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Tradition of African Story Telling: Oral Literature in the Homes and Schools (Pre-School/Kindergarten) of Northern Malawi

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WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY

Tradition of African Story Telling

**Oral Literature in the Homes and Schools
(Pre-School/Kindergarten) of Northern Malawi**

Elisabeth Hangartner-Everts

5/6/2008

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Part I

1. Introduction

Writing about the story telling tradition in a limited area of the northern region of Malawi may seem far-fetched. Malawi is a small, poor country lying at the southern tip of the East African Rift Valley. The majority of people in the Western Developed World have never heard of this landlocked country in subequatorial Africa, commonly referred to by Malawians as “the warm heart of Africa.” (Catholic Relief Services, 2007, pp. 7-9). The few that are aware of its existence are international aid workers and some courageous eco-tourists crisscrossing the country by bike. One cannot ignore the dire poverty of the people, especially in the northern area, caused by disease, famine, unemployment, lack of infrastructure – most of what people in developed countries take for granted.

The rich story telling tradition stands in stark contradiction to this pervasive deprivation in Northern Malawi. Amidst the struggle of two thirds of Malawians to meet basic livelihood needs flourishes this centuries-old African tradition. It comes to life in the court yards of the villages, the summer huts, the homes of uncles, aunts, grandparents – men and women of all walks of life: farmers, traveling merchants, shop keepers, housewives, teachers, chiefs, or village elders. Even in the shelter of a mango, blue gum, or malina tree, stories surface as part of a community-based nursery/kindergarten education and nutrition program or a primary school lesson. In general, there is reluctance to share the stories with strangers. Only by pleading his/her special case is a newcomer invited to join the local audience.

1.1 Purpose of Project

From its earliest inception in 1997 to this day, Lusubilo Community-Based Orphan Care Programme, an outreach program of the Mzuzu Catholic Diocese located in Karonga, has been responding to the immediate needs of children in and around Karonga, Northern District of Malawi. These children are afflicted by HIV/AIDS, malaria and numerous diseases caused by malnutrition and scarcity of water. The program provides food for orphans and other vulnerable children at community feeding centers, rehabilitative care for those children suffering from malnutrition, food and support services for orphan-headed households, and early childhood education in about sixty community-based child-care centers. (Catholic Relief Services, 2007, p. 20; Lusubilo community-based orphan care programme, unknown, p. 1). In addition, it maintains an orphanage (Children’s Village) on the grounds of St. Mary’s Parish in Karonga. Since 2005 the program has been sponsored by CRS Malawi (Catholic Relief Services Malawi) and, more recently, Pact Malawi (nonprofit organization assisting local NGOs; it is registered in the District of Columbia, USA), as well as a group of private donors. Due to the large number of physically and emotionally uprooted children through death or severe illness of one or both parents, several employees and volunteers of Lusubilo, in concert with CRS staff, voiced the idea of launching a project on African story telling. This proposal would

benefit the children deprived of many aspects of their heritage at a very young age, like the orphans in the Children's Village, the children from other areas of Malawi integrated in northern village communities, or the children whose caregivers are unable to pass on traditional African values. It was felt that most of the stories of the northern region of Malawi would exquisitely lend themselves for a children's book introducing the nursery and Kindergarten students of Lusubilo's Community-Based Childcare Centers (CBCCs) to an invaluable treasure of their cultural heritage.

1.2 Scope of Project

Two local branches of the National Public Library of Malawi, the National Library of Malawi in Lilongwe, the Early Childhood Curriculum issued by the Ministry of Gender, Child Welfare and Community Services, and, above all, the many named and unnamed local performers reveal an incredible wealth of African literature of all kinds. The literature gleaned from the National Public Library and its branches in Karonga and Mzuzu as well as the collection in the Early Childhood Curriculum are all national in scope and, atypically, in written form. They will be referred to only summarily in the course of the paper. The appearance of oral literature in written publications distributed over the national library system not only underlines its importance and popularity; it also testifies to the need for its preservation for future generations. In a country tormented by afflictions and tribulations, it is of great importance to secure the oral literary heritage from demise.

1.3 Geographic Areas

Lusubilo Community-Based Orphan Care works in four catchment areas (regions) in and around Karonga within a perimeter of 50+ kilometers. The catchment areas are: *Shola*, *Mwanganya*, *Nyungwe*, and *Wiliro*. In *Shola* and surrounding villages, there is a lack of agricultural land, and food is therefore insecure due to high population density. *Mwanganya*, in the north-west corner of Karonga, is a hilly, stony domain suffering from food insecurity; especially in the rainy season, the area is a challenge to reach for Lusubilo service providers. *Nyungwe*, an extended area on the shores of Lake Malawi some fifty kilometers south of Karonga, is partly in the rain shadow of the Nyika Plateau, partly it is exposed to flooding, and hence also food insecure. *Wiliro* is a mountainous, waterless, food-insecure and disease-prone area about 50 km north-west of Karonga with numerous remote villages and hamlets, until most recently very difficult to reach, but due to exploitation of uranium in the area, improving regarding direct accessibility to the mine and related infrastructure; however, in the rainy season this area is virtually inaccessible (cf. Appendix II).

A total of 48 pieces of oral literature were collected in the four catchment areas. Twelve pieces (#37–#48) were collected in the Shola area; four-teen in the Mwanganya area (#23–#36); 12 in the Nyungwe area (#1–#12), and 10 in the Wiliro area (#13–#22).

1.4 Languages in Collection Area

From the linguistic point of view, the four catchment areas in which the oral literature was collected are unique. The official national language of Malawi is Chichewa. It is taught in school from the far South to the North bordering Tanzania. Business with the government is still widely conducted in English, a residue of the British protectorate of Nyasaland from 1891 until 1964, when Malawi became an independent nation. In the northern area of Malawi, many different native languages are spoken, the predominant two being Tumbuka and Chinkhonde, belonging to the group of Bantu language. In Karonga people speak Chinkonde and Tumbuka. In Nyungwe Tumbuka is widely used, and in Mwanganya the language spoken in every-day life is Chinkhonde (cf. Appendix III). In the Wiliro catchment area (Karonga District) Chiwandya is the vernacular language. Chiwandya is related to Chinkhonde, but has different intonation, coloring and, to a certain extent, vocabulary.

The collection on the second day, November 23, 2007, in the Wiliro catchment area was conducted in Lufira (Karonga District), a small village between Wiliro (Karonga District) and Chitipa (Chitipa District). Like all the other inhabitants of the villages under Chief Amos Mwenechilanga, the people of Lufira (Karonga District), speak Chiwandya. Lufira being the village closest to the language divide between Chiwandya and Chindala is the outpost of Chiwandya speakers. In the neighboring villages, located in Chitipa District, the language of communication is Chindala. On the second collection day in Lufira (Karonga District), none of the Chindala speakers from the neighboring Chitipa District had crossed over to Lufira. Therefore, Chindala is not represented in the oral literature collection from Wiliro.

The diversity of languages spoken in Northern Malawi presents a challenge for the translation of African oral literature. It will be addressed under 2.2.2.1. May it suffice to mention that two native Tumbuka speakers, a retired primary teacher knowledgeable of Tumbuka and Chinkhonde - the latter through her grandparents - and an automotive student (orphan), dreaming about journalism as his future profession, provided translation of the vernacular languages into English and explanation of local images, expressions, slang, sayings, etc.

2. Fieldwork

2.1 Preparation

A month prior to the actual collection, the four field officers of Lusubilo Community-Based Orphan Care were approached about the feasibility of collecting oral literature commonly known to the people in their respective catchment areas. They were informed that the collection would form the basis of an academic paper as well as a book for uprooted orphans of Lusubilo Community-Based Orphan Care (cf. above 1.1). All four field officers spontaneously pledged their support and agreed to participate either in person or through a representative. Also, they committed to round up a group of oral performers that would be able to make a significant contribution to the project.

There is no doubt that the physical, performance and social settings were quite foreign to the narrators and performers. The schedules, the form of the interviews, the relationship

between the performers and the interviewers, for instance, were artificial and arbitrary to the African mind (Guenter, 1996, pp. 93-94). Nevertheless, the narrators and performers approached by their respective field officers not only spontaneously and generously provided the oral literature, but they also proved to be skilled storytellers.

