergen 1981a, 1985b; van Binsbergen & Schoffeleers 1985b.

²⁷³ E.g. Hoover 1980; Papstein 1978, 1980, 1985; Prins 1978, 1979, 1980; Reeve 1981; Roberts 1973, 1976; Schecter 1980b. A sophisticated, comprehensive effort to apply a symbolic and literary perspective to the analysis of Zambian culture and expressive tradition can also be found in Moyo et al. 1986.

of Kapeshi and the myth of origin of *Wene*, from the Large Cooking-Pot of Game Meat, Shimunika tells us a myth that is both more comprehensive and more revealing: a myth that presents the whole of Nkoya history as a process of changing gender relations, from pre-state female *Myene* to male-headed states. We know that we should not take such a myth at face value — as a statement of Nkoya history. To the extent to which *Likota lya Bankoya* is a work of African literature, the work's apparent narrative content may well be a function of essentially contemporary, unconscious literary, symbolic structures emulating a timeless, static and unchanging world-view, rather than that this content is determined by actual historical processes. Yet on the other hand, what *Likota lya Bankoya* has to say on the evolution of gender relations in the process of state formation, is too impressive, too detailed and altogether too rich to be dismissed as a mere (oral-)literary statement of cosmology. The analysis of this central message in the book, and the attempt to distil a history of state formation out of that myth, will take up much of my argument in the remaining chapters.

How then to salvage the possible bits of history in *Likota lya Bankoya*?

One line of approach, pursued in the preceding pages, is to confront the message in *Likota lya Bankoya* with sources of information external to Shimunika's argument. Having made that assessment, I would now rather concentrate on internal evidence: trying to make history not out of the book's static surface symbolic structure but out of the unconscious, dynamic and systematic transformations that can be detected in that symbolic structure.²⁷⁴ In chapter 6 I shall argue that these transformations appear in literary and symbolic form in *Likota lya Bankoya*, because they once appeared in historical reality — even if we cannot yet periodicize that reality.

Whatever our historical verdict on *Likota lya Bankoya*'s hidden message concerning the transformation of gender relations in the process of state formation, we can only assess it after examining it in detail, in the next two chapters. This involves a large amount of decoding. Trying to assess the gender of characters featuring in the book already raised the point that gender symbolism is likely to have led to all sorts of spurious projections of presentday gender connotations into the past, onto real or fictitious actors. The book's hidden message as regards changing gender relations (a development from pre-state female leadership to male-dominated statehood) might just amount to a timeless statement of a cosmology or world-view, in which a Golden Age of peace and harmony with Nature happens to have female connotations (and therefore is presented in terms of a spuriously projected female leadership), while the Iron Age (in Ovidian, not archaeological terms) with all the nastiness of the human condition takes on male connotations.

²⁷⁴ Cf. de Mahieu 1985; van Binsbergen & Schoffeleers 1985b.

The specific context of Central African political structures and their history offers us yet a second possibility: that of symbolically interpreting gender relations as 'perpetual kinship'. This idiom can be one of consanguinity (where title X is called the 'younger brother' of title Y), but it may also be one of affinal relations, where title A is the 'wife' of title B. A sacred form of the latter is that the secular title B has as its complement the priestly title A: his 'spirit wife'. In such cases one could expect — especially with reference to a distant, mythical past — the incumbents of title A to be represented as women, and those of title B as men, regardless of their actual biological gender. Towards the end of chapter 6, again, I shall explore the extent to which this offers a revealing perspective upon historical gender relations among the Nkoya.

But we have sufficiently prepared the ground, and spent more than half of our argument. It is time to start actually reading *Likota Iya Bankoya* as a historical narrative.