

## Chapter 5

# State and society in nineteenth-century central western Zambia: Regalia, legal aspects, ideology and gender

We have now discussed, in so far as *Likota lya Bankoya* and our additional sources have allowed us, some significant aspects of state formation in central western Zambia. In this chapter we shall look at the major features of the states that thus came into being. We shall proceed to examine regalia, constitutional and other aspects of the states' legal structure, the ideological patterns governing their underlying violence, and the changing place of gender relations in that ideology and in the kinship structures which these Nkoya states sought to surpass, but without lasting success. This will lead to an assessment of the specific effects of these processes on the Kahare kingship around 1900, after which the chapter concludes with a final examination of the presentday Mutondo/Kahare rivalry in the light of the historical processes illuminated in our argument.

### **5.1. Regalia: A male prerogative?**

Above we have seen, with reference to the male Mwene Kazikwa, the first time that ceremonial court paraphernalia are mentioned in *Likota lya Bankoya*: as possessions of a male *Mwene*, and many generations after the rise of female *Myene*. If these possessions are so stressed by

Shimunika in this context, does that mean that this type of regalia was only introduced by that time? It looks as if Nkoya *Myene* at first lacked the Lunda characteristics, and that they only obtained them in the course of a process of change also involving the shift to male-centred kingship. Also note the interesting phrasing of the relevant passage in *Likota Iya Bankoya* (12: 7); the instruments almost legitimate Mwene Kazikwa's position as a ruler.

Possession of these regalia imposed requirements of purity which apparently one of the last Lady *Myene*, Kahare II, could not meet:

'Mwene Kapeshi had a daughter Kahare II. When she grew up she gave birth to a son who was also called Kahare; he was a grandson of Kapeshi. 3 When Lady Mwene Kahare II was Mwene of the drum, the people said:

'Mwene, why is it that when you go into seclusion<sup>348</sup> the drums should be silent? That is very bad. Let us therefore elect her son Kahare Wa Luhuki Lumweya, for he is a man.'

4 Mwene Kahare was *Wa Luhuki Lumweya*: With One Hair.' (41: 2f)

There exists a variant of the above story, featuring not Mwene Kahare II but Mwene Shikanda (who according to *Likota Iya Bankoya* was the daughter, not the mother, of Kahare Wa Luhuki Lumweya...):

'Mwene Shikanda, arriving from Shangaland<sup>349</sup> in the North, impressed the local headman Shiluwawa to such an extent with her royal orchestra, that he had no option but to marry her. The child of this marriage was Mwangala,<sup>350</sup> who was always kept inside the *lukena*. After some years the people, irritated that the drums should be silent when the Lady Mwene was menstruating [and in that connexion would leave the *lukena* for the female seclusion hut outside the royal village] decided to elect him to the kingship in the absence of his mother.'<sup>351</sup>

In both variants the historical paradox, in the light of our discussion of female *Wene*, is truly amazing: after a long period of female leadership, women, on the grounds of their physiology, were suddenly considered unfit for association with royal paraphernalia.<sup>352</sup>

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348 In order to spend the days of her menstruation in the female seclusion hut outside the capital (or any other village).

349 For this toponym, see Part III, note to (22: 2).

350 From oral source [3] 19.11.1973, one would get the impression that Mwangala is identical to Shihoka Nalinanga — another example of the spurious free variation of names and exploits.

351 Oral source [3] 9.10.1973.

352 The parallel with the Inkalanyi epic is again very clear. If we tried to pinpoint the differences between that epic and *Likota Iya Bankoya*, and

The most likely explanation is that the regalia (because of any male associations they already had in the Lunda context? or because of symbolic innovation in the hands of male Nkoya? or because of some new regional cultural influence?) could conveniently function as a focus for the newly emerging male claims to power and authority — as the focus of a new male-dominated world-view.

Although it is attractive to interpret mythical materials in terms of broad, general historical processes, abstracting from ethnic and geographical specificities, let us briefly explore to what extent the latter, more specific perspective might illuminate the two versions of the menstruation story.

The circumstance that, in *Likota Iya Bankoya*, this emergence of an anti-menstrual male ideology is situated only one generation removed from the character of Mwene Kahare With-One-Hair, faintly suggests a possible additional factor: increased 'Ila' influence in the Kahare branch of *Wene*. The hair style rendered as 'with-one-hair' in the Nkoya context appears to be similar to the 'Ila' *isusu* hairdress, a conical construction of hair and clay which may stand over 1 metre in height.<sup>353</sup> Historically, the distinction between Ila and Kaonde is much more vague than contemporary socio-cultural traits would suggest.<sup>354</sup> It is remarkable that both the themes dealing with dramatic gender confrontations (that of Kapeshi/Ladder, and the present menstruation theme) seem to refer to a dynastic branch, and to a geographical area, where Ila influence was relatively powerful.<sup>355</sup> This is not to say that

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systematically interpret these as transformations, such an analysis might shed much needed further light on the Nkoya/Lunda connexion. However, I shun from extending the already complex argument of the present study into a discussion of an epic and of a cultural and linguistic environment I only know from secondary sources.

353 Smith & Dale 1920. M. Malapa described this coiffure which is no longer practiced among the Nkoya: all hair would be shaven leaving only a small tuft right in the middle, which would then be plaited.

354 Cf. Smith & Dale 1920; Melland 1967; a detailed assessment of Ila heterogeneity and the Kaonde connexion also in Zambia National Archives, 'A paper on the origin of the Baila, A Suggestion — to accompany Annual report on Namwala subdistrict, 1917-18' (by J.C. Hall), enclosure in KSF 3/1; also cf. van Binsbergen 1985c.

355 In this connexion it is relevant that oral source [5] claimed the tribal boundary between Nkoya and Ila to be far from sharp, whereas oral source [18] (13.10.1977) claimed that Chief Shezongo, often counted as Ila, was a *mwipa* ('uterine nephew', 'sister's son') of Kahare — apparently in an idiom of perpetual kinship. Holub, who only travelled in the southeastern periphery of the Land of Nkoya in the 1880s, repeatedly implies that the difference between the Nkoya and the Ila was unmistakable from hairstyle and weaponry, but at the same time admits that there were extensive trading contacts between the Ila and the 'northern Nkoya', whom we can identify as the Kahare group at Kayimbu (Holy 1975: 84, 125, 166, 180, 184f, 191, and *passim*); missing the point concerning the Kayimbu connexion, Holy (1975: 288, n. 15) wrongly claims that Holub should have considered the 'Northern Nkoya' as Ila. Yet the confusion in itself shows how close the Kahare group and the Ila

by that time there existed already a clearly defined ethnic group named 'Ila': various authors<sup>356</sup> admit the very considerable historical and ethnic heterogeneity of what came to be known, in the early colonial period, as the Ila-speaking peoples. In the nineteenth and presumably late-eighteenth century, 'Kaonde' elements (which may have included the very Kahare presence in Kayimbu) have both confronted, and contributed to, the 'Ila' cultural and demographic stock, and it is possible that in this interaction process earlier 'Nkoya' ideas on the compatibility of *Wene* and the female gender came to be negatively affected. In the Shikanda variant, the story suggests that the transition from female to male *Myene* coincided with the introduction, from Shangaland, of the Lunda-style new paraphernalia among a new local group in southeastern Nkoyaland. Perhaps the specific geographic or cultural factor we are looking for simply consists in the fact that this local group's culture did not accept women to be *Myene*?

However, I prefer the dynamic thrust of a historical process moving towards increasing violence, exploitation and therefore male-headed states with a male-chauvinist ideology, over a mechanical 'diffusionist' argument presenting gender relations and their ideological aspects as fixed datums of a specific culture (Nkoya, Ila or Kaonde as the case may be).

Yet the female element in political leadership, and its symbolic expression, was not ousted so easily, and initially more of a compromise between female and male elements seems to have been reached than is suggested by the case of Kahare II. A description of the Nkoya drums that were demolished by the Kololo c. 1860 still shows a very balanced gender symbolism:<sup>357</sup>

'The instruments had the following names:

- (1) One was the male drum, and it was called "Mboma luvunga matunga", because the image of a python was cut in the wood;
- (2) the other was the female drum, and it was called "Mbulu" because it bore the image of a big lizard — the "Mbulumwene" (27: 10)

Before men acquired the monopoly of *Wene*, there appears to have been a period of transition, when female *Myene* were allowed to adopt

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really were. Kalumpiteka's taking refuge among the Ila after the flight from Kayimbu is another case in point.

<sup>356</sup> Including Smith & Dale (1920), Melland (1967) and 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.

<sup>357</sup> It has no parallels in the contemporary symbolism of the Nkoya royal orchestra (cf. Brown 1984).

the royal paraphernalia donned by their male colleagues. Such a case was Shakalongo:

‘Mwene Liwumbo acceded to the kingship, adopting the following praise-name:

‘I am Shakalongo  
Who Goes Around with the Xylophone’.’ (37: 1)

While Lubosi Lewanika was already in power in Barotseland (after 1878), Mwene Shakalongo is reported as giving shelter to Shamamano and his brothers after their maternal uncle Kalumpiteka (a son of an incumbent of the Kahare title) had been killed by Ila from the Lubanda area east of the Kafue. As reconstructed above, it is likely, but not certain, that by that time Mwene Shakalongo was a woman — perhaps still the first incumbent. But whatever the gender then, it is significant that the Shakalongo title, whose most splendid first incumbent was certainly a woman, had to yield to the (henceforth male) Kahare title as a result of increasing Lozi domination over Nkoya polities. In 1878, 1882 and 1888 Lewanika I made war on the Ila, and Shamamano took part in one of these campaigns, probably the 1888 one (cf. Clay 1945: 6-7). Many Ila were killed, and Shamamano showed to Lewanika’s satisfaction that he was ‘really a man’ (43: 8), by mutilating their dead bodies; being informed of Shamamano’s family relationship to Mwene Kahare,

‘Lewanika told him to accompany him to Loziland; however, Shamamano went [only later] to Lewanika at Lealui. 11 Lewanika covered him with a large blanket and told him:

“Go and succeed to the kingship of Mwene Kahare.” (...)

Upon his return from Loziland, before he acceded to the kingship on the Yange under the name of Mwene Kahare IV, Shamamano reported to Mwene Shakalongo what Mwene Lewanika had told him. Thus informed, Shakalongo gathered all the Mashasha, so that she could have Shamamano installed as Mwene Kahare IV.’ (43: 10f)<sup>358</sup>

Under Lozi protection, both the Kahare and the Mutondo title, with male incumbents, were carried over into the colonial period, while the Shakalongo title, with its female connotations, fell victim to the oppressive presence of the representative *induna* Afumba.

In the light of the Nkoya’s trauma as caused by the taking of the royal drums to Loziland, the accession of Shamamano as Lewanika’s protégé had more than one ironic aspect. The essential aspect of Shamamano’s reviving the kingship of Kahare was that he started to operate a royal orchestra. However, when the court musicians

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<sup>358</sup> Also see footnotes to the English translation of this passage in Part III.

committed adultery with the *Mahano*, of which Shamamano had a considerable number, he maimed the musicians so cruelly that (after intervention from Lealui) his orchestra was discontinued, only to be revived once again by his son Mwene Kahare Timuna in the 1930s.<sup>359</sup>

## 5.2. Some legal aspects of Nkoya states

The regalia however constituted only one of the several ideological devices by means of which the male-centred Nkoya states sought to strengthen themselves. *Likota Iya Bankoya* offers us some insight into the constitutional and otherwise legal framework which supported the emerging state structures. We see (50: 11) how a court of law is part of the *lukena*.<sup>360</sup> We encounter the *Mwene* as legislator: in family law, and with disastrous effects, in the case of Mwene Kashina (28: 2f; 34: 3f), and with regard to the imposition of male initiation and circumcision in Mwene Munangisha's case (48: 6). Here we shall specifically discuss three legal aspects of Nkoya states: royal succession; delegation and democracy; and the interstate rule of law.