2.2 Methods

The collection of oral literature was carried out by means of *prerecorded interview questions*, a *field notebook* (for story collection in Tumbuka and English), and *personal participation* of the three field workers. The interview questions were presented to each performer and, at times, members of the audience, who also volunteered other pertinent information.

2.2.1 Interview Questions

The following interview questions were prerecorded in English and simultaneously translated into local vernacular on site:

Date of performance:

Name of presenter/performer:

Sex:

Age:

Occupation:

Place of residence:

Language of performance:

Type of oral literature:

Does the performer perform this piece on a regular basis:

On what occasion(s):

Where:

When:

For what purpose is the piece performed:

When did the performer first hear a about this piece of oral literature:

By whom was the piece then performed:

Where was the piece then performed:

Was there a specific purpose for performing the piece:

Who were the listeners (audience) at the time:

Is there a family relationship between the performer then and the performer now:

Is there a known tradition of oral performance over several generations in the performer's paternal/maternal family:

Is the performed piece of oral literature known:

- **Mainly in this area**
- **In the northern area of Malawi**
- **In the entire country**

Are there other known versions of this piece of oral literature:

As spontaneous and eager as most performers were in their presentations, some were, however, reluctant to answer the above questions. Even interwoven in informal discussion in the vernacular language between the local field workers and the performer(s)/audience, the interview questions seemed to deprive the gathering, to some degree, from its spontaneity and directness. It was as if the question "Does this have to be?" were hanging in the air.

2.2.2 The Field Notebook

The field notebook was a more unassuming collection tool in the hands of the retired primary school teacher and her companion, the local student. The oral literature was recorded by the teacher in English and by the student in Tumbuka.

2.2.2.1 Translation

The English version was always a translation from one of the three vernacular languages. If the oral literature was presented in Tumbuka, it was recorded in Tumbuka and in English; was it in Chinkhonde or Chiwandya, simultaneous translation into English only occurred.

Translation of oral literature is a "double-daring" venture because oral literature is a distinct category apart from written literature. Words and expressions widely accepted in oral presentation may not be commonly used in written literature and therefore be dropped or exchanged in the process of writing. Once the oral texts are written down in their original language, the translator must take into consideration that words in any two languages, even closely related languages, have often different meaning because "language is the means of communication through which a group expresses their shared social existence. Therefore, language always reflects the social arrangement of the people. The object [of translation] is to provide translations that are really representative and not under the control of whatever group may be in power in the translation situation. ...Only by positioning oneself from within [an alien framework] does the translator make possible any transfer or legitimate disagreement about meanings" (Imbo, 2002, p. 117 f.; Okpewho I. , 1990, pp. 112-115).

A particular challenge of translation of African oral literature constitutes the frequent use of the ideophone, "a form that conveys an idea or impression, as in certain African languages, by means of a sound, often reduplicated, that suggests an action, quality, manner, etc." (LoveTo Know Corp., 1996-2008). Lupenga Mphande writes: "The study

of ideophones is one of the most neglected areas of African linguistics, despite the fact that ideophones comprise a major portion of the Bantu vocabulary and constitute the most artful and colorful aspect of African narrative. ... Yet, ideophones are visibly absent from African folk narrative texts translated under the influence of missionaries and missionary-trained scholars who were the pioneer researchers in the field of African language study. One reason for this absence is undoubtedly the difficulty in representing ideophonic expression in a writing system based on European languages.” (Mphande, 2002, pp. 60-61).

Story #42 furnishes a good example of ideophonic expression: “Mbitikumbi, mbitikumbi - Kango’ma Kakalilanga, Kango’ma Kakalilanga” imitate the sounds of a drum. Reduplication and onomatopoesy are prominent features of ideophones, the former evoking a sense of repetition, the latter imitating specific sounds occurring in the event they refer to. Another example of onomatopoesy can be found in story #43: “Na’nga’, the hole is crying.” Na’nga’ imitates the sound of a crying baby. Needless to say that the above onomatopoeic words/sounds are, by far, nowhere close to their counterparts in European languages.

2.2.2.2. *Structural Organization*

Structural organization of oral literature, such as songs and poems, is problematic because stylistic features, like lines and stanzas, are not necessarily found in the original performance. Lusweti reminds his readers that “it must be borne in mind that written representations can only be of limited use in indicating certain elements of structure and content. It needs to be stressed that features like lines, stanzas, and verses are only relative and not always defined for us by the material itself. ... A field worker who gives his own titles to songs and stories also does damage to the subject of oral literature. Most oral songs do not have titles. Often when songs are performed by the composers, the start and finish may not always have been clearly decided upon beforehand, and may not even become fixed during the performance” (Lusweti, 1984, pp. 27-28).

From the above, it becomes evident that any attempt at structural organization must carefully consider the potential loss of authenticity and accuracy of transcription.

2.3 Techniques

The four Lusubilo field officers were made aware of the field techniques to be used, like *concentration* on the four Lusubilo catchment areas, *verification* of the most widely known version of certain pieces of oral literature, and *submission* of the completed collection for local approval of the gathered materials prior to publication of the children’s book. A *tape recorder*, a piece of technical equipment widely accepted in field work, was not used for lack of availability. If a recorder had been accessible, some performers, especially women, in the rather remote catchment areas of Mwanganya, Nyungwe, and Wiliro, would likely have been stifled in their oral presentations; others might have been tempted to overdo things.

3. General Theory of Oral Literature

3.1 The Word

The first-time visitor to Africa is struck by the importance Africans attribute to the word. Dieterich Seiler rightly stresses “keine Begegnung, kein Geschaefit ohne wortreiches Verhandeln, keine Fest ohne Reden, Preisgesaenge und Geschichten”¹ (Seiler, 1995, p. 11). In African societies, to this day the spoken word has been keeping its essential role because its continuity and solidarity bind together generations, giving them their unique history and civilisation.

A good example of this incredible verbal tenacity is the ceremony of handing over eating and cooking utensils in the Nyungwe area of Lusubilo Community-Based Orphan Care Programme in February of 2007. This ceremony lasted over four hours. There were opening speeches, introductory speeches, speeches of important community members, closing speeches, and ex-tempore speeches in addition to songs and dances! A mixture of fascination, impatience, anxiety, and exhaustion left its marks on the faces of the white participants; passion, excitement, and utter enjoyment were reflected in the black faces.

François Sengat-Kuo (Seiler, 1995, p. 11) puts the great significance of the word on the African continent in the following words:

Les mot sont des totems sous toute les latitudes
Qui murmurent des secrets aux oreilles initiées
Les éperviers dans le ciel dessinent des hieroglyphes
Les sources chuchotent des chants cabalistiques.²

Jacques Chevrier points out the sacred and mythic character of the word as it appears for instance in the above poem. He states: “On comprend mieux ... le caractère sacré et mythique qui, d’une part, s’attache à l’apparition de la parole et, d’autre part, l’étiquette méticuleuse qui, sous la forme de règles parfois contraignantes, préside à son utilisation”³ (Chevrier, 2005, pp. 9-10).

3.2 Literary Text

A crucial aspect of oral literature is the literary text. Therefore, the question about the distinguishing features of a literary text arises. What distinguishes literature from regular speech? The raw material of both literature and regular speech is language, but “unless there is an aesthetic element and a recognisable form and structure there can be no literature at all.” (Lusweti, 1984, p. 7). The method of performance or production ascertains what belongs to the category of literature and what does not. Lusweti points out that “some types of oral literature are not allowed to be performed outside certain social contexts or by certain types of people. Circumcision songs are, for instance, only sung on occasions when circumcision is to take place, and while proverbs are the

¹ No encounter, no business deal without verbose deliberations, no festivity without speeches, songs of praise and stories.

² The words are totems seen from all latitudes | They murmur secrets in initiated ears | Sparrow-hawks in the sky draw hieroglyphs | Springs whisper cabalistic songs.

³ One understands better ... the sacred and mythic character, which, on the one hand, attaches itself to the appearance of the word and, on the other hand, the meticulous etiquette, which guides the use of the word, at times in the form of binding rules.

exclusive property of adults, riddles are children's verbal plays." Lusweti then concludes: "The fact that there is a laid-down procedure for oral literature is important because it enables us to tell whether a given work should be classified as oral literature or not." (Lusweti, 1984, p. 7).

