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# Of Snipe Hunts and Errant Bats, or, Will an Anthropologist EVER Learn?

Allen F. Roberts

## Abstract

*In recent years, a number of humanities scholars have called for event-driven ethnographies of the particular as a tactic to mitigate the flattening of other people's everyday lives, thoughts, and purposes, which has been so frequently represented in literature. What "messiness," what oddities have been omitted from accounts that generalize about entire communities based upon a researcher's few interactions with a few interlocutors? The following essay is an experimental attempt to tell a story from fieldnotes and recollections dating to the mid-1970s when I undertook 45 months of dissertation research among Tabwa people in what is now south-eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. At many steps along this quirky narrative path, contingent truths are at play based upon what I understand to have been my Tabwa interlocutors' ways of understanding such experiences—with the past tense here suggesting that an "ethnographic present" must be dated, especially given the turbulence of Congolese histories these last decades. Endnotes provide glimpses of Tabwa thinking, again based upon my same-day written records and after-the-fact memories of what a few particular people told me. I offer these in quite deliberate defiance of the standard editorial caveat that notes are not meant to be a parallel text: in this case, they are! Furthermore, my essay has no firm conclusion, no wrap-up, no convenient understanding. Instead, readers are invited to consider circumstances that struck me as unusual as they occurred, and to draw their own conclusions about how to understand the events and persons so described, including the anthropologist.*

Anthropological research involves two-way socialization. When things go well, such work can be thrillingly intersubjective, with all the triumphs of negotiation, misunderstandings of motivation, and terrors of indecision so implied. Fortunately, in my experience

anyway, a scholar's missteps are overridden more often than not by the astonishing generosity and tolerance of interlocutors. Looking back at notes from my doctoral fieldwork with Tabwa people of southeastern Zaïre (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the DRC) in the mid-1970s, I am struck by how obtuse I could sometimes be concerning purposes and procedures that my well-meaning friends felt to be self-evident.<sup>1</sup> They tried their best to teach me what their lives are all about, and occasionally must have found me peculiarly dense. Sometimes they made such an assessment painfully clear to me, but in witty ways not meant to be hurtful. At other times, I now see that I was fooled into thinking that the best explanation of a situation had to be the most complex. That is, I assumed that circumstances could only be understood through cultural perspectives altogether different from my own, when "common sense" might have provided ready explanation and a bridge between Tabwa ontology and the perspectives I brought with me to approach everyday circumstances we were experiencing together.<sup>2</sup>

Consideration of "common sense" puts an anthropologist on very shaky ground, of course, for as many have suggested following the prescient thoughts of Clifford Geertz, common sense is a cultural construction like so many others.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, anthropologists teach their students that the commonalities of life, death, and what lies in between permit understanding and appreciation of other cultures despite clear-cut differences. Pertinent here is a heuristic distinction between intention and implication drawn and developed by Anita Jacobson-Widding and her colleagues in the collected essays of *Culture, Experience and Pluralism*.<sup>4</sup> The contrast echoes the well-known linguistic contrast of *parole* and *langue*, respectively, and is useful to those interested in empirical models of social life, for it directs attention to social process in quotidian events.<sup>5</sup> The intentional meanings of actions are negotiated in everyday local-level politics, while implications situate such events in the logic of culture and cosmology. In other words, I now see that while undertaking my dissertation research, I was often caught between my own "common sense" understanding of the intentions of my Tabwa friends, and the implications that their actions and exegeses had as derived from their cultural perspectives.

Tensions between intentions and implications are especially clear in cases of *bulozi*, a term most often translated as “sorcery.”<sup>6</sup> My interest in the ways that social conflict and problem-solving reveal the dynamics of culture was developed while studying sociocultural anthropology with Victor Turner, my graduate advisor at the University of Chicago. Like his own mentor, Max Gluckman, Turner found that tensions and acrimonies of everyday life are often the proving grounds for culture-building, as people test and adapt their understandings and responses to misfortune.<sup>7</sup> Yet I would also admit that, like most outside observers of African culture, I was drawn to sorcery as an aspect of Tabwa culture that *seemed* so strikingly different from ways that I perceived my own upbringing. To a degree anyway, I engaged in the exaggeration and exoticism of earlier anthropology for which many students these days wisely show such scorn. My interest in *bulozi* proved especially perplexing to my Tabwa friends, for as a Euro-American, I clearly had access to many politico-economic powers and prerogatives surpassing their own as rural Zaïrians of limited means during very difficult times.<sup>8</sup> How could I be so foolish as to make myself vulnerable by inquiring about subjects no one wished to discuss openly? Speaking of such things bears inherent danger to those who do not know about them for, if revealed, such knowledge may itself suggest guilt (why and how do *you* know that?), and even more ominously, those willing to resort to evil are ever-vigilant, always listening.

The following events occurred in fraught circumstances in Zaïre, as President Mobutu Sese Seko and members of his political party oppressed and pillaged their own people more and more openly.<sup>9</sup> My intention is to recount these moments here so as to illustrate the sorts of negotiations that arise during dissertation research and to suggest the transformations an anthropologist may experience through the urgings and actions of those working with and caring for him or her. Such contrapuntal interplay of individual intentionality and cultural implications is at the heart of social life itself, and in the stories to follow, presentation of people’s actions and discussion of their intentions will often be accompanied by footnotes explaining relevant implications as derived from Tabwa culture.<sup>10</sup>

A further purpose of this paper will be to give voice to a fairly eccentric (by local as well as my own standards) individual

with whom I spent a good deal of time early in my doctoral fieldwork. The following account is not meant to speak for or be about everyone whom I met along the southwestern shores of Lake Tanganyika, in other words, nor for or about all people sharing some aspect of social identity (e.g. lineage, clan, or ethnicity) with the person whom I shall introduce. Instead, to borrow and adapt a phrase from Lila Abu-Lughod, I shall develop an “ethnography of the particular” that I hope will be compelling and even entertaining, as storytelling usually is, while suggesting how odd experiences can reveal social processes through mundane intentions and implications.<sup>11</sup>

### **Lunfunga and the *Balozi***

In late 1974, after extended visits to what would become our home in the village of Lubanda along the southwestern shores of Lake Tanganyika, my wife and I moved into a house lent to us by Sultani Mpala Kaloko, territorial chief according to Zaïrian political offices established by Belgian colonizers.<sup>12</sup> One of my first acquaintances was Lunfunga, a middle-aged man living just a few houses down the street from us.<sup>13</sup> He was prosperous enough to own his own fishing net, which he often repaired while seated in the flat sweep of road in front of his home. I began chatting with Lunfunga in the afternoon as he was seeing to this task, and soon we were having long conversations while drinking tea or an occasional beer together. It was clear from the start that while Lunfunga might be friendly and willing—even eager—to share his knowledge of Tabwa esoterica with me, he was also an alcoholic who could be very cantankerous in his cups. Before I learned just how troublesome his behavior could be and distanced myself from Lunfunga, the following interaction took place.

One evening as I was at home writing up the day’s fieldnotes on my portable typewriter, I heard someone outside call my name loudly. According to Tabwa etiquette, it is both rude and threatening to shout in this way, for a *mulozi* may hear and then victimize the one to whom attention has been drawn so publically. I recognized Lunfunga’s voice and went outside to see what he wanted, but he had started home and so I followed after him. He was quite inebriated from the *rutuku* “moonshine” his wife had distilled and had been selling for several days.<sup>14</sup> He told me that many in the

village wanted to beat him, whereupon his spouse, who was similarly under the influence, chimed in that he was lying. It was well known that when they were intoxicated, the couple's squabbling could become very unpleasant, and my first inclination was to go back home. Lunfunga told me he wanted me to come in, though, so he could tell me something so secret he could not tell me anywhere but in the confines of his house.

As soon as we were seated in his living room, Lunfunga whispered that he was prepared to name all the *balozi* in town so that I could make a list of them.<sup>15</sup> At the time, he served as assistant to our neighborhood chief (who in turn reported to Sultani Mpala as chief of the village and greater territory), and as such, Lunfunga stressed, he knew the identities of all evil people living amongst us. He moaned that there was so much he wanted to teach me, but that I did not like him and never gave him any gifts. If I wanted to learn the important things he knew, I would have to offer him something very significant. I passed this off as alcoholic behavior and went home to fetch him a few of the cigarettes I kept to offer friends.<sup>16</sup>

When I returned, Lunfunga offered me an easy chair in this living room and then locked the door behind me, saying he hoped I would also come to spend a few days at his fishing camp with him. As I recorded in my fieldnotes, this unusual behavior made me distinctly uneasy, as I felt trapped and unsure of his intentions. Over and over, Lunfunga returned to the fact that I should give him a gift for the important information he was prepared to offer. I said it was my principle never to pay for information, but that as friends, my wife and I were prepared to help people in Lubanda in any way we could.<sup>17</sup> He retorted that he felt "naked," as he only had the clothes he was wearing. I told him I would find a new shirt for him the next time I traveled to Kalemie, but he said he wanted some of my own clothes instead.<sup>18</sup> We bantered back and forth about what I felt at the time to be a most peculiar request, for I told Lunfunga that everyone in the village would recognize my clothes were he to wear them. He finally agreed that I could buy a new shirt for him when next I visited the city.<sup>19</sup>

Lunfunga's behavior was becoming progressively strange, as he repeatedly looked furtively about him and asked his wife if their back door was locked. He told me that because he was assistant neighborhood chief, *balozi* came to him for permission

to ensorcel (*kuloga*). I assumed he was greatly inflating his authority and, tongue-in-cheek, asked if such sorcerers pay him for this service. He said no, the village chief is the one who receives any money of the sort.