### *royal succession*

Royal succession in *Likota Iya Bankoya* is normally a matter of election by senior courtiers, subsequently confirmed by a wider circle:

‘Munangisha was elected to be Mwene Mutondo by the Nkoya, notably by:

- (1) Mwene Lishenga Shonena Luhamba,
- (2) Mwene Kancukwe Mukamba,
- (3) Mwene Shikongi,

and all the Nkoya people, electing him with the words:

‘Munangisha for Mwene Mutondo.’ ’ (47: 4; my italics)

Of course, the phrase ‘and all the Nkoya people’ should not be taken to mean ‘all the members of the Nkoya-speaking people’ or ‘all bearers of the Nkoya culture’, but simply ‘all members of the royal family associated with the Mutondo kingship’.

In the selection of the candidate, Nkoya constitutional law allows for a considerable freedom, and this is amply reflected in *Likota Iya*

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<sup>359</sup> Cf. Clay 1945; oral sources [2], [3] and [6]; ch. 1.3, ‘the indigenous Barotse administration and the colonial state’.

<sup>360</sup> According to oral source [20], the *Mwene* did not try cases himself or herself, but only heard appeal cases against the verdicts of the senior councillors, some of whom (cf. 4.3, ‘court officials’) were specifically entrusted with the administration of justice.

*Bankoya*. In principle, an adelphic system was followed: all siblings of a generation succeeding each other until that generation is exhausted and the eldest sibling of a new matrilineal generation takes over. The ramifications of classificatory and (with regard to joking relationships between clans) fictive kinship spread so widely that succession amounted to the selection, by a council of elders, of a suitable candidate from among a rather numerous pool of possible incumbents: members of a previous (not necessarily the last) incumbent's consanguineal kindred in the widest sense of the word. Therefore, specific political processes limiting down this wide range are involved at the same time as the enactment of constitutional rules. The complex succession patterns brought out by our tentative genealogies in *Appendix 3* (even if historically utterly unreliable in their details) suggest these same factors of flexibility and choice. If Mwene Komoka upon accession claims to 'surprise the Nkoya', it is perhaps because her victorious outcome was far from expected.

In addition to a number of ways to terminate a current incumbent's term of office through regicide, impeachment or abdication, *Likota Iya Bankoya* shows us some short-cuts to accession: appointing oneself after killing a predecessor, or (like Mwene Liyoka's sibling Libondo) taking over the place of a predecessor in forced exile. The fact that a Mwene upon accession inherits not only a royal office but also a name owned by the kin group, introduces the possibility of a consolation prize: the name, but not the office. This stratagem seems to have been invoked among the puzzling bundle of children and/or grandchildren of Mwene Manenga,<sup>361</sup> it is still practiced in Nkoya politics of kinship, and might form an additional argument for my plea<sup>362</sup> against identifying, for the earlier periods, the office of *Mwene* too closely with the major dynastic titles (Mutondo, Kahare) under which they have been known for over a century now.

The reader is referred to *Appendix 3* and the accompanying footnotes for a discussion of the problems that arise when we try to reconstruct, through genealogies, specific instances of succession on the basis of *Likota Iya Bankoya*.

While constitutionally the operative term appears to be *ku yaka*, to elect, the attending ceremony revolves on the terms *ushwana* ('to take the name — *lizina* — of', 'to succeed'), and *ku kwata* ('to catch': to publicly point out as heir or new incumbent).

Although the *Likota Iya Bankoya* text does not go into detail on this point, there is no reason to assume that the form of *ushwana* it envisages differs essentially from what was still Nkoya cultural practice in the 1970s and 1980s, as described in chapter 1.

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<sup>361</sup> Cf. 27: 1; 47: 6; 49: 3.

<sup>362</sup> Cf. above, 3.2: 'dynastic numbers and the nature of the Nkoya royal titles'.

*Likota Iya Bankoya*'s account of Kanyinca's accession shows a case in which this pattern is partly followed yet corrupted under colonial and Lozi influence: the white garment is there all right, but a colonial messenger has usurped the role of the electors, and no time whatsoever was allowed to pass between the predecessor's funeral and *ushwana*. But then, this haste appears to have been prompted by the desire to prevent the more senior pretender, Mushonto, from acceding to the throne; this fell through when Mushonto appealed to the *Litunga* (53: 5), but after Mushonto's suspiciously swift demise Kanyinca acceded anyway.

*delegation and democracy*

The impeachment and subsequent death through starvation of Mwene Kashina (34: 3f; 47: 2), the dethronement of Mwene Kahare II upon popular protests of menstrual impurity (41: 3), the factional divisiveness around Mwene Mukamba (21: 1f) — such examples, whatever their specific historical factuality, at any rate demonstrate that a fair amount of democratic feedback and support was an essential element in Nkoya kingship under conditions of statehood. The cosmological model of *Wene* had not been entirely eclipsed, but when, under male initiative, it had to function as an idiom of power and appropriation rather than as one of order and redistribution, its legitimating force was definitely limited, and it needed constant political support from court circles, and from the people at large. This democratic dilemma, in fact, can still be detected in Nkoya kingship today.

One passage in *Likota Iya Bankoya* suggests that the extent of royal autocracy underwent some changes in the course of the nineteenth century:

'Mwene Mutondo Wahila did not keep the kingship all to himself. He followed the custom of Kayambila and Mwene Mutondo Shinkisha by sharing out tusks to the following Bilolo:

- (1) Katuta, who bore the title of Mwanashihemi;
- (2) Shilanda, who bore the title of Nanyundo;
- (3) Mundendemi, who was the Mwene's maternal uncle;
- (4) Lwando, also called Sikota;
- (5) Mwitila Kamamba;
- (6) Nalishuwa;
- (7) Liholola, also called Mubonda;
- (8) Muyani Lintwike, also called Lyomba;
- (9) Lyomboko, also called Mushakabantu;
- (10) Mafuka also called Namamba.' (50: 10)

May we interpret this as a gradual centralization of the Mutondo state after the reign of Mwene Kayambila and Mwene Shinkisha (i.e. in the period from Kashina Shiyenge, via Kashunkani and Munangisha, to



Mushunga), only to revert to decentralization under Wahila? Widely rejected attempts at centralization (which might have enhanced the chances of survival of the Nkoya states in the face of mounting external military pressure) may well explain why the *Myene* of the period in between appear to have been rather unpopular with their people. The Nkoya adage *Ba Mwene ndungo wa bantu* — ‘The Mwene is the slave of the people’ thus takes on a significance beyond perfunctory respect for serving the common interest: the limitations to royal power have remained substantial. Had the institution of *Wene* been capable of establishing itself upon a truly new footing, not merely transgressing, but also surpassing and effectively supplanting the old female-centred cosmological idiom — and had it, in the process, used (like the Lozi did) such Lunda inventions as perpetual kinship and positional succession in order to restructure and invert the kinship pressures on the king — changing kinship from a challenge of to a resource for the kingship — then the fate of the Nkoya over the past hundred years might have been far less tragic and humiliating than it has now been perceived by the Nkoya people themselves.

*the extent of interstate rule of law and the geographical extent of Nkoya-ness*

*Likota lya Bankoya* does not speak of states but individualizes them into royal titles and their successive incumbents. The titles are shown to ramify and gain a considerable autonomy vis-à-vis one another — but questions concerning the spatial extent of Nkoya states, their boundaries if any, and their interstate relations are not specifically posed nor answered. If many known Nkoya royal titles disappeared under the impact of the Lozi representative *indunas*, this means that a veritable proliferation of such titles occurred in the nineteenth century; did their number correspond with so many states?

The geographical extent of the area effectively controlled by a specific royal court may be gauged from the distance between one *Mwene*’s court and his or her predecessor’s: although the annexation of new land cannot be ruled out, it is likely that a newly acceded *Mwene* tended to create his or her first new capital well within the boundaries of the state. Diagrams 15a and 15b in *Appendix 7*, which show the location of the numerous Nkoya *zinkena* in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, suggest that territories in the order of magnitude of thousands of square kilometres were quite usual. This is also indicated by a passage like:

‘Mwene Kabongo’ s kingdom extended all the way along the Lalafuta, the Shilili, the Lunyati, as far as Makunzu. The fortification of Mwene Kabongo was near the source of the Shitwa.’ (14: 2)

Projecting the colonial existence of four recognized Nkoya royal chiefs back into the nineteenth century, *Likota lya Bankoya* traces, with greater or lesser detail and consistency, the precolonial history of the titles of Mutondo, Kahare, Kabulwebulwe and Momba.

The book is particularly vague on the Momba and Kabulwebulwe titles, and suggests that here a gradual growth of autonomy vis-à-vis the Mutondo title occurred.

The extent of autonomy of Mwene Kabulwebulwe vis-à-vis the two main titles of Mwene Mutondo and Mwene Kahare has been a bone of contention ever since the onset of the colonial period; the creation of Kafue Park, in the course of which Mwene Kabulwebulwe with his people was moved eastward into Mumbwa district, has further complicated the situation. At the *lukena* of Mwene Mutondo continued close relationships are claimed with the Kabulwebulwe title, in line with the picture sketched in *Likota lya Bankoya*.

There are indications that at the Hook of the Kafue Kabulwebulwe's people largely still identified, as Nkoya, with the Mutondo kingship around the turn of the twentieth century. The written evidence is however a bit of a puzzle, in which the ethnic names used locally must be considered in conjunction with such other cultural traits as hair styles, dental practices (!) and circumcision, if we are to identify the specific groups we are dealing with.

Val Gielgud wrote:

'I have been unable to discover a generic name for the people living in the Hook of the Kafue and have been told they are, Monkoia [Nkoya] and Abalenji [Lenje] but am of [the] opinion that neither of these names can be applied to them collectively. (...) [In] most place[s] [they] knock out the front teeth as a tribal mark.'<sup>363</sup>

These characteristics return in Gibbons' account of the same area, a few years earlier:

'The *Mankoyas* [Nkoya] are a race of hunters, are shorter than their neighbours, and, though generally supposed to be inferior, I must confess I was agreeably surprised with them. They use poisoned arrows, which are also carried by every Mashikolumbwe [Mashukulumbwe] warrior. The physique of the Mashikolumbwe is (...) their only good quality. (...) They knock out the four upper central teeth and the back lower ones (...) [A] few Mankoyas on their borders [and some others do the same]. (Gibbons 1897: 143)

A decade later G.H. Nicholls, administering the Baluba sub-district, was to distinguish the following four ethnic groups in his area of juris-

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<sup>363</sup> Val Gielgud to Administrator Northeastern Rhodesia, 14.10.1900, enclosure in Zambia National Archives, BS 1/93, Gielgud-Anderson expedition.

diction: the Ila, Lumbu, Luba, and Nkoya. He insisted that Nkoya, inhabiting the western banks of the Kafue,

‘...are a race apart and have few or no dealings with the Baila. The Balumbu are indistinguishable from the Baila. (...) The Bankoya have mixed up with these Balumbu to some extent, but they still preserve their independence as a race[;] *their custom of circumcision tends to this*, and they always wear their hair long and matted.’<sup>364</sup>

The essential indicator as to a continued link with the Mutondo kingship among these eastern Nkoya is the fact that they observe circumcision, which among the Nkoya-speaking groups is a distinctive feature of the Mutondo group. We are sure to be dealing here with Mwene Kabulwebulwe’s people, at a phase in their history when their original links with the Mutondo dynasty (as described in *Likota Iya Bankoya*) were still particularly strong. The ethnonym Nkoya in this context does not yet have the pan-Nkoya connotations of the colonial and post-colonial period, but still refers uniquely to the Mutondo kingship, even though at the time its *lukena* was situated nearly two hundred kilometres to the west of the Hook of the Kafue.

As we have seen, the cultural and ethnic continuity has its counterpart in an economic one. The Nkoya on the Hook of the Kafue continue to share in the tribute network that links the Mutondo *lukena* to the centre of the Lozi state:

‘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.’<sup>365</sup>

Kayingu, although virtually Kabulwebulwe’s neighbour on the Kafue, in the same region, is a different case. For most purposes (except twentieth-century administrative divisions) this kingship could be counted as a Nkoya one. Kayingu’s historical links with Barotseland are clear:

‘Chief Kayingu of the Mwengwa district insists that his people came in from the West — some from Lealui — many from Bankoya and

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<sup>364</sup> 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; my italics. The matted hairstyle as a distinctive feature of the Nkoya in this area is confirmed by Holub (Holy 1975: 184f), who also mentions a superior type of bows and arrows, but not circumcision.