3.3 Functions of Oral Literature

As much as it is true that different types of oral literature can have identical or similar function, it is also true that the same type of oral literature can have different functions. The oral performer may use a story or a riddle just to express him/herself, or a song may be sung to support a common work effort or to entertain a group of children.

An important function of oral literature is education. From the earliest times of the appearance of foreigners in Africa to this day, it has been commonly assumed that there is a lack of education in Africa. Nothing is farther from the truth! Proverbs are the carriers of wisdom over generations; without the knowledge of proverbs an African person is likely to have problems to properly function in society. Fictional stories of the type of those collected in Northern Malawi form the foundation of the moral education of young people by shaping their attitudes and values. Also, education through oral history is time-tested. "Today many historians have come to realize the importance of oral traditions as sources of historical evidence. In East Africa, books such as *A History of Tanzania* (Kimambo and Temu), *A History of Abuluyia* (Osogo) and *Migration and settlement among the Southern Luo peoples 1500-1900* (Ogot), are all based on oral traditions which have been handed on from generation to generation" (Lusweti, 1984, p. 9; Scheub H. , 2002, pp. xi-xii).

Oral literature contributes to maintaining cultural values and commonly accepted and widely practiced ways of social behavior, to exercising social/political control and authority, as well as to forming social institutions. In this second function, oral literature is shaping "the discourse about society and about the relationship between individuals, groups, and classes in society" (Furniss & Gunner, 1995, p. 1). In particular, "oral art may exhort people to demonstrate strength, courage, and powers and yet lull others into humility and silence before dominant powers" (Imbo, 2002, p. 23). It is unfortunate that this function of oral literature has had its ups and downs. In "Oral art and contemporary cultural nationalism," Penina Mlama writes: "From the prestigious status as a mechanism for criticizing rulers, and for producing pedagogues and custodians of community values, knowledge and history, oral art was denied a place in the world civilization during the dark era of colonialism and foreign domination (Thiongo 1986; Fangon 1967)." The author adds that even in post-independence Africa, oral art is still struggling to solidify itself as a tool of social authority and control (for more cf. Chevrier, 2005, pp. 34-37).

Oral literature is also a conduit for emotions otherwise restricted by social rules and restrictions. "When people find they are bored and frustrated, they sing and dance. Ribald jokes, through which people may criticise and laugh at those in power in a way they cannot do normally in speech, are useful as a means of emotional release. ... In songs ... one can say publicly what one could not say privately to a man's face. ... In stories, the familiar theme of a rise from poverty to riches also serves to give hope to the poor people" (Lusweti, 1984, p. 11; more in Scheub H. , 2002, p. xiii). Story #28 of the collection exemplifies how a poverty-stricken family with ten children managed to

overcome the misery of food insecurity and live comfortably thanks to the unexpected generosity of the creditors and the support of their community through the village chief.

Entertainment is, no doubt, an essential, if not the essential, function of oral literature although this is frequently missed. If a story is not entertaining (amusing, challenging, thought-provoking, etc.), how would it keep the interest of the audience? “Any piece of literature, whether a story or a song, a riddle or a proverb, must have the immediate value of entertaining the audience” (Lusweti, 1984, p. 12; more in Chevrier, 2005, pp. 30-34). Entertainment in the form of amusement engages the audience in similar ways it does in Western cultures. Frequently, in African performance entertainment also comes through direct participation of the audience in song, dance, and dramatization. Story #17, e.g., includes the song “People (husbands) marry goats that destroy the property in this house, bae, bae, bae” and the dramatization of the bleating, jumping, and skipping goat.

3.4 Problems of Classification

Oral literature is mostly unfamiliar to people in the Western Developed World. It is not surprising, therefore, that oral literature has been classified as “folklore,” “popular literature,” “folk literature,” “unwritten literature,” or even “primitive literature,” all terms that denote a clear uncertainty about the true nature of oral literature. Bramwell Lusweti voices objections against these terms by pointing out that “‘unwritten literature’ implies that once oral literature appears in a written form, then it ceases to be oral.” Nothing could be farther from the truth! Lusweti continues that “‘popular literature’ suggests a parallel to ‘popular music’ and ‘popular songs,’ a suggestion which is subject to a narrow meaning. Those who call oral literature ‘folk literature’ argue that it is composed by the folk. ... Although oral literature comes from the culture of a community it is largely the creation of individual men and women of imaginative talents” (Lusweti, 1984, p. 1; Scheub H. , 1998, p. 3). Oral literature coined “primitive” has a demeaning connotation, implying “uncivilized” and “outdated.” It must be made clear that oral literature is not in any way a primitive art. On the contrary, it is “a continuous creation of the people at all times and in all places” (Lusweti, 1984, p. 1; more in Scheub H. , 1998, p. 4). As to “the creation of individual men and women of imaginative talents,” it might be added that in the Mwanganya chatchment area, the second day of oral literature collection was blessed with the talents of a young storyteller renowned and admired beyond the boundaries of his home turf (cf. stories #29 and #30). Godfrey Sembo, farmer and chairman of the Mwandambo Committee for Community-Based Childcare has a reputation of weaving stories together from the threads of true local events and his vivid imagination, thus enlarging and enriching the existing collection of oral literature.

It is now widely agreed that the term “oral literature” includes such literary forms as myths, songs, tales, riddles, and proverbs. Adding three more classification groups to this “generic” classification (cf. 2. below), one scholar of oral literature, Austin Lwanga Bukenya, proposes the following groups (Sunkuli & Miruka, 1990, p. 106):

1. Folkloristic Classifying orature as part of a community’s folklore
2. Generic Classifying oral forms into some kind of families or kindred forms, e.g., narratives, poems, etc.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| 3. Situational/Sociological | Classification according to when, where, and by whom an oral form is performed, e.g., wedding song |
| 4. Stylistic | Classification by the manner in which a form is delivered, e.g. sung, narrated, recited, etc; structure and literary stylistic features that are dominant |

The above four groups or any attempts at classifying African oral literature, for that matter, are not uncontested (cf. critique in Sunkuli & Miruka, 1990, p. 106) because, by and large, they derive from Western concepts, from such categories as the epic, the myth, the legend, the dirge, the praise poem, the lyric, the fable, the riddles and jokes, etc. (Lusweti, 1984, p. 13). Lusweti admonishes that "we must realize that Western concepts not necessarily apply for every culture has its own concepts about oral literature in the language its people speak." According to Isidore Okpewho, though, "the trouble with relying solely on the judgment of the indigenes is that we will be unable to see each society in relation to another. Even though we recognize that there are numerous ethnic and linguistic groups within Africa, there are nevertheless several common features and customs that unite these groups as an African people" (Okpewho I. , 1992, p. 127).

Concluding from the consulted literature, it seems that the discussion about appropriate classification criteria is not yet closed and will likely remain so for some time to come. However, there seems to be cautious acceptance (Ogunjimi & Na'Allah, 2005, pp. 19 and 55-93; Okpewho I. , 1992, pp. 127-272; Chevrier, 2005, pp. 19-23) among scholars of the classification of oral literature in:

1. *Oral narrative forms*
2. *Oral poetry forms*
3. *Oral dramatic and musical forms*

Bayo Ogunjimi and Abdul-Rasheed Na'Allah point out that various components of oral narrative forms, like myth, legends, folktales, proverbs, etc., "have their origin in the hierarchy of values of the African Universe. Characters like the supernatural, the spirits, fairies, humans and animals have their abodes in the same universe" (Ogunjimi & Na'Allah, 2005, p. 19; more in Seiler, 1995, p. 38 f.). On closer examination of the collected oral literature (e.g., #11, #20, #42, #47), quite a few of these characters can be observed alongside more mundane creatures of the African Universe.

With regard to the 48 collected pieces, classification is pretty much -- with the exception of one song -- narrowed down to **oral narrative forms**, like the **folktale**. The latter is defined as a story originating in a community, but largely the creation of an individual of imaginative talents – cf. above 3.1 --; it is passed on by word of mouth rather than by writing, and thus modified by successive re-telling (Answers Corporation, 2008); it includes:

1. *Fables* (usually short narrative making an edifying or a cautionary point and often employing as characters animals that speak and act like humans – cf. Free Dictionary by Farlex, (Farlex, Inc., 2008).
2. *Legends* (unverified stories handed down from earlier times, especially the ones popularly believed to be historical (Farlex, Inc., 2008).
3. *One Myth* about the cause of eternal death (#2)

4. *One Riddle* (#17)

5. *One game* (#7) belonging to the category of **oral dramatic forms**.