Neighborhood chiefs may grant permission to engage in malicious behavior, but the village chief receives any remuneration. Lunfunga then defensively retreated from this point, saying that he was there to protect people in his neighborhood, not to harm them.<sup>20</sup> He could not be hurt by *balozi*, Lunfunga continued, and no one would dare come around his house to bother him—this said despite the anxiety about whether his back door was firmly closed while we were discussing such secret matters. No, he had protection (*makingo*), or “*defense nationale*,” he added in French.<sup>21</sup>

My next question was about what sort of *makingo* Lunfunga had, and after another unrequited request for a gift, he abruptly retired to his bedroom. He returned with the dried carapace of a large black beetle with red spots on its back, tied by a string to a small stick. He thrust the insect into my face aggressively and told me it was a *kafwabubela*. He kept it under his bed, he continued, and if any *mulozi* should come around, the bug would chase the person and bite him or her on the neck until s/he wept and fled.<sup>22</sup> “They cannot insult this bug!” Lunfunga cried. He further explained that when he placed the beetle in his mouth, it would crawl into his *roho* and then, if a sorcerer surreptitiously approached to attack him, the *kafwabubela* would bite inside Lunfunga’s body to alert him to the danger.<sup>23</sup> He explained that such a beetle can live six months without eating anything (thus defying death), and is an *mfumu*, a diviner and practitioner of magic in its own right. He had paid ten zaires for his *kafwabubela*—then about twenty U.S. dollars and a staggering sum.

Dried tests of *kafwabubela* beetles were packed with potent medicines and deployed by the greatest Tabwa hunters of yore as they pursued the elusive aardvark (*mtumbi*). I had been told that a hunter entering an aardvark’s tunnel would place such a bundle in his mouth to become “invisible” and to steel him against the animal’s wicked claws and arcane powers.<sup>24</sup> Lunfunga seemed impressed that I knew such esoterica but was irritated that I was not more impressed by the mysterious beetle he was dangling in my face. He demanded to know who had told me about

*kafwabubela* medicines and aardvark hunters, and I responded that just as I would not reveal his own name to anyone while discussing esoterica, I would not tell him who my other confidants were. He then agreed that aardvark hunters used to do what I described, but when I asked him what powers the *kafwabubela* confers with regard to confronting *balozi*, he refused to tell me unless and until I gave him an important gift. He did demonstrate how the beetle is placed in one's mouth, however, continuing to talk to me with his teeth clamped shut about the insect's desiccated shell.

Lunfunga abruptly asked if I would be frightened were he to summon a *mulози* right then and there. I told him I would not, and that he was free to do as he chose. "No, you are only a child and you would be afraid," he shot back. "You are only a small child. I could tell you how to recognize (*kutambua*) sorcerers. I could call a sorcerer here now and you could see the model [he used French here]. You and I could walk together and no one would see us. We could take note of [*noter*, again a French term] all the sorcerers in town. But I doubt you [*je douter pour vous*, in Lunfunga's French], you have no defense." I countered that I did, but he responded in derision that whatever I might have would be worthless here in Lubanda. I showed him a small, dark green bloodstone pendant with the holy name of Allah inscribed on it in Arabic script that I was wearing around my neck and that I had purchased it in the late 1960s while a Peace Corps Volunteer in the Republic of Chad. The stone was said to have come from Mecca and conveyed blessing energy to protect me. "Were your friends with Muslims?" he asked. When I nodded, he dismissed any such relationships I might have had as "utterly worthless" (*bure kabisa*), as were Muslims themselves in his opinion.<sup>25</sup>

The exchange was growing ever more bizarre, as Lunfunga chose to stand very close to me, peering at me with his one good eye and speaking in a harsh whisper. He said that he had great *makingo* protective magic, and that he could carry his *kafwabubela* anywhere on his body, but that I would be injured were I to do anything like this. He asked if I knew what the word *erizi* means, and when I admitted that I did not, he replied that it refers to the same things as *makingo*. If I didn't know *that*, he could not tell me anything further.<sup>26</sup> After a pause during which I debated with myself about how best to leave Lunfunga's home, he asked me



an extraordinary question: did I know how sorcerers kill people? Even though this was so early in my stay among the Tabwa that I was unfamiliar with esoteric terms like *erizi*, I already knew that such a question, like much of what Lunfunga was telling me, was *never* the subject of casual conversation or public discourse. To ask such a question so openly was to admit that the narrator him or herself was, at least potentially, a *mulozi* as well, for if this were not the case, how would s/he know about such matters or any such answer?

*Baloz*i kill by placing poison (*sumu*) in beer they invite their victims to share, Lunfunga explained.<sup>27</sup> The poison will only affect a victim the sorcerer has designated, and others may enjoy the same beer without harm. I asked what this poison is, and received Lunfunga's by-then-standard response, that I would need to pay dearly to learn such important information from him.

"To know is very expensive," *kujua ni très cher*, he quipped in mixed Swahili and French. After sitting in silence for a few minutes, Lunfunga named two trees, and said that their roots are mixed with the bile of a crocodile. He said that this substance is so poisonous that if someone tastes even a little, s/he will die in less than two minutes. Once such poison is ingested, not even the *mulozi* who has deployed it can stop its lethal action. I asked from whom he had learned this, and Lunfunga refused to say, insisting that were he to reveal his source of such information, "I would know [too much about] how he [Lunfunga] lives."<sup>28</sup>

Lunfunga changed the subject to explain that when a *mulozi* murders someone, the victim may return. When I asked if this would be as a *kizwa* (*vizwa*, plural: "vengeful ghosts"), he asked me how I knew about such things. He never answered my question, but continued that a *kizwa* can enter one's house at night and throw a man out of bed, leaving his wife "in another condition." She might enjoy having sex with her husband, but her partner would be the *kizwa* and not her husband at all. Lunfunga asked me if there were *vizwa* in my own country. I answered that once in a great while, it is said that ghosts are found in old houses and that they can walk through walls, but that I was not sure that these were *vizwa*. I then recounted a bit of the plot from the film "Rosemary's Baby," saying that some people in the United States believe there are *shetani* who sleep with and impregnate women. The baby born will also be a *shetani*.<sup>29</sup> Lunfunga said it is not like

that among Tabwa, for a *kizwa* cannot be born in this way. Instead, he repeated that a *kizwa* would make the wife happy as the husband lay obliviously asleep on the floor. He added that a *kizwa* may travel about as a bat or cricket, and that when it enters someone's house, only the wind will be heard.

The subject changed again, to how it was that people in our village wanted to beat Lunfunga. This time he added that they wanted to thrash him at night, through a *complot ya inchi*—a “traditional plot,” using the French term *complot*. He was referring to *bulozzi*, and said that people were jealous of his holding the office of assistant neighborhood chief, and of his authority to assist in the adjudication of [very minor] disputes. No one likes those who take sides like this, he added. As it was, he was only the assistant; were he the neighborhood chief, he would be *terrible* (again in French)! He cackled ominously, I recorded in my notes.

Then Lunfunga asked me if I heard the crickets singing in his house. These are “bad things,” he said, for evil people enter one's house in such a form—this is the *hewa ya inchi*—“the way [more literally, the “weather”] of the country,” as another indirect reference to sorcery. *Balozzi* even bother him at noon, he continued, but I was probably too tired to hear more about such things that evening. I was indeed. As he walked me up the hill to my house, a bat flew overhead and squeaked. “See?” he asked. Did the bat we had just heard mean that sorcerers were pursuing us? No, he responded, they could not hurt us because of his *makingo* protection, but they were out after other people that night, that was for sure.

### **Lunfunga's Snipe Hunt<sup>30</sup>**

Two days later, Lunfunga came to my house in the late afternoon, intoxicated again (or still). I was busy offering first aid to a man suffering from a grotesquely infected finger. Lunfunga took no notice of my preoccupation with someone else's affliction. Instead, he berated me for not coming away with him immediately, and for not having visited him the night before as I had promised. I told him I had come down to see him, only to find his house shut up and dark. I was obviously busy but would try to visit him that evening. He reappeared at my house not long thereafter while I was taking a bucket shower within an enclosure built for the purpose

behind our house. I was soon ready, but Lunfunga was irritated at having to wait for me on our porch, in public view. It was already dark, so few noticed him, but this was not the point. I followed Lunfunga down the hill to his home.

After an exasperating exchange about whether I had been remiss in not dropping everything in response to his insistence that I come with him, Lunfunga's very next words were about how much I would have to pay him for the information he could share with me. I was increasingly annoyed with this ploy, as his nagging was altogether different from other friends' openness about equally esoteric matters. Lunfunga said that he could provide me with the "means of the village" (*moyen du village* in his French)—that is, the "key" to the place, or an understanding (and possibly control) of the social dynamics of our community. I could then return home [to the United States] with many stories, and become wealthy from them while he remained poor.<sup>31</sup> At the same time, Lunfunga added that my wife and I were doing so much for people these days through our paramedical clinic that we would be sorely missed when we left.

Discussion continued back and forth in this way—one minute Lunfunga chiding me for some perceived deficiency in my tangible appreciation of all he was doing for me, the next praising me as a valued friend. He again insisted he was "naked" and needed new clothing, and told me of an argument he had had that afternoon in the bar owned by a local representative of the *Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution* (MPR)—the political party of Mobutu Sese Seko. Lunfunga accused the man of over-charging for bottled beer that was supposed to have a nationally sanctioned standard price, and he warned that he would denounce the man to civil authorities. The bar owner had physically thrown Lunfunga into the street, further tearing his already tattered shirt. I promised him a new shirt, which I did bring him after my next visit to Kalemie.<sup>32</sup>

Lunfunga again spoke of how *balozi* kill people, saying that the poison of crocodile bile that he had described to me was not their only means, for one can use the venom of a Gaboon viper as well.<sup>33</sup> He rambled on, frequently interrupting his story with a plea for money. The head and skin of the snake are taken, and the venom is mixed with the bile of a crocodile and other ingredients he refused to identify without recompense. These are put onto an arrowhead made of locally smelted iron, and the bundle

is placed at a crossroads. Alternatively, such an arrow may be shot at a victim by an *nzunzi*—an animated wooden figure of the sort that sorcerers possess and direct as familiars.<sup>34</sup>

The “great ones of the land”—*balози*, that is—gather at a crossroads because it is there that they can recognize (*kutam-bua*) who has potent magic, and of what sorts.<sup>35</sup> One of their number will blow a wooden whistle and the others so summoned will come to the crossroads to dance upside-down and naked. I asked if Lunfunga owned such a whistle, and he said he did, then immediately denied it. Some *balози* dance balanced on wooden pestles as the “male” implement with which women pound manioc and other foodstuffs in a mortar. Others dance on the heads of the dead (*wafu*)—presumably their victims. Lunfunga told me all this in the dramatic, harsh whisper he used when conveying esoterica. I would be frightened to see such a sight, he asserted in a mocking tone, for I was such a child without medicines (*dawa*) to protect myself. Did I have any amulets, he again asked? I said I was protected but he laughed, saying anything I had from Chad was utterly worthless (*bure kabisa*). Indeed, Chadians themselves are utterly worthless, and they certainly know nothing of sorcerers’ powers here in Lubanda.

