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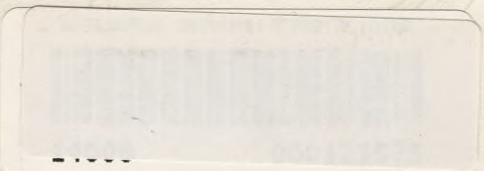
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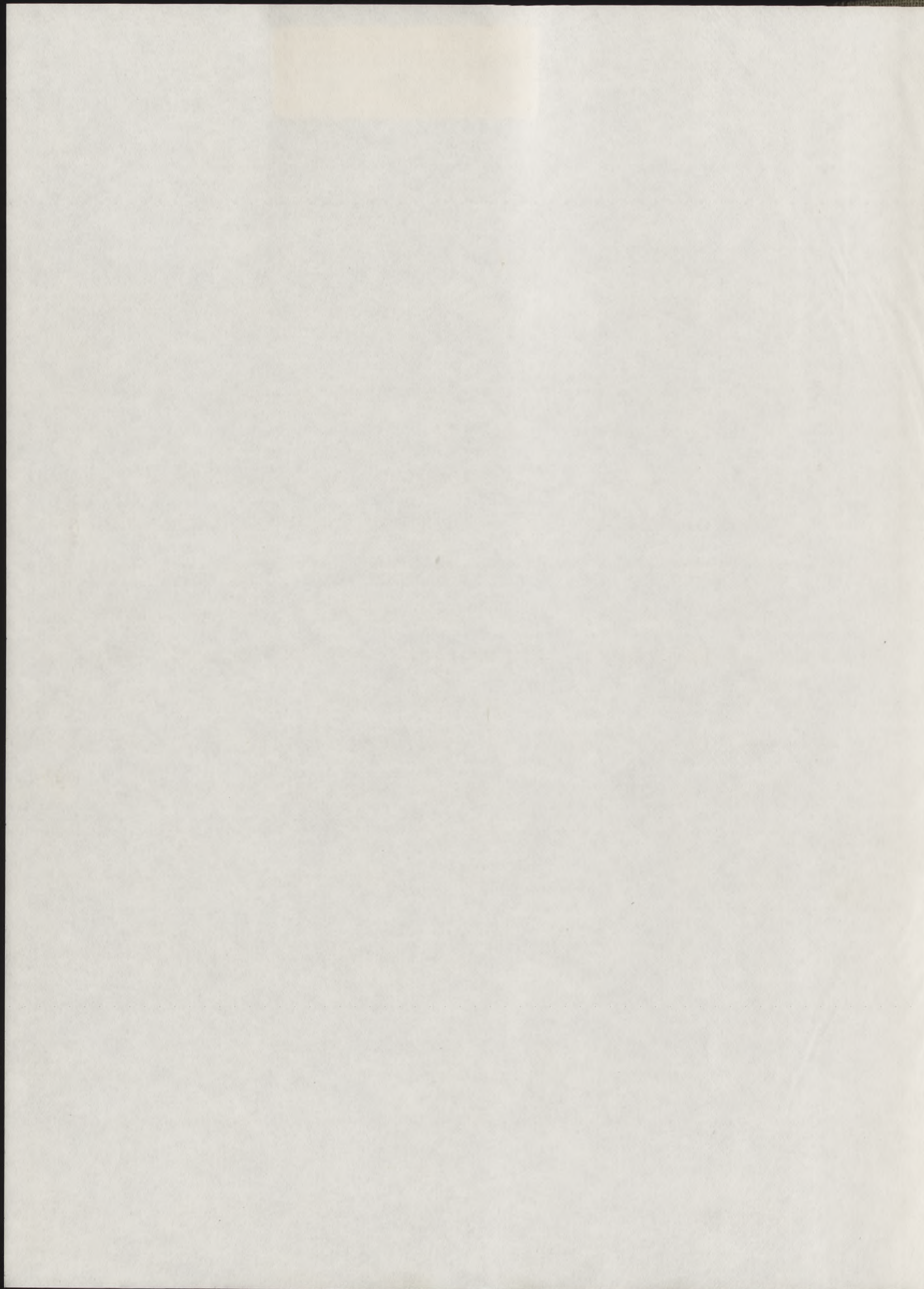
STUDIA GEOGRAPHICA UPSALIENSIA XVI

The Kongo

KARL LAMM



1968



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STUDIA ETHNOGRAPHICA UPSALIENSIA XVI

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# The Kongo IV

BY

KARL LAMAN



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1968



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STUDIA ETHNOGRAPHICA UPSALIENSIA XVI

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1968

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## PREFACE

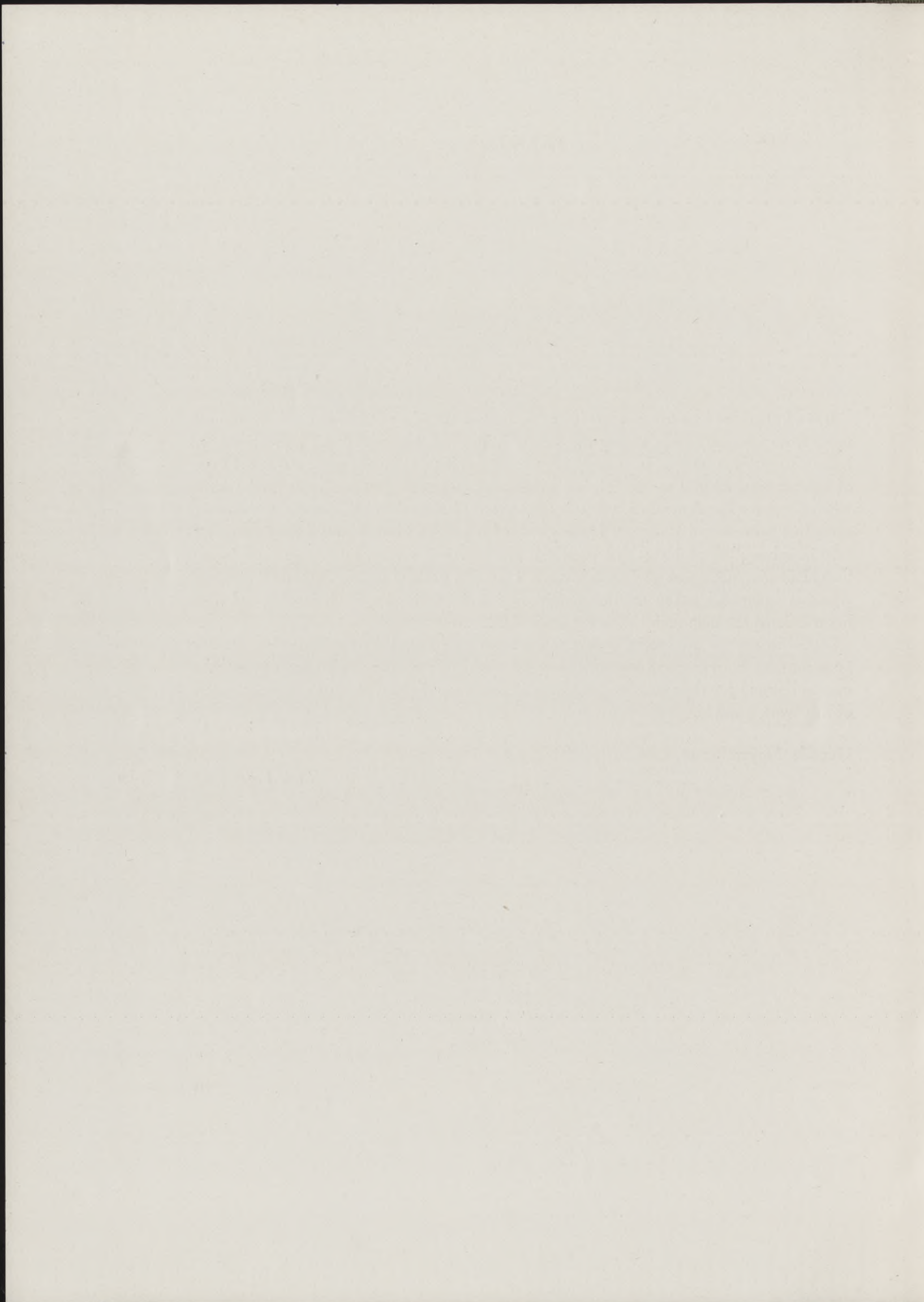
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It is a little more than fifteen years since I undertook the edition of KARL LAMAN's copious notes from his many years among the Sundi. With the completion of his fourth volume, LAMAN's work has now in its entirety been made available to international research. I have of course been faithful to the original manuscript, although obvious inexactitudes have when necessary been corrected. For this I am greatly indebted to Dr. EFRAIM ANDERSSON, sometime professor of Religious History, who has proved himself an unfailing source of help in solving the problems that presented themselves throughout the years since I embarked in the publication of LAMAN's work. I am also grateful to Mr. HARALD FAITH-ELL who has again undertaken the illustrations, and to Mrs. CATHERINE G. SUNDSTRÖM who has translated the manuscript with her usual skill.

I wish to express my special thanks to the former Humanistiska Fonden and to Statens Humanistiska Forskningsråd for entrusting me with the editorship of LAMAN's invaluable manuscript and for their genuine generosity in providing the funds to make the publication of this work possible.

Uppsala, November 28, 1968

*Sture Lagercrantz*



## Mnemonics, Symbols and Signs

The art of writing is traditionally unknown in the Congo. Despite this, traditions and notable events have been transmitted with a remarkable degree of accuracy through various other media. One such event, for instance—the funeral of an important chief—I have found depicted in rock paintings which have managed to escape obliteration, although some of them are much worn both by rain and by human feet, since they are often found on shelving rocks by the roadside or at a water-crossing.

It is uncertain whether the present-day custom of representing certain incidents in calabash paintings dates back to the old days. There are other relics, however, to bear witness to events long past. Objects connected with such events were saved for posterity, to be brought out on suitable occasions. Many of these objects, for instance some beautifully carved chiefs' staffs, are preserved to this day, but for the greater part they have been sold, stolen or burnt in the ravages of modern times.

Matters involving mediation, petitions, sales, and similar transactions between friends in distant villages are carried out by envoys who when performing such missions have a special sign to make their status known. Such secret signs are also used on other occasions. A warning for an impending war or enemy attack, for instance, is conveyed both through secret signs and more publicly, for instance by striking the ngongi bell. A warning to a person standing close by is usually conveyed by a kinsonde fillip (*nambye*) with the thumb and ring finger, or the middle finger and the thumb, accompanied by a penetrating stare.

In order to follow the progress of some undertaking, such as a friend's journey to the coast, notches are cut in the cornerpost of a house or in a stick, or a number of knots are tied in a waist-band or a string, which makes it possible to follow the traveller's progress from day to day and calculate the day of his return. An agreement which is due to take effect on a certain day is memorized by tying knots in a string and cutting one knot for each day that passes. The same system is used to memorize the payment of fines awarded in lawsuits and similar obligations, so that the outstanding debt may be called in on the appointed day. Longer periods may also be reckoned by successive new moons, or even by menstrual cycles.

Notched sticks can also be used to remind children of their misdeeds, the conditions for absolution, and the time when their punishment falls due.

Commercial transactions, such as the purchase of slaves, are recorded both by such tally sticks and by preserving other material evidence. The same procedure is adopted in lawsuits. During such legal proceedings, each count of the indictment, or each question to be answered is usually marked by setting aside a palm kernel, a pebble, a corn cob, or something of the kind. Before counsel for the plaintiff has finished his speech, he may have assembled quite a collection of such tokens to be dealt with by the other party. The opponent picks up each token in the order in which he is able to answer the charges, and in his turn presents his claims. The one who is unable to answer his opponent's questions loses the case.

There are other ways, too, of marking agreements between friends, especially between young couples of opposite sexes wishing to arrange a meeting. A broken branch may be hanging down from a previously selected tree, with a number of knots tied around it to indicate the appointed day for a mutual gift or an assignment. When they meet in public, the man signals by chewing a stalk of grass. If the meeting is to take place at a left-hand fork in the road, the stalk is held in the left corner of the mouth, if to the right, in the opposite corner. Alternatively, he may crook the little finger of either his left or his right hand to indicate the direction and place for their assignment. Or, he may clear his throat in a special manner to make the girl look up, after which he pulls down the left or right corner of his mouth, scratches his head or some part of his body in a particular manner, puts his hands together, or grimaces in a certain way.

Deaf mutes signal their intentions, when trading for instance, by showing the measure or by counting on their fingers. Yes is marked by a nod, no by a shake of the head and a shrug of the shoulders.

Imitation of birds and other animals is an extremely common device when telling stories or in legal proceedings, since everybody is familiar with the hidden meaning of such mimicry. By way of illustration, we can note some of the bird calls that are often imitated:<sup>1</sup>

Nkuka: which swept away the dark: koko-koko, kuka-kuka, ho, kuka, ho (Away over there whistling like wind, ho, kuka, ho).

Ngundu byolo: kinse malavu mamba; kimbikisa mbwa ena: Boobob evo byobyoby byo, Kibyobyololo wele byo (I make palm wine like water, I tempt the dog like this: that foreskin or byobyoby-byo. He went with cries of joy).

Ndinga pigeon: Kilezi, buta kilezi, buta we-we-we kele-wekele (Afterbirth brings forth afterbirth, brings forth we-we-wekele-wekele (onomatopoetic).

Nkuya-nkuya horn-bill (dial.=nkuyu spirit), or else it says mbiya-mbiya.

Lusuku lwa muntanta says, when the rain falls: Oho, oho, kwadi syedi dyo (Oh, oho, haven't you tapped the wine from that palm-tree)?

The wood-grouse: Kweke-kweke-kwedede, or: Kye, kyeroro, sa, kye, kyeroro etc.

The kimfutu owl or dia mafundu calls: Hi-i-i-i, hi-hi-hi-hi, or sometimes: Kutukulu buu,

<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately LAMAN leaves us in doubt about the "hidden meaning" of the examples recorded by him,

but they may serve to illustrate the practice as such.



## CHAPTER II

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### Language

The Kongo language has ever since the arrival of DIEGO CAO been the subject of penetrating studies. "Le plus ancien dictionnaire Bantu", published by J. VAN WING and PENDERS, gives us a very interesting picture of the earliest publications on the subject. Subsequently several works have been published on various dialects. Among them we note W. H. BENTLEY, Dictionary and Grammar of the Kongo Language, 1887 (Appendix 1895), which deals with the area around San Salvador; R. BUTAYE, Dictionnaire Kikongo-Français, Français-Kikongo, 1909, and Grammaire Congolaise, 1910, dealing with the area east of Kisantu; L. DE CLERCQ, Grammaire du Kiyombe, 1921; L. BITTREMIEUX, Mayombsch Idioticon, 1923—27; NILS WESTLIND, Grammatik över den centrala dialekten kring Mukimbungu, 1880—94; K. E. LAMAN, Lärobok i Kongospråket, 1912 (English translation New York, 1912); K. E. LAMAN, The musical Accent or Intonation in the Kongo Language, 1922, which deals primarily with the dialect around Kingoyi; K. E. LAMAN and C. MEINHOF, An Essay in Kongo Phonology, reproduced in MEINHOF's later work, Bantu Phonology, 1928, which deals with the dialect around Mukimbungu; K. E. LAMAN, Dictionnaire Kikongo-Français, Brussels 1936, which comprises the major dialects spoken by the Kongo-Sundi. The introduction deals with the musical intonation and phons eticof thirteen dialects.

A further discussion of the intonation, phonetics, and grammar of the language seems superfluous in the present context; suffice it to refer to the above works.

In comparison to languages spoken in neighbouring areas, such as Teke, the Kongo language has reached a more advanced stage of development. Teke is a tonal language with mainly monosyllabic words. It has but few derivative forms and lacks for instance a passive voice. The qualifying prefix *zi-* is replaced by *ma-*. Teke living in close proximity to Kongo neighbours, however, have begun to adopt several of their inflective suffixes.

People unfamiliar with the Kongo language often use their "lingua franca", known as Kibula Matadi. Its vocabulary is known everywhere and used by whites and negroes alike. The following conversation may serve as an example:

	<i>Kibula Matadi</i>	<i>Kikongo</i>	<i>English</i>
The white boss:	Bubu mukanda meni kwiza,	Bwabu nkanda wayizidi,	Now the letter has arrived,

	<i>Kibula Matadi</i>	<i>Kikongo</i>	<i>English</i>
	mukanda ya mpaku.	nkanda wampaku.	the letter about the taxes.
	Nsamu yina nge kutuba na bantu na nge yonso,	Nsamu wowo ngeye una kamba kwa bantu baaku babonsono,	This message you must relate to all your people,
	kusosa (m)paku mbote.	bana toma tomba mpaku.	that they try to get the taxes together properly.
	Muntu kubaka paku ve, ngonda zoole	Muntu ulembolo baka mpaku, ngonda zoole	He who does not pay his taxes, (gets) two months
	na Luozi, boloko, sikoti kumi na zoole.	ku Luozi, boloko, sikoti kumi ye zoole.	in Luozi (the gov- ernment post), prison, twelve floggings.
	Bubu nge kubokila bantu na nge yonso:	Bwabu ngeye una bokila bantu baaku babonsono:	Now you must call all your people together:
	Bubu paku kaka. Kana paku yikele ve	Bwabu mpaku kaka. Kansi mpaku ka yena ko	Now only the taxes (are at stake). Should there be no taxes (to collect)
	na bantu na nge, mono kukanga.	kwa bantu baaku, buna mono yaku- kanga.	among your people, then I will put you in bonds.
	Mono kutuba na bam- bulu-mbulu yonso	Mono ngina kamba bambulu-mbulu babonsono	I will tell all the soldiers
	bangulu na nkombo na nsusu.	bangulu ye nkombo ye nsusu.	(to take) pigs and goats and chickens.
The black man:	Mundele, mono mbongo yikele ve.	Mundele, mono ki- beki mbongo ko.	White man, I have no property.
The white boss:	A, zoba-a, nsamu na nki.	A, zoba, nki a nsamu.	Oh, you fool, what sort of taradiddle is that.

	<i>Kibula Matadi</i>	<i>Kikongo</i>	<i>English</i>
The black man:	Nsamu mono kele maladi.	Nsamu kwandi, mono ngiena beela.	The fact is that I am ill.
The white boss:	Wapi maladi?	Ve, nge beela?	No, you are not ill.
The black man:	Makata yikele manene,  yau kutatinga mingi.	Makata mena mama-nene,  mau matatikanga beeni.	The rupture is large,  It hurts dreadfully.
The white boss:	A, yina kyuma ve. Sasio, alé (allez) baka yandi.	A, moomo ka kile-kwa ko. Sasio wenda wambaka.	Oh, that is nothing. Sergeant, go and take him in custody.
The black man:	E-e-e, maama mfwidi.  E-e-e, taata mfwidi.	E-e-e, maama mfwidi.  E-e-e, taata mfwidi.	E-e-e, mother, I die.  E-e-e, father, I die.
The white boss:	Alé, kanga nuua. Siidi fyoti mono kufidisa  nge na ntandu.	Wenda, kanga nuua. Fioti fisidi, mono yakufidisa  ngeye ku Ntandu.	Go, and be quiet. Little more is needed (and) I will send you to the Upper (Kongo).

Another corrupt form of the language may be noted in the following examples:

<i>Corruption</i>	<i>Kikongo</i>	<i>English</i>
Ngenkisi Luminkisi walankisi.	Nge Lunungu walanda	If you, Lunungu, will follow.
Mu vonkisi, buna nyunkisi.	Mu vova, buna nyungu.	Through talk there will be quarrelling.
E, Luminkisi nayenkisi, wabonkisi masankisi.	E, Lumingu nayendi, wabonga masangu.	E, Lumingu, go, (and) take the maize.
Kankisi henkisi menkisi?	Kadi he mena?	But where is it?
Mu nzonkisi menkisi.	Mu nzo mena.	It is in the house.

The following examples illustrate still another corrupt form:

<i>Corruption</i>	<i>Kikongo</i>	<i>English</i>
Ngepini (ngepitini) Lutepini.	Nge nge Luteelo.	You, you Luteelo.

<i>Corruption</i>	<i>Kikongo</i>	<i>English</i>
e-e-e nkiapini (nkiapitini)?	e nkyama nkyama?	e, what, what is it?
Kadi kwepini kwepitini?	Kadi kwe kwe?	But where, where?
Bepini bepini ku mfupini.	Beedi beedi ku mfuba.	They came, came on the field.
Mayapitini ma ntepini mepini yapinie? Nkapitini. Ka diapitini kopitini.	Mayaka ma nteka mena yaku? Nkatu. Ka dyambu ko.	Do you have manioc for sale? No. Nothing.

Another corruption can be noted in the abbreviation of words and phrases, and the transposition of syllables:

<i>Corruption</i>	<i>Kikongo</i>	<i>English</i>
Yenge Nzi, or yenge Nziku.	Ngeye Kunzi.	You, Kunzi.
Lungu, or Lungunu	Lunungu	Right, justice
Mule, or mulende	Mundele	The white man
Yo Mbi lele, or Mbinza lelezo	Vo Nzambi zolele	God willing

The transposition of syllables and other corruptions have sometimes been adopted for the express purpose of confusing outsiders, as for instance in ndinga kingayi, or ndinga kingulu, the pig language:

<i>Ndinga kingayi (kingulu)</i>	<i>Kikongo</i>	<i>English</i>
Yenge ndamiku (ndinku miwa).	Ngeye nkundi ami (nkuudi ami).	You are my friend.
Mbaka twakunke (ntonke kuwa)	Kamba nkento aku	Say to your wife.
Watane? Wa tin e? E, nina?	Wanate? Waneti e? E, nani?	Will you bear? Have you born? E, whom?
Wakumbike w-u wo ti?	Wakukembi wo ti?	Has he told you that?
Watihe dyomba wabinke.	Waneti mbadyo wan-kembi.	A certain person has told me that.
Ngunwa. A, tingye.	Wangunu. A, Ngyeti.	Another. Ah, I am (have).
Nzaba vaivo walunuvu ndikwa.	Banza vo waluvunu kwandi.	To think that it really is a lie.
Dika ka manta nibe ka makamenehi.	Kadi ka ntama beni kavikamene.	It is not so long since she reached womanhood.

## Arithmetic

Computation by figures is traditionally unknown. Instead, as has been mentioned before, accounts are kept by means of stones, palm nuts, knots, tally sticks, and similar aids. The methods vary somewhat, according to the goods involved.

Blue beads are counted by fives, tens, and hundreds. Raffia cloth is counted in units of 4, 10, 12, 20, 50, etc. Lead is counted in tens. The price of cloth, powder kegs, etc. in kind is calculated in mbandu (unit of 10), so that for instance one standard keg of powder rates 10 mugs (worth 10 fr.), while a smaller size keg is valued at 3, 5, or 6 mugs.

The units of measurement are the fathom and the ell, the latter being the distance from the fingertips to the elbow.

Peanuts are counted by the peanut measure, which may be a mpidi basket of varying size; for each basket that is sold, one peanut is put aside. The same system is also used for other goods. Any object at all will serve as a mnemonic aid in keeping the account.

Days and longer periods of time are counted by knots tied in a string, notched sticks, and similar aids.

Counting on the fingers is rare, and when it is done, the system varies from the one used in Europe. The Sundi use both hands together, so that four is represented by two fingers of each hand, six by three fingers of each hand, etc.

The week consists of four days and starts on the konzo day. The knots tied in strings as a mnemonic aid as a rule correspond to the number of weeks involved.

The month is always counted by the lunar cycle. The year (mvu) was originally a rainy season (mvula), but has later come to comprise 12 lunar months and is therefore shorter than the Gregorian year.

In games the score may be kept either by mnemonic devices such as putting aside certain objects or tying knots in a string, or by chanting a jingle. As a rule the count goes up to the number 10, for instance:

Kosi (one) 1, koole (two) 2, kinsense (cricket) 3, tunga nzo (built the house) 4, mpakasa (buffalo) 5, nkanda ngo (leopard skin) 6, mansanga (tears) 7, walongo (tinkle of a bell) 8, duki 9, mbondo 10.

Mosi (one) 1, ka mosi (after one) 2, mosi ka mosi (one after one) 3, na mukuta (and one centime) 4, mpingi (rat) 5, na boole (and the two) 6, na mu kambidi (and have told him) 7, nsiba (pipe) 8, mpingi 9, lwe (sound of piping) 10.

Kosi (one) 1, koole (two) 2, kwa Nzambi (to God) 3, kwa mundele (to the white man) 4, mpakasa (buffalo) 5, makinda ngolo (a plant) 6, kimbembe (hawk) 7, watunga nzo (built the house) 8, lungela (piece of brass) 9, i kuumi (is ten) 10.

Mosi ami (my one) 1, zoole ami (my two) 2, tatakana (far apart) 3, ku simu a Kongo (to the bank of the Congo) 4, dya tenda (he who cut off) 5, na kindele (a piece) 6, kya bundi (blue cloth) 7, ntalanga (I look for) 8, kuumi 9, dya lunga (ten, which make up ten) 10.

A peculiar feature in specifying different numbers is that the Sundi put the higher number first. One can for instance buy 6, 5 or 3 goats in every market. Gifts for the shrouding of a corpse consist of 10, 8 or 6 lengths of cloth. They speak of "five to three days".



*Fig. 1. A nkisi belonging to the nsansi-pot with its medicines, Sundi in Kingoyi (Laman 1269).*

## Games

There is a great variety of games, from quiz games, riddles, word games, and cat's-cradle, to more athletic pursuits like wrestling, ball games, or hoop-throwing. In the water the children amuse themselves with turning somersaults, diving, splashing matches, and other aquatic sports. They are very fond of imitating their elders in make-believe trials, weddings, wars, and other adult activities.

Ball-throwing (*ta ndimbu*) is a very popular sport, played with an energy and vigour that leaves the players dripping with sweat. The ball is an unripe melon, singed over a slow fire to soften it so that it will not crack too easily. The game is played by the bigger boys or young men. The players assemble on a court and split up in two teams. The captains of the opposing teams alternately select their favourite players, so that each team forms a mixture of good and bad players. Before the game starts, the rules are agreed upon. It is forbidden to trip up another player or knock him down. It is also forbidden to hold an opponent or prevent him by force from taking the ball. Often smaller boys are used to pick up the ball when it lands far away on the ground, and sometimes they will be allowed to take a turn in throwing the ball. The opposing teams mingle with each other, watching each other for an opportunity to take the ball. The players know who is on their side and throw the ball to members of their own team. One player may throw the ball straight up into the air and catch it again, bragging that no one can get at it. Then suddenly a player from the opposing team jumps up and manages to catch the ball, which then passes to the other side. Inaccurate throwing, of course, makes it easy for the other side to get hold of the ball, or else someone may rush out to intercept it before it reaches the player it is aimed at. The players dash all over the field, since the player throwing the ball and the one who is supposed to catch it are bent upon eluding their nearest opponents. The game reaches its climax when one side manages to hang on to the ball for a long interval without dropping it. Every now and then a player takes a tumble, which evokes boisterous merriment from the other side.

Burn the village (*kinengumuna, vo yoka vata*), a form of skittles played with a lemon for a bowl, is a more sedate sport. One side sets up a long row of corn cobs, representing the houses in the village, and stands guard over them. The other team stands at some distance and attempts to bowl over the corn cobs with a lemon. When they succeed, a house is burnt and they proceed to bowl down the remaining corn cobs. If they fail to bowl all of them

down before running out of bowls, the teams change places. The side that has burnt the greatest number of houses wins. The game is played by some ten boys on each side. The players guarding the corn cobs sometimes resort to special tricks to prevent them from being knocked down by anything but a full hit. One such trick is to peg the corn cob down into the ground with a short stick. Another common trick is to set the corn cobs up behind a small elevation, so that the lemon swerves sideways from its aim.

Football is played with a lemon, by two teams divided by a line drawn on the ground. This line forms the boundary between two villages or domains. The first player places the ball on the midline and kicks it off. A player from the other side must check the ball with his foot and immediately send it back, and so the match proceeds. Failure of the opposite side to check the ball means a goal, and the ball is then again placed on the boundary line for kick-off. The first team to score ten goals has won and captured the other team. The teams then change places and continue the game to see if the captives can win their ten goals back and regain their freedom. A ball that is kicked over the sidelines does not count. The ball is kicked with the toes or, to send it flying high up in the air, with the instep. The lemons, which are both kicked and trampled underfoot, are not very durable, but the players lay in an ample supply.

Hoops (mfumba) are made of a withe bent into a circle and tied together at the ends. One player casts his hoop at an opponent standing some distance away, who must try to throw a string with a corn cob tied to either end into the hoop as it comes at him, so that it twines itself around the circle. If the string has become sufficiently entangled to take the hoop along when it is lifted, he has won. If the hoop remains on the ground, when the string is lifted, however, he has scored a miss. The hoop may be rolled along the ground or thrown up in the air, according to what the players have agreed upon. The first player to ensnare the hoop ten times has won, and

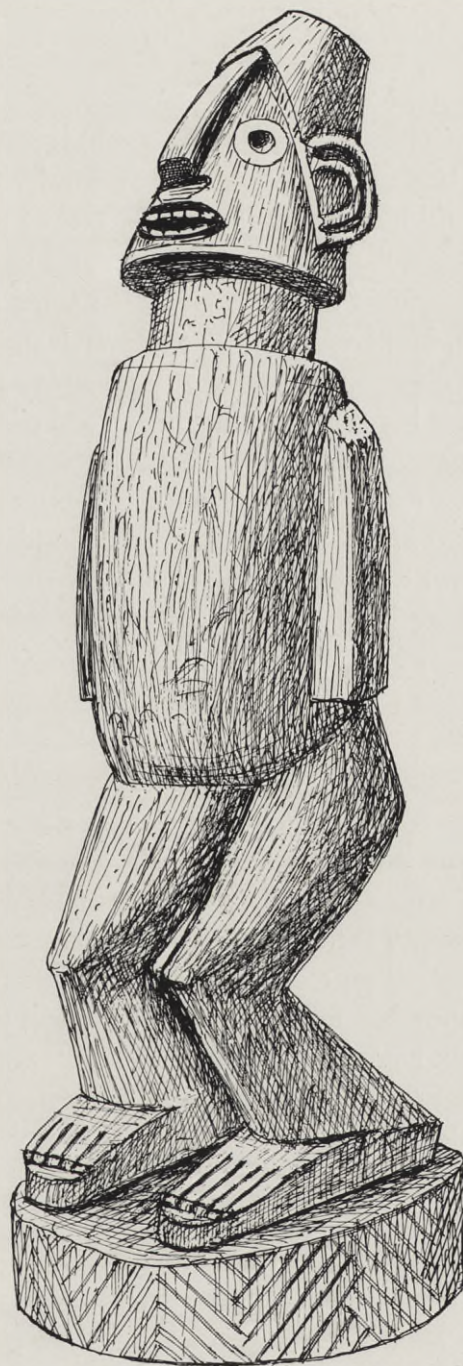


Fig. 2. A nkisi, Loango (Laman).

thereby enslaved his opponent. The players now change places, and the loser in his turn tries to ensnare his opponent's hoop. The game is also known as *lunzinga*, from *zingana* (entwine the hoop).

Riding piggyback (*luzangu*) is played by a long line of boys standing close together and clasping each other's hands tightly. One boy standing some distance away rushes out to hurl himself on the back of one of the boys, who carries him to the first boy in the line. Then the "horse" moves off and in his turn jumps up on another boy's back. The game continues until every boy has taken a turn, while they sing: *E, luzangu, zangu-zangu, or: E, kinkewa yaaya, E, nga wandata.*

Mount the leopard skin (*nkanda ngo badyata*) is played by three persons. The first crosses one leg over the other, the second climbs onto his legs, and the third onto the second player's legs. An older person then orders the first player: "You, *NDINGI*, go and fetch water so that we may cook our food". But *NDINGI* answers: "Should I, *NDINGI*, go and fetch water?" and in his turn orders the second player: "You, *MAMPUYA*, go and find some fire, then we will roast the food". But *MAMPUYA* answers: "Should I go and fetch fire? After all, you were bought yesterday, you should fetch the fire". And he orders *NDALA*: "Go and fetch firewood". *NDALA* answers: "Ah you, should I go and fetch firewood as though I were your servant? Let us then instead eat the food uncooked". In this way they have mounted the leopard skin. They have shown that they are all chiefs (freeborn men) and no one is another's slave. None of them humbles himself by obeying orders, and thus they say: "Let us mount (step on) the leopard skin, that we may prove ourselves rulers and no slaves to be ordered about".

There is a variety of games played with palm kernels. In one of them the players collect twenty kernels and twenty leaves. The leaves are spread out on the ground, with the palm kernels on top. One of the players goes off and hides. The leader of the game then calls upon him to remove the proper leaf to each successive kernel that is taken away. A leaf may not be removed until the kernel is gone, so that it is important to remember the right order. For each kernel that the leader removes, the other players sing a song from which the hidden player can guess which leaf is empty. If he guesses wrong, he is ridiculed by the others. He must listen carefully to the song, and think hard if he is to succeed, otherwise he has to start all over again. To aid his memory, the player bends a finger or a toe indicating the position of each kernel that is taken away. When he comes to a finger that is not crooked, he says: "Remove the palm kernel", and continues until all the leaves are empty.

Hide-the-palm-kernel is a game played by both sexes, but it is an offence for a man to hide the kernel and touch a woman in front. The players split up in two teams. The captain of one of the teams then hides the kernel among his players and says: "It is hidden". The captain of the other team answers: "Re-re".—"What?"—"Fire".—"Who has sent for it?"—"Nzambi, the Supreme Being".—"Who is holding it?" At that point, a certain member of the opposite team is pointed out. If it is a wrong guess, the player who is hiding the palm kernel is called upon to produce it, which he does with the words: "Now I have acquired so-and-so's house in your village". The palm kernel is hidden again, to the

accompaniment of a song intended to guide the seekers to its hiding-place, and so the game continues. The side that finds the palm kernel most often has won.

In the game of hide-the-pea (which is a palm kernel), all but one of the players sit in a close circle. The remaining player sits in the middle of the ring and tries to guess which of the others is holding the kernel when it is suddenly stopped after being handed round the circle. If he fails to find the "pea" right away, the other players sing a song intended to confuse him: "E, my peas, do not eat them, throw them to the dogs", or: "E, passed, it has passed", or: "E, the eyes are like palm nuts. E, the eyes are like tiba bananas, . . .". When he finally succeeds in locating the "pea", he changes places with the one holding it.

Hide-the-knife (sweka mbeelee) is played by some twenty or more participants, squatting cross-legged on the ground. A knife is stuck into the ground, and as one of the players moves off, the knife is hidden among the squatting players. When the first player returns, he is guided in his search for the knife by a diti player, who plays a different melody for each person he touches. When he has gone round, he touches each player a second time, and when he returns to the one who is hiding the knife, the diti player plays the melody: "It is that one there, it is that one there". The third round the seeker should immediately point to the player holding the knife, if he and the diti player have understood each other correctly.

Hide-the-needle (sweka nsoma) is a much more intricate game. Sometimes new players have to pay for learning the trick. A plate is heaped with ashes. The performer takes two hollow tuutu canes of identical size and colour, with similar knobs at the lower-end joints, and closed with the same sort of plug at the upper end. One of the canes he keeps hidden, while he hands the other to the dupe, telling him: "Open this cane and place the needle inside. But when I have touched the cane twice, this needle inside shall pass to me. The third time it shall be mine". Under cover of the ashes on the plate he surreptitiously exchanges the two canes and removes the needle. After touching the tuutu cane a third time, he hands it to the dupe, making him look in vain for its contents, after which he produces the needle.

Another game is played with dinkanda peanuts (two nuts that have grown into one). The girls who at harvest time sit shelling peanuts to put in the drying-baskets, now and then come upon shells containing two nuts that have grown into one, or shells that have only one nut, and others that have three nuts. If a girl finds a pair of nuts that does not come apart during the shelling, she says: "Your mother I have tied with a string" (imprisoned). The next time she finds such a dinkandi, she says: "Your father" (I have tied up), or else a shell containing three nuts may represent the imprisoned father. If a girl finds a particularly long dinkandi, she says: "This is your chief (the eldest, or old man), who is extremely tall, whom I have now tied up". In this way they continue to shell their nuts and for every dinkandi peanut they find, they tie up a member of the family until all of them are imprisoned. Thereafter they continue to do the same with sons-in-law and other members of the father's kanda. When every man and woman, young and old, has undergone the same fate, the girl is asked: "Eh, aren't you going to release the people of your village? But first you must set free the chief and other paternal relatives, and then you can start thinking of your own".

The girl in turn picks up the different dinkandi peanuts symbolizing the imprisoned relatives, and shells a nut for each person she has tied up, saying for instance: "Now your mother, whom I tied up, has been released". In this way she continues to free one after the other, mentioning each person by name. And so the victims are released from their peanut bondage.

Another game is played with nsafu kernels. The kernel is broken in two and one piece placed on the ground, while the other half is stuck onto a fingernail. The other players must guess which finger. In another version of the game a small piece is scooped out with a fingernail from one of the kernels set out on the ground. One of the players must guess which of them the scooped-out fragment (lufudya) fits. The kernels are of course placed so that it is impossible to see which is the ndoki, i.e. the one from which the fragment has been taken. As the player whose turn it is is considering on which of the kernels he is to place the fragment, the others sing: "Ndoki wansa ku nsuka, ngeye uhia" (Ndoki placed him at the end, you are getting scorched). While they continue their song, the first player takes away one kernel after the other. If he guesses wrong, and removes the marked kernel, the other players cry: "Togongo (imitating the sound of a shot). You are burnt". The kernels are collected again and the game continues. One of the rules is that there may be no more than one ndoki among the kernels set out. The player with the largest number of ndoki (right guesses) has won. The special kernel is called ndoki because it requires careful consideration to find (smell out) and identify the right one, just as when looking for a real ndoki.

The bed game is played by a number of boys sitting close together in a long row with outstretched legs, forming as it were a bed spread out on the ground. A length of cloth is rolled up and placed at one end of the outstretched legs forming the "bed". The boys roll it with their legs to the other end and back again, singing: "Eh, bed, bed of elephant grass". Anyone touching the roll of cloth with his hands or letting it touch the ground must stand up and perform a spirited dance, shaking his belly or his hips, while the others sing: "Show your hip, you who eat maize pudding. E, bird, that sits up high, . . .". When he has given a satisfactory performance he is allowed to stop.

The game may not be played by boys and girls, or men and women together, but each sex keeps to itself.

There is a great variety of guessing games. One variant is to hide an object in one's hand and let another guess at it. For instance, someone finds a louse in his loincloth, kills it, and asks another what he is holding in his hand, with the promise: "If you guess right at once and not in two rounds (mazala), you shall have a calabash of palm-wine". The other says: "I guess it is a lusokya husk". "Oh no!" "An ant". "Certainly not". "A hair". "No". "What then?" "A louse". "Show me". "Look here".

In guessing games involving a riddle the one to propound it challenges his listeners by a set phrase, such as: "naye yo, ndeyo, nsonsa yo cye", and the one who wishes to guess answers with: "Yambaasa" (relate, tell me), or "ta yo wiza" (tell it, come). In other parts the challenge and response are: "Ngwalazi" and "Wavyoka" (or "Dibwa").

As a rule the game is played by several people, forming two groups, each with its own leader. After the initial phrases of "naye yo" and "yambaasa" the riddle is presented: "Taata

diidi nsusu, kansi bu katubidi visi va saba bina kekila" (Father ate the hen, but when he threw the bones on the refuse heap they cackled). The other side makes various guesses—a bunch of palm nuts falling down when one tries to pick them when they have ripened, for instance. The first group answers: "Mpiaa yo" (Certainly not, wrong).—"Maybe it is a melon tree which bears its fruit, and when the fruits ripen the seeds fall down, start sprouting, and grow up. That is the same as kekila (cackle)". "Awa, ka bwa ko" (No, not thus). "But when someone has got meat and puts it on the fire, and the pot starts boiling and brimming over, that is kekila (cackle)". "Nkatu" (In vain). "But when someone has drunk too much palm-wine and it starts to go to his heart (making him feel sick) and is thrown up again when he vomits?" "A-a, ka bwa ko nkutu" (No, not at all like that). "What is the right answer then? Buna tudidi kweto" (When we have "eaten", we are satisfied).

Those who have propounded the riddle, explain: "Now that you have eaten your fill, go to the forest and cut off a pineapple. Cut off the shoots (baana) sprouting from the fruit and throw them away, together with the leading shoot. Say, won't you see them grow up and bear fruit like the mother (ngudi)?"

Another riddle is requested: Nsonsa yo.—Ta yo (tell it).—Five elephants went to the savannah, but the paths they walked are only four in number.—It was two people marching along, and they had four legs.—Oh no!—Well then, a hen has laid three eggs, and from two she has hatched a brood of four and from the third one chicken, which makes five.—Not at all!—Well, we are satisfied now.—Now that we have eaten and are satisfied (give up), let us look at this hand. It has five fingers, but the gaps between them are but four, aren't they?—Yes, indeed!

Ndeyo.—Lubasa.—The tree fell down in Mboma, but its branches are broken off here (for firewood).—It is a message of some kind, for instance when someone has been murdered far away, but we are informed of it here.—No, that is wrong.—Well then, shots fired from distant guns are heard all the way over here.—No.—But when there is thunder and lightning in the sky high above, the sound carries here and the lightning is visible here.—Oh no, my brother.—Well, give us the answer.—Don't you know that when a grass fire is burning far away, flakes of burnt grass are carried over here and also fall in a mpidi basket, thus providing kindling!

Nsyeyo.—Yambaasa.—The mbemba eagle's kunda bell is swinging.—It is the women's breasts that are swinging when they run.—No.—What is it then?—Don't you see that it is the drying-basket filled with peanuts which hangs over the fire! Touch it, and it will swing. Isn't that right?—Why, yes!

Nsonsa yo.—Ta yo.—Father's swine are tied by the tail.—It is a needle, which is threaded at the end.—Yes, that is right. Now you present your riddles and we will try to solve them.

Nsyeyo.—Lubaasa.—One follows the other.—It is the layers of grass covering a house, that follow each other up to the ridge of the roof.

Nsonsa yo.—Ta yo.—Father sleeps in the house, but his head protrudes outside.—It is the ridge-pole whose end sticks out from the wall.

Nsyeyo.—Yambaasa.—No ant will enter the house of a lufundi larva.—It is an egg, which makes very nice eating (like the lufundi), but no ant can get inside it.

Nsyeyo.—Lubaasa.—The bell on the wall. When you pass it, ngele (sound of the bell), when you come back, ngele.—It is the door slamming or squeaking when you come in or go out.

Ndeyo.—Lubaasa.—Father's pig has been singed, but the withe around its breast does not burn.—It is the road we walk on, which never burns even if the grass fire sweeps over it.

Nsonsa yo.—Ta yo.—In my master's lake one must bathe near the shore.—It is a fire around which we sit to warm ourselves, for no one sits in the middle of the fire.

Ndeyo.—Lubaasa.—A belt (waist-band) on the road.—It is the migratory ants proceeding in a long line along the road.

Nsyeyo.—Ta yo.—This master one does not touch. Touch him and you will touch your reverence.—It is the fire, for if you touch that, you clap your hands (kunda) as though in reverence.

Nsonsa yo.—Yambaasa.—A thing created by God. It grows out straight, but when it reaches full size, it curves (bends itself).—It is the rooster's tail feathers which at first grow straight and then bend into a curve.

Ndeyo.—Lubaasa.—Woman's cap, man's cap.—The fruits of the mfilu all wear a cap, whether male or female.

Some riddles are presented without any preliminaries, as in the following examples.

I went to fetch the nganga, but he arrived first at the village. What was that?—Well, when I climb the palm tree to cut off a bunch of palm nuts, it reaches the ground before I do.

I went to the forest to cut off a liane. But the whole forest shook and trembled. What is it that acts like that?—Well, when you eat, you chuck a morsel into your mouth and start chewing. But then your whole mouth is shaking.

What chief is it that sits on three chairs?—It is a cooking pot, which the women place on three kuku stones.

When you pass there (you hear) waa, when you return, waa.—It is the sighing of the kangaya bush.

In my father's house there are three maidens.—The answer is the three makukwa stones supporting the cooking pot.

What maiden is full of laughter?—The ngembo bat, which shows its teeth.

Who is it that does not eat green-stuff?—The leopard.

Who is it that does not hold his master in reverence?—Someone who falls down flat.

In what large dark forest does a child not cry?—The foetus in the mother's womb.

What mother is it whose face is beheld by all and by whom all are nurtured?—The market.

The same work they do, but they do not see each other's face.—The eyes.

When this master comes, his glory precedes him.—The sun in the sky.

Who has a thousand feet?—The centipede.

One of God's creations travels day and night.—The water in the stream.

This younger brother of God's whets his knife night and day. What is that?—The makan-gaya bush endlessly scraping its leaves together.

God's gun has "spoken", the shot has scattered far and wide.—It is a grass fire with flakes of burnt grass scattering to the winds.

God's servant cannot be disobedient, but obeys his command day after day.—It is the sun.

Another game that is played is a variation of cat's-cradle, in which the string figures are modelled on the patterns that one sees woven into the walls of houses, tattooed on the body, or carved on certain objects.

To the first category belong for instance diisu dya nkombo (goat's eye), a pattern found at the lower end of the palm laths (at the gable), diisu dya kimfwangi, a pattern of four lines forming a square, sulwa, kanda kya ngo (leopard's paw), nsengo (hoe), nzelumuna, makumbi, and mayanga or kungu (ndungu canoe), which like nyoka mu lundala (snake on a palm branch) is a pattern woven into the long side of a house.

Lumbu lwa nkumba is a tattoo pattern round the navel, while mavekwa (tsetse fly) is a shoulder tattoo in the shape of a cross.

Other figures used in these games are meso na nyonzi (the eyes of the nyonzi fish), bikunda bells, ngonda (the moon), beene dya ndumba ye dya booba (the maiden's and the old woman's breasts), su kyantuutila ngazi (mortar for pounding palm nuts), bukuna mbombo (pug-nose), nkwalu mu minlembo (a pattern made on the fingers like our cat's-cradle), lungono (raven), mu laka (around the neck) ye (and) mooko (the hands), mbungu yanwina mfwa bwazi (the mug from which the leper drinks), ntima (heart), matolo (fin), the mpingi rat, kola dya nsafu (a bunch of nsafu fruit), nzingu (a sort of ring), nkewa mu masangu (the monkey in the maize), nwa funi a nsusu (hen's anus), and bete dya ntondya (ntondya fish spitted on a stick for smoking).

## Neighbouring Tribes

The Sundi often have the most fantastic notions about the tribes surrounding them. One of these tribes, for instance, they call Bamintala ndabu, those whose eyes are always open, sleeping or waking, since they lack eyelids. By decree of their chief anyone with eyelids is not human, but an animal, and may therefore be killed and eaten. Pigs, on the other hand, are shrouded and buried like human corpses. Their country is known as Ku intala ndabu.

Other tribes, such as the Bembe, are credited with great magical power. They can sit down on a plantain leaf without falling off. They can stick a small sharp knife into their nose without hurting themselves. They fear nobody and thrust their knife into anyone who offers them an insult.

The Bembe have been extensively studied, and we have by now gained an intimate knowledge of this tribe. They live north of the Kwilu-Nyari northwards from Kingoyi. Like the Kingoyi tribe, they have been strong enough to resist the initial onslaught of the "civilization" invading the river valley as far as Brazzaville, and to maintain their tribal integrity.

From their clan names, language, and traditions we find that they belong to the Sundi and have come from the south bank of the Kwilu-Nyari. It was a member of the Mbenza clan, MUMBENZA, who first ferried across with his wife. His emigration was occasioned by a fight in his home village, in which he killed a chief. MUMBENZA then fled to the river, taking his wife and his sister with him. He ferried his wife across, but left his sister behind. From then on he was known under the name of SABULA (ferry across). After his death the Mbenza luvila was forgotten, since the sister had not followed them across the river. Instead it was the wife's luvila who became the tribal mother of the coming generations. Thus the first clan to arrive in the Bembe country was called Bembe.

One of the most notorious chiefs was NSAKALA KONGO, an extremely cruel and ruthless ruler. One of his more notable acts was to have an enormous mass grave dug to receive all those who were beheaded for criminal offences. The heads were impaled on the fence round his courtyard. He killed his mother-in-law, because she complained to him of going hungry and without clothes. If one of his children kept him awake at night by its crying and screaming, he put it in the drying-basket hanging over the fireplace. Then he heaped wood on the fire and ordered the mother to sit there until the child had expired from the heat. He told her that she would be beheaded if she cried.

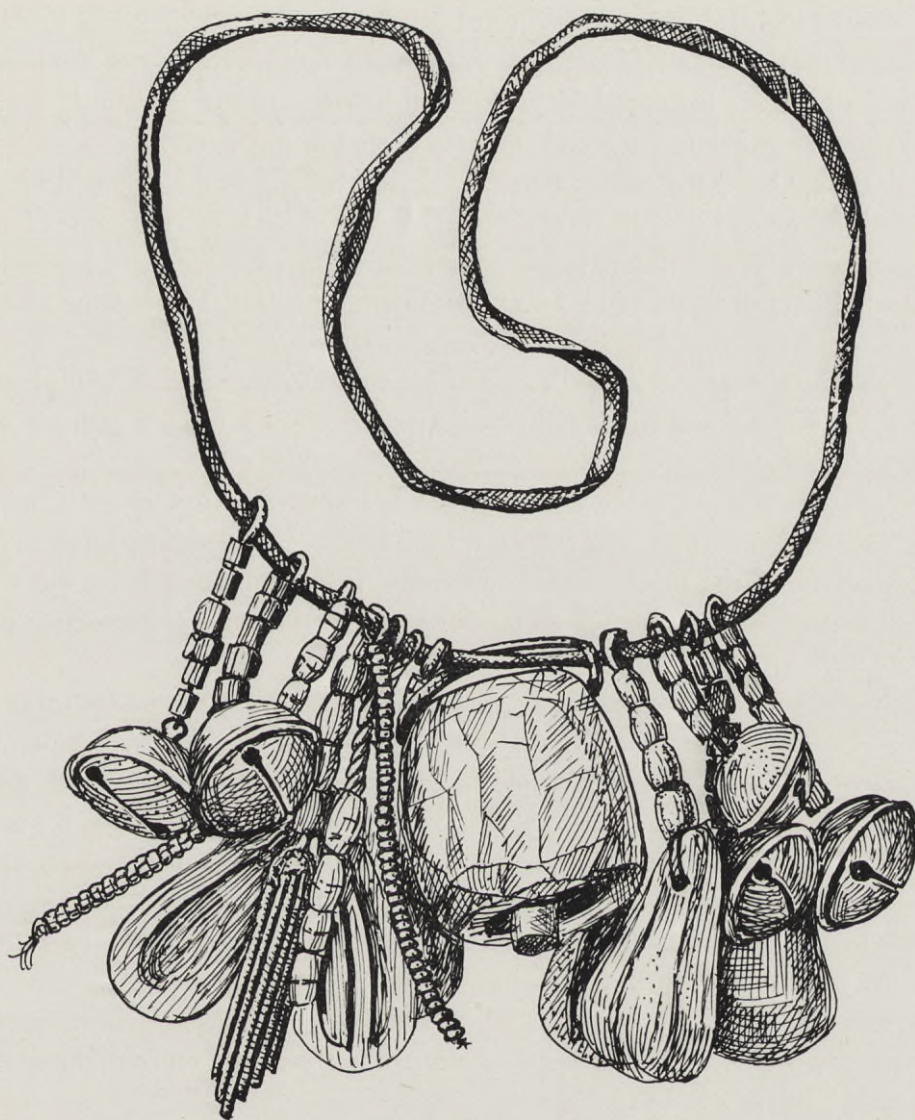


Fig. 3. Amulet, Kinteka Londa, Sundi in Mukimbungu (Laman 1190).

At the same time he was known for his many miraculous feats. He was buried with pomp and circumstance in a sitting position. Subsequently the corpse was unearthed again and the bones deposited in a specially made muzidi. The muzidi figure was placed in his mbongi house.

The Bembe have a great many peculiar customs. One of these is that they traditionally do not bathe, but wipe their face with dew drops collected from the leaves of plantains and other plants. They don't wash the mouth. When the sun burns hotly and they are close to the water, they have been known to bathe. Their women are equally careless about personal hygiene and do not bathe or wash during menstruation or after sexual intercourse. Unlike the Kongo, they do not believe in the nsi disease and feel therefore free to indulge their lusts anywhere.

When someone has died, the corpse is not buried the same day, since the Bembe believe that the spirit of the deceased will not have had time to vanish properly. If the burial should take place before this has happened, the spirit will be angered and the family dishonoured. Infants and people not belonging to a kanda are buried immediately.

When a death has occurred, all women who do not belong to the deceased's kanda must dress in plantain leaves and split up in two groups, one of which sits in the house of mourning, while the other goes from house to house round the village, weeping and lamenting. They don't leave a house until they have been given something to eat. This is done on the day of the death.

The women who form the deceased's next of kin roll over the ground, completely naked, and pummel their body with their fists, or lie sprawling in a careless attitude with their legs spread wide.

The remains are buried in a grave which already holds other dead. One grave may contain five or, six, or even ten corpses. They dig until the bones of a previously interred corpse are unearthed, whereupon the new corpse is deposited in an adjoining hole. On top of the grave a small house is erected, for which the banganga provide magic protection by placing charms at the four corners.

When the Bembe go hunting, the game that has been shot may not be cut up and divided the same day, but must be stored overnight in the house of the bankuyu so that they may take their share first. Otherwise they would be angered and bestow bad luck on the hunters.

If a wife finds that her husband has lost a lot of weight after a journey, or for some other reason, she takes two or three bananas, peels them, and inserts them one by one for a moment into her vulva, whereupon they are toasted and eaten by the husband, together with peanuts. This is done in the greatest secrecy, but the children may overhear the women talking about it in the fields and so it may occasionally come out.

The men carry three or four knives. Two of them hang in a sheath from the hip, while the other pair is worn on a string around the neck. They carry a gun over the shoulder and hold a big tanzi knife in one hand.

The loin cloth wraps around the body and hangs down straight from the waist. It is dyed blue or some dark colour. In order to obtain a very dark shade and give the fabric a durable finish, it is dressed with soot flakes and palm oil. When the cloth fades to grey, it is considered dirty and dyed black again. The loin cloth should also be heavy, and to this end it is spread out at the foot of a nsekinya tree in the forest and incisions are made in the tree to allow the sap to run out over the cloth. After this, it is dyed again.

Nobody, man or woman, young or old, sits on the loin cloth. It is always hoisted up, baring the buttocks, before sitting down. They have no sense of shame about raising the cloth, not even in front of their mother-in-law, sister, or brother.

The marriage customs of the Bembe are somewhat different from those among the Sundi. The price of a wife, for instance, may vary from five to ten "guns", that is, from five hundred to about a thousand francs. The bride price often includes a human being as well as pigs, which are killed and divided among the relatives. Occasionally, though, neither goods nor

pigs are demanded, but only a rooster (*biyoki*). After the legs and wings have been broken off as evidence that the marriage is to take place without a transfer of possessions, the bird is roasted with bananas and eaten by the two parties. There are many other foreign traits to be found in the marriage customs of the Bembe.

A revolting habit, which a stranger cannot help noticing, is that the Bembe break wind anywhere and in front of anybody, be it sister, mother, father or children, sitting or standing, and regardless of whether they are eating or not. Nobody is in the least ashamed of it.

If two men have been friends, taking their meals together in the same house, and travelling around together, and one of them dies, the survivor must that same day make the round of the village, visit the place where they used to take their meals and drink palm wine, the turning of every road they have ever travelled together, and loudly bewail his loss.

Women are under similar circumstances seen to wander around naked, except for a belt (*nkole nswela*) tied just above the pudenda, and to fling themselves on the ground, to show that they are fasting and in mourning.

Custom dictates that the village chief rise at the first cock-crow, take his gun and tanzu knife, and make the round of all the houses in the village. Now and then he stops on his way, watching and listening. Occasionally he will go to the crossroads, or lie down at the side of the road with his legs stretching across it, with the idea that a thief sneaking up at dawn may stumble over them and can then be seized.

To punish a thief, some twenty palm laths are sharpened to a point and driven into his body, three at the end of each shoulder, three at each knee, four between the fingers, and four between the toes, and finally a hen's feather is driven far into the penis, until he gives up the ghost.

Illicit sexual relations are very common among married as well as unmarried people. They even take place outdoors in the grass, where the young couple meet by a prearranged sign. This sign usually consists of a signal on the *mbambi* pipe. Both take dishes of food along, the man a parcel of meat or roasted *nsombe* larvae and palm wine, the woman boiled *nteete* seeds mixed with *nyonzi* or *ntondya* fish and pieces of boiled manioc, among other things. They are in no hurry, but talk, eat, and dally at their leisure.

There are many ways to conceal adultery or avert its consequences, so that the husband may not be stricken with the *mpinga* disease (LDKF, p. 582). If the wife is the guilty party, she will often place a carrying band across the threshold, so that the husband is forced to step over it, which protects him from harmful consequences. The same object is gained by scattering maize grains outside the door, so that the husband will step on them.

Sometimes the woman will confess her offence by saying that she dreamt of being raped.

The woman has a variety of tricks at her disposal when her husband becomes suspicious and subjects her to an ordeal. By naming her adulterous partner she can render the ordeal ineffective. Sometimes the man in question will go to the burial-ground and lie down on a grave, allowing the adulterous wife to describe him in such terms that nobody will guess his identity. As an alternative the male partner in the offence can create such a commotion that nobody realizes that he is the one named by the wife. He may for instance start chasing

a hen and tie his loin-cloth so loosely, that he drops it as he runs. While the spectators are laughing at his misfortune, they fail to listen to the confession at the ordeal.

If a dead person is accused of being a *ndoki*, the corpse must be dissected by a special *nganga*, even if it should have been buried already. Before the corpse is cut up, the *nganga* sees to it that he is paid, because if he should find *makundu* glands in the remains, those who own the deceased may in their rage refuse to pay.

Those who wish to attend the dissection must go to the grave ahead of the *nganga*. Nobody may come later, for then the undertaking would fail. The dissector must make a vow that everything will be done in the proper way.

He begins by tearing off the list edging the cloth used for the corpse's shroud and winds the strips around his head. He makes an incision along the ribs, cuts the heart in two, and proceeds to remove the viscera, one by one. First the stomach, then the intestines, the spleen, the liver, and the kidneys. He is looking for *makundu* nodes on the costal side of the stomach. Sometimes he removes a roundish sort of gland, which is porous and *binzumbudi-binzumbudi*. This is what is known as the magic gland (*makundu*). The number of glands that are removed may vary from two to nine, but in a few cases they are innumerable. The largest ones are found adjoining the stomach. Sometimes they are found inside the heart, or covering it so completely that the heart itself cannot be discerned. The corpses in which glands are found are called *waholoko*, *waholika*, while those in which no magic glands can be discovered are known as *munkenkena*.

If the remains are found to contain magic glands, the corpse is not honoured or bewailed. If no glands are discovered, on the other hand, the corpse is greatly honoured, there is general weeping, and the *mpembe* dance is danced to mark that the people are free.

The dead are mostly buried in *mbongi* houses, or else a small hut is erected over the grave. If the dead return to haunt the living, their bones are unearthed and wrapped in a cloth or mat, which in its turn is placed in a cloth figure manufactured for the purpose. The figure may either be placed in a specially built house or in an ordinary dwelling.

The dead are angered if they do not receive gifts of meat, palm wine, and other necessities, and so their ghost returns. When the remains are stored in a *muzidi* figure, it is easier to make them the proper gifts.

The *nkasa* poison ordeal is practised among the Bembe, although their ceremonial differs somewhat from that of the Kongo.

The Tsangi, or Sangi, live to the northwest of the Bembe and are descended from the Sundi-Kongo. Their language contains a rich admixture of Teke elements, as a result of the Teke infiltration which has left settlements spread throughout the country. Some of the customs distinguishing them from the Sundi are worth noting.

When a corpse is shrouded, the legs are bent immediately after death with the knees drawn up to the chest. The arms too are bent, in order to make the corpse as short as possible. The remains are first swaddled in a cloth of raffia or some other fabric, and then in *nkwala* mats and banana leaves. First one mat is spread out on the ground and covered with banana leaves, and this is continued layer by layer until all the mats that have been prepared are

used. Notable and highly respected members of the community are shrouded in numerous layers.

The mourners lament their dead outdoors. Those who own the deceased go round dancing a dance of mourning, with dirges and lamentations (bitoodi), such as: "Now that you have gone, who will remain with us? I am left in my grief". The mourner then proceeds to enumerate all those who have died before.

The leafy stalks of the pineapple, normally used to make mats, are worn as a sign of mourning. One such stalk is tied around the head, one around the chest, and one around the waist. The face and body are smeared with chalk and on top of that lines are drawn with charcoal mixed with oil. One line is drawn on the forehead and one on the shoulder-blades up to the nape of the neck. These lines prevent the mourner from dreaming about the deceased. The oil-charcoal mixture also contains nails, hairs, and nganga medicine as protection.

In the house of mourning the widow or widows must sleep on the ground. In the daytime she may not face the fire, but must watch the mourners outside the house. She is not supposed to give free rein to her tears in the daytime, as people might believe that she cried from hunger, since she is given a minimum of food in the beginning. When those who own the corpse consider the proper period of mourning at an end, she receives her usual share of food again, and in addition a raffia cloth or fifty centimes, known as "the drying of the tears". If she has violated the rules of widowhood, however, she receives nothing.

Widows pass to the rightful heirs immediately after the husband's death, that is, those entitled to inherit make their choice without delay. When this has been done, the women return to the house of mourning to continue their weeping and wailing. At the end of the mourning period the men who have inherited the widows must take a gift of palm wine, among other things, to the male relative under whose guardianship they are. After that the marriage takes place.

An older woman may not enter the house of her younger sister once the latter has been married. It is not a prohibition, but merely a sign of respect for the younger sister's home.

Tsangi women are not allowed to eat any domestic animals except hens. Like the Kongo women, they are forbidden to eat certain wild animals.

The Tsangi believe the rain to be caused by the heavenly people opening up their dams and releasing the water.

The number of myths and legends is legion. One group of stories concerns the people inhabiting the sky, and relate how these can ride the rays of the sun down to earth and back again. Many of them vary only in minor details from the Kongo stories.

The following story is intended as a moral for those who are prone to bewail their lot, especially on account of barrenness.