6. *One song* (#48) by itself and *twelve songs* (#7, #8, #11, #12, #14, #19, #23, #32, #36, #37, #42, and #43), included in the collected pieces of oral literature

After looking at classification of oral literature, the three elements typical of this literature, namely oral composition, oral performance, and oral transmission, will be taken into consideration.

3.5 Typical Elements of Oral Literature

3.5.1 Oral Composition

For any piece of literature to qualify as oral, it must have been composed without reliance on writing. Memorization is an important and very common means of oral composition. Lusweti gives the example of a storyteller who received a story from his grandfather. The words of the story are to be fully formed in the teller's memory before he starts to present it. "He needs only to call to mind the various incidents in the story at the appropriate moment. This means that he repeats from memory a story which has been composed prior to the occasion when he tells it. ... It is not easy to tell when, where and by whom stories told by memory were composed" (Lusweti, 1984, p. 3). In the course of collection of the oral literature of Northern Malawi, it became clear that trying to pin-point the author of a story is a futile and useless undertaking because each presenter merely receives the piece of oral literature from someone else, memorizes it, and entrusts it to the memory of others.

In addition to oral literature being composed by memorization, pieces can also be composed in performance. This may happen because different people are at each performance or because some themes or words may not be appropriate when certain people are in the audience. The performance may also address different occasions, such as a spontaneous gathering, a planned wedding or funeral, etc.

Furthermore, the performer may draw from a repertoire of set themes to form oral literature. Each performer will have his/her own words, but their ideas will be the same. "Usually singers listen to each other and learn from each other. One singer may like the ideas and messages which are expressed in his friend's song and may also want to express them through his songs" (Lusweti, 1984, p. 3).

3.5.2 Oral Performance

A piece of oral literature is being created through performance, be it a song sung by a singer or a story or poem told or recited by an oral performer. According to Lusweti (Lusweti, 1984, pp. 4-5), there are five ways in which an oral performance can become important:

1. Oral performance shapes the style of the singer or the storyteller through overtones, symbolic associations, facial expressions, tone of voice, movement of body, etc.

2. Only oral performance can realize some aspects of oral literature, like use of the tone of the language during the time of oral delivery as a way of expressing an idea.

3. Oral performance draws on visual resources. Such resources conveying certain information very effectively could be the performer's dress, accessory items of dress and equipment, or gestures of the performer in response to the demands of the audience. Charles Bodunde (Bodunde, 2001, p. 1) calls this involvement of the community in the creative process as well as in the criticism "one of the characteristics of oral traditions, which relates to the nature of performance." He points out: "Finnegan reveals that in a creative performance, members of the audience neither listen silently nor wait for the chief performer's invitation before they join in. Instead the audience breaks into the performance with their additions, questions, and criticisms." At certain points of a performance, an edgy, gesticulating audience may egg on the performer to execute his/her job with speed. Conversely, an audience with flagging attention may have to be pepped up. (Seiler, 1995, pp. 169-175; Chevrier, 2005, p. 18). Already at the beginning of the performance, the performer may ask the members of the audience to participate by making suggestive hand movements and facial expressions that accompany the following opening question known in many parts of Northern Malawi: Chandi, chandi? (Are you ready?) The audience responses: Chiudiza! (Yes, we are!) In the Nyungwe catchment area, Mr. Jesiah Simeza from Masoyafwire Village opened his story about Kalulu, Hippo, and Elephant with a resounding Chandi, chandi?, and his audience spontaneously hollered: Chiudizia! (cf. story #5; for more, Tro Deho, 2005, pp. 22-29, and Chevrier, 2005, pp. 16-17).

4. In oral performance, the occasion or the time of the delivery reveals the underlying meaning of oral literature. The nature of the story, for instance, may require a narrator to perform in the dark of the night or in the light of a fire to avoid detection of signs of potential deceit by the performer, or it is a sacrilege to tell certain stories, e.g. stories of sacred nature, by the light of day. In addition to occasion and time of delivery, the place of delivery is of great significance for literary performance and education. Isabel Hofmeyr's description of the meanings and social relationships embodied in the households of Transvaal communities in South Africa largely pertains to the situation in Northern Malawi. "In the chiefdom ... the household [kgoro] generally remains beyond the reach of white officialdom, and in it men, as family and homestead heads, enjoyed a degree of authority and control that was often lacking in other areas of their lives. In addition, the household and its leisure activities became a focus of conviviality as well as a crucial cipher of identity. ... The kgoro was the place of public gathering and the locale for much ritual ceremony" (Hofmeyr, 1993, p. 84; Chevrier, 2005, pp. 13-14).

5. Oral performance heavily draws upon the use of improvisation as a technique of delivery intrinsic to oral literature; it contributes to the effectiveness of such literature. New words and characters make the performance more relevant to the situation and more exciting to the audience. The extent of improvisation may vary, but there is always room for improvisation which expresses itself in the choice of words and phrases, the use of ideophones, repetitions, etc. (for more, cf. Chevrier, 2005, pp. 17-18).

3.5.3 Oral Transmission

Lusweti defines oral transmission as “the verbal handing on of stories, songs, proverbs, riddles and so on over fairly long periods of time and considerable distances” (Lusweti, 1984, p. 5). Some of the ways of oral transmission are:

1. Exact verbal reproduction of popular pieces of oral literature from generation to generation may seem a tall order. Given the incredible gift of memorization found in oral societies, it is not surprising, though.
2. Memorization entrusts a piece to the memory of a performer, where it may degenerate and thus become a version of the original piece.
3. Recreation and re-composition subject oral literature to considerable change; a piece of oral literature may change so much that the person who composed it (if he/she is known) may not recognize the piece when other people perform it (more to oral transmission, cf. Zenani, 1992, pp. 7-15).

3.6 The Role of Women in Oral Tradition

Northern Malawian women are, at first glance, hard, reliable, consistent workers, devoutly supportive of their families. Their lives have been largely shaped by the patriarchal values, customs, and beliefs of their social surroundings. To this day, patriarchy assigns the women in Northern Malawi a subordinate role. Their role in the community is confined to that of wife and mother. The contemporary realities, though, are changing, slowly but surely. From their traditional roles as caretakers of their families, some women are now venturing into nontraditional fields: education, business, health care, community organization, etc. Samuel Imbo points out that “a consequence of this contradictory assignment of roles is that it forces on women a double commitment: to the culture and to changing the culture. ... An examination of these [Luo and Gikuyu] and other traditional societies in Africa, the majority of which are not matriarchal, indicates that women were not included in the category of wise elders who govern society. This is not to say that women were not considered wise by these societies. It must be concluded, however, that whatever these societies held about the wisdom of women’s roles did not allow their inclusion into the pool from which merit and consensus could make them political leaders” (Imbo, 2002, pp. 72-73). With very few exceptions, staying away from political leadership is also characteristic of women in Northern Malawi. In the recent past, though, there was a woman in the position of village chief in one of the villages surrounding Karonga. Although she had clear leadership qualities, she was very controversial, mainly because of her gender. Sadly enough, she was poisoned and consequently died. Her successor was, unsurprisingly, a man.

Examining the collection of oral literature from Northern Malawi with perspective to gender reveals no gender issues or stereotypes about women’s roles. As performers of oral Northern Malawian literature, the women appear well accepted, some older ones even revered. Overall, however, the traditional roles of gender are deeply entrenched in the oral literary tradition of Africa. Referring to the narrative forms of myth and proverb, Samuel Imbo states: “It is these established notions of gender that the myths and proverbs represent and that the opponents from within [the women and their avowed supporters!]”

must subvert without bringing the house down (Imbo, 2002, p. 83). Challenges of traditional culture must carefully assess the roles of oral literature, whose central role is to promote “social harmony and the provision of a framework for interpreting real biological differences as making men and women different and equal” (Imbo, 2002, p. 87).