<sup>365</sup> 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.

found Mashukulumbwe on the river to the far east. Namalyao's people hold they are closely allied to Kayingu.<sup>366</sup>

The same information is given by Nicholls:

'The Balumbu are indistinguishable from the Baila. (...) They speak Chila. (...) They are supposed to have come from the West, and they may have been the original inhabitants of the Barotse valley before the Sikololo invasion.'<sup>367</sup>

Yet despite this Zambezi connexion, Kayingu's strategic location on the continental trade routes had earned him a remarkable autonomy, which is also clear from the absence of the use of the ethnonym Nkoya in the context of Kayingu. This ruler can impose his own fines and enforce their payment. Apparently because he had committed bloodshed among the Ila in Kayingu's sphere of influence, Shamamano had to pay a high compensation to Kayingu and did so (43: 6). Here Kayingu appears somehow as a higher power of arbitration, standing above parties and forcing them to accept a common rule of law (and thus the avoidance of bloodshed) across ethnic, linguistic and political boundaries.

The extent of this autonomy, which led to defiance vis-à-vis the Lozi state is also clear from Gibbons's vivid account:

'Passing out of the Edzombe country, I came to that of Kayingu. This chief ostensibly received me well. (...) The interior of a strong stockade, inside which his people and cattle were mingled on the evening of my arrival, had a picturesque effect, which was somewhat enhanced (...) by the appearance of a dreamy-looking native draped in a flowing blue and white check robe, who seated himself opposite and sung out an impromptu song in my honour, to the accompaniment of a large native piano, which gave out by no means unpleasant music through the medium of ironwork and various-sized calabashes.' (Gibbons 1897: 138)

Gibbons is not allowed to leave, for he has become Kayingu's main purveyor of game meat. The captive threatens that Lewanika will raid Kayingu, and in response all his possessions are taken away from him, but

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<sup>366</sup> 'A paper on the origin of the Baila, A Suggestion — to accompany Annual report on Namwala subdistrict', 1917-18, p. 5, enclosure in Zambia National Archives, KSF 3/1; for converging, more extensive information on the Kayingu title, cf. Rennie & Mubita 1985a, 1985b.

<sup>367</sup> 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.

‘Finally, with the help of a few friendly Mankoyas, whom I fell in with, I reached the Nkala Mission station in safety.’ (Gibbons 1897: 140).

Back to safety, that meant back to where the rule of law prevailed, under Lozi dominance:

‘The *Marotse* [Lozi] are the ruling tribe. Each Barotse is a chief by birth.’ (Gibbons 1897: 143)

As far as Mwene Momba is concerned, he would at first glance appear to have been sufficiently remote from the Land of Nkoya to allow us to speak of a distinct ‘state’. Yet (much as Kabulwebulwe’s people on the Kafue) towards the end of the nineteenth century also Momba’s people at the Mashili river and surrounding areas are reported to still identify as Nkoya:

‘Population is scarce (...). Several tribes that go to form the Barotse nation inhabit the district. They cultivate several sorts of cereals and pulses, as well as tobacco, pumpkins, and several sorts of roots. They are clothed, if at all, in skins, and use skins to cover themselves at night. They are all armed with assagais, a very few have guns, still fewer have ammunition, and one tribe, the Mankojas, all carry bows and poisoned arrows. They are nearly all adepts at trapping game, either in pitfalls or snares. They are quite peaceably disposed, shy by nature (...) They are destitute of pluck, and would be of no use in a time of danger.’ (Reid 1897: 145)

‘After crossing the Mania (...) we reached a collection of huts on the boundary between the districts of Mankoia and the Matotela. The latter, whose territory we now entered, are a decidedly superior tribe to the former.’ (Reid 1897: 145; also cf. Bertrand 1897)

All this suggests that the ties between Mwene Momba and the Mutondo court were far from severed. So much is also clear from the story, in *Likota lya Bankoya*, of Mwene Munangisha finding a slave replacement for his daughter Makomani among Mwene Momba’s people. Of all the *Myene* we have so far discussed in this book, Momba is the only one to be explicitly mentioned by Holub (as ‘venerated far and wide’), and there too he is identified as Nkoya (Holy 1975: 261f).

The only clear-cut case for the consideration of more than one Nkoya state, therefore, lies in the juxtaposition between the Mutondo and the Kahare title. Here *Likota lya Bankoya* leaves little doubt that, by the middle of the nineteenth century, two distinct states had evolved, entirely separate in international relations (for instance with the Kololo state), internal legislation (e.g. Mwene Mutondo Kashina’s controversial marital legislation), and maintaining contact only at the level of diplomatic emissaries; offenders in one state (like the Kololo

travelling ambassador Munyama, who abducted a Mashasha woman from the court of Mwene Shikanda; 29: 1f) could expect sanctuary in the other state (as Munyama did with Mwene Mutondo Kashina). For, as also Mwene Lutangu Fumika, the later Lozi king Sipopa, was to experience, Nkoya kings had the right to bestow sanctuary, and

‘it was the custom of the Myene of the Nkoya not to refuse strangers.’  
(32: 1)

Later, after Mwene Shikanda had died and Mwene Kabimba had started on his tragic flight from the Kaonde only to end up being flayed by the Yeke, did it transpire that such welcome strangers did not include their distant cousins, the incumbents of *Wene* in other Nkoya states. Kabimba heard Mwene Mutondo’s drums at a distance, yet rather than seeking refuge there, turned away to his doom and to the temporary eclipse of the Kahare title and state.

We must conclude that at least the two royal lines of Mutondo and Kahare had crystallized into two different states. The statement requires three qualifications: it remains uncertain whether these two kingships were as superior to other Nkoya kingships at the time as a projection of the colonial situation might suggest; we do not know if all incumbents of *Wene* in both lines really identified explicitly with the Kahare or Mutondo title; and we do not know whether both titles had a common origin. And even if there were then two separate states, only a limited number of generations before, the regional mobilization for the Humbu war — which seems to have precipitated Nkoya statehood in the first place — had hinted at possibilities of interregional cooperation and identification which used the potential of the clan organization to the full, involving a plurality of clans and *Myene*, and being triggered perhaps by the latter’s very aspirations of autonomy vis-à-vis the Mwaat Yaamv’s Musumban state. Such aspirations would at least be a likely reason why the Sheta clan, who owned *Wene*, would be singled out for battle by the Humbu.

After Kabimba’s death Shikanda’s children and grandchildren, led by Kalumpiteka, found initial if incomplete refuge among the Ila with whom the Kahare state appears to have had already, at that time, some affinity for several generations. When the Ila did not accept Kalumpiteka’s claims to royal status and killed him, the ensuing blood feud (for such it appears to have been) grants us a glimpse of conflict settlement across ethnic and state boundaries in central western Zambia in the 1870s. On the one hand Shamamano, Kalumpiteka’s sister’s son and avenger, sought and found refuge, with his junior kinsmen, at the court of Mwene Shakalongo. It is largely through her tutelage that Shamamano was capable of converting Lewanika’s distant support into political leadership, reviving the Kahare title.

In the process Shamamano came in conflict with Kayingu, and submitted to him. However, when Shamamano subsequently took a major part in one of Lewanika’s Ila campaigns, this went to show that

Kayingu's exacting compensation had far from settled the conflict triggered by the Ila killing of Kalumpiteka, and that the rapidly expanding Lozi state represented viable principles of interregional control (with military, missionary, European, and ultimately colonial backing) as compared to which the trading circuits that Kayingu controlled, however extensive and time-honoured, were becoming obsolete.

Interstate arbitration was a fading option, with increasing state hegemony of the Lozi, and the colonial state about to be established.

Towards the end of the period covered in *Likota Iya Bankoya*, we see Mwene Mutondo Wahila engage in one other form of interstate contact — probably neither unique nor the first of its kind: his state visit to Soliland, across a distance of over four hundred kilometres (50: 12f)! This suggests diplomatic relations to have existed between Mwene Mutondo and Nkomeshya, the senior Soli ruler. They are likely to have been embedded in other types of contacts. The small isolated groups of Nkoya now living in Central and Copperbelt Provinces go back to long-established east-bound hunting and trading links. Contemporary evidence (genealogies, oral sources, even use of the Lenje language in cults of affliction) shows that raiding, marital and cultic relations between the Nkoya and the Lenje and Lamba were quite extensive in the nineteenth century. The archival evidence we have already discussed reveals the Hook of the Kafue and surrounding areas as a veritable crucible of ethnic, commercial and cultural influences from all directions of the compass in the last decades of the nineteenth century.

### **5.3. Towards a male ideological perspective**

The story of Lady Mwene Kahare II suggests how men were developing an ideological perspective which further eroded the symbolic and conceptual basis female *Wene* had once had. Views of *Wene* must already have shifted towards a dominant male perspective for notions of menstrual pollution to acquire legitimating force. Men claimed the regalia as a male prerogative on the basis of pretexts which women were *de facto* (given the concomitant rise of hunting, trade, military exploits, patriliney) no longer powerful enough to ignore. The men, for their part, were not so much discovering a physiological fact they had always known, as banning it from a new set of symbols they had just come to explore.

*limits to male ascendancy: the ladder into the sky*

There is an interesting link between the story of Kahare II, and that of Kapeshi's (her alleged father) crying for the moon:

'[Mwene Kahare] had a son called Kapeshi, nicknamed Kapeshi ka Munungampanda.

One day, when Kapeshi was still young, he saw the moon in the sky. Thinking that the moon was a mpande (for he was only a child), he told his father:

“Father, give me that mpande which is shining in the sky.”

3 Mwene Kahare called his people and told them:

“Cut forked poles and join them to a Ladder, in order to capture that mpande for the Mwana Mwene to wear.”

They started to cut forked poles and made the ladder, and it was so tall that when they climbed it, it collapsed; many people fell down and died. 4 They tried to construct another Ladder and to climb that one, but again it collapsed and more people died. Those who remained said among themselves:

“Come on, folks, let us stop and call it a day. Let us tell the Mwene:

‘We are near our end, don’t you see that there are only few of us left.’ ”

5 Then all the people said to the Mwene:

“Mwene, this will be the end of the people, for that mpande many people can see there in the sky, that thing is not a mpande, it is the moon.”

The Mwene told them to stop the construction of the Ladder. Many people died on the Ladder.’ (40: 2f)

The link with the story on pollution of the regalia by a menstruating *Mwene*, is that the moon which features in the *mpande* story, is also the standard symbol of menstruation in polite Nkoya conversation.<sup>368</sup> As we have seen, the story of people building into the sky is widespread in South Central Africa, but here we find it adapted to Nkoya history — and situated not in the very first, obviously mythical layers of that history, but to a middle period deceptively few generations away from living memory, so that Kapeshi becomes genealogically a contemporary of other *Myene* featuring in the mid-nineteenth century history of neighbouring peoples.

When introducing the mythical Kapeshi theme above (chapter 3) I have hinted at its possible historical significance, in so far as the role of the Nkoya dynasties in Musumban out-migration is concerned. At the present point in my argument, additional layers of interpretation present themselves. While on the more manifest levels the story moralizes about tyranny (‘a ruler should not make impossible demands on the people’) and parental responsibility (‘Kapeshi’s wish ought never to have been taken seriously’), on a deeper level the message of the story is about a relatively unsuccessful male struggle for symbolic legitima-

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<sup>368</sup> Nk. *wali na ngonda*: ‘she has the moon, she is menstruating’.



tion. It pictures a male *Mwene* who in order to ensure the continuity of his position of power (through his son — a usurpatory construction in a matrilineal context anyway), stretches his power over his people to breaking point in a vain attempt to violate an essential cosmological arrangement (the distinction between the Land of the living, and the Sky — which the Ladder was to join) in order to snatch a symbol (the Moon) that for two reasons he should not touch: it belongs to the Sky (i.e. the High God, Nyambi), and to women. The outcome of the story is the reinforcement of boundaries: the people put a democratic limit to the *Mwene*'s power, and the Sky and the Moon remain out of reach. Politically, the male *Mwene* retains the initiative but he has to resign himself to a situation where his exercise of power is peripheral to, and limited by, the central cosmology.