Once there was a woman who worked in the fields and never ceased to bewail the fact that she had no child that could fetch water and do other chores. One day she found a child at the foot of a nsenga tree. When she had finished her work and collected her things, she put the child on her back. Arrived at the village, she told the child: "Get off my back". The

child answered: "But do others not put down the wood when they have children?"—"Get down! I must go and fetch water". The child: "But others who go and fetch water with their children, aren't they human?"—"Get down! I must prepare the meal." The child again: "Those who prepare the meal with their children, aren't they human?"

Whatever her arguments, the child refused to get off her back. Finally she went to the nganga and told him everything. He said: "Find a place where ntundulu fruits grow and only then will you see the child get off your back". On her way home she went to a place where ntundulu fruits grew. As soon as they had arrived there, the child suddenly wanted to be put down. When it had climbed off her back, the mother started gathering the fruits. She picked and picked and put the fruits down by the child. Finally, however, she fled and thereby saved her life.

The Yaka live to the west of the Bembe. They came from the old kingdom Congo, crossed the Congo River and proceeded northwards to the country east of Mayombe to the vicinity of Kinkenge. It is possible that they are identical with the Jagga, who waged war with the peoples to the south, including the Kongo, but when firearms were introduced in Congo were finally conquered and driven out of the country.

According to tradition, the original Yaka were a strong people, armed with powerful cross-bows, bows and arrows, and spears with iron heads. Their most powerful weapon was the bow and arrow.

They crossed the Congo at two different ferrying places, Nzadi a Yinga and Nkyelo near Isangila. At the time of their arrival, they found large villages and towns (mbanza) established in the country. The greatest chief was called NAMAKOMBA (he who swept up the elephant dung).

The Yaka built their small houses on top of the mountains. They refused to live in the forest, but as their power increased they did settle in the plain. They refused to till the soil, however, and concentrated instead on hunting and stealing the crops of the original population. It did not take long before they took to killing any Sundi that crossed their path. They even set traps, known as mbata nkuyu, to catch the original inhabitants.

As a result the indigenous population fled to the forests, and later also to other parts, driven by their fear of the Yaka. Even though the Sundi did learn to set traps of their own and managed to kill many of the intruders, they were no match for the Yaka with their superior weapons, who captured many of them, set fire to the plains where they lived, and caused their ruin in numerous other ways.

A paramount chief by the name of NZANDA had begun trading at Ngoyo on the coast, where he was introduced to flintlock guns. He and his following stayed at Ngoyo for some time and learnt how to shoot them. NZANDA was a strapping and powerful man. On his return he was received with great honours. After he had taught his own people to shoot, he sent a messenger to summon other chiefs and showed them the guns. When a few seasons had passed, he took these chiefs along in his caravans to Ngoyo to buy flintlocks. Among them were chief NANSANGA from Tenzi, NAMBELE from Nyumba, and NANTETE BISENGWA. On their arrival they sold some of their bearers to the whites in order to buy guns. The

party stayed at the place for some time and learnt how to handle the guns. NZANDA, incidentally, also bought a kingongolo mug which became part of the ruler's regalia and has been preserved up to this day by all rulers of the Mbinda. More and more chiefs now went to Ngoyo to buy guns, determined to give battle against the Yaka. NZANDA opened hostilities on the Kimadibu plateau. They fought a relentless battle, the Yaka with their spears and the Sundi with guns. NZANDA's warriors burnt the village of the Yaka, who fled to the Buku valley, only to be killed in new attacks. The place of this last defeat was named Vizya.

By and by, the whole country became involved in the conflict. The Yaka who sought refuge in caves were killed. Others fled back across the Congo, whereas some made their escape up to the country where the Yaka live today.

All through the dry season this first war was kept up on all fronts. In some places the Yaka held a strong position to start with, but the Sundi received support and managed to hold out through the four seasons that the war lasted. All Yaka that crossed their path were tortured and killed.

Finally the Yaka were driven out of the country. The chiefs assembled at Nsinda to elect a paramount chief, who was to be the supreme ruler and king of all the chiefs. Some of them refused to agree to this, whereupon it was decided to elect a paramount chief for each luvila. It was further decided that every young man should have a gun, which naturally increased their military spirit. They also created Nsimbu, the war nkisi, which was to be carried at the head of the troops in time of war. However, they gradually ran out of powder and shot, even though flints might be replaced by burning brands to ignite the priming.

The Yaka in the French Congo west of the Bembe and around Sibiti have been unable to keep their tribal character and special skills intact. Among those that are left is the fabrication of a special kind of mats renowned for their beauty.

Their customs, myths, and traditions are very similar to those of the Sundi. One myth, concerning the origin of death, relates how Nzambi sent a dog and a goat to the human race with the message: "When the moon begins waning, it will grow dark forever, but when man dies, he will return to earth". Somewhere on the road, the goat stopped to graze, so that the dog was the first to arrive. He told a lie and said: "Any human being that dies, will die forever. But when the moon wanes, it will wax again". When the goat arrived, she said: "Nzambi has decreed that when man dies, he will return back to earth. But when the moon dies, it dies forever". But the people refused to listen to his message and believed the different story told them by the dog.

When a paramount chief dies, he is first shrouded and then put up to dry for about three months prior to burial. At the funeral all but the deceased's wives dance, since it is a general holiday. The wives weep and relate all the good their husband and master has done, "but now we shall receive nothing and we will be naked".

To make the shroud, pieces of raffia cloth and nkwala mats are spread on the ground and covered with mayombe leaves and stalks, in order to give the corpse more "body". This is topped by a layer of dry banana leaves and palm fibre pulp (ntumbu) to make the corpse as big as possible, after which the shroud is tied together at the top and the bottom.

Widowhood comprises a period of two or three months during which the widows keep up their laments in the house of mourning. When they take a pause from this, they must weave nkwala mats for their husband's or his brother's sisters and brothers. The widows are entitled to a gift of one or two hens from the brothers and sisters-in-law when their hair has been shaved off, as a sign that they are now free to marry the men who have inherited them.

If a boy is given to habitual pilfering, he is punished by someone making small incisions in his skin over the heart region and rubbing pepper into them. If this does not make him stop his thievery, the mother says that he is driven to it by bandoki.

When a child is born, the Yaka bury the afterbirth in a hole at the corner of the house. The women gather under loud singing, jingling their nkwanga bells. When the afterbirth has been buried, it is shut in by means of magic grass tied into a small bundle and fixed over the hole with chalk. This protects the child from bandoki and permits it to grow up in full flourish. The singing continues for three days.

When a woman has given birth, a medicine is made up which she is to carry with her wherever she goes. She must observe a number of prohibitions to ensure her child's health. She may for instance not pass a roadcrossing, eat palm oil stew in another's company, or tie the cabbage leaves she has picked into bundles; they must be placed in a zobe basket-dish.

A pregnant woman is no longer allowed to share meals with any other wives her husband may have, for then the foetus would die. She is not allowed to eat food prepared by non-pregnant women who sleep with other men. Nor is she allowed to share a meal with any man who has not been circumcised. Nobody is allowed to sit down on her bed, not even her husband, unless he refrains from sleeping with his other wives.

It is foolhardy to discard nail parings on the ground. Unless they are buried, their owner will die soon.

When a party is marching through the grass at dawn, a man provided with a kubula (a whisk made of leaves or something similar) walks at the head of the line to beat off the dew. He must not touch any of the others, since that would mark him as a ndoki and the one that he has touched as his victim, whom he will drive ahead of him as he goes about setting nightmares on people.

Nobody may lean against the post of the house, because that would give him a headache. This is because sick people that are to be treated are often made to lean against the post while a nganga blows medicine over them. The Yaka's treatment of illness is different from that of the Kongo in that a nganga chews the medicine and spits it out over the affected part of the body.

It is forbidden to sit in the door-opening, because one might be suspected of being a ndoki wishing to bewitch the inhabitant of the house.

A stranger should not be the first to utter a greeting; the initiative rests with the inhabitants of the village. Similarly, the master of a household must utter the first greeting in the morning to show that friendly relations obtain.

It is forbidden to look into a house inhabited by a pregnant woman. Visitors must enter the house without delay so as not to bring on a lengthy childbed.

If the peanuts are growing badly and part of the crop starts drooping and withering, the woman should pull up the affected stands and tie them to the post supporting the overhanging roof. This will restrain the bandoki who are trying to bewitch the peanut crop.

Anyone unfortunate enough to sit down on a fire-brand, or a charred or smouldering tree, will be afflicted with hernia, unless he draws a couple of cross-strokes across the wood with a piece of coal, with the formula: "May whoever fetches this firewood be afflicted with hernia".

If someone's loincloth is disarranged, he must not let anyone else straighten it out, or his good fortune will desert him. If it should happen anyway, the other man must shake his own loincloth, while the first one stretches out his arms as if to drive the bad luck away. The same action is performed when someone's loincloth happens to come off as he is scratching his thigh or his buttocks, and falls on somebody sitting close by.

A woman who is engaged in sowing or planting may not sleep with her husband, or the crop would fail to take root. During this time she is not allowed to roast palm nuts, manioc, meat or other food in the ashes of the fireplace in her house, or the newly planted crop would wither and fall down. For the same reason it is forbidden to place the hoe or knife used for her work in the fields next to the fireplace. It is inadvisable to plant anything when the moon is on the wane; when the moon is waxing, everything grows.

Anyone sitting down on a broom risks severe emaciation, unless the danger is averted by spitting on (*dima*) the broom before sitting down.

A new-born child must be taken outside the house after a period of ten or twenty days. A *nganga* arrives to take the child out of the house, and blesses or consecrates it with medicine. This done, they proceed to the village square, where the child is put down on the road and consecrated by having medicine and palm wine spit on it, whereupon the party starts singing and shaking their rattles. The different parts of this ceremony are repeated three times, after which they proceed to visit their friends' houses and go on singing until the child has received some small gift, consisting of a little salt or maize or something of the sort. The ceremonial is intended to prevent the child from crying or getting sick when it is taken outdoors. The medicine with which the child is blessed comes from *nkisi Bukita* as the creator of the foetus.

If it rains for a whole day (*mvula ndumbi*), the women are not allowed to work in a newly planted manioc field, or the roots would rot away. They may work in an old field instead.

Hens are used as sacrifices both for the dead and the living. For instance, when someone is sick and fails to recover despite treatment by the *banganga*, the smeller-out is sent for to investigate whether the patient is under the spell of the dead or the living (*bandoki*). If he finds that the dead are responsible, the brother of the sufferer must kill a hen or a goat, according to the *nganga's* instructions. When the hen has been killed, it is spitted on a stick in the house consecrated to the spirits of the departed, or on the grave of the spirit that has

bewitched the patient. If the required sacrifice is a goat, it is killed and cut up in small pieces which are spitted on sticks and set out at the crossroads leading to the village. The meat must be fresh and uncooked. Whatever is left is divided among the members of the kanda, while an entire haunch or shoulder cut is given to the one who has bewitched the sufferer. If the patient fails to recover, the sacrifice of a hen or goat is repeated, in some cases five or even ten times.

Hens may also be sacrificed by women whose fields refuse to bear crop. In that case a white hen must be bought (a black, red, or speckled one will not do), boiled, and placed outside the door of the house or on the spot where the woman's mother is buried. This will make the fields yield again. The same ritual is observed by hunters to invoke good fortune.

When someone is slow to recover from an illness, or losing weight and skinny, a nganga muzidi is sent for to restore the muzidi spirit to its basket. First the sufferer's relatives assemble, and whoever has any quarrel with the sick man promises to abandon his animosity and forgive him. When the living have thus absolved the sufferer, the forgiveness of the departed is invoked in the dead of night. When this too is settled, the nganga assembles the people to sing and play the drums, while he himself prepares the receptacle which is to house the muzidi. Usually this is a small ponzi or nseba basket, covered with a small piece of cloth, which in its turn is fastened with rings. The basket is placed sideways on the ground, propped up by three sticks, one on each side, and one at the bottom. A nkwalá mat is placed on top and in its turn covered by a blanket or a length of cloth. Three holes are dug in the ground adjoining the opening of the basket, and finally a tutu calabash of palm wine and a plate with a cut-up chicken are brought forward. The sacrifices that have been prepared inside the house must remain there until the muzidi has entered the basket, when it will receive the cooked food, consisting of game, fish, a mess of nteete seeds, and cassava, manioc, or bananas.

When everything is in readiness, the gathering continues singing, beating the drums, and shaking their rattles, until the nganga finds that the muzidi has entered the ponzi basket. He hastens to cover the opening of the basket, and fastens the cover with its rings. The singing, drumming, and rattling is taken up again, while the nganga holds the little basket in his hand to feel its vibrations. When he is satisfied, he hands the basket over to a woman given to ecstatic visions, who in her turn feels if the muzidi spirit has entered it. If the basket quivers under her touch, the crowd is reassured. Then the basket is placed inside the house, so that the spirit can get the food that has been prepared for it. It is also given water to drink, after the calabash has been blessed with medicine by the nganga.

In the morning, it must be ascertained whether the spirit has partaken of the food and drink. If so, it is a sure sign that the muzidi has indeed entered the basket, and the nganga then prepares one portion of medicine which the patient must carry on his person when he has recovered, and another which must be kept inside the house to protect it. The medicine is a mixture of cola nuts, earth, leaves, and other nkisi medicine. Finally, a hen is killed for the muzidi.

People who have died by the will of Nzambi will not be transformed, but retain the shape they had on earth. Anyone dying through the agency of kindoki, on the other hand,

is transformed into a dwarfish creature. These creatures are in their turn after death transformed into animals, for instance a nkabi antelope, due to the fact that they were prior to death shot by the banganga's matuutu guns and protective medicine.

Another custom to charm away evil consists in unearthing the pot that has been used to bewitch a hunter whose good fortune has deserted him, or someone who has been stricken with illness. The nganga comes and smells out the evil by singing and beating the drums during the night. Then he lies down to sleep. At dawn he goes to the edge of the wood to find the spot where the ndoki has buried the bewitching pot. He points out the exact spot, and the crowd starts digging. When the hole is breast-high, the nganga steps down into it. A nkuala mat is thrown over his head. When he gets hold of the pot down in the hole, the nganga quivers with ecstasy. He brings it out, emerges from the hole, and takes the pot to the village, where he exhibits the ndoki's hidden magic to the people. Afterwards, it is burnt to ashes at the fork of the road leading to the village, and the ndoki has lost the power to bewitch.

Bukita is a water nkisi, but the Yaka call her the Nzambi of the earth, whereas Nzambi is known as Nzambi of the Heavens. Popular belief has it that Bukita creates the foetus in the mother's womb, which is why newborn children must be blessed by Bukita's nganga. Nzambi of the heavens is male, Bukita female. Nzambi is male, because the heavens are the source of sunshine, rain, thunder, lightning, and moonlight. This proves that Nzambi is filled with power. But he also has it in his might to kill people and prevent the rain from falling, so that everything dries up. That is why he is described as male. Nzambi of the earth, Bukita, is female, because she brings forth from the soil and the water all that grows there. But Nzambi of the heavens has it in his hand to let it flourish or dry up.

Finally, we may look at some Yaka proverbs:

The nsesi antelope pulled the elephant out of the pit. This means that the small can help the great.

Are you ashamed of the child on your hip? This means, if you are hungry and too proud to beg, you must suffer for your folly.

The elephant tusk is the most precious; that is, a costly thing brings something much more costly in return.

A pig with sand-fleas dies with its fat. This means that one dies with one's vices, the lie one has told, the theft one has committed, etc.

A real sow dies in beauty; that is, a real woman bathes frequently not only because of her work in the soil, but also to please the men.

The Bongo are a people of very small stature, who live in the forests north of the Bembe and in the Tsangi and Teke country. They are an entirely different people from the Sundi. They don't till the soil, nor do they build permanent dwellings, but only mean little huts of ndubi leaves. The framework consists of poles cut from the mangolo-ngolo tree, which are set in the ground and arched in the shape of the roof, after which a covering of leaves is put on top. Their subsistence is provided by hunting. They do not pay tax to the colonial

authorities, but make some contribution in the form of game they have shot. Since their own produce is negligible, they trade meat for agricultural products with neighbouring peoples.

Their hunters must observe a number of prohibitions. After killing an animal, they are obliged to take a rest. They are not allowed to eat the viscera—liver, spleen, intestines, lungs, and heart. Women taking part in the hunt may not eat the animal's head. It is also forbidden for a woman to sleep with any other man but her own, just as a man may not sleep with other women.

The Bongo tribe is also known under the name of Moyo or Kisi ba Nzambi. Bongo is the name they give themselves, whereas Moyo is a name they have received because they wander from forest to forest. Bakisi ba Nzambi is identical with bakisi, and expressive of their belief that they have come from the heavens. In addition, the Bakisi live in the woods, which is where the spirits of the departed dwell. Another name, given them by government soldiers, is Mbinga-Mbinga (the Hunters, from binga tiye).

They are quick to abandon their quarters, for instance at the death of one of their elders, for fear that he may return to frighten them.

Their meals do not require elaborate preparation, since they prefer to roast all food. Everyone roasts his or her own food, and the women do not take care of the men's needs as among the Sundi.

Their native tongue is mixed with the languages spoken in the surrounding country, that is, Teke, Kuta, Tsangi, etc.

The Kuta have in modern times moved down towards the Tsangi and Teke country, where they have bought land and thereby become settled inhabitants. They are a strong, but peace-loving people.

The Nzabi and the Punu are originally Sundi. In the coastal regions they used to form one kingdom, whose ruler was called Nguunu. Undoubtedly his regent's rank had been conferred upon him by southern powers—the Sundi, or the Loango, or other ancient paramount chiefs of great power.

## Conceptions of the Universe

The Sundi believe that the earth is flat all the way to the horizon, where large pillars support the vault of heaven.

Nzadi, the Congo River, is generally renowned for its power and the volume of its waters. At its widest part it is called mukisi (waasa) Nzadi or mukisi mamba (water), down towards the sea mwanza (lake). The Sundi are well aware of the fact that its sources are the small streams and springs up in the mountains.

Nzadi is regarded as a haunt of basimbi spirits. According to the old people, the river itself assumes a human guise, with ears to hear and eyes to see, as it denounces crimes, reveals the secrets of the heart, and avenges justice. That is why anyone about to cross the river must first confess his crimes, such as adultery. Many are the stories that tell how Nzadi dried up and how the waters returned with torrential force.

There are several commands that must be observed in reverence to Nzadi. It is forbidden, for instance, to fetch water from the river in a clay vessel, to throw ngengila stones in the stream, to stamp one's feet on the riverbank, or to behave in a noisy manner during the crossing.

When the ferryman has heard the traveller's confession, he addresses the river: "Be clement. Peace reigns, still your hissing waves, calm your breakers. We ferry across a small lake. We ferry across Nzadi. The lewd and the slanderous we have converted. In peace we ferry across". Then he fills his mouth with water, strikes the side of the canoe, spits the water up in the air and down on the ground, and cries: "Forwards!"

Anyone who has ever refused to cross Nzadi cannot ferry across before he has bitten in the kimbanzya herb and said: "I have refused to cross Nzadi, but now I ferry across with pleasure. In peace I ferry across to the other bank. On top of my tongue I said it, not under my tongue". Then he must fill his mouth with water and spit it out into the air and on the ground.

Nzadi removes any nkisi or prohibition that is cast upon its waters, for the stream flows downwards until it discharges its waters in the sea. Nothing returns to bring sickness or death.

A sacrifice is always made as an act of reverence to Nzadi, as well as to other smaller and larger streams. Leaves, stalks of grass, or a hen's feather are thrown into the water, which is the natural haunt of basimbi and bankita.

Ravines, too, are a favourite dwelling-place of basimbi spirits.

The mountains are believed to have been created on the site where they stand. Popular belief in the north had it that Funza created them to supply all sorts of stones, which could be crushed and melted to provide copper, lead, and iron, and in addition yield flintstones for guns, round nkumbula stones to be used as shot, pottery, clay, chalk, and yellow ochre.

Stones, too, were given a permanent form at the time of their creation. Trees and plants, on the other hand, have life and grow. The Sundi are familiar with, and have a name for all vegetation that can be utilized in one way or another—for food, timber, medicine, nkisi, or any other purpose. The most important of these are palms and bananas. The flowering seasons of different plants are followed with close attention, since they are believed to hold all sorts of portents. For instance, if a bitch should whelp during the flowering of the kola or the nsafu tree, the pups will die. They are known as masafi pups. When the wormwood and the tumvumvu herb are in bloom, the water of the Congo turns cold and the fishing is poor. Palm trees that are tapped at this time also yield little wine. The season in which this flowering occurs is known as vumbuya. Flowers are not at all appreciated for their beauty.

The Sundi have a thorough knowledge of the animal world and its ways of life. The different animals are named for their specific qualities, habits, or appearance. The familiar fact that certain animals slough their skin has originated the belief that man, like the snake, changes his skin when he dies, which will rejuvenate him and give him greater powers.

Although the Sundi lack knowledge about the metamorphosis of insects in general, such as the butterfly's transformation from the chrysalid or cocoon stage, they are very familiar with the larval and chrysalid forms of the big palm beetle (nzau a ba, palm elephants). This makes them believe that certain animals are transformed into a quite different species, especially when they have grown old and changed their skin many times. Similarly, it is believed that human beings when they die after many transformations become spirits, who take up their dwelling in a teki sculpture, or are turned into a nkisi, a simbi spirit, or some other supernatural being.

The kanza snake is said to be transformed into a mboma (python), while the chameleon in its old age becomes a fukila rat. Scorpions living underground and tarantulas turn by a slow but unerring process into mfufu rats.

The spawn of fish turns into fry and small fish, not into kuki tadpoles like the frog's spawn. When the tadpole has grown legs and its tail has disappeared, it turns into a common frog, a bisidi frog, or some other kind. The frog's lack of a tail is due to her refusal to come and fetch hers when the other animals were given their tails. Regretting her laziness when she saw the fine tails the other animals had received, she went to the smith after all, but by that time he had stopped working, and the frog had to return home in shame and without a tail. This tale serves as a warning to disobedient children.

The kwaka or kwakwa larva is said to turn into a mfufu rat in the ndoolo season. The transformation occurs while he is asleep in his cocoon. When the mukusu rat has grown big and fat, it is transformed into a nduutu rodent. The big ngonu rat can in its old age turn into a nkumbi rodent, which for that reason is also known by the name of sumba dya mukusu (a sort of mukusu).

The mbende rat is turned into a seke bird (a weaver-bird), while the kyula frog becomes a makula or matutu rat. The chameleon may also turn into a vwoki, a rat the size of a kuluba.

The mahono, mbanga, maswaka, and kyula frogs sing in chorus, the maswaka starting: "swaka-swaka-swaka". The mbanga follow: "we-we-we-we-we, wa-wa-wa-wa-wa", and when they have finished their song, the mahono frogs start in: "heha tuwawavang'e heha (onomat.), are agreed. Heha, are we agreed." Then the bakyula start: "Haha, here we have a quarrel. Here a violent quarrel is going on. Haha, if you get hold of this, put it in the nkutu bag." This is followed by the refrain: "She dies, was eaten with manioc diilulu mu yaka. Mbanga died, was eaten with manioc. Swaka died, was eaten with manioc. Kyula died, shall rot, shall rot, has rotted. . .".

There is a vast number of animal myths and fables. The Sundi have a thorough knowledge of their different cries and calls, and are constantly imitating them, especially the calls of birds.

The guinea hen and the partridge were slinging abuse at each other. The guinea hen said: "You red one, your legs are red", to which the partridge replied: "Ke-ke makoko, mbandu ntu" (Ke-ke, you scurfy creature, you mangy dog).

When the pigeon is eating peanuts in the fields, she sings: "Ah, it is a nkokudi (a shell containing three nuts). Ah, it is a nkokudi". Then she changes her tune: "This is my kinkonga (a shell with one small nut of poor quality), meant for eating, but the nkokudi is for sowing (property), kuku (onomat). My kinkonga to eat, but nkokudi for sowing, kuku".

Ngwa bukonzó (a market) is the name given to a forest bird that likes to settle in the top of the highest trees. It is renowned for its song. When the earth is hoed for a new crop of peanuts, manioc, or maize, the bird perches in the treetop and keeps up its incessant cries of Koo-kwe-he-he, Koo-kwe-he-he, until the crop begins to ripen. When the time has come to dig up the peanuts, it searches for the hoe and sings: "But where is my hoe? (kadi nsengo ami?). But my hoe. My hoe". It continues its song until the work is finished. During the dry season (sivu), when it is looking for a mate, it sings: "My sister, this one. My sister, this one". Every dry season this song can be heard again. The bird is also called Nsengo ami (my hoe).



Fig. 4. Ancestor, Bembe in Kolo  
(Laman 627).

The wood grouse (nkwandi) and her cock pass the night in the trees. At dawn they start the following conversation. The cock: "Ke-kedeke ha nsi (on the ground). Ke-kedede ha nsi". The hen: "He tukyedololo (here we have spent the night). He tukyedololo". And so they go on. The call of the nkwanki also marks the arrival of the new moon.

It is a well-known fact that the male of certain kinds of birds changes his appearance during the mating season, and is decked out in brilliant colours. The cock of the maseke (a weaver bird) adopts a handsome red plumage at this time, and is then called kinsengwa, while the musyensye a mbula (*Vidua serena*) flaunts extremely long tail feathers.

The ntyetye bird and the purple grasshopper (konko dya mpumbu) are said to be kin, because the ntyetye will never take the kind that has purple wings when it is looking for grasshoppers to eat. If the bird should try it, it would be kicked to death by the grasshopper. That is why the ntyetye says: "The purple grasshopper is my slave (muntu ami), which the late yaa Banga has left behind him".

Traditional beliefs also exist about all sorts of insects. Mufwa nkabu, for instance, is a small beetle which looks as if it were stone-dead the instant one touches it. A pregnant woman must never touch it, because the same thing would happen to her child, that is, its breath would be taken away. If a child later on shows a tendency to have fainting fits whenever it is admonished, the mother must kundika nkuku (LDKF p. 336, 730), and it will rise immediately.



Fig. 5. Basket, Sundi in Madzia (Laman 913).

## Heavenly Bodies

The heavens are regarded as a country which ends at the horizon, and is supported by strong pillars of mbota wood and iron. If they were broken, the heavens would fall down. The sky spreads itself over mankind like the hen spreads its wings over its chickens. The country at the horizon is inhabited by people with only one ear, one eye, one nostril, one arm, and one leg. They weave wondrous cloth. The world underneath the surface of the earth is populated by a different people. They call the earth we walk on heaven, just as we call the skies above us heaven.

The people inhabiting the skies live their life during the ntombo and ndoolo seasons. At the start of the sivu and mbangala seasons they fall asleep and remain in a state of suspended animation. Someone who happens to be up in a palm-tree continues to hang in his climbing-sling. Another, overcome while hoeing a field, remains bent over the hoe. A woman cooking a meal still stands with the spoon in her hand. Whatever they happen to be doing when sleep overtakes them, they remain rooted to the spot with staring eyes, until the thunder gives forth its na-u-u-u-u and they come to life again. That is the way of their death, not like ours here on earth. The people up there call our earth Ku Nsuku bikata (the valley, or the plain of the cripples). When the children up there are naughty or cry, they are admonished by the threat: "Quiet, or I will throw you down to Nsuku bikata".

The moon is set in the sky to indicate the passage of the months (for the foetus in the mother's womb, for instance), and to give the human race an opportunity for small talk and gossip. The old people believed that moonshine represented the moon's garrulity, while the dark period of its waning symbolized its jealousy or rivalry.

The waxing and waning of the moon have great influence. At the end of the waning period, people and animals grow weaker, the flowers of the trees fold their petals, sickness and other evils become worse. When the new moon shows itself again, everyone cheers. The banganga renew the power of their nkisi by burning powder, mothers hold their children up to show them Master Moon, saying: "Father Moon, Father Moon, you afflict us with pains in the stomach and in the head. You give birth to your son, I will give birth to a girl".

When someone has lost a tooth, he must take a piece of burnt-out coal, go to a road above the house and throw the tooth onto a road below the house, followed by the piece of coal, or else he must throw the tooth towards the moon.

When the moon is approaching the full, the nganga believes that his nsala soul is full too, that is, sound and healthy. When someone falls ill, his soul is "waning". When he is healthy it is full and round like the moon.

The sun brings the dawn. A lot of sunshine will bring rain. The sun keeps to its own unswerving course. The sun is set inside the sky, but it can stretch out its legs (rays) into the clouds, and that is how one can follow its course. The rising of the sun marks the beginning of the working-day, which ends when the sun goes down. There is a saying: "Work, work, put (tuula) down the hoe of the ndoolo season, the sun's day will not retrace its steps, for when it meets the earth as it goes down, the day has gone." When the sun sinks, it is on its way to eat its crabs.

Sunshine is better than rain, as it gives strength to everything the rain has fallen on. That is why the people say: "The sun showed itself, and the sunshine broke through". Other sayings are: "I will not work, but sit inside the house where there is a bed", "I will work, for it is sunshine we seek and not the night", and "If there were no sun, everything would die. Sunshine is a cloth protecting the people from fever".

When the sun and moon have gone down, they pass each other under the earth. The people living there regard our earth as we regard the heavens.

The people living under the earth build their houses of clay and cover them with earth and clay, for the sun has fire in its body. It goes down when it comes to their village, but the villagers beat the ngongi and drums, and blow their trumpets so that the sun is scared into flight. As it flees, it drops fire. Gradually it climbs up into the sky again, reaches zenith, and comes down again, killing swine, goats and chickens to still its hunger. The sun is like a huge beast. At the point where it goes down, the people are awaiting its return, so that they can chase it away again.

Many stories are told about the sun and the moon. One such tale relates how both wished to bathe. When they arrived at the waterside, the sun said: "Scrub my back". The moon scrubbed the sun carefully until its back was clean and shining. Then the moon turned its back to the sun and said: "Now scrub my back". The sun took some mud and threw it at the moon's back, whereupon it departed for the sky. The moon was very distressed, because it was full of spots.

Another story tells how the sun got into trouble, because he had nothing to pay with after losing a law-suit. He considered borrowing from the stars, but in the end he went to the moon, since they were dear friends. When he arrived, he asked the moon if she would be willing to help him with a loan, as he had lost a big law-suit. The moon asked him: "When will you pay it back?" The sun replied: "Don't worry. You will not have to come and ask for it." Thus reassured, the moon let the sun have his loan without further ado. But the sun failed to pay her back, and she was forced to go to him and demand her money, since her mother had died and had to be shrouded. When the moon came with her request, the sun, without turning a hair, declared he had nothing to repay her with. Just as she was considering a second visit to the sun, they happened to run into each other. The moon said: "My mother has died. Let us go now so that I can get back what I lent you and bury her."

The sun answered: "But how are we going to arrange that? We must meet here at the zenith. It is my work to dispel the darkness. I cannot return home. Let us meet here again tomorrow." The moon sighed: "Ah, peace!" and went on her way. Early the next morning she returned to get back what was due to her, but the sun had also started on his course. Suddenly they came face to face and the moon said: "Let us go home to fetch the property you owe me". The sun replied: "The dark has already turned into dawn. What can I do? I am in the midst of my work. If I turn back, the darkness will return and then the people cannot work".

The moon went home, full of rage. In the meantime, her mother's corpse had started to rot, so she threw it out into the grass. The next day she went back to the sun, and again and again, but always they met at the zenith. But one day there was a violent altercation about the mother's corpse that had to be discarded, and they came to blows. The sun landed under the moon and it became pitch dark. Darkness fell over the earth, because the sun and the moon were fighting.

Ever since that time they cannot keep peace with each other. The moon talks to the sun, but only so she can warm herself in his light, but the sun cannot warm himself in the light of the moon, for to this day he has not returned the moon's property.

The old people believed that the moon shines for the dead.

When the sound of rain is heard in the distance, too far off to be seen, it is called *kimpuni mvula* (make-believe rain). Rainwater (*nlemba nga ntoto*) does not run a fixed course like rivers and brooks. It is stored in big lakes in the sky's diaphragm (*luvungu*), in separate reservoirs that are emptied at the proper time. Then the rain spreads out over the sky through a gaping hole extending along its entire diaphragm, which appears to be floating on top of the water.

Another belief held in the old days was that the rain fell down through the small apertures in the sky through which the stars shed their radiance.

Thunder and lightning can dissolve (*nyengisa*) the rain and hurl it down to the earth. They are regarded as awe-inspiring phenomena, and people express the hope that *Nzambi Mpungu* does not send the rain in anger. The roll of the thunder can also signify that *bakisi* are searching for *bandoki*. A palm tree struck by lightning must be sprinkled with *nkisi Nsansi*, while a field that is hit must be drenched with *lemba-lemba*. The *nganga* receives offerings of the different crops grown on all other fields, which he shares out among those working on the field struck by the lightning.

The rainbow prevents the rain from falling down on the earth. A rain *nganga* can therefore stop the rain by producing a rainbow in the sky. To this end he collects medicine for *nkisi Nkiduku* (*tondo*, *diba*, *nsamba* pepper, *nkandikila*, charcoal, and other sorts of pepper). The medicine is placed in a pot, on which markings are drawn with chalk, yellow ochre, *tukula* red, and charcoal. The pot is blessed, and after an incantation to ward off the rain, the *nganga* places it over the fire. When the smell of the medicine is wafted up to the sky, it closes itself immediately. Then the *nganga* takes the *musengala* branch used to stir the pot, and says: "Not until this branch is shaken by the storm will the rain break through up

there". Once the rain is shut in, the nganga is not allowed to bathe until the time has come to call it forth once more. Nsumbanganga and Simba dya ngembo are some of the other minkisi that ward off the rain.

Another method to produce a rainbow in the sky is to smear fresh yellow ochre across the road, and cover it by markings in chalk, tukula red, and charcoal. Small particles scraped off this latter medicine are mixed with powder, and a shot propelled by this charge sends its power up to the heavens.

The old folks say that the rainbow comes from a fathomless black lake, which is inhabited by a large black snake. Its throat is adorned with three bands of different colour—one a darkish, but brilliant hue, one a reddish brown, and one a pale blue. When the snake sees that the sky is overcast, he twists around in his lake so that the coloured bands turn upwards, and that is when the rainbow appears.

The appearance of the rainbow is full of significance. If it forms a complete circle, it means that the bandoki have gathered and are conspiring to eat people. If it is a circle with a small piece missing, it means that the nganga's soul is incomplete, that is, he is ill. The disappearance of the rainbow signifies that the power of nkisi Funza has united with that of the nganga to prevent the rain from falling.

The colours of the rainbow are nsonya (yellow), nkunzu (green), mukoko nloba or lubwi (reddish brown, like dry leaves), and mavamba ngazi.<sup>1</sup>

Comets appear on the sky like a long muswanda or ndungu drum. People are terrified that it may fall down and shatter to pieces on earth, for that would mean death to all mankind. But once the comet has disappeared, they say: "Mamwene (the Lord) came to show us an image of the ndungu drum to dance to". The disappearance of a comet, which is called a muswanda or ndungu star, is celebrated by a big kiitu dance.

The stars are called bananga (the slaves) and are regarded as persons. It is highly dangerous to take a newborn baby outside at night, for the stars can check its growth. If it cannot be avoided, the baby must be protected by rubbing the rims of its eyes and its forehead with ashes.

The wind predicts the different seasons. A steady east wind (ku ntandu) predicts the ntombo season with storm and rain, while the west wind heralds the gales of the ndoolo season. Winds from the north and the south are interpreted as the storm and gale of the banganga, which they set at each other when they match their magic powers.

Whirlwinds bring malignant epidemics, and their arrival is therefore greeted by the plea: "Fly away up high, where there are peaceable young men and women".

<sup>1</sup> It may possible refer to mwamba ngazi, a mash mainly consisting of palm nuts (LDKF, p. 644).

## The Human Body

The Sundi are very ignorant about the internal anatomy of the human body; all their knowledge in this field derives from dissections made for the purpose of finding kundu glands. Since these glands are found in different places throughout the body—mainly in the abdomen, but to some extent also in the neck, the female genitals, and other organs—the whole body may have to be dissected before the kundu gland is localized. It resembles a hen's crop in that it serves as a receptacle for all sorts of things. A kundu may contain quite a miscellaneous collection—blue beads, small rings, stalks of palm flowers (used for tapping wine), and the kind of vegetables grown by women—nzi beans, herbs, peanuts, maize, etc., which have been bewitched by them. Small kundu glands in the first stages of development may even be found in the spleen, the liver, the kidneys, or the intestines.

The heart rules the entire human being. It is the centre of all information and instruction, the source of anger, wit, and all other feelings and character traits. This is evident from such sayings as: "His heart is nahe-he-he (impulsive), he does not calm it", or: "The heart contains our life", that is, the breath. Some of it passes out through the windpipe, and through the arteries that come from the heart the breath is distributed throughout the body. That is why no warrior wants to be wounded in the heart, for that would stop the breath of life.

The heart stores up the memories of all past experience and gives man his power of action. Someone who is in doubt or tempted by something, or who forgets a promise, is said to have two hearts, meaning that he is in two minds or double-tongued. One of his hearts thinks, says, and wants one thing, but the other pulls in the opposite direction.

A good heart is humble and generous, without selfishness or greed for the property of others. An evil heart is irascible, quick to take offence and burst out in abuse and threats. The word heart is used as a synonym for feeling or emotion in the same way as in the English language.

The heart is also regarded as the primary source of hunger and thirst. When the heart demands to have its cravings satisfied, the stomach responds by rumbling. After a meal, the heart is satisfied, and the food passes out into the intestines to nourish the body. To drink nothing but water is unhealthy, since it will make the blood clot and cause illness and headaches.

The lungs are believed to assist the heart in preserving the breath of life, providing a passage for the blood so that it can circulate freely throughout the body.

The blood (menga) plays a part in the regeneration of the body. It is transformed into flesh and thereby builds up the body. The blood, too, is the seat of life, since excessive bleeding leads to death. A disease of the blood can be cured by cupping the patient.

There are no specific theories about the formation of blood. Blood is blood, although at times it can turn weak and watery. Menstrual bleeding appears to be a doubtful issue. On one hand it signifies that the woman is marriageable, but at the same time it is believed to be due to the rupturing of a swollen gland.

Animal blood is used for sacrificial purposes. Human blood, too, may be used as one of the ingredients composing a nkisi, in order to imbue it with power.

The seminal fluid (also called menga, blood) is thought to be formed by the spinal marrow. For this reason impotency is described as fwa nima (dead back). A father may be described as se dya luketo (loins father), signifying that the children are regarded as the fruit of his loins. It is an accepted fact that the semen is passed out through the scrotum, since castration prevents a man from begetting children.

The function of the head is expressed in the saying: "He who has inherited the lot of the head (to bear burdens), may he strengthen his heart". It is also the place where the marrow of the head is stored. The brain is the seat of all reason. If it becomes rusty (injured), a person grows feeble-minded and incapable of lucid thought. In all other respects, though, the heart is the seat of man's thoughts and intelligence. It is the source of speech, memory, love, hate, diligence, laziness, happiness, sorrow, in short, of all emotions and character traits. Reason, as opposed to insanity, has its seat in the brain, but all other thought originates in the heart. The old people believe that all good qualities come from the apex of the heart, whereas all that is evil, deceitful and unfair comes partly from the spleen and partly from the back. There is an old saying: "Protect your heart and you will protect your kidneys", i.e. the loins.

The nose is described as "a thief, because it takes another's smell". "The nose is not deprived of its share", is what people say when they are not invited to share a meal with a tantalizing smell. Otherwise, man has received his nose so that he can blow out snot and inhale air.

The primary functions of the mouth are of course known. In addition, it serves to express happiness or sorrow, which explains the saying: "If he is afflicted by a disease of the mouth, cure him, for what the mouth expresses is of great consequence".

The external ears are the organs of hearing, but dreams come through mfumu a kutu (the master of the ear), or ngudi a kutu (the internal ear). When the nsala soul is impaired, one of the eyes inside the ear is open to bandoki. The ear contains an organ resembling a mbanga (testicle), which has two eyes. One of them shows the dreams of death, the other the dreams of health. If the nsala soul vanishes, bandoki come and open the eye showing the dreams of death. It is possible to survive, however, by opening the eye which shows the dreams of health. These two eyes in the internal ear are therefore one of the seats of life. The internal ear is called lunzi or nsala. It has a flattened shape. Some of the tendons (myanzi) attached to the inner ear run to the back of the neck, others to the forehead.

The function of the arms and legs is expressed in the old adage: "Brace your energies,



Fig. 6. Contents of nkisi Makuni Mababakento, Sundi in Lolo (Laman 1176).

and you shall acquire possessions”, that is, use your arms and legs for work and trade journeys. The limbs should not be afraid of anything.

The lips cover the teeth and the mouth, so that it can be closed. The tongue is used for speech, and is therefore liable to involve people in law-suits.

The eyebrows store up sleep.

Formerly it was not generally accepted that everyone possesses a stomach; those who possessed this organ were regarded as bandoki. Nowadays the stomach is regarded as a receptacle for miscellaneous matter and even as one of the seats of life, since the food that is eaten sustains the body.

It is believed that one of the tubes in the throat functions as a passage for water, while the other passage serves to swallow food. The reason for this belief is that a Sundi can open his mouth wide and pour water from a calabash in a steady stream down his throat, without

swallowing. It has been observed that obstruction of the windpipe by saliva or other matter causes coughing, and it is therefore known as the sacred throat, while the esophagus is the innocent throat, which can swallow anything.

The eyes are considered among the most valuable organs of the body. Congenital blindness is extremely rare, but people frequently lose an eye through illness or accident. The pupils are called mwana diisu (the eye's children), or nduzi, ndubi (image, because of the diminutive picture reflected in them). The eye's children lie down on their back when darkness falls, which makes it possible to see in the dark. When daylight comes, they return to their former position.

The spleen is known as the cause of stitches in the side. Someone who suffers frequently from this affliction is said to be unable to digest his food, which is why he will not grow fat.

Specific names exist for the kidneys and the midriff, as a result of the frequent dissections to localize kundu glands.

The hair of the head serves as a protection against excessive sunburn. The hair and the nails symbolize the human body in nkisi magic.

Excrements, spittle, snot and such things are regarded with disgust. Nature is eased in the grass, where the pigs will eat it in the mornings. When there are no pigs available, a place is cleared at the edge of the forest and the bowels are relieved on big leaves, which are thrown into the wood. Animals and insects are drawn to the place.

To spit in front of a crowd or a pregnant woman is considered spiteful, since it is something evil that one spits out. On the other hand, saliva is known to have beneficial effects, especially as a remedy for burns, which is evident from the saying: "When the finger burns itself, the saliva is the sea", i.e. the water in which one dips the finger. Dribbling at the mouth is considered a sign of inferiority.

To throw one's snot in the yard of a house, or some other public place is an act of pure spite. Snot belongs on the refuse heap.

Hiccups in a child are a sign that it is growing well, and it is told: "Come, come, may you grow into a big child whose beauty people will gaze on". Prolonged fits of hiccuping indicate illness, causing contractions of the heart.

Belching indicates that one has eaten one's fill, and serves to express one's thanks to the person providing the meal. Guests are wont to do so with gusto. A belch to indicate satisfaction after a meal may be accompanied by the words: "Shake and digest". A deep belch from the depth of the stomach, though, indicates acidity and other gastric disorders.

It is known that failure to urinate causes death, due to the toxic properties of urine. Hunters always rub the noses of their hounds with the urine of wild animals, so that they will pick up the right scent.

Coughing is a sign that the lungs are irritated. Sneezing produces a sensation of scratching one's nose.

A yawn indicates that the heart is yearning. It may also be a sign of hunger or thirst. An old saying has it that a stranger who yawns has run out of provisions. People are wont after

a yawn to repeat the names of their own and their ancestral makanda, usually as a sign of happiness, but sometimes also of sorrow.

The youth of the country is carefully observed by their elders for signs of superior mental faculties. If a young man attending a law case is noticed to have a quick appreciation of the points at issue, he is said to be intelligent, quick-witted, with great powers of comprehension, and as clever as a nsele antelope. The same is said of people with a gift for memorizing all they see and hear, inspiring them with new ideas and stirring them to master any number of arts or professions. People with a keen intelligence are said to have a sharp eye. People who manage to solve some intricate problem, or to discover something secret, are said to have an extra sense, leading them for instance straight to the palm wine, wherever it may be hidden.

In the old days, people of keen intelligence were often sent abroad to watch skilful artisans at work, so that they could reproduce these skills on their return home. The method was very popular for instance as a means to learn the art of carving wood sculptures.

There is no doubt that professional skills in various fields used to be of a very high standard. Unfortunately, during the days when nkasa poison and the belief in bandoki were at their worst, it was more often than not the most skilful artisans who fell victim to these practices, owing to their superior talents.

A quick intelligence may also manifest itself in a child in games imitating adults and their occupations. In such games the children build toy houses, make toy cooking-pots, dig up banana stumps to represent palms, tap wine from them in a calabash, and make guns of the central ribs of banana leaves to play war. Another day they clear a road to a market, where they engage in trading, mock trials, and other grown-up activities.

Smithery, mining, and various arts and crafts were held in much higher esteem before the mass-produced articles of modern times flooded the country. The arts of rhetoric and pleading have also disappeared. What remains is a wealth of proverbs, myths, and traditions, and a talent for imitating and interpreting animal cries, especially the calls of the birds.

## Portents

There are portents (*bikula*) of all sorts and kinds, and they are heeded by everyone.

Some people are believed to have a special gift for predicting a death within the *kanda*. If their predictions come true too often, they are accused of being *bandoki*.

Most portents, though, are found in the calls or behaviour of certain animals, especially birds, in visions and special events of different sorts, and in certain signs and symptoms in the human body. Most predictions are concerned with gifts, hunting, misfortune, and death.

Popular tradition is rife with portents derived from the animal world. The jackal's bark predicts death. Being pursued by *baminzi* (prairie-dogs) or *mameewa* (jackals or hyena-dogs) means that the victim's *nsala* soul is waning, like the moon, and that he must see a *nganga* to restore it.

The roar of the leopard, in the forest or elsewhere, predicts the imminent death of a member of the country's royal family. The same significance is attached to a leopard that frequently takes animals in a village.

If the village dogs bark at night, they have seen the spirits of the dead. A *mvudi* antelope stealing hens in the village predicts a death. When it "speaks" at night, it has seen the spirits of the departed.

A common owl or a *kuti* owl hooting incessantly day after day predicts death. A *kim-bembe* kite flapping its wings over a village road warns of the arrival of a stranger or someone seeking shelter. If it flaps its wings over a house, on the other hand, the master of the house or his wife or children are bound to die in the near future.

The cackle of hens at night announces deaths in some other part of the country. If only one hen cackles, there will be only one death.

If the frogs will not stop croaking, it either means that somebody is at death's door, or that someone will receive news of a death in some other village.

The cry of the *mbala* wildcat predicts a death. Some people believe that its cry is the lament of an unfortunate fettered by the ropes of the *bandoki*, or the voice of a *nkuyu* spirit. The animal's cry is interpreted to mean: "Eh, when I step down on the ground it is moist, when I climb high up, it drips down from the leaves". It is thought that the animal cries because it fears moisture, since its "voice" is heard most often in the rainy season.

When hens and other domestic animals disappear or die, and their owner starts losing weight, it is sometimes said: "It is either a nkanku knife, such as the men use for tapping palm-wine, or a hoe that women use in the field, that has been defiled. A man or a woman must have died".

If a dog urinates on somebody, the victim will be stricken by a fatal illness in the near future.

Ngembo a mvangi, the bat, predicts death by its: "koka, koka, koka" (carry a corpse).

When the kitunsi bird cries incessantly, the near future holds good fortune, in the hunt or in some other way. If the kitunzi bird flies past the corner of the house, screeching "eye", the master of the house says: "Bring your catch into the house, for here we lack everything. Alas, neither as I scour the countryside, nor yet as I go to the water, do I catch anything, either living or dead". The bird's cry of "eye" may also evoke the response: "sengula" (show the good side, good fortune). When the kimbembe kite flaps its wings, or the mbemba eagle sails through the air in the vicinity of the house, a similar formula is repeated: "Syesyeye, bring to the house, the house is empty . . .".

If a bee buzzes into the face of somebody who is drinking palm-wine, he will receive a gift. Should he react in the wrong way, however, and say: "Buzz off. You come buzzing around me. Who knows me and this dog?", one of his companions is sure to warn him: "Don't say dog, it may be a friend bringing you some palm-wine".

If the firefly and the ngembo bat enter the house when darkness falls, they bring riches to the master of the house in their train.

If a leopard pursues somebody, it means that it will steal an animal in the village. They must therefore be locked up carefully.

Driver ants predict sleep, for when they set out to rob the people of their possessions, the master of the house feels his eyes getting heavy and lies down to sleep. Hence the saying: "Three fingers (toes) remained. Two were overrun by driver ants", meaning that someone is too weak to offer resistance.

When the hens put their heads together as though deliberating, a strange woman is approaching; in roosters, this signifies the arrival of a man.

The nkembi-nkembi snake (*Dendraspis jamestoni*) just plays with people. After being bitten by a mboma snake (python), no other snake bite will hurt. The presence of a namamba snake in a pool or a spring indicates that its water is fresh. The mpidi snake cackles like a hen, as a trick to catch and devour them.

A chattering squirrel in a tree, looking round in all directions, indicates the presence of a snake in the tree.

The hoopoe predicts an imminent grass fire by its call of "Syayoke (shall I burn?), syayoke?" Both for this reason, and because it is usually seen in the plains (via), it is described as Nkombo a via (goat of the plains).

Fat mbende and kulumba rats predict the approach of the ntombo season, thin ones indicate that the time for burning the grass is near. Fat kimpele rats herald the coming of the mbangala season. When the rats start building nests and bearing young, the season of the grass fires is approaching.

The ntoyo bird not only announces the approach of the kyanza season, but also predicts many deaths in the community. For that reason it is also known as the bird of the dead. Like many other birds, it also announces the approach of the new moon.

When the raven scours the villages, the ntombo season is near.

When the kinsengwa bird turns red, the ndoolo season is coming. This season is heralded by several other signs, such as the fruit of the ngyengye turning yellow, the ripening of the beans, or the nsokya grass and ngudi a boola setting ears.

Pelicans passing by in the sky herald the approach of the sivu dry season.

When the dogs start pairing, the kyanza season is near.

The mbambi lizard announces that the ndoolo season is near and that several trees, such as the ngyengye, mango, and mpiwa, are about to bear fruit.

When the mbungu za mputu beetles swarm over the flowers of the wormwood, the dry season is approaching. Similarly, a swarm of nkenge a nkala beetles on the wormwood or pea flowers announces the coming of this season.

When driver ants invade the houses to look for food, the ndoolo season is not far off. Someone who dreams that driver ants are swarming over his legs or body will be afflicted by a disease with open sores. His limbs will start aching, and he will not recover from his illness until a whole season, or even up to two years have passed. It is clearly an extremely nasty dream to have.

Clusters of mamene-mene flies on people's legs, and the appearance of common flies mean that the ntombo season is approaching.

Funza has various signs to reveal future events. Trees, grasses, flowers, fruit, and corn in the ear are all heralds of specific seasons. When the palms see that the beans are ripening, they postpone forming male flowers, signifying that the kyanza season has come with its palm-wine. When the pineapple ripens, the time has also come for the malombo fruit to ripen. When the mfuma, mutele, or mfyolongo trees start sprouting green leaves, the ntombo season is near.

Matyokula birds announce the coming of the dawn, and of noontime when the palm-wine has to be tapped. The call of the matyokula is the signal for the palm-wine tappers to grab their climbing-slings and set to work. The bird also sings just before sundown.

A cluster of many stars (the Pleiads) predicts an abundance of peanuts for that season.

In the old days, when a whirlwind set a grass fire going at tremendous speed, it was said: "This fire will burn a house, or claim a human victim".

Twitches in various parts of the body can indicate a number of different things. Intermittent twitching of the eyelids, for instance, predicts a death, sorrow, and weeping. Twitches in the skin by the eyebrows signify a death; if it is on the left side, it means that a grown woman will die. A twitching upper lip is a sign that food will be forthcoming, either through hunting or fishing, or from a friend. Twitches in the shoulder predict the arrival of someone carrying a bag over his shoulder with meat to eat. Twitches in the buttocks predict good luck in hunting. It may also mean that one will be attending a law case.

A singing in the ears means that one is being slandered, by a woman, if it is the left ear. A slight buzzing that stops almost immediately is not dangerous.

If one's right foot kicks or bumps into an obstacle, it means that one is being discussed by a man, while the left foot signifies a woman. Being hurt by a violent impact means that a distressing affair is imminent. Under certain circumstances, that is, when a traveller has arrived at his destination, bumping into something spells good fortune, but otherwise it is a danger signal warning the traveller that he may become involved in a law-suit or some other unpleasantness if he continues on his journey.

An abundance of saliva in the mouth is a good omen, but someone who bites his mouth is being slandered.

A quick and irregular heartbeat means that one is being slandered, and one is supposed to say: "Pfu (spitting) e pupupu", to spit the evil out of one's heart.

If one feels the blood pulse violently in a leg, it means that one will be pursued and must be careful and run fast. A racing pulse in the buttocks means that one will be captured by the enemy and pushed down to the ground in a sitting position. A throbbing chest or back may lead to death; the heart will stop beating and blood run out through the nose. A strong pulse in the hand or shoulder means a gift from friends, game in one's traps, or profits from trade. A rapid pulse in the neck predicts that one will bear a yoke, while the same thing in the eye means that a relative or friend has died.

Throwing stones on the ground is a foolhardy thing to do, for it can mean that one will have a rupture. An innocent onlooker who sees a grown man do it must jump up in order to avoid a rupture himself.

To take crooked branches and tree roots for firewood is asking for trouble. It will bring illness and make the limbs crooked. Some trees may not be used for firewood at all.

A quarrel among people who have always lived in peace before, is regarded as a sign that something is wrong with their health. Someone who several days running is caught asleep, or relieving nature, or stealing, has a defective nsala soul.

The banganga samuna expose bandoki by looking at them, and guard the village from this danger. These banganga, and others with prophetic powers, are called mimbingudi, mimbikudi, or minsamuni, meaning "they who reveal, predict, divine". There are other people with ecstatic powers, who are used to smell out the truth and reveal crimes.

Nkisi Mutadi's nganga divines and reveals what has happened in criminal matters, such as theft, by smelling out the truth. If the accused pleads innocent to the offence, the question is settled by an ordeal, such as trial by fire.

Before a war party sets out, too, a nkisi is used to foretell which of the warriors will be wounded or killed. These must remain behind.

A nkisi has numerous signs to show whether a sick person will live or die.

Sometimes the dead appear to foretell future events, such as the imminent death of a sick person. Sometimes they just open the door to the house where the sufferer is lying, and even though they are not seen, the sick man dies. At other times the dead may surround the house and spread terror all around. They may steal food, personal possessions, or what-

ever takes their fancy in the house of the victim. If they take a child's bead necklace, it is doomed. As soon as the patient has died, their reign of terror stops.

There are other signs to predict a successful cure of an illness.

The sound of the dead crying or dancing strikes the entire village with terror, for it can mean that someone is bound to die soon. The dead dance and rejoice when they are expecting a new arrival to their world, but they weep and wail if it happens to be someone they wish to remain among the living, to take care of children or other dependents.

Premonitions of someone's impending arrival may manifest themselves in sounds or visions, but most often they are felt in the heart. Such premonitions or visions occur usually when someone has been away on a journey. A man preparing for his return may think to himself: "Today I shall meet my wife", or: "Today father and I shall see each other". Through this prediction the one left behind in the village receives a premonition and hears, as it were, that someone is coming. Out of the blue the thought may strike him or her: "I must look outside". There are stories of sagacious wives in polygamic marriages, who are able to have a meal ready for their husband whenever he chooses to come home, because they get a premonition of his arrival.

It is this kind of premonition, which does not manifest itself in sounds or visions, but only in thoughts, and sometimes in dreams, that most often precedes someone's arrival.

Sounds of *ngwi-ngwi* (thumping and banging) proclaim that the *bankuyu* are on their way to spread terror. Sometimes the sound of talking or coughing is heard on the road to the village, but when someone does arrive, he may deny that it was him they heard. Visual forebodings of someone's arrival are also known; sometimes, if the road runs through flat country, one can get a vision of somebody coming down it, although actually there is nobody there yet.

## Proverbs

Proverbs (ngana) are very often used in lawcourts, public speeches, stories and myths of all kinds. There are hundreds of them, most of them virtually defying interpretation if one is not familiar with the way the Sundi's mind works. Close to a hundred and fifty proverbs are set down and interpreted below.

Ntambudi mwana natuntuka. Ti: Mono beeni tuntuka natuntuka. I who have accepted the child (to care for), should I fall into ecstasy? Say, should I myself (be able to) fall into ecstasy (with the child)?

— This proverb is used in answer to a plea for financial or other help, and means: I am in debt myself, I myself have to borrow and lack the necessities of life, therefore I am unable to help you.

Futa swanga kya bwala bwayoka kyo beeno bamosi. Set fire to the village savannah, burn it down together.

— Discuss village business first with each other, before informing outsiders. Someone who is too hasty in broadcasting village matters or other secrets, may find his people turning against him in anger.

Nsafu ya vumba yavia kwandi, kansi yalomba ka yilendi via ko. An unripe nsafu fruit was toasted, but a ripe one cannot be toasted.

— A stranger can forgive you when you quarrel, but a friend who has spoken to you in anger cannot.

Bote (bwa nitu) ka nsolo ko. Beauty (of the body) cannot be traded.

— Beauty will not buy sugar cane in the market or in the village. Diligence counts for more than beauty in a young man or woman, for beauty will not fill an empty stomach. This is said to people who judge a prospective spouse by appearance only.

Saba (nsengi) kya namwene kya bola. Ti: tui ubodisi kyo. My master's refuse heap has rotted. But isn't it the dung which has made it rot?

— There is a lot of rubbish on a refuse heap, but nobody plants or sows on it, and people use it to relieve their natural needs. If it were cultivated, it would bring a return. The meaning of this proverb is that a crop which is not cleared of weeds will be stifled by them.

Mfuma yadianga ya tufunya ko. A chief does not eat anything purulent.

— A chief will only accept a live animal, never a dead one, for his services as advocate or in recognition of his rank.

Tutu nsonsa mu buku kya nguba. The tutu rat scrabbles about by a bit of peanut.

— The ntutu rat is only heard scrabbling about when it is eating peanuts; it is never heard in the ntete basket, on the shelf, or in the chest, for inside the house there should be no litter that crackles or rustles. The meaning of this proverb is that if a young man is pursuing a girl with his attentions, one can be sure he wants to get married.

Nsompì kakomongo mbeele ko. The debtor is not exorcised by a knife (in nkisi Nkondi).

— Don't grumble over your debts or your creditors, for if you balk at repaying them, nobody will ever give you credit again.

Mfundulu nkanu ku mpamba, vo nsèkulu mpaka ku mpamba. In the grave one is charged with crimes. In the grave disputes are carried on.

— Let nobody deceive or swindle his fellow men in the belief that it will be forgotten or remain a secret. Even in the grave all one's evil acts may be unravelled, and witnesses can be called from among the living.

Yasonga ngandu. As the crocodile showed.

— Some people make fun of others by pretending to give them something, just as the crocodile, when it has caught somebody, at first acts as though it would let him go, although it has no intention of letting its victim escape. The moral of this proverb is that it is wrong just to put up a pretence of generosity.

Waneena mfuni, yenda nseke. If you must break wind, move off a little way.

— The evil you speak and do, speak and do it by yourself, so that nobody else will suffer from it.

Mbwa kabwa kukuma makonko, ka yasiidi na mabunga ko. A dog that starts chasing grasshoppers has lost its nose.

— Just as the dog grows old and fails to pick up the scent of its quarry, old chiefs and pleaders lose their ability to handle lawsuits and win their cases.

Wayena ntantu aku, komba mbazi ka vyoka kwandi or: kalomba nlangu umvani. If you see a stranger (your enemy), sweep up the road outside so that he can pass, or: if he asks for water, give him.

— As we do unto a stranger, or enemy, thus Nzambi will do unto us, that is, help us in lawsuits not to show anger towards our opponent but merely to state our grievances. Then he will put his complaint before Nzambi, with the words, "Nzambi, not I myself!" or sometimes, "Laugh, Nzambi". In this way he too keeps his anger in check and cannot do anything wrong, because his complaint (manyongo) has been entrusted to Nzambi, and so one can even remain on speaking terms with an antagonist.

Habuta yaaya, me naba ndezi. Ti: Bwisa kwandi mooyo. When mother gives birth to a child, I will become its nurse. Come, come, you had better wait and see.

— It is foolish to boast in advance that you will not tire of a certain job you have set our heart on; wait until you have tried it, because you may find you dislike it and wish to be rid of it.

Habeedi diinu, ludimi kalendi vo lembo kwenda ko. Where the tooth has been, there the tongue cannot refrain from going.

— It is hard to break a habit once it is established. Someone may break himself of the habit of stealing, but one day the vice will get him in its grip again.

Bimfuna-mpuna byavanga Nzambi. The small lying (creatures) that Nzambi has made.

— Nkisi is a lie created by Nzambi, for a nkisi is nothing unless Nzambi comes to the sufferer first.

Walamba tatula ntulu. When you prepare the food, keep your breasts out of the way (of the fire).

— You who are preparing a meal for your husband, don't go to excessive trouble, for when you two fall out, he won't remember that you cook his food.

Kulula malenge mbee. With the knife one cuts down the gourd.

— A plea to put down the price in commercial transactions, decrease the amount of a fine, etc.

Kudiila mu mpanda ko, kadi mu ntete si wadiila kwaku. You may not eat from the wicker (basket), for from the ntete basket shall you eat.

— One is bound to get one's share one way or the other. Someone who does not share in the damages adjudged in a lawsuit, will get something out of it as counsel. Someone who doesn't receive a share of the meat, will get the bones to chew.

Wadia mpimpa, wazimbakana n̄ua. He who eats in the dark, does he miss his mouth?

— A man who acts without thinking is liable to find himself in court, or involved in some other trouble.

Nkamfi longo lwakwela muntu na wandi kalobula. At a marriage, the nkamfi rests are spit out by one and all.

— In the same way, when the marriage is dissolved, as well as in many other agreements, the will of both parties is done.

Nganga ngombo kafwanga nsoni ko. A smeller-out nganga is not ashamed.

— Such a nganga is not afraid to speak the truth to anyone, be it in court or to a chief. He feels neither sorrow nor shame at doing this, even if it involves a death. And when he charges for his services, he is not ashamed of demanding his due.

Mbiszi katominanga va saasulu ko. A fish does not look appetizing when it is being cut up.