Part II

4. Opening Remarks

Part II presents selected pieces of oral literature from the entire collection of the 48 pieces gathered in the four Lusubilo catchment areas in and around Karonga during the second half of November 2007. The pieces have been sorted according to concepts and topics listed below under 5.1–5.9. Story #2 below is followed by a sample of the questionnaire (cf. 2.2.1) that was presented to a number of performers and frequently answered not only by the performers but also members of the audience. The selection criteria for adding the information collected from this interview and not any of the other ones that were conducted was its completeness, reliability, and uniqueness.

5. Traditional Concepts and Topics of Oral Literature Collection

5.1 Creation – Life and Death

#2: Chameleon was told to go to the people to tell them that when a person dies, he dies for good. Lizard, on the other hand, was told to tell the people that a dead person is not dead forever. Lizard was very fast and delivered his message, but slow Chameleon was late. When Chameleon tried to deliver his message, the people said, “We have already heard the message from Blue Lizard, and we do not believe you.”

The eternal questions of life and death are the warp of creation myths crossed by the weft of an incredible variety of answers, woven into a pattern rich in texture and color. Story #2 of Chameleon and Blue Lizard -- versions can be found in (Schoffeleers & Roscoe, 1985, pp. 23-24; Scheub H. , 1999, p. 99) -- addresses itself to man’s mortality. In African literature, death is accepted as a necessary condition, but the desire for rebirth is, as can be derived from the above story, equally strong. J.M. Schoffeleers and A.A. Roscoe indicate “that man has always *desired* rebirth; that earthly life, even at its most raw and perilous, is still felt to be worth repeating, a vale of tears worth returning to. ... [Man] has always believed that, somehow, a return might be affected, that death need not be final” (Schoffeleers & Roscoe, 1985, p. 30). The chameleon is a divine symbol in African oral literature (Schoffeleers & Roscoe, 1985, p. 27) and therefore perceived in a very positive way (Schoffeleers & Roscoe, 1985, pp. 26-27). However, in this story, it carries a negative association, namely the blame for eternal death. The above co-authors note: “Perhaps what we are seeing in all this, is the use of symbolic doubles, a device common in oral literature and used to express negative feelings about a centrally important figure (God himself in this case) which would be difficult, or dangerous, to express more directly” (Schoffeleers & Roscoe, 1985, p. 28).

Chameleon and Blue Lizard was the only piece of oral literature reported in Northern Malawi that fitted the category of “Creation – Life and Death (cf. 5.1). The moral, frequently found in the oral tradition of this area, presents itself in story #2 as follows: **The first message is always the important one.** This moral, like quite a few others given to the oral pieces in the collection, may appear simplistic and somewhat trivial to

the Western mind. However, it must be remembered that the African moral is deeply rooted in popular wisdom and every-day experience handed down from one generation to the next. In *Création romanesque négro-africaine et ressources de l littérature orale*, Roger Tro Deho reminds his readers that “dans certains récits, le message véhiculé va bien au-delà de la morale explicite et nécessite, pour l’appréhender, que l’on interroge la morale implicite, celle que l’auditoire doit bâtir de lui-même” (Tro Deho, 2005, p. 26).⁴ The answers provided to the interview questions (cf. below, p. 17 and 2.2.1) that were presented after the performance of *Chameleon and Blue Lizard* were given by a highly reliable source; they were complete and unique:

Date of performance: November 19, 2007

Name of presenter/performer: Mchekacheka

Sex: male

Age: 70

Occupation: Principal Group Village Headman (GVH); retired police officer (Northern Rhodesia)

Place of residence: Nyungwe

Language of performance: Tumbuka

Type of oral literature: Oral narrative – creation (mortality of men)

Does the performer perform this piece on a regular basis: No

On what occasion(s): Announced visit of collectors of oral literature

Where: In Mchekacheka’s yard under a tree

When: In the morning of November 19, 2007

For what purpose is the piece performed: For collection of oral literature of Northern Malawi

When did the performer first hear about this piece of oral literature: 1949

By whom was the piece then performed: By Elders (grandfathers, grandmothers, etc.)

Where/When was the piece then performed: In the yards of the above persons, after work, around a fire, often by moonlight

Was there a specific purpose for performing the piece: Teaching of the younger members of the community, entertaining the entire audience

Who were the listeners (audience) at the time: A cross-selection of the community, mostly neighbors and friends of all ages

⁴ In certain performances, the conveyed message goes far beyond the explicit moral, and, in order to comprehend the true message, one must search for the implicit moral; the latter has to be unearthed by the audience.

Is there a family relationship between the performer then and the performer now: Mchekacheka does not know his relationship to the first performer. It was certainly told by men and women of previous generations living in his area.

Is there a known tradition of oral performance over several generations in the performer's paternal/maternal family: Yes, *Chameleon and Blue Lizard* has been told and retold in Mchekacheka's larger family for many generations.

Is the performed piece of oral literature known:

- **Mainly in this area**
- **In the northern area of Malawi**
- **In the entire country** Yes

Are there other known versions of this piece of oral literature: Yes, they are referred to on page 16.

Principal GVH Mchekacheka added that the story was presented mainly verbally, at times some singing was added. When the GVH was a child, oral literature of all kinds (stories, songs, riddles, proverbs, myths, etc.) was told in his school. Unfortunately, the GVH remembers only a few stories and is unable to refresh his memory because the few written witnesses disappeared while he was serving as a police officer in Northern Rhodesia. When he returned home, he learned that they had been taken to the Livingstonia Mission for preservation and research purposes. Copies were never given to his community.

5.2 Religious Institutions, Holy Places and Heroes

Pieces of oral literature about religious institutions, holy places and heroes are conspicuously absent from the Malawian collection. A plausible explanation for this might be that the contributing communities were informed in advance that eventually the collection would be shared with the young orphans and vulnerable children in the Community-Based Childcare Centers in Lusubilo's four catchment areas. Sacred, religious and heroic literature is usually complex, hence surpassing the level of understanding, emotional as well as cognitive, of 2–5-year-old pre-schoolers.

Furthermore, in Africa the momentous events surrounding the crucial moments of human/divine coexistence tend to be shrouded in a veil of secrecy. For instance, the traditional funeral rites and the holy burial places of chiefs are only known to the surviving chiefs. In Mwanganda, a village in the vicinity of Karonga, following the official Christian ceremony in the presence of the entire town population, the attending chiefs gathered for several days in a secret, holy location to honor the dead according to the century-old indigenous traditions. All that the "regular" townsfolk knew was that the traditional burial rites would be performed in a secret place "somewhere in the direction of the river" attended only by the village headmen (chiefs), the group village headmen (chiefs over some villages) and the principal group village headmen (chiefs over the villages in a larger area). Any attempt at intrusion by an "ordinary mortal" would be a grave offense.

It might be added that Chapter II of *Land of Fire – Oral Literature from Malawi* by J.M. Schoffeleers and A.A. Roscoe contains, among other narratives, one on an eminent holy place, the central Cheŵa rainshrine. "... [I]t is against a background of the setting up of this and other shrines throughout Central Africa that we see the emergence of the great cult figure Mbona and the spirit wife Chauta, both of whom became powerful symbols for the Cheŵa-speaking people⁵ (Schoffeleers & Roscoe, 1985, p. 51).

5.3 Chieftaincy

#30: Lion and Cow were friends. Each had one child. To provide food for the children, Lion hunted animals while Cow was collecting grass. One day there were no animals and no grass for Lion and Cow. The two children left behind were very hungry. They said, "Let us fight each other; the one that falls down shall be killed and eaten." Lion's child fell first. He said, "Let's try again. Last time, we did not proceed properly." So, they started fighting again. Again, Lion's child fell down, and this time he died. When Cow came home she found only her child alive. Together they ran away from home. Later Lion came home with meat. He was very angry to find his child dead and pursued Cow and her child. Cow had meanwhile reached Cock's house. Cock asked Cow, "Why are you running?" Cow answered, "We are afraid of Lion." Cock said, "I am a chief. Nothing will happen to you." And Cock invited Cow and her child into his house. After a short while, Lion arrived. Cock asked, "What are you looking for, Mr. Lion?" Lion answered, "I am looking for Cow and her child." When Cow heard this, she started to cry. Cock said to Cow, "You are wanted by Mr. Lion." Cow said to her child, "Let us pray first." After praying, the cow and her child went to Lion and started fighting with him. Equipped with divine power, they managed to kill Lion.

Lesson: Do not lose hope. Never give up.