*Balози* can come to the crossroads in the form of certain animals wearing magical amulets around their forearms, shoulders, necks, and waists, Lunfunga said.<sup>36</sup> “If you went out at night, would you recognize sorcerers?” he asked me. “I do not think you would. I will not cause you to walk about (*sintakutembeza*).” This verb construction struck me as odd, for Lunfunga might have said “I will not take a walk with you” (*sintatembea nawe*), but instead, he used a causative form as though he had the power to oblige me wander about whether or not I was doing so of my own volition. This sounded like *bulози* to me.<sup>37</sup> I asked in return that if he did “cause me to wander,” would other people be able to see me? “No, no one could,” the implication being that I would be “invisible” to them because of Lunfunga’s protective devices including his *kafwabubela* bundle. “OK then, let’s go!” I responded. “Yaa!” he replied dismissively. “You have no defense. I am afraid that if the *féticheurs* [using the French term] threw poison at you, you would be paralyzed and I would get in trouble. If we go out together, I shall wear my amulet and be protected, but your amulet is ‘European’ and worthless here. Father V [a

Flemish Catholic missionary] was amazing (*ajabu*), he was armed and could confront and beat *balози*.<sup>38</sup> But you? You have nothing. You are really just a child (*mutoto kabisa*). Go to bed! They will throw evil things at you and you will not see a thing but will be injured nonetheless." I chose not to respond.

After a pause, Lunfunga said that if we were to go down the hill to the crossroads (he used the French term *rond-point*) at the center of Lubanda where the bar of the party representative was located, he could show me many things. If I had the price of a bottle of beer, we could go and he would call forth our community's *balози*. "Ah, but you are not ready. Sorcerers dance there and beat their drums." I asked if he danced there as well, in what was meant to be a joke. He replied testily that he did not, and he only recognizes *balози* who do. "We could go there and beat the sorcerers with our superior powers (*nguvu*). Some *balози* come as house cats, others as people, but they are not the people they appear to be, at all. Women at the crossroads seem to wear a cloth, but it is not a cloth. But you are such a baby, you would be weakened by the poison they would throw at us. *Balози* set a trap at the crossroads, and anyone who does not know how to be careful will stumble into it. The trap cuts like a razor blade, but one does not feel anything at first. Their trap is made like a spider web, but it is not a spider web. If you touch it, you will be poisoned. The crossroads in front of the bar is where the greatest *balози* dance and set their traps. The greatest of them dance there at noon, the lesser ones at night." He uttered a phrase that he then explained was in Lingala, a language I could not understand. When I admitted as much and asked what he meant, he responded that he cannot speak Lingala. He repeated the phrase a moment later, again in "Lingala."<sup>39</sup>

Lunfunga's wife came into the room and they promptly fell into bickering. I rose to leave, but Lunfunga told me to wait outside for him, as we would go to the crossroads. He emerged a few minutes later to repeat that I had no defense against *balози*. Was I courageous? I answered that we would see. Lunfunga whistled a tune as we walked down the hill into the village, and the few people out and about at that hour (around 9 p.m.) whistled tunes as they passed us, so as to demonstrate their innocence of purpose, I surmised. Most homes were already dark, for people retire very early in Lubanda so as to rise before dawn to go fishing on Lake

Tanganyika, sometimes paddling their pirogues a mile or more from shore. As we arrived at the crossroads, the last two merry-makers emerged from the MPR representative's bar, and the door was closed and the kerosene lamp extinguished inside. Lunfunga whispered that this crossroads was where the "great ones" dance, but we were too early to see them. We would have to wait at least an hour before they would appear.

We stood around in moonless obscurity. Lunfunga pointed to the nearby home of a congenial elderly couple I knew well, and said the *balozi* hadn't come out of that house yet. They were great sorcerers, though. I asked if others living near the crossroads were also *balozi*, and he named the mother of someone then engaged in bitter litigation concerning a death attributed to sorcery. The old woman was a notorious *mulozi*, he said. I asked about a 90-year-old man who had lived across the street and had just died, but Lunfunga said no, he wasn't a *mulozi*.

After an awkward silence of a good fifteen minutes or more, Lunfunga said he had some business nearby and would leave me for just a moment but be right back. I assumed he had gone to urinate, but his absence stretched on and on. Several people walked by me as I stood in the crossroads, doing nothing. I felt exceptionally out of place, as each person politely stopped to ask if anything was wrong and they could be of help. When I had no convincing answer as to why I was there, one man ominously muttered that I must have "work" (*kazi*) there at the crossroads, the implication being that I was somehow associated with *bulozi*. I could think of no answer to that, either. I started back up the hill but Lunfunga quickly caught up with me and asked why I was leaving. I wondered to myself if he had been watching me from some hidden place all that time.<sup>40</sup> He would call the *balozi*, he assured me, but we would have to be patient and wait a while longer. I reminded him that he had told me he lacked the sort of whistle necessary to summon sorcerers. He answered that he had other ways to call them. I had had enough and headed home, sure I had been made a fool as the victim of a "snipe hunt" as among the oldest tricks in the book.

### **Errant Bats**

Since he lived just down the street from me, I continued to chat with Lunfuga from time to time, but my association with him

waned over the next months, as I found him too often drunk and too aggravating an interlocutor. Instead, I continued to develop friendships with many other people in and around Lubanda. These relationships were not without their own occasional problems, of course, and in particular, several people most closely associated with my wife and me confided their worries that others in the community were jealous of the privileges they were alleged to enjoy because of their association with such “wealthy” persons. A repeated theme of such gossip was that we frequently shared meals of meat with our close friends. While it was true that we once purchased several pounds of beef from the butcher shop in Kalemie and brought it back to Lubanda to share with a few friends including, first and foremost, Sultani Mpala, ordinarily our only source of meat was that of game available once in a great while when Mbote hunters brought it down from the mountains to trade in Lubanda.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, most others in Lubanda were better apprised than I ever was of when game meat was available, and ate it far more frequently than my wife and I could. For Tabwa, though, reference to “meat” is always an allusion to the alleged cannibalism of *balози*, who are said to reduce their victims to “meat” that they then clandestinely consume.<sup>42</sup>

One day in late October 1975, Lunfunga and I chanced to meet in front of his house, and as we were alone, I asked him what he knew about a magical bundle called *lyang’ombe* that I had just learned about from someone else. A *lyang’ombe* is said to be used by *balози* to travel from one place to another as they attack their victims. One man explained to me that the shell of a giant African land snail (probably *Achatina fulica*) would be filled and so empowered with medicines that *balози* could pack themselves into it and travel, although, as he quipped, while experiencing the cramped rigors one endures when traveling with several people in the back seat of a Volkswagen “beetle.”<sup>43</sup> Ordinary people perceive the transit of a *lyang’ombe* vehicle as a shooting star. Lunfunga told me he knew all about such things but that it would cost me a great deal if he were to tell me. Still a bit riled by what I was convinced was his earlier snipe hunt and not wishing to hear more of his “I am ‘naked’ and need a new shirt” entreaties, I responded that I had no particular need for his information, for others had already told me what a *lyang’ombe* was and what *balози* could do with one. I simply wondered if *he* knew about a *lyang’ombe*, being

the well-versed person I knew him to be. Seeming somewhat flattered, Lunfunga invited me to join him that afternoon in visiting a great *ng'anga* practitioner of arcane healing and related arts who would be staying in Lubanda for a few days and who could tell me many great things like what may constitute a *lyang'ombe*.<sup>44</sup>

Agreeing to meet later that afternoon, I went to Lunfunga's home only to discover that he was off drinking *rutuku* moonshine at a neighbor's. An intoxicated Lunfunga appeared at my door several hours later, ready to take me to meet the *ng'anga* he had mentioned. He refused to say where we were going, and after an exasperating exchange, I put my dog on its leash and set off with Lunfunga.<sup>45</sup> We wended our way among houses rather than following any particular path (in a way that would have drawn suspicion had anyone noticed us), and we eventually entered a home whose owners were unknown to me. Inside, a number of men were seated and Mutapo, the *ng'anga* in question, was selling one of them a dried giant African walking-stick insect (*Palophus leopoldii*) used as an activating agent in several sorts of Tabwa magic.<sup>46</sup> Mutapo's assistant was a strikingly diminutive fellow standing no more than three feet tall, and the only person with this physical challenge that I encountered during my many months among the Tabwa.

Mutapo begun our conversation by asking me if I knew the meaning of the word *kizimba*—the generic term for activating agents of medicines of the sort he was in the process of selling. I answered easily and followed with an explanation of the most common use of the giant walking stick he had in his hand: in love potions to make someone “tremble” as the insect does to camouflage itself. Everyone laughed and my testing seemed over for all but the inebriated Lunfunga, who goaded me in what I took to be an attempt to show off before the other men. Mutapo, though, acted kindly to me as Lunfunga grew more and more contentious. Taking his key from Lunfunga's aggression, one of Sultani Mpala's judges (whom I recognized but did not yet know personally) told the audience that my African-American wife and I took pills so that if we were to have a child, it would not be born a “mulatto” (using the French term). We gave the same medicine to our dog Seso, he added, and this explained why despite his frequent coupling with village dogs, no puppies looked like Seso. In my fieldnotes from this experience, I recorded my resentment at the effrontery of the judge's racist comments that harkened back



to colonial politics, and my feeling that given the warmth of our friendship with so many others in the village, I had no need to maintain such an abusive relationship as the one I had with Lunfunga that led to any so unpleasant a moment.

Lunfunga announced that there were too many people present for the conversation he wanted to have with Mutapo, and rudely told everyone else to leave. Mutapo and Lunfunga finished the moonshine from an almost-empty bottle and were both quite intoxicated, while Mutapo's assistant was sound asleep in a corner of the room. When the others had all left, Lunfunga urged me to ask Mutapo the question I had put to him earlier that day—that is, about the ingredients and purposes of *lyang'ombe* devices. I resisted, as it was a great leap to broach anything so esoteric and, because of its associations with *bulozi*, so problematic, when I hardly knew the man. Lunfunga insisted I ask my question nonetheless, now that the others had gone. Because I distrusted Lunfunga's motivations, I asked about *mwanzambale* instead, as a medicinal bundle used to protect *against* sorcery rather than as a vehicle *for* it, as *lyang'ombe* is. Lunfunga shot back that this was not what I wanted to know about at all. No, I was interested in *lyang'ombe*.

Mutapo talked a bit about one activating agent of such a magical device, but by now he was so inebriated that I could hardly understand what he was saying. He then asked if I myself possessed protective magic. Lunfunga answered for me that I did not, that I had some worthless thing from Chad, and that I was only a child who knew nothing of *balози* here in the Congo. I could not even see sorcerers when they were all around me (in reference to our previous adventure at the crossroads). Mutapo asked if I was being bothered by sorcerers. Again, Lunfunga answered for me, responding that there were many sorcerers dancing naked around my house every night, but while he could see them, I could not. Lunfunga then asked me the rhetorical question, "Could I see them?" and answered in my stead that I could not. No, I lacked "eyes" (*macho*)—that is, the magically enhanced sight necessary.

In a kindly if slurred voice, Mutapo countered that he could explain everything to me that I might want to know, and that he would take me to the woods to find herbal medicines and *vizimba* activating agents if I wished. Lunfunga urged me to ask Mutapo questions immediately, clearly so that he could hear the famous

healer's explanations. I thanked Mutapo and told him that I would rather wait and talk to him another time, for it was better that I learn slowly and carefully. Mutapo agreed that it would be better to meet when he had "white eyes." At the time, I assumed he must be referring to his need for sobriety, but in afterthought I realized that he was more probably alluding to clairvoyance.<sup>47</sup> Mutapo explained that he and his assistant would be traveling to a village up in the mountains for several days, but that we could meet when he returned. He would not come to my home, though, for people would see him doing so and would assume he was trying to get something from me. I told him I would be happy to visit him again at this same house where he was a guest, or anywhere else he might choose.

Several days later, Lunfunga stopped by to tell me he had just seen Mutapo, back from his trek. In contrast to what he had told me, Mutapo came to my house the next morning, accompanied by a man whom my wife and I had successfully treated with a broad-spectrum medicine for what we had deduced as an acute case of amoebic dysentery. The man's dramatic recovery from what people feared would be a fatal illness had been altogether remarkable. I was glad to have Mutapo see me in circumstances different from our earlier encounter, made so awkward by Lunfunga.

Mutapo and I chatted about my wife's own recent illness that had been marked by repeated fevers and lethargy. An anti-malarial treatment had not helped, and she had just had a vivid dream that someone was afflicting her through *bulozi*. Mutapo said that her illness could not be from sorcery, since "Europeans" like us cannot be attacked by *baloz*i, nor are they subject to the powers of their magic (*dawa*). We agreed that it would be good for Mutapo and me to talk somewhere without Lunfunga's or anyone else's interference, and he invited me to visit him that same afternoon at the house where he was again lodging for a few days.

In the afternoon, I took the circuitous path through the back yards of our neighborhood to where Mutapo was staying, managing to get there without Lunfunga seeing me as far as I knew. When I arrived, I was told by the lady of the house that Mutapo was at Lunfunga's, drinking *rutuku* moonshine. She went to call Mutapo and returned with him shortly, happily without Lunfunga. Mutapo was not intoxicated, and we had a very pleasant conversation about how he had learned his skills as a practitioner of a most

esoteric body of knowledge called Buyembe.<sup>48</sup> He was open in discussing his personal history and methods and, like most of my Tabwa friends and unlike Lunfunga, he did not ask for any evident remuneration.

As an anecdote to reciprocate his storytelling, I told Mutapo of a peculiar experience I had had several nights earlier. I was at home typing up fieldnotes when I heard distant drumming and singing. I had gone outside to determine what was happening and whence the music was coming, and I guessed that there must either be a funeral or a séance of the Bulumbu spirit mediums somewhere on the far side of Lubanda. I decided to try and find it, knowing from experience by then that I would be most likely be friends with at least one of the people so engaged, and would be welcome to participate in whatever was going on. I had trouble hearing well enough to gain my bearings, though, and so I walked down the hill from my house in the general direction from which the music seemed to be coming. When I reached the crossroads in front of the MPR representative's bar, the music stopped. I stood there for a few minutes, assuming that the activities would soon start again and I would be able to determine where to go from there. Several drunken young men were milling about the bar, and once again, I felt altogether out of place standing in a crossroads I knew to be associated with *bulozi*. I moved back to the edge of the intersection, ready to return up the hill if the music did not begin shortly. It did not, and during a final moment of indecision, I was suddenly struck in the middle of the forehead by a bat, which flew off after the impact. This bizarre event rattled me, and I quickly retreated up the hill to my home.

Bats do *not* do any such things as striking someone in the forehead, I told Mutapo.<sup>49</sup> I also said I knew that sorcerers sometimes shift their shapes to become bats (as Lunfunga had told me), and that I was aware that the very crossroads where I was lingering was where *balozi* assemble and dance upside-down and naked. What had happened, did he think?

Mutapo replied that I had not heard music at all. Instead, *balozi* had lured me to the crossroads with their music-that-is-not-music. It was they who had sent the bat to strike me in the forehead. Somehow, surprisingly enough, I had been protected from greater harm. Mutapo said he had noticed that I was wearing an *erizi* (amulet), pointing to my Chadian bloodstone pendant,

and asked what it was for. I explained that it was inscribed with the holy name of Allah and that I had been told it would bring me blessings and good fortune—*bahati*, a Swahili loan word from Persian.<sup>50</sup> Mutapo asked how much the pendant had cost, but when I told him it was the equivalent of a half-zaïre, he was clearly unimpressed with such a trivial amount.<sup>51</sup> He said he had seen other amulets in my home hanging over the front door; what were these? I explained that the small red-leather packets were also from Chad and contained Quranic verses. The Chadian friend who had made and given them to me as a gift during my Peace Corps days had told me that one would protect me from “poison” thrown into my food, another would guard me against theft, and the third would keep me from having travel accidents. Mutapo politely agreed that Muslims (*Waislamu*) do possess strong medicines, but that while my amulets might work in distant places like Chad, I should have other devices to protect me from malicious people and dangerous circumstances here in Lubanda. He could make such a bundle for me, and I responded that I would like that very much, as my wife’s nagging illness and several other anxiety-producing events made me feel that we needed something of the kind.

Over the next two days, Mutapo prepared a *mwanzambale* protective device for my wife and me.<sup>52</sup> Several dozen *vizimba* activating agents were assembled from the great many that Mutapo possessed, and artifacts of my wife and me were collected: drops of blood from pricked fingers, dirt from our footprints, and scrapings from where our shadows were cast against a wall. These were placed in an empty penicillin bottle inside which “we” would be harbored and safe in the “little world” (*kadunia*) that Mutapo had constructed for us. Our bodies would be “closed” by what he had done, and his choice of *vizimba* would protect us from all dangers that might ever befall us. By opening the little bottle and adding a drop of kerosene from time to time, the *mwanzambale* would remain forever active. We would be “invisible” to anyone wishing to attack us and indeed, any evil would be reflected back upon the *mulozi* in a mirror-like way, so that s/he rather than we would be afflicted. This first interaction with Mutapo was exceedingly stimulating, and I hoped it would be the first of many; alas, he was an itinerant practitioner of potent and problematic medicines

that were widely sought, and I never saw him again in the more than two more years that I remained in Zaire.<sup>53</sup>

### Conclusions and Beginnings

What is one to make of tales such as these? A first question might be whether or not Lunfunga's invitation to see *balozi* at the crossroads was a snipe hunt, as I thought at the time, or his honest attempt to teach me something so esoteric that I was too impatient and obtuse to appreciate. Was this an opportunity to stand "in sorcery's shadow" that might have changed my life as greatly as Paul Stoller tells readers that his has been since his initiation into Songhay arcana?<sup>54</sup> Or was Lunfunga simply an alcoholic whose ambivalence to me reflected the same psychological factors that drove him to drink so often and so much? As in any community of our times, alcoholism is not uncommon among Tabwa, but even if other friends were sometimes intoxicated, they were never abusive to me as was Lunfunga. Perhaps his marginality and aggression were marks of one who knew the powerfully dangerous secrets of *bulozi*. A Tabwa reading of Lunfunga's actions and personality might run along just such lines, yet other people I got to know well recounted even more esoteric and potentially damaging stories—and some were so politically incriminating that I long ago decided never to write about and so divulge them. My own "common-sense" understanding of Lunfunga now, more than forty years after the fact, remains as it was then, that alcoholic behavior is alcoholic behavior, whatever its particular psychological motivations. Lunfunga was jealous, greedy, and oddly assertive. A sorcerer, a Tabwa person might well conclude; something of a sot, to my mind. And yes, I was duped: it *was* a snipe hunt.