— Just as the fish is good to eat once it has been cut up and prepared, all sorts of problems



Fig. 7. Nkisi Nkoko Bondo, Sundi in Kingoyi (*Laman* 514).

or jobs which at first appear fraught with difficulties, may on closer acquaintance turn out to be quite pleasant.

Fwa, (difwa) kadianga ntantu ko. An estate is not inherited by a stranger (outside the kanda).

— The family to which the deceased belongs must be his heirs, even though their inheritance might only consist of large debts.

Nsusu ami mpondolo. Ti: Ya ku mpaka aku. My hen they have killed for me. Well, it is from your hencoop.

— When a traveller has a hen killed for him in some village, it is, so to speak, his own hen he is eating, since he will have to kill a hen for his hosts when they return the visit.

Menga ma nkabi ka mavaika, mamaku mateka vaika. The blood of the nkabi antelope will flow, but your own blood will flow first.

— Someone who sets out to shoot a nkabi must count on being wounded by thorns and spiky grasses. In the same way, someone who wins a lawsuit must first use his own possessions to pay his legal advisers or the chief before he will receive the damages adjudged to him in court.

Zumbu kabakulungu mu baka ko. A palm grove is not acquired by taking it (it is inherited or bought).

— One cannot get what belongs to others unless one inherits it or pays for it. The acquisition of a wife does not mean that one owns her forever, since she may run away or die.

Dia nungu zaku, zakula vola ye mambu ta. Eat your pepper, it will cool soon as compared to answering a charge in a court of law.

— The pepper burning one's mouth, the hot, angry words one would like to speak, will cool soon enough, but a lawsuit can do permanent harm.

Lauki kazimbungu ko. A fool cannot help recognizing a ravine.

— Everybody has someone whom he is wise enough to fear or respect, just as the fool bewares of the ravine.

Wateka sikama wabika wa nandi tolo. May the one who wakes first let his companion sleep.

— A wicked man may rail at a friend for being wicked, but that does not detract from his own wickedness. A stupid man who calls his companion a fool does not change his own foolishness.

Vumu kayibungu (vumu kya mwana). A foetus cannot be stolen.

— Food can be stolen, but a wife cannot steal a child for her womb. If she carries a foetus, her husband has given it to her.

Munsakala wanwanina kyazi. The munsakala ant fights on the cluster of palm nuts.

— The man cutting down the nuts may be bitten by a munsakala ant, but it is other people who eat the nuts. In other words, the one who does all the hard work may not derive any profit from it, while others enjoy the fruits of his industry.

Mpasi zayena ngodi. The toil endured by the climbing-sling.

— This proverb has the same meaning as the previous one.

Nkontobolo tadi kavukusa, nse kwandi mu nkutu. An old flintstone that has misfired I place in the nkutu bag.

— New things can be spoiled, too, so one should save the old one in case of emergency.

Wazaaba buta, zaaba sala mbongo. If you know how to give birth, then you must know how to grow vegetables.

— Unless you do, you won't be able to provide for the children.

Wabonga kwangi sika nlolo. If you take a royal prisoner, have it proclaimed by the call of wolo-oo-o.

— Unless you want to be accused of stealing, inform the owner before you borrow his property for your own use.

Zandu dyata bambwa. The market that the dogs visited.

— Someone going to market without goods to trade is like a dog visiting the market.

Mpingi buta nkusu. The mpingi rat gave birth to a parrot.

— An insignificant person can give birth to great people. Great things can grow from small beginnings.

Zaaba ko bwaku, nga siwa dyengila. Zaaba nzadi aku e, nga buna siwa dyengila, etc. Know your father and mother-in-law, or you will have to wander around. Know your brother-in-law, or you will have to wander around, etc.

— A man must be on good terms with his in-laws, the male branch of the family, and other relatives, for otherwise he will get no help from them when he finds himself involved in a lawsuit or some other trouble.

Wavuuka, vuukila mu kyaku. If you wish to live, live on what is yours.

— A man cannot live by the bounty or help of others. If he becomes involved in a lawsuit or gets into debt, it is his own fault. If he steals, he has only himself to blame.

Waleka lumbu zaaba nlongo. If you are going to sleep some day, know the prohibitions.

— If you wish to stay alive, you must know all about the prohibitions regarding the body. If you want to stay out of court, it is wise to learn all about the laws of the chiefs and the white men.

Mwana usubilanga mu nkata a taata, nga taata kasubilanga mu nkata a mwana ko. The child urinates in the father's lap, but the father does not urinate in the child's lap.

— A child can take something from his father and keep it, but it is difficult for a father to hold onto something his child wants, because he hates causing it unhappiness.

Moyo kumbudi, nsatu kayaudi. The stomach rumbles, it is the hunger crying out.

— If a stranger asks for something, he is hungry.

Kwenda meeso, ka kwenda ntima. Where the eyes go, there the heart shall not go.

— Don't envy other people their possessions, for you may end up by coveting them.

Dyambu dya Nzambi. Nzambi uvutulanga dyo. It is Nzambi's business, Nzambi will avenge it.

— It is unwise to laugh or show contempt when someone else has committed a crime, for you could land in the same miserable situation yourself some day.

Talanga nnua udianga. Nga kutalanga andi nnua uvoohanga ko. Look at mouths that eat. Do not look at mouths that speak.

— Never listen to slanderous tongues, for by listening and maybe even contributing to such talk, you share the guilt if the matter should be taken to court.

Nkombo wakidi die nungu. The goat still eats pepper.

— This is a retort made when someone is asked: “Are you still alive?”

Mpidi mu nzila bavyoka. Ti: mbimbi, kansi lumbu kabangumuka, teele. Those who pass the mpidi snake on the road say: “a banana stock”. But one day, it turns around and stings.

— Even someone who is notoriously stupid may one day do something smart or cunning, for instance trick another into getting involved in a big lawsuit.

Ntwendano ku ba dya fuku twafukano mo kwandi. Let us go to the fuku palm, so that we may deliberate (the case).

— Let us retire to some secluded place to decide upon our verdict, or, figuratively, let us settle our business in private.

Nnua nnua ntoyo wa yaku. You have the mouth of a ntoyo bird.

— This is said to people whose utterances tend to come true.

Nsusu mbakala kubila ku nludi a nzo angana. A rooster crows on the roof of someone else's house.

— A man may not sire children within his own kanda, but only in another kanda.

Sompa ntiinu za nsia. Borrow the fleetness of the nsia antelope.

— Run at top speed.

Vusu kavie ko ntombokolo nsinga. If the vusu palm burns, the liane helps the fire to climb up.

— This or that would never have happened if you had not done one thing or the other, or, you are to blame for things becoming even worse.

Nnua mosi, tuutu. One mouth seldom.

— One man by himself seldom succeeds in winning a lawsuit.

Nge wabandama kwatina nsoni, mono yatala yatiina nsoni e? You, who turn your rump up at another, are not ashamed. Should I, who see it, be ashamed?

— Someone who abuses me or speaks harshly to me, feels no shame. Why should I then be ashamed of abusing or scolding you?

Baasa yaka, wakatula mwanzi. Split the manioc root and remove the very core. Vuza mbundu ye mayaka buuna. Pull up (the stock of) the mbundu herb with leaves and all.

— Tell all you know and don't forget or hide anything.

Fwa ye mputa vanda, nki kilutidi? To die or lick the wound, which is best?

— Which is the lesser evil, to pay and be pardoned, or not to pay and be locked up in prison?

Bi bwa nsusu mu lusala. The evil of the hen (is) in the feather.

— Evil people or animals may produce quite decent offspring, as the chicken of a bad hen may be quite fit for eating.

Ngo kadia mpemba, dibangale. If the leopard eats chalk, he is suffering (from hunger).

— If someone eats something he dislikes, it is because he is famished or has nothing else to eat. Similarly, if someone has to do something he dislikes, he is being forced by circumstances.

Wazinga mooko kena ye dyambu ko. He who crosses his arms is not bent on evil.

— Someone who is idle or lacks all enterprise cannot do any bad deeds either.

Dia udianga mbumba kwa mbelele ko. You eat and eat cats, but do I hate them?

— You go on eating, but you know nothing of the difficulties of being fined in a lawsuit.

Mbungu mputu kabulanga ntantu ko. A European mug is not broken by a stranger.

— If a stranger breaks some costly object, he must be made to pay a high price.

Ntu ngulu kavaika mu nzo, mbizi yimeni. When the pig's head sticks out of the house, the meat is finished.

— A wealthy man who openly borrows has lost his riches.

Ku kibi na mbi bo ti yandi zeyi nzila. Do not travel with the evil (wicked), unless he knows the road.

— As a rule we avoid work or food we dislike, but when we get into trouble we may be forced to accept whatever food or work is offered.

Mpuku mosi yisiidi, nga tooto kifulukidi. There is one rat short, otherwise the stick would be full.

— The debt was within an inch of being paid, or the patient was on the point of getting well, or something came within an inch of succeeding, etc.

Mfinda yakondwa nkamba, saka dya nkanka. A forest which lacks nkamba (mahogany) trees is a grove for the nkanka squirrel.

— A village without a chief is an unsettled village populated by youngsters.

Diiki dyasisa ngumbi na kwanki wadyo teeta. An egg left behind by the partridge in the plain will be hatched by the partridge in the forest.

— Customs and possessions left behind by the old people will be inherited by a later generation.

Mvula yinokene yikyele, mangundu-ngundu masiidi. The rain has ceased, only the raindrops (on the leaves) are left.

— The consequences of a past event are still observed or felt.

Mwena meeno ka mwena mbanga ko. Where there are teeth there are no palm kernels.

— Where food is plentiful, few people are willing to eat palm kernels, and where work is plentiful, there are often no workers willing to perform it.

Makinu ma mfumu mu nlembo kwandi, teetano nsaki. The dance of the chief is performed with the finger, the clap of the hands.

— You have undertaken some business or someone else's job, and even though you are unfamiliar with it, you must persist, because you are in straits.

Kimbadya kasiwa va mfokolo. The kimbadya snake is not placed in the lap.

— You can't involve a powerful man in a lawsuit against his will, for he will turn against you and bring a suit against you. A powerful man must be handled subtly and with tact.

Mputa kanyaka banyanzi bafwidi nsoni. When the wound heals, the flies are ashamed (fly away).

— When a lawsuit is finished, the plaintiffs are ashamed (go on their way). In other words, remove the cause and there will be no aftermath.

Mbende wafwa mu lusambu lwabuta. The mbende rat died at the moans of birth.

— A mother, or even someone else, can die of grief when a child is in extreme distress.

Kani ukwe dyengidingi, kundu mfuma. Wherever the mbemba eagle travels, its home is in the mfuma tree.

Ngandu kadianga mbizi yabola, nani wavwanda yandi ku nlangu? The crocodile does not eat rotten fish, they say. Who has lived with him in the water?

Ngudi a muntu kadie bilambulu mu makuku ma sama ko nani ubanga yandi? An old man does not eat what has been cooked by the termite's nest. Who is there with him?

Wakala nsadi mbongo, lwengila zo, nga ntama zimani. If you are a weaver of mbongo cloths, be crafty about them, or they will soon be finished.

Malenga i mwana, mazila ka mwana ko. Quickness is a child, laziness no child.

— Laziness and slowness are deplorable qualities in a child.

Kyabodila tadila ku tiya. If it is rotten, look at the fire.

— If some article of food is spoiled, put it aside immediately, otherwise it may be cooked and eaten by mistake. Similarly, if you are tempted by evil, drive it out of your thoughts immediately, or you may give in.

Mwini, unkwedisa nkento. Sunshine, marry the woman off for me.

— Refuse to give your sister to a parsimonious man, for you can hardly expect him to make you any gifts once they are married.

Mutambu lebika nwa lezi, kwenda vutuka. A boy goes to and fro to tend a trap he has set.

— When you have something on your mind, your thoughts tend to return to it all the time.

Zima meeso neva, bwa bu nke talanga. Shut your eyes and I give as though I were seeing.

— Now that I am here you can't pay what you owe me, but say that I shall have my money tomorrow.

Vana be kolo malamu: nayenda yangila mukento anga. Ti sati kala wamutanguna. When someone is drunk, he says: "I will go and court another's wife. Well, it might really happen.

— Many men talk that way when they are in their cups and it could happen that way. But a lewd man, who runs after the wives of other men all the time to satisfy his lusts, also tries to excuse himself by claiming that he was drunk. In other words, people tend to trump up an excuse for their misdeeds.

Kisa kya mante kyatebokela mu muntu muntu. A cooking-pot is filled with spittle by one person after another.

— It is impossible to fill a cooking-pot with spittle all by oneself, but if everybody takes a turn spitting, it will soon be full. In the same way, one man alone cannot pay the high fines imposed on him in a lawsuit, and he must get help from his relatives. An important business deal can't be handled by one man, and a company (munta) is formed, in which all the members contribute their share.

Wayena vamanikini mukufi nkutu, nge manikini yo vovo. If you see where the short man has hung up his food-bag, hang yours there too.

— If a tall man should hang his bag on the highest branch, a short man would be unable to take it down and save it from getting wet if it started raining, and the tall man would have to eat soggy food. This proverb is used in lawsuits or other dealings, when someone makes extravagant demands. Then he is told: “Hang your bag lower down if you want to get anything at all, for you might get into difficulties yourself some day, and then you wouldn’t like to pay through the nose either.”

Yaka dya ndudi losela dyo va nsoso muleba. A bitter cassava root is thrown in a corner of the shed.

— But one day, when the hunger becomes too strong, one looks for it again, toasts it over the fire, and eats it. So don’t be too rash about discarding things, for they may come in handy some other day.

Mooyo kavimba nzala vwidi. When the stomach distends, the hunger is finished.

— Many people will eat anything at all, as long as their stomach is filled and their hunger stilled. But others are fastidious and can’t bring themselves to eat tasteless food. Such people will starve, but the former kind will be satisfied to get what they scorn. This is true of many other things too; what is scorned by some people will be gladly accepted by others.

Mbwa kabutilanga va koto dya mfumu andi ko. The dog does not whelp on its master’s knee. (It seeks seclusion and lies no longer at its master’s feet.)

— When legal proceedings have reached the stage where all parties have stated their case, the guilty or losing party retires for deliberation. There, in private, he can discuss his terms and propositions without being overheard by the other party. When the deliberation is finished, he and his advisers return to the court.

Wayena bavulu, twika nzo aku. When you spy willing hands, put the roof on your house.

— A small group of people settling in a new village can’t put the roof on their new house, but they can enlist the help of visiting friends. It is the same when someone has a legal action brought against him by some powerful persons, who demand high damages. If he is lucky enough to be visited by travelling friends at that time, he can ask them to stay and assist him in answering the charges in court, and help him to win his case. In other words, one should never pass up an opportunity to receive help.

Muzanza me mooyo kangononango ko. A charge brought against the stomach I do not contest.

— All sorts of charges I can contest, deny, or ignore. But when the stomach rumbles and is empty, I give in, listen, and give it what it demands. For the sake of my stomach I will do anything, suffer anything to get food.

Bu makidi na meeno, dia mbanga. Whilst you have teeth, eat palm kernels.

— When your teeth are gone, even pig’s liver will be hard as bones for you to chew, and palm kernels will be quite impossible for you to eat. In the same way, you must work hard and amass riches while you are in your full power. In your old age your wealth may

give out, because you or the younger generation have spent it. You will have nothing left, but nevertheless you must live through it and bear all the troubles that come your way.

Mukuyu ku ngumbu, ti mfumu andi kafwa mu mpinga. If the mukuyu spirit is in the inner room, its master has died through exchange.

— Occasionally the banganga can take the nsala soul of a person and exchange it for the soul of a chief or wealthy man, in which case the former dies in their stead. In other words, see to it that you get rich and acquire magical skills, become a great nganga, and they won't take your soul and exchange it.

Munga mbwa zandi kadiwungu kwa ngo ko. The leader of the hounds with his dogs is not eaten by the leopard.

— His dogs will defend him if the leopard should attack him. In the same way, if one gets rich and acquires many subjects and slaves, they will defend their master against the attacks of predatory people.

Mutondo ya lenge. Lenge na bunene, kansi mbeezi mu lenge puu. Gratitude as for a pumpkin. The pumpkin may be large, but the knife in the pumpkin puu (cuts in two).

— This is said about people who are very pleased to see their friends come to the rescue when they find themselves in trouble in court, and in danger of losing their case, or when they want help with some work, such as sowing or harvesting, but have no thought of rewarding them or returning their favour in any way. The gratitude of such people is like that of a man who is given a pumpkin, only to put the knife into it, cut it up, and boil it for himself.

Wayedila (lwenga) nganga, mabeela vwidi e? Be shrewd, nganga, is the illness over?

— If a nganga does not watch out when he is called in to treat a patient, he may be done out of his just reward. So, the next time that patient or someone else falls ill, he must remember to be wary. The same applies to others who lend their services. If they don't settle the price in advance, they will be cheated out of their wages.

Kifuma yulu kivyokela kalunga, kwadi bulu dyatekela vovo? What comes from above, passes into the bowels of the earth. Surely there must have been a hole there already?

— This is said when somebody revives an old lawsuit or some other conflict that has been in abeyance, in order to avenge past wrongs or injustices. The hole is the injustice to which the avenger has fallen a victim.

Mutumbu mu yulu ba, musinga wamunata. The calabash up in the palm tree is held up by a string.

— A travelling trader would never be able to conduct his business all over the country, if he didn't have one or more friends in every village where he passes through or stays for a while. These friends guarantee his safety. The same is true in many other circumstances and in all kinds of work—unless it is backed by a responsible person, it can not be carried out.

Kisa kabila bisaku, nga ti kinkuni ko kibila ko. A pot boils with split sticks. With one small log of wood it does not boil.

— One quarrelsome person cannot set a quarrel going, but if he is joined by others, the quarrel will soon be in full swing. The same applies to work and business that cannot be undertaken by one person alone, but that many hands make light work of.

Bwa ya Mwanda Luvunu, kwadi mwana ngudi aku wukoledi e? A, wukoledi kwandi. Mwanda Luvunu (lie), how is it, has your dearest child recovered? It has recovered.

— The child was dead, and asked why he had lied about it, he answered: “I lied to myself. I haven’t lied to anybody else”. This saying is used when someone doesn’t keep his promises, or fails to turn up at a prearranged meeting: “Oh well, Mwanda Luvunu has lied to himself, but I certainly haven’t”.

Yungula mutela kwandi, kimbekele vudi dyela. He has enormous length, the short-legged has better sense.

— One must not judge people by appearances, such as tallness or shortness, but by their intelligence, even though someone may be scornfully described as “that short-legged fellow”.

Nzazi nkuta (wonga), wabanda muti wambalala. The streak of lightning was afraid, struck a fallen tree (bypassing the high trees).

— This is said when someone is unable to recover a debt from the debtor himself and seizes some valuable possession or, if it is a large debt, even takes a hostage in another village. When the victims of such arbitrary action are informed of the reason for it, they approach the debtor and force him to pay the debt, while they themselves receive the smart-money they are entitled to. The fallen tree symbolizes those the creditor pounces on. In other words, a debtor should realize that he will never get out of paying his debts, for there is always some way of recovering them.

Mfumu ngonini muzonza, va kooko va naani, kyafuta kabeki kyo ko. A chief who has gone through a lawsuit has nothing in his hand, nothing to pay with.

— A debtor promises to pay, then sets a new day for the payment of his debt, gains some respite by giving a hen, then some cloth, gunpowder, and so on, but when it comes to the final payment he is helpless, because he has nothing to pay with. Still, he can be forced to borrow, or give his own people in payment if the creditor pounces on someone who is more powerful.



Fig. 8. Amulet, *nkiduku za nduna*, Sundi in Mayombe (Laman 1230).

Wadia na mbabu, madia ma busuku, binga tiya. Nga ti kubingidi tiya ko, ukuvimini. If you eat under deceit, the night's food, light a fire. Should you fail to light a fire, he will deceive you.

— Be wary of deceitful people, whether during a meal, at work, or in business, or you will be swindled.

Mbeezi kazimbala, kusakila yo na ku nzo a buko. If the knife disappears, seek it in the house of your mother-in-law.

— It is shameful to go and ask her for it, but people stoop to any shameful act or work when they have really set their heart on something.

Va nsoso lukaya valembakana ngwa mbwa mu venda. On the corner (edge) of the leaf the dog cannot lick. (It would also lap up gravel which would grate between its teeth.)

— It is often so with people that no matter how much they are praised and how popular they may be, they always have some objectionable trait. Some people, for instance, may be popular in the eyes of strangers by acting generous or kind, but in reality, at home, they are stingy or bad-tempered.

Nsia basumbila ku nima vundi. They bought the nsia antelope behind a tussock.

— Not much of the animal could be seen behind the high tussock of grass, with the result that they paid more than it was worth. The moral is that one should always see a thing first and estimate its value, and never buy a pig in a poke.

Waheeka lumbu, walenda nzala. He who sends (announces) the day for a visit, conquers hunger.

— If someone wishes to visit a friend, he should announce it in advance, so that his friend will be home and lay in food and palm wine. In other words, if people will only think before acting, not only their hunger but all other needs will be satisfied.

Kubuta ka kwa ko, kadi kuyundwa ku mpasi na mpanda. To give birth is nothing, but to rear is a tremendous labour.

— A mother gives birth to a child in one day, but to rear it will take its parents years of work and trouble, and when there is little in the house to eat, it is always the child that is yelling for food. The moral of this saying is, that it is easy to accept a job of work, or to make a promise, but in the long run it may mean a lot of trouble.

Bayukanu banatanga muti wa mankamba-nkamba ko. Those who are familiar with each other (friends), do not carry a log cross-ways.

— That would result in dispute, abuse, and quarrelling, which does not occur among friends.

Kinunu fwika ndumba. The decrepit (old man) wins a maiden.

— There are a lot of people who despise the old and decrepit, revile them, beat them up, and sometimes even kill them. When the relatives of such an old man demand legal redress and are offered another old man in his place, they answer: "It is this old man who recounted the traditions of our kanda, and for that reason he was revered. The guilty party must give us a maiden in compensation instead". The moral of this saying is that disrespect and abuse of members of another kanda, even if they are old, infirm or mentally less well endowed, may bring on a lawsuit.

Wavonda nyoka, landikisa nti. If you kill a snake, follow it up with the stick.

— One must hit the snake repeatedly to make sure it is dead. Similarly, it is a wise man who finishes his projects without delay, so that he is not forestalled by others. A man who is thinking of getting married, for instance, had better have the marriage performed right away, before others can get wind of his plans and put a spoke in his wheel.

Mbwa babukuna nzila, kinganzi batuma. They cut the tail off the dog, it was for its savage temper they ordered it.

— It is foolish to believe that a dog will become less savage once it has lost its tail. It is the same with ill-tempered, deceitful, or thievish people—they may be caned, put in fetters, or otherwise chastised, and behave as long as the pain lasts, but afterwards they are the same as before.

Lwatamana na munzadi aku, kodesa mutanga. If you would wrestle with your brother-in-law, strengthen the calf of your leg.

— Brothers and sister-in-law indulge in wrestling games together, but someone who is set on winning trains himself beforehand, while his opponent regards the whole thing merely as a game.

This proverb conveys a general warning to all those who adopt a frivolous attitude to all sorts of temptation, and regard it all as a game, for sooner or later they will fall, and may for instance commit adultery, with fines or some other penalty as a consequence.

Va una mulele, kwabwana buko bwaku ko. When you wore your loincloth, you did not meet your mother-in-law.

— Clad in a loincloth, a man does not have to be ashamed of meeting his mother-in-law, but he can be sure of running into her when his only covering consists of mataba strips in front and back, so that he must tuck the front strip in well for the sake of modesty.

This saying is quoted when someone gets an unexpected visit from a friend and has nothing at all to offer him. When he has plenty of food and palm wine, nobody comes to see him.

Mukokolo kavia tiya, luvangu me mamba beedi na lo. If the wooden footbridge burns, the water itself has had a hand in it.

— The argument is that otherwise it could not have burned over the water.

It means that when someone has been kidnapped or maltreated in a village, some of the other villagers must have had a hand in it.

Nsusu kakulosila, tekedi teela musaakila mboko. Before the hen lays for you, it raises cries of distress.

— This applies to all garrulous persons, who shout their intentions from the rooftops.

Buteela bwakangana ngundu byolo. Markmanship competes with the ngundu byolo bird.

— This saying refers to a myth, in which the kiduka bird tricked the ngundu byolo out of its quarry by saying: "I myself have shot it". But one day the ngundu byolo shot a human being and the kiduka rushed up, exclaiming: "Not I, not I!" But then he was told: "After all, you are the one who has proved his markmanship and shot the other game, so it is no use saying that you haven't shot this human being as well. You must pay for him".

The proverb applies to all those who cheat others out of what is rightfully theirs, the moral being, that they will get caught in the end.

Mwendo mu muti watia banuni. I go to the tree that the birds like.

— Birds like all sorts of trees where they find different kinds of food—larvae, insects, fruits, or flowers—and when they have eaten their fill, they sit down in another tree to rest before flying off to settle down to sleep. This is said about children, and adults too, who may yearn for meat, bananas, peanuts, and other delicacies, but get used to stilling their hunger with a meal of stewed leaves, which leaves them happy, well-behaved, and peaceful.

Mantumbu kakenga ngonda wamona. If you want to protect yourself from the mantumbu wasp, the moon must be new.

— When the moon is new, the wasps are harmless and don't sting, so that one can get right up to their nests and even disturb them with impunity. It means that for games or other dealings with an irascible and bad-tempered person it is best to choose a time when he is in a good mood, or things may turn out badly.

Mvumbi na mvumbi bana dyadyana mu kibaya. One corpse will consume the other in the nyombo.

— When someone has died in the village, the corpse is put up to dry. Then, after some time, one or maybe several others die and are also put up to dry, and finally all the corpses are shrouded together in a great number of mats into one large nyombo. Then, one day, the bones inside the nyombo are heard to make a dry sound, "kolukusa", and the people say that the corpses inside are eating each other. The proverb is used when malicious talk or ill-will breaks out among people belonging to the same kanda. That family is doomed to perish. It is the same among friends, whose friendship will be destroyed.

Ntiinu zanooka bonga. Hastily the bongo lizard rushed on its way.

— This is said about people who rush into speech or action without first trying to find out how matters really stand. If one takes it easy, one will find out that things aren't as bad as they seem.

Watunga mu nzila yamanene watia bantu nandi. He who builds by the highway likes his fellow-men.

— This is said about gossips who like to hear the latest news, and try to draw other people to their house by offering them food and palm wine.

Lumbu wavutula kikata na mukongo va fulu. The day you drove away cripples, you did the same with the crowd at the forking of the road to the village.

— In a certain village the eldest man, left alone with a group of youths, set out to other villages to ask for food and permission to settle. Before entering a village, he hid his party in the high grass by the forking of the road to the village. Because of his infirmity, one village after the other refused to take him in, and he was met with derision and shouts of laughter. But finally, one village received him with kindness and permitted him to settle. Then he went and fetched his companions, who became a valuable asset to the village. When the other villages heard this, they regretted their behaviour, for who would have

thought that the cripple would be accompanied by such a party. The moral of the story is that a village should be charitable and take in those who wish to settle there, for one never knows what good fortune and blessings may come from it.

Mpaati wakenga kilavi ku zumbu dyaku. The climbing-sling's share (mpaati) paid heed to the man begging palm wine in the grove.

— Every now and then somebody passing a palm grove may beg some wine of the man sitting in the palm tapping the juice. If he is kind, he may ask the beggar to wait until he has finished tapping, and when he has filled his large calabash, it may happen that there are a few cups left to drink with the beggar. He in his turn may produce meat or fish and other food from his foodbag, which they share under companionable talk, so that the palm wine tapper gets to hear the latest news from outside. Had he been stingy, surly, and unobliging, he would have had neither meat nor news. Thus this proverb advocates hospitality and helpfulness to strangers.

Dinkondo dya bandalala dyavitulanga ku ntembo ko. A bent banana is not swept away by the storm.

— The big, tall, and straight ones are the first to be tossed down by the storm. The proverb means that patience and humility are the best policy.

Muntu u lwadia mbwa ku ntyabulu nkunu. The man with whom you are to eat a dog (is also) to fetch wood.

— Two men who had got hold of a nice fat dog were going to eat it together, and both agreed to fetch wood to cook it and bananas to eat on the side. But while one of them fetched lots of real wood and a big bunch of fine bananas, the other, who was thoughtless and didn't feel much like eating, fetched some rough grass as kindling and a small, poor bunch of unripe bananas. The dog was cooked, but as they were about to start their meal, the man who didn't want to eat left, saying he would be right back. The other man tasted the meat, and ate some of it as he was waiting. Then his companion returned and said he didn't want any. He had not fetched real wood, nor any bananas. The moral of this story is that any kind of work or agreement, or any other undertaking, should always be taken seriously and not be treated as a joke, so that each partner does his duty, assumes his share of the work and the responsibility for it.

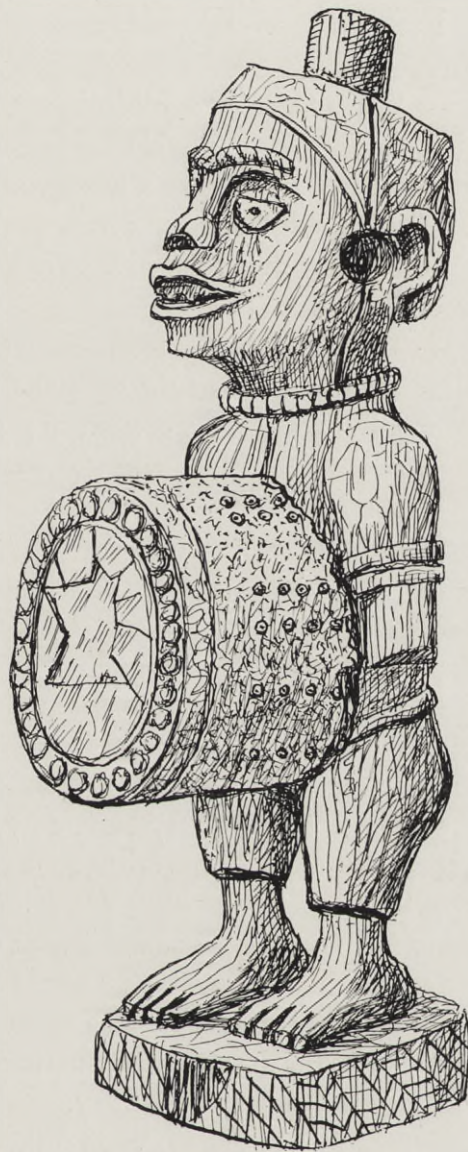


Fig. 9. *Nkisi Mbongo Nsimba, Sundi in Mayombe (Laman 511).*

Kyadia mbevo kyayenda mpuumu. What the sick man has eaten has produced an echo (rumour).

— When some distinguished person is beginning to recover from a serious illness and has started eating again, it will soon be common knowledge among all who visit the market and inquire after the patient's health, and the rumour will spread through all their villages. Similarly, other news and events become public property in the market-place.

Wu va sina musafi kabakanga nsafu ko. He who stands at the foot of the nsafu tree will not get any nsafu.

— This is because the fruit does not grow close to the trunk of the tree, but far out on its large branches. When the men and boys climb the tree to pick the fruit, therefore, the women waiting on the ground to gather any fruits they may drop never stand close to the trunk, but further out where the fruit will fall. The meaning of this saying is that the news of something that has happened in a village may reach its outskirts or even another village before anyone in the immediate neighbourhood has heard about it.

Mwana kazaaba taata, ngwandi wamukamba ti: Sanga ti taata. Mwana kazaaba maama, taata wamukamba ti: Sanga ti yaaya. When the child knows its father, the mother tells it: Say father. When the child knows its mother, the father tells it: Say mother.

— This proverb reminds parents of their duty to teach the child the names of every object and person, step by step, as it learns to recognize each of them.

Kutu kafwanga nzala ko. The ear knows no hunger.

— The ear hears everything. Anyone with private or secret plans should be careful to keep quiet about them, for as soon as one ear has heard, other ears will hear too. And if people are asked how they know, they will answer: "If I pick up a feather, hasn't a bird worn it?" They have heard the news, and that is how they know.

Mbuke ehunda simu tiya. The old man's place is by the fire.

— The younger people of a household prefer to sleep in a quiet corner against the wall across from the fire, which is kept burning through the night. The place by the fire is for the eldest man of the house—the younger people are afraid to sleep there, for bankuyu spirits come and look in there right in front of the door. Then the old man says: "You sleep by the wall, let me sleep here by the fireside. Let them come and take me away". It is the same in a village, too. The eldest man of the village is expected to protect the village, and to be the central figure when legal conflicts, family quarrels, or other problems have to be solved.

Lutambi dyati tuvi, kinkuma na mamba. The foot has stepped in the dung, fortunately by water.

— The dung can then be washed off right away, and the bad smell vanishes. If it happens far away from any water, so that it has to be wiped off with grass, the smell will stick. The saying is used when friends turn up at an opportune moment—it may be to enjoy their share of a lucky hunter's bag, but it may also be to help someone who has become involved in a lawsuit or some other trouble.

Wasyela va bula, fuka tuvi. If you want to tap palm wine in the village, cover up the excrements.

— Some people ease nature in the grounds around the village and on the paths taken by the palm wine tapper. If he throws grass and litter over it, he won't be bothered by it. This is said about the village elders, who willingly listen to quarrels and slanderous reports, but never react to anything that is liable to incite to anger and break the people up. They overlook it, cover it up.

Wasaala manima minkusi umuyukuti. He who follows, will be sated by wind.

— That is, the wind produced by the flatulent stomach of someone walking ahead in a file of people. This is said about the old people in a village, who are wearied by all the problems and grief caused them by the talk, pranks, and even wickedness of the younger generation.

Nsusu koko-dyo-ko mu diiki kaba. The hen that cackles koko-dyo-ko has been in the egg.

— Even big chiefs and other prominent persons were children once.

Mbwa wanokono mvula mu kyadi kya mfuma andi. Dog on which it rained felt pity for its master.

— If the dog had wanted to, it could have escaped the rain by running ahead to the village. The saying applies to anyone who endures suffering or worries through pity for a chief, a mother, a brother, or some other relative.

Musafu lakununa, wadiikila na bikata. Nsafu trees that drop (their fruits) feed cripples.

— Even though cripples cannot climb the trees, the nsafu bears such an abundance of fruit that what falls down is sufficient to feed the cripples of a village. This is said about a rich and generous person, who not only supports his own family, but even provides for others.

Bateekila banwanga mulangu wa mviitu ko. Those who walk ahead do not drink muddy water.

— Nobody has preceded them and stirred up the water at the crossing. This saying admonishes people not to delay whenever a chance of work offers itself, for those who come first will get the job.

Ti wadia kyafwa, landa nsengo. If you inherit something, fetch the hoe.

— It is with the hoe that the previous owner has cultivated the fields, laboured, and acquired the property you have inherited. Unless you also accept the hoe, that is, follow the example of industry and diligence, your inheritance will soon be spent.

Kimfutu wavyokisa nkabi. The owl let the nkabi antelope pass.

— The owl was asleep and let the nkabi go past her beat. When called to account, she answered that she knew nothing about it, as she had been overtaken by sleep. This is said about people who neglect their duties and are not on their guard, whether during the hunt or on any other occasion.

Makutu kati kudidi kalutanga mfumu andi muntu ko. The ears grow, to be sure, but they do not grow larger than their master's head.

— This is said about the younger people, the coming generation, who boast before their elders of their wisdom and knowledge. But all they have they owe to the older generation's wealth, knowledge, and insight. After all, the older generation came first.

Kivunga mooyo kadianga ki ebi ko. One who is patient does not eat what is bad.

— The background of this saying is a story about a man who has set some traps and is too impatient to wait a while before inspecting them. He has to run down all the time and check, and finally he thinks: "I'll take them away, for I won't get anything anyway." Then he dreams that an animal got caught in a trap he has abandoned. He goes down and finds it true. The moral of the story is that all sorts of work may seem attractive to start with, but people tend to grow tired of it after a while. Those who are patient enough to persist, however, will get their reward.

Munwa kabeela, mu bukisa watanga munwa mingi. His mouth ached, but the cure made it talk too much.

— Someone with a toothache, blisters in the mouth or something of the kind is sad, unable to talk, and food has lost its taste. Life is nothing but misery. But once the ache has been cured, he talks twice as much.

This is said when someone has heard a rumour from some prattler, who is given to boasting and bragging about everything.

Watumisa kitembo, kodisa misinguku mu mankondo. If you send for the storm, strengthen the sticks propping up the bananas.

— This saying admonishes people to show foresight and make preparations for all their undertakings. For a marriage or a funeral, for instance, one should prepare by laying in a sufficient store of food and drink, for a war by stocking up on guns, shot, and powder.

Art

The native art of the Sundi is both ornamental and metaphysical in character, which is reflected by their numerous sculptures, in which the magical and supernatural are embodied in a variety of forms. The figures are given a hideous aspect in order to inspire fear and respect. Occasionally they may be represented with various defects, such as dumbness, for instance, to show that they have the power to cause such afflictions. Other sculptures portray the native image of the dead (*bankuyu*).

Even though the style shows some variation in different localities, Sundi sculpture is on the whole very simply conceived. The statuettes are almost always stiff, frontal images, which very seldom give expression to a particular idea, emotion, or conception of life. The greatest attention is devoted to the ornamental aspect, which expresses itself in finely carved tattoos, elaborate hairdos, etc., to attract future buyers.

A high level of artistic skill is revealed in the ivory carvings offered for sale to Europeans in modern times. Many of the Sundi show great skill in carving small, beautiful, and expressive works of art.

While architecture and painting are nowhere practised as a specialized occupation, efforts are nevertheless made to give the houses a decorative appearance by means of intricately woven designs, while chests and other useful objects are often decorated with patterns in different colours.

A familiar form of art is found in the calabash paintings, consisting of various ornamental designs or portraying special subjects like burials, wars, or caravans.

Whereas there are some artists who work purely for artistic pleasure, most artistic endeavour is ruled by considerations of a practical or commercial nature. Everything that is sold in the market, or handed over in connexion with marriages or other payments, be it baskets, dishes, pipes, rings, or any other object, is made as ornamental as possible, since the more beautiful the object, the higher the price that it will fetch.

Artists of all kinds are popular and admired members of the community, and they often vie with each other in producing the most exquisite works in order to win public esteem.

Even though colouring techniques are little developed, the few available pigments are often used to decorate chests, wooden doors, drums, and the mud walls of the houses. Grass walls are decorated by inwoven patterns of varicoloured materials.

There are only three distinct colours: red (mbwaki), black (mpyuki, ndombe), and white (mpembe). The addition of a suffix (mbwakuluka, mbwakisila) means that the red colour shifts into brown. Different shades in each colour are moreover defined by the name of the stone, earth, or tree from which the pigment is derived, for instance ndimba (red from the ndimba stone), musongo (yellow ochre), nkula (red from the Coral wood), or by comparison with birds, textiles, or other familiar things. Blue, for instance, is called ndombe (dark), whereas ndombe ya simba is the colour of the blue simba cloth.

Black dye is usually obtained by pounding bark of the mwindu tree, which is mixed with water. This solution is spread over surfaces which readily absorb the dye, such as newly baked earthenware vessels, pipes, etc. Sometimes the dye is just sprinkled over the object to produce a handsome mottled effect.

Bast used for binding or wickerwork is dipped into this solution, while coarser materials are soaked in it. By adding pulverized charcoal of nsenga wood to the mwindu solution, a deep black colour is produced. Ground charcoal may also be sprinkled over the object after dyeing. Dark patterns on various objects are furthermore produced by pokerwork.

Chalk is the most common white dye. The white colour is often used to emphasize carved designs on a dark surface. In this way, the nsenga tree—a familiar motif—is made to stand out in its natural light colour for instance.

Red dye is obtained by pulverizing ndimba and ngunzi stones, or it is derived from trees like the mbamba, sungu, lungunzi, and others, which yield a deep red colour. Before red blankets were brought on the market, white or pale-coloured cloth was always dyed red for shrouds. Sometimes the pigment obtained from the tree is pulverized and rubbed on the cloth, in other cases the cloth is soaked in a solution with water. Red is symbolic of life.

In former days the corpse of an eminent person was covered with various designs painted with red, soot, and chalk, to make the people who would come to view the body exclaim in admiration: "E, yaaya, such beautiful lines over the stomach, and such exquisite makumbi figures on the forehead!"

The enormous nyombo in which the dead are shrouded in the north are made with the greatest artistic care. Particular attention is devoted to the head and trunk, among other things by copying the tattoos of the deceased.

Wood carving is a highly esteemed craft. In its simpler forms it is found everywhere, but figure sculpture is restricted to a fairly limited number of people. Since they aim primarily at achieving a faithful likeness of the head, this is carved first, and the body afterwards. As a result, the proportions between head and body become rather unnatural.

The figures are images of the nkuyu spirits enclosed in them. The difference in the outer appearance of the spirits during lifetime is reflected in the different tattoos and dress styles traditional for the various regions. In the far north the figures are quite small and covered with elaborate tattoos.

In some places we find huge, almost life-size statues of hideous aspect. They are images of the dead and, like them, are portrayed with bent legs, in a dancing posture.

In Mayombe and various other parts of the country carved human figures are set out on

the burial grounds. In those parts where white is the colour of mourning, they are coated with chalk.

Finally we also find all sorts of animal figures, dogs and ducks for instance, carved out of wood.

Stone sculptures too were found in the past, especially in the Mbenza cult in Mayombe.

The magic power of the figures is sometimes symbolized by a bundle of wood carried to show the pressure they can exert on the chest and heart. Hands held on top of the head are a sign of mourning.

Among other carved objects, the beautiful chiefs' staffs which are preserved as family relics are worthy of note. In addition there are powder horns carved with ancient designs, spoons, knife handles, doors, bells, rattles, mortars, and innumerable other objects which are ornamented with elaborate carvings.



Fig. 10. Nkisi Kengele, Sundi in Lolo (Laman 1171).

## Dance

There is a great variety of traditional dances, and many new ones have been introduced by people from foreign parts. Among the older dances we can note the nzwanda, ndumuka, ndefa, nzadi, mumbala or mbumbakana, kimboma, ngombe, and boyila.

Traditionally the dancing starts with the ngombe, which is danced by men and women to the rhythm of the ndungu drum. Two men and two women dance out into the square, gradually followed by two more couples at a time until everybody has joined in. When they tire of this, they take up the boyila (shoulder dance), in which only the chest and shoulders are shaken vehemently, while the hips remain still. After that the velele is danced. This dance is danced by sets of two men and two women. The men twist their hips, while the women violently shake theirs, keeping the chest and shoulders still.

When they get tired of these dances, there are numerous others to continue with.

For the nzwanda the men and women line up opposite each other. One man steps out from his line and starts dancing towards his partner in the opposite line, twisting his hips and buttocks. Then the girl dances out in the same way towards the man, her ankle rings jingling: nzye-nzye-nzye. In this way the dance continues all along the line. Sometimes the couples also slap each other on the chest.

For the ndumuka (jumping) the women line up at the foot of a small hillock, the men at the top. The women step with twisting hips and buttocks (dweba), singing all the while. The men are supposed to jump, two at a time, until the end of the line is reached. When everybody all along the line has jumped twice, the dance starts over from the beginning.

The ndefa, or mandefa, is also danced by men and women lined up across from each other. The women dance towards the men and turn about. Then it is the men's turn to dance out and turn about again, and in this way the dance continues.

In the nzadi women and men dance towards each other. When they meet, they toss their loincloth up with the leg or knee. The nzadi can also be danced by a set of two men and two women, who go towards each other across the square. They clap their hands, eya-eya-eya, slap each other's hands twice, and separate, all in time with each other. When they stand lined up, they let their shoulders sag.

In the mumbala the men go in turns over to fetch the women from their line. They dance with them and hit their breasts. They dance like this for about three to five minutes,

and during the dance they bring their private parts close together, while both the man and the woman keep making *dweba* movements. When the couple separates, the man first swings his arms down and then upwards. The men who remain in the line clap their hands, *nsaki*. Afterwards it is the women's turn to dance across to the men in the same manner.

*Nzoko* is a dance for men, who dance one at a time. It is also a frolicsome dance for women to betoken friendship when someone has emptied his bladder after eating *nkasa* poison.

*Kikoki* and *mboma*, or *kimboma*, are dances which the Sundi have learnt during their trading trips to Boma.

Special dances are performed when a sick person's *nsala* soul is being restored to his body.

*Nkisi* dances vary according to the rules and customs governing the various *minkisi* cults. When he is engaged in divination or in similar ceremonies, the *nganga* enters a state of ecstasy and sings and dances to influence the patient's condition through suggestion.

Dances are very common in connexion with lawsuits. First the chief or mediator dances alone, and after that the counsel of both sides join in, clapping their hands, and often chanting in chorus to indicate what they wish to discuss and settle. Parables, ironic sayings, etc. are used to make their meaning clear.

Chiefs often dance the *ntwadi*, in which they swing their drum and twist their hips. Sometimes the chief falls to his knees and the children wash his insteps. The chief's wives stand on the side shaking their rattles, and he goes over to each one in turn and dances facing her. He swings and waves a *serval* (*nzuzi*) skin with dog bells attached to it. The people show their admiration by persistent *kunku* clapping: *kwo-kwo-kwo*. When the chief throws the skin up into the air, they change to *nsaki* clapping: *eye-eye, kwo-kwo, eye-eye, kwo-kwo*. Finally the chief exclaims: "*Lutambula bula!*"<sup>1</sup>, and the people answer in chorus: "*Ayi*".

The *lungondunga* or *lutanda* is danced in a jerky rhythm (*tempa-tempa-tempa*), with the whole body quivering (*tiita*) and the rump bouncing up and down (*mwetta-mwetta-mwetta*). In their exuberance the dancers may crouch down and bend their shoulders backwards until they are practically lying on the ground. In the heat of the moment they entirely forget to sing, but afterwards the singing is resumed with increased force. Later on in the dance the men go two at a time to select a dance partner from among the women who so far have been looking on. The man puts his hands on the woman's shoulders. The woman rolls her belly (*tyenga*) and shakes her hips, and the man also starts rolling his belly up and down in time to the woman's movements. The dance is accompanied by loud singing and the strong rhythm of the *ngoma* drum. They sing this song: "E, listen, the women are selling their wares under their loincloth. E, listen, . . .".

The *bankimba* have a special dance, called *kinkimba*. In the *ntandu* the men put their faces against the women's faces and roll their bellies (*tyenga*). In the *nkwanda* the men kick their loincloth high up with one leg, while the women rapidly shake their hips. The *banda*

<sup>1</sup> Int. used by chiefs, meaning approximately: "Receive, accept, inhabitants of the village".

is danced by every other man and every other woman in the line. They step around the square bumping (*tamba*) their rumps (*mataku*) against each other.

In the *tikiti* and *ntunta* the men jump rapidly up and down, while the women twist and sway their hips in an alluring fashion.

Some of the dance movements, such as *tyenge* (rolling the belly in undulating movements), are an imitation of the *nsombe* larva. Other movements imitate the *kimbembe* kite quivering its wings in the wood, or the movements of the *kintiku* chrysalis, or of birds like the wagtail. That is why it is said that birds like the wagtail dance too: *Ngoma dwe-dwe-dwe*.

Often the dances turn into voluptuous, erotic movements, ending in fornication. Proficiency in this field is much admired.

Practically any occasion is right for dancing—*nkungi* festivities, funerals, poison ordeals, the killing of a big animal, someone placing himself under the protection of the chief, the capture of a prisoner-of-war, or the arrival of a white visitor.

The effect of the dancing is enhanced by the rich adornment of the dancers. Their hair is shaven and dressed in various fashions. They wear rings around arms and legs, and beautiful loincloths, trimmed with bells. The women often wear beautiful girdles and extra bands interwoven with beads in various bright colours around their waist. They also wear bands around their foreheads and fasten varicoloured beads in their hair tufts. Jingling dog bells are also popular ornaments.

The men dress in handsome loincloths, trimmed with tassels. Often they carry their best nail-studded gun cases and finest *nkutu* bags along to the dance. Their hair is shaved in elegant patterns of squares, lines, or other figures, according to the fashion. In addition they may wear beautiful combs and handsome tail feathers in their hair.

On festive occasions the dancers are regaled with food and palm wine. At thanksgiving ceremonies and similar occasions they also receive their share of chickens, pork, and other viands.

Masks are not very common, except in *bankimba* ceremonies. In the past, however, masks were worn both at dances and in all sorts of enterprises to inspire fear.

*Nkyinkibi* (the roaming antelope) is a wooden mask held in front of the face. It was not used for *bakisi* dances, but for important feasts with dancing, when five or six bands of musicians might assemble, as for instance at the burial of a *nyombo*. Around noon the funeral procession sets out, with the deceased's wives, sisters, and male relatives weeping and wailing to give voice to their deep grief: "Oh, mother, where is father, where have they taken father, e-e". Night falls, and at dawn they continue with a great feast with food and drink. That is the time when the owners of the mask set out with a band of six musicians to join the festivities. When they arrive in the village and are in the midst of the crowd that has gathered, one of them puts the mask in front of his face and goes around the village, blowing a *mbambi* pipe: *wetete, wetete*, or his *ngwala* pipe: *ngwalala, ngwangwa, sensulu-sensulu*, and crying: "O, he-he-he, he-he-lu". People who have never seen such a mask before run away and hide themselves in their houses. Those who brought the mask assemble

in the village square and set out food and palm wine which they have brought along for their friends. These in their turn bring palm wine and hand it over under loozi cries: "O, taata (father)". The tanda band answers: Wo! The village chief asks: "Where have you come from?" "From Ngungu". He continues: "What is the name of the tanda band?" They answer: "Komba nzala, bikula ye mfumu a bwala kihunda kya mukento kyena yau" (Komba nzala, man and old chief, women are around you). Thereupon they are served with palm wine.

Afterwards they lift their trumpets and play and sing: "Yelele banami bakolo-longo Ngungu". The first trumpet sounds: wi-wi-wiwi. Two big trumpets fall in: ngodi-ngodi-ngodi, followed by four small ones: ku-mfeku-feku. Finally the whole band is playing loudly, while the man wearing the nkyinkibi mask goes around, whirling about to show his mask. He looks inside the houses, making the children scream with fright.

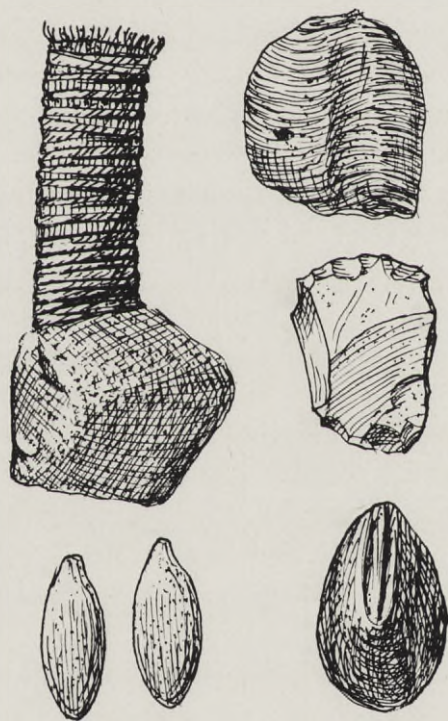


Fig. 11. Nkisi Ndumba antela-ntela, Sundi in Mukimbungi (Laman 1270).

## Song and Music

Song and music form an integral part of everyday life and work. It is heard in the fields, for instance when the women are hoeing or planting a peanut crop, and on the caravan routes, for instance before people ferry across a river, but especially in the evenings and on festive occasions.

The music is as a rule monotonous, often loud and rattling. To the European listener the Sundi appear to lack all sense of tone and to have no ear for music. This, though, is largely due to the fact that their music has a different structure and form, different "scales", and a different progression from the music we are accustomed to. That the Sundi not only have an ear for music, but indeed a strong natural aptitude is proved by the fact that they are very quick to master musical instruments and singing in choirs. The musicians are more often men than women.

Everyone plays and sings as he likes. On major occasions, skilled and proficient musicians perform, and during their song and dance festivals anyone who knows the verses is allowed to take up and lead a verse of the song. The music and dancing start at a slow pace, but gradually increase in intensity, finally driving the performers into an ecstatic pitch. To the European observer the dances are not particularly graceful, but to the Sundi many of them are the height of aesthetic delight.

The musical instruments can be divided in four groups: 1. Self-sounding instruments (idiophones), 2. Skin instruments (membraphones), 3. Stringed instruments (chordophones), and 4. Wind instruments (aerophones).

The idiophones include smaller and larger rattles, various kinds of bells, drums without skin, gongs, and marimbas. Xylophones are unknown. The membraphones consist of skinheaded drums, while the chordophones include musical bows, harps, and guitars. Mandolines and zithers are unknown. The aerophones, finally, include trumpets, pipes, and flutes.

The smaller kind of rattles usually consist of a calabash with its dry seeds. They are decorated with various designs in chalk or pokerwork. They may also consist of empty fruit shells filled with seeds, such as the mwakasa pods used by diviners.

The larger rattles (nkwanga and nsakala) are either made of large, hollow, oblong calabashes, which are gripped by the neck, or else of the hard shells of *Strychnos*

fruit, filled with seeds of *Canna indica*. Both in the calabashes and the fruit shells small holes are bored to improve the sound. Some of the holes are incised in the shape of a plus sign. A handle of calamus rattan is stuck through the fruit-shell rattles, usually through two to four at a time. This instrument is generally used by women, who play it by hitting the handle against the thumb and forefinger, as an accompaniment to their informal dances and games.

Often a lot of women sit together and rattle. They can modulate the pitch and rhythm, producing a quite agreeable sound.

They also use their rattles on their way to market or to the fields, or when they go bathing, to accompany songs like the following:

Toko dyami kadianga byo ko	My husband eats them not
Mu ngazi kwandi twabakanana	Because of the palm nuts we fell out with each other
Toko dyami kadianga byo ko	
Mu ngazi kwandi twabakanana	
Ca, kalaka, ma kasaka (onomat.).	

Bells may be made of the hard shell of some fruit, usually *Borassus flabelliformis*, into which a clapper is inserted. Bells of this type are often used in the cult of nkisi Londe, and are known as ndinga or mpovila za Londe (Londe's voice or speech). Such bells may also be made of iron or wood, in which case they contain holes for the string holding the clappers. Usually this type of bell has two or three clappers, in exceptional cases only one.

The wooden madibu bells are hollowed out and sometimes decorated with carved or poker-work designs, occasionally with figures carved out on top. These bells are mostly used as dog-bells, and are tied under the dog's belly during the hunt. Some of them are also used for divination and other ceremonial functions.

There is another type of bell, in which both the bell itself and the clappers are made of iron. Some of them are known as bimpombu. They are usually quite small and threaded on a string, so that they tinkle when the wearer is dancing. These metal bells are made by joining two halves enclosing a small pellet. They are usually worn by children.

The kunda bell is a double bell, hollowed out of wood, usually with two clappers at each end. This instrument is used in the ceremonial singing and dancing that form part of the nkisi rites, for instance in healing the sick.

Some bells are made of small antelope horns. As a rule several of them are strung together. Each horn contains a clapper.

Minkisi are often adorned with rattles and bells.

Gongs (ngongi) are always made of iron. They are found in varying sizes, and may consist of a single or double gong. They are struck with a wooden stick.

Ngongi are often forged from gun barrels, which are hammered out into two symmetrical, thin halves, whose edges are then joined together. The handle is usually of wood, and is slipped over a tenon projecting from the gong. The handle can also be of iron.

Small single ngongi do not appear to be very common. Large single munkunku are likewise rare. It is extremely difficult to joint the two halves together. They may be about one meter high and widen into a bell-shape at the base. When they are joined together, the edges are reinforced with insertions of thin iron plate.

Double ngongi are more common. They consist of two single ngongi which are joined by intricate wickerwork connecting the projecting stems of the ngongi. This joint is strengthened by additional wickerwork lower down at the neck.

These double gongs are usually about 20 to 30 cm high, while the opening is about 8 cm wide. As a rule they are beaten with a straight, strong stick, or with a club whose head is wound with string dressed with resin.

Ngongi are used at dances, in war, at burials, and to announce the death of a chief, a lawsuit, or some other important event.

Drums without skin, so-called slit drums, are found in various sizes and forms. The greatest care is devoted to the making of such drums. First the material for the drum is roughly hewn with an adze, after which it is trimmed with a knife and chisel, and ground down with kunya leaves which serve as sand-paper. Many of these drums are beautifully ornamented, sometimes with carved designs that are treated with different colours.

In its simplest form this drum consists of a log of wood in which a long, rectangular slit is cut. Through this slit the inside of the log is hollowed out with a sharp gouge that is slightly curved at one end. It is slow and laborious work, especially if the drums are big and unwieldy, when it may take a whole year to finish them. The depth of the slit determines the tone of the drum and is adapted to the customer's wishes. One side of the slit usually has a higher tone than the other side. Cracks which may appear in the drum before or after it is finished are repaired with a strong resin (mukuki). Even iron bells are repaired in that way and sound as good as new afterwards.

Mbudikidi is a very common type of drum with a short and narrow slit in the middle, and a wider rectangular opening on either side of it. The drum may be cut off squarely at the end like a log, or it may have projecting handles to carry it by. As a rule the drum comes with two drumsticks made of strips of caoutchouc wound round a rough wooden handle. The drum varies in shape, size, tone, and ornamentation, as well as in the shape of the slit. As a rule one side is thinner and produces a higher tone.

In Mayombe similar drums with two longer rectangular openings are called ngungu. These drums have slanting edges.

The mbuma is in Mayombe a huge slit drum. Higher up in the country, however, mbuma is a drum with a skin head.

Nkooko are smaller drums of cylindrical shape, which are held in the hands. They have a wide, long, rectangular slit in the middle. One end is often roughly carved in the shape of a head. This type of drum is carried by the bankimba on their wanderings to warn the uninitiated. Nkooko drums are also used for dancing.

Nkonzi (e.g. nkonzi a Lemba) is crescent-shaped, approximately 19 cm long and 5 cm high in its central part. It has a narrow rectangular slit. The drumstick is attached to a string

fastened in a hole under the drum. Large-sized nkonzi, which are more like a canoe in shape, are used everywhere for dances and similar occasions. They are made of mahogany. The drumstick is called kikonko or konkolo.

Diti, also known as marimba, consists in its simplest form merely of a piece of wood with two or three palm-lath bars (tooto sticks), which rest on a small rattan bridge. As a rule, however, these instruments are provided with a sound-box and bars of iron (umbrella ribs, etc.). They can be decorated in various ways, with beads or carved patterns. They are also known as nzanga, nzangwa, mbobila, or dimba.

The sound-box is made of kyenya wood, with a finger-sized hole in the bottom which can be stopped up to modulate the tone. The holes in the back and at the side are to emit the sound. The sound-box is hollowed out from one side, which is then covered with a lid. The bridge (nkamba) is set on top, usually on a piece of leather to strengthen both the bridge and the bars which lie on top of it. As a rule the bridge is fastened with rattan through holes in the sound-box.

The instrument may have eight or more bars. The first bar from the left is called mbadiki (beginning), the two following bars and the two to the far right binkele or nseki za nkunga (the leaders of the song with the highest tones). The other bars are called mintambudi (that answer). The largest bar is called ngudi (mother), the ones next to it balanda ngudi (that follow the mother). In other cases some of the bars are designated as minkumata (used to modulate the tone), kya ngudi (mother), and kya mbangudi (that explain). Alternatively the scaling of the bars follows the vocal register, while two of them are denoted as mbangi (witnesses).

Finally, the group of idiophones also includes a number of musical toys. One of these is called mbeela and consists of a rod filled with rattling seeds. It is also carried by people on their way to market. Another toy consists of a sort of serrated wooden scraper over which a stick is drawn back and forth to produce a piercing sound. Nsansi zandyengisila is a toy made of nsansi seed with a number of holes pierced in it. A string is put through the holes and the seed is set spinning by twirling the string round and round in both hands.

The group of membraphones includes both double-headed and single-headed drums. To the former category belongs the ndungu, an elongated drum which is very common. It is used for dances on various occasions, as well as at poison ordeals and in the nkisi cult to inspire ecstasy. Like most headed drums it is made in duplicate, one with a lower tone (ngudi, mother), and one with a higher tone (mwana, child), or else a special high-pitched drum—known as mbindu (from bindukila, bindala)—is made to be used in alternating rhythm with other drums.

The long ndungu is also known as nlambula or mundamba (the elongated), while the smaller one is called ndindi (child) in Mayombe, and munsaku or munkandu further north. The names mumbete and munkambu are also found. The long drum may be about 3 meters long, with a diameter of 20 cm at its biggest end and 12 cm at the smaller end. As a rule a small rectangular stand of carved wood is made, with a hole into which the smaller end of the drum is fitted when it is beaten. The drum itself is usually made of a nsangula or nsanga-

nsanga tree. The log is hollowed out from both ends with a very sharp knife-blade stuck in a long-shafted nsuku handle. Both openings are covered with different kinds of antelope skin, like nsia or nsuma. Both the upper and the lower drumhead is bordered (tobila) with split and peeled rattan strips or raffia fibres, to reinforce the skin and prevent it from bursting when the straps stretching it are fastened to it. The drumheads are stretched by means of long straps of nkabi skin or rope (mfumvu) made of mpunga or twined creepers. The straps are pulled tight gradually. The large ndungu moreover have from one to four or five pierced handles (makongi) to lift them by.

The smaller, high-pitched ndungu are more or less similar in appearance. As a rule the drum is painted with ndimba red. The drummer also rubs himself and his loincloth with the red colour.

A heavier and larger type of ndungu, called ndungu a ntuntani or ndungu a yilu (=yulu), is placed on a special stand from which it is not taken down. This type of drum is beaten with the hands.

Kingoma kya nkisi is a very small, double-headed drum, which is held under the arm when it is beaten.

Tangala is a drum made from a large nsanga-nsanga tree. It is much stouter than the ndungu, but only about 1 meter long. It is hollowed out in the same way as the ndungu, and the drumheads are stretched with ropes or leather straps. They are edged with some sort of strengthening material to prevent them from being rent when the straps are pulled tight. This is done by twisting them around, after which a wooden toggle is put through them to keep them from untwisting. The drum has a deep and full sound. It is beaten with drumsticks. In Mayombe tangala is the name of a small drum.

Mbindu is shorter and narrower than the tangala, and has a higher tone. It is usually double-headed. It is carried along to dances and beaten on the way to announce that a dance is about to start.

Kibuku is a drum of less than one meter in length, but with a resonant skin-head at both ends.

Tutila is a drum made from a mungoma-ngoma tree in both a high-pitched (mwana) and bass (ngudi) version. The drumheads are stretched by means of straps, in the same way as the nlambula. The larger drum is called tutila dya vungu, the smaller (mwana) mwana ngulu because it sounds like a screaming pig.

Lambamba is a short cylindrical drum, whose drumheads are stretched taut by means of rattan (mbamba), which has given it its name.

Dukulu is a short tubular drum. The drumheads are stretched with leather straps or rattan. Both this and other drums have straps to carry them by.

There are several kinds of single-headed drums. One of these is the ngoma, which is made from a ngoma-ngoma or nsanga-nsanga tree. It is cylindrical in shape, with a height of somewhat over one meter and a diameter of about 40 cm. It may be entirely hollow or have a massive bottom. Its lower end can have different shapes. Usually it is the same size as the upper end, but sometimes it tapers off, or is set on a base of one kind or the other.

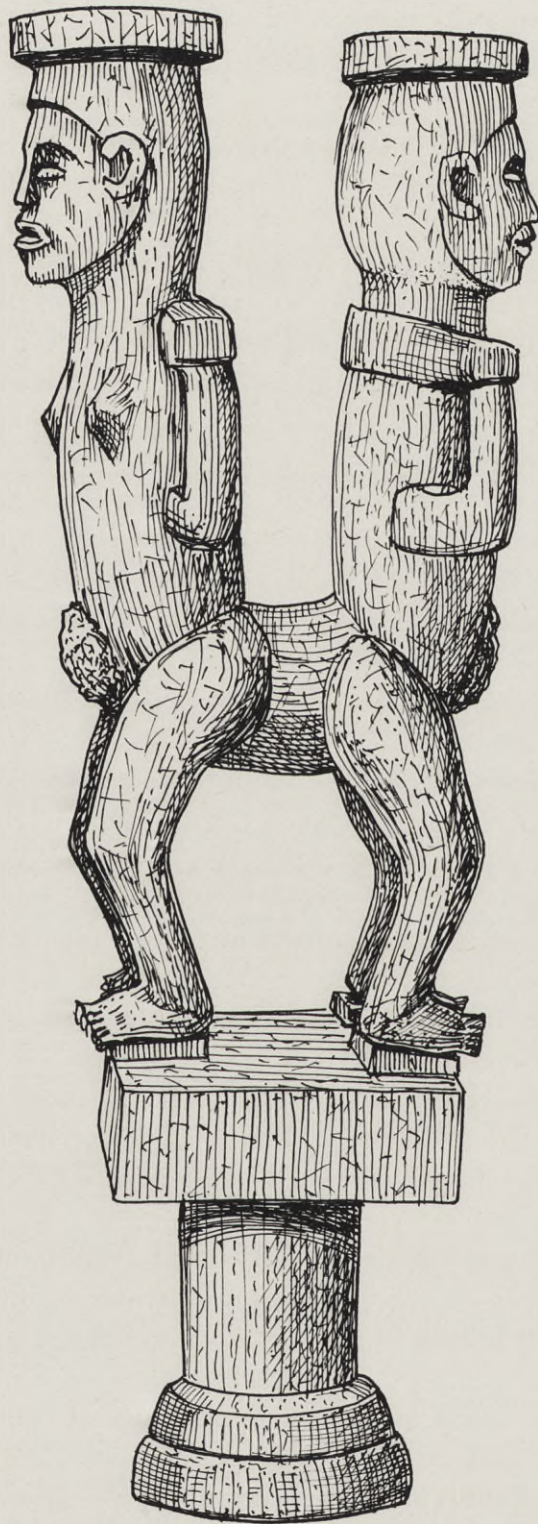


Fig. 12. Wooden sculpture, nkimba Koka Nkombe, Sundi in Lolo (Laman 1239).

A handle (kaalu) is set on the outside of the drum. Sometimes these handles are very small, with a hole in the center through which a strong leather strap can be drawn to carry the drum by.

Ngoma drums are ornamented in various ways, for instance by designs in various colours, poker-work, or long, carved lines.

Sometimes the upper end is provided with a bevelled edge over which the drumhead is fitted. The drumhead is fixed by vertical wooden sticks holding it in place when it is stretched. This is done by warming the skin before a fire. A lump of nlombo resin is placed in the center of the skin. It retains the heat and stretches the skin.

The drummer slips the strap over his hips and holds the drum between his legs, while he beats it with both hands. Now and then a mbindu drum (also known as ngoma's child) with a higher sound joins in.

The ngoma drum is used for dances on all sorts of occasions, in lawsuits, war, etc. It is also used as a signalling drum in case of death or other events.

Another type of single-headed drum is called ndembo. It is about a meter and a half long, with a large, massive, round base. The drumhead is of antelope skin, dwangi for instance. It is attached with palm-lath pins. The outside of the drum is ornamented with carved lines (mfyende). Between these lines a little hole is made to let the air through. The ndembo is made from kimbidi wood.

This drum was only made at the order of paramount chiefs. They could have two or three of them, and a fourth one with a higher tone (mbindu). The ndembo is placed on a high stand over which a shed is erected.

The ndembo was beaten when someone was to be buried alive or executed by hanging or beheading. At times the condemned man was forced to lie under the drum while it was beaten. He might also be executed there, so that the drum would be sprinkled with his blood. On such occasions the drum sounded all through the night. The ndembo is most common among the Kinanga.

A drum of similar type is also made for the funeral of a paramount chief. It is beaten for as long as the corpse remains in the village. The last night it is beaten with such frenzy that the drumhead bursts. After that, it may not be used again until a new paramount chief is crowned.

Buuma is originally a huge, split drum. It can also be fitted with a drumhead, however. In that form it is scarcely one meter long, with a narrow base, but very wide at the upper end. The skin may be nailed to the drum, or stretched taut with straps in the same way as the ndungu.

The buuma is very common as a signalling drum, used to summon people from their work in the forest or on the fields to a lawsuit, or to announce the capture of a prisoner or some similar event. The drum is beaten with one hand, and the rhythm indicates the nature of the message. The drum is made of kamba wood (*Chlorophora excelsa*).

Kitengene is the simplest of the string instruments. It consists of a bow with a string of raffia fibre. The player holds one end of this musical bow in his mouth and the other in his

left hand, while he plays with his right hand. He varies the pitch by alternately tightening and muffling the string with his fingers. Occasionally a small calabash is tied to the bow as a sound-box.

Lusinga, as it is called in the south, or nsambi in the north, is a sort of guitar with a square, oblong, oval, or circular sound-box. Four or five curved pins are fixed to its bottom and strings of raffia fibre are tied to the ends of these pins and stretched across the sound-box to a small bridge. The top of the sound-box is often covered with a lid, which is tightly fitted along the sides. The strings are tightened by shortening the fibre at the end of the pin. The pins are held in position by tying them firmly to a crosspiece, or some similar arrangement.

Among the wind instruments we may first of all note the trumpets, which are made of wood, horn, or elephant tusks. The latter type was formerly very common among paramount chiefs, but is no longer used today, having been sold or looted.

The most remarkable native trumpets are found in Bwende. They consist of so-called ntamba or tanda, that is tree roots whose pulp has been eaten away, either naturally or by termites, while the outer shell remains hard and strong. The tone is determined by the shape and size of the root. These trumpets—also called nkenke (the small), by way of contrast to the wooden trumpets, which have a stronger sound—are about one meter to a meter and a half in length, while the mouth measures about 20 cm or more.

These nkenke trumpets are played together with other instruments on various occasions. The trumpet section usually consists of four trumpets, on special occasions like dances or the burial of a nyombo of as much as seven or more. The different trumpets each have their own name. The first is called kingenene (the one that starts), the second ntambula (the one that answers). After that comes mukakamba (the middle one), followed by longi. The rest of the band consists of one or more wooden horns (ludi) or trumpets, of which those with a deep, bass sound are called mulumi (the husband) and the ones with a higher sound mukazi (the wife). Then there is a kintumbu, a small wooden trumpet, and one or more mukonzi and nkooko, small slit drums. Sometimes the band also includes a mbudika slit drum.

The horns (ludi) are stout, hollow, tubular trumpets, made of wood. The blow-hole is square, and set at the back near the upper end of the trumpet, which is adorned with a carved head or bust or some similar ornamentation. The ludi is about one meter long and has a diameter of about 20 cm.

Other hollow wooden trumpets are used for nkungi ceremonies and other special occasions. The first trumpet is called vunga, the next one vunga's follower, the third mintyabi (the reviler). The smaller size is called minkela.

Trumpets made of the horns of various larger species of antelopes, such as nsungu (*Cobus*), valangi (*Hippotragus*), and mvudi a mamba (*Limnotragus*), are very common. The blow-hole is square.

Ivory trumpets, often ornamented with beautiful carvings, used to be common and were handed down from generation to generation as family heirlooms.

Pipes are usually made from smaller antelope horns, like nsia (*Sylvicapia*) or nsuma (*Cephalophus*). They are called nsiba or mbambi. Occasionally they are made of wood, in

which case the tail of a nkumbi or an oiled tendon of a nkongo antelope is inserted in the pipe to prevent it from cracking.

Nkwanana or ngwalala are wooden pipes which are adorned with a monkey tail and wildcat skin. Often an oiled chicken feather or tendon is inserted in the pipe to prevent it from cracking. Often the pipe is also covered with skin.

Pipes are blown at the upper end. Their sound varies according to their construction.

In addition, the shells of various kinds of fruit, with a hole bored in them, are often used as pipes.

A more elaborate version of this is a sort of ocarina, made of the shell of a vumi fruit, in which two to four holes are bored. One of these serves as the blow-hole.

These mavumi are often played by women on their way to the fields, when they may sound like this:

E, yaaya yahata	Eh, mother, I shall cultivate
O, yahata	Oh, I shall cultivate
O-o yahata, yahata	Oh-oh, I shall cultivate, cultivate
Ntoto wa nakolokoto	The earth is hard
O-o yahata	Oh-oh, I shall cultivate
E, kamba kyahatanga ko?	Eh, say, do I not cultivate?
Bakala uhuka, e, uhuka	The man, the uhuka larva, e uhuka (he eats)
Bakento uhuka, e uhuka	The women, the uhuka larva, e uhuka (they eat)
Babakala badianga uhuka, e uhuka	The men eat uhuka, e uhuka
Bakento badianga uhuka, e uhuka	The women eat uhuka, e uhuka

The young men have their own melodies, which they play to win the admiration of the young girls. Through their melodies they can indicate a place where they can meet and talk.

The usual wooden nsiba pipes are turned into flutes by providing them with two or more holes. Flutes with two holes are known as nsiba ye kiliti, or ye kizaaka up north. Here too a tendon or something similar is inserted to prevent the instrument from cracking. The hole at the upper end is to blow the flute, while the lower one is stopped by the finger. This flute, which has only two notes (kiliti or kizaaka) is used to direct the hounds during the hunt, or played for pleasure. The sound is imitated as: tse-tse-lu. Another hunting pipe with two notes, usually made of wood, is called mwemvo.

Other types of flutes are rare. Makwanga, a reed-pipe consisting of seven grass reeds of varying length, is most common in the south. The reeds are tied together with raffia fibre straight across the upper end, the middle, and the lower end.

The Sundi are extremely skilful in modulating the pitch of their music when playing in concert. Usually this is done with special instruments, such as the mbindu drum and certain trumpets. A ngongi is held upright when it is beaten, but by striking it rapidly against the

chest the sound can be muted. The pitch of a single, meter-high gong is lowered by dipping its lower end in water. String instruments are muted with the fingers.

To distinguish different pitches in similar instruments, they are compared with the pitch of the human voice. Thus a trumpet with a deep bass sound is called *nlumi* (husband, man), one with a higher and more delicate tone *nkazi* (wife). A bass drum is called *ngudi* (mother), the more high-pitched type *mwana* (child, daughter).

The Sundi are very talented in imitating the rhythm and sound of their various instruments vocally. Different melodies are indicated by the initial words of the song or tune.

The rhythm of the drums on various occasions, for instance the *ndungu* rhythm on the *nlambuta*, is reproduced in words as follows: *Batensika fwi. E, babangumuna fwi. Mberekete, kilete-kinte. Batensika fwi. E, babangumuna fwi. Or: Ndumba dziki, ndumba dziki.* The frenzied rhythm produced by an ecstatic drummer in *minkisi* ceremonies, on the other hand, cannot be reproduced in words.

When the warriors set off to war, the war drum sounds: *Ti-nti, or mpiti-mpiti.* The people rejoice, jump and dance, and slap each other on the back.

The sound of the *mbudikidi* is imitated as: *kidi-kidi-kidi*, the rhythm varying according to the dance.

In a *marimba* the middle bars (*ngudi*) sound: *ngi-ngi-ngi, nga, ngelele-ngele.* When it has palm-lath bars, it sounds: *kwindindi, kindiki-ndiki, mbede-mbede, ndike, mbede-mbede.* A trumpet: *wili-wili.* Konki pipe: *cicilu-cicili.* Nkwanana pipe: *mporo-mporo.* Ngwalala pipe: *krr-krr-krr* (against the roof of the mouth with a pronounced trill). Ngongi bell: *nge, ngo-ngo-nge.* Mbantika (first) trumpet: *ku nleku, ku nleku, or ku luku.* Ntambula (responding): *ntente-ntente.* Mukamba (announcing): *ntelelele-ntelelele* (tela = announce). Longi: *kwo-kwo-kwo.* Mulumi (husband): *mveyi-mveyi.* Mukazi (wife): *wi-wi-wi.* Kintuula: *nki, nkinki-i-i, nkinki-nti-nti-nti.* Mukonzi: *mbulu-mbulu, nga bula kabaka tolo, nga kabaka tolo.*

The Sundi believe that music and musical instruments arrived with the first people, while several instruments moreover have originated in dreams.

The Sundi appear to have a natural talent and interest for song and music. They burst into song at the slightest provocation and on any occasion. The women sing during their work in the fields, the men at their work, for instance when they are dyeing. When a caravan makes a halt, there is always somebody ready to play a snatch on his *marimba*, which is stuck in the back of the waistband while they are on the road.

Almost anything at all will provide an occasion for singing. Songs are sung at lawsuits, when healing the sick, in gladness and in sorrow, at marriages, during poison ordeals, in games and all sorts of pranks, or to revile or annoy other people. Songs of the latter type are usually sung during festive dances, when peculiarities of physique or character become the butt of other people's insinuations. The songs call attention to people's deformities, their inability to sire or give birth to children, their bad morals, or denounce them as frauds or liars. On the other hand the songs can also praise and glorify admirable qualities like generos-

ity, beauty, or skill in dancing, or call attention to the excellence of the chiefs and elders, stressing their wealth and power, and the numerous children of their wives.

In lawsuits the songs convey warnings, instructions, and admonitions, as well as containing allusions to the progress and outcome of the case. They warn against adultery, violent fighting, or whatever the case may be dealing with. Often one man has to face several, or even a crowd of others who sing and shake their rattles.

Dance and music without song is rare, for it is said that song enhances the beauty of dancing. It is not at all uncommon, on the other hand, to find people singing without music, beating time by clapping their hands.

Anyone at all is free to call the tune and start a song, in which the others join him. Often there is a soloist (nseki a nkunga) who intones the verse, while the whole congregation joins in the refrain, singing and yelling at the top of their voices, often in falsetto. The soloists change, however, so that another can take the place of the previous one with entirely new verses of his own selection.

Accomplished soloists, who lead the singing expertly and compose new verses, are held in high esteem. Many of them compose entirely new songs and poems. Their names are well-known and remembered.

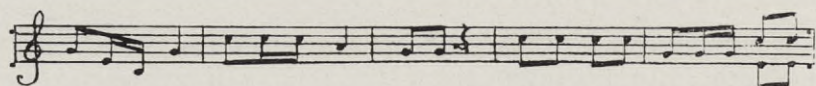
The range of the melodic scale in singing appears to be five notes. I have recorded some hundred songs with EDISON's phonograph. Several of them are from tribes living at some distance from the Sundi. They were prepared for publication at the Psychological Institute in Berlin by Mr. GEORGE HERZOG, assistant to PROFESSOR VON HORNBOSTEL, but due to lack of funds they could not be published at the time. Since Mr. HERZOG left for America shortly before the first World War, it is possible that they have now been published.

The songs often include imitations of birds. The songs and melodies are not derived from bird song, however, but have come and gone with the generations. Many songs have originated in dreams, especially those connected with minkisi. A bird wagging (dweta) its tail is described in song as: Ngoma dwe-dwe-dwe, another bird by: Yaa neyokidi, e, here we have met the dawn.

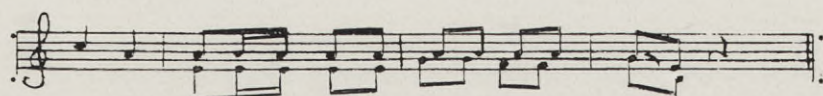
From "The Musical accent or intonation in the Kongo language" the following song may be reproduced (the transcription is made by Dr. HEINITZ of Hamburg).



Ni-di, ni-di, na-ma de; na-ma de, ki-di ki-di; ki-di ki-di,  
One, one, follows lightly; follows lightly, still more; still more,

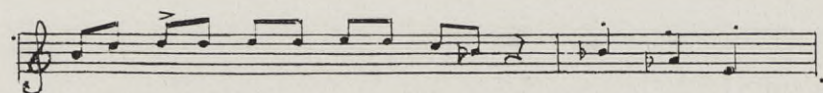


bu-si-ma-ni; bu-si-ma-ni, mo-do; mo-do mo-do, sa-nga ma te-te,  
Bushman ; Bushman , two ; two two, making you spotty

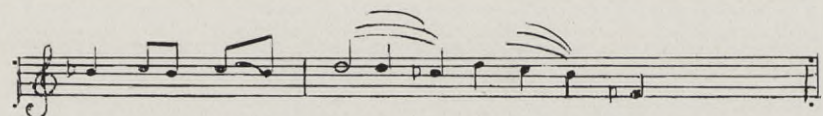


ko-le; su-mba kwa-ndi ka-su-mba ka-di ko.  
two; buy, may he buy, buy to be certain.

1. A goat

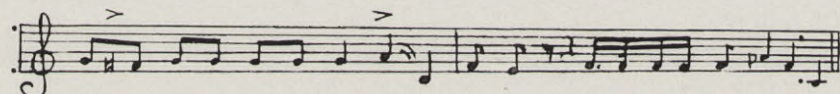


me me me me me me me me me me me me me;  
baa baa baa baa baa baa baa baa baa baa baa baa baa;



me me me; me me me  
baa baa baa; baa baa baa

2. An owl



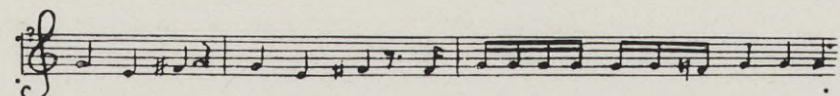
ku ku, ku-ku, ku-ku-ru wu ; ku ku, ku-ku ku-ku-ru wu.

3. A bird (nsiele).

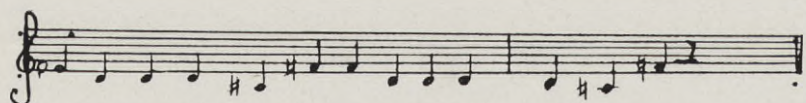


da-ka-ni-fa----ri , da-ka-ni-fa----ri .

5. A bird (kokolo).

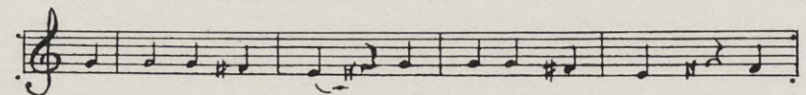


Me ko kwe, me ko kwe -----  
I am here, I am here -----



ko ko ko ko; ya -nki; ko ko ko ko ko ya- nki.  
What is it? What are they?

6. A bird (ngundu biolo).

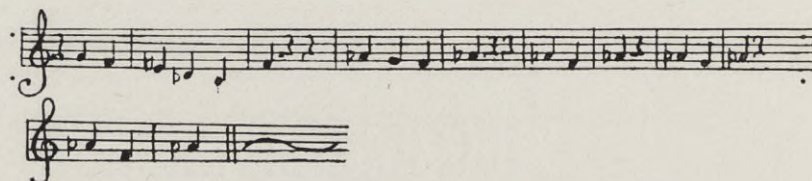


E, me--me ndye---yo E, me-me ndye -yo O,  
O, I am the one (you seek), O, I am the one O,

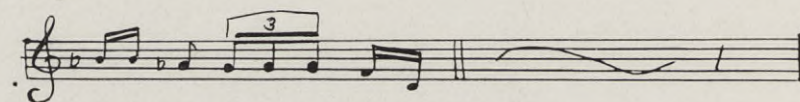


ma--ku-ddye- yu , ku po-ko ku.  
I am the one

7. The whistling of  
same bird

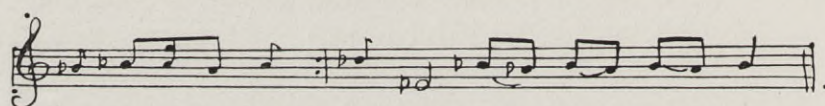


8. Guinea hen  
(nkelele)



ko ko ko ? ku we ru ko

9. A pigeon  
(ndinga)

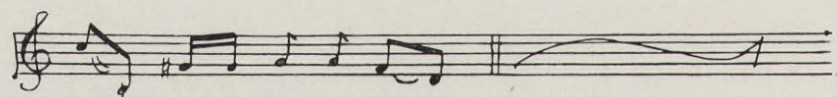


Ki- le ndi bu- ta (bu-)ta ko, yaa, yaa, yaa, yaa.  
I cannot bear the child, alas, alas, alas, alas.

10. A bird (popodi  
ye nsiele)

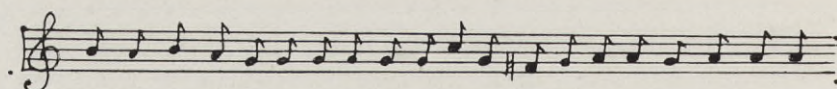


Popodi: E e -----ya-bo-di, ya-bo-di, ya-bo-di.  
E e ----- we two, we two, we two.

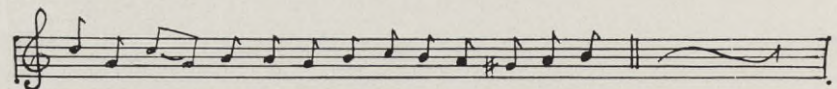


Nsiele: E, kin'a--mi ta--ba.  
O, I shall not run away.

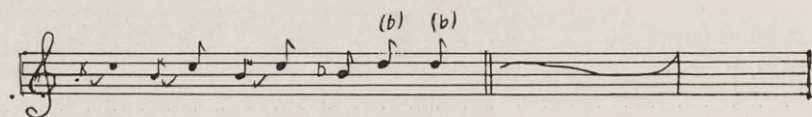
11. A monkey



e e e a a a ----- we-----



12. An antelope  
(nsuma).



dwe, dwe, dwe, du, du, du.

A prominent feature of the dancing songs is the refrain, in which everybody joins at the top of his voice. It may occur at the beginning, at the end, or at any point in the middle of the song. It is characterized by the frequent repetition of certain words, for instance E, ngongo ami and E, yaaye-e, E-wo-o.

“Rhyme” in kikongo consists in the repetition of the concluding word of the previous line at the beginning of the next. The words may have a different meaning, but must sound approximately alike. This technique is often practised in singing games, but may occur in other songs too.

Note that a song may be repeated any length of time as long as the soloist inserts some new words between the refrains.

Nsala mwana  
The child's soul  
E, yalalele  
E, has flown away  
yalalele  
Has flown away.

Konzo kya malavu  
Konzo is the day for the palm wine  
E, mene-mene tu bwabwene  
The day after tomorrow we meet.

Nge kwakudidi ko  
You who are not yet mature  
Zolanga ku longo  
Want to be married  
Engwa kanda dyazola ku longo  
Oh, such a family to desire marriage.

E, tukyelolo  
E, we have spent the night  
Muna vata dya nangumbi  
In the village of the guinea hen.

Mwana wanga, wange-e  
Child, listen, listen then  
Mwana wanga, wange-e  
Child, listen, listen then.



Fig. 13. Simbi-plant, Sundi in Lolo (Laman 1374).

Bu wakedi waleeza  
 When you were beautiful  
 Ngwa kwazola ko  
 You did not like me.  
 Bu wameni nuna  
 When you have grown old  
 E, ngongo ami  
 E, then I will not.  
 Yaaya wameni nuna  
 Yaaya has grown old  
 E, ngongo ami  
 E, I will not.

E, yaaya bonga baala  
 Maama baala bavwididi  
 Lukunga bonga baala  
 O, yaaya bonga baala.

E, mother, take the children  
 Mother, the children are no more  
 Lukunga took the children  
 O, mother, take the children.

O, yaaya, simu na simu  
 Lutyama nkuni.  
 Sita wayoko  
 O, yaaya sita wayoko

O, mother on this bank and on that  
 Fetch wood.  
 The barren one is burnt.  
 O, mother, the barren one is burnt.

E-e maama, e-e ndumba yobilanga.  
 E-e maama, e-e ndumba yobilanga.  
 E-e loko kyakukwele kani, lusakananga nandi.  
 E-e maama, e-e ndumba yobilanga.  
 E-e maama, e-e ndumba yobilanga.  
 E-e loko kyakukwela, vonso kifwetisidi?  
 E-e-e-e maama, e-e maama, ndumba yobilanga.  
 Mayoka maaku teedi, toko dya bezezi na kwela  
 E-e taata, e-e ndumba yobilanga e-e-e, ee taata.



Fig. 14. Nkisi Kubungu, Sudi in Kingoyi  
 (Laman 1314).

E-e, mother, the maiden bathes  
E-e, mother, the maiden bathes  
E-e, the one who will marry you, do you play with him?  
E-e, mother, the maiden bathes  
E-e, mother, the maiden bathes  
E-e, the one whom you will marry, where has he filled his eyes (meeso-e)  
with tears?  
E-e-e-e mother, e-e mother, the maiden bathes  
You have made the boast: a handsome, a handsome man shall I marry  
E-e, father, e-e, the maiden bathes, e-e-e, ee father.

Taata, lumbu ka lumbu ti dyafwema taata.  
Taata, wantandisa dyambu dyaku, e-e Taata.  
Taata, kukwangisi ngazi, e-e taata  
Ntima ami wayuku mpwila, e-e taata  
Bonso buzolele, unkamba taata, e taata  
E-e-e i yo taata, e mwene Kapita.  
Wakumpangila mvwende?  
Ngwaku, nani wansumba?

Father, day after day father remains wroth  
Father, if you let me grow lean, your concern, e-e father  
Father, you have not had the palm nuts cut down, e-e father  
My heart is parched with thirst (longing), e-e father  
As you will, tell me, father, e father  
E-e-e, thus it is, father, e, big chief  
Will you insult me?  
By your mother, who has bought me?

*Song for restoring a nsala soul*

E Maama, bandumba, luntala kwami. E-e-e  
Nkumbu yi nabyala mono Mavukumuna ndumba. E-e-e.  
Wamaa kuntonda, buna va meeza una diila. E-e-e.  
Ndumba yina kwela mu ntumba, kyami kantiila. E-e-e.  
E taata, E-e-e taata.  
Beeto mu Kinkonza mono i kubikanga ntandu. E-e-e.  
Nkumbu yina byala mono. Disiki mu Kinkonza.  
Wamaa kunkwela, buna mu nkata una diila. E-e-e.  
Wazola kwela, malanta wiza twadi. E-e-e.

E, mother, maidens, look at me. E-e-e  
 This name I received, I the tempter of maidens. E-e-e  
 If you love me, you will be allowed to eat at the table. E-e-e.  
 The maiden will be married through slander, mine will she love. E-e-e.  
 E father, E-e-e father.  
 I, of those living in Kinkonza, am the one to cause strife. E-e-e.  
 The name Disiki (endearment) I was given in Kinkonza.  
 If you marry me, you will eat in the womb. E-e-e.  
 If you want to be married, come and bring a box of canned goods. E-e-e.

E yaaya, bambulu-mbulu wakwela  
 Bu usolanga matoko  
 Bambulu-mbulu wakwela. E maama.  
 E maama, e-e wakwela.  
 E maama, e bambulu-mbulu wakwela.  
 Bu usalanga matoko.

E, mother, jackals may you marry,  
 If you scornfully reject young men  
 Jackals may you marry, e, mother.  
 E mother, e-e, may you marry  
 E mother, jackals may you marry  
 If you scornfully reject young men.

*Song for samba dance to the watutula drum*

E, yaaya-e,  
 E, wo-o.  
 Nsingu na binkandya, bonga baana  
 Yambula maama.  
 E, yambula maama, yambula yi  
 E, mooko na bilewa, bonga baana  
 Yambula maama.  
 E, nsingu na makolo, bonga baana  
 Yambula maama  
 E, nitu na mankanza, bonga baana  
 Yambula maama  
 E, mbunzu na makundu, bonga baana  
 E, yaaye-e  
 E, wo-o



Fig. 15. "A nkisi or a sculpture of an ancestor", Sundi in Kingoyi (Laman 1258).

E, yaaye-e,  
 E, wo-o.  
 The neck is scurfy, take the children  
 Yambula maama (e. g. Let be, mother expressing amazement)  
 E, yambula maama, yambula yi  
 E, the hands have red spots, take the children  
 Yambula maama  
 E, the neck has boils, take the children  
 Yambula maama  
 E, the body has pimples, take the children  
 Yambula maama  
 E, the forehead has witch glands, take the children  
 E, yaaye-e  
 E, wo-o  
 (The song goes on to point out all sorts of blemishes and defects in certain people.)  
 E-e-e yaaya, nalembo kwaku  
 E-e yaaya, bidianga mpwati.  
 O-o-o maama, bidianga wowo.  
 Toko-toko bya banda bidianga mpwati  
 O-o-o maama, bidianga mpwati e-e-e.  
 E-e-e, yaaya, let be, you (expressing disapproval)  
 E-e yaaya, they eat beans  
 O-o-o mother, they eat it  
 The young people down there eat beans  
 O-o-o mother, they eat beans e-e-e.  
 (The song continues to enumerate various things that certain people have stolen in the village.)  
 O-o-o maama, wilu wo-e?  
 E-e-e maama wilu-e?  
 Nsiku mya Luwozi, wanga myo  
 Nga walembana myo wonga, zengolo.  
 E-e-e, kwela, wele wo-o.  
 E-e-ekwela, wele wo-o.  
 E, nsiku mya makwela, zaaba myo  
 Nga walembana myo wonga, zengolo.  
 Weti mu nsengo fwila kwami, zengolo  
 Weti mu kiibi fwila kwami, zengolo  
 E, nsiku mya Luwozi, wanga myo,  
 Nga walembana myo wonga, zengolo.

O-o-o mother, have you heard?  
 O-o-o mother, have you heard?  
 The law of Luwozi, heed it  
 If you do not heed it, you will be condemned  
 E-e-e, to get married he has gone  
 E-e-e, to get married he has gone  
 E, the law ruling marriage, study it  
 If you do not heed it, you will be condemned  
 If it is for a hoe I die, I will be condemned  
 If it is for the axe I die, I will be condemned.  
 (The song goes on to enumerate different tools, a knife, a club, a matchet,  
 etc., and then returns to the original verse.)  
 E, the law of Luwozi, heed it  
 If you do not heed it, you will be condemned.

O-o-o, madami, sukula mooko  
 O-o-o, madami, sukula mooko  
 E-e-e, madami vulu kyakwela.  
 E-e-e, madami, vulu kyakwela  
 E-e-e, twalaba, sukula mooko  
 O-o-o, twalaba, sukula mooko  
 E, madami, nlambu nswék-e-e-e.  
 E, madami, nlambu nswék-e-e-e.  
 E, madami, bwivi bwingi-e-e.  
 E, madami, yambula bwivi

O-o-o, Lady, wash your hands  
 O-o-o, Lady, wash your hands  
 E-e-e, Lady, crazy to get married  
 E-e-e, Lady, crazy to get married  
 E-e-e, let us talk, wash your hands  
 O-o-o, let us talk, wash your hands  
 E, Lady, the dish is pumpkin leaf stew  
 E, Lady, the dish is pumpkin leaf stew  
 E, Lady, a wild urge to steal, e-e  
 E, Lady, leave off stealing.  
 (The song continues with other admonitions to the intended spouse.)

*A song to point out good or bad qualities in people*

E, yaaya, bunkita udiidi, baana ba  
 E, e e yaaya bunkita budiidi, baana ba.  
 Wakala kizengi?



Fig. 16. A nkisi, Sundi in Mayombe (Laman 725).

Kizengi udiidi, baana ba.  
E-e-e yaaya, kizengi udiidi, baana ba.  
Bu ukala nlemvo,  
Bulemvo udiidi, baana ba.  
E-e-e yaaya, bulemvo udiidi, baana ba.  
Bu ukala nzika  
Kizika udiidi, baana ba.  
E-e-e yaaya, kizika udiidi, baana ba.

E yaaya, deceit you have eaten (practised), these children  
E, e e yaaya, deceit you have eaten (practised), these children  
Are you stupid?  
Stupidity you have practised, these children  
E-e-e yaaya, stupidity you have practised, these children  
When you are mild (merciful)  
When you practise mercy, these children  
E-e-e yaaya, when you practise mercy, these children  
Then you are a friend (kind)  
When you practise friendliness, these children  
E-e-e yaaya, when you practise friendliness, these children.  
(And so the song goes on to mention various other qualities.)

*A song for someone amazed at finding himself the subject of vengeance or punishment*

E ntima ami, banzanga, yaaya  
Banzanga taate-e, banzanga

E, my heart, reflect, yaaya  
Reflect, taata, reflect.  
(The same phrases are repeated indefinitely.)

*Song to console a child whose mother has gone*

E nsangu-nsangu a mwana ndezi  
E, mwana ndezi kayimunwa ko  
Fiyuuma fya mwana ndezi.  
E, nguba tatu ya mwana ndezi.  
E, mwana ndezi kayimunwa ko.

E, my darling's little ear of corn  
 E, my darling will not be denied  
 My darling's little dish of yuuma  
 E, my darling's three peanuts (i.e. a handful)  
 E, my darling will not be denied.  
 (The song goes on to mention other eatables.)

*Lullaby*

Mwana ami, wanga  
 Iwanga.  
 Kudilangani-i,  
 Wanga  
 Nani ubendi-i?  
 Wanga.

My child, listen  
 I listen.  
 Do not cry,  
 Listen  
 Who has struck you?  
 Listen.

*A song to comfort a child*

Mwana weka dila, leelo bonda kwaku  
 Nge kaka a leelo masanga

The child cries, lull it now to sleep  
 You alone can dry its tears.

*Lullaby*

Mbo-mbo-mbo mbombo tolo  
 Mbombila mwana nahaana yaka  
 Yaka dya balanda dyayika ntoma  
 Mbo-mbo-mbo mbombo yaka.  
 Yaka dya balanda dyayika ntoma  
 Mbo-mbo-mbo mbombo tolo.



Fig. 17. Fork, Bembe in Kolo  
 (Laman 638).

Hush-hush-hush, hushaby to sleep  
 Lull the child for me, I'll give a manioc  
 The manioc they fetched had a nice taste  
 Hush-hush-hush hushaby manioc  
 The manioc they fetched had a nice taste  
 Hush-hush-hush hushaby to sleep.

*Song for carrying small children on the shoulders*

Nani kuneti?	Who carries you?
Yaa Ngonda	Lady Moon
Nkyama kaheeni?	What has she given?
Diiki dyami	My egg
Mpaani dyo kwami	Give it to me
Ngongo ami	I will not
Tuluka kwaku	Then go down (from my shoulder)
Ngongo ami	I will not
Sika nsiba pepepe	Blow the pipe pepepe.

*Begging song*

Wampaana ya kwami kooko	Give me, I am there
Nga wangimina,	Should you refuse me
Ngyele bwa ku tia	I'll go and fall in the fire
Ngyele zina kooko	I'll go and burn to death there
Ngyele lota kooko	I'll go and burn to charcoal there
Ngyele lambu	I'll go and be boiled
Ngyele tobuzuka	I'll go and burst to pieces
Ngyele konanana	I'll go and shrivel up.

*Dirges*

Yindila-ndila yidila	Laments I wail
Wedi maama watwama	Our dead mother has gone before
Yindila-ndila yidila	Laments I wail
Wedi mwene watwama	Our dead chief has gone before
Mpeleko i mbemba muna	Maybe that the sea eagle is there
Lusangi ye nsesi wa	The fish and the antelope
Tanda maalu wena makinu	Stride with your legs when dancing
Mandi nsambodia. Indila	His seven dances. I weep.

*During a poison ordeal for a ndoki*

Ukala dia, kutedi ndezi ko  
Umana dia, ndezi tambula  
E, ngongo me, kilela mwana ko

If you are to eat, you do not look after the one that minds the child  
If you have eaten, the one who minds the child answers  
E, I will not, I will not mind the child,  
etc.

*Song of the kin*

E, mwene zibula ko vitu e  
E, mwene meni tala mbangu

Mpiti yooyo  
E, mwene zibula ko vitu e  
E, mwene meni tala mbangu

Mpiti yooyo  
E, mwene zibula ko vitu e  
Bankanga kidi bakota  
Mwene wo  
E, mwene zibula ko vitu e  
Mono kidi yakota  
Mwene wo, e-e-e

E, master, open the door  
E, the chief has seen the ridge of the  
roof

This black edge  
E, master, open the door  
E, the chief has seen the ridge of the  
roof

This black edge  
E, master, open the door  
That your subjects may go in  
This master  
E, master, open the door  
That I may go in  
This master, e-e-e.

*Song of the grandchildren*

E, yaaya zibula ko viti e  
Yaaya meni tala mbangu  
Mpiti yooyo-yooyo  
E, yaaya zibula ko viti e  
Yaaya meni tala mbangu  
Mpiti yooyo yooyo

E, yaaya, open the door, e  
Yaaya has seen the ridge of the roof  
This, this black edge  
E, yaaya, open the door, e  
Yaaya has seen the ridge of the roof  
This, this black edge.

*Song of the children*

Taata, zibula ko vitu e  
Baana kidi bakoti  
I taata wowo wowo  
E, taata zibula ko vitu e  
Baana kidi bakota

Father, open the door, e  
That the children may go in  
It is this father  
E, father, open the door, e  
That the children may go in.

Kwenda ku nlangu  
Meno kwandi kaka wonga  
Kwenda ku tyoba  
Mono kwami kaka wonga  
Inga maama wo-o, ndila

To go to the water  
I only fear  
To go and fetch (wood)  
I only fear  
Yes, mother, wo-o I cry.

Kwenda ku mfinda  
Meno kwami kaka wonga  
Kwenda ku yinza  
Meno kwami kaka wonga  
Inga maama wo-o, ndila

To go to the wood  
I only fear  
To go to the field  
I only fear  
Yes, mother, wo-o I cry.

*Song of the kin*

E, mwene nayendi  
Wenda yendi kwaku ko  
Nkyama, bena (bandoki) saadi mu  
Nde au u-u, wulu (wilu) u-u wulu

E, master, go your way  
May you go your way  
What, may they (the bandoki) remain  
in  
Their country, u-u, hear, u-u, hear.

*Song of the grandchildren*

E, yaaya nayendi  
Wenda yendi kwaku ko  
Nkyama bena saadi mu  
Nsi au e-e wulu, e-e wulu

E, yaaya, go your way  
May you go your way  
What, may they (the bandoki) remain  
in  
Their country, e-e, hear, e-e, hear.

*The children*

E, taata nayendi  
Wenda yendi kwaku ko  
Nkyama bena saadi mu  
Nsi au a-a, nayendi a-a nayendi  
Bena saadi mu nsi au  
E, wulu, e wulu  
Bena saadi mu nsi au  
E, father, go your way  
May you go your way  
May they remain in  
Their country, a-a, go your way, a-a, go your way  
May they remain in their country  
E, hear, e, hear  
May they remain in their country.

Nzambi nungini e  
Nkanda (wa lufwa) wayenda nandi  
Ndilanga, yasaala, e maame-e  
Ndilanga malembe  
E, maame-e

God has won  
Letters (the book of death) came with him  
I weep, I remain behind, e mother  
I weep softly  
E, mother, e (repeated).

*Lament at dawn*

E, nsusu nkyelo-o  
E, ngumbi nkyelo-o  
Ngyele bulakana  
Wedi taata e-e

E, with the hens I have met the dawn  
E, with the partridges I have met the dawn  
I have gone to visit  
My dead father, e-e.

E, nsusu nkyelo-o  
E, ngumbi nkyelo-o  
Ngyele bulakana  
Widi yaaya wo  
Ku dyengila kwami mbedi e-e

E, with the hens I have met the dawn  
E, with the partridges I have met the dawn  
I have gone to visit  
This dead elder brother of mine  
After wandering around I have come,  
etc.

Ku yemba (nsi a bafwa) wele  
Kwa mbutami e-e  
Ku yemba kamba kwa kotolo ko  
Leelo ku kotolo e  
E, ku yemba

To the land of the dead he has gone  
To my mother e-e  
In yemba, say, you have not entered  
Now you have entered  
E, into the land of the dead.

E, ku yemba beele  
E, beele kwa nkomba ami, e-e  
E, kamba kwakotwanga  
E, leelo kukotolwe e-e  
Ku yemba leelo kukotolwe

E, to the land of the dead they have gone  
They have gone to my brother, e-e  
E, say, have you not entered  
E, now you have entered  
Into the realm of the dead you have now entered.

E, meno nakambu taata	E, I have no father
Madila-dila	Weep and cry
Meno nakambu nkazi	I have no brother
Madila-dila	Weep and cry
Meno nakambu ngudi	I have no mother
Madila-dila	Weep and cry.

*Song of counsel in a lawsuit*

E, ku ntandu beela	E, up there there is sickness
E, ku banda beele	E, down there there is sickness
Mwana wu	For this child
Mwana wu	For this child
Mfwa ndeleti nganga	Let me find a nganga
Yakumbuka nsonga	To cure his illness.

Kokulanga,	Cry loudly (crow)
Walembo kubanga	If you don't crow
Wele kwa nzuzi	You go to the judge
Kokulanga,	Crow loudly
Walembo kubanga	If you don't crow
Si wenda kwa nzuzi	You'll go to the judge
E, nsusu koko kokulanga	E, the rooster always crows
Walembo kuba	If you don't crow
Wele kwa nzuzi	You go to the judge.

Taata, wu, taata, wu  
E, mpani kyuma  
Yakukamba nsamu  
Yaaya, wu, yaaya wu  
E, mpaani kyuma,  
Yakukamba nsamu  
E, nsaa - nisaaka  
E, zyo - zyolo

You father, you father  
E, give me something  
I will tell you something  
You brother, you brother  
E, give me something  
I will tell you something  
E, decide—I decide  
E, examine—I examine.

Mbamba fya yaaku  
Mbamba fya yaa  
E tee - teeta  
E, zyo - zyola

Mbamba, a little (guilty) you are  
Mbamba, a little (guilty)  
So, just so  
E, examine—examine.

Wolo, wolo  
Kamba ka lwakambungu  
Wolo, wolo.  
Kamba ka lwalongo ngo ko  
Wolo, wolo  
Kamba ka lwalwengongo ko  
E, baala ba bwe  
Bwaboolo  
Ya, ta ta mambu

Out with it!  
Say, have you not been told?  
Out with it!  
Say, have you not been instructed?  
Out with it!  
Say, have you received no counsel?  
E, these children, how?  
Just so.  
Shall I hold a trial?

E, lwe, lwe, lwenga  
E, wa nuua aku wo

E, be, be wise  
E, it is for your mouth.

Ntyete, ntyete  
E, yakutala  
Ntyete, nki a nti umyata  
E, yakutala

Ntyete, Ntyete (a bird)  
E, I shall look at you  
Ntyete, in which tree shall you sit?  
E, I shall look at you.

*Another song*

Eyi, ka yaa ko, yafubila nsambanu  
Eyi, ka yaa ko, ya nkila nsambanu  
Eyi, ka yaa ko, ya nkila nsambanu

This (pig), not this, six animals (pigs)  
This, not this, one with six tails  
This, not this, one with six tails.

(This song is continued until the guilty party has paid all his fines.)

*Burial song*

E-e lubokoyongo, teemuna  
Kwidi butalala  
A-a, e lubokoyongo, teemuna  
Kwidi butalala.

E-e nightjar, keep awake  
That you may not sit crouched down (asleep)  
A-a nightjar, keep awake  
That you may not sit crouched down (repeated).

*Song about people who accuse each other or talk at the same time*

Konko, yaaya, neti nkazi andi  
E, banatane  
Konko dya mpumbu neti nkazi andi  
E, banatane  
E, taata, taata, neti nkazi andi  
E, banatane  
I mambu e? Inga.

The grasshopper, yaaya, carries his wife (along)  
E, one carries the other along  
The grasshopper, the purple one, has his wife along.  
E, one carries the other along  
E, taata, taata, he has his wife along.  
E, one carries the other along.  
Is it a lawsuit? Yes.

*Song sung during a lawsuit while the chief dances in the middle of the square*

E, yaaya, si nantwadi ku nenga.  
E, wonso lwalandana  
Nantwadi ku nenga.  
E, yaaya, si nantwadi ku nenga  
E, wonso lwalandana  
E-e-e, kumbano mambu - Waho-ho.  
E, yamaka? - Maka  
E, yakulumuka? - Kulumuka.

E, yaaya, take me aside (to the place where the parties hold their council)  
E, whatever you may bring forward  
Take me aside  
E, yaaya, take me aside  
E, whatever you may bring forward  
(Repeated)  
E-e-e, I concur in the matter—Waho-ho  
E, shall I rise?—Rise  
E, shall I step down?—Step down  
(i.e. shall I raise or lower the amount of the fine?).

*Work songs*

E wele, e nasala mbote ko  
Nkya udiila bina lamba  
E wele, nasala mbote ko.

E, he has gone, e, I shall work well (ko=kwandi)  
With what shall you eat what is prepared  
E, he has gone, I shall work well.

E, malebe-lebe banga mba  
Sala basala, bakulanga  
Ngamba, e malebe-lebe  
E ngunga.

E, be lithe in your movements, smiths (workers)  
They work, they hammer  
Helpers, bearers, be supple in your movements  
E, the bell.

Kikwanga weka bala  
Kamba, ubulanga aku ngamba ko.

Kikwanga has thoughts  
Say, does he not strike the bearers (workers)?

*Song when planting peanuts*

Yi-yi-yi-yi  
Tebele  
Yi-yi  
Tebele  
Teba  
Twateba  
Tebele-e-e

Tebele  
 Twabwabwana ku Mpungi  
 Tebele  
 Twabwabana ku Mpudi  
 Tebele  
 Twavempana zo kwandi  
 Tebele  
 Twakwenkuna zo kwandi  
 Tebele  
 Twawona zo kwandi  
 Tebele-e-e-e-e-e  
 Yi-yi-yi-yi  
 Tebele  
 Yi-yi  
 Tebele (repeated several times)  
 Teba (Scale)  
 Twateba  
 Tebele-e-e  
 Tebele  
 We shall meet at Mpungi  
 Tebele  
 We shall meet at Mpudi (repeated with other place names)  
 Tebele  
 Let us level (the earth) for them (the peanuts)  
 Tebele  
 Let us eat them  
 Tebele  
 Let us shell them  
 Tebele-e-e-e-e-e

*Ferry song*

Ya nkelele eyo	For the meat of that guinea hen
Ya nkelele eyo	For the meat of that guinea hen
Ya nkelele eyo	For the meat of that guinea hen
Nsumbidi mbizi ya nlangu	I have bought fish
Ya nkelele eyo	For the meat of that guinea hen.

*War song*

Ehe, ehe, ehe	Ehe, ehe, ehe
E, maama, nani wakumponda, maama	E, mother, who shall kill me mother
E, maama, nani wakumponda.	E, mother, who shall kill me?

*Singing games*

Yankenge, kwa wavatila?  
Vatila kwami simu a Mazinga  
Mbondo-mbondo  
Keti yankenge a samba  
Ntu ku nseke  
Maalu ku nsi a madyadya  
Kidwa-kidwa  
E, kinkembele  
Kidwa-kidwa  
E, kinkembele.

Yankenge, where will you cultivate (hoe)?  
I will cultivate on the Mazinga shore  
Lazybones  
You are a red sandfly  
Head on the shore  
Legs under the elephant grass  
Tearing sound  
Dog-bell or imitation of its sound  
Tearing sound.  
Dog-bell or imitation of its sound.

E, yaaya, mpeeti nsengo ami e.  
Nsengo ya nki e?  
Nsengo ya mulumi ami e,  
Mulumi nabi e?  
Mulumi wa lusala lwa mbemba  
Ti, watuuka Malwangu  
Tuukidi kwandi mwana nkesi ko  
Nsiba za nki e?  
Nsiba zaami ho-o-o  
E, Malwangu-e, e-ho-o-o

E, mother, give me my hoe  
Whose hoe?  
My husband's hoe  
Whose husband?  
The husband of the sea-eagle's feathers  
It has come from Malwangu  
He has come from a child of anger  
Whose nsiba pipes?  
My pipes.  
E, Malwangu-e, e-ho-o-o



Fig. 18. Wooden sculpture, Kimbandi, Sundi in Mayombe (Laman 1241).

Ntyetye-ntyetye  
Ka kumbweni ko-o-o.  
Ka kumbweni.  
Mbombo ngwaku yayala mankanza  
Yala kwandi yala  
Mpuku nzo  
Yidiidi Nsona  
Nsona diidi mbundu  
Subidi kwandi  
Kyakumbu ta wo-o-o  
Yandi yaa Kyakumbu  
Yenga kwandi kayenganga-a-a  
Bu kayenganga  
Kyokyo kwandi kitembisa banyonzi?  
Ka banyonzi ko  
Kobe kya mpumbu kisanga naboka-boka  
E weti e yoa Kyakumbu, e-e  
Boka-boka, boka  
E yoa Kyakumbu  
E, boka-boka, boka

Ntyetye-ntyetye (a bird)  
It has not seen me  
It has not seen me  
Your mother's nose is full of pimples  
Scattered everywhere  
The rat in the house  
Nsona has eaten  
Nsona has eaten the poison  
He has emptied his bladder  
Kyakumbu (expressing surprise) says wo-o-o.  
He, Kyakumbu  
Screams, he screams  
When he screams  
Is it this that shakes the nyonzi fish?  
Not the nyonzi fish  
The lip of the mpumbu grasshopper moves up and down  
E, it is Kyakumbu  
Call, call, call  
E, it is Kyakumbu  
Call, call, call.

E Davidi  
Kyasala yo ko  
Wayika nani?  
Yayika tende  
E tende?  
Tende nzaaka-a  
E nzaaka  
Nzaaka bodi-i  
E bodi?  
Bodi singi  
E singi e?  
Singi dya ngo  
E, ngo?  
Ngo badiila.  
E diila?  
Diila mpodi  
E mpodi?  
Mpodi nnanga  
E nnanga?  
Nnanga mu ba  
E ba?  
Ba dya yooya  
E yooya?  
Yooya nkanga  
E nkanga?  
Nkanga benga  
E lunga?  
Lunga lwabuta  
E buta?  
Buta bwa nkuusu  
E nkuusu?  
Nkuusu mambu  
E mambu?  
Mambu masuka-suka, mankengele  
nkwasu  
E nkwasu?  
Nkwasu kuulu kwandi kumosi  
Mankondo mataanu

Nani vyokele?  
Maseesa kwandi vyokele

O, David  
I have not done it  
Who have you become?  
I have become a tende grasshopper  
Which tende?  
A nzaaka grasshopper  
Which nzaaka?  
Tendency to rot  
Whose rotten food?  
A very large head  
Whose large head?  
The leopard's large head  
Which leopard?  
The leopard they ate  
What to eat?  
To eat squirrels  
Which squirrels?  
The slave's squirrels  
Which slave?  
The slave in the palm  
Which palm?  
The palm that dried up  
What is it that is like yooya?  
By roasting  
Which nkanga?  
Meat stew  
Which lunga?  
The gun's priming pan  
Which gun?  
The parrot's gun  
Which parrot?  
The noise at a lawsuit  
Which lawsuit?  
The lawsuit is difficult, it twists  
limpingly  
What is it that goes crosswise  
It is one foot that slips  
Five bananas.

Who has gone past?  
It is Maseesa who has passed

Nkambileti yandi  
Twalembe dya mba dyeto

Nkazi andi wa kundi  
Kasumbidi ya nsunga  
Mono bu kambela,  
Usumbudi ya nkodya  
Nkodya bu nadia wo  
Mpitumuni diinu  
Nkala bu kawa bo  
Kyayika tuku kyandi  
Kavyoka vabu  
Kavutuka vabu

Do!  
Na udodanga?  
Do!  
Beto kweto  
Do!  
Nki lusala ko?  
Do!  
Mfilu zeeto tudia  
Do!  
Na wasisa zo?  
Do!  
Wadi yaaya Ntumba  
Do!  
Ve kadyama?

Mwana wu,  
Mwana wu.  
Mpeeti nsengo aku e  
Nsengo ya nki e?  
Nsengo yinivakila nkeka  
Ti!  
Nkeka ya nki e?  
Nkeka ya mulumi ami e  
Mulumi nani e?  
Mulumi wa lukaya lwa musitu  
Ko!  
Watekila Malwangu

I must tell him  
That we will leave our hemp (to  
smoke)

His favourite wife  
Has he bought meat for  
Me, when he cured me  
He bought me a shell  
When I ate the shell  
It took along a tooth  
When the crab heard that  
It became his abuse  
He went by chipped at the edges  
He came back chipped at the edges.

Forgive me! (int.)  
Who is knocking?  
Forgive me!  
It is we  
Forgive me!  
What are you doing there?  
Forgive me!  
Our mfilu fruits we eat  
Forgive me!  
Who left them?  
Forgive me!  
Our departed mother Ntumba  
Forgive me!  
Where is she buried?  
etc.

Tekila kwandi Mwanda bakisi  
 O, yaa Tonga, wadia-wadia  
 Kwalundanga ko.  
 Ti!  
 Nsiba za nki e?  
 Nsiba ya binsyelele-nsyelele  
 O, yaa Tonga wasika nsiba syelele-syelele  
 You child,  
 You child  
 Give me your hoe  
 What hoe?  
 The hoe with which I will dig up nkeka tomatoes  
 Ti!  
 Whose tomatoes?  
 My husband's tomatoes  
 Who is the husband?  
 Husband to a forest plant  
 Ko!  
 He was before Malwangu  
 He was before bakisi Mwanda  
 O, mother Tonga, eat and eat  
 You do not hide  
 Ti!  
 What nsiba pipes?  
 Nsiba of the syelele plant  
 O, mother Tonga who blew the syelele-nsiba pipe.

E, Nzambi -  
 Nzambi nene  
 E, Nzambi-  
 Nzambi nene  
 Wabonga ntu watuula -  
 E, Nzambi nene  
 Wabonga meeso watuula? -  
 E, Nzambi nene.  
 Wabonga matu watuula -  
 E, Nzambi nene.  
 E, God (answer)  
 The great God  
 E, God  
 The great God

May you take the head and put (it) down  
E, the great God  
May you take the eyes and lay (them) down  
E, the great God  
May you take the ears and lay (them) down  
E, the great God.  
etc. etc.

Mpaani mbeele nabudila mpaatu zoole  
Mpaatu zoole nayabila mahongo moole.  
Mahongo moole nabaka ntodya myole.  
Ntodya myole nalambila bataata.  
Bataata bampeeni nlele bundi.  
Nlele bundi ya yabakila nsaka  
Bitikita bilembo mbutidi mwana bakala.  
Mwana bakala ndukidi nkumbu a taata.  
Nkumbu a taata yazenga mbadi munga.  
E, lo dilo.  
E, lolo lodi.

Give me a knife that I may make two scoops  
With two scoops I will bail out two holes  
In the two holes I will catch two ntondya fishes  
The two ntondya I will cook for the fathers  
The fathers have given me a piece of blue cloth  
For the piece of blue cloth I got nsaka stew inside of me  
Shake the fishpots, I have borne a son  
As the son I received the name (of) my father  
With the name (of) father I decide (and) look around  
E, lo dilo  
E, lolo lodi

*Singing game*

E, tumpungu-mpungu-u  
Tumpungu-mpungu kotele ku sanga-u  
Ku sanga tungudi kitunga nkutu-u  
Kitunga nkutu kyele kwa Luteete-e  
Luteete wateeta nkandi naye-ye  
Tutuunta haana  
Kimpa kisukidi

E, dragonfly  
The dragonfly went into the grass  
In the grass it built a cover (bag)  
The snail went to Luteete  
Luteete cracked palm kernels, crack-crack  
We move over there  
The game (riddle) is finished.

*Song on emerging from the water*

Mwini, mwini teeka  
Yalambila, teeka  
Mwini, mwini teeka  
Baana ba yaa Ngonda bafwa ye kyonzi.  
Tebo-tebo.

Sunshine, sunshine, shed forth your radiance  
That I may make food, shed forth your radiance  
Sunshine, sunshine, shed forth your radiance  
The children of Lady Moon are dying of cold  
Chatter-chatter.

*Song by which a son would find the father's prisoner whom the son had set loose (tale)*

E mundele wavanga ndambi  
Mputu i kwenda kwami  
Wonso bongidi nuni taata  
E, mundele wavanga ndambi  
Banuni beka bangula  
Mavengo, wonso bongidi  
Nuni taata, bangula mavavi  
Pukya pukya bila nuni  
Bankaka ka bayena ko

E, the white man has committed a crime  
To Mputu (abroad) will I travel  
Who has taken father's prisoner (bird)  
E, the white man has committed a crime  
The birds will explain it  
Mavengo who has taken  
Father's prisoner, the wings explain  
Hear, hear, such a bird! or: See, see the gallows-bird  
Others they have not seen.



*Song when travelling, walking*

Bisi banda batotokele  
E, yaaya, e yaaya.  
Bisi banda batotokele  
E, yaaya, e yaaya.

The people down there have gone  
E, yaaya, e yaaya  
The people down there have gone  
E, yaaya, e yaaya

*Song about a boy who only wanted to sleep with his mother*

Ulekanga mu nzo a ngudi  
Kivyodumuna, kivyodo

He only sleeps in his mother's hut  
Jerky movements of the belly.



Fig. 19. Necklace, maboka, Sundi in Mukimbungu (Laman 383).

Tales

Nsesi, the wily gazelle, or Ngo, the ferocious leopard, or both of them, are the principal characters of many Sundi tales, some of which are set down below.

Once upon a time there was a man who married a woman, by whom he had a very beautiful daughter. The little girl grew into a fair maiden, and her father declared that any man who wished to win her for his wife would first have to take down the chicks of Mbemba, the sea eagle, from the top of the mfuma tree.

One day the girl had gone to hoe her field, when Valangi<sup>1</sup> came up to her and asked her for a drink of water. She told him: "Go ahead and drink from the little calabash there". When he had drunk, he belched, and said: "Eh, this water is as excellent as its mistress". The girl replied: "Eh, alas, were I indeed beautiful, would I remain unmarried?". When Valangi heard that, he asked: "Can this be true? Are you unmarried?" The girl sighed: "Yes, I'm unmarried". Then Valangi said: "If I were to give you a token, would you accept it?" "Yes, I can accept it", the girl answered. "But my father has declared that the man who is to wed me must first climb to the top of the mfuma tree and take down Mbemba's chicks." Valangi received this information blithely, and said: "That's alright. Expect me later tonight, for why shouldn't I be able to take down Mbemba's chicks?"

That evening Valangi came to the girl's house. He paid his respects to the girl's father, saying: "Yes, Mayombe chief, taste this mug from the village street. I have come to seek my manioc root". The father answered: "Alright. I thank you for this mug from the village street. But if this is all, then you, my child, must know what it is all about?" The daughter hastened to replay: "I am willing, but my father has made it a condition that the man who is to wed me shall first climb the top of the mfuma tree and take down Mbemba's chicks". The father agreed: "Yes, those are my words". Then Valangi addressed his nzitu (father-in-law): "Yes, Mayombe (chief), we are agreed. Wait until dawn tomorrow, and I'll take them down".

The father told his daughter: "Go and light a fire in the house, and show him where he is to sleep, so that he can retire early. And take along this mug of palm wine for him to

<sup>1</sup> A species of antelope.

drink. The girl did as her father had ordered her, and followed her suitor into the house to sleep by his side.

At the break of day Valangi awoke, and said to the girl: "Let's go and take down Mbemba's chicks". But his nzitu had had a goat killed for him, and the girl said: "Wait until you have eaten the food my father has had prepared for you". But her suitor exclaimed: "A-a, I've no time to wait for the food. We must leave now". The maiden assented. Arrived at the mfuma tree, Valangi asked: "Tell me, does one sing while climbing up, or do I just climb?" The girl answered: "We must sing", and started the song

"I rob and plunder Mbemba's nest  
I rob and plunder Mbemba's nest"

Valangi joined in as he climbed up. About midway up the tree, he lost his hold, and dropped dead on the ground. "Come on", said the girl, "drag him along to my father's house". She asked for Valangi's horns to keep her oil in. His body was cut up and provided meat for the household.

Another day, she had again gone to hoe her field, when Nsuma (zobongo)<sup>1</sup> came bounding up to her and asked for a drink of water. The conversation developed along the same lines as with Valangi, and after talking with her father, Nsuma accepted the condition and said: "We are agreed. Just wait until dawn comes tomorrow". These preliminaries over, he went to sleep in the girl's house. At the first light of day the next morning he made his way to the mfuma tree. As they stood at the foot of the tree, the maiden started her song:

"I rob and plunder Mbemba's nest"

Nsuma climbed up, but close to the top he also fell down and was killed. The girl told the people that had gathered: "Drag the body off to my father's house". She asked for Nsuma's horns to put her oil in.

And so it went on. Nzau, the elephant, and other animals after him, all suffered the same sorry fate after asking the girl for a drink of water. But then one day Nsesi, the gazelle, came and asked for water. The girl said: "Go ahead and drink from that little calebash". Nsesi drank eagerly, and said: "Ah, this water is as delightful as its mistress". "Eh, come", said the girl. "If I were beautiful, wouldn't I be married?" Nsesi asked: "If I were to give you a token, would you accept it?" The girl answered: "Yes, but first you must go and take down Mbemba's chicks from the top of the mfuma tree there, not until then". Nsesi said: "Alright. Why shouldn't I, the great Nsesi who drinks water with his foot, be able to take down Mbemba's chicks? Alright, I'll be back later". In the evening he came and brought along a mug (of palm wine) for the girl's father, which he presented with the words: "Yes, Mayombe chief, taste this mug from the village street. My reason for coming here is that I wish to marry your daughter". The father replied: "I thank you for this mug from the village street, but if it is marriage you have in mind, it is for my daughter to say whether she

<sup>1</sup> Zobongo; another type of antelope.

is willing". The daughter said: "I'm willing, but you have made me accessible only through Mbemba's chicks". "Yes, that is what I said", the father agreed. "It's alright with me", Nsesi declared. "Wait until dawn tomorrow, and I'll be on my way to take them down".

At dawn he set off for the mfuma tree. They sang the prescribed song for climbing up. "I rob and plunder Mbemba's chicks", and Nsesi started climbing. He arrived at the top and grabbed the nest with Mbemba's chicks, overwhelmed with joy. But before taking them down, he first climbed down, danced, and embraced his betrothed. Again he climbed up, and again he came down to embrace his betrothed. Finally he climbed up once more to bring down the chicks. Having taken them down, he took them to his father-in-law and received the daughter in marriage. And thus it was only Nsesi who proved himself worthy to marry the girl.

— A maiden grew to maturity in the village. The man who was to wed her would first have to fill a cooking-pot with tears. Mvudi, the antelope, went to the girl and asked her for a drink of water: "Nkenge, give me water". When he had swallowed the water, nakidi-nakidi, and belched, nabyo-o, he said: "This calebash is as beautiful as its mistress Nkenge". Nkenge retorted: "If it were true that I am beautiful too, wouldn't I get married?". Mvudi asked: "Are you still unmarried?" "Yes", Nkenge answered. Mvudi said: "If I send for cola nuts, will you accept them?". Nkenge answered: "If you wish to marry me, you must first fill a cooking-pot with tears". At that, Mvudi began crying, while he sang this song: "Taata, taata, will you marry me, then don't think, a cooking-pot full of tears you must squeeze out of this head". But no tears would come, and he went on his way.

Then he met Nsuma<sup>1</sup>, who asked him: "Where do you come from?" Mvudi told him: "A maiden I was to have wed, but to marry her, one must fill a cooking-pot with tears". Nsuma said: "I'll go and try my luck". Mvudi retorted: "Oh, you, Nsuma, how would you win this maiden? Should you succeed where I, Mvudi, have failed?". But Nsuma went. When he met Nkenge, the conversation proceeded in the same way as with Mvudi. The girl fetched a cooking-pot for him to weep in. He pressed and squeezed his head, but to no avail. Only a few tears fell into the pot. And so the girl told him: "Be off! You have no tears".

Mvudi in his turn met Mpakasa, the buffalo, who asked him: "Where do you come from?" Mvudi explained: "In vain have I tried to woo a maiden. If you wish to wed her, then fill a cooking-pot with tears". "Hah", said Mpakasa, "wouldn't I, Mpakasa, with my large head, be able to win this maiden?" And so he went to Nkenge and asked her for a drink of water, and the same conversation as before took place. Nkenge produced a large cooking-pot: "Father, father, a cooking-pot full of tears". He squeezed his head, but it yielded no tears. "Off with you", said the girl, "you shall not marry me".

Then Nzau, the elephant, came to try his luck. Nkenge gave him a cooking-pot, but for all his trumpeting, he could not fill it with tears. However hard he squeezed his head, not a drop would come. "Be off", said the girl, "you won't be the one to wed me".

There were many other animals who tried to win the maiden, but none of them could weep a cooking-pot full of tears.

<sup>1</sup> Another type of antelope.

Then Nzau met Nsesi, and told him: "If you wish to wed this maiden, you must fill a cooking-pot with tears". Nsesi replied: "I, the wily Nsesi, I who drink water with my leg, I shall wed her". Nzau retorted: "You, Nsesi, you will never succeed in winning this woman. Eh, you puny little creature, with your thin legs like stalks of grass, should you be the one to wed her?" Nsesi went off to Nkenge, but on the way he picked up an almost rotten banana root oozing with liquid, which he placed on his head, pressing his small cap down over it. When he came to Nkenge's house, he asked her: "Please, give me a drink of water". Nkenge offered him her calabash, and told him that she would accept cola nuts as a sign that she accepted his proposal. But before he could wed her, he would first have to fill a cooking-pot with tears. Nsesi told her: "Bring it here", and Nkenge fetched the pot. "E-e-e-e, father, a cooking-pot full of tears, if you wish to wed her, do not think", and Nsesi squeezed his head. The tears fell in a steady stream, filling the cooking-pot to the brim. The maiden took the pot of tears and hastened to pour it out over her mother's grave.

And so it was through his shrewdness and intelligence that Nsesi won the maiden, which goes to show that these qualities count for more than physical size.

— Kimpwangi, the spider, had married six wives. One of them gave him a beautiful daughter, whose skin was as fair as that of the white people.

One day Nsuma came sauntering along, *bidika-bidika* (onomat.), and asked Kimpwangi: "Where is your daughter?" "Inside, in the house", said Kimpwangi. "I wish to marry her", Nsuma told him. Kimpwangi answered: "If you wish to marry her, you must bring along three calabashes of palm wine, and you must be able to tell when light replaces the darkness at dawn". And so Nsuma went to fetch three calabashes of palm wine. They drank and drank, but finally Nsuma said: "I want to go to sleep now". Kimpwani answered him: "Are you going to leave me, your *nzitu*, to drink this palm wine alone?" Nsuma let himself be persuaded, and the drinking continued. But finally Nsuma laid his head down on the bed and fell into a peaceful sleep, snoring his head off. The following morning the sun rose higher and higher in the sky, but he did not wake. The people of the household decided to have a look at Nsuma, after all his boasting. They woke him up: "Nsuma, Nsuma!" Nsuma asked: "What is it, what?" and they shook him: "Wake up, wake up!" He looked up at the

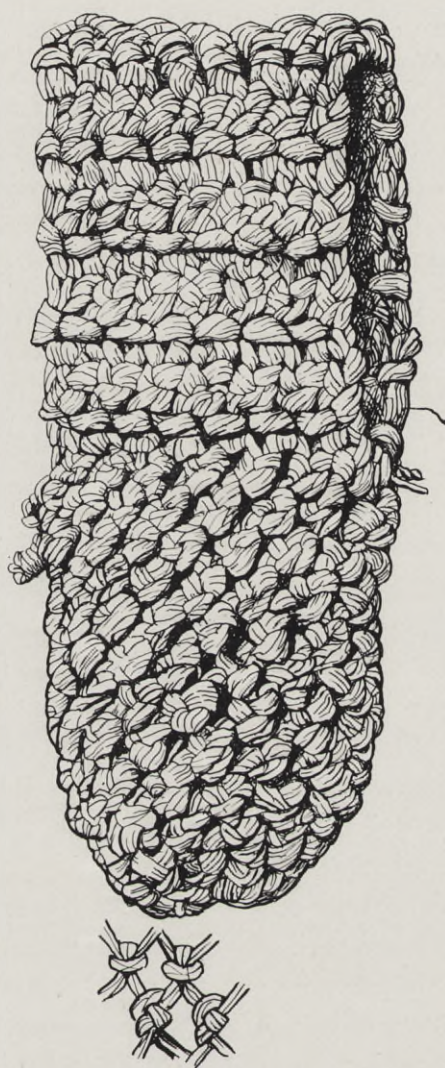


Fig. 20. Bag (*mbwanga*), Sundi in Kingoyi (*Laman 612*).

sky and sighed: "Ah, poor me". But the girl's people told him: "Be off, you will not wed her".

And so Nsuma went off, and met Mvudi, who asked him: "And where might you be coming from, master?" He answered: "In vain have I tried to win a maiden. But if you wish to marry her, you must know when dawn dispels the darkness, and that after three calabashes of palm wine! Only then will she wed you". The other replied: "Hah, and why should a mvudi not succeed in marrying her?"

And so Mvudi set off and asked the father: "Kimpwangi, how about your daughter?" The father replied: "If you can tell when dawn arrives, and if you give me three calabashes of palm wine, then you shall marry her". Mvudi went to fetch three calabashes of palm wine in his village. They drank and drank, and finally Mvudi said: "I'm going off to sleep". But Kimpwangi upbraided him: "After all, I'm your nzitu, would you leave me alone to drink this wine? Have you no shame?" And so they continued their drinking. At last the wine was finished and they lay down to sleep. Mvudi fell into a deep sleep. The sun was already high in the sky, when the father ordered his household to go and wake Mvudi. They did so, and he found that the dawn had passed long ago. Mvudi sighed: "Ah, we poor Mvudi people, this maiden is not for us!" He was told: "Off with you, you will not wed her". And so he went.

On his way he met Mpakasa, who asked him: "Where do you come from?" Mvudi told him: "Master, let's not speak of it. I have in vain tried to win a wife from our master Kimpwangi. If you wish to wed her, you must be able to tell where the dawn arrives, and three calabashes of palm wine besides". Mpakasa boasted: "I, Mpakasa, whose stormy passage sweeps the ears off the grass (nkanzika), I'll go and try my luck". And so he went. "Master Kimpwangi. What price do you set on this maiden of yours?" he asked. "The price is three calabashes of palm wine, and you must be able to tell where the dawn arrives. If you succeed, she will be yours". Mpakasa went to fetch palm wine in his village, and on his return the drinking started. It went on and on, and finally Mpakasa said: "I'm off to bed, master Kimpwangi". Kimpwangi replied: "So you would leave me alone to drink the wine? Have you no shame?" And so the drinking continued until the wine was finished. Darkness had long since fallen when they finally went to sleep. Mpakasa fell into a deep sleep (nalu), snoring nkonke-nkonke (onomat.). The following morning the old story repeated itself. When they woke Mpakasa, the dawn had passed long ago. Looking up at the sky, he sighed: "It's true, we Mpakasa people are unable to marry this maiden". And he too was sent packing.

On his way he met Nzau, who asked him: "Mpakasa, where do you come from?" "Ah, master Nzau, say no more", he answered. "In vain I have tried to win Kimpwangi's maiden. But if you would marry her, you must know where dawn dispels the darkness, and three calabashes of palm wine besides". Nzau hastened back to his village to fetch the three calabashes of palm wine. Arrived at the girl's village, he told her father: "Here is the palm wine, presented by me, Nzau, ngwani (in truth), who scatters the dew, tramples the thorn". As before, they drank and drank. Finally, Nzau exclaimed: "Ah, as far as I'm concerned, it's

time to sleep". But Kimpwangi scolded him: "But Nzau, have you no shame, that you would leave me, your nzitu, alone with the palm wine?" And so the drinking went on and on, until the wine was finished and both lay down to sleep. Nzau slept like a log and his snores, botolo-botolo, were heard all over the house. When dawn had come, they went to wake Nzau up: "Eh, eh, Nzau. Eh, you, wake up!" Dazed at first, then wide awake, he lamented: "Ah, what a sorry fate! Now I, the great Nzau himself, have lost my chance to win the maiden". But the girl's people chased him off: "On your way, you will not wed her".

On his way, he ran into Nsesi, who asked him: "Our chief, master Nzau, where do you come from?" He replied: "Hush, my brother, I have in vain tried to win Kimpwangi's maiden. But if you would marry her, you'll have to be able to tell when it dawns, and three calabashes of palm wine besides".

Nsesi said to himself: "I, the shrewd Nsesi, who drinks water with his leg, I'll return to fetch palm wine". He fetched the palm wine and approached Kimpwangi: "What do you ask for your daughter?" "You must be able to tell when dawn arrives, and three calabashes of palm wine you must give me, then she will be yours", Kimpwangi answered. Nsesi handed over the palm wine and a new drinking bout began. After a time, Nsesi said: "Ah, it's time for me to leave", but the other told him sternly: "Eh, you, Nsesi, are you leaving your nzitu all by himself to drink the palm wine? Have you no shame?" And so the drinking continued, until finally both of them went off to sleep: "Ah, will I sleep!" Their sleep was deep and their snores resounded, tarara nkoke, tarara nkoke. It had been light for a long time when Nsesi was shaken awake: "Eh Nsesi, eh Nsesi, wake up now! The day is far gone". He woke up and sighed: "Ah, now I, Nsesi, have been tricked. I failed to win the maiden". He too was sent on his way: "Be off. You will not wed her".

Then Nsesi went off and met Koko, the cock, who asked him: "But master Nsesi, where do you come from?" "Hush", said Nsesi, "I, Nsesi, have in vain tried to win Kimpwangi's maiden. But if you would wed her, you must know when the dawn dispels the darkness, and three calabashes of palm wine besides". Koko said: "I, Koko, will not forget the dawn, so I'll try my luck". When he arrived, he asked: "What do you ask for this daughter of yours?" The father answered: "You must know when the dawn arrives, and give me three calabashes of palm wine. Then she will be yours". Then they sat down and drank palm wine. It went on and on, until Koko said: "I'm going to sleep now". Kimpwangi retorted: "Would you really leave me, your nzitu, to drink the palm wine by myself?" Koko was served more palm wine, but he happened to stumble and all the drink was spilled. Finally the party was over, and they could go to sleep. When dawn arrived, Koko was right on the dot with his crow of koko-dyo-ko-aa, koko-dyo-ko-aa. Then he went to Kimpwangi, and said: "Bring me my maiden". Kimpwangi refused to part with her, at which Koko hacked him to pieces and swallowed him in one big gulp (namyo). Then Koko took his maiden.

The moral of this tale is that a husband who becomes too fond of his wine is in danger of destroying his marriage. When his brain is fuddled with drink, he won't know what he is doing, just like those who were incapable of greeting the dawn, because their heads were

heavy with palm wine. There is a second moral as well: Never try to cheat people out of the just reward that has been promised them. People with Kimpwangi's attitude are bound to suffer a similar fate as the spider, when he was swallowed by Koko.

— Once upon a time the rat Mbende decided to compose a nkisi of his own. When it was finished, he put a cap of ngombo cloth on his head, dressed himself in animal skins, and bound his waist with nsakulu strips of skin. Then he painted lines at his temples, slung his nkisi over his shoulder, and set out.

The other animals he met gazed at all this finery, and asked him: "But Mbende, brother-in-law, where have you been to compose a nkisi like this?" Mbende answered: "In Mayimba's village. But now I in my turn travel around to teach anyone who wishes to learn the art, so that he will be entitled to wear these beautiful robes. Who is interested?" Mvudi was the first to declare himself willing to learn. And so Mbende opened his nkisi bag. He took out some yellow ochre and rubbed it on Mvudi's temples. Then he drew a sign on his brow, and said: "Now that I've marked you with this nkisi powder, you will not burn in the heat of the nkobo grass fire, for the nkisi will protect you". But Mvudi answered: "To enter the burning nkobo grass might be dangerous, for I've never seen any nganga who braved such a fire. So how about you venturing into the burning grass first? Then, when you've proved that the fire has not harmed you, I'll follow".

In reply, Mbende marked himself, and said: "Now let's go to the nkobo grass". Arrived at their destination, Mbende walked into the high grass. The first thing he did was to find a burrow in which he could hide himself. After he had placed the nkisi inside, he turned around, stuck his head out of the hole, and called: "Eh, set fire to the grass, e!" Then he hurried to burrow down as far as possible inside the hole. When the other animals heard his call, they immediately set fire all around the plot of grass, and soon it was one roaring blaze, with high flames shooting up. The other animals thought: "Surely nganga must have perished in these flames!" When Mbende noticed that the roar of the fire had died away, he slung his nkisi over his shoulder and emerged. And he sang: "Eh, I am not burnt, I, the swift Mbende", as he danced and capered about. The other animals examined him closely, but they found that not a hair on his body had been singed. Then they exclaimed: "Oh, truly, this is indeed a powerful nkisi". And Mvudi said: "Now I'm willing to do the same in another plot of grass". "Go, and farewell", said Nsesi. Mvudi entered the high grass, and called out: "Eh, light the fires". The others set fire all around the field. The fire blazed, and Mvudi thought: "Please let me make it. The nkisi will protect me, just as it protected Mbende". But when the fire reached him, the flames leapt at him, and roasted him until he looked like a heap of dry, charred bones.

Mbende went in and ate the remains, after which he returned to his village.

Some time later, he again dressed in his nganga robes, and set out to teach others how to compose his nkisi. This time a wild boar fell victim to his trickery, and was burnt in the same way as Mvudi. He ate it and returned to his village. In this way he managed to burn several other animals to death. But then one day, when once more he had dressed in his nganga finery and set out to teach others the secret of his nkisi, he met Nsesi, who

asked him: "Well, Mbende, brother-in-law, where might you be going?" Mbende answered: "I'm out to teach others how to compose my nkisi. Anyone who wishes to learn the secret will have the right to dress in robes like mine". Nsesi said: "I'd like to learn, but how does one go about it?" So Mbende explained: "I'll put a mark on your face with powder, and then we'll put you in the burning nkobo grass. But never fear, the power of this nkisi will save you from burning to death". But Nsesi retorted: "I've never yet seen a nganga brave a fire in the nkobo grass, so it would be hazardous for me to be the first now. But if what you say is true, why don't you do it first, and then we'll see. If you are alright, I'll follow". Mbende said huffily: "You can ask anyone of your friends if I got burnt when they left me in the fire before!" But Nsesi persisted: "That's all very well, but I'd like to see it with my own eyes".

So Mbende untied his nkisi bag, marked his face with powder, and said: "Now I'm all set; lead me to the grass plot where you want to burn me". Nsesi told him: "Wait here, we'll go and find a suitable plot, and then we'll come back to tell you". Mbende assented. The others left, and when they had arrived at their destination, Nsesi told his friends: "Now search the grass for rat holes. Whenever you find one, block it up with stones, and be sure not to leave a single one open". They all did as they were ordered, and blocked up every hole and burrow in the grass. Then they returned to the village, and said: "Come along now, Mbende, brother-in-law, for we have found a nice, thick field of grass". "Let's go", said Mbende, and off they went. On the way Mbende was singing this song: "Eh, I won't burn, I, the swift Mbende". Arrived at the field, he told the others: "Wait until you hear me call out to set the fire. Then you can go ahead. Is that understood?" The others answered: "It is understood". And so Mbende entered the high grass with his nkisi. He looked everywhere for a hole in which to hide himself, but found none. Every single one of them had been effectively blocked up. Nsesi and his party, impatient at the delay, asked him: "Eh, shouldn't we set the fire now?", but Mbende called back: "Eh, wait just a little while longer, but then!" He kept running frantically all around the field, but found no hole to save himself. Then Nsesi had his friends set fire all around the grass, and Mbende perished in the flames with his nkisi.



Fig. 21. Calabash for nkisi Nkondi amamba Sundi in Lolo (Laman 1316).

— There was a man who married a woman, who gave him a very beautiful daughter. The girl had captivated all the young men, but her father said: "The man who is to wed my child must catch a live animal and bring it here. That will clinch the bargain". When Ngo, the leopard, heard this, he said: "Alright, I'm off into the grass". And there he lay in wait until he caught a nkabi antelope. But it put up a lot of resistance, so that Ngo was forced to dig his claws deep into its body, and the nkabi died on the way to the girl's house. When Ngo arrived, he said: "Ah, see here your animal". But the father answered: "I did not ask for a dead animal, but for a live one". And so Ngo returned to his hunting grounds. This time he caught a nsuma, but again the animal had been wounded by his claws and died on the way back. And when he came to the girl's house and offered the animal to her father, he was scornfully dismissed: "Why do you persist in bringing me dead animals? Take it away. I'm looking for live animals".

Nsesi had also set his heart on marrying the girl, but small and puny as he was, there was no chance of his taking a live animal by force. But he hit upon a stratagem to get around this difficulty. Hurrying to his palm grove, he cut off a lot of palm branches, which he made into ntete baskets. He made a great number of them, in different sizes to suit every animal roaming the plain. Then he proceeded to cut mpunga bast, which he scraped and twisted into a rope. He tied it to all the ntete baskets and carried them to the forest, where he hid them in the underbrush. Close by the place where he had hidden the baskets, a large nkamba tree grew in the forest. He took an axe and started chopping it down. As he chopped his way through the trunk, he sang this song: "E-e-e, nganga Squirrel, we shall build on the skin of an ox, nganga Squirrel, kwo-kwo-kwo-ki-kwo, eh nganga, nganga Squirrel, we shall have our lair on the skin of an ox, eh nganga Squirrel, kwo-kwo-kwo-kwo-ki-kwo". His beautiful song captivated all who heard it. Belo, the antelope of the plain, was one of them and he hurried to the forest where Nsesi was. He asked him: "But what will you use this enormous tree for?" Nsesi answered: "I will make it into a pole for my house". Belo asked: "Are you strong enough to lift a piece of this tree and carry it to the village?" Nsesi told him: "Of course I can". But Belo refused to believe him: "I'm sure you can't do it—you couldn't even carry me!" Nsesi persisted: "I'm telling you the truth. If you are inside a ntete basket, I can do it". Belo told him: "Hah, if we only had a ntete basket, I would let you try to lift me". Nsesi answered: "Agreed. Just wait here while I fetch an old ntete basket that I put over there". He went off and fetched a basket of the right size for Belo. Belo crept inside. Nsesi said: "Let me tie up the basket a bit". Belo answered: "A-a, don't do that", but Nsesi persisted: "Eh master, let me tie the rope on and tighten it a bit, so that you won't fall to the ground". Belo gave in: "Alright, tie it then, but don't pull it too tight". Nsesi pulled the rope as tight as he could, while Belo wailed: "Not so tight, not so tight!" "I know, I know", said Nsesi, and made a knot in the rope. Then he lifted the ntete basket and set off. After a while Belo thought they had gone far enough and said: "Ah, Nsesi, I'm convinced, you really are very strong. I never thought you would be able to carry me all this way. Now you can put me down". But Nsesi told him: "Wait a little while until we come to the plain", and despite Belo's pleas he refused to put him down. Belo bleated and

struggled wildly in the ntete basket, but he couldn't get out. When they arrived in the plain, Ngo caught sight of Nsesi and sprang to grab the basket from his head. Ngo carried Belo, who had been fatally wounded by his claws, to the girl's father, but again his gift was refused, for the animal was dead.

Nsesi returned to the forest and went on to chop down his tree. He resumed his singing. The antelope Nkabi, walking along the edge of the forest, was attracted by his delightful song, and thought to himself: "Let's go and find out whoever that can be that's singing". He went far into the forest until he came upon Nsesi, and asked him: "Eh, but that tree is enormous, what will you use it for?" Nsesi answered: "I'll cut it up into poles for my house. Don't you know that the kintombo season<sup>1</sup> has arrived? That's why I want to strengthen my house, so that it won't be blown away by the storm". Nkabi taunted him: "You couldn't carry it, you couldn't even carry me to the plain over there". Nsesi answered: "Certainly I could. If you are in a ntete basket, I'll get you there". Nkabi retorted: "Then find a basket and try to carry me, but I'd be surprised if you can even lift me off the ground". Nsesi told him: "Agreed. Wait here while I fetch an old and worn ntete basket that I left over there". He went off and fetched a basket of the right size for Nkabi. Nkabi lay down in it, but he told Nsesi: "Don't tie me down in the basket". But Nsesi pleaded: "Please let me tie you down, so you won't be thrown to the ground". And finally Nkabi told him: "Alright, but don't pull the rope too tight". Nsesi promised: "No, I won't pull it too tight, I'll just tie it loosely". He tied the rope loosely, but then he pulled it as tight as he could. When Nkabi felt that, he wailed: "Eh, stop, don't pull it so tight". Nsesi answered: "Eh, master, I know, I won't pull it very tight", and proceeded to knot the rope. When they had gone some way, Nkabi told Nsesi: "Put me down. Yes, you really are strong". Nsesi told him: "Wait a little while until I come to the plain". Nkabi pleaded: "A-a, really, put me down, I won't argue with you", but Nsesi refused: "I won't put you down until we've gone just a bit further". Nkabi bleated and struggled with all his might, but he couldn't escape from Nsesi. When they came to the plain, Ngo spied Nsesi with his basket containing a live antelope. He sprang at him and grabbed the basket away from him, killing Nkabi. He carried the basket to the girl's father, who again refused his gift.

Nsesi returned to the forest to chop down his tree. He caught many animals, a buffalo and a horse antelope, and a swine and a big ndutu rodent, and an elephant, and animals of every kind, but every one of them fell a prey to Ngo's attacks.

Then one day he went again to the forest to cut his tree. He was singing his usual song. But that day Ngo was hunting in those parts, and when he came to the edge of the plain, he heard someone singing in the forest. He went to investigate, and saw Nsesi cutting down a tree. He asked him in amazement: "But what on earth will you use that enormous tree for?" Nsesi replied: "For poles to support my house. Don't you know that the kintombo season has arrived? I want my house to be really steady, so that it won't be carried off by the wind". Ngo told him: "Eh, Nsesi, you really have the rapacity of an ant (a rich imagination). That

<sup>1</sup> Beginning of the rainy season, Oct.—Dec.

enormous tree, how could you possibly manage it? You couldn't even manage to carry me!" Nsesi answered: "Certainly, if you are in a ntete basket I can carry you". Ngo said: "Eh, if only we had one my size, we could settle the argument right away". Nsesi told him: "Wait a bit while I go and look for an old ntete basket that I left over there". He hurried off and fetched a basket made to Ngo's size. He told Ngo to lay down in the basket, and Ngo obeyed without demur. Then Nsesi started to tie the basket up, but Ngo protested: "Eh, don't tie it up". Nsesi replied soothingly: "Eh, master, I know. I won't tie it up, I'll just put the rope loosely around it, so you won't fall to the ground when I'm ready to lift the basket". Ngo assented: "Alright, tie it a little bit, but don't pull it too tight". Nsesi wound the rope loosely all around the ntete basket, but when he started pulling it tight, Ngo protested again: "Eh, you, Nsesi, stop pulling it so tight". Ngo soothed him again: "Not at all. I won't pull it tight". When the rope was tied to his satisfaction, he lifted the basket and went home. When Ngo found that they had come quite some way, he praised Nsesi: "Ah yes, there is no doubt that Nsesi is very strong. Put me down, I won't argue any more". Nsesi told him: "Wait a little while, I want to go as far as the plain". When they came to the plain, Ngo again pleaded: "Eh, Nsesi, put me down". But Nsesi answered: "Ah, that I can't do. I'm going on. Eh, you can be sure that today you will reach your destination, so that I may "eat" what you stole from me on previous occasions, all my animals. I will take you as a gift to settle my marriage". On hearing these words, Ngo squirmed and struggled, but he could not get out. Nsesi carried him all the way to the girl's village. Arrived there, he said: "Eh, see here my live animal". The girl's father was highly pleased and told Nsesi: "Take your wife with you, the bargain is clinched". Nsesi took his bride to his village, where they lived happily.

— Nzambi Mpungu had two daughters. The eldest was called Nkenge Nzambi, the younger daughter Ndongo Nzambi. Nkenge Nzambi was sacred (prohibited). She was not allowed to show herself to people.

One day Nsesi passed their house and asked: "Ndongo, my girl, give me some water". She fetched water and let him drink. When he had drunk, he belched, kaa, and said: "This water is as good as your elder sister is beautiful". Ndongo asked: "Can't I be as beautiful as yaaya Nkenge?" Nsesi sighed: "I would call to her, but it isn't allowed. I would blow my pipe, but it is forbidden to summon her thus". Then Ndongo sang this little song:

"Yaaya Nkenge  
 Did you get your suitor?  
 Kidi kidiè, what is the name of your suitor?  
 Kidi kidiè, the name is Nsesi.  
 Kidi, kidiè, tell me, should he leave?  
 Kidi, kidiè, his legs are thin.  
 Kidi kidiè Ndongo: Go back to where you got these thin legs".

When Nsesi heard this, he went on his way.

Then one day Nkabi passed and said: "Woman, give me water". Ndongo fetched water and gave it to Nkabi. When he had drunk, he belched, kaa, and said: "Eh, this water is as good as your elder sister is beautiful". Ndongo asked: "But aren't I as beautiful as yaaya Nkenge?" Nkabi yearned: "I wish I could call to her, but one isn't allowed to call to her. Wish I could blow my pipe and summon her, but it is forbidden. How am I to communicate with her?" Again Ndongo sang her little song:

"Yaaya Nkenge  
Did you get your suitor?  
Kidi kidiè, who is your suitor?  
Kidi kidiè, his name is Nkabi.  
Kidi kidiè, tell me, should he leave?  
Kidi kidiè, his legs are so long.  
Kidi kidiè, Ndongo: Go back to where your legs grew so long".

Nkabi disappeared.

Then one day Ngondo, the monkey, came and said: "Ndongo, give me water". She gave him water. When he had drunk, he belched, kaa, and said: "Ndongo, this water is as good as your elder sister is beautiful". Ndongo answered: "But aren't I as beautiful as yaaya Nkenge?" Ngondo said: "That I could call to her, but we aren't allowed to. That I could blow my pipe, but it is forbidden. However am I to reach her?" Ndongo again sang her little song:

"Yaaya Nkenge  
Here is your suitor.  
Kidi kidiè, what is the name of this suitor?  
Kidi kidiè, his name is Ngondo.  
Kidi kidiè, tell me, should he stay here?  
Kidi kidiè, sanga kyamakandiè (basket for manioc bread),  
Kidi kidiè, stay where you have numerous kin.

Ngondo waited, and finally Nkenge appeared and Ngondo beheld his wife. Man and wife loved each other. Then Ngondo said: "Ndongo, my sister-in-law, take care of my wife for me, I must go back to my village". When he had fixed the day on which he was to return with the marriage payment, Ngondo went off. The days passed swiftly, and one day Ngondo said: "Today is the day we have agreed on with my sister-in-law". He set off to his appointment, taking along a lot of food. He also took along his many brothers, but those he hid by the crossroads before they reached the village. Ngondo, the husband, went on to the village. The girl's relatives said: "Ah, our brother-in-law has arrived. You, brother-in-law, we do not demand any of your wealth as the price for your bride, but only that you eat your way through this sumptuous meal all by yourself. When you have finished all the food, the woman will be yours. Take her with you as your wife".

Ngondo started eating. During the meal, he sang:

"I die, I Ngondo, manioc I eat.  
I die, I Ngondo, plantains I eat.  
I die, I Ngondo, am going to escape (kaluka-e).  
I die, I Ngondo—e."

Then he asked: "Eh, brothers-in-law, surely I can go and relieve myself?" "Of course", they said, and Ngondo went off to the crossroads, where he told one of his brothers: "Go and take my place". The brother had been told the next verse of the song, and took up where Ngondo had left off:

"I die, I Ngondo, beans I eat.  
Eh, I die, I Ngondo, peanuts I eat.  
Eh, I die, I Ngondo, kwenda kaluka-e (escape),  
Eh, I die, I Ngondo-e".

Then this Ngondo said: "Eh, brothers-in-law, I'm off to relieve myself". "Alright", they said, and off he went to the crossroads, where he told another of the brothers: "Go and take my place". The next brother started eating, and took up the next verse of the song as he had been told:

"Eh, I die, I Ngondo, palm wine I drink.  
Eh, I die, I Ngondo, potatoes I eat.  
Eh, I die, I Ngondo, kwenda kaluka,  
Eh, I die, I Ngondo-e".

After a while he too said: "Eh, brothers-in-law, I must go and relieve myself". "Go ahead", they said. Back at the crossroads, he told the brother who had married the woman: "Now you can go and finish it up, there's only one pot left". The husband went back and finished the rest of the food.

Then his in-laws told him: "Ah, brother-in-law, you have indeed won your wife, but come now and hear what rules you must observe to keep your wife safe, for she is a sacred child. The rules are these: she shall not go to the water. She shall not go and fetch firewood. She shall not go to the forest. But her sister Ndongo is with her. Have you understood all that?" "Yes", said the husband. "Go then", said his in-laws.

On their way they came upon a large tree which had fallen down across the road. Nkenge began singing:

"Cyabalala, Nzambi has created me,  
Yaaya Ndongo, what is this?  
Cyabalala, Nzambi has created me.  
Yaaya Ndongo, what is this?"



Fig. 22. *Nkisi Nsasi, Sudi in Lolo (Laman 1184).*

Ndongo replied: "Let's go on, for the tree belongs to another". They arrived at the husband's village, and as they approached the door of his house, the wife again sang her song:

"Cyabalala, Nzambi has created me,  
Yaaya Ndongo, what can this be?  
Cyabalala, . . ."

Ndongo told her to enter the house. They settled down, and Ndongo took care of the household chores. But after a time Ndongo went off to fetch provisions from the sisters' family. She was gone for two or three days, and in the meantime Nkenge was left without help, so that she was forced to go down to the water herself. When she came down to the stream, she sank down into the water. She sang her song:

"Cyadalala, Nzambi has created me,  
Yaaya Ndongo, what is this?  
Cyabalala, Nzambi has created me,  
Yaaya Ndongo, what can this be?  
Cyadalala, . . ."

As she sang, the water came up to her waist. There was no one to help her, and she sank deeper and deeper until the water closed over her head and she disappeared. Thus Nkenge died, and so the story ends.

— Nsuma, the antelope, formed a friendly alliance with Ngo, the leopard, entrusting a bitch he owned to Ngo's care. This bitch had two pups, and one day Nsuma took along some palm wine and went to fetch them. Ngo had already eaten one of them, but he showed Nsuma the same pup twice. Some time later Nsuma returned, again bringing palm wine with him. He said to Ngo: "Fetch the pups, and I'll give you one of them". Ngo answered: "Come back another day". Then Nsuma asked: "Say, may I see how big they are now?". Again Ngo showed the one remaining pup in the litter twice. After some time Nsuma again prepared palm wine and set out to fetch his pup. On this third visit, as they sat drinking the wine together, Ngo suddenly caught Nsuma by the throat and killed him. In the throes of death Nsuma cried out: "Ngo, but what have I done? You ate my pups and now you are about to kill me? And I who let you raise the bitch! Give me the pups, may you perish!" When it was all over, the leopard proceeded to eat the remaining pup as well as the bitch and her owner.

This fable is told to a deceitful chief who refuses to return some property to its rightful owner, or trumps up an excuse to get out from returning property that has been left in his care.

— The people were getting ready for the hunt. Arrived in the forest, the driver of the hounds told the hunters: "Draw up in orderly line by this enclosure". When they had taken up their positions, the mpomfi pipe was sounded. The driver tied the bells on the hounds and drove them into the enclosure, crying: "Eh, he eh, he goes. Eh, catch hold of your gun, he there, he there. Eh, search close to the ground, these children, by a mother. It goes there, it goes there (the quarry)". And so he came to the den where Ngo used to keep his new-born cubs. He was asleep and the cubs were sucking. The driver took a bell from one of the hounds and dashed forth to tie it to Ngo's tail. When he had tied the bell on, he shook it: bokolo, bokolo, bokolo. At this Ngo took to flight, and the driver of the hounds called out in a ringing voice: "Ngo has fled at full speed". The hunters did not shoot. Ngo made his escape. When the other animals heard the bell that had been tied on Ngo, they in their turn took flight. Day after day Ngo searched for game to provide food for his cubs, but he was doomed to walk in solitude. The mother and her cubs died from lack of meat.

The moral of this story is that people should never be too greedy when hunting for game, or they will be the cause of scaring the animals away.

— Once upon a time Ngo had no luck in catching any prey to eat. He was plagued by hunger. He thought to himself: "Ah, what shall I do to trick the other animals into coming close enough for me to kill and devour them?" Finally, he hit upon a stratagem—he would pretend to be ill. When the other animals heard about it, they would say: "Ngo has fallen

ill. He has no strength left to attack us. Let us go and look at him on his sickbed". Ngo told his wife to spread the rumour among all the animals that her husband was ill. The animals that came to see him in his illness should not be left to stand outside to inquire after his health, but she, his wife, was to bid them: "Please enter the house. He is lying in the inner room". The minute they entered, Ngo would then spring to kill.

The wife told the news to the birds, who in their turn spread the rumour to the fourfooted animals. They asked: "Do you think his wife is ill too?" The birds replied: "It may be so". And so Nkabi said: "Ah, I must go and convince myself of that. I will visit him to find out whether his illness is real". For all the animals were happy to hear the news that Ngo was ill. If he should actually die, they would no longer have to wander in fear, and therefore they were anxious to find out whether his illness was real. The Panting One (munga kiheemi) went off first to find out the truth. Arrived at his destination, he asked: "How is Ngo? It is rumoured that he is ill?" And Ngo's wife answered: "Step inside the house. He is lying in the inner room". Nkabi asked: "But you, wife, are you ill too?" The wife answered: "Both of us, and the children as well, are stricken at the same time". At that, Nkabi entered the house, and fell a victim to Ngo's trickery. As he was about to bend down to look behind the dividing wall, he was set upon by Ngo and killed. Ngo and his wife ate him. But the other animals were unaware of Nkabi's sorry fate, and so others followed suit and went to visit Ngo. Every one of them was killed and eaten. Nsuma, Nduutu, Nsia—yes, all the animals went to visit him and he ate them

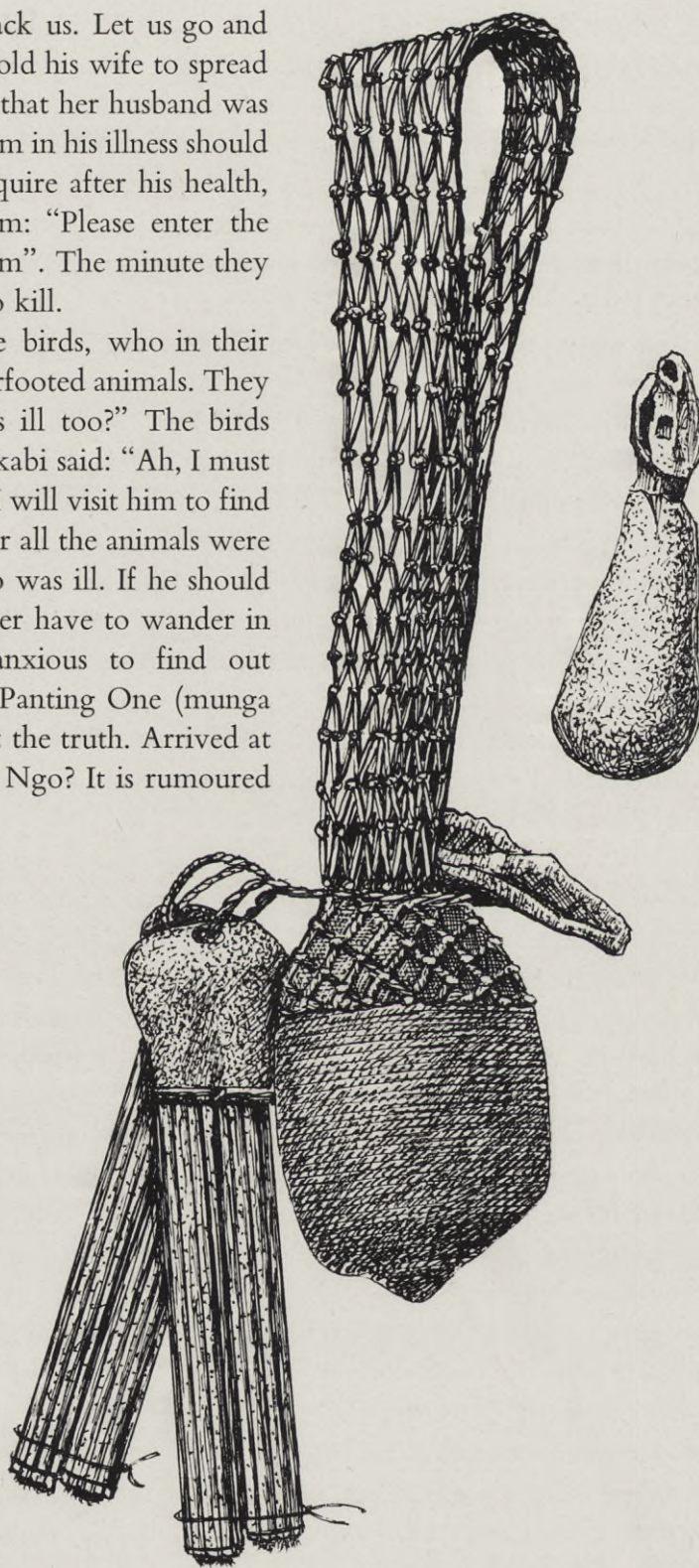


Fig. 23. Nkisi Nduda, Sudi in Vungu (Laman 1054).

all. When Nsesi heard of Ngo's illness, he too went to visit him. When he arrived, he asked: "Ah, is Ngo no better? Say, is he still sick?" The wife told him: "Ah you, Nsesi, go inside the house to ask him. He has not come out at all. He does not leave the house. Step inside". Then Nsesi lifted his eyes to look into the inner room where the patient was supposed to be lying, and caught sight of Kikumbi Ngo crouching in a corner, ready to spring on Nsesi and devour him. But now Nsesi had seen him, and when Ngo sprang to catch his prey, Nsesi slipped out of his reach and leapt straight up in the air, saying: "I, Nsesi, the Cunning One, I drink water with my leg. In the air I travel, on land I travel".

This story originated the proverb: "Ngo is not ill. Any illness of his is a trick".

— This fable is told about two birds, Tyokula and Seke. Sometimes people set their bird snares close to a termite nest, which they smash. Then the winged insects swarm out and act as bait to entice birds to the traps. And then Tyokula urges Seke: "Go down, go down, go down". Seke descends, bumps his foot (*kakya*) against a snare, and is trapped. Tyokula, seeing Seke caught in the snare, quickly flies up and perches on a stalk of grass, saying: "Tuo-tyo-tyoluka. Didn't I tell you. Didn't I tell you". Then he himself goes for the bait, but he does so with great cunning and caution, keeping well away from the snares as he catches the termites.

It is the same with people who trick their friends and relations. When they have got them ensnared or managed to make them do something criminal, they themselves wriggle out of it by their lies.

— Once upon a time Nzobo, the civet, had a litter of five cubs. Early one morning she set out to find food for them. She was away for quite some time, and in the meantime Ngo came scouring the neighbourhood where the cubs were lying in their lair. He caught sight of them, found they were Nzobo's cubs, and ate four of them. He left one cub where it was, and lay in wait for the mother's return. Finally Nzobo was heard to approach, *eko-eko*. Looking for her cubs, she saw Ngo crouching there. Nzobo wailed: "Oh, if only you haven't eaten my children". Ngo was cunning and held up the one remaining cub five times for Nzobo's inspection. But Nzobo had her wits about her, and told Ngo: "Throw them one by one on the ground, so that I can count them myself". Ngo made to escape with Nzobo's remaining cub, but the cat's lair lay close to *Nsyasya*<sup>1</sup>, and his flight was cut short when his scrotum caught in *Nsyasya*. Ngo wailed and implored *Nsyasya*: "Please let go of my scrotum, so that I can escape with my prey". *Nsyasya* answered: "If you let go of Nzobo's cub, I'll let go of your scrotum", and dug still more of her thorns into his scrotum. Ngo's wails increased: "*Nsyasya*, please let go of my scrotum so that I can run off with my prey". *Nsyasya* was adamant: "Unless you let go of Nzobo's cub, the scrotum will stay caught". In agony from his fierce pain, Ngo released the cub. *Nsyasya* called out to Nzobo: "Quick, take your child while I hold him by the scrotum". Nzobo grabbed hold of her child and ran

<sup>1</sup> A bush or tree that stings and burns.

off far away to another part of the country. But Ngo wailed and moaned loudly: "Oh, my scrotum, oh, my scrotum, I'm dying, my scrotum". When Nsyasya was sure that Nzobo had a good start, she finally let go of Ngo's scrotum. Ngo tried to revenge himself by biting Nsyasya, but all he got was a torn and sore mouth. And so Nsyasya proved herself the strongest in the vegetable kingdom, for she managed to get Nzobo's cub out of Ngo's claws.

The moral of this story is that even the most cunning can meet his match and suffer for his trickery.

— Once upon a time Ngo became the father of two children. One of the women of the family was also pregnant, and went down to the river to find a place to give birth. Taking one of Ngo's newborn children and placing it in her basket, she set out. On her way she met Ngo, who asked her: "What is in your basket?" "Nothing", said the woman. But when Ngo looked in the basket, he found one of his children, and he said: "So that is how it is, you're a thief who steals my young". The woman, trembling with fear, pleaded with him: "Save your anger, master. I am pregnant—wait until I have given birth, and come then to receive your child". Ngo assented and went on his way.

The day arrived when the woman gave birth to her child, and Ngo set out to demand it. But the woman refused, telling him: "He will bear your name, but not until he is grown. Then you can come and take him to your village". When the child had grown up, the mother went to the Congo shore and composed a small nkisi. Soon afterwards Ngo came and demanded the child he had been promised, but the child refused to come with him. Then Ngo asked the mother: "But what shall I do, when the child doesn't want to come with me?" The mother answered: "Go and hide yourself on the river bank. Then I'll send my son to fetch water and you can take him". Ngo did as she had told him. But when the child approached the river, his nkisi sang to him: "Eh, Ngo, eh, by the riverside, Ngo eh, he is lying in wait there, Ngo eh". The boy threw himself headlong into the river and fetched his water, and when Ngo sprang at him, his claws grabbed nothing but water, and the son ran off, back to his mother.

Ngo went back to the woman and asked her: "What shall I do, for the child keeps escaping me". The mother told him: "Alright, tomorrow you must hide yourself on the edge of my peanut field, and when we start taking up the peanuts you can take him".

That night, when the boy was asleep, the mother secretly took away the little nkisi that had warned him about Ngo's hiding-place, and the next morning, when they had gone to dig up peanuts, Ngo caught him. The son was terrified of being taken away by Ngo, but his mother told him: "Go, you bear his name, so what harm would he do you?" And so the son, to his despair, was forced to come with Ngo. When they came to the road, Nzinga Ngo (little Ngo) told Ngo: "Let's have a quick look at my father's trap; maybe there are plenty of animals in it". They went and looked, and found three animals caught in the trap. When they had emptied it, Nzinga Ngo said: "Let's do what father always does". "What's that?" asked Ngo, and Nzinga Ngo explained: "We catch each other's feet in the trap and then set them free again. Come on, I'll put my arm in and you pull the spring-pole taut.

Then, when I tell you: Eh, maama, take it away, you bend the spring-pole down again so that I get loose." Ngo answered: "Yes, I understand". "Alright", said Nzinga Ngo, "now bend the spring-pole down so that I can stick my arm into the snare". Ngo did so, and then pulled the spring-pole taut. When he heard Nzinga Ngo call out: "Eh maama, take it away, take it away", he bent the spring-pole down and let his catch out. Then the young one said: "Now when I bend the spring-pole down, you must quickly thrust your head inside. As soon as you tell me to empty the trap, I'll let you out again, just as father and I used to do. Do you understand?" Ngo said he did, and Nzinga Ngo bent down the spring-pole so that Ngo could stick his head into the snare. Then the noose was pulled taut around his neck. He begged and pleaded: "Eh, empty the trap, let me out, Nzinga Ngo. Eh, maama, I'm dying, take the noose away—e". But Nzinga Ngo ran as fast as he could until he reached his own village. Everybody there was amazed to see him back, and they asked him: "But how did you get back?" And so he told them how his cunning had set him free.

— Once upon a time Ngo forged a knife for his son. Then he ordered him to take the knife and prepare the ground in the valley, where the animals graze. The son set off and started clearing the ground. Then Nsuma passed by and saw him at work with his new knife. So he asked: "Eh, and who has forged that knife for you, say?" The son told him: "Father Kai". Nsuma said: "Tell him that I'll be along tomorrow to have him forge me a knife". When the son came home, he gave the message to his father, who said: "That's fine. Let him come".

The next morning Nsuma arrived. Ngo started forging him a knife, chanting: "kutubulu, kutubulu (sound of the bellows). Eh, mbazi kyafina ntu (tomorrow I shall not bewitch the head). Eh, kyafina ntu". When his work was done, he invited Nsuma into the house for a meal. As he was eating, Ngo squeezed him to death, and father and son ate him.

Next morning the son returned to his work. Then Nsesi passed and stopped with him. He asked: "But who has forged that knife?" The son answered: "Father Kai". Nsesi told him: "I'll be there tomorrow to have a knife of my own forged". The son passed the message on to his father, who said: "Good. Tomorrow, when we ask him into the house for a meal, we'll kill him and have ourselves a feast". Next morning Nsesi arrived, and Ngo started forging, chanting as before: "kutubulu, kutubulu. Eh, mbazi kyafina ntu. Eh, mbazi kyafina ntu". Nsesi told him: "No, while you forge you should sing: Eh, a false and foolish ear, a false and foolish ear". Ngo said to him: "Go into the house and eat, after that you can take your knife with you". And so Nsesi went inside and ate. When he had finished his meal, he jumped onto the bed, and Ngo's son came in to kill him. But Nsesi was too quick for him, and cut his throat with the knife, killing him. Then Nsesi leapt out of the house and said: "You see, Ngo, your son I've killed, I, the wily Nsesi". Ngo set out after him, but Nsesi changed into a melon. When Ngo caught sight of it, he plucked it down and ate it. But again he was outwitted by Nsesi, who changed back to his own shape and taunted him: "Pyelele-pye,<sup>1</sup> say, aren't you going to eat my nose?" Ngo, enraged, set after him again,

<sup>1</sup> Invective.

but now Nsesi turned himself into a dry stick of wood. When Ngo saw it, he said: "You, Nsesi, be off. I'm taking my stick of wood along, plant (kuna) your mother, spindle-shanks". And he carried off the stick of wood. Then Nsesi, inside the stick, sang: "Kibwema, Ngo, kibwema (exhausted). That Nsesi carried in the stick of wood, Kibwema Ngo. Eh, it's a large animal. Kibwema, that Nsesi carried in the stick of wood, Kibwema Ngo".

When Ngo heard this song, he said to himself: "Ah, that was a beautiful song. I believe that they're having a dance over at Kimwanda. I must go and join in". But when he arrived at the village, he was told: "There is no singing and dancing here, be off". So Ngo took up his stick of wood and left. Nsesi in the stick sang the song again: "Kibwema Ngo". Ngo heard it, but he bided his time until he had arrived at his own village, when he smashed the stick. Immediately Nsesi changed himself into a handsome dog. Ngo viewed it with pleasure, and told all his wives: "Now I've got myself a dog, and let none of you beat him". But when the wives pounded palm nuts, they always threw some of them at the dog, which set up a terrific howling. Ngo complained: "But why do you persist in torturing my dog?" And finally he took a stout stick and beat his wives to death. When Ngo had killed his wives, Nsesi got back into his own body and said: "Pyelele-pye, tell me now, Ngo, isn't it I who finished off your wives?" Ngo was furious and set after him once more. Fleeing from his pursuit, Nsesi turned himself into a beautiful maiden, swaying and shaking her breasts. When Ngo beheld this maiden, he said: "Oh well, Nsesi, you can go now that I have found myself a beautiful maiden again. You thought that I wouldn't marry again after killing my wives, but now I've found this bride, shame on you!" Back at Ngo's house, the woman prepared a meal and they ate together. After the meal, Ngo ordered his wife: "Wife, pass behind me, that we may find ourselves a child". The wife answered: "No, it's too dangerous with your claws that are so terribly long". So Ngo held out his paws and said: "Here, cut, cut them off".

When she had clipped his claws, Ngo told her: "Now pass behind my back, so that we can have a namesake for your departed mother". But the wife answered: "No, it's too dangerous, for your eyes lie so deep in your head". Ngo proffered his eyes and said: "Here, take them, take them out". His wife put out his eyes. Then Ngo called her to him again: "Now pass behind my back". This time the wife answered: "No, it's too dangerous, for your skin is so full of spots and so hairy". Then the leopard handed her his knife, and said: "Skin me, but hurry up, so that we'll soon have a namesake for your dead mother". And so Nsesi skinned him, and rubbed pepper on his flayed body. Then he jumped outside, and taunted Ngo: "Tell me now, are you a match for my cunning? Now you see how clever I really am. Ah, taka, taka (you fool), have you no sense at all? Wake up and pursue me again. Come, won't you find me, taka, taka?" But Ngo was in agony from the pepper and suffered until he died. Then Nsesi left him and went on his way.

— Once upon a time Ngo went on a trip and found a market where quantities of peanuts were traded. On his way back to his village, he met Nduutu, the big rodent, at the crossroads. Nduutu asked Ngo: "Where have you come from, Master Ngo?" Ngo answered:

"I've been on a journey and I've visited a market where I saw quantities of peanuts being sold". Nduutu asked: "When is it market-day?" Ngo told him: "The day after tomorrow, so if you want to, we can go together". "Agreed", said Nduutu. It was settled that Ngo would come to Nduutu's village the next morning to make a ntete basket and tie it up for him. So, the next day, when the sun was just rising from the earth, Ngo appeared. He plaited a ntete basket and tied it securely to keep the peanuts from falling out.

When they had eaten and drunk, Ngo told Nduutu: "Come by my house tomorrow at dawn to fetch me, for the market is a long way off". When the leopard got back to his own village, he also prepared a basket and tied it up, but it contained only small stones and gravel, and not a single peanut. Next morning at dawn they met as agreed, Nduutu passing by Ngo's house to fetch him. When they were halfway to the market, darkness fell. They set their baskets down on the ground and lay down next to them to sleep. But when Nduutu had fallen into a deep sleep, Ngo exchanged the baskets. He got the one that had been Nduutu's and Nduutu got his. When dawn dispelled the darkness, they got up and continued on their way to the market. Each took his basket, but Nduutu did not know that the baskets had been exchanged. When they had arrived at the market, Ngo told Nduutu that he would sell his wares first, and after that Nduutu could start. So Ngo untied his basket, and the people came in droves to buy from him, so that his peanuts were soon sold off. Then Ngo said: "Now bring your basket, Nduutu, then I'll untie it and sell your wares". But when Ngo opened the basket, it contained nothing but ndimba stones. Ngo pretended to be aghast, and said: "But how can this be, Nduutu? Didn't I myself tie up your peanuts in this basket? Where on earth did these ndimba stones come from?" Nduutu was desolate and bewailed his bad luck. They returned home. On the way Ngo gave Nduutu a piece of kerchief cloth and told him that he would have a hen sacrificed to the nkisi because of what had happened that day.

Having thus successfully tricked Nduutu, he took Nsesi along to the market and did exactly as before. Then he took Mvudi along and tricked him in the same way, and after him the antelope Lubongo, and all the other animals he happened to meet.

Then one day Ngo agreed to take the bird Ntoko-yaka<sup>1</sup> along to the market. But this time he was going to be outwitted, for Ntoko-yaka was a wily creature. They matched each other in cunning, or, as the saying has it, "nkila sysaya ngangula au yimosi" (the tail and the one who shakes it are one and the same smith). When they came to the place where they always slept on their way to market, they ate and drank, and then they lay down to sleep. When Ngo heard Ntoko-yaka's snores, ngo-ngonta, ngo-ngonta, he said to himself: "Ntoko-yaka is asleep", and stole over to where he lay sleeping, next to the baskets. But he happened to touch his foot, and Ntoko-yaka tossed in his sleep, exclaiming: "Ntoko-yaka i mwendo wowo e?" (Isn't it time for Ntoko-yaka to go now?). Ngo was shaken and hurried back to his own place. He told Ntoko-yaka: "Eh, be quiet, what sort of babbling is that? Don't you know that this is country where one is liable to be attacked? What sort of nonsense is that:

<sup>1</sup> *Stephanibyx inornatus*.

Ntoko-yaka, it is time to go, indeed! It isn't dawn yet, is it?" After this conversation they settled down to sleep again. But Ngo was burning to get his hands on the other's basket, and after a while he got up and listened to Ntoko-yaka who lay snoring, feigning sleep. So Ngo said to himself: "Now I'll sneak off". But Ntoko-yaka spoke again: "Ntoko-yaka, Ntoko-yaka, on your way". Foiled again, Ngo returned to his own place, scolding Ntoko-yaka: "But Ntoko-yaka, do you have visions in your dream, what? Why, your eyes are awake!" Ntoko-yaka answered: "That's the way I am, I don't talk in my sleep". Again they settled down to sleep, and soon it became daylight. Ngo told Ntoko-yaka: "You go there, but I'm not coming". When Ntoko-yaka asked him: "Why, what's the matter with you?", he answered: "My foot is bothering me". But that was just another of his lies. The real reason was that his own basket contained nothing but ndimba stones, since he had been frustrated in his nocturnal attempts to swindle Ntoko-yaka. Ngo slunk back to his village, and Ntoko-yaka went to market.

— At one time Ngo was living in the woods as a palm wine tapper, mixing and selling his wine on the spot. At that place there was a nkisi prohibition against killing gnats and mosquitoes. Anyone who sinned against the prohibition would be killed by Ngo's claws. All who knew this country were afraid of coming close to Ngo, but since he was a skilful tapper and his wine was excellent, he had many customers all the same. One day, as Ngo was waiting for custom, the antelope Nsia and the serval Nzuzi came to his tapping place to buy palm wine. On their arrival they exchanged greetings with master Ngo: "Let us talk, i-i-i, father Ngo". "Father Nsia, e-e-e. Father Nzuzi, e-e-e", Ngo replied. "We have come from our village, we woke up in good health, and now we are here. We felt very thirsty, and that is why we decided to come here to you. That is the reason for our visit. That is all, unless you have anything to discuss? Nsangu (stories), i-i-i?" they said. "No", answered Ngo, "I have nothing to discuss either, but there is one thing I must tell you. I must warn you not to kill any gnats or mosquitoes here at my place, because I have an evil nkisi. Anyone who kills gnats or mosquitoes at this place I will kill, either with my claws or by strangulation, and I will eat him. If I failed to do my duty in this way, the nkisi would take its revenge on me. Therefore, be careful while you are here".

As they sat there talking of this and that, father Nsia forgot himself and squashed a gnat against the ground. Immediately Ngo threw himself at Nsia, strangled him, and threw the body on the ground. Then he ripped him in small pieces and devoured him then and there.

Nzuzi went home alone, full of woe. He warned all his friends and pleaded with them to be very careful around Ngo. But when Nsesi heard about it, he boasted to his friends: "I'll kill gnats and mosquitoes at Ngo's place, and he won't notice it unless I tell him. And even when I tell him, he won't be able to kill me, because I possess magic skills and I move by magic. The old people had a proverb that said: "If you shoot your own gun, shoot the enemy's too". Is he the only one that is strong? Tomorrow I'll go and buy palm wine to take to my brother-in-law Kintunta, because it's a long time ago since he drank a mug at my expense. Yes, to be sure, tomorrow! He can expect me. Say, would his magic skills be

superior to mine? Let him expect me tomorrow!" Nsesi's sisters were very vexed with him and tried to persuade him not to visit master Ngo. They were dedekele-dedekele (worried) all during that day, and warned him of the many risks he would run, but Nsesi refused to listen to them.

At dawn the next day Nsesi set out with his servant boy, Ndambukonono. On the way Nsesi gave him careful instructions: "When I have bought palm wine and have drunk the fermented dregs that are left after tapping (when the wine is poured over into another vessel), you must take the palm wine that I've bought and go ahead to the crossroads. When you've gone some distance, sit down and wait for me". "Eh, I understand", said the boy. "You have grown up (kudidi), e-e", said Nsesi. "Remember now, you go ahead. E-e-e. And sit still when we come to master Ngo". They walked on to the tapping place where Ngo was busy making knots in his climbing loop and getting the nkuta funnels ready for the day's tapping. They exchanged greetings: "Master Ngo".—"Master Nsesi! E-e-e, Ndambukonono. State your errand". "Well", said Nsesi, "in our home village all are in good health. Therefore I've come to buy a drop of palm wine. Of course I was reminded by Nzuzi yesterday that anyone who killed gnats or mosquitoes in Ngo's place would be killed. Nzuzi felt bitter because of your killing Nsia when he forgot himself and killed the insects. But when he sighed: "Oh, horror!" I told him that it was Nsia's foolhardiness that was to blame". Ngo answered: "You know the law, so hold yourself in check. Woe be to you if you sin against it. You have it in your own hand". "I won't, master Ngo", said Nsesi. "My sisters almost succeeded in frightening me out of this journey, they tried to keep me from coming here by saying that you would be sure to kill me. But I told them: "Of course. But if I don't sin against the prohibition, he would kill me without cause. Oh, master Ngo, it is my obstinacy that has brought me here. This is my errand. Now tell me your news". "Here too, where I live", said Ngo, "everybody is in good health. Except from that cold in the head that we are suffering from, everybody is hale and hearty. Your information about the prohibition which forbids the killing of gnats and mosquitoes here is correct. I settled down here to compose an evil nkisi, father Makumbu. Otherwise I intend no harm. That is why I have made it known, so that you won't forget yourselves. Anyone who kills a gnat or a mosquito here at my place will die that very day. That is what I have to say". "Oh yes", said Nsesi, "I almost forgot something". "What then", asked Ngo. "Oh, something terrible, master", answered Nsesi. "Yesterday father Matuta in Ndingi was beaten within an inch of his life. When he visited the mpika market yesterday, they battered him black and blue. They hit him mamu, mamu, mamu, mamu, bu, bu, bu, bu, bu, bu, bululu (onomat.)". While ostensibly imitating the assault, Nsesi was in reality killing off gnats and mosquitoes left and right. The ground around him was covered with dead insects.

Then, crying nayee-yee, yee-yee, he took one terrific leap (i kubyee) and was out on the plain and on his way. Ngo turned to where Nsesi had been sitting and saw gnats and mosquitoes scattered all over the ground. His heart (ntima) was deeply roused, he struck his palm, and rushed off to give chase; off he went in wild pursuit. Panting, he reached the top of the hill, but Nsesi was already in the next plain, from where he called tauntingly to Ngo:

"What now, aren't you coming? What are you doing over there? Say, do you call yourself a nganga? You claim that one is not supposed to kill those creatures at your place, for then one would die. But how about those I killed? How long have you got to live? You are about to die, aren't you? O-o, master Ngo has died, e-e-e. Master Ngo has died".

Ngo ran off in a rage, full of woe and shame, and fell headlong in a ravine where he was killed. Nsesi took all his possessions and went back to his own country.

— Once upon a time the nsafu tree outside Nsesi's house had matured and bore blue-black fruits. Nsesi, who owned the tree, had a child who was a cripple and lacked arms and legs. His father told him: "Look at this nsafu tree. If anyone asks you where I have gone, you must ask him what he wants. Then, if it turns out he wishes to buy nsafu fruit, ask for his arms and legs. If he gives them to you, climb high up in the tree and call me, then I'll come and kill him. Do you understand?" "Yes, father", said the child, whose name was Mayaala.