In the above story as well as in story #28 (cf. Appendix 1), the following qualities and responsibilities designate the role of a good chief: power, authority, high morals, commitment, generosity and care. The chief's convincing words "I am the chief. Nothing will happen to you" exude authority and protective power; they reassure Cow of her safety in a potentially dangerous situation. In story #28, the care and concern of the village headman save an entire family from starvation. In Karonga and surrounding areas, land is given to a new owner by the village headman when its current owner is absent for an extended period and unable to use the land according to traditional rules.

The moral of story #30 concerns itself with Cow and her surviving child. Lion, though not responsible for the death of his child, is portrayed as the intimidating, frightening and angry opponent of Cow. The chief is indirectly included in the moral because he is the one protecting Cow and inspiring her never to give up, not even in the face of great danger. Although Cock appears to hand Cow over to Mr. Lion by saying "You are wanted by Mr. Lion", Cow courageously faces Lion, however, not without praying first.

⁵ People from the central region of Malawi

The text, it seems, is a reminder that even the power and prestige of the chief derive from, and ultimately depend on, the divine powers.

In Central African narratives, references to hunger, drought, and poverty abound (cf. also stories #9, #27, #28, and #29 of the collection). Sadly, Cow and Lion's experience of not being able to provide the daily food for their children reflects the harsh reality in Northern Malawi. J.M. Schoffeleers and A.A. Roscoe's observation about the interaction between poor weather conditions and hunger in Central Africa, increasingly worsening in the more recent past, is to the point. "The seasons," they state, "behave capriciously, and when the life-bearing rains choose to come late, the people starve and die" (Schoffeleers & Roscoe, 1985, p. 50 and 52). From this perspective, the fight between the two children is but the dire consequence of their predicament.

5.4 Witchcraft

#43: There was a family with many children. Whenever a child was born, the husband would use witchcraft and kill the newborn child. When the wife gave birth to twins, she feared her husband would kill these children, too. She therefore went to the bees. The bees said, "Don't worry and bring your children to us." The mother entrusted her children to the bees. When she came to breastfeed the children, she would sing a song:

"Na'nga' (crying of babies); the hole (where the bees are living) is crying."

The husband, wondering about the disappearance of his children, asked his wife about their whereabouts. The woman, afraid that her husband would kill the children at the first chance, said, "This is none of your business." One day the husband followed his wife to the hole of the bees. When the wife had fed the babies and left the hole, her husband sang his wife's song. The bees were surprised that the voice of the woman had changed. They swarmed out of their hole, attacked the unsuspecting husband and killed him. The wife lived a long and happy life with her children.

Lesson: Choose your future husband carefully.

In typical African fashion, not just living beings but also innately voiceless and motionless objects can act like human beings. In the above story, the bee hole cries; in #7, the counting song, the sun has eaten the turkey; and in story #18, cock's head is herding cattle!

#20: Owl, the King of Birds, told all the other birds that they should conduct a meeting. All the birds were invited to the meeting, but Bat could not attend because the birds did not think he was a bird. One day Hummingbird got sick, and the birds were told that Dr. Bat was an African (witch) doctor. Blackbird went to Dr. Bat's office to get help for Hummingbird. But Dr. Bat said, "I cannot see the patient because I am not a bird." Kalulu went to Dr. Bat and pleaded with him to see the patient. But Dr. Bat refused again. Then, Owl, the King of Birds, sent Swallow to Dr. Bat's office. Swallow was not received either. Last, Owl went himself to Dr. Bat's office, and he was told the doctor would see Hummingbird. When Dr. Bat saw

Owl with his big eyes, he thought, “This must be the patient.” He treated Owl instead of Hummingbird. Hummingbird died.

Lesson: Beware of doctors!

Witchcraft still enjoys considerable popularity in Central Africa, including Northern Malawi. It thrives exuberantly in the shadows of reluctant acceptance of traditional medicine. Rarely, though, witchcraft is openly advertised in Karonga or even remote villages and hamlets in the northern foothills and mountains. Two of the more prominent advertisements (wooden, hand-painted signs) for the services of witch doctors, also called African doctors, have disappeared. One was replaced by a sign drawing the passer-by’s attention to the location of a “natural doctor of traditional medicine”. In a campaign to lower the high infant mortality rate, the Malawian government recently cracked down on witchcraft still widely practiced in connection with childbirth. Young parents, for instance, do not hesitate to engage the practice of witchcraft of the traditional, local midwife while at the same time presenting their child for Christian baptism. In *The Land of Fire – Oral Literature from Malawi*, the authors point out that witchcraft “is a subject who belongs to the night, but a subject which haunts both the walking and the sleeping consciousness of the people. A powerful stimulus to the imagination of storytellers, it is an abiding theme of their work ... , it is a subject that engages to the full a narrator’s skill at creating suspense and horror, and lets him roam freely around the world of dream and nightmare” (Schoffeleers & Roscoe, 1985, p. 128).

The horror of the father’s ruthless killing of his children in the above narrative (#43) is likely to have a therapeutic and cathartic effect on the listener. It induces in him/her a reassuring sense that real life is far from being as bad as presented by the narrator. J.M. Schoffeleers and A.A. Roscoe note that “thus witchcraft might ... indirectly stress the positive side of waking life” (Schoffeleers & Roscoe, 1985, p. 128).

From the fate of the father, namely his death brought about by the bees, enablers of basic maternal instincts, it can be concluded that his behavior is socially not approved. He commits his heinous deeds in the confines of his own home, away from the scrutiny of the community, “whose survival depends on keeping all its members firmly within the circle of agreed behavior and practice” (Schoffeleers & Roscoe, 1985, p. 128). Hence, the traditional African society’s attitude to witchcraft is strangely hypocritical: On the one hand, it is officially branded as a societal evil while, on the other hand, below the surface of agreed behavior and practice, it enjoys wide acceptance.

5.5 Disease and Disability

#32: Five girls were chatting under a tree. A lame man appeared. One girl could not help but laugh at him.

The girls went to collect mushrooms in the forest. There it rained. They took shelter under a tree. When the rain ceased, the girls stepped out from under the tree, one by one singing:

“The one remaining under the tree will turn into a pillar.” 2x

After this song, the girl that had laughed too much turned into a pillar.

Lesson: Do not make fun of disabled people.

#33: A boy was suffering from leprosy. Nobody in the village wanted to be with him. He was shunned. The parents made a small hut for the boy to keep him away. Whenever the mother brought food to the hut, she sang:

“Can you open for me?” the boy answered, “you have made a hut for me in the bush.” 2x

One day an animal came to the hut and ate the boy.

Lesson: Do not stigmatize a person suffering from an illness.

#34: There were two women. One had an incurable wound on her swollen back. The healthy woman made fun of her. The sick woman resented her. She took her wound and put it right on the other woman’s back, and the other woman died.

Lesson: Do not laugh at a disabled person.

Three narratives from the Mwanganya catchment area, i.e., #32, #33, and #34 of the collection, focus on the perpetual human struggle with disease. The first story, #32, deals with permanent disability, a most deplorable human condition in a society that lacks the basic necessities of daily life. In Northern Malawi, it is moving, though, to observe how the disabled are integrated in the community and lovingly cared for. The meager personal and communal resources are shared spontaneously and generously (cf. #33 below). The second story, #33, reminds of the social stigma that accompanies leprosy to this very day. The disease, which is far from being eradicated in Africa, is often linked to man’s own wayward behavior, in story #33, stigmatization. In story #34, an undefined wound is transferred to the cruel person mocking the afflicted, while story #32 shows a girl poking fun at a lame man and turning into a pillar. The transfer of the wound as well as the transformation into a pillar are considered punishment for man’s wickedness and exhortation for empathy.

According to traditional belief, human beings bring disease upon themselves. “Man must suffer because he is an infernal meddler, not content to leave things in the natural state” (Schoffeleers & Roscoe, 1985, p. 112). A Sena story puts it as follows: “You human beings are all alike. You cannot let anything live the way it likes. Everything has to be disturbed for your own pleasure. But you will have to pay dearly for your wickedness. ... May the air which escaped from the last pot turn into numerable diseases for you disturbed what ought not to be disturbed and you did not avoid what ought to have been avoided” (Schoffeleers & Roscoe, 1985, p. 105).