But wait: Tabwa sorcerers *do* dance upside-down and naked at crossroads, sometimes on the heads of the dead they have done in. A number of Tabwa friends corroborated Lunfunga's assertions in this regard. Let us again briefly consider the contrapuntal interplay between intentions and implications as drawn in *Culture, Experience and Pluralism*.<sup>55</sup> I would hold that Lunfunga's primary intention was self-aggrandizement—and obtaining a new shirt as the first of many gifts he hoped to receive from me. He was a troubled and troublesome individual who was constantly at odds with his own wife and others in the community. He was a fool,

too, willing to bait the bar-owner when others rightly feared the man's political connections and knew from experience that he would physically assail any who defied him, protected as he was by his MPR membership.<sup>56</sup> Still, Lunfunga's actions, especially as he offered to instruct me in the ways of *bulozi*, must be situated in the implications of Tabwa culture. Tabwa possess distinctive philosophical criteria for understanding and taking action in the world. The existence of sorcery is generally unquestioned, but who is or is not a *mulozi* is always debated, always defined according to any given interlocutor's positions and loyalties in ongoing local-level politics. Cultural implications are shared, intentions interpreted. So, what might have happened, then, if I had stayed at the crossroads until Lunfunga returned to summon and show me the otherwise invisible *balozi*? Was the bat-smack-in-the-forehead a warning not to be so foolhardy as to return to the crossroads in another attempt to see sorcerers? As my taciturn Connecticut Yankee ancestors might have opined, "hard to say" (although they would not have pronounced the R).

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Forty-five consecutive months of predoctoral anthropological fieldwork (1974-1977) were conducted with Tabwa people living along the shores of Lake Tanganyika in southeastern DRC. Generous funding was provided by the U.S. National Institute of Mental Health (grant-in-aid #1-FO1-MH-55 251-01-CUAN), the Committee on African Studies and the Edson-Keith Fund of the University of Chicago, and Sigma Xi, the Scientific Research Society. Subsequent archival and museum research in Europe has been supported by a Summer Stipend from the U.S. National Endowment for the Humanities (1984) and faculty development grants from Albion College, the University of Iowa, and UCLA. This paper was originally drafted in 1993 for a proposed festschrift for Anita Jacobson-Widding, then soon to retire as Professor of Anthropology after a celebrated career at Uppsala University in Sweden; sadly, the volume was never published and Dr. Jacobson-Widding is now deceased. Thanks to the late Professor Jan Ovesen, also then of Uppsala, and to Mary Nooter Roberts for editorial and intellectual guidance in writing this paper. For Polly.

<sup>2</sup> An example of how I sometimes reversed the logic of Occam's Razor (that simplest explanations are correct more often than not) is the following: One time when I was attending a performance at the invitation of a Bulumbu spirit

medium, I began taking elaborate notes of what I assumed must be her sacrifice of a chicken to advance the purposes of the ritual she was leading, only to discover that the most hospitable lady was making me what would prove a most delicious lunch. For results of the lady's guidance, see Allen F. Roberts "Through the Bamboo Thicket: The Social Process of Tabwa Ritual Performance," *TDR, The Drama Review* 32, no. 2 (1988): 123-38.

<sup>3</sup> Clifford Geertz, "Common Sense as a Cultural System," in *Local Knowledge*, by Clifford Geertz (New York: Basic Books, 1983), 73-93.

<sup>4</sup> Anita Jacobson-Widding and David Westerlund, eds. *Culture, Experience and Pluralism: Essays on African Ideas of Illness and Healing; Uppsala Studies in Cultural Anthropology* 13 (Uppsala: Academiae Upsaliensis, 1989).

<sup>5</sup> The heuristic distinction of speech and language are discussed by Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (Peru, IL: Open Court Classics, 1998).

<sup>6</sup> *Bulozi* (with *mulozi* as the singular reference to someone practicing these arcane arts or at least accused of doing so, and *balozi* its plural) defies easy translation, for while it most commonly refers to the means by which people act upon evil intentions to persecute their adversaries in various ways, any such definition is altogether situationally determined—that is, what one individual or faction may consider heinous aggression, adversaries may well find ethical behavior and laudable self-defense. For a brief introduction to these matters of consequence for Tabwa people, see Allen F. Roberts, *A Dance of Assassins: Performing Early Colonial Hegemony in the Congo* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 8-9. For Africanist thinking about sorcery and witchcraft more generally, see Barry Hallen and J. Olubi Sodipo, *Knowledge, Belief, and Witchcraft: Analytic Experiments in African Philosophy* (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1997); and Peter Geschiere, *The Modernity of Witchcraft: Politics and the Occult in Postcolonial Africa* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2004).

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Victor Turner, *The Drums of Affliction: A Study of Religious Processes among the Ndembu of Zambia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968). "Culture-building" was not among Turner's own phrases but is consistent with his thinking about the dynamic nature of social processes. I have developed and applied the phrase in writing about the creativity of recycling in African contexts; see Allen F. Roberts, "The Ironies of 'System D,'" *Recycled, Reseen*, C. Cerny and S. Seriff, eds. (New York: Harry Abrams for the Museum of International Folk Art, Santa Fe, 1996), 82-101.

<sup>8</sup> On Tabwa responses to politico-economic difficulties during my years with them in the mid-1970s, see Allen F. Roberts, "The Comeuppance of 'Mr. Snake' and Other Tales of Survival from Contemporary Rural Zaïre," *The Crisis in Zaïre: Myths and Realities*, ed. Nzongola-Ntalaja, (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1986), 113-21. See also, Allen F. Roberts, "'Authenticity' and Ritual Gone Awry in Mobutu's Zaïre: Looking Beyond Turnerian Models," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 24, no. 2 (1994), 134-57.

<sup>9</sup> Mobutu's rule and its violent aftermath have been studied by many scholars of late; see, among others, V. M. Muhindo, *Le Congo-Zaire d'une guerre à l'autre, de libération en occupation* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2003); and, Thomas Turner, *Congo Wars: Conflict, Myth, Reality* (New York: Zed Books, 2007).

<sup>10</sup> Other anthropologists have sought to describe and contextualize experiences of the sort to be presented here, with a most noted example being *In Sorcery's Shadow* (1989) by Paul Stoller and Cheryl Olkes, based upon fieldwork among Songhay people of southwestern Niger. See, Paul Stoller and Cheryl Olkes, *In Sorcery's Shadow: A Memoire of Apprenticeship among the Songhay of Niger* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

<sup>11</sup> Lila Abu-Lughod, 154. Lila Abu-Lughod, "Writing Against Culture," *Recapitulating Anthropology*, ed. Richard Fox (Santa Fe, NM: School for Advanced Research, 1991), 137-162. My approach to event-driven ethnographic writing is influenced by the engagingly humanistic work of James Fernandez, *Persuasions and Performances: The Play of Tropes in Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986); and Michael Jackson, *Existential Anthropology: Events, Exigencies, and Effects* (New York: Berghahn, 2005), among others.

<sup>12</sup> At the time, I was married to Christopher Davis-Roberts, and we conducted research together among Tabwa people leading to our PhD dissertations in Anthropology at the University of Chicago. Her studies in Tabwa medical anthropology are presented in Christopher Davis, *Death in Abeyance: Illness and Therapy among the Tabwa of Central Africa* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000). "Sultani" is an honorific in local Swahili for "Chief," as borrowed from Arabic. Within the Belgian colonial order as adopted by postcolonial Congolese governments, Mpala Kaloko was chief of the large village of Lubanda and a *Chef de Territoire* who reported to a *Grand Chef* or paramount, who then reported to civilian authorities represented by a *Chef de Zone* at Moba-Kirungu. The house that Sultani Mpala lent us had been built by a primary-school teacher who had moved to work elsewhere when the school at Lubanda closed for lack of government funding. He was not involved in the house being made available to us, however, as all land and properties are "identified with" (rather than "owned," following capitalist senses of that word) by the chief, and so are at his disposition. When I did communicate with the teacher and told him of a few improvements I hoped to make to his home, he was very pleased to have his house occupied.

<sup>13</sup> "Lunfunga" is a pseudonym used here to protect the man's identity, following common-sense principles articulated by the American Anthropological Association and other professional organizations; see <http://www.americananthro.org/ParticipateAndAdvocate/Content.aspx?ItemNumber=1656>. The word "lunfunga" is not usually a person's name, but is that of a tree (*Ziziphus abyssinica*), the roots of which can be used as an ingredient of Tabwa protective medicines like *mwanzambale* bundles to be discussed below (see Davis, *Death in Abeyance*, 271).

<sup>14</sup> *Rutuku* (or *lutuku*) is distilled from fermented manioc, also called cassava, yuca, or tapioca (*Manihot* spp). Manioc flour is cooked to produce the thick staple



that Tabwa eat with most meals that is called *bukali* in local Swahili, and *rutuku* is made from the tough skins peeled from manioc roots before they are soaked to leach out their naturally occurring—and lethally dangerous—cyanide. Sadly, an especially potent batch of *rutuku* can lead to alcohol poisoning, and people occasionally perish because of lead poisoning from pipes sometimes used during distillation. Lunfunga’s excessive drinking is a thread through the present paper, and it is important to realize that such altered states often mark and influence the intercultural encounters of anthropologists, as they did those of early European visitors to central Africa. For a remarkable discussion of such matters, see Johannes Fabian, *Out of Our Minds: Reason and Madness in the Exploration of Central Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000). For an account of the “tropical Gothic” that could result from the aberrant behavior of certain late-19th-century European explorers among Tabwa, Roberts, *A Dance of Assassins*, 99-126.