The symbolic significance of the moon here touches upon an entirely different perspective in the ideological history of South Central Africa. While Rain features prominently in Nkoya notions concerning the supernatural, and veneration of the sun has been described for the Lozi who are culturally so closely related to the Nkoya (Mutumba Mainga 1972), religious emphasis on the moon would appear to be primarily related to a pre-Bantu Khoi-San substratum (cf. Barnard 1986).<sup>369</sup> There are diffuse indications of a certain incorporation of Khoi-San elements in Nkoya life. Some of these indications are somatic (the occurrence of light-skinned people — the inhabitants of central western Zambia are of course aware of the difference between Portuguese and allegedly Khoi-San ancestry). Other indications are in the cultural sphere. Thus conspicuous features of one of the most central Nkoya institutions, female puberty ritual (cf. van Binsbergen 1987a), can be interpreted as an attempt to imitate two major physical characteristics of the Khoi-San: steatopygia (at her 'coming out' dance the girl's behind is padded with thick layers of cloth wraps), and the 'Khoi-San apron' of elongated labia: anticipating on, or as part of, their initiation training, Nkoya girls from the age of about ten years spend hundreds of hours handling their labia in order to increase their natural size. In the sphere of music (prominence of the thumb piano), dance (where the central feature is a circular movement called *ruhnwa*), healing ritual and hunting many more parallels might be traced.

Was the link between pre-Bantu and Bantu elements primarily provided by local women having pre-Bantu connotations, with men as the importers of a Bantu cultural heritage from the north? Would such a view not be in contradiction with both the role of women as transmitters of culture through child-rearing, and the agricultural dimension that would suggest a linkage between Rain and emergent *Wene* through women? Or does any hypothetical Bantu/Khoi-San confrontation in the western part of what is now Zambia predate by any number of centuries the processes of cultural and/or demographic south

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<sup>369</sup> For a general discussion of Khoi-San reminiscences among the Bantu-speaking peoples of Zambia, cf. Colson 1964; Clark 1950.

migration that are at the root of the emergence of the Nkoya as a distinct ethnic identity in the nineteenth and twentieth century? Obviously we have not reached the end of our quest yet. Anyway, when situated in a context of Bantu/Khoi-San confrontation, Kapeshi's story could also be interpreted along the following lines: in search of cosmological legitimation, an invading ruling group seeks to gain control over a central deity (the Moon) of a pre-existing local group; this attempt fails repeatedly; but instead an alternative and morphologically analogous symbol of legitimation is adopted and confirmed (the *mpande*).

*male circumcision and the Mbwela connexion*

In their search for a male ideology, the men also attempted to exploit the institution of male circumcision. Circumcision, and in general male puberty ceremonies (*Mukanda*), have formed a common practice among Mwaat Yaamv's Lunda and among groups who were related to this people and who immigrated — as from perhaps the fifteenth century — from Zaïre and/or Angola into Zambia: the ancestors of today's (ruling groups of the) Ndembu Lunda, Luvale, Kaonde, Mbunda, etc. As we have seen, *Likota lya Bankoya* claims that the Nkoya rejected circumcision at an early stage of their history (the Humbu war). Likewise unsuccessful was a later attempt by Mwene Mutondo Munangisha (a contemporary of the Lozi ruler Sipopa who reigned 1864-1876) to introduce *Mukanda*:

'During the reign of Mwene Mutondo Munangisha, he revived the custom of Mukanda at Lizuna. The Mukanda which Munangisha organized at the Lizuna capital was the last to reach here in Nkoya, [even though] Munangisha wanted to stage Mukanda again at his Mabala capital near the Mangango.' (48: 6)

The actual development of male circumcision among the Nkoya turns out to be less straightforward than *Likota lya Bankoya* suggests. The Nkoya today abhor and ridicule male circumcision, but in fact the rejection of *Mukanda* was less than total in the period prior to the massive twentieth-century immigration of circumcising non-Nkoya groups into Kaoma district. *Mukanda* is consistently claimed, by such authors as Stirke (1922) and Clay (1945: 4), to be a practice associated with the Mutondo *lukena*. Moreover, from oral sources a handful of members of the Mutondo royal family are known to have been circumcised as late as the early decades of the twentieth century.<sup>370</sup> Circumcision as a practice of the Nkoya on the Kafue is also stressed

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<sup>370</sup> Oral source [2], [17] 30.9.1977

by Nicholls.<sup>371</sup> The insistence on *Mukanda* by Mwene Munangisha as related by *Likota lya Bankoya* is explained by the Mutondo Royal Council by the dubious fact that his mother came from Lunda.<sup>372</sup> Another source inverts the parent's gender:

'Kambotwe came just after Lipepo. Kambotwe introduced Mukanda, for his father, a Mukwetunga, was from Lunda.'<sup>373</sup>

Other oral sources even sought to explain the fundamental cleavage in Nkoya socio-political structure today, that between Mutondo and Kahare, by reference to *Mukanda*: 'Kahare' rejected the institution whereas 'Mutondo' insisted on it.<sup>374</sup>

Although *Likota lya Bankoya* only reports a confrontation between Humbu and Nkoya, and claims that the Nkoya came out victoriously, investigations at the Luvale and Lunda end of the precolonial history of western Zambia have established beyond doubt that in the Lungwebungu/Zambezi area Luvale and Lunda immigrants<sup>375</sup> partly chased, partly subdued, both culturally and politically, the ancestors of today's Nkoya (called Mbwela in the Upper-Zambezi context).

This aspect of Nkoya history is virtually absent in presentday Nkoya traditions from Kaoma district. A group interview with the Kahare Royal Council did not come further than the information, volunteered, that originally the Nkoya had villages in the Mwinilunga district, near the source of the Zambezi.<sup>376</sup> The only extensive treatment at my dis-

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371 G. H. Nicholls, 'Notes on natives inhabiting Baluba subdistrict', 1906, p. 1, in Zambia National Archives, enclosure in file number KTJ 2/1: Mumbwa — some important papers.

372 Oral source [19] 19.10.1977; the same information in oral source [10]. According to *Likota lya Bankoya*, Munangisha's mother was Mwene Shihoka Komoka, by no means a Kaonde immigrant; however, his father Mukwetunga Lwengu may have had Humbu, and hence *Mukanda*, connexions — cf. below, 6.4: 'an alternative explanation: perpetual kinship on the Upper Zambezi?' Oral source [18] supports the Lunda connexion through an in-marrying *Lihano*, but makes no specific reference to Munangisha. His principal *Lihano*, Liziho, came from Kaondeland (44: 2) and hence from an area where *Mukanda* has been practised for centuries (Melland 1967); but she specifically came from the village of Kalembeleme — a Mbwela ruler who, as we shall see below, was related to the Kahare kingship and might well have shared that kingship's rejection of *Mukanda*.

373 Oral source [16] 16.10.1977. Through the reference to Lipepo, Kambotwe is situated in the context of the Mutondo kingship; see below, where the Kambotwe name becomes crucial in succession conflicts around the Kahare title.

374 Oral sources [10] and [16] 16.10.1977.

375 Cf. Papstein 1978; Derricourt & Papstein 1977; Schecter 1980a: ch. 8.

376 Oral source [18] 13.10.1977. The existence of Nkoya in Mwinilunga district was also acknowledged by Mr Katete Shincheta, letter to the

posal of the Upper Zambezi and eastern Angolan connexion in Nkoya history came from Mr S. Mulowa, summarized here:

‘The Nkoya came from Kola, from Mwaat Yaamv. [In this connexion the name Nkomba is mentioned, probably a clan name.] In the early days the Nkoya were ruled by Lady Mwene Tete. From Kola the Nkoya were led by Mwene Kachembele. Their journey went via eastern Angola; then to Chavuma, then to the Kabompo, and onwards to the Lundazi and the Lufizi. My father was born in Chavuma.

Kahare remained in Lukolwe, whereas Kachembele went to Namitome (ten miles north of Mongu). The Nkoya name for the Bulozhi flood-plain was *Ngula ya Mikaka*, ‘valley of the day journeys’, for they could not cross it in one day. Mulambwa Notulu, the Kwangwa Mwene,<sup>377</sup> found Kachembele there. *Luyi* means ‘foreigner’ in the Nkoya language. Kachembele left one of his grandchildren, Shihoka Nalinanga, at Mongu. Mwene Mutondo was also left there by Kachembele. Then Kachembele died at Jididi [= Jizino, a small tributary of the Luena].

Kachembele was succeeded by his younger brother Muyowa. Muyowa was succeeded by his uterine nephew Katupisha. Katupisha died in Angola, after a misunderstanding with the Lozi. His grandson Mutondo then came to take over.<sup>378</sup>

Significantly, Angola and Kachembele as reference points in early Nkoya history were angrily rejected by another informant.<sup>379</sup>

The causes of this collective amnesia require further investigation. One obvious set of reasons ranges from embarrassment to historical trauma; another is geographical distance: it is only under Luhamba, after the Humbu war, that the Nkoya *Myene* are claimed to have reached the presentday Kaoma district, hundreds of kilometres from the presumable scene of the confrontations between the ‘Mbwela’ and Luvale/ Humbu/Lunda.

Meanwhile the following reconstruction would appear to fit the data available. It is likely that these Mbwela initially rejected *Mukanda* — also other sources than *Likota lya Bankoya* suggest that *Mukanda* was in fact an important concrete reason for the Mbwela to reject the Lunda political system and to leave the Lunda sphere of influence. However

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author, 25.10.1979; cf. above, ch. 1.2, ‘the proliferation of Nkoya subgroups’.

<sup>377</sup> Note that this is the same personage as the Mulambwa who features in *Likota lya Bankoya*; but he is here represented on a much more modest scale, as the ruler of a minor Lozi subgroup.

<sup>378</sup> Oral source [20].

<sup>379</sup> Oral source [17] 1.10.1977.

the Mbwela could not permanently escape re-Lunda-ization<sup>380</sup> by later groups from the Lunda core area. In the process of mutual cultural accommodation between the Mbwela and these later groups, the Mbwela groups which remained on the Upper Zambezi adopted *Mukanda*. But also among the Mbwela who left the Upper Zambezi and whose descendants are now found in Kaoma district as Nkoya, the rulers, operating within the same general context of selective re-Lunda-ization, time and again sought to explore the political potential of *Mukanda*. Probably in Kaoma district *Mukanda* remained limited to the aristocratic clans, and never spread to the population as a whole. At any rate the source of *Mukanda* appears to be to the north of Kaoma district; there is no reason to follow Luc de Heusch's suggestion (de Heusch 1978) that male puberty ritual reached western Zambia after a detour via South Africa.

In due time, Nkoya politics came to be incorporated in the Lozi state and the colonial state. Since the early nineteenth century the Lozi had tolerated the custom of circumcision (notably among the Mbunda), but they considered it alien to Lozi culture.<sup>381</sup> In recent decades, at the national level in urban situations, the Nkoya, while emphasizing their political distinctness from the Lozi, have attempted to pose as culturally very closely related to the Lozi — hoping thus to trade their despised status as Nkoya for the much greater prestige of the Lozi, and freeing themselves from humiliation by the Lozi themselves. It is for instance significant that successful Nkoya politicians at the district, regional and national level often have a mixed Nkoya-Lozi ancestry. Even though the two languages are very little related, passing as Lozi is one of the strategies employed by Nkoya in town when involved in upward social mobility. But such a cultural *rapprochement* vis-à-vis the Lozi could scarcely be combined with an insistence on circumcision. In the twentieth century, the circumcising groups, as Angolan immigrants, came to compete with the Nkoya for scarce resources at the district and provincial level; also, at the national level, these groups had acquired very low status connotations, through their urban professional specialization of night soil attendants. In this context it was not surprising that the increasing ethnic articulation of the Nkoya among other things expressed itself in an exaggerated juxtaposition vis-à-vis the Luvale, Chokwe and Luchazi. *From a partly*

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<sup>380</sup> Hypothetical as the notion of re-Lunda-ization appears to be as yet, the process of cultural and ritual interaction in the destination area between various waves of immigrants from the same area of origin may have been somewhat parallel to the process of Bena Ngandu accommodation in early Bemba history; cf. Roberts 1973; van Binsbergen 1981a: 119f.

<sup>381</sup> Cf. Gluckman 1949. Holub (1879: 56) claims that he has not heard of circumcision in the Lozi empire. However, in Sesheke he witnessed *makishi* dances (Holub 1879: 64f), whose performance and symbolism is inseparable from *Mukanda*; according to Holub, women were excluded from the performances, and the elaborate costumes belonged to king Sipopa himself who, we should remember, had lived at Lukwakwa as Munangisha's senior kinsman.

*shared custom, in the course of half a century circumcision became an indicator of ethnic distance.*

Again, male puberty ritual is more than meets the eye. Much like hunting, it brings men to identify and be solidary on a gender basis, to seclude themselves spatially and socially, and to build extensive regional organizational structures and leadership. It, too, is an important source of power in the societies of the savanna. That men repeatedly failed to establish or at least to consolidate male puberty ritual among the Nkoya, might be attributed partly to the fact that they had already in the developing institutions of hunting a very similar functional alternative. However, absence of male puberty rites put the men at both an ideological and an organizational disadvantage, as against the rich development of Nkoya female puberty ceremonies.

*shattering the female cosmos*

The data so far presented suggest that the men had great difficulty in eradicating the female strands of cosmology and symbolism even from the political sphere of life they had increasingly monopolized. Despite the rejection of female physiology and the emphasis on unpolluted maleness, men continued to legitimize their positions of power partly by reference to female predecessors, and they were unable to impose male circumcision as a central institution of male identity. But if the old cosmological order was not so easily redefined, adapted or supplanted so as to accommodate a male perspective, one could always try to forcibly break out of that order, in an effort to shatter it even if a suitable, integrated alternative was not yet available.

In the pre-state and early state world-view of South Central Africa,<sup>382</sup> incest, bloodshed and sorcery were the three main breaches of the cosmological order, to be punished by natural disaster: drought, locusts, cattle pests. A breach of the *incest taboo* does not constitute an important theme in the history and mythology of state formation among the Nkoya; but Mwene Mutondo Kashina (28: 3f) tried to effect a rather similar breach by upsetting marital laws that form a major regulating force in gender relations in general (of which incest taboos are a specific part). Royal *sorcery* is present in *Likota Iya Bankoya*, but it is far from presented as a specifically male innovation: the most elaborate case discussed is Lady Mwene Likambi's. In this cosmological scheme, drought is an effect rather than an independent variable, but it is certainly in line that pre-state female *Myene* are associated with Rain, and their husbands and male successors with Drought. Finally, as a breach of the old cosmological order, *violence* appears to have been the most effective, destructive, truly male option. Therefore I am inclined to consider the contrast, in *Likota Iya Bankoya*, between the peaceful pre-state period and the violent period of

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<sup>382</sup> Cf. Schoffeleers 1979; van Binsbergen 1981a; Ranger 1985.

statehood as a reflection of a relative (not, of course, an absolute) difference in historical reality, and not as a mere reference to the Golden Age.

References to violence abound in *Likota Iya Bankoya*'s descriptions of male *Myene*. Thus when the male Mwene Kayambila ascended to the throne, his self-given praise-name was:

'I am Kayambila of the Lands,  
The Thatcher who Takes Care of the Skulls of People  
Like the Thatcher Takes Care of the Roofs of Houses —  
The Son of Manenga,  
Shishopa Mikende.' (23: 2)

Head-hunting and drinking from human skulls were customary at Nkoya courts in the nineteenth century and were described not only in oral sources<sup>383</sup> but also in the journal of the hunter and trader George Westbeech,<sup>384</sup> although we do not know for sure that these customs derived from exclusively male *Myene*, or preceded the latter. Also some ancient songs belonging to the repertoire of royal music still being performed at the Nkoya *zinkena* speak of the cruelty of the *Myene* and of young children who disappeared in this connexion.<sup>385</sup> Another oral source<sup>386</sup> dwells on human sacrifices brought to the royal drums, to the royal fence upon completion, and as part of the burial procedures of the *Mwene*.

Sometimes women may have been considered as spoil-sport censors of violence committed by the male rulers associated with them:

'Mwene Liyoka and his mother Shapita continued along the Luampa. When they reached the Lwamanzambo, Mwene Liyoka killed someone and put the blood of his victim onto his large drums. The next morning his mother Shapita looked at the large drum and saw that it was red with blood.' (36: 2)

The (classificatory) mother appears not as someone condoning her son's cruelty or taking part in it, but as someone who only after the deed has been committed is confronted with the horrible effects — as if Mwene Liyoka did not dare to commit the killing in front of his mother, and was in the morning chided by her for it...? Her reaction has not been recorded, and her main function in the passage of *Likota Iya Bankoya* is perhaps to suggest that essential information has been

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383 Oral source [5] relates how 'Kahare' and Shamamano used to engage in head-hunting and to drink blood from human skulls.

384 Cf. Tabler 1963.

385 Manuscript: Davison Kawanga, 'Nkoya songs as taped by Wim van Binsbergen: translations and notes', songs 38 and 39.

386 Oral source [2].

censored out — by narrators with a male bias, no doubt. Still, the passage makes sense in depicting the mother as a critical representative of the cosmological order the son tries to destroy by bloodshed.

There is plenty of conflict and tragedy in Nkoya political leadership during the nineteenth century: people abandoning their (male) *Mwene*, regicide, violent rivalry over royal titles, *Myene* being forced to abdicate. From a balanced cosmological system *Wene* became an idiom of violence, terror and exploitation — the central institutions of a male-headed state, one is inclined to add.

Part of this terror was internal and directed at the *Mwene*'s own subjects, as shown by the above passages featuring Liyoka. Shamamano's record, outside *Likota lya Bankoya*, is particularly negative in this respect (Clay 1945: 7). Such terror (through sorcery, open violence, and the *Mwene*'s secret executioners) has been part and parcel of at least the conceptual set-up — and perhaps also the secret practice — of Nkoya *Wene* to this day, in a way that is only implicitly indicated by *Likota lya Bankoya*. A twentieth-century example is the following:

'When Mwene Mutondo Wahila died in the year 1914, (...) [he] was mourned for one year, as 'Mwene Mutondo, the Receiver of Gifts.' (...) All the Nkoya shaved their heads upon his death; that was the Nkoya mourning custom for Myene. If anyone did not shave his or her head that person would meet death in the forest.' (52: 10)

The implication is: at the hands of the *Tupondwa*, the *Mwene*'s secret executioners.

*Likota lya Bankoya* certainly gives the impression that as Nkoya states developed under male *Myene*, the amount of internal violence increased to keep in step with the mounting external violence, directed at outsiders and in response to outside pressure. A different pattern of power relations emerged: power was no longer based on legitimation in the light of a local cosmology (something equally open to both genders, but primarily favouring women), but on the manipulation of people and relationships through trade, tribute, diplomacy, raiding and war — something eminently male. The later, male *Myene* increasingly took to violence precisely because they could not rely on the legitimating and consensus-creating force of a local cosmology. Moreover, their power increasingly derived from successful relations with the outside world; and it is from there that they derived both the incentives and the means to rely on violence: guns and ammunition; other much-coveted commodities, such as iron pots, beads, cloth; and the notion that human beings could be commodities and sold as slaves.

Besides this commercial activity, there was the increasing external military pressure on the Nkoya states. *Zinkena* were turned into real strongholds (*kembi*), and were situated close to one another for further security. Kololo were pressing from the west and south, and after the restoration of the Lozi state the latter's military exploits, although not



directed at the Nkoya, involved the Nkoya in operations further afield, such as those against the Kaonde and the Ila; Ndebele and Chikunda were pressing from the south and east; Lunda and Luvale, and later Kaonde and Yeke from the north.

The immediate effect of Kaonde pressure was that the Kahare kingship was chased from Kayimbu, from the *lukena* built at the hill which later was to become Kasempa boma. It is remarkable that this traumatic event is not itself reflected in *Likota Iya Bankoya*. We have seen Chief Kasempa's version in chapter 3; the episode, which is a standard item in the oral traditions at Mwene Kahare's court today, is furthermore related in several accounts of the history of the Kasempa district.<sup>387</sup> Another account derives again from Nicholls; in its complexity of the ethnic relations depicted it has a strong suggestion of authenticity and moreover confirms the intimate relations between the Kahare dynasty and the non-Nkoya or non-Mbwela inhabitants of the Hook of the Kafue and the area around Mumbwa. Nicholls describes how the Baluba inhabiting the northern part of the presentday Kasempa district were dispersed in all directions by

'Musokatanda [Musokantanda], a Mweyeke [Yeke].<sup>388</sup> One party of Baluba [Luba] settled at Kasempa while other parties settled to the east of Kasempa. At this time there was living at Kasempa a tribe of Bambwela [Mbwela]<sup>389</sup> under a chief named Kahari [Kahare]. The Baluba and Bambwela seem to have got on well with each other for some time and Kapidi, the Baluba chief, married the daughter of Kahari. But an inevitable quarrel arose, and as a result, the Baluba were driven south by the Bambwela under Kahari. They crossed the Kafue near the site of Mushuma's present kraal, with the Bambwela in hot pursuit. On reaching the river, Kahari was bitten by a mad dog in the heel and died, his body being taken back to Kasempa for burial by his people.<sup>390</sup> After a time, Kapidi collected his scattered warriors and made war on the new Kahari. As it was a surprise visit, he succeeded in driving the Bambwela away from Kasempa to the place where they are at present, living in the Mankoya [Nkoya] country.

About this time, a further raid was made by the Bayeke from Garenganze on the Baluba living east of Kasempa. As far as I can learn, Kahari had agreed with Msidi to make a clear sweep of the Baila [Ila], and Kahari's attack on the people at Kasempa should

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<sup>387</sup> Cf. Smith & Dale 1920; Chibanza 1961; Sandasanda 1972: 14. Jaeger 1972: 18 also deals with Chief Kasempa's war on groups identified as Mbwela, Mashasha and Nkoya.

<sup>388</sup> Musokantanda, however, is the name of the most senior Lunda ruler in northwestern Zambia; the Yeke ruler's name at the time was Msidi.

<sup>389</sup> Note that the word 'Nkoya' is not used here.

<sup>390</sup> Cf. the discussion of Shikanda's gender above, 2.5: 'gender and death from natural causes: an example'.

have taken place at the same time as the Bayeke attack on these Baluba living to the East of Kasempa. These Baluba fled on the approach of the Bayeke and followed the party under Kapidi. (...) They arrived in Ila country, there engaged in heated armed combat with the Ila, the Baluba suffered famine, but ultimately the Baluba's poisoned arrows turned out to be superior to the Ila's assegais. This resulted in a truce between Baluba and Ila.<sup>391</sup>

Much of this seems to echo the death of Mwene Kabimba and the subsequent exploits of Kalumpiteka and his followers, as related in *Likota Iya Bankoya*. However, Nicholls's account revolves on the distinction between Mbwela (owning the Kahare kingship) and the small Luba group in central western Zambia,<sup>392</sup> whereas in the *Likota Iya Bankoya* version this distinction is not made. Yet some of the contradictions in the *Likota Iya Bankoya* version (particularly the lack of continuity between the Kasempa branch, the branch that remained settled in Ilaland, and finally the branch that revived the Kahare kingship) could be resolved in the light of this distinction.

What Shimunika's account of the episode certainly conveys is the sense of aimlessness, defenselessness and loss that must have prevailed in the Kahare group in that period:

'[whereas] Shikanda had been very brave and without fear of the Kaonde army, Kabimba absconded, fleeing towards the south. 2 When they crossed the Dongwe near the Dongwe-Lalafuta confluence, they heard the sound of large drums in the night; the elders said that the sound they had heard might be that of the drums of Mwene Mutondo I Shinkisha at Kalimbata. They went back 3 eastward and crossed the Lufupa. Mwene Kabimba and his people saw a tribe of people who were called Yeke; these were murderously fighting among themselves. Mwene Kabimba and his people feared them and fled at night. 4 They went to the Lunga, a tributary of the Kafue. The Yeke followed them. They caught up with them between the Lunga and the Kafue. They killed Mwene Kabimba and flayed him! The Yeke took the skin of Mwene Kabimba with them to their land.' (42: 1f)

The silent passing at night of the *lukena* of a related ruler, the desperate trekking all over Nkoyaland finally to be skinned by foreign invaders — it conveys a sense of hopelessness in the light of which

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<sup>391</sup> 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. A very similar account in Smith & Dale 1920: i, 25f.

<sup>392</sup> A discussion of their relationship with the Zaïrean Luba is outside our present scope; cf. van Binsbergen 1981a: 126-137 and references cited there.

increasing state violence among the Nkoya becomes both understandable and tragic.

*Lady Myene of a later period*

A women's world (symbolically female ecological and ritual power: fishing, collecting, fertility and rain ritual, concentrating on the local clan territory) had become a man's world. Yet even so, Lady Mwene Shikanda managed to counter the Kaonde, regardless of her gender, and she died not by Kaonde arms but in her bed:

'After the death of Mwene Kahare, Shikanda took over the kingship. By that time the Mashasha were established in the Kayimbu area, which we call 'Kasempa District' today, and which in the past we used to call 'Kayimbu', 'in Kayimbu'. 7 In this place Mwene Kahare the Elder had lived, a few years after he and Mwene Shihoka had left the valley of the Maniinga. Mwene Shikanda died in her area, which had also been her father's; he was buried there and she was buried there too. In her time, while she was ruling the land, the Kaonde of Mwene Katotola came; Mwene Shikanda fought them until her death. (...) Mwene Shikanda died from natural causes. (...) Shikanda had been very brave and without fear of the Kaonde army' (41: 6f).

However, compare the contrasting account of Shikanda's reign by Clay:

'During Shikanda's reign the Ba-Kaonde came down and raided his [*sic*] people, and finally Shikanda was wounded, and died at Kasempa. (Shikanda, by taking medicine, was able to fly, and it was while flying over the heads of the enemy that he [*sic*] was wounded by an arrow.)' (Clay 1945: 5-6)<sup>393</sup>

It is just possible that it was this Mwene Kahare Shikanda who was referred to as bitten by a mad dog in Nicholls's account; probably, along with the free permutation of genealogical links between dynastic figures we must also count with the possibility of free permutations of exploits which are attributed to them. At any rate, Shikanda demonstrates that even at the height of Nkoya statehood some women managed to adopt and effectively exercise a male style of leadership. But they remained exceptions: partly because the increasing male bias in the Nkoya social and political system made them obsolete, partly because of the incorporation of that system in the male-centred Lozi state and colonial state. Shakalongo's case as discussed above may have been comparable to Shikanda's, and so may have been, further

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<sup>393</sup> For the spuriousness of Clay's claim of Shikanda being male, cf. above, 2.5, 'gender and death from natural causes'.

east, the female rulers Naumba and Longo on the Mwembeshi river (Brelsford 1935). Their reign, in the mid-nineteenth century, marked the emergence of the Sala ethnic identity, but both descriptions of the local culture, and extensive marital links with the Nkoya mainland in the late nineteenth and throughout the twentieth century, suggest them to be closely related to the Nkoya stock, much like (in the same general area) Mwene Lilanda near Lusaka.

Nor are these female rulers of the statehood period confined to the Nkoya. They are also reported among the Luvale (with the trading queen Nyakatolo just north of what is now Zambezi district as a famous case; Papstein 1978); in eastern Angola as studied by Joseph Miller (with Queen Temba Andumba as the most famous exponent; cf. Miller 1976); and among the Lozi: the *Litunga la Mboela* or 'Queen of the South', whose Nalolo court has formed a complement to that of the male *Litunga*.<sup>394</sup> Jaeger relates how the first incumbent of the chieftainship of Kapiji, now in Kasempa district, was a woman, and she has a double significance for Nkoya history since she fought the Mbwela already at the Lualaba river, still in Zaïre (Jaeger 1972: 18). Much further afield, yet perhaps pertaining to the same politico-symbolic complex, we have that textbook example of southern African ethnography, the Lovedu rain queen (Krige & Krige 1943), who may have been just one example of a more widespread complex.

These female rulers could be regarded as survivals from a pre-state, female-dominated system of sacred kingship. In fact, their existence, often well into the nineteenth and twentieth century, adds further plausibility to the idea of female leadership in an earlier age. The female rulers functioned in a period of statehood, in a context where they had become anomalies in a male-restructured political system. They indicate that state formation, on the political plane, and the increasing male-centredness of the ideological system, however intimately related, still remained two separate phenomena which maintained a certain tension and did not develop at exactly the same pace.

#### 5.4. The changing kinship roles of women

The increasing male-centredness of the political system, and the concomitant ideological changes, cannot have remained without effects on the kinship roles of women.

*Likota lya Bankoya* claims, as we have seen, that until well into the nineteenth century male *Myene* would continue to justify their positions by association with or reference to mothers and sisters. In this respect the following domestic scene is very telling:

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<sup>394</sup> Mutumba Mainga 1973; Gluckman 1943, 1951; Brown 1984.

‘When [Mwene Kayambila’s daughter] Mwana Mwene by the name of Mashiku had grown up she gave birth to a son. According to the Nkoya custom at the time, she took the baby to her father Mwene Kayambila, so that he could name him. 3 In the morning, in the first light of the sun, the Mwene took his grandson in his hands and named him with the following words:

‘‘You are Mukamba Kuwonga, a son of Manenga’’.

Mukamba Shingole<sup>395</sup> was born in the year 1817’ (25: 1).

Another example from *Likota lya Bankoya* showing the intimate relationship between a male ruler and his daughter concerns Mwene Munangisha, an incumbent of Mwene Kayambila’s throne a few decades later. The Kololo had occupied Barotseland. From there they had taken the Mutondo royal family into captivity. After ousting the Kololo, the Lozi ruler Sipopa allowed most of them to return:

‘Munangisha went back to Nkoya with his younger brother Mushunga. However, he was not allowed to take his daughter Makomani with him, for she was very beautiful. 4 Sipopa told Munangisha:

‘‘If you want to take your daughter, then go and bring a slave who resembles her, to take her place.’’

Munangisha failed to find a beautiful slave woman in that area, so he went to Kabuzu, to Mwene Kasheba Momba. There he found a slave woman who was beautiful. 5 He took her to Mwene Sipopa and then he was allowed to take his daughter Watunga Makomani with him.

After their return Makomani was married to [ **beter: at; Nkulashi is the name of a river** ] Nkulashi.’ (46: 3)

Meanwhile, the rise to power of the *Bakwetunga* entailed a marked change in royal conjugal matters. Of Lady Mwene Manenga it was still worth noting that all her children were from one father: in other words, she might have chosen otherwise. The free sexual morals of Lady *Myene*, their freedom to take and change lovers, comes out in the oral sources outside *Likota lya Bankoya*.<sup>396</sup> However, with one of Mwene Manenga’s successors, the male Mwene Kayambila, the roles seem to be reversed:

‘Mwene Kayambila had many children and [some of] their names have been mentioned at the beginning of this book. Mwene Kayambila had many children because he married many Mahano.’ (25: 1)

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<sup>395</sup> *Sic*, and not Mukamba Kuwonga; most probably Shingole was his father’s name.

<sup>396</sup> E.g. oral source [3] 19.11.1973.

Women appear to have become valued more as daughters than as wives. *Likota Iya Bankoya* reports how Mwene Mutondo Kashina, Munangisha's predecessor, initiated legislation which amounts to the institutionalization, in the field of marital law, of the men's increasing dominance over women:

'He proclaimed a bad law:

"There will be no court cases concerning women any more, and the Mwene will no longer respect the Shilolo's wife.'" (28: 3)<sup>397</sup>

However, Kashina did far from succeed in thus formalizing female subjugation, and he met with so much popular protest that it meant the end of his reign:

'All the people failed to appreciate his law, since it greatly corrupted the people in their hearts. At that 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. (...)

Many Nkoya had refused to follow Mwene Mutondo Kashina to Lukwakwa, to Fumika (...). When the Nkoya reached Lukwakwa they said to Fumika:

"The Mwene is telling lies: it is not as if we reject the Mwene, but the Mwene has rejected us, for he is not ruling the land. 4 That is why the people have turned away from him."

(...) When they arrived here in Nkoya they did not want Mwene Mutondo Kashina to be their senior Mwene any more, saying:

"He has brought unrest to the land and has failed to unite the people. That is why we do not want him any more."

They did not pay him tribute any more, not even food, and so he died on the Shimano (...). The ants buried him.' (28: 2f; 34: 2f)

*Likota Iya Bankoya* implies that moral disorder in the land, in other words the breach of the cosmological order including gender relations, brought about external disasters such as war. It is a bit hard to believe that Mbololo deliberately sent his troops in order to restore Nkoya marital laws he was no party to. At any rate, also the negative response of his own people told Kashina that there were limits to the extent to which he could redefine gender relations in the direction of male dominance.

But although Kashina's legislation was revoked, sexual prowess has remained to this very day an important expression of the male *Myene's* exalted position. Thus Mwene Munangisha, Kashina's successor and a

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<sup>397</sup> Interestingly, also Sipopa is reputed to have claimed a royal sexual right to whatever woman he might fancy (Holub 1879: 14).

contemporary of the Lozi ruler Sipopa, is reported to have committed adultery with his 'elder brother's' wife:

'The daughter of Kancende; she became the Lihano of [Munangisha's] elder brother Shikongi. Mwene Shikongi had a conflict with his younger brother Munangisha because the latter trespassed in his elder brother's house. Then Mwene Shikongi said to his younger brother:

'You committed incest! Just pay me a slave and marry her [Kancende's daughter] so that she shall be your wife.' (44: 3)

It would however be too much of a projection of presentday feminist concerns, to view the situation merely as that of male chauvinist *Myene* taking lecherous advantage of helpless women who had lost their politico-religious status. For one thing, a male *Mwene* whose sexual powers failed him could not stay in office, and more likely would find himself the victim of regicide — after the model of African sacred kingship that would appear to be older than male-dominated state formation among the Nkoya; in other words, male power models were not totally innovative but had to operate in the context of an ancient heritage. Moreover, while an ideology of sexual prowess might suggest male dominance over women, male *Myene* would still be at the mercy of women testing, and giving testimony of, his sexual justification for ruler status — another group of women critically surrounding (as sexual partners) the male *Mwene*, in addition to the consanguineal female relatives (to whom he had no sexual access due to incest prohibitions).

Munangisha's liberties with his sister-in-law must not be exclusively interpreted within an aristocratic context: the royal temptation to break through sexual taboos (*à la* Kashina) or the royal obligation of sexual prowess. In fact Munangisha's behaviour could be recognized by many Nkoya as fairly standard. In sexual matters among the Nkoya (and elsewhere in the region) it is a generally accepted principle that (classificatory, but including biological) siblings of the same sex are interchangeable as partners. As a common Nkoya saying runs:

'She is your sister-in-law in front of the house, but behind the house she is your wife'.<sup>398</sup>

Finally, the outcome of the story of Munangisha's adultery shows, as a moral, that men might pursue their ephemeral illegitimate pleasures, but that women and their female powers of reproduction continued to form the backbone of dynastic succession — until patrilineal succession of *Myene* became institutionalized (see below):

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<sup>398</sup> Also cf. van Binsbergen 1987a.

‘The daughter of Kancende had two sons: first Mampilu also called Wahila, begotten by Mwene Shikongi. 5 Then Munangisha begot Kazikwa Shayama, also called Mushonto. These were born before Mwene Mutondo Munangisha went to Loziland during the Kololo war in the year 1860.’ (44: 4f)

In the end Kancende’s daughter, more than her lover and subsequently husband Munangisha, appears to have come out victorious in this story: both her sons, Wahila and Mushonto, were to accede to the Mutondo throne, one after the other, around the turn of the century.

Yet this success was attained from a position of formal powerlessness, and — significantly — it became manifest not in the mother but in her sons. This was a far cry from women’s position as the very embodiment of cosmological, cultural and political order; women now had become mere bones of contention between men.

Significant in this respect is the detailed account, in *Likota lya Bankoya*, of the exploits of Munyama, Mbololo’s emissary *induna*. When at the Kayimbu court of Mwene Kahare Shikanda, Munyama abducted a Nkoya woman and took her to the court of Mwene Mutondo Kashina, under whose lenient marital laws he could find shelter — an indication that the several Nkoya courts stood for practically independent states sharing the same overall language and culture. Shikanda’s people traced Munyama, and Kashina could not prevent his being beaten up. Munyama fled to Mbololo and out of spite persuaded him to send a punitive expedition to Kashina, taking the royal family captive, and seizing or destroying the royal drums. The episode is of unique significance: this was the one traumatic defeat that would determine Nkoya relations with the Kololo and more important with the latter’s political heirs, the Lozi, for the rest of the nineteenth and throughout the twentieth century — the very core of the Nkoya’s negative historical experience. And not unlike Homer in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, *Likota lya Bankoya* blames it on adultery and elopement. In both cases, and both types of kingdoms, the rulers’ entanglement in sexual affairs may be interpreted as a sign of *how little the political sphere had yet managed to develop into a separate structural domain, autonomous from the kinship domain*.

As wives, women not only came to disrupt diplomatic relations between men: they may also have cemented them. Thus Munangisha is depicted as letting his marriage serve his diplomatic interests as a future ruler:

‘[Shibuyi Likambi’s] father was Mukwetunga Lwengu of the Lands; his mother was Mwene Komoka Shihoka. When Munangisha had grown up, he sent people to Kaonde to the village of Kalembelembe in order to fetch the woman who was to be his Lihano. They fetched the woman, carrying her on their shoulders, and brought her to him in the valley of the Miluzi (...), where he lived in the capital of his



mother Mwene Komoka (...). Liziho became the senior of all the wives of Mwene Mutondo Munangisha' (44: 2).<sup>399</sup>

Also in this case the male *Mwene's* own status was obviously still very much dependent on that of his mother Mwene Komoka.

Significantly it is women who are on the move now, while their husbands remain entrenched in the *zinkena*: a reversal of the pattern of slave marriage by female *Bana wa Myene*: through uxori-local<sup>400</sup> marriages or less formal unions involving male 'slaves', these created a solidary following of half-caste royals whose descendants are still to be found around the Nkoya *zinkena* today. Men, not women, have begun to form the local knots of the *lukena* kinship network.

A final aspect of the emergence of a male ideological perspective was the shift to patrilineal succession of *Myene*, so marked in the twentieth-century succession pattern of the Kahare kingship: once Shamamano had claimed this title under the protection of Lewanika, it passed on to his brother Mpelembe in 1914, to Shamamano's son Timuna in 1921 and again to Timuna's son Kabambi in 1955; at the time of writing (1990) Mwene Kabambi is still the incumbent. Likewise, patrilineal succession entered the Mutondo kingship: the *Myene* Kanyinca, Mushonto and Kalapukila were all sons of Mwene Munangisha.<sup>401</sup> This shift was specifically linked to Lozi domination as from the second half of the nineteenth century, when — as *Likota Iya Bankoya* makes overwhelmingly clear — all instances of Nkoya royal succession were instigated, controlled and/or arbitrated by the Lozi *Litunga*. Nkoya *Myene* had become answerable to the Lozi state. The latter was organized along patrilineal lines, and may have had an interest in the existence of slightly irregular (for patrilineally-succeeding) Nkoya *Myene* whose power would then be even more dependent upon Lozi protection. Patrilineal succession infiltrated Nkoya *Wene*, and has been there ever since — further eroding female power.<sup>402</sup>

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399 Although *Likota Iya Bankoya* explicitly situates the ruler Kalembelembe in Kaondeland, he was ethnically much closer related to the Nkoya and Mashasha than their arch-enemies the Kaonde. Cf. E.M. Shimantale, 'The history of the Mbwela people', photocopy of a typescript of an interview by J.K. Rennie, 6 pp., author's collection; there Kalembelembe is listed as the first chief of the Mbwela, having arrived at the Mbwela's presentday location near the Kafue and Lufupa rivers 'together with chief Kahala' [= Kahare]. So Munangisha in this case is perpetuating, through marriage, a historic political and ethnic link.

400 The anthropological concept of uxori-local marriage applies when a newly-wed couple takes up residence with the wife's kin.

401 Not documented by *Likota Iya Bankoya* is the general shift to patriliney also outside the context of royal succession, which made contemporary Nkoya society bilateral instead of matrilineal; cf. van Binsbergen 1977, 1979.

402 Butterman's paper 'Towards a history of gender relations in Zambia' (1985), concentrating on the colonial and post-colonial phases, nicely

### 5.5. Contested patrilineal succession of the Kahare kingship around 1900: Shamamano, Kambotwe and Timuna

In the case of the shift towards patrilineal succession, we are fortunate that the oral-historical data provide us with the details that allow us to perceive the specific, concrete political strategies through which such major changes in the socio-political structure tend to realize themselves.

From the account in *Likota Iya Bankoya*, Shamamano emerges as a great warrior and resourceful adventurer, and also as a usurper, who only under the protection of Lewanika managed to revive the Kahare name to which he was related not as a sister's son, but only as a daughter's son, i.e. outside the ordinary line of dynastic succession. A century of chief's rule by members of Shamamano's patri-segment, in a general context of the Lozi indigenous administration and the colonial and post-colonial state favouring patrilineal succession, has created such an image of self-evident legitimacy for the current Kahare line that oral traditions dwelling on the irregularity of Shamamano's accession are completely suppressed at the Kahare court today. However, there is in Kahare's area and among urban migrants hailing from there a noticeable undercurrent of traditions in which this legitimacy is challenged, and rival claims to the Kahare kingship are entertained.

When Shamamano built his *lukena* in the same general area where his sons and grandson have since held the Kahare kingship, he did not enter a virgin territory, but one which for at least a century had been under Nkoya rule. Mwene Kabazi lived on the Njonjolo, at Litoya Iya Mbuma. His younger sister, one of his successors, Mwene Manenga, had her *lukena* at the Lwashanza less than ten kilometres away. Mwene Mulimba, whose title (perhaps through perpetual kinship?) is claimed to go back to a son of Mwene Manenga,<sup>403</sup> was and is considered the owner of the local land, even though his name appears on the list in chapter 1 of those *Myene* who saw their status annihilated under the impact of the Barotse indigenous administration and the colonial state.<sup>404</sup> Other *Myene* encountered by the Kahare group when settling there were named as Kabimba, Shikandabole and Shikwasha<sup>405</sup> — but:

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complements my argument, with this qualification that her view of precolonial gender relations remains altogether too general: it overlooks women's possible dominance in the initial stages of what could be called the tributary mode of production.

403 Oral source [18] 14.10.1977.

404 Oral source [19] 20.10.1977; cf. above, 1.3, 'the indigenous Barotse administration'.

405 Oral source [3] 9.10.1973; these are to this day the names of headmen and villages on the south bank of the Njonjolo river, near Mwene Timuna's

‘Mulimba is the greatest headman here of all, directly under Mwene Kahare. He gave us this land. Without him we could not live here.’<sup>406</sup>

At Mwene Kahare’s court Mwene Mulimba, even though an unremunerated village headman — with only his royal bell to prove a more glorious past — is treated with the greatest deference. None the less, it stands to reason that the Mulimba title has for many decades been the rallying focus of rival claims to the Kahare kingship.

The most detailed information on Shamamano’s contentious succession was however not volunteered by an incumbent of the Mulimba title, but by an urban informant whose very strategic genealogical position will be clear from diagram 9: his father married both in the Shamamano and in the Kambotwe family:

‘Kambotwe (a predecessor of Shipungu) was the original owner of the Kahare name. All regalia had been taken by Kambotwe from Mongu to Kasempa:<sup>407</sup> *ngongi, ngoma ntambwe, shibanga, mpunga* (eland tail), and *mpande*. These regalia did not originate in Mongu but from somewhere else, where he stayed first.<sup>408</sup>

Kambotwe<sup>409</sup> gave the Kahare name, and the regalia, to Shamamano, because in his own family he could not find a successor.<sup>410</sup> After Shamamano’s death Kambotwe asked the name back, but in vain: the Europeans did not allow Kambotwe to take the name of Kahare. After the death of Timuna, Kabangu wanted the Kahare name back, but the elders declined.’<sup>411</sup>

This reading allows us to look with different eyes at the praise-name with which Timuna acceded to the Kahare kingship:

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grave. This Kabimba is of course not identical with the one who was flayed by the Yeke.

<sup>406</sup> Oral source [23] 13.10.1973.

<sup>407</sup> This is in line with the journey of Shihoka Nalinanga and his sister’s son Kahare from the Zambezi valley to the Lunga river, as related in *Likota lya Bankoya*, which suggests that Kambotwe Kahare might be the same personage as Shihoka’s sister’s son.

<sup>408</sup> No more explicit information was given. It is possible that the Upper Zambezi or the Zambezi/Congo watershed is meant, and that the present tradition is subject to the same collective amnesia or self-imposed censorship as all other Nkoya reminiscences of that location.

<sup>409</sup> As usual, the tradition speaks indiscriminately of the royal title irrespective of the various incumbents it must have had over time.

<sup>410</sup> Which fits in with the upheaval in the Kahare line in the final episode at Kayimbu, and during the flight south.

<sup>411</sup> Oral source [11], confirmed by oral source [14]. Kabangu’s son Muchati was Mwene Mulimba in the 1960s and early 1970s.

'Ami Timuna  
Mwana mutanda na mpande  
Ba Timuna ba Nyengo':

'I am Timuna  
The **son** who dons the mpande  
Timuna son of Nyengo.'<sup>412</sup>

The *son*: in other words he has managed to claim the *mpande* (i.e. the kingship), *even though* he is only a son, and not a sister's son, — not even (as his father had been at least), a daughter's son.

The above version of Shamamano's usurpation is widely accepted in the Kahare area. Even our informant Katambula, who as Mwene Shamamano's daughter cannot quite afford to subscribe to this reading, at the same time admits that Shamamano received the Kahare name from the Nkonze clan, which is the clan owning the Mulimba title; in her view, Mulimba was in collusion with the representative induna Simuliankumba when the latter — after allegedly killing Timuna's predecessor Mpelembe by sorcery — tried to oust Timuna and convert the Kahare kingship into an exalted *induna*-ship for himself.<sup>413</sup>

In the course of a formal group interview with the Kahare Royal Council another informant, distantly related to Kabangu and from 1975-1980 the incumbent of the Mulimba title which has been the rallying focus for the political faction contesting the Shamamano line in the Kahare kingship, did not confirm Mr Mangowa's reading but instead claimed — as some sort of compromise — the existence of a third royal title on a par with Mutondo and Kahare: that of Kambotwe.<sup>414</sup>

The same group discussion, a day later, failed to throw any light on the place of Kambotwe, and Shakalongo for that matter, in relation to the Mutondo and Kahare kingships.<sup>415</sup> Headman Mulimba's public interpretation may be understandably diplomatic but it is far from helpful: at this stage in the argument we are in a position to interpret this view as a projection of the colonial survival of the kingships of Mutondo and Kahare back into a past where there was a proliferation of royal titles. However, in private he completely confirmed Mr Mangowa's interpretation of Shamamano's succession:

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412 Oral source [1].