Story 32# (cf. Appendix I) has a plot similar to #6, but the moral (lesson) of #6 indicates its Christian origin.

Story #34 is somehow reminiscent of the Grimm Brothers’ fairy tale *The Fisherman and His Wife*. Insatiable greed of the fisherman’s wife reverses her and her husband’s good fortune, and, in the end, the couple faces again dire poverty. Heartless fun poked at the ailing woman in story #34 results in the offender’s death. In both cases, immoral behavior brings about negative consequences.

5.6 Suitors

Suitors come in many different varieties. They can be unselfish, courageous, heroic, poor, underprivileged, cunning, stubborn and much more. The suitor narratives explore “the engaging themes of boy-gets-girl and girl-gets-boy” (Schoffeleers & Roscoe, 1985, p. 147). The former “can be described as ‘male’ texts, since they narrate the fortunes [or misfortunes!] of a male suitor. ... The ‘female’ emphasize the role the woman plays in the courting game (Schoffeleers & Roscoe, 1985, p. 147). Traditionally, the man takes the initiative in the courting; the woman is expected to refrain from such activities. Should she break with the rules of courtship, she is punished; “while spatially remaining within her community, [she] places herself, like a candidate for witchcraft, outside it, largely by refusing to conform with the rules separating the married from the unmarried” (Schoffeleers & Roscoe, 1985, p. 148; also Zenani, 1992, p. 21).

#12: A certain man, Tall, married a beautiful woman. The man was a poor mouser, who was often working in the field. When Tall was gone, other men chased after Tall’s wife. When she told Tall one day that another man had proposed to her while he was working away from home, Tall asked his wife to warn him by singing the following song:

“Tall, Tall, I have gone with another man. Tall, Tall, I have gone with another man. Who is he? Who is he? I’ll beat him with my sickle. I’ll beat him with my sickle.”

When Tall returned home from his work in the field, he found the suitor in his home; the suitor took to his heels.

Lesson: Be faithful in your marriage

Story #12 features an unusual courtship between a beautiful woman, married to a poor man (a mouser) by the name of Tall, and a bold suitor, attempting to break the marriage between the woman and her spouse. Home alone, the wife is in an uncomfortable situation, which she virtuously overcomes: Her song expresses her willingness to defend the marriage by “reporting” her suitor to her husband. Her brave action is rewarded: When her husband comes home, the suitor runs away.

#35: There once were a black and a white woman. Hyena wanted to marry the white lady, but Kalulu loved her, too. He was jealous of Hyena and went to the lady, asking her, “Why do you love Hyena?” He is only my worker. I can prove it to you.” One day Kalulu pretended not to feel well and asked Hyena to give him a ride. When they approached the white lady’s house, she noticed Kalulu sitting on Hyena’s back. Kalulu said, “Didn’t I tell you that Hyena is my worker. Not long thereafter, the white lady married Kalulu.

In narrative #35 Kalulu, the notorious trickster (Sunkuli & Miruka, 1990, p. 89, and 5.9, pp. 28-29), plays the role of the cunning suitor. Both he and Hyena have fallen for the white lady. Understandably so! Her skin color promises a life style of abundance, luxury and wealth. Given the dire living conditions in Northern Malawi, the two cannot resist. The choice of Hyena as Kalulu’s rival may not be mere coincidence because the hyena has negative connotations in Malawian folklore. (Sunkuli & Miruka, 1990, p. 89).

#42 (cf. 5.8, pp. 25 and 27)

5.7 Family Relations – Husband and Wife

Stories #14, #19, #21, #24, #36, and #39 explore the situation of husbands and wives and, of course, co-wives. Story #14 freely mixes an unrealistic fantasy (the choice of a gourd as a hiding place for the wife) with a typically African metaphor (a problem of the size of a Baobab tree). At the same time, it incorporates realism by presenting a wide-spread local tradition, namely the custom of giving the engaged woman a hoe. When the marriage breaks up, the hoe is to be returned to the husband and his family. Also story #19 (cf. Appendix I) has a fantastic component: The wife turns into a goat.

#14: A man and his wife had a garden of millet. On day, they planted a gourd in the middle of the garden. The wife was not happy in her marriage; she planned to leave her husband. She had a hoe which she had received from her husband before she got married. When the husband asked his wife to work in the garden, she said that she was sick, and she hid in a gourd. Observed by a bird from afar, she composed the following song in the gourd:

“Husband, you do not understand, husband you do not understand. Songa (a bird), go and tell my family that I have a problem. Songa, go and tell my family that I have a problem. My problem is as big as a Baobab tree. Please, dear parents, return my hoe to my husband’s family.”

While the woman was singing, her neighbors came to dance in the millet field, and, dancing, they destroyed the whole field. When the man discovered that the field was trampled, he was angry and left his wife for good.

Lesson: Carefully choose your spouse.

Although monogamy is the law in the Republic of Malawi, polygamy is well and alive in and around Karonga. Christianity’s influence militates against multiple sexual partners, whether inside or outside of marriage, forcing polygamy to live in its shadow. While professing monogamy in public, many males reject it in private and consequently have more than one female partner. As to the reactions of women to polygamy, they vary considerably. Educated women, for instance, find it difficult to welcome more than one male sexual partner into the marital relationship.

#36: A man had two wives. Both of them had children, one child each. One of the women died, leaving her child to the other one. The stepmother was very cruel to her dead sister’s child: She took her stepchild and pushed her under a stone. The child would sing:

“Mother, Mother, I am here, under the stone.”

When the child’s father heard the singing, he looked for his child, found her and rescued her from under the stone.

Lesson: We must take care of other people’s children as we do of our own.

In story #36 one of the two wives dies, leaving her child to the other wife of her polygamous husband. Suggestive of the fairy tale of Cinderella, the story depicts the relationship between the child of the deceased mother and her stepmother in somber colors. Fortunately, though, the biological father comes to the child’s rescue.

#24: A man had three wives. They went to work in the field. One of the women returned home to get the hoe she had forgotten. At home she took a turkey, killed it, cooked it and, without hesitation, ate it. Then she rejoined her family in the field. When the field work was completed, the man and his three wives went back home. They cooked nsima (large lumps of maize – the Malawian staple) and wanted to add turkey relish, but it was gone! The husband asked his wives who had eaten the turkey relish. None of them admitted to it. He took the wives to a deep well and said, “Whoever has eaten the turkey will drown.” So the wives circled the well singing, “Who has eaten the turkey? Who has eaten the turkey?” The first wife walked around the well without any problem. The second one did likewise. The third wife still did not admit to having eaten the turkey, and when it was her turn to walk around the well, she drowned.

Lesson: Act honestly at home and in the community.

Story #24 leaves it to the imagination of the listener/reader whether the third wife’s death is related to her thievish inclination or if it is punishment for her polygamous life style. In any case, death is the direst of consequences inflicted on her. J.M. Schoffeleers and A.A. Roscoe write in *Land of Fire*, “Women, it seems to be suggested, have naturally flawed characters and when this leads to an inevitable offense they most receive the most extreme punishment. With men, however, it is different. When they do wrong it is not a fundamentally bad character that causes it but simply the very human fault of making a wrong decision” (Schoffeleers & Roscoe, 1985, p. 176).

#21: Two young people were getting married some years ago. As family and friends were presenting their gifts to the couple, a man in a car happened to pass by. He got out of the car and asked the groom if he could drive the bride a little bit around. The groom accepted, and the wife got in the car with the stranger, and off they went ... never to be seen again!

Story #21 has a special twist to it. It is a true story! Some years ago, it happened in Wowe, a small village in the Nyungwe catchment area. To the Western mind it sounds unbelievable. In Northern Malawi, however, it is entirely plausible. To this day cars are a novelty for Northern Malawians, and riding in a car is a very special treat for them. In the discussion following the story, neither the narrator nor the audience appeared to be overly concerned about the young woman’s well-being. It was generally assumed that she is living with the bridal thief happily ever after!

5.8 Parents and Children

The relationship between parents and their children is generally close, but rarely without distinct utilitarian traits. Life is extremely hard: infant mortality is high, poverty rampant, food scarce, weather conditions harsh ... to name just a few. Children, the more the better, increase the likelihood of family survival. They are fellow-combatants in the daily struggles and challenges of life. No matter how poor the family, the children’s personal needs are in the minds of most Northern Malawians negligible compared to their contributions. The fathers and mothers, guided by their own interests, are therefore at times less than ideal parents.