<sup>15</sup> Presumably, Lunfunga’s reference to my desire to make a list of sorcerers was because of my note-taking and related research activities, rather than any sense that I might use such knowledge in local-level politics. As for his living room, the architecture of houses in Lubanda and adjacent villages has long been influenced by European idioms promulgated by staff of the Roman Catholic Mission of Mpala. Early Fathers deemed 19th-century Tabwa round houses to be “primitive,” insofar as their lack of interior rooms meant, in their estimation, that children might observe the sexual activities of their parents. The priests obliged a shift to rectangular dwellings with a living room and at least one separate bedroom for adults, despite how inappropriate such a design might be to local weather. Indeed, as I found out the hard way, stiff winds off Lake Tanganyika lift the straw of thatched roofs over right-angled corners of rectangular walls, thus exposing the structure to heavy rain that can quickly lead to collapse of walls made from sun-dried earthen bricks. As a consequence, local people take huge risks as they climb onto the roofs of their homes during violent thunderstorms characteristic of the rainy season, to rearrange thatch so as to keep their houses intact. For thoughts on Tabwa architectures, see, Allen F. Roberts, “Tabwa,” *The Encyclopedia of Vernacular Architecture of the World*, vol. 3, ed. Paul Oliver (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 2012-2013. On histories of relations between local Tabwa and the Catholic missionaries who settled among them, see Allen F. Roberts, “History, Ethnicity, and Change in the ‘Christian Kingdom’ of South-eastern Zaïre,” *The Creation of Tribalism in South and Central Africa: Studies in the Political Economy of Ideology*, ed. Leroy Vail, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 193-214.

<sup>16</sup> Tobacco was enjoyed by many Tabwa I knew, but most often as dried leaves from their own gardens, as cigarettes were a luxury few could afford. Tobacco has long been grown in central Africa, and was once an important trade item among people living along the shores of Lake Tanganyika; see Allen F. Roberts, “Beyond the Betweens: The Swahili Coast as Sensed from a Hinterland,” in *World on the*

*Horizon: Swahili Arts across the Indian Ocean*, eds. Allyson Purpura and Prita Meier (2018). The conviviality of tobacco-smoking bears many social connotations for Tabwa, especially from water pipes made from gourds that are handed around at palavers or funerals. Gifts of tobacco are an important facilitator of social relations, then, to the extent that a popular euphemism for divorce is *kukata tombako*—“to cut or stop sharing tobacco”; see, Allen F. Roberts, “Smoking in Sub-Saharan Africa,” in *Smoke: A Global History of Smoking*, eds. Sander Gilman and Zhou Xun, (London: Reaktion, 2004), 36-57, 368-69.

<sup>17</sup> I was referring to the fact that to reciprocate people’s exceptional generosity in some small measure, my wife and I ran a paramedical clinic during our many months at Lubanda. The government’s small infirmary was closed and the local nurse no longer practicing because medicines had become unavailable due to the general politico-economic crisis of Zaïre in the mid 1970s; see, Roberts, “‘Authenticity’ and Ritual Gone Awry” (1994). Although we lacked any formal medical training, I had experience in occasionally administering first aid while a Peace Corps Volunteer, and we had brought several “where there is no doctor” guidebooks with us. We used most of our dissertation fellowship funds to purchase broad-spectrum antibiotics and other medicines with which to treat common afflictions and see to first aid. Our own living expenses were minimal, as we maintained a garden and raised fowl and small livestock, and Tabwa friends kept us supplied with gifts of fresh fish and local produce.

<sup>18</sup> Kalemie (formerly Albertville) is the main port on the Congolese side of Lake Tanganyika, and is about 70 miles north of Lubanda. Early in our stay, I was able to purchase a 20-horsepower outboard motor in Lubumbashi and then a 26-foot-long open plank boat from a Tabwa man living along the shores of Lake Tanganyika. Although the boat was much too big for such a small motor, I was able to travel on the lake. I named the boat *Haba na Haba*—“Little by Little” in Swahili—because when my wife and I used the vessel to go to Kalemie every three months or so to purchase a few supplies, we could only chug along very slowly because we took as many as thirty people with us who wished to go to the hospital or see to urgent family affairs. The most pressing problem was finding gasoline to power the outboard, as none was available for sale to the public because of the economic collapse of Mobutu’s Zaïre. Friends helped me participate in the local parallel economy by purchasing a barrel of gasoline, when I could, from a soldier in Kalemie who siphoned a cup of fuel from his military truck every day and then secretly sold the fuel to whomever would buy it. Similarly, through the oddest of channels I was able to obtain Chinese penicillin smuggled across Lake Tanganyika from Tanzania that we then used in the paramedical clinic my wife and I offered in Lubanda. Again, these are the sorts of background stories that are rarely included in anthropological writing and yet can influence research outcomes in significant ways.

<sup>19</sup> Lunfunga’s request for some of my own clothing was stranger than it might seem. Most rural Tabwa own very few clothes, and are obliged to wear the same

ones so regularly that people traveling by pirogue on Lake Tanganyika can recognize someone in a lakeside village from a great distance by the colors of his or her clothing. Furthermore, one of the most essential moments in Tabwa funeral proceedings is called “to wear the belt” (*kuvaa mukaba*), which once referred to the actual belt of the defunct when small leather or bark-cloth aprons constituted everyday apparel; see Allen F. Roberts, “Precolonial Tabwa Textiles” *Museum Anthropology* 20, no. 1 (1996): 47-59. The phrase now signifies the donning of the unwashed set of clothes most closely identified with the deceased. In this way, the social persona of the dearly departed is inherited and maintained (Roberts, *A Dance of Assassins*, 212-216). *Baloz*i invert such procedures when they use bits of clothing in nefarious medicines to victimize those intimately identified with the garments. My uneasiness derived from the implication that Lunfunga’s request was a distinct and possibly dangerous violation of my person.

<sup>20</sup> In my experience, Tabwa feel distinct ambivalence toward anyone in authority, and especially those holding offices created during the colonial period. Chiefs are understood as wise and generous “fathers” of their people, but they are also deemed the most heinous of sorcerers, since maliciousness exists in any community and ultimately, chiefs must be responsible for misfortunes that result. I was repeatedly told that chiefs do not commit crimes themselves, but they condone the victimization of their own people, and allegedly receive clandestine payment for their permission to do so. Such matters are discussed throughout my writing on Tabwa social dynamics, (e.g. Roberts, “The Comeuppance of ‘Mr. Snake’”).

<sup>21</sup> By the mid-1970s, Kiswahili had been the first language of most Tabwa living along the southwestern shores of Lake Tanganyika for three or more generations. In the 1970s, primary-school education was conducted in Kiswahili, not French, and indeed, Catholic missionaries based at Mpala reserved the teaching of French to seminarians in their highly selective secondary school. On colonial politics of language in the Congo, see Johannes Fabian, *Language and Colonial Power: The Appropriation of Swahili in the Former Belgian Congo, 1880-1938* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986). Lunfunga’s French was limited to a few words that he used boastfully. *Makingo* is a Swahili noun derived from the verb *kukinga* that refers to “the effect of what is interposed between two objects,” often with regard to something that protects one thing from another. See, Frederick Johnson, *A Standard Swahili-English Dictionary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 199-200. In Johnson’s dictionary definition and long list of uses, no mention is made of magical means, nor did I hear anyone but Lunfunga use the word in this particular manner, let alone combine it with a military analogy in French. Lunfunga was very much his own person.

<sup>22</sup> The large beetle called *kafwabubela* by Tabwa is known to Western entomologists as *Brachycerus apter*. One is illustrated and discussed briefly in Allen F. Roberts, *Animals in African Art: From the Familiar to the Marvelous* (Munich: Prestel for the Museum for African Art, New York 1995), 93-95; and, other examples can be found via Google Images, with one posted for sale on eBay as of July

2016! Pronouns in Bantu languages do not show gender. For Tabwa, who observe matrilineal descent and whose culture is marked by remarkable gender egalitarianism, both men and women may be *balozi*, and in my experience, neither was more or less likely to be guilty of malicious behavior of the sort.

<sup>23</sup> *Roho* is a complex term that comes to Kiswahili from Arabic and generally refers to essence of being or “soul,” as missionaries often understood it, although it can also connote willfulness and avarice; see Johnson, *A Standard Swahili-English Dictionary*, 400-401). For lakeside Tabwa, *roho* is sometimes associated with the heart (*mutima*), sometimes with the liver (*maini*); see, Davis, *Death in Abeyance*, 41- 42.

<sup>24</sup> An anthropomorphic aardvark (*Orycteropus afer*) is the culture hero of several Tabwa cosmogonic myths, and aardvark claws are deemed useful in transformative contexts of ritual and healing; see, Allen F. Roberts, “Performing Cosmology: Harmonies of Land, Lake, Body, and Sky,” *African Cosmos, Stellar Arts*, ed. Christine Kreamer, (New York: Monacelli Press for the National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, 2012), 184-203; and, Roberts, *Animals in African Art*, 81-83. Aardvark hunting was described to me as an achievement impossible to today’s hunters, and especially insofar as I was told that the greatest hunters of yesteryear entered an aardvark’s tunnel and engaged the animal in mortal combat, unsure of which would prevail. I was never certain to what degree these accounts may have referred to some sort of vision quest or a process such as that of the Isoma ritual to restore human fertility as described among Ndembu people of northwestern Zambia by Victor Turner (1968: 20 and passim). In Isoma, an analogy is drawn between an aardvark burrow and a woman’s birth canal that must be “opened” through symbolic means that include patients entering a model of such a tunnel. “Invisibility” conveyed from use of a *kafwabubela* beetle as the container for potent medicines is in part due to the constitution of the bundle, in part the insect’s own camouflage. One time, while chatting with several men on a garden path outside of Lubanda, I looked down, noticed a *kafwabubela* next to my foot, and picked it up to show my friends. I was slapped on the back in appreciation for what they considered my uncanny ability to notice something “invisible” to them, and for the fact that I could name the beetle and talk about its powers. I kept the insect in a can with holes in the top, and it seemed to refuse to eat what I offered it but did live a very long time; I still have its dried carapace in my office at UCLA.

<sup>25</sup> Historical relationships between people living along the shores of Lake Tanganyika and Muslims of the Swahili Coast have long been fraught due to the East African slave trade through which so many central Africans were captured and dragged from their homes or killed in the process. On particular histories of these difficult times, see Roberts, “Beyond the Betweens” and Roberts, *A Dance of Assassins*. For a broader understanding of this slave trade, see Edward Alpers, *Ivory and Slaves in East Central Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975). In the 1970s, lakeside Tabwa suspected that Muslim merchants in Kalemie

colluded with a mysterious spirit called Mamba Muntu or Crocodile Person, that is a local version of Mami Wata and the apotheosis of capitalism as known in many parts of Africa. How else could these Muslims be so wealthy when everyone else suffered from the collapse of the Zaïrian economy? On Mamba Muntu in the DRC, see Bogumil Jewsiewicki, “Mami Wata/Mambu Muntu Paintings in the Democratic Republic of the Congo,” in *Mami Wata: Arts for Water Spirits in Africa and Its Diasporas*, eds. John Henry Drewal (Los Angeles: UCLA Fowler Museum, 2008), 126-133.

<sup>26</sup> *Erizi* is an esoteric term for a magical bundle that was rarely used in my experience, and then only during consultations with diviner-healers. The word is probably derived from the Swahili *heri*, in turn borrowed from Arabic, that refers to blessedness, success, or advantage (Johnson, *A Standard Swahili-English Dictionary*, 132). I was still early in my days at Lubanda, and even though I knew of *erizi* like the *kafwabubela* bundle I had just described to Lunfunga, I simply had not heard the word yet when the more generic term *dawa* or “medicine” was so much more current. As I later learned, a common description of an *erizi* is that it is a *kadunia*, or “little world”—a microcosm, that is, as a practitioner selects potent elements of herbal and symbolic healing to foster and protect a client’s safety and prosperity. The *erizi* called *mwanzambale* will be discussed below.

<sup>27</sup> My suspicion at the time, as recorded in my fieldnotes, was that Lunfunga’s choice of the word “poison” was influenced by missionary explanations of sorcery. In their sermons and writing, Roman Catholic priests serving among Tabwa did not deny that evil exists, and indeed, they felt that Tabwa and other central Africans were in Satan’s clutches and all too often at his service; but they stressed that chemically efficacious “poisons” were used when malicious persons afflicted their victims, rather than any marshaling of mysterious forces. Tabwa with whom I conferred about such matters felt that their own explanations of *bulozi* were just as literal and as obviously correct as the priests asserted their accounts to be. For the most part, neither side agreed with the other, that is. Lubanda has very particular histories with Catholic missionaries, for in 1885 a station was created there by Missionaries of Our Lady of Africa, better known as the White Fathers for the color of their everyday cassocks. For well over a decade, Mpala Mission would be the center of a Christian Kingdom as defined by all tangible criteria except international recognition; see, Roberts, “History, Ethnicity, and Change.”

<sup>28</sup> Many accounts of poisoning by crocodile bile are to be found on the Internet, such as a case from 2015 when seventy-two people perished in Mozambique from drinking locally brewed millet beer into which the substance was allegedly introduced; see, <http://mashable.com/2015/01/13/mozambique-beer-poisoned/#JHbCatxdKuqY>. Lunfunga’s insistence that only persons chosen by the *mulozi* would succumb challenges a chemical explanation of their demise.

<sup>29</sup> In making reference to contemporary popular culture in the United States, I did not mean to be facetious, but instead was trying to offer stories somehow resonant with Lunfunga’s. “Rosemary’s Baby” was a very well-received 1968 horror

movie starring Mia Farrow and directed by Roman Polanski. The winsome Rosemary discovers that she has been impregnated by Satan, with whom her husband (played by John Cassavetes) has made a Faustian pact; see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosemary%27s\\_Baby\\_\(film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosemary%27s_Baby_(film)). Other accounts of *vizwa* shared with me described errant ghosts bent on avenging their unjust deaths, instead of acting as sorcerers' familiars as Lunfunga had it. The term *shetani* in Kiswahili is derived from Arabic and refers to "that which suggests supernatural power, whether evil or simply incomprehensible," with further reference to jinn as understood by Muslims of the Swahili Coast and throughout the world to be ambiguous in their abilities and intentions. Satan is usually known to Muslims as Iblis (Johnson, *A Standard Swahili-English Dictionary*, 419).

<sup>30</sup> During my days as a Boy Scout attending summer camp in the mid-1950s, snipe hunts were a favorite trick of counselors to terrify their first-year protégés. In the dead of night, boys were awakened and led into the woods to hunt "snipe" (in New England, an imaginary bird). Each was instructed to hold a stick and hide behind a tree, awaiting the elusive bird all by himself. Once the campers were so situated, the counselors would circle around and make startlingly abrupt loud noises, leap out of the shadows, and otherwise terrify the youngsters.

<sup>31</sup> This sort of comment was not something I heard often, but I did a few times from people whom I did not yet know well, and who, reasonably enough, were perplexed about why I had come to live among them. Why would I leave a life of such privilege as I must enjoy as a *muzungu* "white person"? I came from Bulaya—the world far from direct experience—and was therefore, by definition, wealthy and powerful as Belgian colonizers had been. Why would I live *here*, without electricity and other luxuries known to be available to the few expatriates remaining in the small lakeside city of Kalemie? I must be expecting to profit somehow—with suspicion of nefarious purposes a subtext.

<sup>32</sup> I never saw him wear the new shirt I brought to him, presumably because had he done so, everyone would wonder how he had come by it and suspect that he was receiving secret gifts from me.

<sup>33</sup> For discussion of the dangers of Gaboon vipers and other locally found serpents, see Roberts, "The Comeuppance of 'Mr. Snake,'" which further concerns the fraught relations that obtained between people in Lubanda and the local MPR representative from whom Lunfunga had suffered injury during an altercation.

<sup>34</sup> Again, following the logic of my Tabwa friends as I came to understand it, Lunfunga's divulging the manner in which such a poison could be made and activated would suggest that he must be a *mulozi* himself, for "nice people" would not even know such things, much less talk about them. An example of an *nzunzi* figure is illustrated in Allen F. Roberts and Evan M. Maurer, eds., *The Rising of a New Moon: A Century of Tabwa Art* (Seattle: University of Washington Press for the University of Michigan Museum of Art, Ann Arbor, 1985), 149 —the book accompanying a traveling exhibition of the same name that was based upon my dissertation research. An *nzunzi* is empowered to perform evil deeds, for it can

be sent to rob or otherwise harm a *mulozi*'s adversaries. I purchased the figure in question from a man exiled to a tiny encampment in the mountains west of Lubanda after being accused of sorcery and driven from his home village. I did not understand the exact nature of the figure at the time, and when a friend named Mumba Marselina visited our home and saw that I had naïvely displayed it in my living room with baskets and other local arts, she was fearful that the *nzunzi* (as she identified it) might harm my wife and me. As she asked, had the old man in the mountains secreted a familiar into our home in the "person" of this sculpture? Using her powers as a Bulumbu spirit medium, she picked up the figure, used a small knife from her dress pocket to pry out the medicinal charge implanted in the top of its head, and replaced it with white *mpemba* chalk as a blessing substance. For more on Mumba's practice as a spirit medium, see Roberts, "Through the Bamboo Thicket."

<sup>35</sup> Crossroads are sites for several sorts of Tabwa rituals because of the evident conundrum of indecision they present: Which path should one take when two paths cross? Should one return whence one has come, or take the alternative path back rather than forward? Or should one stand at the crossroads itself, as a convergence of possibilities? Crossroads are similar to thresholds in such regards; see Allen F. Roberts, "Neither Here Nor There," *Threshold States/Sprach-Schwelien*, ed. H. Breder, ed (Münster: Hackmeister Verlag, 1993), 106-9.

<sup>36</sup> In a paper in progress as of the present writing, I consider shape-shifting among Tabwa, with particular reference to an event in which I was directly involved, when three men collectively became a hippopotamus. At the time, I was teased for what friends considered my naïve assertion that this was not the case, when it so obviously had to be. I was told about practices of earlier days when certain great chiefs and *ng'anga* practitioners of magic could shape-shift to become lions or otherwise summon and direct lions and crocodiles to do their bidding. It was rumored that the late-19th-century Chief Lusinga had this capacity—he being one of the two protagonists of my *Dance of Assassins* (2013) monograph. Tabwa lion-man terrorism of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries is the subject of Allen F. Roberts, "'Like a Roaring Lion': Late 19th Century Tabwa Terrorism," *Banditry, Rebellion and Social Protest in Africa*, ed. Donald Crummey (Portsmouth NH: Heinemann, 1986), 65-86.

<sup>37</sup> No such subtext was necessarily intended, given that the construction can mean to stroll about and "show a stranger round the town" (Johnson, *A Standard Swahili-English Dictionary*, 461), but at the time, I no longer trusted Lunfunga to be so innocent of purpose.

<sup>38</sup> "Father V" (again using a pseudonym) was a White Father who served at Mpala and other Catholic missions among the Tabwa through the 1960s. A number of Tabwa friends told me of his arcane powers and gave me long accounts of his prowling about at night wearing a miner's helmet equipped with a blue spotlight that permitted him to see otherwise invisible *balozi*. He was said to have chastised and flogged people he identified in this manner. Mission documents and

interviews with other European missionaries make it clear that Father V practiced prestidigitation as parlor entertainment, but I suspect he also engaged in activities more on the order of exorcism. When I briefly met him once in Brussels through a mutual acquaintance, I told him of my interest in his work and he politely agreed to correspond with me, but never answered my several letters.

<sup>39</sup> Because I did not speak the language, I could not be sure whether Lunfunga was speaking Lingala or only telling me he was. Tabwa associate using a language ostensibly unknown to the speaker with spirit possession. Lingala was developed by Belgian authorities as the lingua franca of the Force Publique—the colonial armed forces. It is still spoken in Kinshasa and adjacent parts of west-central DRC and by Congolese soldiers and politicians. During the period of my fieldwork, many Tabwa considered Lingala to be synonymous with their political oppression, and derided its arrogant use by Zairian officials harassing them; *see*, Roberts, “The Comeuppance of ‘Mr. Snake.’”

<sup>40</sup> In afterthought, I wrote in my fieldnotes that a Tabwa explanation more sympathetic to Lunfunga would have been that he remained present but had become invisible to me through use of arcane devices he deployed to avoid being detected by *balozi*. This same logic, though, would suggest that I was a *mulozi*.

<sup>41</sup> Although Lubanda is the largest village of its region, Tabwa do not create marketplaces as one would find in communities of comparable size in most parts of the world. Instead, any goods for exchange or sale are acquired through established friendships, at least in the old days cemented through a blood covenant called *lusale*; *see*, Roberts, *A Dance of Assassins*, 60-61. As for Mbote, a few hundred hunter-gatherers of this ethnic designation live in the mountains southwest of Lake Tanganyika. They are presumably distantly related to Mbuti and similar communities living in Congolese rainforests. Mbote have long lived in a tense social symbiosis with Tabwa that is marked by mutual mistrust and derision but common needs: Mbote provide forest products like game meat, mushrooms, honey, and herbal medicines in exchange with Tabwa for manioc flour, smoked fish, and small commercial goods like matches. Hunter-gatherer communities in the DRC other than those of the Ituri Forest remain very little studied, but *see* the evocative article of Hideaki Terashima (1980), then a graduate student in Anthropology at the University of Kyoto, who used my home in Lubanda as a base for his dissertation research with Mbote living in mountains west of Lake Tanganyika, and who has now gone on to study hunter-gatherer peoples of Cameroon. *See*, Hideaki Terashima, “Hunting Life of the Bambote: An Anthropological Study of Hunter-Gatherers in a Wooded Savanna,” *Africa* 2, *SENRI Ethnological Studies* 6 (1980), 223-268.

<sup>42</sup> Any such suspicion is built upon histories of its own, and several Tabwa told me of what they understood to be— or to have been—a “secret society” among Belgian colonizers called Mitumbula. Congolese were captured, held in the dark confines of Belgian settlers’ basements, and converted into sausage, corned beef, or other foodstuffs popular with European consumers. In its own ways,



Mitumbula was and is somewhat similar to “vampire” activities rumored to exist among Europeans of colonial eastern Africa, as so remarkably discussed by Luise White, *Speaking with Vampires: Rumor and History in Colonial Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000). Mutual misunderstandings abounded during the colonial period, but what was certain to Congolese was that they were being “eaten”—perhaps literally as well as figuratively—through oppressive colonial policies as implemented by heavy-handed authorities. That the paradigm still existed in the 1970s was brought to my attention when a shocking story of the alleged pederasty of a European residing near a primary school in Kalemie was attributed to Mitumbula by someone with whom I spoke in Lubanda. I hope to develop such accounts in a paper called “‘Sinister Caricatures’: European Cannibalism in the Latter Years of the Belgian Congo.” Stories of cannibalism assumed to exist among European colonizers by colonized Congolese are matched by tales of Congolese cannibalism assumed to exist by Belgian residents. For discussion of Mitumbula elsewhere in the Belgian Congo, see, Rik Ceyskens, “Mitumbula, mythe de l’opprimé,” *Culture et Développement* 7 no. 3-4 (1975), 483-550. On rumors of cannibalism more generally in Africa and the rest of the world, see, William Arens, *The Man-Eating Myth: Anthropology and Anthropophagy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).

<sup>43</sup> Volkswagen “beetles” were more common in the Belgian Congo, but one was still driven by an expatriate in Kalemie during the mid-1970s, hence my interlocutor’s meant-to-be-humorous metaphor. Although this is not the place for further discussion, the etymology and purposes of *lyang’ombe* magical devices among Tabwa are intriguing, given that to the north of Lake Tanganyika in what is called the Cwezi complex of Rwandan, Burundian, and Ugandan peoples, the most prominent culture hero is named Ryangombe; see, Pol Pierre Gossiaux, “Mythe et pouvoir: Le culte de Ryangombe-Kiranga (Afrique équatoriale de l’Est),” *Actes du Colloque de Liège et Louvain-la-Neuve: Homo religiosus* 9 (1983), 337-372, also at [www.anthroposys.be/kiranga.htm](http://www.anthroposys.be/kiranga.htm). Cwezi political and cultural influences are far more evident among communities living along the eastern shores of Lake Tanganyika in Tanzania [see, Roy G. Willis, *A State in the Making: Myth, History, and Social Transformation in Pre-Colonial Ufipa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981)], than along the western ones in the DRC, but that a Tabwa device of distinct efficacy should be named for the Cwezi hero can hardly be coincidental.

<sup>44</sup> It is important to recognize that no two *erizi* bundles, whether they are *lyan’gombe* or of some other sort, have the same composition, even if created by the same *ng’anga* practitioner. Instead, each is made to respond to the particularities of a client’s needs, the *ng’anga*’s knowledge, and such practical factors as what a given practitioner has available as possible elements at the time he is contacted.

<sup>45</sup> Cecil the Wonder Dog (called Seso in Lubanda) appeared as a stray one day at a friend’s home where my former spouse and I were staying in Lubumbashi in 1974. This was a time of upheaval, as Mobutu had recently ejected most

expatriates engaged in small business, giving their shops and ateliers to Zairians associated with the MPR. Collateral damage included abandonment of pets like Cecil. Because he was part long-haired Belgian sheepdog, part terrier, Cecil was strikingly different from short-haired, long-legged Tabwa hunting dogs, and Tabwa friends were in awe of how smart and well-trained they deemed Cecil to be. It was often said that he possessed the eyes of a lion and great mystical powers. As we travelled in our boat all the way to the southern tip of Lake Tanganyika one time, Cecil's reputation preceded and greatly outshone our own. When we finally left Zaire in late 1977, we brought Cecil to Chicago with us, and the dog and I enjoyed each other's company until he died of old age in 1982. I mention this detail here, as in my experience, research often depends on unexpected factors such as owning a dog that captures people's fancy and that may then make them willing to talk with an expatriate whom they have not gotten to know yet.

<sup>46</sup> "Mutapo" is another pseudonym and is the Tabwa word for locally smelted iron as the product of a once- important local industry. Unforged *mutapo* bloomery iron is still sometimes used in the confection of potent medicines, especially for human fertility. Tabwa ironworking is a topic I am writing about for an edited volume called "Striking Iron: The Art of African Blacksmiths" that will accompany a major traveling exhibition under preparation at the UCLA Fowler Museum to open in 2018.

<sup>47</sup> Chalk is used as "surrogate moonlight" by Bulumbu spirit mediums, who whiten their whole faces or sometimes only around their eyes to extend their kens to otherworldly realms; *see*, Roberts, *Through the Bamboo Thicket*,"; *and*, Mary Nooter Roberts, "Proofs and Promises: Setting Meaning Before the Eyes," *Insight and Artistry in African Divination*, ed. John Pemberton III (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000), 63-82.

<sup>48</sup> Buyembe was a practice observed by only a very few Tabwa in my limited experience in the 1970s. It is the same as or derived from Kazanzi, a mutual-aid society among Luba living west of Tabwa through which communities were protected from and purged of sorcerers. Overt activities of Kazanzi were suppressed during the colonial period, and as their vestiges, Buyembe was a highly esoteric and secretive circle of knowledge and praxis among Tabwa. *See*, Allen F. Roberts, "Anarchy, Abjection and Absurdity: A Case of Metaphoric Medicine Among the Tabwa of Zaire," *The Anthropology of Medicine: From Theory to Method*, 3rd ed., eds. L. Romanucci-Ross, D. Moerman and L. Tancredi. (New York: Bergin for Praeger Scientific, 1997), 224-39; Roberts, "'Authenticity' and Ritual Gone Awry;" *and*, Mary Nooter Roberts and Allen F. Roberts, *Memory: Luba Art and the Making of History* (Munich: Prestel, for the Museum for African Art, New York, 1996), 180-181.

<sup>49</sup> The animal may have been diseased or dying, of course, with rabies a strong possibility if it were. My immediate recognition of such possibilities did not lessen my discomfort at the time, but was not the point of my raising the issue with Mutapo.

<sup>50</sup> Johnson, *A Standard Swahili-English Dictionary*, 25).

<sup>51</sup> At the time, one zaïre was worth two U.S. dollars, but in the late 1960s when I was a Peace Corps Volunteer in Chad and my \$200 monthly salary was more than adequate, one dollar was a significant amount to pay for my bloodstone amulet.

<sup>52</sup> The astonishingly long and complex recipe for the *mwanzambale* that Mutapo created at my behest, as well as theoretical discussion of how and why such devices work for those creating and using them, are presented in Roberts, *Animals in African Art*, 93-95; cf. Davis, *Death in Abeyance*, 267-273.

<sup>53</sup> Aside from regretting that I had no further interactions with such an affable and knowledgeable gentleman, I remain especially sorry that I did not have an opportunity to ask him more about his practice, including particular cases if he would disclose them to me as other practitioners often did as they took me into their confidence [*see*, Allen F. Roberts, "Difficult Decisions, Perilous Acts: Producing Potent Histories with the Tabwa Boiling Water Oracle," *Insight and Artistry in African Divination*, ed. John Pemberton III (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000), 83-98]. Furthermore, I could not inquire about the material culture he had in his possession, some of which he arranged in a shrine-like display as he saw to his work as an *ng'anga*. Included were works of figurative sculpture of a sort I had never seen before and never saw again. I made the mistake of not asking to photograph these, as I did not yet know the man well and assumed I would see him again. Important sculptures of several sorts were once produced by Tabwa artists but almost none were in use by the mid-1970s; *see*, Roberts and Maurer, *The Rising of a New Moon*.

<sup>54</sup> Stoller and Olkes, *In Sorcery's Shadow*.

<sup>55</sup> Jacobson-Widding and Westerlund, *Culture, Experience, and Pluralism*.

<sup>56</sup> *See* Roberts, "The Comeuppance of 'Mr. Snake'"