413 Oral source [6].

414 Oral source [18] 13.10.1977.

415 Oral source [18] 14.10.1977.

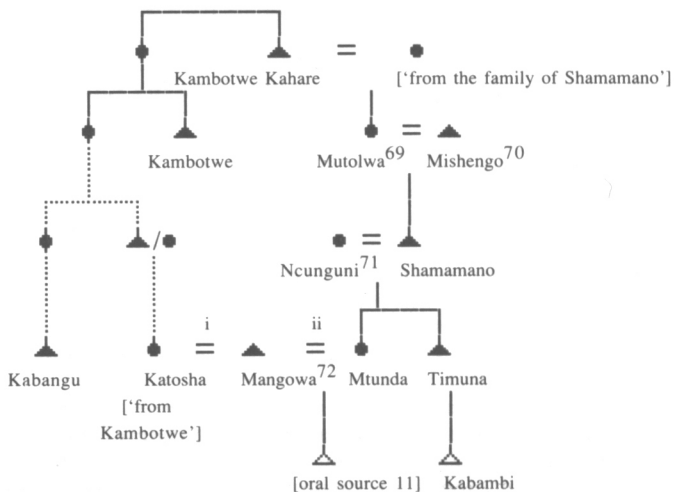


Diagram 9. Reconstruction of the genealogical relationship between Shamamano and Kambotwe.<sup>420</sup>

‘Kambotwe came just after Lipepo. Kambotwe introduced Mukanda, for his father, a Mukwetunga, was from Lunda.

The Kambotwe who was in competition over the Kahare name was a different Kambotwe, he lived in the time of Shamamano. But that Kambotwe did not get the Kahare name back because in Lealui he was told:

“Kingship is to be inherited in the male line now.”<sup>421</sup>

If this throws some new historical light on the current owners of the Kahare title, what about the relations between Kahare and Mutondo?

<sup>416</sup> Name not specified by [11].

<sup>417</sup> Name not specified by [11]; Mishengo in other accounts is called Nyengo, e.g. oral sources [1] and [23].

<sup>418</sup> Name not specified by [11], but origin from Shakalongo stated.

<sup>419</sup> Son of Muyuwani, from Kabulwebulwe, and a Lamba woman; his third marriage, also with a Lamba woman, is not indicated in the diagram.

<sup>420</sup> Compiled from various sources, primarily oral source [11].

<sup>421</sup> Oral source [16] 16.10.1977.

## 5.6. Another look at the seniority contest between the Kahare and Mutondo titles

In the preceding section we have looked at oral traditions which because of their anti-establishment, not to say underground character deserve to be taken seriously as possible glimpses of historical truth, such as may have been censored out of official versions which are effectively attuned to the neo-traditional political *status quo* in Kaoma district. Amazingly, in two instances the Kahare title was associated with the original introduction of crucial elements in the political culture of central western Zambia: the total package of regalia, and *Mukanda*.

It is time we return once more to the political issue of rivalry and seniority underlying the moiety-like political structure of the Nkoya community in Kaoma district today, before we return, in the next chapter, to the text of *Likota Iya Bankoya* and seek to penetrate its symbolic deep structure.

There is reason to believe that Mutondo's qualified seniority only goes back to the greater success of the Mutondo state in Nkoya in the nineteenth century as compared to the decline of the Kahare state before its being revived by Mwene Shamamano Kahare at the end of that century. As a royal title and a dynasty, Mutondo seems primarily a local product of Kaoma district, from the first quarter of the nineteenth century. It is quite likely that Kahare is in fact the older, more established and senior title, whose history goes back to Mbwela settlement on the Upper Zambezi if not to Musumba itself.

For prior to the dynastic migration to Nkoya there is only very unconvincing evidence concerning the Mutondo title, whereas the Upper Zambezi and Lunda connotations of the Kahare title are somewhat more substantial. Schecter (1980a) mentions a Kahare cave in the old Mbwela region; he finds passing references to the names of both Kahare and Mutondo in Upper Zambezi traditions,<sup>422</sup> but most likely this is a projection on the part of contemporary informants, in an attempt to render more substance to traditions on Mbwela and Nkoya groups: they certainly know — as many other Zambians these days — that the Nkoya in Kaoma district have Kahare and Mutondo as their principal chiefs.

The oral source<sup>423</sup> on Kambotwe as quoted above is not the only one in which 'Kahare' is claimed to have made and distributed the first xylophone, which does have strong Lunda connotations. The praise-name of the first incumbent of the Kahare title is:

'Kahare kamulema njimba

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<sup>422</sup> He claims that the Mbwela characters Nsanganyi, Mutondu [Mutondo] and Kahari [Kahare] are known to virtually every informant (Schecter 1980a: 272), but no further specific mention is made of either Mutondo or Kahare, with the exception of the Kahare cave.

<sup>423</sup> Oral source [11].

Bale mangoma zizinge  
Katapishila bantu nimwabo’:

‘Kahare Who Made the Xylophone  
And Many Drums  
To Share with all the People.’<sup>424</sup>

Brown (1984), whose musicological research in the 1970s concentrated on the Mutondo *lukena*, offers various traditions connected with the origin of the royal orchestra among the Nkoya. A recurrent theme there is that the first royal musical instruments were created not by humans but by spirits. Significantly, the royal orchestra of Mutondo is claimed by these traditions to have perhaps a supernatural, but at the same time a strictly local origin in the land of Nkoya: allegedly it was invented by spirits in a lake near Shinkisha Mate’s capital (Brown 1984: 130-150) — a charter-like ideology clearly meant to cater for

‘...the need of the Mutondo dynasty to establish an exclusive claim to the Nkoya royal xylophone and drum ensemble, a primary symbol of political power. Claiming that the ensemble was a gift from the spirits eliminated any need to acknowledge the possession of the ensemble (and through it, political power) by anyone outside the Mutondo dynasty.’ (Brown 1984: 147)

The most likely outside claimant in this context would be the Kahare kingship!

Moreover, Kahare is much more than Mutondo associated with the mythical Mwene Kapesi, and hence not only with Musumban traditions of Kaposh, the mythical tower into heaven, but also with the origin of tribal heterogeneity and even with human (or at least *Bantu*-speakers’ s) presence in South Central Africa. Some Kahare subjects claim, as we have seen, the Kapesi link explicitly as an indication that, historically speaking, not Mutondo but Kahare should be the senior Nkoya chief.<sup>425</sup>

This would seem to mean that, contrary to Mutondo, the Kahare title was already in existence at the time of the original dynastic migration from Musumba. But what then to make of those traditions which attribute the later separation between Kahare and Mutondo to disagreement concerning *Mukanda*? Admittedly, the traditions on this point are highly contradictory. *Likota Iya Bankoya*, and the ethnographic fact that *Mukanda* is associated with the Mutondo kinship and with the Nkoya in the narrower sense but rejected by the Mashasha, would indicate that the Kahare kingship resolutely rejected *Mukanda*, whereas the Muto-

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<sup>424</sup> Oral source [3] 19.11.1973. Oral source [1] gives the same interpretation but only the first line of the praise-name. According to [3], the Kahare in question would have been Libinda, *son* [*sic*] of Shihoka.

<sup>425</sup> Oral source [7] 22.10.1977.

ndo kingship after initial rejection was more effectively subjected to a process of re-Lunda-ization including reintroduction of *Mukanda* under Munangisha. There is a neutral source which merely states that *Mukanda* was a bone of contention between the two titles without specifying which side was taken by either of them.<sup>426</sup> And again, there is the Kambotwe tradition:

‘Kambotwe came just after Lipepo. Kambotwe introduced *Mukanda*, for his father, a Mukwetunga, was from Lunda.’<sup>427</sup>

The puzzle may be solved once we realize that the latter-day separation and juxtaposition of the kingships of Kahare and Mutondo, and the political convenience to deny any genealogical relationship between the two kingships, does not at all preclude that the kingships were actually related in the past, perhaps not in terms of genealogical links (which is largely a political idiom anyway) but at least in terms of having a joint political origin. It may be highly significant that in a context of legitimacy or usurpation of the Kahare title, Kambotwe is relegated to a figure like Lipepo who according to *Likota lya Bankoya* and other Mutondo-orientated sources is clearly situated in the Mutondo tradition.

What we are witnessing in the process of Nkoya state formation is the creation of a political culture, offering powerful symbols by means of which aspiring polities can both legitimate themselves internally and define themselves vis-à-vis each other. As far as external definition is concerned (and for argument’s sake still concentrating on two Nkoya royal titles out of the far greater number to which Nkoya royal titles proliferated) two phases can be clearly distinguished: self-definition of the proto-Nkoya out-migrants vis-à-vis the Musumban state; and differentiation between Kahare and Mutondo.

The Humbu war, in which Mwaat Yaamv’s loyal subjects attacked the Nkoya *Myene* because the latter refused to perform *Mukanda* — and by this stance declared their independence from Musumban overlordship, strongly suggests that initially acceptance or rejection of *Mukanda* was, among the proto-Nkoya, the decisive element in their political self-definition vis-à-vis the Musumban state.

As cleavages developed within the newly broken-away proto-Nkoya group, an internal contest over regalia came to supersede the external contest of *Mukanda*. *Mukanda* lost its central position as a boundary marker, and an inconsistent process of re-Lunda-ization, difficult to allocate to either dynastic line but in the nineteenth century increasingly situated on the Mutondo side, once more found employ for this institution — even to the extent of it becoming an internal boundary marker, not between Nkoya and Musumba, but between Kahare and Mutondo.

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<sup>426</sup> Oral source [10].

<sup>427</sup> Oral source [16] 16.10.1977.



More important meanwhile was the struggle over the regalia. Here the forced invention, on the Mutondo side, of an independence charter founded on the claim of a local but supernatural origin contrasts so beautifully with the proud declaration of personal invention and distribution in the praise-name of the first Kahare, that the conclusion is inescapable: *the Mutondo line broke away from a senior group associated with the Kahare kingship, and in the process evolved its own regalia as well as accompanying myths to assert its independence from that older stock.*

Such an interpretation, finally, would also explain the names of the two kingships. The name *Kahare* comes from the verb *ku hala*: ‘to uproot’, ‘to dig up a wild tuber called *shihala*’.<sup>428</sup> Since reference is made to a *wild* tuber, the name cannot have the connotation, found with other early *Myene*, of the introduction of new crops. Instead, the name carries an association with the early phase of proto-Nkoya economy, when reliance on gathering wild forest and aquatic products may have been more important than agriculture. And particularly, the image of uprooting befits the emigration from Musumba. One can well imagine the first Kahare creating the title by adopting a hypothetical praise-name like:

‘I am Kahale  
The Uprooted One...’

The image of the Mutondo tree is the opposite: the kingship has taken root and has grown to be a proud and beautiful tree. Its origin from Mwaat Yaamv can be admitted, but it is no longer a dominant theme. This is clear in the historical praises (denoted by the verb *ku tanganisha*) that habitually accompany a public performance of Mutondo’s royal orchestra:<sup>429</sup>

‘Etu Baka Mwene Mutondo  
Mutondo Mwana Manenga  
Mutondo wa Mpululwila  
Mutondo waluba nceshelo  
Etu Baka Kashina ka Luhamba  
Hano nibo ba Nkoya Nawiko’:

‘We are the people of Mwene Mutondo  
Mutondo the Daughter of Manenga  
With Branches only at the Top  
Without any Scars from fallen-off Branches  
We are the people of Kashina son of Luhamba  
Here are, in other words, the Nkoya Nawiko’.

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<sup>428</sup> Oral source [17] 30.9.1977.

<sup>429</sup> From the manuscript by Davison Kawanga, ‘Nkoya songs as taped by Wim van Binsbergen: translations and notes’, 112 pp.; cf. the praise-names of Mwene Mutondo Shinkisha in *Likota Iya Bankoya* (26: 1f).

Some among the audience may accompany this praise by shouting

‘Tufumako ku Mwantiyavwa’

‘We have come from Mwaat Yaamv’

but this is not part of the formalized praise proper, and is often omitted.

With Mutondo we have arrived at a later phase of Nkoya state formation, with other, more pressing concerns than some remote origin in a distant land: Mutondo’s praise-name, with its imagery of branches and blemishes, revolves on dynastic purity and intra-group rivalry<sup>430</sup> — the typical problems of an established state elite.

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<sup>430</sup> As particularly manifest in the geographical dispersal yet — at least partially — continued allegiance of the Momba and Kabulwebulwe titles vis-à-vis the Mutondo title.