The following texts are, in a nutshell, about an absentee mother (#8), a concerned, caring mother (#11), a cruel, vengeful father (#23), a proverbially bad stepmother (#31) and two sets of opportunistic parents (#40, #42); in story #42, the parents are effectively aided by the old woman.

#8: There was a man who married a woman. They had one child. When the husband was not at home, another man came and convinced the woman to follow him. As they were leaving, her only child was singing:

“Mother, can you wait for me? The pot is broken. I want to nurse from you. Mother, can you wait for me? The pot is broken. I want to nurse from you.”

After singing this song, the very young child died.

Lesson: For the sake of the entire family, women should be faithful to their husbands.

The sad outcomes, i.e., death, of stories #8, #11 and #23, in spite of the apparent attachment of the children to their mothers, may have a deeper cultural root. Most families in the greater Karonga area adhere to the patrilineal kinship system. That is, children trace their descent through their father. They are part and parcel of the father’s kinship group. A close intimate relationship between mother and child could be interpreted by the father’s family as a threat to the patrilineal kinship system, blurring the lines between patrilineal and matrilineal lineage for the children and thus to be avoided.

#11: There was a clay child by the name of Maganyeza. Maganyeza was told that he should come home when rain clouds formed in the sky. His mother said, “Do not let rain fall on your body because it will melt.” One day the clay child went very far away from home to play. He saw the clouds, but it was too late. The rain washed over his body before he reached home, and he died. The mother can still be heard singing:

“The rain is coming. The rain is coming. I am your mother calling. I am your mother calling.”

Lesson: Children should be careful when staying away from home.

The above story of the clay child (#11) echoes mythic times, which are remembered by some tribes in oral narratives that tell how humankind was fashioned out of clay. “In each region of the world in which the creator traveled, he created humans from the materials available, making some white, others red or brown, and the Shilluk black (cf. African Creational Myths, The Shilluks, (Crystal, 1995-2008). “A West African creation tale explains how two spirit people are accidentally sent down to earth by the spirit god. Lonely, the people decide to create children from clay, but feel they must hide when the sky god comes down. ... Over time, these clay children ... [hidden in fire and turned to shades] ... grow up and move to various regions of the earth, ultimately populating it” (Crystal, 1995-2008). These myths serve a dual purpose: They give but one of numerous accounts of how human beings were created and illustrate an open-minded, unbiased approach to the phenomenon of racial differences. The end of the story above (#11) reminds of the fragility and ultimately the demise of human beings when exposed to natural forces, like rain, drought, earthquakes, etc. Unfortunately, the warning signals of Mother (Nature) go unheeded!

The *Child of Clay* by Steve Chimombo (Chimombo, 1993) is a much longer version of story #11. It picks up the song of the mother: “Child of Clay, get out of the rain! Child of Clay, get out of the rain! Alas! My son is gone! Get out of the rain!”

#23: A man and a woman had twin girls, Ngoza and Lyombo. They were told to draw water from the well, one with a gourd, the other one with a tin. Lyombo broke the gourd. She was afraid of being beaten by her father and ran away into the hills. The mother followed Lyombo into the hills to give her food. She sang:

“Lyombo, Lyombo, where are you.” 3x

Lyombo answered:

“I am here.” 3x

After some time, the father discovered that his wife was feeding Lyombo, and he quietly followed his wife to see with his own eyes what was happening. When he found his wife feeding Lyombo, he killed Lyombo.

Lesson: Parents are responsible for their children’s well-being.

#31: A husband and a wife had two children, Tullanganya and Tulamanya. The wife drowned, leaving her husband and the two girls behind. The man remarried. The second wife hated the children. She dug a hole and buried both of them. The children died.

Lesson: Treat all the children as you would treat your own.

#42: Two twin sisters, Ngoza and Kasiwa, received marriage proposals from young men in the disguise of animals. Ngoza accepted. Kasiwa declined. Ngoza moved in with her husband. She asked her sister not to follow her, but Kasiwa did not listen. On the way to the young man’s house, the animal suitors left the two girls with an old woman. The old woman asked the sisters, “Where are you going?” Ngoza said, “I am on my way to my husband’s house.” The old woman retorted, “These young men are not human beings but animals.” The old woman made a drum and hid the two sisters in it. Taking the girls to their parents’ house, the woman carrying the drum sang:

“Mbitikumbi (sound of the drum), mbitikumbi. Kango’ ma Kakalilanga (sound of the drum), kango’ma Kakalilanga.

The animals came running to the old woman’s house, but the old woman and Ngoza and Kasiwa had already left for their parents’ house. The animals followed suit. In order to get rid of their daughters’ unusual suitors, the girls’ parents poured hot water from the drum over the animals when they arrived at their house. All the animals died.

5.9 Man and Beast – Beast and Beast

The following narratives, though diverse in content, share one common trait: They all feature animals embodying human beings and actions in diverse situations. In some stories animals are joined by men and women in some special way. Remotely and

vaguely, these stories remind the listener of the Fables of Aesop and Lafontaine (for more about foreign influences on fables, cf. Seiler, 1995, pp. 32-33).

The stories involving a long parade of domesticated and wild animals turns out to be the most prolific as well as the most endearing to the people in Lusubilo's four catchment areas. Kalulu, the trickster, is by far the champion among the animals appearing in the story collection. He is prominently featured in stories #4, #5 (including 2 versions), #9, #13, #18, #25, #26, #27, #29, #35, #37, #38, #41, #44, #46 and #48, the latter being the most popular children's song, resounding from all the community-based childcare and feeding centers of Lusubilo Community-Based Orphan Care. Kalulu is also the hero featured in two books, *Calling Dr. Kalulu* (Banda, 1989) and *Operation Kalulu* (Chimombo, undated copy). From the Lusubilo collection, two Kalulu stories are presented as examples. In story #26 Kalulu is the clear winner; in story #25 he is the rare loser (cf. also #38, Appendix I).

#48 (Song): Kalulu, vine, a – e, Kalulu, vina, vina, vina pamchenga.

Kalulu, nyada, a – e, Kalulu, nyada, nyada, nyada, pamchenga.

Kalulu, duka, a – e, Kalulu, duka, duka, duka, pamchenga.

Kalulu, yenda, a – e, Kalulu, yenda, yenda, yenda, pamchenga.⁶

#26: Mr. Tembo had a groundnut garden. One day a group of monkeys and Kalulu ate his groundnuts. Kalulu reported to Mr. Tembo that many monkeys were in his garden. Kalulu said, "Let me tell you how you can kill the monkeys." He advised Mr. Tembo to go to his garden and pretend to be dead. Kalulu then returned to the garden himself to eat more groundnuts with the monkeys. While they were eating, they discovered Mr. Tembo supposedly dead, with ants all over his body. Kalulu and the monkeys carried the "dead body" to Mr. Tembo's house, singing: "Tembo is dead." 3x Then Kalulu told the monkeys to close all the doors and windows. He slipped out very quietly, leaving the monkeys behind. After Kalulu had shut the door, Mr. Tembo "woke up" and killed all the monkeys. Only Kalulu survived.

#25: Kalulu and Squirrel were hunting. Kalulu had a resounding voice; Squirrel's voice was very low. When Squirrel had killed an animal, he would whisper, "I have killed." Kalulu would shout, "I have killed!" All the animals were happy when they heard Kalulu's loud voice. One day, Squirrel killed a person instead of an animal and whispered, "I have killed," while Kalulu hollered, "I have killed!" The other animals came and found that a person had been killed. They were very angry. When Kalulu saw the crowd of animals coming toward him, he said, "Squirrel has killed." But nobody believed him, and Kalulu paid for Squirrel's deed with his life.

Lesson: Do not keep everything for yourself; leave something for others.

Why is Kalulu the most beloved of the animals featured in the story collection? Is it coincidence or maybe because of the idea or value he represents in his culture? These questions were presented time and time again to the narrators, performers, and their audiences. It soon became clear that Kalulu's popularity could not be a matter of chance.

⁶ Kalulu, dance, a – e, Kalulu, dance, dance, dance in the sand.

Kalulu, boast, a – e, Kalulu, boast, boast, boast in the sand.

Kalulu, jump, a – e, