

KAZA NGA

The Nkoya Society, Chieftaincy and the Kathanga Traditional Ceremony

Information Leaflet

The Nkoya Society, Chieftaincy and their Kathanga Traditional Ceremony.

WHO ARE THE NKOYAS

The Nkoya people came from Kola. They migrated from the Lunda Luba Empire between the 11th and the 16th century. Map No. 1 shows the migration of the Nkoya people from Congo. The majority of the Nkoya people settled in Kaoma and Lukulu east, which the colonialists named Mankoya. Map No. 2 shows the boundaries of Mankoya. Others settled in Kafue or Lwenge as it was commonly known. According to Czech Emile Holub, he found the Nkoya people settled in Kafue from 1885 to 1886. The rest of the Nkoyas are found in Kalabo, Mongu, Sesheke, Nanwala, Itzhitezhi, Kalomo west, Lusaka, Kasempa, Kabompo, Chibombo and Mumbwa west.

Chiefs

The most senior (*by Nkoya definition*) Chiefs of the Nkoya people are Chief Mutondo and Chief Kahare found in Kaoma District. Chief Kahare is in the east while Chief Mutondo is in the west. The Nkoyas have Chiefs Moomba in Kalomo west, and Chief Kabulwebulwe in Mumbwa west in Kalomo and Mumbwa districts respectively.

There are several Installed Nkoya chiefs in Kaoma District. These are Mwene Muleka, Mwene Funkafunka, Mwene Munyuwanyuwi, Mwene Shihoka, Mwene Kalongo under Chief Kahare, and Mwene Shitunya, Mwene Lishenga, Mwene Mushwala, Mwene Lumano, Mwene Muyani, Mwene Mute, Mwene Kapupa under Chief Mutondo. Nkoyas also have Mwene Nyati, Mwene Pumpola, Mwene Kangombe, in Lukulu District, and Mwene Kangombe in Kabombo District and Mwene Mutinginyi in Kasempa District.

Ethnicity

The Nkoya people have at least 9 ethnic groupings:

Lukolwe of Kabompo and Lukulu, Shishanjo of Kalabo, Lushangi of Kaoma, Nawiko of Kaoma, Mashasha of Kaoma, Lumbu of Namwala, Mbwera of Kasempa, Shibanda of Mumbwa, Shikalu of Chief Momba in Kalomo, Munsamba of Sesheke.

Dialects

The Nkoya tribe has 8 dialects: Shimashasha of Mwene Kahare of Kaoma, Shinkoya of Mwene Mutondo of Kaoma, Balumbu of Mwene Moomba of Kalomo, Shibulumbwe of Mwene Kabulwebulwe of Mumbwa, Shililanda of Mwene Lilanda of Lilanda of Lusaka, Shiukalu of Mulobezi of Sesheke, Shiyowe of Luampa of Kaoma, Shimbwela of Mwene Nyati of Lukulu, Kabompo, Kalabo and Mongu districts. Under the British Colon, Nkoya tribe was recognized as a language and hence Nkoya language was being taught in schools in Mankoya land. This ended in 1968 when the Education Officer of Mankoya at the time burnt all Nkoya teachings and pupil books. The Nkoya People is still contesting this issue.

Kathanga KAZA NGA

Kathanga is a ceremony that dates back to the beginning of the Chieftaincy of the Nkoya people. Kathanga is a sacred basin dug at the center of a shrine known as Shihanda found in every palace of a Nkoya Chief. A replica of a shrine Kathanga is a ceremony that dates back to the beginning is made at shilombo the site for Kathanga. A fresh and sweet traditional brew made from a new crop of sorghum called Tongo is placed in the sacred basin for the Chief to drink. In Chiefs palaces, prince and princesses partake in the drinking of Tongo. After drinking from the Kathanga, the Chief gives praise to ancestors for a good harvest and asks for ancestral blessings for his people. Nkoyas rely on sorghum, millets, maize and cassava for their staple foods.

The Tasting of Tongo is a purification act. It means the subjects can thereafter use the fresh crop because the Chief has paid homage to God for the harvest. According to legend, the Chief has spiritual powers to communicate with ancestors of Nkoya people called Bapashi.

After the Chief has finished with the rituals of blessing the crop, he is prompted by the Chief royal drummer to resume the Ntomboke dance. This is a war and hunters dance performed only by chiefs and recognized heroes. Only those that have accomplished some great act perform Ntomboke. Nkoya traditionalists say, in previous centuries, Nkoya warriors presented skulls of their victims before performing the dance. Muzzleloaders are fired during this stage of the ceremony.

After Ntomboke, the arena is now open to subjects to entertain the Chiefs and invited guests, including tourists.

Array of Dances

The array of dances during the ceremony include luhwa, makwasha, makuku, Kanganga, tukonkobe, Kamunyelele.

1. Luhwa, Kanganga, Makwasha and Makuku.

Luhwa is a very important ceremony in the life cycle of a Nkoya woman. Luhwa is celebrated to mark the end of an initiation of a young Nkoya girl. Once an Nkoya girl becomes of age, she is confined for 1-6 months until parents are ready to celebrate the end of her isolation.

During the isolation, the girl is trained in issues of managing the future homestead, respect for elder family members and in-laws.

On the d-day, her matron to the ceremony site near the kanganga's village lifts the kanganga on the back. She is made to sleep on the ground covered by a blanket and sheets before anybody goes to the site. This is done to test how disciplined the Kanganga is. She sleeps on the ground for the whole day with no water and no food with occasional turning by the matron.

The drummers with a big xylophone, four drums namely, mundindi, kayanda, munkupele and ngoma ya nene stage themselves in readiness for makuku makwasha and Luhwa.

Soon after the Kanganga is brought to the dance site, the matron and the entire entourage of elderly women ululate and perform the Makuku dance to symbolize the beginning of the ceremony. Makuku is a dance performed exclusively by elderly women, which is a demonstration of happiness for bringing up a girl child to adulthood.

