

Preface

Ndala wanyanga is the story of a young man with talents who learns to master difficult situations in life. Eventually he rises to positions of power by outwitting his opponents. The handsome youngster attracts the admiration of a princess, daughter of a benevolent chief or king (*mwangana wangoma*). All other applicants to the marriage fail to win her father's consent who demands from them that they first till a field that is full of rocks. Ndala devises a clever strategy to win the girl. He says he would start tilling, but only after the chief's cooks have prepared a special breakfast for him, a broth to be served on a long stick without any of the liquid dropping down. When the cooks fail to provide such a breakfast, Ndala succeeds in convincing the chief that tilling a field of rocks is equally impossible. The two lovers obtain her father's agreement to marry.

The plot is set in precolonial eastern Angola, in the country of the Vangangela, i.e. people from the lands of dawn, people of the East, as they were called by Ovimbundu traders in the 18th and 19th centuries. Ndala's first journey across Angola takes him and his caravan as traders of ivory and rubber to the Angolan central highlands, at a time when those commodities were in great demand by the Portuguese established on the Atlantic coast. Later, on another journey, this time in search of the legendary King (Mweni) Peku, he and his crew – missing direction at a crossroads – end up in captivity by another powerful ruler, Mweni Lindimana. That chief discovers Ndala's talents and then wants to keep him for ever in his palace, so that he would serve him as an advisor. Ndala soon gets tired of that assignment far from home and begins to think of ways to liberate himself and his companions. Eventually, he succeeds, overthrowing Lindimana's kingship. This is followed by two more conquests which in the end make him the ruler of a large country.

Kayombo kaChinyeka's story is written in Lucazi, one of the languages within the so-called Ngangela cluster, other variants being Mbwela, Nkhangala, Lwimbi and Mbunda. Some of these languages are threatened today with extinction, as a result of population displacements during the Angolan Civil War from the 1970s to 2002, which caused the disappearance of nearly all traditional institutions of learning, e.g.

mukanda (for boys), *cikula* (for girls), *vandumbu* (the „voices“ of the ancestral kings), *mungongi* (a male secret society), *tuwema* („the flames“, a female secret society) and also loss of the ideographic script called *tusona* (cf. Kubik 2006). Large parts of eastern Angola are still a mine field, with millions of people unable to live in their former rural settlements (cf. Onishi 2017:2)

In Chinyeka’s manuscript there are many lexical items no longer understood by current speakers of the language. So he gives a short list of “unusual” words at the end of this book. He also asks readers to practice the language, retell parts of his story, and train their vocabulary by answering questions at the end of each chapter.

Kayombo kaChinyeka completed his manuscript in 1982. Unfortunately, it has taken an awfully long time until publication. He constantly reminded us about it, most recently on our visit to his home in Manyinga, northwestern Zambia, August 2015.

Apart from financial constraints, the main reason for the delay, however, was editorial. In a letter dated March 31, 2004, he had warned us about spelling mistakes by his typist and also shortcomings in the English translation, since he himself, as he expressed it, was not a native speaker of English.

The spelling mistakes were easily removed; I also had the final typescript checked by two of our team members, Moses Yotamu and Chindamba Ngunga, who are both from Chinyeka’s home region. More serious was that the present manuscript – in contrast to Chinyeka’s earlier works, i.e. *Vihandyeka vyamana* (1973) and *Konkha vyavanda* (2013) – had been typed in an obsolete orthography of disjunctive writing, such as used long ago for the Lucazi translation of the Bible. We had to retype the entire manuscript using conjunctive writing, as applicable in Bantu languages (cf. Horton 1949, Instituto Nacional de Línguas 1980, Frost ed. 1980, Ministry of Education 1970, etc.)

For Lucazi I also decided this time to represent the sound [tʃ] with a single letter /c/ and not /ch/ as in engl. “church”, in conformity with Mbunda and Cokwe orthographies in Angola (Instituto Nacional de Línguas 1980, Barbosa 1989).

Ndala wanyanga is fiction incorporating elements of history. Apart from its educational mission, the text paints a lively picture of the ecology, and the social and economic conditions in late 18th and early 19th centuries across eastern Angola which the Portuguese used to call “o fim do mundo” (the end of the world). This was a region that had received powerful influences from the Lunda Empire further north ruled around 1625 A.D. by the legendary Queen Luweji Iwa Konde.

Kayombo kaChinyeka grew up in northwestern Zambia, in an area which received a large number of Lucazi-speaking refugees from Angola around 1920. They traveled under the leadership of two brothers, Ntsamba Chiwaya (1898-1981), and his elder brother Kamwocha escaping unbearable Portuguese rule, forced labor and other abuses of power. The group settled in what was then Northwestern Rhodesia, a British-held territory on a divided continent whose borders had been drawn at the “Congo Conference” in Berlin 1884/85. In 1936 Ntsamba Chiwaya was installed to be Luchazi Chief Kalunga II after having acted for ten years under his elder brother Kamwocha Kahyata Samukonga I. In 1971, 1973 and 1979 I myself and associates were guests of Chief Kalunga II who contributed significantly to Chinyeka’s and my research on Lucazi traditions and history. Chief Kalunga II Ntsamba Chiwaya died in Kabompo on October 12, 1981.

Publication of the present book became possible within our current project P28178 – G24 whose primary objective is to put oral literature and creative writing in minority languages on record, concentrating on east and south-central Africa. Kayombo kaChinyeka’s writings are to be considered a legacy of a culture which has largely disappeared, but remains an inspiration to those of us who were privileged to participate in its institutions and learn the language.

Gerhard Kubik

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