Nsesi went off to his chores. Meanwhile Nkabi, the antelope, came sauntering along the road by the house. When he saw the ripe, blue-black nsafu fruit, he asked: "Where has your father gone?" The child answered: "He's gone to work in the fields". Nkabi said: "Give me some nsafu from your father's tree". The child replied: "Lend me your arms and legs, so I can pick you some". And so Nkabi cut off his arms and legs, and fastened them to Mayaala's body. The child climbed high up in the tree and called for his father: "Father, e. Hear me, father! Nkabi has given me arms and legs. Hear me, father, e, father, e, who is breaking up the earth by the spring Yongo". The father called back: "Mayaala, stay where you are, by your mother!" Nkabi implored the child: "Come down, bring back my arms and legs". But Nsesi arrived with a stout stick and killed Nkabi. Then he said: "Come down, Mayaala. Whenever you find an animal who asks you for nsafu fruit, you must ask him for his arms and legs. When he has given them to you, I'll come right away and kill him, so that we'll have meat for the pot".

Next time Buffalo came and asked: "Eh, who is the owner of this nsafu tree, cripple?" Mayaala answered: "It's my father's". Buffalo said: "Come, I'll lift you up, so you can take away the charms (bikandu) and I can pick me some nsafu". "Give me your arms and legs", answered Mayaala, "then I'll pick you some". And so Buffalo cut off his front legs and fastened them to the boy, while Mayaala cut off his hind legs and put them on himself. Buffalo said: "Start picking, and do it quickly, because it hurts where my arms and legs have been". Mayaala up in the tree, sorely tormented by flies and ants, called for his father: "Hear me father! Father, Buffalo has given me his arms and legs, hear me, father, e, father who is breaking the earth by the spring Yongo". "Eh, Mayaala", came the reply, "by your mother, stay where you are". Buffalo begged and pleaded: "Come down, give me my arms and legs". But Mayaala, whom he had called a cripple, had turned the tables on him, and now Buffalo was the one who lacked arms and legs. Then the father arrived and struck him with a stout stick. Buffalo cried out: "Have mercy on me, master!" but another blow, i po-o, i lo, finished him off. Then the father told Mayaala to come down. In this way he killed off many animals.

But then one day Ngo came to those parts during his wanderings. When he saw the nsafu tree, he asked: "Hi-hi, who is the owner of this tree, you cripple there?" Mayaala answered: "Father Nsesi". Then Ngo said: "Come, I'll lift you up so that you can remove the bikandu amulets and I can pick myself some nsafu fruits". As before, Mayaala answered: "Master, give me your arms and legs, and I'll pick you some fruit". But Ngo retorted: "Your lies you can save for others". He took himself up with the climbing loop and tied the boy up by the amulet in the top of a palm tree. Then he slid down, climbed up in the nsafu tree, picked some fruit, and returned to his own country.

Nsesi had waited in vain all day long for his son's call. He went home and called for his mother. Then the women told him: "Your son has already been killed by Ngo, who tied him up in that palm tree over there". Having bewailed the loss of his son, Nsesi brought Mayaala down from the palm tree and buried him. When that was done, he went and consulted Nightjar about smelling out the murderer of his son. The bird told him: "Change yourself into a young maiden and then go and bathe at the spot where Ngo usually crosses the river, and let your nakedness excite his lust".

Nsesi did as Nightjar had told him. When he came to the water-crossing, he took off the ornaments he wore in the guise of a maiden, cast himself into the water and thrashed about with his arms. In no time at all the leopard appeared, and asked: "Are you married?" The maiden answered: "You torment me with your words. Whatever have I demanded from you that we should be married?" Ngo asked: "Who are your father and your brothers?" The girl replied: "I have no father, nor any brothers. They are all dead". Ngo said: "I wish to give you a token of my intentions. Can you accept it?" The girl replied: "That is for you to say". So Ngo took two chieftain's rings, gave them to the maiden, and left.

The maiden emerged from the river, took the rings that Ngo had left as a token and put them on her left arm. Home again, Nsesi ordered the people of his village: "When Ngo comes with a gift of palm wine, I'll change into a maiden. Be sure that you don't tell him that I'm a man. Have you understood me?" "Yes, master, we understand", said the villagers.

And so one day Ngo turned up with palm wine to pay for the maiden whose body had excited his lust. He drank with her people, who told him: "You only have to pay ten calabashes of palm wine as a marriage payment, and you can take her to your village". So some time later Ngo had collected the palm wine for the marriage payment and set off with his wives, who carried the wine in their baskets. The girl's people gathered and placed pots of chicken and nkaadu soup before their brother-in-law Ngo. When they had eaten, they sealed the contract in the courtyard and Ngo handed over the ten calabashes of palm wine that had been demanded from him. When the wine was drunk, the women gathered to accompany the maiden Lubwaku, who was now married to master Ngo. As they passed the plain they gathered wood for Lubwaku to cook food on, the firewood with which the new wife was to be led into Ngo's compound. Others carried bananas and fish to be prepared in the husband's home. When they had seen their sister to her destination, they returned to their own village.

However, when it got dark, and Ngo wanted his bride to lie behind him, she refused. "Why are you afraid of lying behind me?", Ngo asked. Lubwaku answered: "Because your arms are too long. Cut them off so that you and I will be alike". "Bring me a knife", said Ngo, "and I'll cut them off". The bride brought the knife and Ngo told her to cut off his arms. She cut and cut and cut, and there the arms were, *ndi* (cut off). Then Ngo told her: "Now you have cut them off, so lie down behind me". But the bride said: "I would sleep with you, but your legs are too long". Ngo sighed: "If I'd known that your people had such customs, I would never have dared to marry you. Bring a knife". So Lubwaku took the knife and started cutting one of his legs, cutting away, until there it was, *ndi* (cut off). The same with the other leg. But now Ngo started to moan: "Eh maama, eh maama". His younger brothers asked him: "Master Ngo, what are you moaning about?" Ngo told them: "It was only my dreams while I lay asleep". To his bride he said: "Now lie down behind me". "I would have obeyed", said Lubwaku, "if only your ears hadn't been so long". "What am I supposed to do about that?", asked Ngo. "Cut them off", said his bride. "Really", exclaimed her husband. "You are an evil and wicked wife. If I'd known this, I would never have married you. But bring the knife and cut them off". She took the knife and cut away, *wuya*. The same with the other ear—she cut and cut, *wuya* (cut off). Ngo was beginning to moan and cry, but once more he ordered her to lie down behind him. "Well", said the bride, "alright so far, but you and I are still not alike". "What remains?", asked Ngo. "Your lips are too long", said his bride. "Take the knife and cut them off, *nzwa-nzwa*", he said. "Look, now you can see your teeth", said the bride. Again Ngo told her to lie down behind him, but she told him: "Three things remain, and after that we will sleep". She lifted up the piece of cloth that covered her loins and let Ngo gaze upon her nakedness. Ngo's desire became even more ardent when he saw her smooth and hairless skin. "What are the three remaining things you were talking about?", he asked her. "Your eyelids, your nose, and your hair", said the bride, and proceeded to cut off his nose and eyelids. Then she pulled *nyanga* grass out of the roof and singed off every hair on his body, as one singes a pig after slaughter.

That done, the bride went outside, took Ngo's gun and his bag with his staff, and the *nseba* basket with the viands she had brought along. But lo, it turned into a gun and a *nkutu* bag, and instead of the bride Nsesi stood there. It had only taken him till midnight to accomplish all this by his tricks. He addressed Ngo: "Father Mazinga, this is how I, Nsesi Mapyangu (the sly one), who drank water with my leg, revenge myself. You, Ngo, put my child in the top of the palm tree, but where are you now?" Ngo lay on the bed, wailing and crying. When the younger members of his household and his wives came to look what was wrong, they found Ngo in the same sorry plight as Nsesi's son Mayaala, the one he had tied up in the palm tree. He presented a truly horrifying sight, as he lay writhing on the bed without arms or legs, without ears or lips, without nose or eyelids, and without a single hair on his body. It was a very sad spectacle.

Nsesi sped home to his village, taking along Ngo's front and back paws as irrefutable evidence of his victory over the leopard.

— Long, long ago Ngo became the father of two daughters. Time passed, and one day he thought to himself: "Really, my daughters ought to bear grandchildren, so that our family will multiply". And so he sent Mabyaala, his son, to summon everybody he could find to a meeting. In response to Mabyaala's summons, all the animals came. The only one who failed to turn up was the rat Mpingi.

Ngo put food and palm wine before his guests to bid them welcome and to show that all was peace. When they had finished eating and drinking, Ngo set up a pole with a pumpkin on top, and told his guests: "Whoever succeeds in taking down the pumpkin I put on top of this pole will get my two daughters and they will be his wives". Nzau, the elephant asked: "But if someone now takes down the pumpkin from the pole, wouldn't you demand some gifts as well?" "No", answered Ngo, "I cannot accept anything for my daughters, since I need grandchildren, so the pumpkin is the only price that has to be paid".

When his guests heard this, they started arguing about who would be the first to climb the pole. They pushed and shoved each other, until Nzau raised his voice: "Stop your fighting. I am your chief. I shall be the first to climb up, and make the daughters mine". He started climbing, but at his first attempt he fell down on the ground again. The spectators greeted his failure with shouts of derision (*loози*), and the elephant tribe left the gathering in shame.

One after one, every animal in creation that had participated in the feast prepared by Ngo climbed the pole. But no one succeeded in taking the pumpkin down. Their shame and dejection were great at the thought that among them all there was not one who could succeed.

Then, after a while, Mpingi arrived, drenched with sweat. He asked the guests: "Why are so many gathered here?" They told him: "Ngo has arranged a feast to marry off his young daughters. He has put a pumpkin on top of a pole and whoever succeeds in taking it down will get his daughters in reward. Master Nzau was the first to try his luck, and after that we've all had a go at it, but none of us has succeeded in climbing up and winning the maidens". When Mpingi heard how matters stood, he immediately removed the plug from his *mbambi* pipe which hung on his chest, and piped up. *Lwe-lwe*, sounded the pipe, and up he went and took down the pumpkin from the top of the pole. The others just stood there and gaped. Mpingi had accomplished the task that would give him the daughters.

Ngo exclaimed: "Oh, my heart rejoices, Mpingi, my son-in-law. You will sire my grandchildren. Come and finish the food that the others have left, the unlucky suitors who failed to accomplish the task I had set as the price for my daughters". After the meal, Mpingi was given hens and pigs, and the daughters were provided with all the things they needed to install themselves in the house of their husband and serve him.

Mpingi bid his father-in-law farewell and set off with his wives. When they had come some way, they encountered the antelope *Nkabi*. "Peace, *Nkabi-e*", Mpingi greeted him. "Mpingi, where did you get those beautiful maidens?", asked *Nkabi*. Mpingi said: "Weren't you among those at father Ngo's place who tried to take the pumpkin down from the pole?" "Well, yes, I was there", admitted *Nkabi*. "But Mpingi, you aren't worthy of women

such as these". "Well", said Mpingi, "if you succeed in knocking me down, you can take the women with you, because I too have won them in a contest". "Ah", said Nkabi, "agreed. We'll fight for them". They grabbed hold of each other, kulukutu-kulukutu (sound of scuffle), and the women started singing this song:

"Mpingi, be strong, father, be strong,  
another's child nsi malongo (the country far away)".

When they finished singing, Nkabi lay on the ground.

Mpingi set off again with his wives. On the way he was set upon by one after another of the animals that had been present at Ngo's feast, but he knocked them all down. But then one day at the crossroads he suddenly met Nsesi and his wife. Nsesi had his dog with its coiled-up tail along, and his gun was loaded with brass tacks. "But how can it be, Mpingi", asked Nsesi, "that you own these beautiful maidens that our Nsesi tribe failed to win at Ngo's place?" "It was I who took down the pumpkin when everyone else had failed", replied Mpingi. "You aren't worthy of these wives", said Nsesi. "But I am. You'd better give them to me, or else!" "If you succeed in knocking me down, you may take my wives with you", said Mpingi. "Let's fight it out like I did with the others". "Really, you fool", said Nsesi, "so you won't let your wives go until I've knocked you flat on the ground? I'll sink my teeth into your throat, and after that you'll give me my women". No sooner said than done. Nsesi took Mpingi by the throat and flung him to the ground, giving the women no chance to sing their song. The husband lay on the ground where Nsesi had thrown him, covered with mud. The brides were overwhelmed with sorrow, for they were very fond of Mpingi. But Nsesi picked up his gun with its cover of nsuma skin and his nkutu bag, and sent his three wives ahead while he himself followed them with his dog with the coiled-up tail.

When Mpingi had recovered his senses, he went to his father-in-law Ngo and said: "Father-in-law, place the shells in the water to draw forth the rain, for the daughters you gave to me in marriage have been seized



Fig. 24. "Idol", Sundi in Kingoyi  
(Laman 1224).

by Nsesi, who is now making off with them". When Ngo heard how his son-in-law had been despoiled of his brides by Nsesi, he hastened to place the shells in the water, and the rain came down in torrents. Nsesi, about to enter his house, found the water standing up to the seats. Forced to retreat, he and his wives climbed a tree, but still the rain came pouring down. The water rose higher and higher up the trunk of the tree, and still there was no sign of it clearing up. And Mpingi continued to conjure the shells, chanting: "Wherever Nsesi has gone, let loose a steady downpour. Wherever Nsesi has gone, let loose the rain and a raging storm".

Finally, his limbs frozen with cold and his wailing wives entreating him: "Let us go, father, then you may escape with your life", Nsesi sent word to Mpingi to come and get his brides. But Mpingi answered: "No, let Nsesi himself come and deliver them to my house. I can't take the risk of leaving my house and getting drenched in this downpour for nothing, considering how wily he is". And so Nsesi was forced to climb down from the tree with Mpingi's brides and take them all the way to Mpingi's house. Worn to a shadow he returned to his own home.

— Ngo lived in a very large compound with a lot of valuable possessions like elephant tusks and horns of buffalo and horse antelope and all sorts of other animals.

One day, as Ngo sat drinking palm wine with his younger brothers, he said: "When I die, you younger ones will inherit this compound, and nobody else". "How could it be otherwise?" the younger brothers agreed. "An estate is not inherited by an enemy". But secretly Ngo had quite different thoughts. His idea was to kill his younger brothers first, so that none of them would inherit his compound or his possessions after his death.

Plotting this evil scheme, Ngo went off and stole two animals from Frog's pen, a sheep and a pig. The next morning, Frog discovered the animals gone. "Ah, what now?" she exclaimed. "Someone must have discovered this pen. Oh well, we'll find out whoever it is". That night Ngo returned and stole a pig and a goat. Frog jumped high at the discovery that a pig and a goat had disappeared. "Is this the only pen they can think of?" she sighed. "Ah, this is a hard blow. But all right, if any (animal) is doomed to disappear forever (die), why not maama (mother)?"

Meanwhile Ngo, scheming another forage in the dead of night, said to his younger brothers: "The place where I get my meals I'm not likely to forget". But Frog, in her turn, was scheming to get the better of whoever was robbing her pen. When all was dead quiet, Frog climbed up on the overhanging roof of her house and crouched down, watching in all directions. Then she caught sight of Ngo. Tense, with her heart pounding, she stood up and came out of her hiding-place, *sosolo-sosolo* (rustling). "Oh, mwana himself is coming", she cried. "Come, do what you wish, except for me there is nothing there". "Wait for me", answered Ngo, "I'm coming". But when he rushed into the pen, he found Frog aiming her gun at him and turned tail. Frog fired, *te-e*. Ngo dropped to the ground, jumped up and down, and finally, after crashing into the *mfuma* tree so that he saw stars in front of his eyes, made his escape, moaning: "*e maama, e maama*". He arrived at the house

of his younger brothers, who asked him anxiously what was wrong. But he told them: "There's nothing wrong with me, except that I've taken a tumble. But a curse upon you if I don't get any meat to eat tomorrow!"

The next morning one of the younger leopards went out and caught a mvudi antelope. But when he offered it to his chief, Ngo told him he would not eat meat from the plain. "What sort of meat do you want?", wondered the younger brother. "Do you want meat that is tough and stringy?" "No", answered Ngo, "meat from Frog's pen". "Ah, alright then", said one of the younger ones, and when night fell he set out and caught a pig and a goat in Frog's pen. He took them to Ngo, who felt much better after eating what he liked best. In the morning Frog opened her pen and found a pig and a goat gone. "It is he himself who cannot keep away from my pen", she said. "Oh well, we'll meet again soon!" When darkness fell, Frog told herself: "Soon now he'll be on his way", and she took up the same post as before, keeping a sharp lookout. Suddenly she spied Ngo's younger brother approaching, and right away she felt calmer. He crept up, rushed inside the pen, and rushed out again past her. Frog fired, *te-e* (onomat.). "Eh maama", cried the leopard, and dragged himself up with a broken arm. Off he went, groaning: "Eh maama, eh maama".

When he came back to his brothers, they asked him anxiously what was wrong with him. But Ngo told them: "Someone has got his finger caught. Now you know that one of you is ill. Shouldn't we go out and find him some meat?"

That night one of them caught two nduutu and brought them to Ngo, who said: "Not this kind of meat. He won't eat anything with a soft skin, but only what comes out of Frog's pen". And so the brother set out again to steal a pig and a goat from Frog's pen. He brought the meat to Ngo, who told him: "You see, this kind of meat is what suits us". "How do you feel now?", he asked the injured leopard.

In the morning Frog opened her pen and missed a pig and a goat. "Always this pen!", she raged. "But I'll see to it that he won't come back". When night fell, the same thing happened. One of Ngo's younger brothers came and tried to rob the pen, but Frog fired, *te-e*. The animal dropped down with a broken leg. He dragged himself home. Again Ngo hushed the anxious questions of the family by saying: "He's not injured in any way, but he is suffering from illness". But his only intention was to get them all to Frog's pen in the hope that she would mutilate them. His evil scheme succeeded—they all met the same sorry fate at Frog's hands. After some time Frog became curious to know what had happened to them and said to herself: "I wonder how they are. Maybe they're gone". And so one day she decided to follow the track along which they had dragged themselves home, groaning with pain. Finding the corner of the pen spattered with blood, she exclaimed: "The creature itself must have been hit, for how else could this bloody track have been made?" She followed the blood stains until she suddenly came upon the compound. She entered and found the brothers lying about in the grounds, prostrate and unable to move. "Aha", she cried. "So it was Ngo and his younger brothers who were the culprits!" She finished them off and had Ngo's elephant tusks and all the rest of his inheritance he had left behind in the village moved to her own house. And so the story ends—one who heard *napoo*, mvudi has told it.

— One day Ngo proposed an infamous scheme to Nsesi: "Let's go and devour our mothers". Nsesi answered: "Master Ngo, let's go to your place first, and I'll cut up your mother". Said and done. Nsesi cut the mother's throat, and Ngo drank the blood. Then Ngo said: "Now go and cut up your own mother, Nsesi". But Nsesi, quick as ever, killed a goat instead and hid his mother under a rock.

Some time after that Nsesi and Ngo went out together to set traps, in which they caught a mvudi antelope. When it had been cut up, Ngo ordered Nsesi: "Go and sell this hind quarter for us". Nsesi took the meat and set off. When he came to the hill crest, he sang: "Swe-e, swe-swengele (sound of walking). Your mother we have eaten, my mother I've put under a rock". Then he hurried down into the valley and put the meat in his own house. His young wife set yuuma before him, and after his meal he told her: "Give me three ears of corn, and then I must be off on an errand". When Nsesi returned, Ngo exclaimed: "What now?" "The quarter sold for two ears of corn", Nsesi told him, "but they gave me four ears".

Next time they went to examine their trap, they found a nsuma antelope. When it had been taken out of the trap and cut up, Ngo again told Nsesi: "Go and sell this quarter for us". Arrived at the hill crest, Nsesi took up his song again: "Swe-swe-swengele. Your mother we ate, mine was hidden by the stone. Swe-swe-swengele. Your mother we ate, mine was hidden by the stone, swengele". When he had eaten his dish of yuuma, he told his wife: "Give me three ears of corn and then I'm off to Matadi!" He got what he asked for and set out for Matadi.

Meanwhile, one of Ngo's children went to his father and said: "See here, father, I heard someone say: "swe-swengele. Your mother we have eaten, my mother is safe by the stone, swengele". When he heard this, Ngo set off to fetch a nganga and told him: "This child has heard swe swengele. Your mother we have eaten, swengele, mine is hidden over there by a stone". The nganga told him: "Go and refrain from eating or drinking water". When the nganga arrived, he asked him: "What have you eaten?" "Plantains I've eaten and water I've drunk", answered Ngo. "Now hear", said the nganga. "Carara (cry of the Nightjar), mbiki yo (this verdict), carara, mbiki yo, stamp on Ntadi and throw in a ravine. Zya zya (around), stamp on Ntadi and throw in a ravine. What have you eaten?" "Plantain I've eaten and water I've drunk", answered Ngo again. The nganga left him still eating.

Then Ngo climbed up to the crest of the hill and sang: "Swe-swe-swengele. Your mother we've eaten, swengele, my mother was hidden under a stone". From her hiding-place under the rock the mother answered: "Swe-swe-swengele. Your mother we have eaten, my mother is hidden under a stone". Ngo hurried down and rolled the stone away, grabbed Nsesi's mother and ate her, but he left a hind quarter.

When Nsesi returned, he chanted his song: "Swe-swe-swengele, your mother we've eaten, my mother was hidden under the stone, swengele". But when he went to look behind the stone, his mother had gone. A hind quarter was all that remained. Then Nsesi bought himself a marimba and twanged it, ngwi-ngwi. It did not sound ngwengwe, oh no! A big one he bought, that sounded ngwi-ngwi, yes, just this one that sang ngwi-ngwi while he

sang: "I'm going to buy myself a mother on the other bank of the Congo, ngwi-ngwi, I'm going to buy myself a mother on the other bank of the Congo".

On his way he met a fly, who asked him: "Master Nsesi, where are you going?" "I'm going to buy myself a mother on the other side of the Congo", Nsesi told him. "Can't you put me in your nkutu bag?", asked the fly. The next one he met was Mbumbu nzeka, the borer (one of the hymenoptera), who asked him: "Master, where are you going?" "To the other bank of the Congo to buy myself a mother", answered Nsesi. Mbumbu Nzeka too asked him: "Can't you put me in your nkutu bag?" On they went, until they met Kimpwangi, the spider. He too asked Nsesi: "Master, where are you going?" Again Nsesi answered "To the other bank of the Congo to buy myself a mother". "Can't you put me in your nkutu bag?", asked Spider.

Nsesi continued on his way, singing to the accompaniment of his marimba, ngwi-ngwi-ngwi: "I'm going to buy myself a mother on the other bank of the Congo". When he came to Nzadi's shore, he wondered: "How am I going to get across?" Spider told him: "Put me down on the ground", and when he had done so, he ferried him across to the other bank. There he asked the people to sell him a mother, but they told him: "Not until you have chopped down this tree with your bare hands". Mbumbu Nzeka told him: "Put me down on the ground". Nsesi did so, and the borer crept inside the nkamba (mahogany) tree and set to work, boring with all his might. Then Nsesi hit the tree with his fist and felled it at the first blow. The people told him to go to the house, where he found a chest in which a maiden lay. He took it and went on his way, playing his marimba, ngwi-ngwi, and singing: "I've been to buy me a mother on the other bank of the Congo", ngwi-ngwi. "I've been to buy me a mother on the other bank of the Congo". Again he was ferried across by Spider. Back on the other shore Spider asked him: "Pay me", and Nsesi gave him three pieces of cloth. On he went, ngwi-ngwi, singing: "I've been to buy me a mother on the Congo shore". When he came to Mbumba Nzeka's village, the borer demanded: "Pay me, so that I can stay in my village". Nsesi paid him five pieces of cloth. Finally he arrived at his own village and took the maiden out of the chest.

When Ngo heard this, he said: "I too shall buy me a marimba". When he had done that, he set off and, like Nsesi, met a fly who asked him: "Where are you bound for, master Ngo?" "I'm on my way to buy myself a mother on the other bank of the Congo", said Ngo. "Can't you put me in your nkutu bag?", asked the fly, but Ngo crushed him to death and went on, playing his marimba, ngwi-ngwi, and singing: "I'm on my way to buy myself a mother on the other bank of the Congo". Then he met Mbumbu Nzeka, the borer, who asked him: "Where are you going, master?" "I'm going to buy me a mother on the other bank of the Congo", answered Ngo, grabbed him and squeezed the life out of him. Continuing on his way, he met Spider who also asked him: "Master, where are you bound for?" "I'm going to buy myself a mother on the other shore of the Congo", answered Ngo. "Can't you put me down in your nkutu bag?", asked Spider, but Ngo grabbed him and crushed him to a pulp.

Arrived at the Nzadi shore, he called out: "Eh, ferryman, e-e-, ferryman e-e". The ferry-

man took him across. When he got to the other side, he asked the people there: "Sell me a mother". But they answered: "Not until you've felled this tree with your bare fist, then we'll see". Ngo hit the tree with his fist, nakaa nakaa. "Eh, maama, my knuckles", he cried out. Even though he failed to fell the tree, he managed to find a house with young girls. He selected a chest, but when he opened it, it turned out to contain bees, and he could not lift it. Trying to cross the river again, he fell into the water and drowned.

— Once upon a time Nsesi and Ngo entered into a friendly partnership. They set out together to plait their duba fishpots. When they were ready, the pots were set out in the river. The next morning, Nsesi stole down to fill his own pots with the ngola fish he took from Ngo's baskets. Then later Ngo came to fetch Nsesi to inspect their catch. They found Nsesi's basket full of ngola fish, but Ngo's traps held nothing but crabs. But Nsesi gave Ngo six ngola fish, which they cooked and ate together. Early next morning Nsesi went down again and emptied Ngo's fishpots, putting the catch in his own baskets. When Ngo woke up, he fetched Nsesi. When they emptied their traps, Nsesi's little basket was half full of fish, but again there was nothing but crabs in Ngo's. Nsesi instantly handed two of his catch over to Ngo.

But one morning when they came to empty the fishpots and Nsesi's basket was again full of fish, while Ngo's contained only crabs, Ngo got suspicious and said: "Nsesi, you're up to no good!" "But what have I done?", asked Nsesi innocently. Back at the village, Nsesi hastened to cook his fish and invited Ngo to come and share them with him.

Another time, when Nsesi had plaited a new set of fishbucks, he set them in the runnels in the peanut field. Then he filled them with fish he had caught in the stream. Ngo went along with him and saw him lift the wriggling fish out of the bucks set in the runnels in the peanut field. Immediately Ngo said: "Nzinga Ngo, Nzinga Ngo (little leopard), go and cut me some palm laths". His baskets ready, he said: "Now let's go and set them out in the runnels on the peanut fields". But when Ngo and his people came to empty the bucks, all they found were small frogs. This was too much for Ngo, and he cried out: "This is the end of Nsesi!" Storming over to Nsesi's house, he asked the wife: "Where's that wretched husband of yours?" The wife answered: "He's tapping wine from the plantain". Ngo went over to Nsesi and told him: "Fetch me some of the wine you've been tapping so I can judge its taste". Tasting the wine, he found it nice and sweet, and so he said: "I'll follow Nsesi's example and start tapping wine from the plantain". Back home he set to work cutting down plantain after plantain, trimming the top shoot off those that were bearing fruit. His wife cried out: "Stop destroying them", but he answered her: "Won't you be drinking the palm wine too?" He took a calabash and tied it to the tree to catch the sap. But next morning, when he tasted the wine, he found it flat and insipid. So he ordered Nzinga Ngo: "Cut down a plantain and some palm nuts to eat, for today Nsesi shall die". Ngo set off and found Nsesi surrounded by his hens, which had stuck their heads under their wings. Nsesi hurriedly scattered some maize, and irri, all the hens came to life. "Well", said Ngo, "when I have ten (hens), you can be sure that they'll multiply rapidly". Back home, he called:

“Nzinga Ngo, catch all the hens and chop off their heads”. “Don’t cut the head off my hen”, cried his wife, but Ngo reassured her: “Nsesi chopped the heads off all his own hens”. Taking a long ear of maize, he shelled it and scattered the corns, but pii, all remained quiet. Again he scattered some corn, with the same result, pii. “Nzinga Ngo”, cried Ngo. “I’ll cut down that plantain over there so we can eat it with Nsesi, for this means the end of him!” Over at Nsesi’s house, he asked the wife: “Where has that wretched husband of yours gone off to?” “He’s over there helping the goat to give birth”, she answered. “Your lies are as bad as your husband’s”, said Ngo, but all the same he went over to have a look. He was met by the sound of slaps, nabufu, and bleating, be-e. Nsesi hurriedly put in his hand and pulled out blankets and pieces of cloth and francs. “How on earth did you get her to bring forth all this?”, cried Ngo. “When I have five goats, I will have great wealth”. Back home, he called: “Nzinga Ngo, Nzinga Ngo, go and catch the goats and fetch me a razor”. When he got hold of a goat, he hit it, nabufu-bufu. He put his hand inside, but all he pulled out was dung. Then he got hold of a billy-goat, and again he hit it, nabufu-bufu. He put his hand inside, but dung and nothing but dung was all he got. Deciding that this one was not fully grown, he got hold of one with a proper stomach, and hit it with all his might, nabufu-bufu. He put his hand inside and again pulled out nothing but dung. “Nsesi is as good as dead”, he cried, and went over to Nsesi’s house. “Where is Nsesi?”, he asked the wife. “Nsesi is in the inner room”, she answered. “If you must kill me”, said Nsesi, “then throw me in the Nzadi river. If you spill my blood, you will bring trouble on yourself”. “Nzinga Ngo”, ordered Ngo, fetch me plenty of palm laths so I can make a huge lembo buck.” When it was ready he ordered Nsesi to get inside. When Nsesi had done so, Ngo gloated: “Now your last hour has come!” He lifted the buck and set off. They came to a village, and he told Nsesi: “Wait while I go and have a smoke here”. While he was gone Mvudi arrived. “Master, how are you?”, he asked Nsesi. “I’m on my way to be installed as regent”, Nsesi answered. “But my legs are so short, so how shall I ascend the throne?” “But don’t you want to?”, asked Mvudi. “No”, said Nsesi, “I don’t want to”. Mvudi suggested: “Shall I release you and take your place in the basket?”. Nsesi agreed.



Fig. 25. Sculpture of an ancestor, Bembé in Kolo (Laman 626).

Mvudi untied the buck and Nsesi was free, i lwa. Mvudi took his place in the basket and Nsesi wound the strings tightly all around it. Then he shot off into the grass. When Ngo returned, he exclaimed: "Even if you have changed your skin with hundreds of spots, you won't escape death!" And on they went. When they came to the Nzadi river, in toppled the buck, i fu-u-u, making the water rise in bubbles, i nadada-da.

Back at his own place, Nsesi had spread out his blankets and cloths so that they covered the ground and the roof. Taking his nsambi pipe, he started playing, bi-he-li-be. Hearing the music, Ngo wondered: "But who can it be that's making this music in Nsesi's village?" He went over and found it was Nsesi whom he had just thrown in the Nzadi. "Your friends sent you many greetings", said Nsesi. "If you were to go there, you would acquire immense riches".

And so they made another lembo buck. At Nsesi's order Ngo sat inside it and off they went. They went on and on, until Nsesi said: "Now I want to have a smoke". When he returned from his smoke, he asked: "Ngo, are you here?" "Yes", answered Ngo, "I'm here". "You're a born chief", said Nsesi, and on they went to the river. When they came to the shore, Ngo ordered Nsesi: "Take me to the rapids". Nsesi did as he was told, but when they got there, he said scornfully: "Did you really think you were as clever as I am?" And with the final greeting "Fu-fu taata" (this is the end, father), he toppled him into the river.

— One day Nsesi sat down to eat malombo fruits. He had just eaten one, when he caught sight of Nkabi. He threw a fruit at him, which caught him in the eye. "Master Nsesi", asked Nkabi, "why did you hit me in the eye with this fruit?" "Taste it", answered Nsesi. Nkabi tasted it, and cried: "Let's go so that I can see this nlombo tree for myself". When they came to the tree, Nsesi told Nkabi: "Let's climb up by the mungu nkuma tree that Nlombo has given me. But close your eyes while I climb up first". Nkabi shut his eyes and Nsesi climbed nzala-nzala (like a monkey) up the nlombo tree. Then Nkabi climbed up by the mungu nkuma tree, and its thorns tore the underside of his belly. When he had reached the top, Nsesi suggested: "Let's cut the bottom out of our nkutu bags, and don't turn it inwards". But that was exactly what he did with his own bag. Then he told Nkabi: "Let's pick the green unripe fruits. The ripe ones belong to Ngo". But while Nkabi picked only unripe fruit, which fell down to the ground through the hole in his bag, Nsesi concentrated on the ripe ones. Under the nlombo trees stood Nkaka, the pangolin. He summoned Ngo with this song:

"Nlombo, master Ngo,  
has Nsesi divested of its green fruit  
Nlombo, master Ngo . . ."

When he heard that, Ngo came and asked: "Who's that up there in my nlombo tree?" "It's I, Nsesi", answered he, "who drink water through my leg. If you should hear natii (a splash) downstream, it will be a nlombo fruit, but if you hear natii upstream it will be me, Nsesi, falling into the river". Nkabi dropped down in the water upstream, where Ngo was ready to pounce upon him. Nsesi escaped safely.

Then Nsesi went to the antelope Nsuma and hit him in the eye with a fruit. "Master Nsesi", asked Nsuma, "why did you throw this fruit in my eye?" "Why don't you taste it?", answered Nsesi. Nsuma did so and exclaimed: "Master Nsesi, let's go so I can see that nlombo tree for myself!" Off they went. When they came to the foot of the nlombo tree, Nsesi said: "Let's climb up the mungu nkuma tree to master Ngo's nlombo tree. But you shut your eyes while I climb up". Nsuma shut his eyes and Nsesi climbed like a monkey up the nlombo tree. Then Nsuma climbed the mungu nkuma tree, kalikita-kalikita (with its thorns). When both had reached the top, Nsesi said: "Let's cut the bottom out of our bags, and not turn them inside out." While Nsuma cut the bottom out of his bag, Nsesi turned the lower half of his bag. That done, he said: "Let's pick the unripe fruits, the ripe ones belong to Ngo". But while Nsuma did pick the unripe fruits, Nsesi took the ripe ones. Nsuma's green fruits fell down on the ground, and the pangolin called for Ngo:

"Nlombo, Master Ngo, the green fruits has Nsesi picked.  
Nlombo, master Ngo, the green fruits has Nsesi picked".

Ngo came and asked: "Who's up there in my nlombo tree?" "I, Nsesi", said he, "who drink water with my leg. If you should see something natii downstream, it is a nlombo fruit, but if you see something natii upstream, it will be me". Then Nsesi made his escape downstream, while Nsuma went upstream and ran straight into Ngo's clutches.

Then Nsesi went to Dwangi, the red antelope, to Mvudi, to Nduutu, and many other animals, and threw nlombo fruits in their eyes. When they asked him: "Master Nsesi, why did you throw malombo fruits in our eyes?", Nsesi answered: "Take them and eat them". When they had done so, they entreated him: "Master Nsesi, take us to this nlombo tree". He took them along and when they had arrived at the foot of the nlombo tree, he told them: "You must climb up by the mungu nkuma tree, we shouldn't climb in master Ngo's nlombo tree. But shut your eyes while I climb up first". They did as they were told, and Nsesi climbed nzala-nzala up the nlombo tree. Dwangi, Mvudi, Nduutu and the others followed him by way of the mungu nkuma, kalikita-kalikita. When they had reached the top, Nsesi said: "Let's cut the bottom out of our nkutu bags". They did what he told them, but Nsesi deftly folded the bottom of his own bag inwards. Then he told them: "Let's pick the unripe fruits and leave the ripe ones that belong to Ngo". The others picked the unripe fruit, but Nsesi took the ripe ones. The fruit picked by the others fell down on the ground, but Nsesi's ripe ones were safely stowed away in his bag. When Nkaka heard the fruits falling down, he called Leopard:

"Nlombo, master Ngo, the unripe fruits has Nsesi picked,  
Nlombo, . . ."

Ngo came rushing up in answer to this song, and asked: "Who's that sitting in my nlombo tree?" "I, Nsesi", replied he, "who drink water with my foot. If you should hear natii downstream, it is a lombo fruit, but if you hear natii upstream, it will be me". The other animals jumped upstream, where Ngo was ready to pounce on them, but Nsesi instantly

made his escape downstream. In this way he killed one animal after the other, until he finally met one who proved a match for his own cunning.

This was the rodent Nkumbi. When Nsesi came to see him and hit him in the eye with a lombo fruit, Nkumbi asked: "Master Nsesi, why did you throw a lombo fruit in my eye?" Nsesi answered: "Take it and taste its flavour". When he had finished it, Nkumbi said: "Master Nsesi, let's go so I can see this nlombo tree for myself". Off they went. When they arrived at the foot of the tree, Nsesi told Nkumbi: "Let's climb up by the mungu nkuma tree, for we shouldn't climb in master Ngo's nlombo tree. Shut your eyes, and let me climb up first". But Nkumbi was cunning enough not to close his eyes all the way. Nsesi climbed up the nlombo tree nzala-nzala, like a monkey. Nkumbi followed suit and climbed the nlombo tree in the same way. Then Nsesi told Nkumbi: "Let's cut the bottom out of our bags, and don't turn it inwards". Again Nsesi quickly folded his own bag inwards, but Nkumbi did exactly the same. "Let's pick the unripe fruit", Nsesi went on, "the ripe ones belong to master Ngo". Nsesi picked the ripe fruit, and Nkumbi followed his example. The two were well matched in cunning. However, Nkumbi dropped a fruit on the ground, and the instant he heard it, Nkaka called for Leopard:

"Nlombo, master Ngo, the unripe fruit has Nsesi picked.  
Nlombo, . . ."

Ngo arrived and asked: "Who is it that sits in my nlombo tree?" "I, Nsesi", said he, "who drink water with my foot. If you should see a splash downstream, it is a lombo fruit, but if you see a splash upstream, it will be me". Again Nkumbi and Nsesi proved themselves equally cunning. Nsesi hurriedly threw a fruit upstream, and Ngo set off in hot pursuit in that direction. Nsesi and Nkumbi rushed off downstream, and this was one day that Ngo was left without a prey.

Another day Nsesi and Nkumbi went back to the tree. This time Nkumbi had filled his mouth with pepper, and when they arrived at the nlombo tree, he said: "You climb up, Nsesi, while I remain down here to trap Nkaka. When you've reached the top, drop a lombo fruit on the ground". Nsesi climbed up and threw a fruit on the ground. Nkaka heard it fall and made his way to the foot of the nlombo tree, not knowing that Nkumbi was already waiting there where he usually kept his vigil. Instantly Nkumbi rubbed pepper into his eyes, and Nkaka died on the spot. Nkumbi and Nsesi returned to their villages.

But Ngo, unable to find Nkaka, went to Nightjar and said: "Nightjar, smell out for me where I can find Nkaka". And so Nightjar started divining:

"Mbiki yo, mbiki yo (this verdict, this verdict)  
Mu kiyaaya, mu kiyaay'e-e  
Maybe to the water, mu kiyaay'e-e,  
Maybe through lwebo (garrulity), mu kiyaay'e-e,  
Mu kiyaaya, mu kiyaay'e-e".

Then Nightjar told Ngo: "Bring me my payment, then I'll tell you what I have". So Ngo paid five mbandu (bundles of cloth, worth 50 francs) and Nightjar told him: "Go and set a sikila (extinct firebrand) under the nlombo tree, and you will see who killed Nkaka". So Ngo set his sikila trap in the morning, and see, Nkumbi fell into it. Great was Ngo's joy when he saw Nkumbi trapped.

When Nsesi discovered that Nkumbi had disappeared, he in his turn went to Nightjar, and asked: "Smell out for me where Nkumbi has disappeared to". So Nightjar started divining:

"Mbiki yo, mbiki yo,  
Mu kiyaaya, mu kiyaay'e-e  
Maybe for theft, mu kiyaay'e-e,  
Maybe in the village, mu kiyaay'e-e,  
Or in the water, mu kiyaay'e-e".

Then Nightjar said: "Bring me my payment and I'll tell you what I have". So Nsesi paid him five mbandu, and Nightjar told him: "Go and find Nsongi (honeybird) and Systo, the frog, and let them help you to build a village". (When that had been done), Nsesi told Nsongi: "Carve a ndungu drum, and you'll see who has killed Nkumbi". Nsongi carved a drum, and Frog was the drummer. Nsongi's job was to provide those who wanted to smoke with tobacco leaves. Frog lived in the village and beat the drum:

"Mbambala, Mbambala (grasshopper),  
Let us rise to dance.  
Mbambala, Mbambala,  
Let us rise to dance".

One day Nkabi, the antelope, came up to him and said: "Master Frog, give me your drum and let me beat it". Frog handed it over. Nkabi beat the drum, and then he overpowered Frog and made off with it. Frog set up a wail:

"Eh, father Nsongi, the drum has gone to Nsakala's country,  
Eh, father Nsongi, . . ."

Leaving his work, Nsongi caught up with Nkabi on the road, and said: "Put my drum down there". "No", answered Nkabi. In the ensuing fight Nkabi was killed by Nsongi, and the drum was returned to the village.

In this way one animal after another tried to get hold of the drum, but Nsongi buried them all, until he finally met one animal who proved to be the death of him.

Nsongi had returned to his work of handing out tobacco leaves to the smokers. Frog remained in the village and beat the drum: "Mbambala, Mbambala, rise to dance . . .". Then Ngo came and wanted to beat the drum. He asked: "Master Frog, give it to me so I can beat it too". "Oh well, alright then", said Frog. Ngo beat the drum, and when he had finished, he overpowered Frog and made off with it. Frog called out to Nsongi:

"Eh, father Nsongi, the drum has gone to Nsakala's country. . .".

Nsongi left his work and caught up with Ngo on the road. He told him: "Put my drum down there". When Ngo defied him, Nsongi was furious. In the fight that followed, Nsongi was defeated by Ngo and torn to shreds. Frog, wondering what had become of Nsongi, went in search of him, zondo-zondo-zondo (leaping). Coming upon the remains of Nsongi, he invoked him thus:

"Mavunu maaku, nama, nama, nama.  
Your lie (you are shamming), catch, catch, catch  
Ta byaku, nama, nama, nama  
Your limbs, catch, catch, catch".

Frog kept up his incantation until he had woken Nsongi to life again. Then Nsongi, Frog, and Nsesi went to consult Nightjar, who divined:

"Mbiki yo, mbiki yo  
Mu kiyaaya, mu kiyaay'e-e.  
Maybe in the water, mu kiyaay'e-e.  
Maybe by theft, mu kiyaay'e-e,  
Maybe by force, mu kiyaay'e-e,  
Mu kiyaaya, mu kiyaay'e-e".

Then Nightjar told them: "Go and compose a nkisi called Mbuki". Nsongi, Nsesi, and Frog went off and composed this nkisi. Then Nightjar told them: "Climb to the top of the mountain and then point it at the village in the valley, and this nkisi will bring ruin to the people and the animals and everything else in the village". They climbed the mountain and when they arrived at the top, they looked down on Ngo's village. They pointed their nkisi at the village, singing a mighty song:

"Sakusi (he has reduced), over there Mbuki has gone, e.  
Sakusi, over there Mbuki has gone.  
Sakusi, over there Mbuki has gone.  
Banda (strike), ta-a-au-u."

Plantains and hens and pigs and goats and ducks, all were destroyed (nlalu). Again they sang:

Sakusa, over there Mbuki has gone,  
Sakusa, over there Mbuki has gone.  
Banda, ta-a-a, u-u

Every man, woman, and child in the village was destroyed (nlalu). When Ngo found his whole village in rack and ruin, with himself as the sole survivor, he sent for Nsongi, Nsesi, and Frog to cure the village and bring everything back to life. Again they sang their song:

"Sakusi kuuna kwayenda Mbuki-e  
He has reduced, over there where Mbuki has gone,  
Banda, taa-a-a-a, u-u-u".

And see, plantains and hens and pigs and goats and ducks had come back to life. Once more they sang their song:

“Sakuna, kuuna kwayenda Mbuki-e,  
Banda, taa-a-a, u-u-u”.

Women, men, and children rose. Now Nsesi, Nsongi, and Frog demanded their payment from Ngo. It consisted of a hundred men, a hundred women, a hundred pigs, a hundred goats, and the same number of everything else. This was the price Ngo had to pay for his thievishness. When Nsongi, Nsesi, and Frog had received their payment, they returned to their village.

The moral of this story is that one should never covet one's neighbours possessions.

— Once upon a time Nsesi, who was the younger, and Ngo, who was the elder, entered into a partnership as traders. They ferried across to the Mazinga shore to buy pigs. When they came to the Mangelo market and were to start buying, Nsesi said to his elder partner: “Master Leopard, it would be best if we bought sows that will yield us some interest”. “E-e, brother”, said Ngo. “You can buy a sow, but I want to buy a boar”. “Ja-ha-ee”, agreed Nsesi. “Let's do that, one a sow, the other a boar”. And so Ngo bought a boar, while Nsesi acquired an old sow. They returned to their village. When some months had passed, Nsesi's sow threw a litter of five. Then Ngo claimed: “It is my pig that has produced these young, not Nsesi's. It is only fitting that I, the elder, should have the first proceeds, and not he, who is the younger. It is my boar that has given birth”. But Nsesi, who had never heard anything like it before, retorted: “Oh, has anybody ever seen such a miracle. Whoever has seen a boar farrowing too? A truly miraculous happening!” Ngo suggested: “Let's put our case to the guardians of the country. Let Elephant and Buffalo solve the question for us”. “Let me hear the summons first”, said Nsesi, “then I'll come. I wanted us to buy sows that would bring a return, but you, you had to have a boar. And now he has farrowed! Ah, go and enter your complaint, bote fyale zakii,<sup>1</sup> for if nothing had come of it, what would have happened then? If I lose, I lose”. In other words, nothing is to be gained by fraud.

But Ngo's indignation got too much for him. The Nzelele termite and the Nkangala fly failed to change his mind for him, and he set off in a rage to bring suit against Nsesi before Elephant and Buffalo. When he stood before the chiefs, he began to state his grievance against Nsesi: “Look here, master Elephant and master Buffalo, I have not come for nothing, seeing that I have a little matter to put before you. I and my younger brother Nsesi are having an argument. Together we went to trade on the Mazinga side of the river to buy us some pigs. I bought a boar, he bought an old sow. But when we got back to the village,

<sup>1</sup> Term used in lawsuits, meaning “Be it so”.

his sow, who was pregnant, threw a litter of five pigs. My own pig looked and looked, but it did not farrow. I said: 'Eh, after all, I'm the elder, aren't the first proceeds mine by right? As though they ought to be given to the younger one! Wait while I go and ask the country's guardians (simbi) to solve the question for us.' That is why I have come, now summon Nsesi, and let us settle the matter".

Elephant gave his opinion: "Really, your case is lost from the start, for where did you ever see a boar farrow too? But since we are the country's rulers, we might as well get something out of this process. Now stay here tonight, tomorrow we'll send for Nsesi". When Nsesi got home from his field, his children told him: "Ngo has brought suit against you before Elephant and Buffalo". "Oh well", said Nsesi. "Let him go. But I'll go and consult the rodent Nkumbi, who is my age-mate." When he arrived there, he said: "Look here, master Nkumbi, I and my elder brother Ngo bought pigs on the Mazinga shore, at the konzo market. I bought an old sow, and he bought a boar. Then we got back to the village, and mine threw a litter of five, since she was pregnant when I got her. But when my brother Ngo found out, he said: "My own (pig) has given birth to these five pigs, and not the one belonging to my younger brother Nsesi, for I, as the elder, have first right to any profits, since he is my younger brother". He took all the young and the sow, and hid them in his sty. I was going to speak, but on second thought I let it go. All the same, I did ask him if anyone has ever seen a boar farrow too. Jehe-e-e-e (never mind). The long and the short of it is that we quarreled. Now he has gone to enter a complaint against me before Elephant and Buffalo. So then I thought I would go to my age-mate Nkumbi and ask his advice. So tell me what I should do". "This is what you should do", said Nkumbi. "Take off what you're wearing now and dress yourself in mataba strips. When you reach the hill crest near Elephant's village and Buffalo's village, and see Ngo sitting with Elephant on one side and Buffalo on the other, then rush down the hill and dash right through their group as fast as you can. You must not speak until they address you. When they ask: "But where on earth is Nsesi off to?", then you must answer: "Aa, yaaya, I'm going to call for help, because father has borne a child". "But how will the matter end then?" asked Nsesi. "Go on, hurry", said Nkumbi, "and do as I told you. You will know the outcome when you get there. Hurry, because they're waiting for you". And so Nsesi dressed himself in strips of cloth and set out. When he reached the hillcrest he looked down. Elephant and Buffalo were in position on either side, with Ngo between them. Nsesi came coursing down, zoke-zoke-zoke (onomat.), taking Elephant and his crowd by surprise. He bounded past at tremendous speed, he, he, he, he, he, he, he. Those who saw him first said: "But who is it that comes running in old and worn loincloths?" But Ngo recognized him and said: "It's Nsesi". But Nsesi rushed past them without a word. Then Ngo cried out: "You and your crowd, Elephant, call him back, otherwise our case cannot take its proper course". Elephant and the others hailed him: "Eh, you, Nsesi, wo-o-e (int.)". "What's up now?", asked Nsesi. "Where are you rushing off to?" the others asked. "After all, you have been sued. Ngo has entered a complaint against you, and so we must absolutely insist that you come back, you hear". "No, wait", answered Nsesi, "for yaaya, I'm off to get help, because father has

borne a child". "Has he borne a child?" they said. "No doubt he should have said that father was going to get help because yaaya (mvu) has borne a child. Where did we ever hear of a father giving birth to a child?" "That's just like him", said Ngo. "Whenever something comes up, he has to confuse the issue like that". "E-e-e-e", he hailed Nsesi again. "Look at his garb! See, he has even disguised himself in mataba loincloths, nkote-e-e (int.). That's just how he acts in the village, diverting the blame for things that he is accused of by trying to make the people believe that a nkuyu spirit or nganga Ntadi passed". Nsesi turned in his tracks and took his place in the court beside Elephant and the others. "Now tell us the truth", they said, "has your father given birth to a child?" "What do you mean", asked Nsesi. "Let's put it like this, then", the others resumed. "Has your father really borne a child, or hasn't he?" "Hwo-o, is that so surprising?" asked Nsesi. "What do you mean?" the others exclaimed. "Is it not remarkable? Where in Congoland did you ever hear of a man ready to give birth? Did you ever hear of such a thing?" "Eh", said Nsesi, "then hold your trial for the charge that has been brought against me. Otherwise, as far as I know, men do not give birth. But how about this charge that has been brought against me before you, the rulers of the country? What line does that take, if not the same idea

about men? Rulers of the country, hear me. I and my elder brother Ngo, we went to trade on the Mazinga shore. I said then: "Master Ngo, what sort of pig will you buy?", and he answered: "A boar that will soon bring some wealth into the house". I said: "I'll buy a sow". I bought an old sow, and he bought a boar. After a while my sow, being pregnant when I brought her along, threw a litter of five. But when Ngo saw that, he said: "It's my boar that has given birth to these pigs". He has come here and accused me before you because I refused to give him my pigs. But tell me, chiefs, where did you ever see a boar farrowing? Why do you marvel at my father, as though it would be impossible for him to bear a child? How has it then been possible for a boar and master Ngo to give birth, if my father has been unable to do so? If you deny what I say about my father, then I deny your claims about the boar and master Ngo. Now tell me the truth, e-e, can't boars farrow? I await your verdict, chiefs". Elephant and the others bowed low. Then they rose and said: "To be sure, master Nsesi, we have never heard that a male can give birth. Indeed, a boar does not farrow". Elephant looked at Ngo, and asked him: "What sort of pig did you buy?" "A boar",

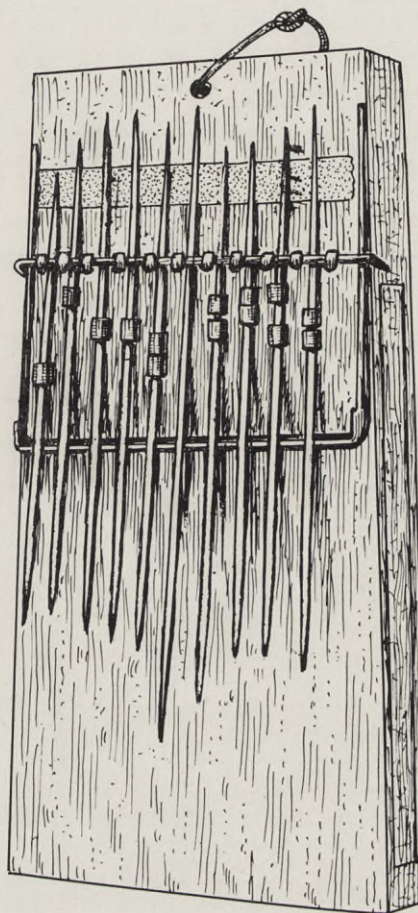


Fig. 26. Marimba, Sundi in Nganda  
(Laman 786).

answered Ngo. "And what did your brother Nsesi buy?" "A sow". "Wich of them farrowed?" "Mine". "Yours?" "Yes". "In whose sty did it throw the litter?" "In Nsesi's". "But to start with, when you got home, in whose sty was it put then?" "In mine". "How did it happen then that it threw a litter a Nsesi's sty, when it had not been there before?" "Because the birthpains became too much to bear". "How is it marked?" "By a white hoof". "And Nsesi's?" "By a spot on the forehead". "Which pig threw the litter, the one with the spot of the one with the white hoofs?" "The one with the spot, the one that has the litter now". "Did you ever hear of any male giving birth?" "No". "But when it comes to boars, did you ever hear of them farrowing?" "Certainly not". "Why are you then trying to cheat your brother out of his pigs? This is the verdict. It is not your pig, but your brother's that has thrown the litter. Give everything back to him, you hear?" "Yes", Ngo agreed. "The case is settled". Nsesi wondered: "But if we get back to the village and he refuses to give me my pigs, what then?" "Then come back and put your case before us. You, master Ngo, go and settle with your younger brother". "Nsesi should make me a peace offering of two hens", said Ngo. "But master Ngo should know that what belongs to the younger belongs to the elder, and what belongs to the elder belongs to the younger", the judge replied. "So you have no cause to argue and quarrel with your brother. You have no reason to be envious of each other. Farewell! I demand no fee for my services as counsel, for you are our friends".

— A man by the name of Kaye tambi had set his traps up in a palm tree. Lumfini got caught in one of them. The trapper told him: "I'll stab you to death with this knife". Lumfini begged him: "Let me be, and one day I'll save you from a trap". "Ehe-e-e", laughed the trapper. "You with your bulging eyes, would you save me?" But he let the animal go and went to inspect his other traps, where he got all the rats he wanted.

Then he went to tap his palm trees. When he had stored his wine in the shed to mature, he went home to his village, laid himself down in his house and went to sleep. When dawn came, he felt like going down to the brook. He inspected his traps. This time there was no Lumfini, but plenty of rats. When he had taken his catch out of the traps, he set out to tap his palm trees. Suddenly he listened. Somebody was calling at the shed where he mixed the wine. "Wa-a-a, palm wine tapper, e-e". Calls of "ka-a-a" and "wo-o-o" resounded. Someone said: "I'm Ngo". "What do you want?", asked the wine tapper. "Wo-o-o, this. Fetch some soft palm kernels for me to eat. Take mbundi palm kernels up high, take mbundi palm kernels down low. Are there any sombo palm nuts here?" When the man heard that, he immediately began to gather the kernels. When he had enough, he went over to the shed with them, and there was Ngo waiting to crack them. When Ngo had finished cracking nuts, he said: "O-o-o, tapper of palm wine, e-e-e". "What is it?", asked the man. "O-o show me a field of manioc, one that has good roots". The man answered: "Those in the upper end are bitter, and those in the lower end are bitter, but the ones that grow in between, aren't they sweet? Take your manioc roots there". Ngo took up a manioc root and came back to sit by the shed where the tapper mixed his wine. Then the tapper himself arrived there. He filled a mug to the brim, mfwa-a-a, with frothing wine, and drank. Again he

poured a brimming cup, mfwa-a, and offered it to Ngo. "I don't drink from those mugs", Ngo said. "I drink from my own". With these words he put his hand in his bag and pulled out a human skull, which he threw to the tapper. The tapper took it up, filled it to the brim, mfwa-a-a, and handed it back to Ngo. Ngo drank and drank and drank. Then he belched: "Tya-a-a-a. Father Bwende, his mother's child he struck, dragged him, he crouched down, increased his force, the tapper I shall eat, the tenth I shall eat today". Again he delved in his bag, and brought out a second skull, which he threw to the tapper. Mfwa-a-a, to the brim. He drank and belched: "Tya-a-a. We heavenly leopards. The ninth tapper I have eaten, the tenth I shall eat today". When he heard these words, the tapper was stricken with terror.

A little while later Lumfini made his appearance. "Good day", he greeted the tapper. "E-e-e, good day, father", the man answered. When Ngo saw Lumfini, his bragging grew even worse. Again he stuck his hand in his bag and pulled out a human skull. He threw it down in the middle of the clearing. The tapper filled it for him until it was brimming over, mfwa-a-a. He drank and drank. Then he belched: "Tya-a-a. E, we of the leopard tribe, if any of us should eat chalk, he must be perished with hunger. The ninth tapper I have beheaded, the tenth I shall behead today". The tapper took his funnel (siba) and poured a mugful of wine for Lumfini. But Lumfini said: "I won't drink from these mugs". "He-e-e", laughed Ngo when he heard that. "From whose mug do you drink then?" "I have my own mug", answered Lumfini. He put his hand in his bag and brought out a leopard skull. He threw it down in front of the tapper, who filled it to the brim, mfwa-a-a, and handed it back to him. Lumfini drank and drank and drank. Then he belched: "Eh, we children of Lumfini, we of the bulging eyes, kernels of the raffia palm. Nine Ngo I have eaten already, the tenth I shall eat today". When Ngo heard that, he became apprehensive and started scrabbling his skulls together with his toes. Lumfini sat there, looking all around, yelo-yelo-yelo (rollong his eyes in all directions). He delved in his bag and threw another leopard skull on the ground. He drank and belched: "Tya-a. Nine leopards I have beheaded already, the tenth I shall behead today". Scarcely had he finished speaking before Ngo scrambled to his feet and with one terrific leap fled into the wood, giving Lumfini no chance to pursue him. Left alone, Lumfini said: "You see, tapper, if it hadn't been for me, Ngo would have killed you. So if you had killed me, who would have saved you? Now give me my due reward. You must pay me five calabashes of palm wine and in addition five mbundu cloths and a pig. For if it hadn't been for me, what would your life have been worth? It would have been the end. Ja-a, that's the truth!" Then, their debts to each other paid, they went their separate ways.

— Once upon a time Nkumbi and the other animals decided to clear a road and have a market, so that they could trade with each other. They all met at the market place, and all the animals brought their wares there. They sold, they bought, but nobody wanted the wares that Nkumbi had brought, since Nkumbi carries everything in his cheeks, and the wares he brought to market were simply dripping with spittle. That was why nobody bought his wares and everyone just laughed at him. Puzzled, he thought to himself: "Ah, here we have

set up a market, but whatever I bring, be it one thing or the other, they don't want it". One day, sitting at the edge of his burrow, he saw Ngo come stalking by, his mane bristling, his claws thrust out, and his mouth gaping wide. Hungry for meat, he tried to catch Nkumbi. But Nkumbi crouched down on the ground by his burrow and said: "Eh, Ngo, I'll put you on to a good thing". "Well, tell me", said Ngo. Nkumbi told him: "I and all the other animals have cleared a market place where we can take our wares to trade. But they just laugh at me and buy nothing. I can just take everything back again. They say my wares are simply drenched with spittle, and that is why they return them to me. But Ngo, if you are willing, I'll take you along to the market. I'll take you there in a blanket. Then, when we've come to the market place, and a sufficient crowd has gathered, and they ask me what I have in the blanket, you, Ngo must not make a sound. But I'll tell them: "It's my dog that is for sale". Then, when the crowd is gathered there and I've put you down on the ground, you rush out of the blanket, kill them and eat them. And I'll dive into a hole that I'll dig at the corner of the market where the drinking is done.

That was a scheme to Ngo's liking. Nkumbi went ahead and in all secrecy dug a hole in the ground at the corner of the market place. And so, when market day came, Nkumbi put Ngo in the blanket and set out to go to market. When the other animals saw Nkumbi with his blanket that was rising and falling, they all exclaimed: "Ah, Nkumbi, what is that heaving in the blanket?" "My dog is in this blanket", Nkumbi answered. "Ah, sell it to us", they begged him. "Where shall I sell it?", he asked. "Ah, show it, put it here, and then tell us how much it costs", they said. Nkumbi lifted the blanket down from his shoulder and put it on the ground, all the other animals crowding around it. Ah, when they opened the blanket to look at the dog, it was Ngo that rushed up and soon they were fighting all over the place. Nkumbi dived into his hole, while Ngo attacked and killed one animal, pounced upon another and laid it down. Some of the animals survived, but the others he killed. That was the end of the market too. That is how the saying arose: "Nkumbi dia mazandu" (Nkumbi eats the market), because they treated him with scorn and let him return home in shame with his wares.

— Long ago the weaver bird Kwanga built himself a town. He was a gentle ruler, who sincerely loved his people. As a result, he was held in high esteem by his tribe. When strangers came to visit Kwanga, he sent for his subjects with the message: "Bring palm wine". "Yes, yes, master", they would answer, "here is your palm wine". Then he would send for the women: "Bring food so that the strangers may eat", and the women would answer: "Our master, yes, yes, see here the dishes we serve you". In this way they would honour him day after day before men and women. The town grew larger and larger, thanks to Kwanga's gentle rule. In the evenings and mornings the youths of the town indulged in their boisterous play.

One day Ngo walked over to Kwanga's town. When evening came, he remarked: "Master Kwanga, such frolicking I hear in your village". "There are so many boys", explained Kwanga. "In the evening, when they have been drinking palm wine, they come over to

the compound to eat. That is the way to preserve a large village and support a large tribe. There has to be an indulgent chief to watch over them". "Ah, to be sure, yaaya", agreed Ngo, "you know how to preserve a large tribe". Then Kwanga sent for palm wine: "My subjects, bring palm wine so that we may drink with yaaya Ngo". His subjects answered: "Yes, yes, master, mbembe, mbembe", and old and young hurried to obey his request. When the palm wine had been drunk, he called upon the women of the village: "Bring food, so that we can eat with master Ngo and my subjects and the boys". "Yes master, yes, yes, e", the women answered. Dishes of food arrived. "Master, yes, yes, mbembe, mbembe". Ngo was amazed at the way Kwanga was obeyed by his subjects, and he asked him: "But tell me, yaaya Makwanga, how do you manage to preserve this big tribe?" "I have a mbonzo medicine that soothes the heart", said Kwanga. "If you have a troubled or trembling heart, you cannot preserve a village. But if you drink the medicine I have, then maybe you will succeed. But you will find it difficult to preserve a village, master Ngo, if you lack gentleness". "Ah, yaaya", answered Ngo. "If you who are so small can preserve a large village, wouldn't I who am so big be able to preserve a town? But sell that mbonzo medicine to me". Kwanga replied: "Let's go to the wood where my men have gone to tap palm wine. When we get there we can agree on the day when you come and fetch the medicine itself". "Ah, I am glad, yaaya", answered Ngo, "that I too will be able to rule a tribe, for to go on in solitude is not a good thing".

They arrived at the palm grove and Kwanga called to the members of his tribe that had gone ahead: "Subjects, bring palm wine so that we may drink with master Ngo, for he is ready to be on his way". "Eh, master, we're coming, yes, yes", they all answered and came with palm wine. Again Ngo was amazed at the remarkable way in which Kwanga's subjects obeyed their master. Kwanga ordered them: "Go and clear the field". "Master, yes, yes, yes", the response came. There by the fermenting shed (kandu) they agreed that Ngo would meet Kwanga on the plain to fetch the medicine.

When the nkandu day<sup>1</sup> arrived, they met on the plain. Kwanga told Ngo the names of the leaves and different herbs he was to gather for his medicine: malemba-lemba, mabolongo, lembika ntima (which soothes the heart, calms the mind), vunga moyo (calm down), and ndingi (which soothes the heart, from dingimisa). Then he planted a malemba-lemba and mabolongo sapling, a seedling of a ndongila plantain and a tiba banana, and finally a root of lubota, nsanda, mungyenge, and nkumbi. If they should plant nsyasya herbs, the village would disperse.

Ngo did exactly as Kwanga had told him. When he had drunk the special medicine and buried nkinda<sup>2</sup> medicine, he summoned all the animal families, big and small alike. When they had gathered, Ngo told them: "Here we shall build a huge town, and I will be chief over all of you. You shall all obey me as yaaya Kwanga is obeyed by his tribe. And you shall tap your measure of palm wine and bring it to me. When I call to you: subjects, come and bring me palm wine, you shall hasten to reply: yes, our master, mbembe, mbembe, our master". The medicine made Ngo a mild ruler, and the town grew larger for every day.

<sup>1</sup> One of the four market days in the Kongo week.

<sup>2</sup> Nkinda is a nkisi which guards against all misfortune.

When it had become a large town, Ngo sent a message to his yaaya Kwanga to ask him to come and look at the town that had been established owing to him. But Kwanga answered that the rainy season would have to be finished first, after that he would come for a visit.

In the early days there had been an argument between Ngo and Nsesi when they held their council. Ngo told Nsesi: "You shall live close to me, Nsesi". Nsesi had protested: "No, indeed, not I, yaaya". Then Ngo had resigned, saying: "Ah, indeed, yaaya Nsesi, you're right in what you said".

Time passed and life went on, but then Ngo's wife became pregnant. She started crying, day after day. Then Ngo asked her: "But my wife, what are you crying for day after day?" The wife answered: "I have a craving for a nduutu kid". "No", exclaimed Ngo, "do you want to disperse the village?" But the wife went on crying, and Ngo became so distressed that finally he thought: "Oh well, I might as well catch a nduutu kid so that my wife will have food to still her craving". And so Ngo went through the village, which lay deserted except for the small children. He roved about until he came to the edge of the town, not meeting any of the older people. Suddenly a nduutu kid came running and went right past him. Ngo instantly caught the nduutu kid. His wife stopped crying.

When Nduutu came home from the forest, he looked for the kid. When he could not find it, the mother and the father and the brothers wept. When some days had passed, Ngo's wife started crying again. And when Ngo asked her: "What are you crying for?", she answered: "I have a craving for a little porcupine". "No, my wife", Ngo protested. "The village will be dispersed." Ngo was adamant, but the crying went on, and finally he had no choice but to go and catch a little porcupine. He roved all through the town first, making sure none of the older people were about. Then he turned back and close by his own house he caught a little porcupine and gave it to his wife, and she ate it.

Everybody returned from the forest. When evening came, Porcupine looked for his child, but could not find it. Those who owned the child cried. Nobody had any idea that it was the village chief who went about catching their children.

Only a few days later the wife started crying again. Day after day she went on, until Ngo asked: "Why are you crying?" She answered: "I have a craving for a nsuma kid and a dwangi kid". "No, my wife", said Ngo. "Do you really want to disperse the village? I refuse!" At that, his wife's crying doubled in strength and finally Ngo was forced to set out again. He roved all through the town, not seeing any of the older people. Then he caught a nsuma kid and a dwangi kid.

When they came home from the forest, Nsuma and Dwangi looked for their children. They searched until night fell, but could not find them. All the people were aghast, wondering what it could be that made their children disappear from the village. They bewailed their children under loud weeping.

Finally it came to Kwanga's attention that in nkaayi Ngo's town children kept disappearing without tangible cause. Kwanga said: "I've heard that his wife has a voracious craving". They told him: "That is so, Kwanga". "If that is so", said Kwanga, "let them take warning there, e maama. I will bide my time for a visit, but right now, no, I refuse".

Nsesi, cunning as ever, found out that it was the village chief who caught the children of his younger brothers. One day everybody in the village went to the forest, leaving only Nsesi. He hid himself by the nkinda, at the foot of a plantain tree. He hid himself well. Only little boys and girls were left in the village. Ngo's wife started crying again, and she cried and cried, until Ngo asked: "What is the reason for your tears?" She told him: "I have a craving for a nsesi kid". Ngo protested: "No, do you want to disperse the village." She kept on crying. Nsesi was listening. Ah, now Ngo came out. He roved through the whole village, looking in all directions. Nobody was there. Nsesi was watching him. The children were playing. When they came running past Ngo's house, he caught Nsesi's child. Nsesi cried: "Let go of my child! So it's you who carries off other people's children and eats them!" Ngo let the kid go, and Nsesi called all the people who had gone to the forest back to the village. When they were all gathered, he told them: "It is our chief himself who has eaten the children that we have been searching for. Therefore I and my people will go back where I came from, for the chief himself has dispersed the village. Let's therefore not flock together so that he can catch our children right away. I'll go round the village to collect our possessions from the houses. The village is now entirely dispersed".

The whole tribe went off, and Ngo was left alone, thanks to his treacherous behaviour.

— Once Ngo summoned all animals with the message: "Tomorrow evening you must all gather here to blow the bellows for me, for they've brought me much iron to forge hoes and knives". On the evening of the konzo day<sup>1</sup> all the animals gathered at Ngo's forge and helped him to work the bellows. But Ngo himself was the first, and as he worked the bellows he sang this song:

<sup>1</sup> One of the days in the four-day week of the Kongo.



Fig. 27. *Nkisi Ndumba antela-ntela*, Sundi in Mukimbungu (Laman 1270).

“Mbazi kyafyona kutu (tomorrow he will squeeze the ear)  
Mbazi mene (early tomorrow) kyafyona kutu.  
Mbazi mene kyafyona kutu.”

All eyes turned towards Ngo. The other animals just stared at him, at a loss to understand the meaning of his song. But Nsesi grasped the meaning and said: “Ah, so tomorrow he will kill people, he will squeeze their ears”. Then Nsesi said to Ngo: “Wait, master, I too will work the bellows”. “Go ahead and take over”, answered Ngo. Nsesi took over the bellows and started singing a song of his own:

“Kutu diufyona dyazengi (the ear you will squeeze belongs to a fool).  
The ear you will squeeze belongs to a fool.  
The ear you will squeeze belongs to a fool”.

Thus Ngo and Nsesi kept a wary eye on each other. When night came, they slept. Early in the morning, when the darkness lifted, there was fire in the forge. Everyone was sent off to the water. Then Ngo chose Nkabi and Nsuma to work the bellows. Nsuma was ordered to prepare the charcoal. Nsesi stood at the other end of the blower (nsong anlaku). Nkabi was just about to start the bellows when Ngo sprang at him. At the same time Ngo's wife threw herself at Nsuma. A wild fight ensued, but by that time Nsesi had already fled to the forest. Nkabi and Nsuma were fools, who did not heed the warning given by the song, and because of that they lost their lives.

In addition to the many fables featuring Ngo and Nsesi, there are numbers of other animal tales. Some of them follow here.

— One day Kinsidikiti<sup>1</sup> looked at Ngembo, the giant bat, and thought: “Day after day goes by, and never does he fly out in daylight to feed. Surely Ngembo can't produce much excrements, when he never eats in the daytime”. And so he asked Ngembo: “Tell me, master Ngembo, when you never eat in the daytime, do you have any excrements?” “Certainly”, answered Ngembo. “I produce plenty of excrements. What I excrete in one day, you cannot throw away in one day”. Kinsidikiti answered: “I'll show you that I can get rid of it, if you'll let me”. “Go ahead then”, said Ngembo.

Thus agreed, Ngembo started relieving his bowels: tooto, tooto, tooto<sup>2</sup>. Kinsidikiti moved to and fro, picking it up and throwing it away, picking it up and throwing it away. Ngembo went on and on relieving his bowels, saying: “that there, that there, that there (tooto)”. And Kinsidikiti went on picking it up and throwing it away, picking it up and throwing away. And still Ngembo relieved his bowels, saying: “that there, that there, that there”. Kinsidikiti went on throwing it away, and Ngembo went on relieving his bowels. They kept it up from dawn until the sun went down. Kinsidikiti was exhausted and in need of food, for night was about to fall. And so he told Ngembo: “Ah, master Ngembo, now I know that I cannot throw away all your excrements, because they are so plentiful. I admit

<sup>1</sup> A small bird (*Spermospiza guttata*).

<sup>2</sup> Dem. pron. from the word *tuvi* = excrement.

that I have lost. I'll never argue again with you about this matter". Ngembo answered: "That is as you like, for it was you who wanted to argue. So be off now, for you've been proved wrong and disgraced. Remember that I eat all night long until daylight breaks. You, Kinsidikiti, eat all day long until night falls".

Kinsidikiti was now very anxious to find his next meal. But where would he get any food that might tickle his palate and appease his hunger? Dark night fell and Kinsidikiti flew off to his sleeping-place without food. And so he lay awake all night. His nest felt so hard and lumpy, although it was so soft and nice. Sleep was not for him. He struck his hands together and muttered to himself: "Really, really, I'll never do it again. Now I'm going to the land of the dead". But how did things end for Kinsidikiti? Well, early next morning he woke up and set off to find himself some food, and ate his fill. Happy once more, he lay down and fell into a deep sleep. But die he did not.

— Once upon a time there was a Mboma<sup>1</sup> who was pinned down by a falling tree. He tried to free himself, but he was not strong enough. Then he heard a Mvudi antelope passing. Mvudi saw Mboma twisting and turning under the tree. He asked him: "Do you want me to release you from your suffering?" "Yes, please", said Mboma. "Have pity on me, for I've been pinned down by this tree since the day before yesterday, and so far I've been unable to get out of here". Mvudi's pity took the upper hand and he said: "Alright then, even though you eat us, I'll release you from your suffering all the same". And so he lifted the tree that was pinning Mboma down. The tree was rolled off, and Mboma was free. He showered thanks on Mvudi and told him: "If it hadn't been for you I would now have been lying dead under that tree".

But since Mboma was almost starved, and too weak to go out in search of food, he suddenly got the impulse to grab Mvudi as his prey. Without further reflection Mboma threw himself at Mvudi. Mvudi fell down; "E, maama!", he cried. "But what have I done that you want to devour me?", he asked Mboma. "Wasn't it I who released you from your suffering?" Mboma could find no words to answer him. He just blinked, coiled himself and wound himself tightly around Mvudi's body to squeeze the life out of him, the sooner to eat him. When Mvudi felt Mboma squeezing his body and crushing his ribs with increased force, he used all his strength to free himself from the grip of his enemy. Mboma lost the fight, for he was weakened from lying under the tree and almost starved. He had not eaten anything for four days. And now that he was defeated, Mvudi put Mboma back under the tree where he had been caught before. There he died, and his rotting body was eaten by worms.

— The rooster said to the cricket: "You, Cricket, do you know how it becomes dawn?" "Yes, I do", answered Cricket. "But I must know better how dawn comes", boasted Rooster. "After all, I crow to let everybody know that dawn is coming". Cricket answered: "I chirp

<sup>1</sup> Python.

to let everybody know that dawn is coming". Rooster suggested: "Let's meet tomorrow at the crossroads over there then, since you claim to know when dawn arrives". They agreed on that, and went their separate ways. In the evening Cricket went to his fellow crickets and told them: "At the break of dawn we're to meet Rooster at the crossroads. The one who arrives first has proven that he knows how it becomes dawn". His fellows agreed to come with him, and so they went to sleep.

By the time the hens felt their necks swelling, the crickets had already woken up and spread out along the entire road. At every crossroad they crouched down, waiting for Rooster to make his appearance. "Say, is he the big nganga who knows when dawn comes?", they asked each other. Rooster, tossing on his bed, woke with a start and dashed off to the crossroads where he had agreed to meet Cricket. When he got there, he heard Cricket say: "I arrived first. I arrived first". Rooster set off to another crossroad. Just as he was about to start crowing, he heard Cricket chirp again: "I was there first, I was there first". Again Rooster dashed off to another crossroad, and again when he was about to crow, Cricket was there: "I was there first". Rooster exclaimed: "But where did Cricket acquire such speed? He is there at every crossing, chirping: "I was there first". If I run to another crossroads to be first with my crow, Cricket is already there: "I got there first, I got there first". They kept it up until it was full daylight. Rooster was left with his shame, brooding over his defeat.

— Once there was an elephant who had a habit of felling trees and blocking the roads for the people that passed there. And so one day he was wandering around Ntyetye's palm grove, looking for trees to block up the road with, when he came upon the Kilemba tree that had already shed its leaves. The elephant said to himself: "I'll just pull up this little tree, and then I'll go and eat, for this can hardly be difficult. I have cast aside mfuma trees and nsangula trees and trees of many other kinds. I've pulled them up and put them across my back, so now it's your turn, Kilemba". Kilemba answered: "Come on, let's fight. The one who wins will be surnamed after the loser. So if you were to win, your name will be Nzau Kilemba, but if I win I shall be known as Kilemba Nzau, a name to honour me before all the trees in the plain and the forest". Then the elephant coiled his trunk (kilwanga) around Kilemba's trunk, and pulled. He pulled, and Kilemba pulled back. He pulled again, and Kilemba pulled back. He twisted around the tree, and the tree twisted around him. He pushed and the tree pushed back. Finally, the elephant said: "Ah, yaaya, my stomach is suffering dreadfully from hunger, and night has already fallen. What am I going to eat? I'm in anguish, yaaya". And he ran off to the dyadya grass and lay down in his lair. Next morning, he rose and set off at once to still his hunger with grass and tender palm shoots. Suddenly he came upon ten elephants who had also come there to eat grass. The first elephant immediately embarked on his story: "Yesterday I was wandering around in Ntyetye's palm grove. I chose a tree with branches that could block up the road, but I was so intent on finishing what I had set out to do, that darkness caught me unawares, and I was famished". When they heard this, the other elephants said: "Let's go and have a look first". The whole

group set off and when they came to Kilemba, they united forces and twisted and pulled and dragged until evening fell. But they did not succeed in pulling the tree up. Finally, famished and exhausted, they set off to the jungle where they had their lair. When they were about to leave the jungle again, it grew dark, and at the same time it started raining and thundering and storming, so that they were forced to remain where they were. The next morning they rose and went to the place where they before had found plenty of grass. There they met the first elephant, who had told them about the tree. They told him: "You told us about that tree that we've been trying to pull up. Our bodies are weak from our terrible hunger. Pay, you must pay us, otherwise we'll send you to a hunter at Nguedi, who kills elephants". The first elephant answered: "But who paid me for my work that time when I was surprised by darkness there?" The others said: "But didn't you send us there?" The first elephant replied: "But that day, when I was so hungry, then you ate. So now you've been hungry and I have eaten".

In the midst of their argument they were surprised by the arrival of their great chief, the giant elephant, who asked: "What is it you're arguing about here?" So the first elephant related how he had told the others the story of the Kilemba tree. When he had finished, the elephant chief said: "Yes, I've heard a careful account from both sides, but listen to what I shall tell you to settle the matter. Whoever runs away when I decide the matter has lost, and should be deeply ashamed of his greed for wealth". And then the giant elephant broke wind so that the earth trembled. The eleven elephants all cleared off to get out of his way. The group of ten elephants looked deep into their hearts, and then they said: "Really, we shouldn't have argued with that elephant, then we could have lived on happily forever. But now we have disgraced ourselves before our chief. The lone elephant has won!" But while they were thinking that he had won, the lone elephant, overcome with shame, decided that it was the others who had proved themselves right.

Once upon a time the turtle Bongo and Bela-bela, the bird of prey, had a contest in magic. Bongo said: "See here, master Bela-bela, I have a powerful Simbu.<sup>1</sup> If I were to hide in the nkobo grass when the people set fire to the plain, I could not burn to death". Bela-bela replied scornfully: "Your magic isn't worth much". Bongo insisted: "I assure you I won't burn", and to settle the argument quickly, he suggested: "Now tomorrow, when the sun is high, I'll enter the grass first. Then you, master Bela-bela, will slash and burn the plain, and you'll see that I will get out alive". And so Bongo went into the grass. There he dug a deep hole in the ground to put his legs in, while he hid his head under his shield. Bela-bela set fire to the plain. Master Bongo called out: "I'm not, I'm not burning". The fire crept up to him, and still he called: "I'm not, I'm not burning". The fire passed him, and Bongo's body was not even singed. Bela-bela came up to him and asked: "Master Bongo, are you burnt?" "I'm not", answered Bongo. And Bela-bela had to admit: "Ah, you really have a great Simbu".

<sup>1</sup> Nkisi.

Then Bela-bela said: "Tomorrow I'll go to another plain and you in your turn can set fire to the grass around me". And so next morning Bela-bela went to the plain and hid himself in the grass. Bongo set fire to it. The nkobo grass was crackling merrily. Bongo kept asking: "Bela-bela, are you burnt?" "No, I'm not", came the reply. "Bela-bela, are you burnt?" "No, I'm not". "Bela-bela, are you burnt?" "No, I'm not". Then Bongo asked again, and again, but no answer came. Then he went and looked. Bela-bela had expired. Bongo addressed him with scorn: "Tell me, is your magic equal to mine? Now I'll make pipes of your leg bones". And so Bongo broke off both legs and tied them to a string. Then he played this melody: "The legs of master Bela-bela, the legs of master Bela-bela have become hunting pipes, vye-vye (onomat.)".

Then suddenly Nsuma came bounding up to Bongo. He asked him: "Eh, master Bongo, where did you buy these handsome makwanga pipes?" Bongo told him: "I and the late master Bela-bela had a wager about whose magic was more powerful. First I was to be shut in in the burning nkobo grass, since I have composed a Simbu that is greater and has the power of extinguishing the flames surrounding my body. Seeing that I survived, Bela-bela in his turn wanted to try it, but the Simbu he had composed was too weak, and so he burnt to death in the grass". Then Nsuma asked: "Please, master Bongo, let me blow the bones that belonged to Bela-bela?" for they had been made into hunting pipes, vye-vye. But when he had blown them, he ran off with Bongo's pipes. Then Bongo put a curse on Nsuma by invoking his nkisi Budimbu: "Budimbu, bind, Budimbu, bind". Nsuma kept running, and Bongo continued his loud appeals: "Budimbu, bind". Down in the water basin Nsuma was seized by a cramp that wrenched his entire body. Nsuma begged and cried: "Master Bongo, come and get me out of here". Then Bongo went down and said to Nsuma: "How is it, didn't you run off with my pipes which I won by my magic in contest with the late master Bela-bela? Now you acquired them by theft". But he invoked the nkisi to straighten Nsuma out again: "Budimbu, release. Budimbu, release". Then the cramp left Nsuma's body and he returned the pipes to Bongo.

And so Bongo continued on his way. He blew his pipes again: "Master Bela-bela's leg bones, master Bela-bela's leg bones have become hunting pipes, vye vye. Master Bela-bela's leg bones, master Bela-bela's leg bones have become hunting pipes, vye-vye". Then Dwangi came bounding up and asked: "Eh, master Bongo, what is that you're blowing?" Bongo explained: "Master Bela-bela's leg bones. When he and I had a contest in magic, to see who could survive the burning nkobo grass, he was burnt to death, because my Simbu was stronger than his. I took his legs and made them into hunting pipes". Then Dwangi said: "Come, let me try them". Bongo gave him his pipes, and Dwangi tried them: "Master Bela-bela's leg bones have become hunting pipes, vye-vye". Then he suddenly rushed off, *i lombe, i lombe* (swishing through the grass). Bongo lost no time in putting the curse of Budimbu on him: "Budimbu, bind. Budimbu, bind". Dwangi's rush through the grass was unchecked. Again Bongo cried: "Budimbu, bind. Budimbu, bind". When Dwangi came to a bluff, he was seized by an agonizing contraction. There he was, *i booko, i booko*, yelling and screaming: "Eh, come and straighten me out. Eh, come and straighten me out,

master Bongo". But Bongo repeated his curse: "Budimbu, bind. Budimbu, bind", and Dwangi's forefeet and hind legs stiffened even more. Bongo went over and took his Bongo pipes, and only then did he remove the curse: "Straighten out, Budimbu, straighten out, Budimbu". And then Dwangi's limbs loosened again.

Again Bongo continued on his way, blowing his pipes, when suddenly Nkabi came ploughing through the grass. He said: "Well, well, master Bongo, so you go around blowing handsome makwanga pipes. Hand them over and let me blow them". But Nkabi ran off with the pipes. Bongo cursed him through his nkisi, so that his forefeet and hind legs contracted until they were inside his body. Bongo went over and took his pipes, and then he invoked his nkisi: "Release, Budimbu, release, master, flog him with the skin of a nsingi wildcat, and sprinkle him with nsanga-lavu, release his arms and legs. Budimbu, hear me". Then Nkabi's limbs relaxed.

The same thing happened with the large antelope Nkuti, with Mpakassa the buffalo, Nzau the elephant, and many others. But then one day Nsesi happened to hear the piping: "Master Bela-bela's legs, master Bela-bela's legs have become nsiba pipes, vye-vye". But Nsesi had already heard how Nzau, Nkuti, and Mpakassa and the others had fared, so he went to consult Nightjar to find out whether Bongo really had a Simbu, and who had taught him to compose it. Nightjar told him: "It is I who taught him how to compose it. If you intend to take those pipes away from him, he'll put the curse of Budimbu on you. All the joints in your body will knot themselves, as it were, and your eyelids will be turned inside out. Take my advice, master Nsesi, and give up all thought of stealing those pipes. If you want to blow them, do so if it pleases you, but give them back to him, and you will escape the curse of Budimbu".

Then one morning he heard the piping again: "Master Bela-bela's legs, master Bela-bela's legs that have become nsiba pipes, vye-vye". Nsesi bounded up the road: "Eh, master Bongo, hand me your makwanga pipes whose tone is so enchanting, and let me blow them". "Here you are", said Bongo. Nsesi blew: "Master Bela-bela's legs, master Bela-bela's legs that have become nsiba pipes. vye-vye". When he had finished, he returned the pipes to Bongo and went to his village.

Bongo went on, blowing his pipes. He arrived at a marshy vale, and suddenly he came upon Mvudi, lumbering yidika, yidika, yidika down the path. "Well, Bongo," said Mvudi, "so you go around blowing your makwanga pipes. Give them to me so I can blow them". "Here you are", said Bongo. Mvudi took the pipes and blew: "Master Bela-bela's leg bones, master Bela-bela's leg bones that have become nsiba pipes, vye-vye". Then he rushed off. Bongo cried: "Eh, Budimbu, bind. Budimbu, bind, let the curse fell him down. If he leaps off, follow him and bind him, bind Budimbu, bind. Eh, the little that Elephant could not manage with his huge calves, bind Budimbu, bind". Mvudi fled safely over the three hills, but when he had passed the fourth and came down to the valley, his body was seized and shaken by a violent contraction. Mvudi called out for help three times, but on his fourth cry he expired.

This tale has two morals. The first is that one should never enter into contest with an experienced nganga. The second is that one should not covet what belongs to another,

for such greed is punished by suffering and sometimes even by death, as in the case of Mvudi who died because he coveted Bongo's pipes.

— One day Nsesi and Nkoko-tuvi<sup>1</sup> were having an argument. Nsesi told Nkoko-tuvi: "You, Nkoko-tuvi, if I were to lock you inside the house, you would be unable to come out and you would burn to death if I set fire to the house". Nkoko-tuvi protested: "Indeed I would not burn to death". "Is that so?", asked Nsesi. "Yes", insisted Nkoko-tuvi. Then Nsesi told him: "You get inside the house and I'll lock it up tightly". But unbeknownst to Nsesi, while he was locking up the house, Nkoko-tuvi was busy digging a hole for him to hide in, so he would escape burning to death when the house was set on fire. Nsesi set fire to the house, and it roared and crackled. Soon the house collapsed, but when the ashes had cooled, Nsesi saw Nkoko-tuvi creeping out from under the charred remains of the burnt house. Nsesi turned Nkoko-tuvi over and examined his body on all sides, but not a single hair had been singed. Then Nsesi said: "Now you lock me in, Nkoko-tuvi, and I'll show you that I won't burn either". "Alright", said Nkoko-tuvi. "Get inside then". He closed the house up tight, and then he set fire to it. The fire caught, and Nsesi was rolling about in agony, tortured by the flames. Nkoko-tuvi said: "It was your own idea. After all, you claimed you would get out safely". When the flames surrounded Nsesi, he collapsed in terrible agony, and burnt to death. Some charred remains were all that was left of Nsesi. Since that time, whenever Nkoko-tuvi has eaten his fill, he boasts: "I and Nsesi had a contest. Nsesi is dead now, and I, Nkoko-tuvi, have risen again".

— Once upon a time Kuti, the owl, met the bird Tungsi<sup>2</sup> and asked him: "Can you stand hunger as I do, Tungsi?" "Eh, why do you ask, master Kuti?" retorted Tungsi. "Because I notice that you can't wait until the sun has risen on the sky to eat. As soon as it starts dawning you are already busy eating", said Kuti. "See here", said Tungsi, "if you mean that I should not be able to endure hunger as well as you, I certainly can!" "We'll see about that", said Kuti. "Let's fix the days on which you and I are to fast". "Alright", answered Tungsi. "Choose whatever days you wish, but you'll see that I won't die from hunger". They settled for six days of fasting. Kuti said: "Now don't move off anywhere, we'll remain together until six days have passed". "Alright", agreed Tungsi. "I'll follow wherever you want to take me, so that we can stay together". Said and done. After some time Tungsi snapped up an insect and was about to treat himself to a little fly, when Kuti asked: "But what are you doing, Tungsi?" Tungsi replied: "I almost fell down, master". They sat and sat, and after some time Tungsi again was about to snap up a fly. "But what are you up to now, Tungsi?" asked Kuti. He answered: "Ah, master, never mind, you don't know my habits. I was about to fall down". Then Kuti sat motionless; it was forbidden to stir.

Two days had passed already, and whenever Tungsi said "iyele" he snapped up something, but Kuti did not understand that this was Tungsi's way of eating. So Tungsi continued to pull

<sup>1</sup> A scarabaeid of the genus *Diastelopalumus* cophrophag.

<sup>2</sup> *Ispidina picta*.

the wool over his eyes in this way. When Kuti asked him: "What's that?" he answered: "I was on the verge of falling down". Three days passed, and on the fourth Kuti got so dizzy and faint from hunger that he dropped to the ground and died from starvation. Nzenze mante Yankumba (the sweet salive ran down in streams). And how did Tunki make out? He did not starve. He was strong enough to denounce Kuti's shame at having lost, even though his voice was weak. The old can be defeated by the young.

— Elephant and Ntyetye<sup>1</sup> had an argument about drinking palm wine. When Elephant met Ntyetye, he asked him: "You, Ntyetye, can you drain two cups of palm wine, seeing you have such a small stomach?" "What do you think of me?" asked Ntyetye. "You think I wouldn't be able to drink two cupfuls? You have a poor opinion of me. It smarts inside like a little corn of pepper". "Alright", said Elephant, "let's fix a day. Each of us will buy three calabashes of palm wine, and we'll meet in the plain". Ntyetye consented. They agreed on the nkenge day<sup>2</sup> for their meeting in the plain, and separated. When the appointed day arrived, Ntyetye had been visiting all the other ntyetye birds and told them to accompany him. During their previous meeting, Elephant and Ntyetye had also agreed that each of them would bring along a second to pour the palm wine and act as witnesses to watch them and decide who would be the winner and who the loser. When Ntyetye had prepared his palm wine, he and his fellows set off to the plain to keep his appointment with Elephant. But just before they arrived there, Ntyetye hid his following behind a patch of grass that had not been burnt. His eyes swept the plain, searching for Elephant, but he had not yet arrived. "Oy-i", he called out. "Oy-i", came Elephant's reply from the plateau, "I'm coming. O-yi, I'm on my way". Ntyetye greeted him: "Master Elephant, are you in good health?" Elephant replied: "Greetings, my younger brother Ntyetye". "Are you strong (well)?" continued Ntyetye. "Yes, my brother", answered Elephant, "I am well today". Elephant was ignorant of the fact that Ntyetye had previously hidden his following a little distance away. Ntyetye placed his three calabashes of palm wine between them, and Elephant took his three calabashes and put them next to the others. And so they started drinking. Two cupfuls were poured out and handed to Elephant, and another two cups were poured and handed to Ntyetye. Ntyetye drank two cupfuls, he drank three, and then he said: "I want to go and pass water". He left, but in reality it was to fetch another Ntyetye. He went behind the patch of grass and lay down on his back, and another came out to take his place. Elephant commented: "Eh, but what sort of a piddler are you, Ntyetye?" "That's the way I drink", said he. Elephant retorted: "When I drink, I don't make water until I've finished drinking". And he continued: "I, Elephant, the big one, I am wide (hold much) inside". They drank and drank, Ntyetye's companions relieving one another all the time. But after some time Elephant lost heart. He began to drink heedlessly, started to stagger, and his speech became incoherent. And all the time the Ntyetye birds kept replacing each other. Finally Elephant had no more strength left to drink. He fell to the ground in a faint, relieving

<sup>1</sup> *Cisticola lateralis*.

<sup>2</sup> One of the market days in the four-day week of the Kongo.

his bowels where he lay, and vomiting. The Ntyetye birds flew up. They lifted their voices in a loozu cry, shaming master Elephant. So you see, the rich you can argue with, but the poor you can defeat (tungudila).

— Once upon a time Dog, the large rodent, Nduutu and Squirrel arranged to go to Matadi to trade, and they made the following agreement: "Nobody may leave any of the others behind". So agreed, they set a day. Everybody was to bring his own food for the road. They set off, but when they had come quite a distance, Nduutu stated: "Not before this corn has ripened shall we leave here". "Alright", said Dog and Squirrel. They stayed on and on, occasionally roaming the neighbourhood for food. They stayed there for three or four months, until finally the corn was ripe. Nduutu ate his corn.

They continued their journey. They walked and walked, and when they had covered a long distance, they put up camp. Then Squirrel said: "Not until those palm nuts have ripened shall we leave here, do you hear". "We've heard", said the other two. They built leaf huts for themselves. Everyday they looked and looked at the palm nuts, but they would not ripen. They stayed at the place for a long time, looking and looking and looking, but still the nuts were dark. But they agreed: "Let's have a little more patience. As soon as they turn red, we'll move on". They looked, but nothing. "We stay on and on here, and the palm nuts won't ripen, so what's going to happen now?", they said to each other. But see, finally they ripened. Squirrel cut up his nuts, put them in his ntete basket, and on they went again.

When they had come a long way, Dog said: "Now we'll stay here until my nose has dried. Not until then shall we leave". They built their leaf huts, collected wood, and made a fire. They kept throwing wood on the fire and looking at Dog's nose, but it would not dry. Whenever Dog felt his nose getting a little dry, he licked it when his companions were not looking. When they looked again, it was moist. "Oh well", they said, and fetched more wood to keep the fire going. But the nose just kept shivering and shivering (with cold), wu-u-u. Whenever his companions looked aside, Dog licked his nose. And when they looked again, there it was, still moist. They waited and waited, but Dog's nose would not dry up. They had been there for three months and still his nose was wet (nakototo).

Then one day Nduutu said: "We've been here for goodness knows how long, and his nose won't dry. We're getting hungrier every day, so why should we stay any longer. Let's move on". "But why?" asked Squirrel, up in the tree, even though he had been plagued by hunger for a long time. But Dog said: "Alright, Nduutu, let's go then". But when they had gone a little way, Dog struck him to the ground under the dyadya grass, and then he ate Nduutu.

You see, that is how it is with people too. When we hastily agree on something, we must have patience and stick to the agreement, because if we refuse and won't obey, there is bound to be trouble. Disobedience leads to trouble. Just look at Nduutu who died because he broke their agreement.

— Once upon a time Crocodile, Mboma the python, and Nzobo, together with their younger brothers and their wives and children, all made their home together. One day

Crocodile decided to go to Nboma<sup>1</sup> to sell palm kernels. And so he said to Mboma and Nzobo: "Let's go to Nboma. We can buy our palm kernels tomorrow morning". "Alright, Yanga", they agreed. Next morning, when they were all set to leave, their wives and brothers said to them: "But aren't you going to pack any food for the road, when you intend to go to Nboma?" "Food for the road we'll find on the road", they answered. And so they left. They went through a wood, over a plain, and into another wood. Then they came to a place where palm trees grew. Nzobo lifted his eyes to the top of the palm and saw some palm nuts whose kernels had not yet set. He said: "My food for the road is there, for I'm accustomed to palm nuts". Crocodile and Mboma tried to dissuade him: "Eh, master Nzobo, it will be very difficult to keep it up and wait for the palm nuts to set their kernels". Nzobo answered them: "We three have arranged to go to Nboma. Eh, either we wait for these palm nuts, or else we turn back". "We'll wait", said Crocodile and Mboma. They waited there by the foot of the palm tree until finally the palm nuts ripened. Nzobo picked his palm nuts and put them in his bag. Now he had his food for the road.

Next morning they emerged from the wood. They walked a long way until they came to another wood. They tramped on and on, until the wood ended and they came out in a plain. After a while Crocodile looked at the top of the ulolo tree<sup>2</sup>, and said: "These ulolo fruits will be my food for the road". "They're still too small, those", said Mboma and Nzobo. "They'll be hard to digest". Crocodile said: "We three have arranged to go to Nboma. If the ulolo fruits won't ripen we can't go, for I'm accustomed to ulolo fruits. That is my food". "Alright", said Mboma and Nzobo. "We'll wait until they do". And so they stayed there until the ulolo fruits had ripened. Crocodile picked his fruits and after that they were ready to set off again. They started walking and came to another wood. They walked for a long time, passing the large forest, then a plain, then another forest. When they were walking through the dyadya grass, Mboma after a while caught sight of a spot at the side of the road where Nzuzi<sup>3</sup> animals had been feeding. He said: "First I'll catch me some nzuzi, and then we'll go on to Nboma". Nzobo and Crocodile said: "Eh, master Mboma, we have no idea where the nzuzi have disappeared to. Shall we then stay on here?" Mboma answered: "We've arranged to go to Nboma, we three, do you want me to be plagued by hunger on the road?" "Alright then", said Crocodile and Nzobo. "Let's stay here then". After a long time they suddenly heard the nzuzi approaching, fye-fye-fye-fye. Mboma sprang at the banzuzi, bakiu bakiu, and gulped them down one after the other. Then Nzobo and Ngandu the Crocodile said: "Well, now we'll go on to Nboma, won't we? Haven't we arranged to go to Nboma, we three? Let's leave now, even if the nzuzi haven't rotted yet". But Ngandu and Nzobo were forced to give in to Mboma and wait until finally the nzuzi had been digested by Mboma. Finally they broke up and at long last arrived at Nboma to buy salt. When they had done so, they returned to the village.

The moral of this tale is that when you are travelling, whether in a group of three, four, or ten, stick to the agreed route (Iwakanga nzila). Do whatever your companions ask of

<sup>1</sup> The town Boma on the lower Congo.

Senegalensis.

<sup>2</sup> According to Laman (LDKF, 403) lolo or nlolo = Anona

<sup>3</sup> Serval.

you, and wait for them, so that nobody gets left behind and gets in trouble. You who continue your journey won't know what is happening to the companion you left behind, so wait for him.

— Once upon a time Mvudi summoned the sons of Dwangi and Nsesi, and the sons of Frog and other animals, with the request: "Come and make a clearing in the woods for me". When the appointed day arrived, he had a pot of yuuma<sup>1</sup> prepared. His wives came and placed the pot in the yard in front of the house. Dwangi said: "I'll stay here and guard the pot of yuuma". When the others had left to clear the forest, a bird by the name of Nkaama nkila (the hundred tails) turned up. When Dwangi saw that bird, he instantly fled to where the others were clearing. When they came back, the yuuma was gone.

They fixed up another day, and the women boiled yuuma and brought it to the same house again. Mvudi said: "This time I will stay here in the house". He went inside, and the others left to clear the forest. When Mvudi heard a knock (naku) on the house, he shot out through the roof and landed in the midst of the clearing where his friends were. "What now?", they asked. "Aa, master Dwangi has indeed told a true story", he answered. "When I heard a knock on the wall, I fled by the roof and my horns got stuck".

Another day the women had again boiled yuuma, which they placed inside the house. Then Frog said: "I will remain here in the house. But before you leave, grind me some pepper". They did as she asked, and left to clear the forest. As soon as they had gone, Frog put the pepper in her mouth, went inside, and closed the house up. The bird Nkaama nkila arrived. Frog heard his tap, i ku, on the house, and when the bird opened the door, Frog hid herself behind the partition by the door. Just as the bird was entering the house, Frog threw pepper in his eyes. The bird collapsed just inside the door. When he turned around, Frog again spit pepper in his eyes. Again he turned, and again Frog spit pepper in his eyes. And so Nkaama nkila died. Frog sat down on the doorstep. When Mvudi and the others came back, they just stared and stared. They asked: "But lady Frog, how have you fared here?" "Let's go over there", replied Frog. They went with her and found Nkaama nkila. Frog sang this song: "Nkama nkila-nkila are scattered over the town. Nkaama nkila-nkila are scattered over the town. Whoever wants to, come and take a tail (inkila) and put it on". The others pressed her: "Eh, lady Frog, take this one". Frog refused, saying: "You take one, for didn't I kill the bird for you?" One after the other came and took a tail. When everybody had taken, Frog came, but by that time there were no tails left. She wailed wo-o. Frog was left without a tail. The others told her: "But after all, we told you to take a tail, but you refused".

It is because she was dilatory that Frog lacks a tail.

One day there were two birds, Duka<sup>2</sup> and Nkuku ampeela<sup>3</sup>, who agreed to go hunting. Duka said: "Let's go hunting, and who is to shoot our game if not mister Nsongi<sup>4</sup>?" Nkuku ampeela agreed: "Let's go hunting". They set off and arrived at the grassy plain, where

<sup>1</sup> Dish of boiled bananas, peanuts and palm oil.

<sup>2</sup> *Chalcopedia afra*.

<sup>3</sup> *Centropus senegalensis*.

<sup>4</sup> Honey-bird or colibri.

they took up their positions for the drive. Duka the pigeon flew up and settled in the Mwindu tree. Nsongi drove the dogs into the grass at the upper end of the plain. He cried: "chee-e-e", and Mvudi rushed up from the grass, straight at Duka. Duka fired a shot and the animal fell down dead. Nkuku ampeela fired his gun at a clump of saba grass, but he went over to the place where Duka had fired and said: "That's my meat, it's mine". Nsongi came up and said: "I think that you shot it, Duka". Duka answered: "I did", but Nkuku ampeela insisted: "it's mine, it's mine, it's mine". And so Nkuku ampeela cheated him out of his game and cut it up for himself.

"Will there be any hunting tomorrow or not?", they wondered. "Let's go", said Nkuku ampeela. And so they went. Duka flew up and settled in the Mwindu tree. Nsongi drove the dogs in the grass at the upper end of the field. He cried: "che-e-e". A swine rushed up, straight at Duka. Duka fired a shot and the animal fell down dead. Nkuku ampeela fired his shot in a clump of grass. He came and insisted: "It's mine, that. It's mine, that". Nsongi said: "I think it's you who shot it, master Duka". "I did", said Duka. But Nkuku ampeela insisted: "It's mine, it's mine". And so he tricked him out of it. Nkuku ampeela cut up the game for himself and gave Duka a small share of it, which he accepted.

"Will there be any hunting tomorrow or not?", they wondered. "Let's go", said Nkuku ampeela. And so again they took up positions for the drive. Nsongi led the dogs into the the grass at the upper end of the field and cried: "Che-e-e". A buffalo rushed up and made straight for Duka. Duka fired at the animal and it fell down dead. Nkuku ampeela fired his shot in a clump of grass. He came and insisted: "It's mine, that. It's mine, that". Master Nsongi said: "I thought you had shot it, Duka". "I did", said Duka. But again Nkuku ampeela insisted: "It's mine, it's mine".



Fig. 28. A war nkisi, Sudi in Kingoyi (Laman).

And so they went hunting again. Nsongi let the dogs loose at the upper end of the field and cried: "che-e-e". An elephant came up, full of curiosity. Duka let it pass. Then a buffalo rushed up. He let it pass. Nsongi came up to him and he was just about to ask: "But are you letting the game pass, iwa (gliding past)?", when Duka shot him, ilu (without warning). Instantly Kiduka reloaded his gun and cleaned it. Nkuku ampeela fired his shot in a clump of grass and came running: "It's mine, that". But when he saw the victim, he exclaimed: "You shot another's master". But Kiduka answered: "You're the crack shot around here, how could it be me?" Nsongi's relatives came and said: "You're the one who shoots everything here, so who else could it be? Now you alone will carry him to the village. You alone will provide blankets and shroud him, all by yourself. Go and dig the grave". He finished digging the grave and was about to climb up, when he found that he couldn't. The corpse was thrown in on top of him, and the grave was filled in over both of them.

— Once Frog said to Chameleon: "Let's go and build us each a house." Chameleon said: "I'll live in a white banga house among the mpwesya beans. Mine will not be an ordinary house". Frog built her house of nkobo grass. When the ndolo season<sup>1</sup> came, Chameleon's banga house collapsed. So he went to Frog and said: "Dododo (excuse me), lady Frog, let me stay in your house, I'll sleep in the corner". Frog opened the door to him, and Chameleon climbed straight onto the bed. Frog went to relieve herself outside, and when she returned, she said: "Chameleon, open the door and let me in". But Chameleon answered: "If anyone enters here, the blood will trickle (newe-newe). If anyone enters here, the blood will trickle". Then Frog went out in the plain and cried and cried. Mvudi came and said: "But chief, why are you crying?" "For my house that Chameleon has occupied", answered Frog. "Let's go", said Mvudi. "It would be a fine thing if a Mvudi couldn't manage to get rid of Chameleon. When he came to the house, he called: "Chameleon, Chameleon, get out of the house that belongs to another, to Frog". Chameleon answered: "If anyone enters here, the blood will trickle (from him)". Mvudi left and Frog remained out in the plain. Then Nsuma came: "Our chief, what are you crying for?" "My house that has been occupied by Chameleon", she answered. "Come", said Nsuma. "I, Nsuma, will certainly be able to get rid of him". They went up to the house and Nsuma called: "Chameleon, move out of the house that belongs to another, to Frog". Chameleon answered: "If anyone enters here, the blood will drip". Nsuma left.

Again Frog was left to roam the plain. Buffalo came: "Our chief Frog, what are you crying for?" "Because Chameleon has occupied my house", she answered. "Come", he said, "I, the black buffalo, will chase him away". When they came up to the house, Buffalo called: "Chameleon, leave the house that belongs to another, to Frog". Chameleon answered: "If anyone enters here, the blood will drip". Buffalo left and Frog continued to roam the plain. She met Elephant and many other animals, but none of them was able to help her.

And then the bird Mvondo came wuke-wuke (soaring along). Tripping around in the

<sup>1</sup> The last part of the rainy season (March-middle of May).

plain, he caught sight of the crying Frog. "Our chief, why are you crying out here in the plain?" he asked. Frog answered: "Chameleon has occupied my house". "Come", said Mvondo. "After all, I'm Mvondo who shakes the branches". When they arrived at the house, he called: "Chameleon, leave the house that belongs to another, to Frog". "If anyone enters here, the blood will drip", answered Chameleon. "Wait here", said Mvondo, "while I go and fetch young men and women". Young girls arrived, wearing pamba cloths<sup>1</sup>, and young men wrapped in cynko cloths<sup>2</sup>, and the drummer with his drum. The leader began to sing "Eh, Mvondo, yaaya, all young men, all maidens, off with their heads. Never mind, they shall dance and dance". And then they beheaded a young man and a maiden. Again they took up their song: "Mvondeo yaaya, all young men, all maidens, off with their heads. Never mind, they shall dance and dance". Again they beheaded a young man and a maiden. Chameleon came out of the house. "I'll put on my best finery", he said. He was told: "Choose your own maiden with whom you will be beheaded". Without hesitation he made his choice, and the pair was instantly beheaded. Then Mvondo called out: "Rise, my people", and see, they stood up. But Chameleon was and remained headless, because he had taken possession of another's house, and that when he had been taken in out of pity. Mvondo and his people left, and Frog took possession of her own house again.

— Nkuku mpela had married several wives. Their names were Mbende, Fumfu nsala, Singi utu, Tutu, and Kimpele.<sup>3</sup> After the marriage he went off by himself. His wives stayed behind and prepared food. Then they came and called on him in chorus: "Nkuku mpela Madingi, to Madingi shall we go, say something, ku-ku-ku<sup>4</sup>". He came and sat down. He accepted the food they had brought. Then he had to return his wives' gifts by filling their baskets with bananas and other viands. In some of the baskets he put eight beautiful bananas of the seluka and ndongila sort, but in Tutu's basket he placed tiba bananas, which are not good. In some of the baskets he put tender meat, but Tutu's basket he filled with tadpoles. Tutu grumbled: "They get beautiful bananas and good meat and I get this". "What is the matter?", her husband asked. "Eh, nothing", Tutu said. "I just said: I get good things and you the bad things". Every day when they came with food, the same thing happened. She got only tadpoles and tiba bananas. Then one day Tutu had prepared the food. She took her child along. When they were almost there, she imitated the voice of Kimpele, the favourite wife, and called: "Nkuku mpela Madingi, to Madingi shall we go". "Ku-ku-ku-mya", answered Nkuku mpela and rose. "Eh, haven't the others arrived yet?" "They stayed behind", the wife answered. "I came alone". She happily thought: "Now he has filled my basket with the things he always puts in the baskets of his other wives". Then she said: "Let's shave each other. You can shave my eyebrows, and I'll shave your beard". The husband shaved her eyebrows, and then the wife started shaving his beard. When she had finished, she said: "Now I'll delouse you". She searched and searched and searched until the husband's eyes closed in sleep. Then she whetted her knife against the

<sup>1</sup> Loincloth covering the front of the body.

<sup>2</sup> Piece of cloth of 6 meters' length.

<sup>3</sup> Names of various kinds of rats.

<sup>4</sup> Nkuku mpela's cry.

ground, fya-fya-fya (onomat.). The child that was with her said: "But is it father you're going to stab to death?" She answered: "Stop making a nuisance of yourself. Maybe I should kill you first". When the knife was sharp, she went right on to cut her husband into small pieces, which she threw into her basket. Back in the village, she boiled the meat and gave it to her child. But as the child was eating, it said: "The smell of father is in this dish". The mother asked: "This "corpse", where do you smell it?" But the other wives that the husband had married heard the child saying: "I'll eat my fill of father's smell".

Then one day they all went. The husband was not to be found. The favourite Kimpele, whom he used to answer, uttered a shrill cry: "Nkuku mpela Madingi, to Madingi shall we go. Answer me!" Silence. The next day the same thing happened. They came, and silence met them. Then they began to believe the child's words: "I'll eat my fill of father's smell", and so they summoned Ntadi's nganga. He began to divine: "Sadadada-sadadada embiki yo, embiki yo, the lubonga cloth the woman got, put it in the house, put it in the house. Sadada-sadada, mbiki yo, mbiki yo, the lubonga cloth the man got, put it in the house, put it in the house. And he concluded his divination by saying: "Ah, one of you has eaten him". But Tutu denied it. When they had paid him for his divination, he reassured them by saying: "Go and stretch a rope across the river. The one under whom the rope breaks has eaten him". They left him and did as he had told them. They crossed the water with the words: "The one under whom the rope breaks has eaten him". All the others had crossed the river safely both ways, but when it was Tutu's turn, she tumbled in. The rope had broken. It was she who fell into the river and died.

— Once there was a man who went to clear the forest, and his child came with him. While he was busy clearing the wood, the child said: "Eh, father, I'm going to swim". When he was plunging and diving in the water, he suddenly spied a fish. "Eh, a ngola<sup>1</sup>", he cried. "Come out", his father said. He came out of the water, but after a while he said again: "Eh, father, a swim, I'm going for a swim". Again he saw a ngola when he was plunging and diving. "Come out", called his father. "E-e", cried the child. "I want to swim more". "But be careful when you swim", warned the father. "Remember there is a ngola there".

Again the child cried out: "Ngola, ngola", but this time the ngola took him to his cave. The father went to the waterside to look, but the child was gone. He cried bitterly. At last he went to fetch Luboko-yongo (nightjar), and told his story: "While I was busy clearing the wood for my fields, my child went swimming. And when I heard him cry: ngola, ngola, I went over to look, but there was no child to be seen. It must either have disappeared underground or up in the sky". "Cararara, mbiki yo, mbiki yo. Carara, mbiki yo, mbiki yo<sup>2</sup>, said Nightjar. "If you want to find your child, you must dig. Take a hoe and you will find it". The father and his helpers dug and dug. The child began singing: "E-e-e, master Nsesi will let me go. E-e-e, I depart (die). He has sinned against

<sup>1</sup> Clarias ngola.

<sup>2</sup> Imitation of the nightjar's cry.

me. He is taking me down. E-e-e, I depart". The father and his helpers responded with another song: "Upwards, e-e. E-e, master Luboko-yongo, they have taken the child downwards, master Luboko-yongo". Then the child took up his song again: "Master Nsesi, let me go. E-e-e, I depart, He sinned against me and now you're taking me down. E-e-e, I depart. They are already approaching Kai". The father and his helpers went on digging and digging without stopping, while they sang: "Upwards e-e, master Luboko-yongo. Upwards they have taken it, master Luboko-yongo". Then the child took up his song again: "Eh father, are you going to leave me? E-e-e, I depart. He has sinned against me, would you now take me down? E-e-e, I depart". And the father responded again with his song: "Upwards, master Luboko-yongo, upwards they have taken it. E-e-e, master Luboko-yongo".

And still they went on digging. They had already reached the mountain Kai, and still they were digging. They were on their way down to the village of Nkwanza. There was nothing for it but to go on.

The child sang its song: "Master Nsesi is going to set me free. E-e-e, I depart. My taata, I have not sinned, you must set me free. E-e-e, I depart. Master Nsesi, you must set me free. E-e-e, I depart". They went on and on with their digging. They would not give up and kept up their digging without ever stopping. Already they had reached the village of Kibunzi, and still they were digging. They sang: "Downwards, e-e-e-e, master Luboko-yongo. Upwards they have taken it. E-e-e, master Luboko-yongo, upwards, e-e-e, master Luboko-yongo". And went on digging. Already they were at Viibwa.

The child sang its song: "Master Nsesi, you must set me free. E, I depart. I have not sinned, would you take me down, e-e? I depart". The others just went on digging. Now and then the women came with food and some of them brought palm wine as well. Day and night they continued digging. Already they had reached the Viibwa plain. The father cried: "These mvumbi (corpses)! Just keep it up. We shall get the child". And they sang again: "Upwards he has taken it, e-e-e, master Luboko-yongo, upwards, e-e-e, master Luboko-yongo". They kept digging and singing, and they had to go on until they had reached Mpambala.

Then Luboko-yongo led them to the spot where Ngola was emerging. And just as Ngola was about to emerge, Luboko-yongo sprang and caught him, iba. And then he ate him.

That is why children are admonished to honour their father and their mother, so that they may prosper and live a long life in their country. For this child was made to suffer for his disobedience to his father. That was why he was taken by Ngola. And another thing. Evil is repaid by evil. That is why Ngola was punished by death.

— Once upon a time Owl settled on a branch of a tree to sew himself a nkutu bag. When it was ready, the bird Munganza arrived and asked to buy it. He took it along, falsely telling Owl: "Come towards evening and get your payment". When evening came, Munganza gathered all the birds together. They all dressed in black cloaks. When Owl came to demand his payment, all the birds laughed at him, chattering and calling: "Soo, soo, soola (choose),

soo, soo, soo, soola, which one has asked for the price of your bag?" Owl looked them over carefully and thought silently to himself: "Which of them can it be that asked for my bag?" But since the whole flock was dressed exactly alike, he could not say who had taken his bag and remained silent. At last he said: "It is like this, you've hidden him in the dyanga hole. But I'll find him".

And so he went in search of Nganka, the striped Squirrel, to ask him to use his nganga powers to find out who it was that came and asked for the bag. Nganka divined: "Kye, kye, kye, kye, kye, kye", and climbed up in the tree where the birds flocked together. But he was so awed by the large crowd of birds in all their splendour, that he did not venture to pass them and point out the swindler. So Owl told him: "Be off, for you're no nganga at all". Then Owl fetched Bela-bela, the bird of prey. Bela-bela sailed high up in the sky over the tree where the flock of birds was sitting, but he too was afraid to expose the swindler. So Owl said: "Come down, for you're no nganga either, you're nothing but a taka-taka (fool)". Then Owl went in search of Lubaku, the falcon, a pugnacious and wily creature. He came and flew right up to the tree, set off in pursuit of Munganza, the swindler, and took him to Owl. Owl was happy when he saw him and paid the falcon, while Munganza paid for Owl's bag.

All the birds that were sitting in the tree flew down and scattered in all directions, for they were terrified of Lubaku. And they all kept at Munganza, telling him: "You almost led us to our deaths at the hands of Lubaku, because of your deceit".

— Once upon a time there were a man and a woman to whom a very beautiful daughter was born. They adorned the child with rings for her arms and legs, and every day the mother would bathe her in yellow ochre and rub her tuft of hair with sweet-smelling pomade. Then one day a young man by the name of Nsuma came to ask for her hand: "Say, are you willing for us to get married, you and I?" The girl answered: "I don't know, isn't it mother (who decides)?" When he approached the mother and father, they said: "Go ahead and marry her. We're not asking much of you, but look at the ten rows of calabashes stacked against the wall there. If you manage to count them all in one breath, she will be your wife". Nsuma burst out laughing and thought to himself: "Well, really, wouldn't I, Nsuma himself, be able to count them in one breath?" And so Nsuma took out rings and mbwala beads and handed them to the maiden as a token: "Accept this as a token of the marriage". The maiden accepted the gift. But she was not allowed to show her face in the presence of men. She stood behind the door, and laughed.

So Nsuma returned to his village. He fetched goods and handed them to the tappers of palm wine. He gave ten lengths of cloth and received twenty calabashes of palm wine in return. Then he went into the woods and shot a wild boar. He packed all the meat in a ntete basket and set off, groaning under his burden. His younger brothers carried the palm wine for the marriage transaction. In the evening he arrived at the girl's village. At the door of his brother-in-law (nkwezi) he cleared his throat and said: "Eh, brother-in-law,

open the door". His father-in-law answered: "Who is it?" "It is your nzitu<sup>1</sup>, Nsuma, who has arrived". His nzitu said: "Child, open up". When the girl had opened the door, she hid herself in the corner. Nsuma and his companions brought the meat and the palm wine inside, putting it at the far end of the house. His nzitu told him: "Go to the guest house and come back later, then I'll prepare a meal". And so the visitors went to the lubongi house. After a while the nzitu had the meal ready and sent one of the other children to fetch the nkwezi (brother-in-law). "Go over to your sister-in-law", he told him. "I'm coming", Nsuma replied. As he was entering the house, the girl hid behind the door and covered her head with a piece of cloth. They ate, and when the meal was finished, the brother-in-law fetched the meat which they were to eat, and the palm wine. He said: "About the meat you must tell us tomorrow what you decide. Now it is time for the palm wine, if you are willing, for the night (fuku) covers (fuka) the matter". And so they settled down to drinking the palm wine. When the man had drunk, he handed the remaining drops to the woman. When the woman had drunk, she handed the rest of her cup to the man. When they had finished drinking, they lay down to sleep. In the morning the prospective husband came to hand over the meat he had brought along. He said: "These viands I have brought along". The mother-in-law answered: "Yes, indeed, brother-in-law. That I have seen, to be sure, but there is still the matter of the calabashes. As I told you, it would be sufficient for you to come and count them. Now if you want to win your wife, come and count the calabashes". "How shall I count them then?", he asked. "Like this, answered the mother. "Little maiden, count the calabashes, eh, my mother-in-law's calabashes".

Nsuma settled down and touched the calabashes one by one. He started counting and while he counted, he sang this song:

"Little maiden, count the calabashes,  
Eh, my mother-in-law's calabashes.  
Eh, mwana ndumba (little maiden), count the calabashes,  
Eh, my mother-in-law's calabashes".

But after only a short while he had to take a breath. At that the whole gathering lifted their voices in a loози cry. He had not been able to count them. Mortified, he asked for the jugs that he had carried his palm wine in. He never wanted to see that woman again.

When he had gone a little way, he met a young man called Ngo, the one that nobody skins except in the lukaka trap. When Ngo saw him, he growled hi, hi, hi, hi: "Where do you come from, my younger brother Nsuma?" "Ah, master (older brother)", Nsuma answered. "There is a precious maiden in that village over there, but it will cost a lot of tears to win that maiden". "I'll go and marry her", said Ngo. "You do that, master Ngo", said Nsuma. Ngo set out to have a look at the woman. When he arrived in the village, he growled hi, hi, hi, hi: "This marriageable woman, where is she?" The sister-in-law (the girl's mother) answered: "She's gone to the woodpile (ku ntala). She's so beautiful, and her skin is fine and lustrous". "She and I will make a fine pair", said Ngo. The sister-in-law

<sup>1</sup> Nzitu means both father-in-law and son-in-law.

answered: "Yes, master, come and marry her. But we won't ask a high price from you. Look inside the house. If you, brother-in-law, come and count these calabashes which my departed elder brother has left behind him, that will do". "Alright, sister-in-law", said Ngo. "Expect me on the nkandu day<sup>1</sup>, that is when I'll come". When Ngo came back to his village, he told his younger brothers about it. They said: "We are willing to marry her". They collected palm wine and meat. The nkandu day arrived, and in the evening Ngo and his younger brothers were ready to go to the maiden. When they came to the house, they knocked. "Who is it?", came the question. "It is your brother-in-law Ngo", he answered. They were admitted and put the palm wine and the ntete basket with meat inside the house. "Go and sit down in the mbongi house, while I prepare a meal", said the girl's mother. They did so, and when the meal was ready, she called them. They came, and she served them yuuma. They ate, and when they had finished their meal, Ngo fetched what he had brought along. They drank palm wine, and he handed the token (of marriage) to the maiden. Then they went to sleep. Next morning, when they woke up, Ngo asked: "How will it be, nkwezi (sister-in-law)?" She answered: "Eat, and after that you must go and count the calabashes". And then his mother-in-law taught him the song he was to sing while counting the calabashes. He started as he had been told: "Mwana ndumba, count the calabashes, eh, my mother-in-law's calabashes. He who takes the maiden with him, has counted the calabashes, eh, my mother-in-law's calabashes. He who takes ndumba with him has counted the calabashes, eh, my mother-in-law's calabashes". But after a little while he took a breath. They all joined in a loozi cry, o-o-o-o, because he had taken a breath. He walked away, but collapsed, rolling about in convulsions from lack of breath. They threw water over him, and piles of excrements and streams of urine came pouring out. Finally he rose and asked for his jugs, and he left. He never even looked towards the maiden.

And that is the way it went for all the animals who came to ask for the maiden's hand. When Elephant heard the rumour that there was a beautiful woman who was marriageable, he said: "Eh, Elephant ngwandi, really, shouldn't I be able to win the woman? Just let me get there, and she'll be snapped up. Just wait until I've seen her with my own eyes". And so he lifted his gun to go over there. On the road he met the bird Ntyetye, who just came from there. He told him: "The woman is full of beauty, but I, Ntyetye, have already given her a token myself". Then Elephant said: "Since I've heard that numerous young men have failed to win her, why should she marry you, Ntyetye, with your short legs? But it is I, Elephant, who will marry her". Then Ntyetye said: "Master, I've given her my token first, so why should you steal her from me? But go ahead, master. Go, but on the konzo day<sup>2</sup> I will return to count my sister-in-law's calabashes." Then the great Elephant said: "Alright! On that day we shall meet. I too will give her a token of my own". And so he gave his token to the beautiful maiden. "I'm worthy of her", said Elephant. Then he went back home and thought of the day that Ntyetye was to go there. When the konzo day came, both Ntyetye and his younger brothers and Elephant were preparing to set out. Elephant's

<sup>1</sup> One of the market days and day of the week.

<sup>2</sup> Another market day.

younger brothers were ready to go and marry their woman. They set out, and when they arrived, they placed the palm wine and meat which they had brought along inside. Their nzitu told them; "Go to the mbongi guest house, then I'll prepare a meal first. After that you can come". When she had prepared the food, she called them: "Come, nkwezi". They came and she put food before them. They ate and when they were ready, they said: "Nkwezi, come and give us a cup of palm wine". "There it is", he said, "but I won't lose". "We'll see", they said. Nzitu brought palm wine, and they drank. When Elephant had accepted the first cup, he left a mouthful in the cup for the maiden. Then, when it was her turn, she left a mouthful for Elephant. Then, when Ntyetye's turn came, he left her a mouthful, and when she drank, she left a mouthful for Ntyetye. The two suitors said: "We'll see later who will make the maiden his own", for both of them had given a token. "Let's sleep", they said. In the morning, when they had woken up, the bazitu (brothers-in-law) prepared food, and after they had eaten, the suitors asked: "Well, nkwezi, what is your decision about the maiden?" They said: "You see, young men, the one of you who can count the calabashes left by our departed elder brothers, he will make her his own". Both of them smiled at that, because they thought: "Well, that's really nothing". They asked: "But how shall we count?", and the girl's relatives told them: "Like this: E, mwana ndumba, count the calabashes, eh, my mother-in-law's calabashes". The two looked at each other, wondering which of them was going to start. "I'll start", said Elephant. Nzitu warned: "But he's not to take a breath in between". The others said: "Exactly. If he pauses to breathe, he has lost". "I'll start counting", said Elephant. "Alright", they said, "you start". And so he started counting like this: "Eh, mwana ndumba, count the calabashes. Eh, my mother-in-law's calabashes", and so on.



Fig. 29. Amulet, masimu, Sudi in Lolo (Laman 1066).

But as he went on counting like that, he gradually lost his breath and took a gulp of air. Then everybody joined in a loozzi cry, o-o-o: "Eh, master Elephant took a breath!" Then Ntyetye said: "Now it's my turn". "Come forward", they said, "if you're going to count them". He came forward and started counting: "Eh, mwana ndumba, count the calabashes, eh, my mother-in-law's calabashes", and so on. He had almost finished counting the calabashes when his voice began to sink and there was practically no breath left in him. And so, after a while, he took a breath. Again the loozzi cry resounded: o-o-o. Ntyetye had taken a breath. The two suitors received their jugs and set off towards their home together. Ntyetye said to Elephant: "You see, master Elephant, you insulted me in vain, when you said that I'm nothing because I am so small. Now you see, you who are big, and I who am small, we are equal in our failure". As they walked along, talking together, they suddenly met the children of Mfingi<sup>1</sup> coming down the road. Mfingi asked them: "Where do you come from?" They told him: "Oh, can you imagine, my young friend, we failed to make a charming maiden our wife". "Where?", asked Mfingi. They told him: "Just follow this road. There are no crossroads. When you come to a spot where there are two houses, that is where she lives. Look in the first house". Mfingi went and looked behind the door, and there was the maiden. "I'm going to marry you, woman", he said. "Alright", she said, "come then". He told her: "I'll come on the nkenge day<sup>2</sup>", and gave her a token. On his way back, he shook his head: "Eh, this maiden, just wait until I marry her"! When he came home, he told his family about it. They agreed: "Yes, the day after tomorrow we'll go there". They started collecting palm wine and meat. When the day arrived, they packed the meat and the palm wine in ntete baskets and set out. On the way, his younger brothers told Mfingi: "E-e. When we get there, whatever they tell us, just confirm it". They all agreed. They went on, and at last they arrived at the house. They asked: "Is nkwezi there?" She answered: "Eh, yes, nkwezi, I'm here". They opened the door and put the things they had brought with them inside, and sat down to rest. When they had rested, they brought out bananas and meat and palm wine. "Yes, I hear", said the nzitu, "but we will ignore that for the time being". They gave the visitors food, and they drank and talked awhile. After that they went to sleep in the guest house (lubongi). In the morning, when they woke up, the nzitu made food for them. When they had eaten, they asked: "How will it be now, nkwezi?" She answered: "Eh, nkwezi, I have nothing to say but this. I will really not ask you for a goat or a pig, but what you must do is to count all the calabashes that our elder brothers have left behind. Then you may take the woman with you". Mfingi said: "Yes, nkwezi, tell me how to count the calabashes". She told him: "Like this you shall count them: Eh, mwana ndumba, count the calabashes, eh, my mother-in-law's calabashes. Natanga ndumba, I have counted the calabashes, eh, my mother-in-law's calabashes".

And so Mfingi settled himself comfortably to do his counting and opened his mouth: "Eh, mwana ndumba, count the calabashes, eh, my mother-in-law's calabashes", and so on, and so on. After a while he had counted fifty, for there were a hundred. He went on,

<sup>1</sup> Mfingi is a shrewmouse, a bird which follows the monkeys, or a wasp which builds its nest of clay.

<sup>2</sup> Another market day.

never taking a breath, until he had counted the last of the hundred calabashes. They told him: "Yes, master Mfingi, even though you're a little man, you are the only one who has defeated all the big young men". Mfingi said: "Give me water so that I can quell my thirst". When he had drunk, he told the woman: "Get your things together". She collected her things, and Mfingi left with his wife.

The rumour spread everywhere that Mfingi had settled the deal for the coveted maiden. Then the other suitors became envious and said: "We have no choice but to take her away from him by force, for what right has a little thing like Mfingi to marry a maiden like that?" In the morning, when Nsuma heard about it, he went to Mfingi and asked him: "Say, is it true that you went and married my woman?" "Yes", said Mfingi. "Where is she then?" asked Nsuma. "Inside the house", answered Mfingi. "What would you do if I were to carry her off?" Nsuma asked. Mfingi answered: "Nonsense, master. How would you carry her off? But I'll tell you what we'll do?" "What?", asked Nsuma. "Eh, master, if you succeed in knocking me down with one blow (kibwa kyantete), then you can take the woman with you", said Mfingi. "Do you mean that?", asked Nsuma. "Yes", said Mfingi. "Let's go to the flat shelf of the rock". They went there, and Mfingi told his wife: "Woman, come and sing a song". She came and sang this song:

"Eh, Mfingi, yaaya, syama, mwana angana, nsi a malongo  
(Eh, Mfingi, yaaya, stand strong, another's children, far away country),  
Eh, Mfingi-e, yaaya, be strong, mwana angana, nsi a malongo",  
and so on.

Then Mfingi knocked Nsuma to the ground with his first blow, and started a second round. Nsuma's leg was smarting from the blows, i le-e. He cried: "Eh, maama", and went limping back to his own house.

But when Ngo, the one who cannot be skinned, heard that the woman was Mfingi's, he went over and said: "So it is you who went and married my woman". "Yes, that's right", said Mfingi. Ngo said: "If I were to dig my claws into you first, don't you think I would carry her off with me then?" Mfingi replied: "Eh, master, maybe we should have a contest. If you were to knock me down first, then the woman will belong to you". "Do you mean that?" asked Ngo. "Yes", said Mfingi. "Let's go over to the flat shelf of the rock". And so Mfingi grabbed him and knocked him down. They rose. Mfingi took hold again and knocked him down once more. Ngo's arm was aching, i lee-e. "Eh, maama, I'm dying", he cried, and fled.

Then the great Elephant in his turn heard the news that Mfingi had married the woman, but had promised that anyone who knocked him to the ground would get the woman. "I'll go and stamp him out with one foot", said Elephant. He arrived panting at Mfingi's house. "Mfingi, master, say, have you gone and married my woman?" "Yes", answered Mfingi. "I'll take her away from you, what do you say about that?", said Elephant. "Eh, master", said Mfingi, "to lust after another's wife is a crime, but I'll tell you what. If you manage to knock me to the ground, you're free to take her". "Agreed", said Elephant.

"Let's go to the flat shelf of the rock", said Mfingi. When they came there, Mfingi told his wife: "You, woman, sing your song". And she sang:

"Eh, Mfingi, yaaya, syama, mwana angana, nsi a malongo",  
and so on.

Mfingi took hold of him and knocked him down flat. "My neck", cried Elephant, "i le-e (pain). Father, eh, father, I'm dying. E, maama, I'm dying". And he too made his escape.

But when Nsesi heard about it, he was gripped by a strong desire for the woman. He said: "Really, that little thing of a Mfingi has taken my wife, but tomorrow morning perhaps I'll go there myself". The next morning he went to find Mfingi and asked him: "Isn't it you that is married to a woman for whose sake you break people's arms and legs?" "They come and visit me of their own free will", said Mfingi. "Then you might succeed with me too", said Nsesi. "Who knows? That's your business", said Mfingi. "No argument. But all we do is fight and knock each other down". "Alright then", agreed Nsesi. "I want to fight too". "Let's go to the flat shelf on the rock", said Mfingi. The two clutched each other round the chest. They grabbed hold and tried each other's strength. The woman sang her song:

"Eh, Mfingi, yaaya, be strong, another's child, the country far away,  
Mfingi, yaaya, be strong, another's child, the country far away,  
Mfingi, yaaya, be strong, another's child, the country far away".

They tumbled about, trying to knock each other down, but le (without success). Nsesi didn't knock Mfingi down, Mfingi didn't knock Nsesi down. And all the time the woman went on singing her song:

"Eh, Mfingi, yaaya, syama, mwana angana, nsi a malongo".

Now Nsesi grabbed hold and struck a blow. Then Mfingi grabbed hold and struck a blow. But then at last Nsesi took hold and hit Mfingi so he crumpled up with pain, i le-le. "Eh, maama, I'm dying", he cried. "Eh, father, I'm dying". Nsesi grabbed the woman: "Let's go". They set off on the village road and were gone.

Mfingi lay where he was. At last he moved. "E-e, my wife I must suffer much for, for she has gone away. Never mind, I'll go and see a nganga and find out by what trick I can get her to return to me". Meanwhile Nsesi took his wife far away. Mfingi cried day after day, just cried for his wife.

One morning he set off and went to the village of Lubiki yongo, Nightjar. He said: "I've come to fetch you, to divine for me with your nkisi", and Mfingi put the matter to him like this: "What have I come for, have I lost a knife or a hoe?" Nightjar divined and divined. Finally he said: "No, you have lost neither knife nor hoe, but your wife". "That is right", said Mfingi. And then he put his next question: "Shall I then consult other banganga for this woman, shall I then find her or shall I not?" Nightjar divined and divined, mbiki

yo, mbiki yo<sup>1</sup>. Finally he said: "Ah, really, give me my reward first, then I'll tell you what I've seen". Mfingi said: "Accept this piece of cloth". Nightjar took it and then he told him: "When you come back to your house, take nkisi Nkiduku and put it in the water, so that it points towards the road he took out of the village". "Yes", said Mfingi. He went back to his village and read the formula for Nkiduku: "Has Nsesi gone down, then send rain. If Nsesi has gone up the road, then send rain up the road". Then Mfingi prayed and dipped Nkiduku in the water. The rain came and went on from morning till night, and all through the night the rain kept pouring down in Nsesi's village. Then Mfingi sang this song: "Over there where Nsesi has gone, let down a big shower of rain, my Kwangi. Kwangi, let down a big shower of rain. Over there where Nsesi has gone, let the rain come pouring down in torrents".

Over in Nsesi's village the goats were walking in the water, the pigs were walking in the water, the hens disappeared and the houses disappeared. Nsesi himself climbed up in a high tree. Not a single thing was left in Nsesi's village. Then, when many days had passed, Nsesi thought: "What can have brought this misfortune upon me? But never mind, I'll consult a nganga who will find out for me". So he went and fetched Nightjar. He arrived and asked: "What did you fetch me for?" He divined and said: "It is because of this rain you have fetched me". Nsesi said: "Bunda (old man), who has sent this rain over me, has it come from down the road or maybe from up the road?" Nightjar divined and said; "E, yaaya, bring me my payment, then I'll tell you". "Alright", said Nsesi, "here is a measure of powder". Then Nightjar told him: "Now look here, Nsesi, shouldn't you return Mfingi's wife, since it is Mfingi who is behind this thing (siki mfya)". "Oh yes, master Nightjar", said Nsesi. "Take Mfingi's wife with you". When Nightjar handed the woman back to Mfingi, Mfingi said: "I'm so grateful for the return of my wife. I will stop the heavens. You, Nightjar, must pay me a pig and a goat for stopping the rain".

— Ngembo, the giant bat, and Mbwa, the dog, were friends. Now Mbwa was thinking of going courting, because he wanted to get married. When he found a marriageable girl, he asked her: "Maiden, will you marry me, Mbwa?" "That is up to you", the maiden answered. Thereupon he also asked the girl's mother. She gave her consent.

And so Mbwa filled syelo calabashes with palm wine and packed his bag with salt and meat. But he asked his friend Ngembo: "Ngembo, come with me to the house of the maiden whose hand I have asked for and whom I am to marry". Ngembo agreed. When they were on their way, Mbwa said to Ngembo: "You, Ngembo, when we arrive at the house of my mother-in-law, you must not leave me, but stick with me wherever I sit down. You see, I, being a Mbwa, have this trait in common with my relatives that whenever I hear someone call: bo, bo, bo, bo, maama, or whistle like this: nyo, nyo, nyo, then I must instantly run over to the place where I heard the call. That is why, when we arrive at my mother-in-law's house and you hear anything outside, you, Ngembo, must hold my arm

<sup>1</sup> Imitation of the nightjar's cry, meaning "give a verdict".

in a tight grip with your simba claw (at the wing-tip), so that I don't run off and get into trouble with other dogs".

When they arrived at the house of Mbwa's mother-in-law and had put down their palm wine, Mbwa stuck his hand in his bag and brought out meat and salt, which he presented to the girl. The girl accepted the gifts, and so did her mother. Then the girl and her mother went off to find some food to prepare him a meal, since Mbwa had come for the marriage feast. When the food was ready, they poured it on a plate to cool. Just as they were to start eating, Mbwa heard the call outside: "Bo, bo, bo, bo, maama". Alas, Mbwa could not resist it and rushed off so that the dust whirled up into the food which his mother-in-law had put before him. His mother-in-law was aghast at his behaviour. When Mbwa returned, after he had eaten the quarry he had set out after outside, his mother-in-law said to him: "Really, Mbwa, you are inconsiderate, and my daughter will not be allowed to marry you now, for you have scorned the food I put before you. When you heard the call outside, you should first have eaten what I gave you, and let whatever was outside wait. And on top of that you threw dust in the food. My child you will not marry".

Then Mbwa told her: "Alright, I will make you a conciliatory gift". But the daughter herself said: "Not even if you gave a quarter pig would I accept it. Find yourself another wife".

And so Mbwa left in desolation. Ngembo had failed to hold him, and because Mbwa was thinking of what was outside, he lost his chance to make the maiden his wife.

But came the time when Ngembo in his turn was looking for a woman to marry. He found her, and she said yes. Then he in his turn asked Mbwa: "You, Mbwa, come with me to the house of a girl whom I've asked to marry me". "Eh, alright", said Mbwa. "I'll come with you any time you have collected the palm wine". And so Ngembo collected palm wine in syelo calabashes and put palm nuts in his ntete basket. Meat and salt he packed in his bag. Since the two had established a friendship, they went in company to Ngembo's wedding. When they were on their way, Ngembo said to Mbwa: "You, Mbwa, when we get to the house, you must dig a hole in which I can put my rump, for that is not round (tempo). You go in first and dig a little hole, so that I can sit down when I come in". When they arrived at the girl's house, the dog went in and sat down right away. He was not going to dig any hole for Ngembo. Ngembo came in, but he couldn't find any place to put his rump in. When he tried to sit down, he fell over. When he tried to lie on his back, he fell over too. And so Ngembo looked all over the house to find a little hole that he could put his rump in, but he could not find any. In the end he grabbed hold of the roof in the house and hung there upside down.

Then his mother-in-law said: "But Ngembo, have you no shame here in your mother-in-law's house, rushing all over the place, in the inner room and on top of the musungu chest! You can't sit on the mat with your friend Mbwa with whom you travelled. Are you unable to sit then? Must the food be served to you up there under the roof? Will you eat it there, or what? Aa, Ngembo, you will certainly not be allowed to marry my child". "Aa, mother-in-law", said Ngembo, "I'll make a conciliatory gift". But the girl's mother

said: "Not even if you gave me a quarter pig will I let you marry my child". And so Ngembo returned home in shame.

On the way home, Ngembo and Mbwa broke their friendship, because they had failed to help each other. But we, let us help one another!

— Once the elephant Nzau was telling the bird Ntyetye with scorn and derision: "You, master Ntyetye, you have a little stomach. The droppings you produce I can sweep away in no time. But the dung I drop you cannot sweep away, because you're much too small. You can't even lift my droppings". Ntyetye protested: "I can too". "You can't", said Elephant, "because I produce a huge heap of dung". "Let's agree on a nkandu day", said Ntyetye. "Alright", said Elephant. "Where?" "In the plain, by the nkandu market", said Ntyetye. "Come and drop your dung there. On the morning of the konzo day I will come and sweep it away. On the nkenge day we'll meet, you and I, to see whether I've finished sweeping it away or not".

On the nkandu day Elephant went to drop his dung in the plain, as they had agreed. The next morning Ntyetye summoned all the bird families that could cover the plain. They kept eating Elephant's dung until there was not a trace left of it.

Next morning they went to their meeting, he and Elephant. Ntyetye said: "You see, Elephant, you who told me scornfully that I would not be able to sweep away your dung, where is it now?" "Ah", said Elephant, "it's true, you've won".

On the next nkandu day Ntyetye gathered all the bird families together and told them to come and put their droppings all over the plain, and on the leaves of the mweti tree, the nlolo tree, the mfilu tree, the ntumba tree, and the mbota tree, and in all the valleys. The next morning Elephant came out to the plain. Ntyetye was there too. And so Elephant started sweeping away the droppings Ntyetye had produced. As soon as Elephant started sweeping, Ntyetye started singing this song:

"He sweeps away this dung,  
Eh, even this dung".

and so on. Elephant went on sweeping, and Ntyetye went on singing. At last Elephant had to give up. He was unable to finish, for it was a large plain, and there was nothing but bird droppings all over the grass. And that is how Elephant was tricked by the little bird.

— Once Mboma came and wanted to play with Elephant. In play, he made as if he wanted to swallow him, and therefore he threw himself headlong at Elephant, in a twinkling (neyu).



Fig. 30. Nkisi Lambamanga, Sundi in Kinkonko (Laman 1106).

But Elephant didn't even feel it. Instead he carried Mboma in his trunk to a mfuma tree and threw him straight at the tree, so that he got stuck on its thorns as though he had been nailed fast. And there he died of desiccation, held captive by the tree's thorns.

— Munyenye is a very small ant. It is dressed in a coat of human skin. It bides its time until it finds some people who sit and talk. Then, if one of them has chaps or a small sore on his foot which is beginning to heal, Munyenye starts picking up the skin that falls to the ground when new skin forms in the healing wound, and the old skin is scraped off on the ground. Munyenye comes softly and stealthily wherever people sit and talk. Then it sniffs the air and finds the skin dropped by someone with a sore and chapped spot or something like that. The little ant takes the skin and carries it off to her hole. She says: "A coat of human skin I'm dressed in".

When Lukaami, the driver ant, saw Munyenye in this coat, he said to her: "But Munyenye, that coat is human. Where did you get it?" Munyenye told Lukaami: "This coat is made of human skin. I got it through my patient disposition. That is how I acquired it. And someone who lacks patience has no chance of acquiring one". Lukaami said: "Tell me by what trick you got hold of this coat. Maybe you'll sell it to me? Then you can go and get yourself another. You know how to get hold of another to dress yourself in". But Munyenye told Lukaami: "I, Munyenye, cannot sell this coat. If you want a coat of human skin, then listen, and I'll tell you how to go about it". And then she told him: "If you want to get a coat like this, go in peace and tell your tribe that when you come to a place where people sit and talk, you must not sow discord by biting them, but only cautiously sniff around on the ground, then you'll find the skin they pick from their body and throw on the ground. Take that and carry it home, and sew it into a coat. If you can't do that, you will never own a coat of human skin". When Lukaami had heard Munyenye's words, he set off with his tribe. When they had gone some way, they came upon some people who sat and talked, but they paid no heed to Munyenye's warning. As bold as brass they swarmed over the human bodies and bit them. When the people saw that it was Lukaami, notorious for his vicious bite, they pursued the whole tribe with fire and burned them, they grabbed sticks and beat them off. They were bent on chasing the driver ants (bankaami) away, for they had not brought peace with them, as Munyenye had done. That is why the people do not like Lukaami. He never got his coat of human skin. But Munyenye made herself small and insignificant, and that is why she was allowed to dress in a coat of human skin.

— Once upon a time the lightning descended from the sky and got himself into debt by borrowing from Frog. Lightning said to Frog: "You Frog, grant me a loan. Next time I come down to earth after my return to the sky I will pay you back". When Frog heard that, she made him a loan. As soon as Lightning had got his loan, he returned to the heavens where he lived. Then one day he returned to earth, and Frog asked Lightning: "You, Lightning, pay me back what you owe me". But Lightning roared: "Ngangala-ngangala baluta-baluta (burn me with a crash and a bang), I haven't got it now, I'll come back another

day and pay you". Frog said nothing. Lightning hurried back to his heavens where he lived. Another day he returned and Frog asked him again. But Lightning grumbled at her request, and refused to pay. He, Lightning, thought to himself: "Frog has no legs (speed), so I am in no hurry to pay that debt. I'll tell her to get up and come and present her claim up in the heavens where I live". For Lightning thought: "How will Frog get up to the heavens?" But meanwhile Frog was thinking to herself: "Soon Lightning is coming back here. If I remind him of his debt, he won't pay. But wait, I'll creep into his ntete basket. Who said I couldn't get up to the heavens where he lives?" And so Lightning came back to earth once more. Frog asked him: "You, Lightning, now it's time for you to pay what you owe me". But Lightning just growled. And so Frog hurriedly hid herself in the ntete basket that Lightning had brought along on his trip. But Lightning was unaware of that. And so, when Lightning had come back to the heavens, Frog leapt out of the basket that Lightning had brought along. When Lightning saw Frog leaping about, he asked: "Ah, Frog, how did you get here?" Frog answered: "The same way you did". Lightning untied his basket, but he saw no trace of her having been hidden there, since Frog took so little space, so how could he have found any trace of her hiding-place? Lightning was astonished and burst out: "Eh, leele! (int.) Do you want to tell me that you leapt up here from the country where you live all in one day? You can't have come up by a mountain. I left you on your earth, didn't I? I suppose that when I soared up to the sky, you came along on my back and arrived here in the heavens in no time". Frog answered: "Now I've come to the heavens, so now pay me what you owe". Lightning said: "Of course. But when I pay back my debt, how are you going to return to your country?" Frog said: "You pay me what you owe me and don't worry that I won't find my way back to my country". Lightning paid his debt, and when Frog had received what was due to her, she said: "Ah, now I'm off". But she only took a few leaps, zondo-zondo, until she was hidden in the low grass, and there she sat down and waited. Lightning believed that Frog had returned to her country, but actually Frog remained in hiding, waiting for Lightning to return to earth again, so that she could get into his ntete basket and come along. And so one day some time later Lightning packed his ntete basket, and Frog hastily crept inside. Lightning had no idea that Frog had crept into his basket and was coming down with him. And so Lightning lifted his basket and descended right down to earth. When he put his basket on the ground, Frog got out without Lightning noticing anything. She got out on the other side. Then she pretended to come leaping from a different direction. When Lightning saw Frog, he said: "Ah, Frog, it's you. I thought you might have crashed to death on the ground when you came down to earth from the heavens, but you're still alive. But it must have meant great hardship for you, when you dashed down on the earth". "Not at all", said Frog, "I had no trouble at all. I descended like a bird, and landed on the ground nangunga (gently down). I had no trouble at all".

— One day Cricket and Nkabi had a contest. When Nkabi met Cricket, he leapt around her and said: "You, Cricket, let's have a contest to see who comes first to the crossroads".

Cricket said: "Well, Nkabi, you think that just because your legs are so long you will get to the crossroads first, don't you?" "What did you think?", said Nkabi. "Of course I'll get there first. When you come hopping up, I'll be there already". And so they separated. Nkabi sped on his way. But now there were many crickets. Nkabi arrived at the crossroads. He heard Cricket saying: "I was first, I was first". Nkabi said: "Alright, let's separate again and then meet again where we first separated". Cricket agreed and they separated. Nkabi set off at full speed, but again he was met by Cricket who said: "I'm first, I'm first. Nkabi was kept at it, dashing to and fro, until the break of dawn.

— Once Turtle went to set a trap. He caught a nkwete rodent. Then Turtle started moaning, to lure others to his trap: "I-i, I have no arms, I have no sister left. I-i, I have no brother left. I-i, the meat is rotting in the trap". Buffalo came bellowing, and asked: "But what's the matter, master?" "Ah, I've caught an animal in my trap, but there's nobody to take it out for me", said Turtle. "I'll take it out for you", said Buffalo. "In that case we'll share alike", answered Turtle. When they had cut up the catch, Buffalo said: "Give me my share". Turtle told him: "Go and cut some leaves". Buffalo did so and said: "I've cut these". "No", said Turtle, "those you should leave alone, they're prohibited. Go and cut them over there". When Buffalo was out of sight, Turtle hid the meat in his cave. Buffalo returned and said: "Where has Turtle gone to? Give me my meat". Turtle answered: "Why should I give you my meat? Don't you think we should set the trap together then?" "Alright", said Buffalo, "I'll snap it shut". "But snap it with your head", said Turtle, "if you use your arms, you'll regret it". Buffalo set off and thought: "He said not to use my arms, so I'll do it with my head". He stuck his head in the trap and it snapped shut on him, killing him outright. When Turtle saw that Buffalo was dead, he sat on top of the trap and started his wailing again. In that way he got one animal after the other to the trap. When they had cut up the meat and had been sent off to gather leaves, Turtle disappeared into his cave and took the meat with him.

But then one day Nsesi came up to the wailing Turtle. He asked him: "Shall I cut up the meat for you?" "Would you?", said Turtle. "Then we'll share alike". Nsesi cut up the catch. Then Turtle told him: "Go and fetch some leaves". And when Nsesi started pulling off leaves close by, he told him: "Not those, they're prohibited. Those over there you can take". Nsesi set off and Turtle disappeared into his cave. Nsesi came back and said: "But give me my meat". "We didn't set the trap together, now did we?", asked Turtle. "Alright", said Nsesi, "I'll go and snap it shut". "But snap it shut with your head", said Turtle. "If you use your arms you will regret it". When Nsesi got to the trap, the first thing he did was to wreck it. Then he stuck in his head and let it close on him. Turtle came to examine his trap. He saw that Nsesi was caught. He climbed on top of the trap, and took up his usual wail, not knowing that Nsesi was not dead: "I-i, I have no brother left. I-i, the meat is rotting in the trap". But then Nsesi suddenly sprang at him and carried him off to his village. Turtle sang a song: "Nsesi has gone to Sampu and Wamba<sup>1</sup>, maybe he'll get into danger". Then

<sup>1</sup> Probably place-names.

Nsesi's children made Turtle dance. Afterwards, he fled and made his escape into the water. But there he got caught in Nsesi's fishbuck. They took him out and made him dance again. Afterwards he escaped and disappeared forever.

The day came when it was these children's turn to make the food. Their father Nsesi said: "Cut up Turtle, children". The children pretended to do so by hitting the shield that had covered Turtle. But then another child told their father that Turtle had escaped when they had made him dance. The first time he made off, they had managed to catch him again in their fishbuck. "But Turtle tricked us", they said. "He told us: "I must go and cool off my sweat", but the last time he escaped, he disappeared for good. This is his shield". Nsesi was furious and told them: "Now, children and your mother, I can never again eat your food".

— Once upon a time Lightning came courting in Frog's village. He sat outside with his palm wine and said: "I've come courting". Frog's people answered: "That's fine, when we've seen your palm wine. If we'll drink it we don't know yet. Eh, after all, you have your village up there in the sky, Lightning. So what will happen? Will you come here for the marriage, or will your wife go there?" But Lightning assured them: "I'll come here for the marriage". They told him: "Now that we know just where we stand, you can go and see the maiden. Eh, you girl, thank for the palm wine if you like the young man". The maiden came and thanked for the palm wine, and they began the drinking. The name of the maiden was Lusamba.

While they were drinking, the talk flowed. Some of them said: "Lightning is anyway a very handsome young man". Lightning's younger brothers in their turn praised the maiden. They said "Ah, what a mother to have given birth to such a maiden, she has brought off a good birth. Look, her little lips are so soft". Others said "Ah, the maiden and the young man truly love each other".

They drank and drank under laughter and merriment. And then suddenly Lightning opened his mouth and said: "I can tell you that we in the sky have many maidens that are marriageable". Frog asked: "Is that true, or are you lying, my son-in-law (nkwezi)?" "Ah, never mind, my nkwezi Frog", he answered. It's no use just telling you about it. But you should come and see those breasts, and then you'll see if they haven't covered them with a slip of cloth, and tied a band across them. See for yourself if they aren't mature". Frog answered: "I'll come to the sky myself, nkwezi Lightning, and find me one of those marriageable woman". "You do that, my nkwezi", said Lightning. "But how will you get there?" Frog said: "I'll get there, don't worry". Lightning retorted: "You won't get there, for there are hundreds who are unable to go there". Frog said: "Do you mean that I won't get there? What will you give me?" Lightning answered: "If you manage to get there, I'll give you a hundred pieces of cloth (kindeke)". And Frog replied: "Done. And if I don't get there, I'll give you a hundred pieces of cloth". "Agreed", said Lightning.

When the drinking was over and they had thanked for the palm wine, Lightning and his younger brothers with a clap and a crackle (natelelee) rose up in the sky. And so the day

came when Lightning prepared palm wine for his second visit. He let the thunder roll. With a loud crash (natelelee) he descended and sat down. His in-laws called: "Nkwezi has arrived". They swept the house and yard, and spread mats for Lightning and his party. Lightning came and sat down on his mat. His younger brothers had put down the palm wine, four calabashes of it. They were talking and talking. Evening came and it got darker and darker. At last they went inside. The palm wine was taken in too, and placed in their midst. Then Lightning said: "I don't say two or three, but as you see I have two pavu calabashes to seal the contract, and two to pay for the dressing of my wife, so what is there left for me to say?" His bakwezi said: "That is satisfactory. Let us thank for our palm wine: mbwo, mbwo".

They started drinking. Lightning looked about him, but Frog was nowhere in the yard. He went and listened, and heard her muttering to herself in the house. Lightning thought to himself: "I'll call her", and he called: "Where are you, nkwezi Frog?" She answered: "Here". "Aren't you coming to drink now?", Lightning asked. "Ah, you go ahead and drink", she said. "I don't feel very well". But actually Frog had something else on her mind, to find a way to get up to the sky as they had wagered. Now see how clever she was. She squeezed herself under the first bear-pads that were tied to the basket, and when they came to pack the calabashes in the basket, she would be under it. And when they left, she would come along with them in the basket all the way up to the sky. And so next morning, when food had been prepared for Lightning and they had eaten, the visitors left. The younger brothers tied the calabashes in the basket, having no idea that Frog was already there under the bear-pads. Then Lightning let the thunder roll, and with a loud crash they shot up to their village in the sky. They put their calabashes down under the overhanging roof. When evening came, Frog left her hiding-place under the bear-pad and hid herself a bit away, watching those who passed by. To herself she said: "So that's what it is like in the sky. But now I'll show Lightning that he was wrong when he said I would never get to the sky".

Lightning had no idea that Frog had come with them, and next morning, when Frog came leaping up to his house, she appeared before him without any warning. Lightning cried out in surprise and clapped his hand over his mouth five times. He could call neither taata nor yaaya. He was dumbfounded. At last he exclaimed: "Ah, but nzitu Frog, how did you get here?" Frog answered: "The same way you all came, what other way is there?" "To be sure", said Lightning, "you've done what hundreds of people have failed in. You got here". Frog chuckled in a secretive manner, and said: "Remember when I said I was feeling drunk from the palm wine? But who has won now, nkwezi?" Lightning admitted: "Yes, you have, my nzitu". He went inside, fetched one hundred pieces of cloth, and placed them outside in the yard, with the words: "That is right. Yes, nzitu Frog, we wagered in the morning, we wagered in the evening. One loses, the other wins. Now it is you who has won. See here what is due to you". Frog threw herself at her spoils. Lightning asked her: "But tell me, nzitu Frog. You have neither head nor arms, so how are you going to carry your new possessions?" "Don't worry", said Frog, "they'll be carried".

After some time Lightning asked Frog: "What day are you leaving?" She said: "I want to

wander around in the sky a bit longer. Maybe you are ready to leave?" Lightning told her: "I'm travelling on the konzo day". When the konzo day came, Lightning had the palm wine packed in ntete baskets. While they were eating, Frog came and squeezed both her possessions and herself in under the bear-pads that were tied to the baskets. When Lightning and his companions had finished their meal, they set out. With a crash (telelee) he landed straight in Frog's village. He had no idea that Frog had accompanied them. She took the possessions that she had acquired by her trickery, and went straight into her house with them. Next morning Lightning gave a start when he saw Frog emerging from her house. "Frog, when did you arrive?", he asked. "You came first", she answered, "I followed". "Good", said Lightning. "When are you going back". "Ah", said Frog. "I'll stay here".

— Once upon a time Kangala, the bluebottle, made a fire in his yard to warm himself, because it was cold. When Mboma the python and Mpidi the horned viper saw his fire, they came over to warm themselves, for they were cold too. When Kangala saw Mboma and Mpidi by his fire, he fetched his marimba and played this tune:

"I will cut to pieces, bitindi-bitindi (onomat. from bita)  
I will cut to pieces, bitindi-bitindi".

When Mboma and Mpidi heard this melody, they understood immediately that it was them he had in mind. They looked at their bodies and thought: "Which of us will be cut into pieces, in small pieces (bitindi-bitindi)?" When Mpidi looked at himself, he found that he was the shorter, and he muttered to himself: "Ah, I'm too short, how can I be cut into pieces? So I have no reason to escape". But when Mboma looked at himself, he found that he was much longer. So he in his turn muttered to himself: "There's no doubt that I'm most likely to be cut up in small pieces". And hardly had the thought occurred to him, before he fled into the grass, yikwo (onomat.).

But where he fled in the grass, there happened to be some hens pecking for food. When the hens caught sight of Mboma, their enemy, they scurried in all directions to make their escape. In their flight they happened to come to the spot where ngondo monkeys were eating their fruits. When the ngondo monkeys heard the hens cackling, they instantly thought: "Perhaps some animals or birds are out after them to eat them?", and they fled in haste. But while they were fleeing to save themselves, they happened to break a branch off a dead tree. The branch fell down on Nzau, the elephant, right on top of his boil, so that it burst, nanya (onomat.). Nzau jumped, for the pain twisted him inside. Enraged by the pain, he set fire to the grass. Because of this grass fire, Mvudi scorched his horn. When Mvudi came to the river and, nvwa, plunged his horn in the water, it happened to poke straight in the eye, i vuvu, of Mfulututu the turtle. Mfulututu's eye was poked out, and he was furiously angry with Mvudi who had done it. Mfulututu went to Mvudi and told him: "Pay for my eye". But Mvudi said to Mfulututu: "I won't refuse to pay for your eye, but really it is the one who set fire to the grass who must pay both for your eye and for my horn, for if he hadn't set fire to the grass, I wouldn't have burnt my horn. And then you,

Mfulututu, wouldn't have had your eye poked out". And so Mvudi and Mfulututu went together to Nzau and told him: "You, Nzau, have set fire to the grass. Because of this grass fire, see, Mvudi's horn was scorched, and Mvudi rushed down to the water to quench the fire in his horn, see, then it poked Mfulututu straight in the eye and it was poked out. Now Mfulututu is very angry and has come to ask me, Mvudi, to compensate him for the loss of his eye. But I, Mvudi, have told him that it is not I who should pay for his eye, but the one who burnt my horn, he must pay both for his eye and for my horn. For if I hadn't got my horn burnt, then I would have had no reason to dip it into the water. Therefore it falls upon you, Nzau, to pay both for Mfulututu's eye and my horn".

But Nzau said: "I have heard everything you told me. But now you listen to the story that I will tell you. See, I will not refuse to pay you, but I myself am very angry with the monkeys, who dropped a branch right on my boil. That is why I set fire to the grass. If that hadn't happened, Mvudi's horn would not have been burnt and Mfulututu's eye would not have been poked out. Therefore it is not I, Nzau, who should pay for the horn and the eye, but those who caused my boil to burst, they are the ones who should pay for the horn and the eye and my boil".

When they had discussed this, all three of them, Nzau, Mvudi and Mfulututu, set off to the Ngondo monkeys. When they arrived, Nzau told the monkeys: "You monkeys dropped a branch which broke my boil. I, Nzau, got angry and set fire to the grass. In that grass fire, see, Mvudi burnt his horn. And then when Mvudi went to extinguish his horn in the water, see, Mvudi poked his horn in Mfulututu's eye and poked it out. That is why we have come to you monkeys to bring suit against you. Pay for my boil and Mvudi's horn and Mfulututu's eye".

But the monkeys told Nzau and the others: "We monkeys can not be held responsible for what is not our fault, but go to the hens, because it was they that made us flee, because we thought that there might be some birds after them that would grab us and eat us. That is why we fled. But you yourself know, master Nzau, that you and we have settled in the same country, and our woods are the same, and we live up in the trees and you under them. Have we ever before dropped a branch on you?" Nzau answered the monkeys: "No, indeed, never before. This is the first time that I've known you to hurt me. Oh well, never mind then. Let's go and see the hens. They are the cause of it all".

And so they went to see the hens, and when they got there, they said: "A big suit is brought against you hens, and you must answer it now". The hens asked: "What is this suit, what have we done or been accused of, that we have to answer?" Nzau and his party told the hens: "Wasn't it you that cackled and yelled and scared the monkeys into flight, so that they dropped a branch on a boil on Nzau's back, so that Nzau got angry and set fire to the grass, which burnt Mvudi's horn. And when Mvudi went to the water to extinguish his horn, he happened to poke out Mfulututu's eye. So you see what a big case this is, for none of this would have happened if you hadn't scared the monkeys. That is why you, hens, should pay for Nzau's boil and Mvudi's horn and Mfulututu's eye".

The hens answered: "Well, we're sick of lawsuits. But listen to our story, and then decide

whether we are guilty or not". And so the hens told Nzau and his party: "We hens would never have cackled and fled if Mboma had not scared us. You know that Mboma is our worst enemy. That is why we put this question to you, Nzau, and you other people: If you were to see an animal that is wont to devour you, would you then flee or not?" Nzau's party answered as follows: "Yes, we should set off in flight, for it is better to live than to die". The hens said: "We thank you for this answer. What is your decision? Shall we take the blame? We feel that it is Mboma who must be held responsible, for it was he who frightened us". Everybody approved of that answer.

And so they rose and went to where Mboma lived. They told him: "You are responsible, Mboma, for you have scared the hens, and the hens scared the monkeys, and the monkeys dropped a log that fell on Nzau's boil, and Nzau got angry and set fire to the grass, so that Mvudi's horn got burnt, and Mvudi extinguished his horn in the water, and then he poked out Mfulututu's eye. Therefore we have come to you, Mboma, to demand payment for Nzau's boil and Mvudi's horn and Mfulututu's eye".

Mboma told them: "I'm not guilty, but go to Kangala, for he frightened me". They asked Mboma: "How then did he frighten you?" And Mboma told them: "It was like this. Kangala had made a fire in his yard, and we two, Mboma and Mpidi, we went to warm us by that fire. But when Kangala saw that we were warming us by his fire, he fetched his marimba and started playing like this: "I will cut into pieces, bitindi-bitindi, in small pieces". When I heard that tune, I looked at my body and found that I was the longest, and I thought that Kangala probably intended me to be cut up in small pieces. That was why I fled, and I just happened to make off to where the hens were. You see, that was the reason for my flight.

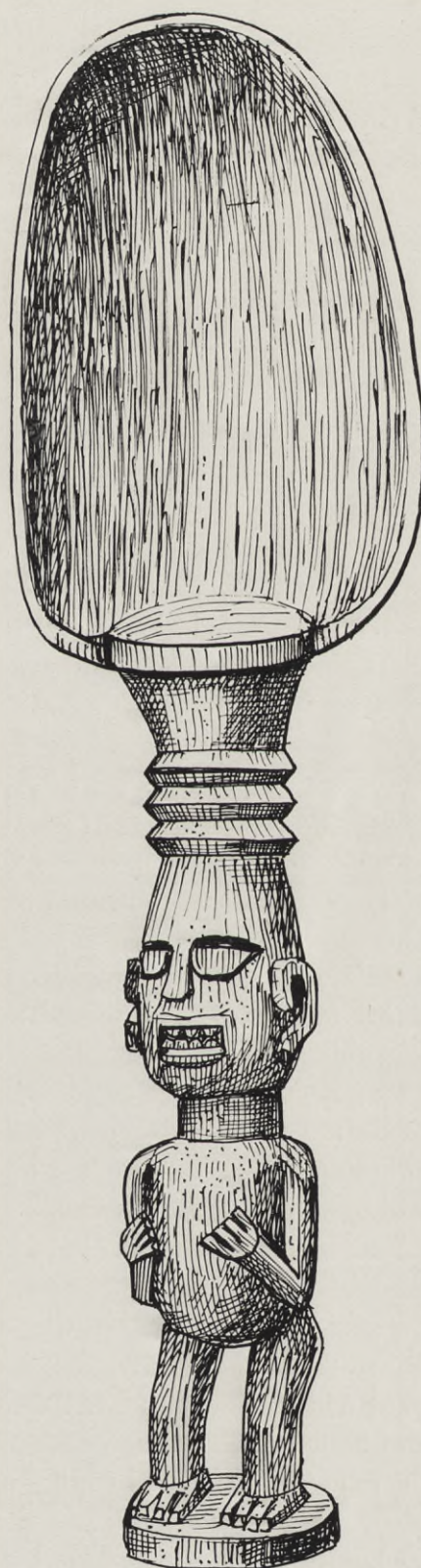


Fig. 31. Spoon, Sundi (?), (Laman).

But I had no idea of eating the hens, so how could I be guilty of this charge?" They all agreed that Mboma would not have to pay the fines, but that Kangala was the one who had to assume the blame.

And so they went to Kangala. They told him: "Take your marimba and play it." This time, when he played, he chose another melody. The others said: "Change it, play another tune". Kangala changed his tune and played: "I will cut up in small pieces." When they heard this tune, they said: "You, Kangala, will have to answer a suit, because by playing that melody you scared Mboma into flight, and Mboma scared the hens, and the hens scared the monkeys, and the monkeys broke off a branch which fell on Nzau's boil so that it burst. Nzau got angry and set fire to the grass. The grass fire burnt Mvudi's horn, and Mvudi went to extinguish his horn in the water, and the horn poked out Mfulututu's eye. That is why you, Kangala, are responsible, for if you had not scared Mboma off, none of this would have happened".

And so Kangala was found guilty of the charge. He said: "The boar is full-grown. There are some among you who carry a knife". He paid for Nzau's boil and Mvudi's horn and Mfulututu's eye. That was how that lawsuit ended.

The old people had a saying: "Have a sensible mouth and a healthy body". If your eyes don't land you in a lawsuit, your mouth will. If your hand does not land you in a lawsuit, your leg will.

— Dog and Lizard were friends. Dog went hunting for big game with the people, but Lizard, small and puny as he was, had no chance of catching anything good-sized. But Lizard thought: "Now that I have Dog for my friend, I'll get plenty of meat to eat, for Dog takes part in the hunt". Day after day passed, and Dog went along with the hunters, who certainly shot enough game, but Dog had no chance of taking any meat along to his friend Lizard. Then, one day, Lizard complained to his friend Dog: "Oh you, Master Dog, you are forever eating meat. Your mouth and neck are dripping with blood, couldn't you take a little something along for me?". Dog replied: "Stop there, Master Lizard, consider the toils that I must endure". Lizard asked: "But the blood covering you, what is that?", to which Dog replied: "Some day, when we go out hunting, and you hear a shot, come then and watch us cut up the game. Sit in the top of a tree and watch, and you will see what your share will be when it is given to me".

And so, one day, when Lizard heard that the hunt was under way and heard a shot go off, he climbed up in the top of a tree and sat there without moving or making a sound. When the game was cut up, Dog tried to get close and lick up some of the blood, but he was beaten off by the hunters. Then he went to Lizard: "Master Lizard, you see?" Lizard replied: "The nod of the head I saw". Dog went back and tried to lick a second time, but again he was beaten off. Then he went up to Lizard: "You see, Master Lizard?" "Ah, I see!" When the hunters had finished cutting up their game, they called for Dog. They bathed him in blood, but he was given only a small morsel of meat. Then Dog went back to Lizard: "Master Lizard, did you see?" "Ah, I saw, yaaya. Your words are true".

The moral of this fable is that one should never condemn anyone before hearing his version. It is told when somebody is heard spreading some malicious rumour.

— Once upon a time a man set out early in the morning to tap palm wine. On the path in the mponzila he discovered a mass of tracks of every animal in Nzambi's creation. Back in the village, he told the men: "Load your guns, and put in big shot, for I have seen the passage of a host of animals, nsoba-nsoba (mud trampled up by the passing of numerous feet), and a wealth of tracks".

So they loaded their guns and put in big shot, and took the dogs along to the forest. The sight of the innumerable tracks filled the hunters with wonder. They drew up in line and the driver of the hounds led his animals into the high grass, and told them: "A-a-a-a, stick to it, you, aku aku ewo e, here where they have passed, search here. Let the ecstasy get hold of you. By your dead mother, eh, up there, lutengolo, eh, he has passed there, dokalo bwo bwo, e wo e wo (imitating the sound of a wooden bell). The mwemvo pipe (sounds) nkwa, nkwa".

When the hunted animals heard the mwemvo piping, the first flock, consisting of nsuma antelopes, sang this song:

Nsoba-nsoba ntambi (a tangle of tracks)  
Be yiyi maama nsuma (these here of nsuma)  
Mivyokele mumu (that pass here = the tracks)  
E, maama ma (oh, this mother).

On hearing the animals' song, the driver of the hounds was struck with awe, and called out to the hunters: "Ah, I leave this jungle, not these kombisilanga, but I!". But at that moment one of the hunters called out that the hounds had found matnswala tracks, trampled grass showing the way the animals came and went. So he sent his hounds off again: A-a-aku, aku mwakoo moo. They returned to the place they came from, ewo, ewo, catch, catch him, the mwemvo pipe kwara, kwara. Then the flock of ndutu sang:

A tangle of tracks  
These here e maama ndutu  
Have passed just here.

When the driver of the hounds heard this song, he again called out to the hunters: "Ah, I will not call here, I am getting out of here". And so another came to replace him, giving him his gun instead. Then the new driver urged the hounds on: "They have passed here, here they have passed, this way the tracks go, by their mother, they have red teeth, they have fed here, here they have passed, they are scattered in all directions, the mwemvo pipe kwara, kwara". Then the mvudi antelopes sang this song:

A tangle of tracks  
These here, e maama, of mvudi  
that have passed here, eh, maama.

At this both hunters and dogs rushed out of the grass. All the animals sang together and their ringing song resounded through the high grass, but they did not come up to the hunters. This was witnessed by all the hunters that were along that morning.

This is a story told by the chiefs if the young men of the village are given to prowling about at night for lascivious purposes, and admonishes them to desist from their nocturnal excursions to the daughters and wives of other men.

— People who are thinking of buying a slave should take warning from the fable about the dove, Bembe, who had bought Kimfutu, the owl. Night after night, as she settled down to sleep, she cried out the same thing:

Kimfutu is my slave u-u  
Kimfutu is my slave u-u  
Kimfutu is my slave u-u.

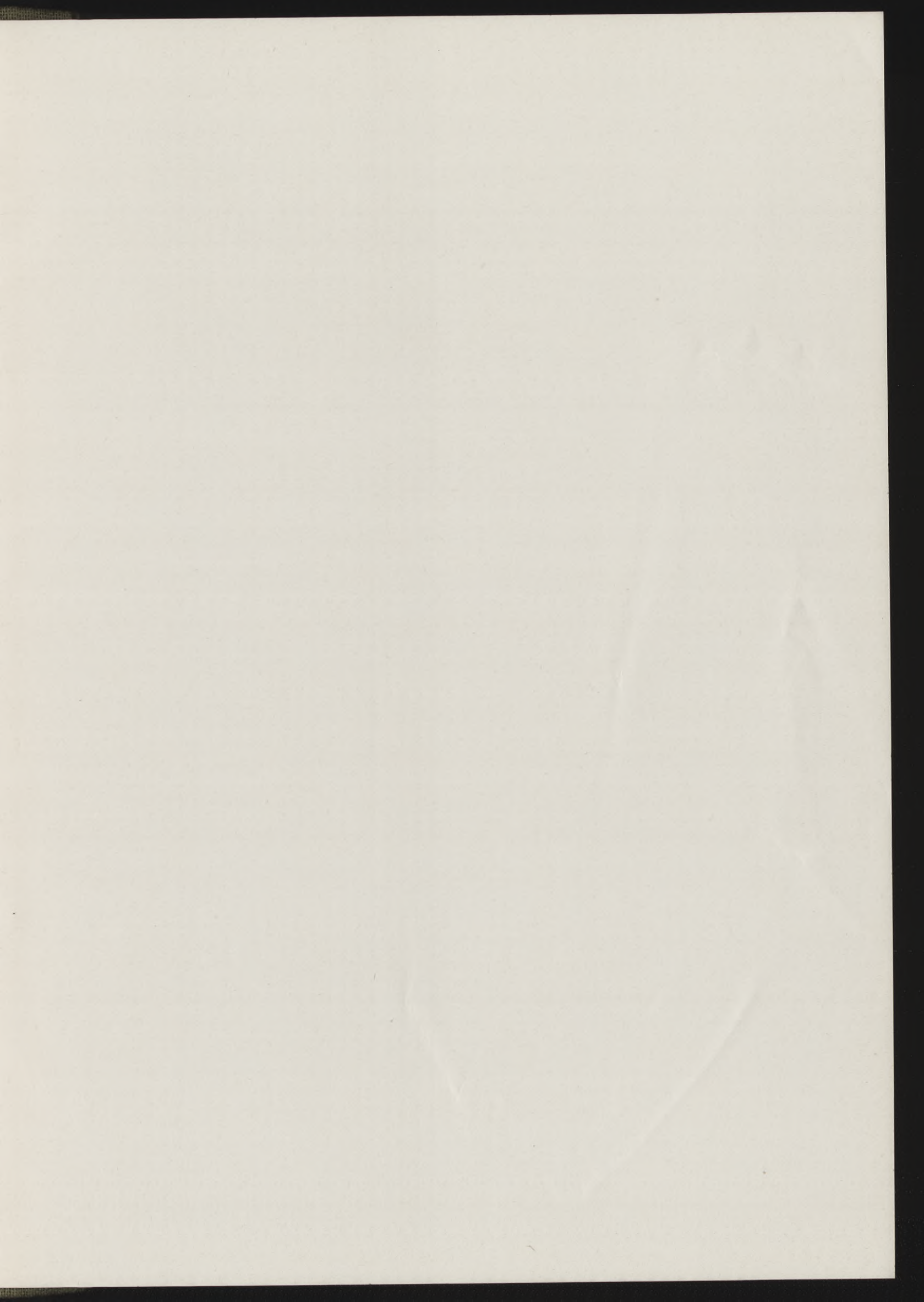
Day after day she repeated her boast. Then one day Kimfutu made an agreement with Nzobo: "Tomorrow evening we'll swoop down on Bembe, for she tells all the world that I, Kimfutu, am her slave".

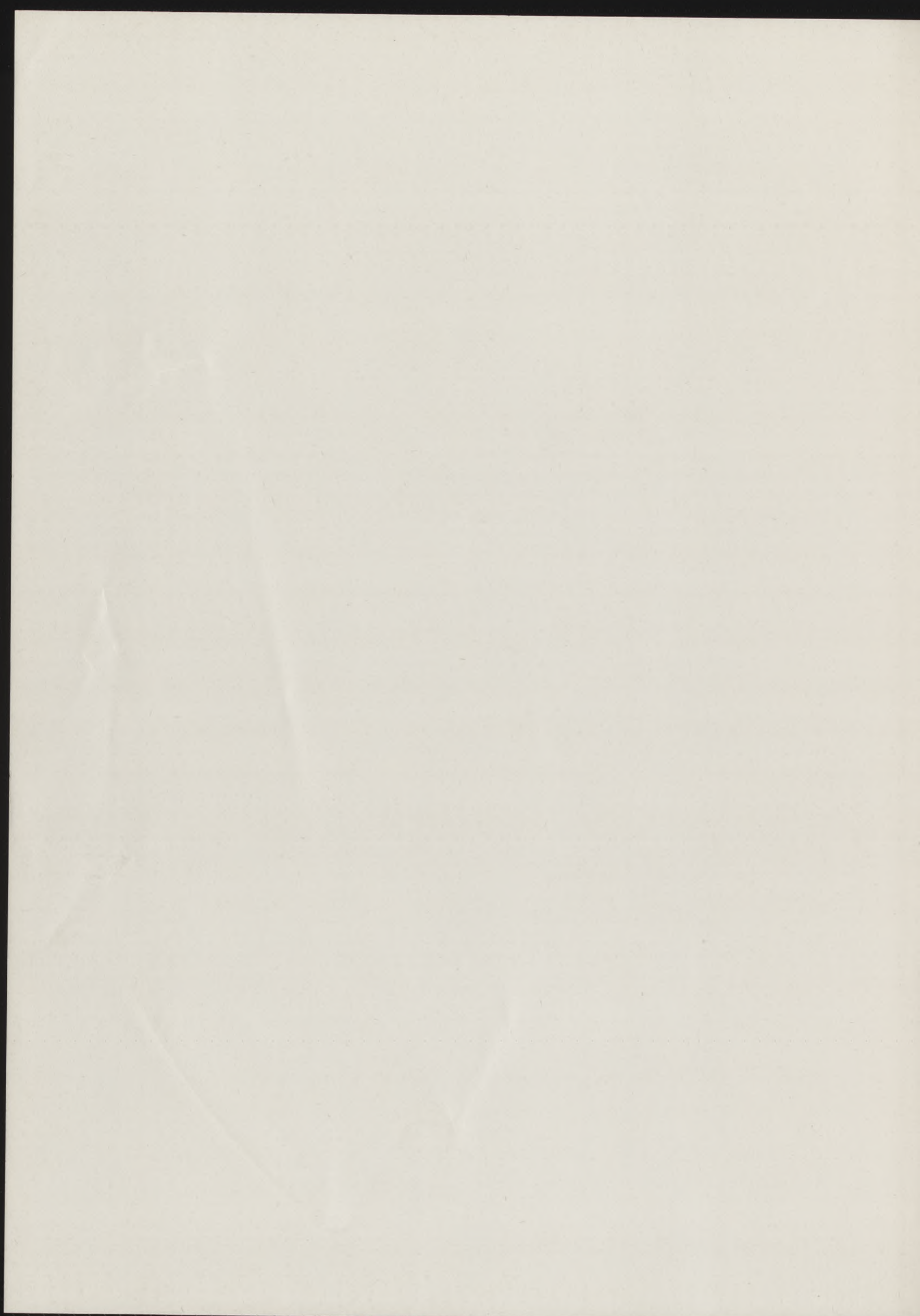
So the next day Kimfutu got first to the place where Bembe was wont to cry out her boasting words, and flew up on a branch in the top of the tree. In due time Bembe arrived and settled on her branch, not knowing that Kimfutu had got there before her. So she started her usual boasting, and cried:

Kimfutu is my slave u-u  
Kimfutu is my slave u-u  
Kimfutu is my slave u-u  
Kimfutu I have bought u-u. Ruru u-u.

When Bembe had almost finished, Kimfutu swooped down upon her as she perched on her branch, pa, pa, pa (beating his wings). Bembe slipped through his fingers and fell bump (i kwo) on the ground. And at the foot of the tree waited another unexpected enemy, Nzobo. Nzobo grabbed Bembe, who had died in the fall, and ate her.

The moral of this fable is: "Even if you happen to be rich and are able to buy yourself a slave, you don't have to shout it from the rooftops".





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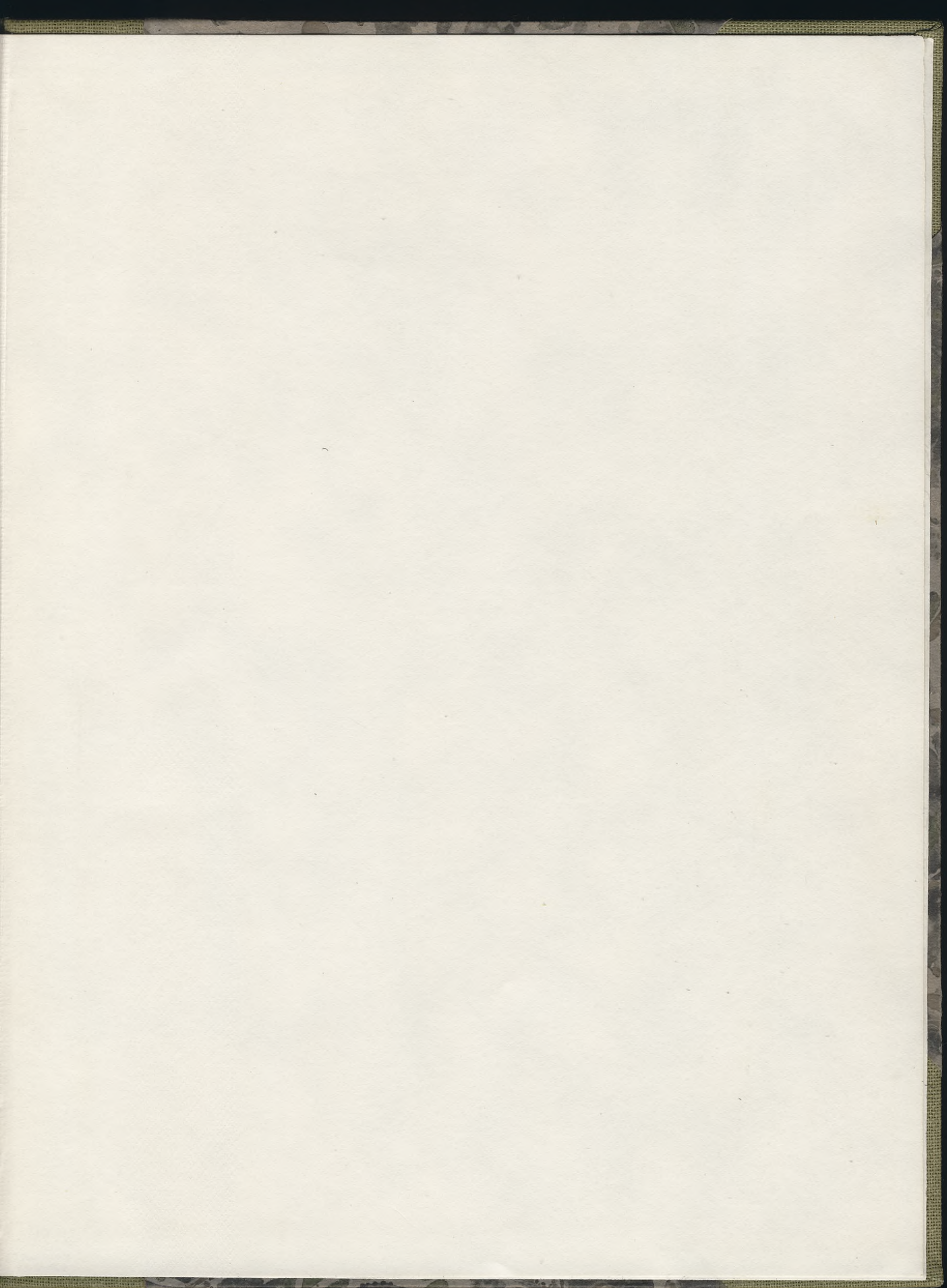
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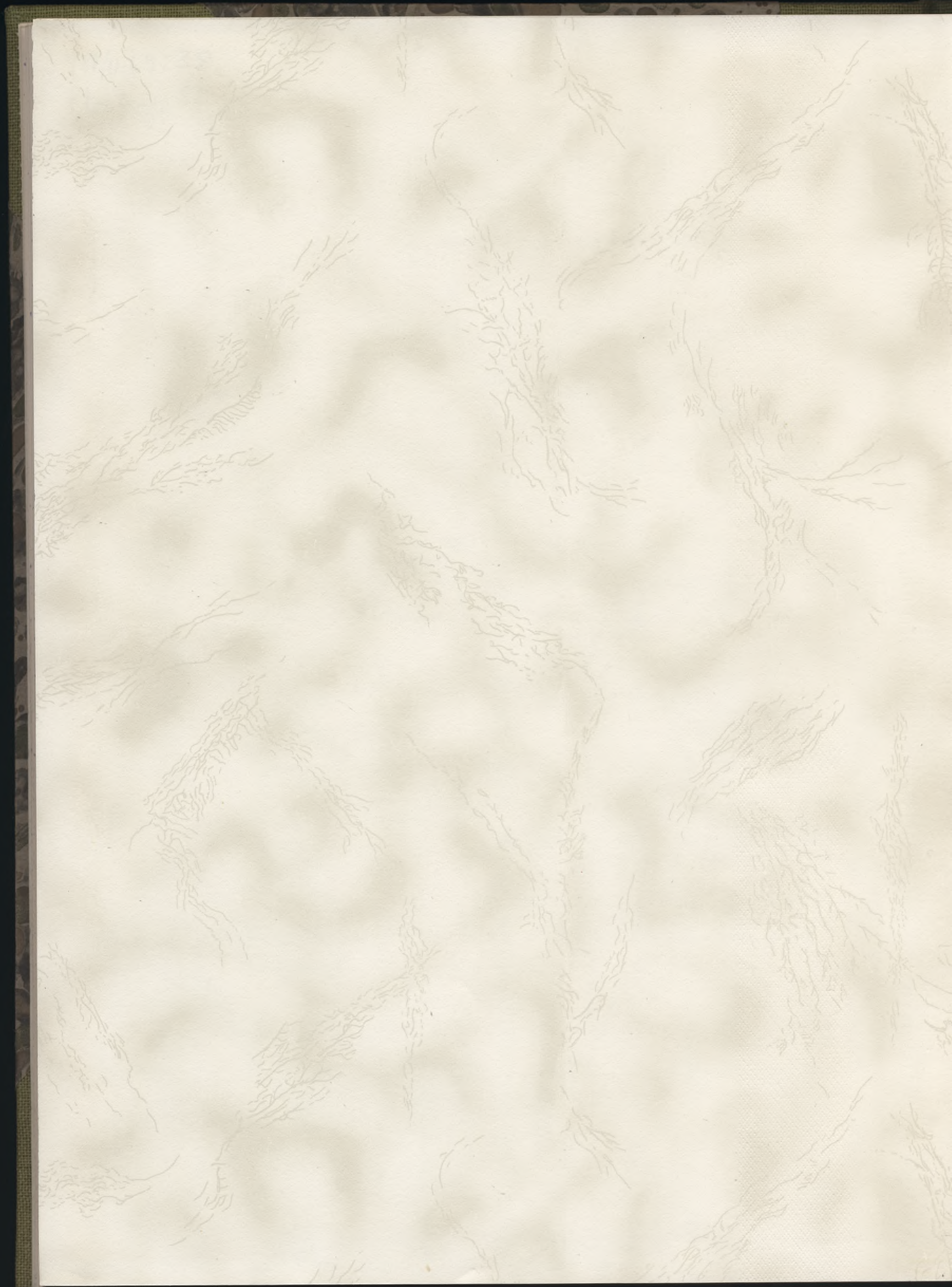
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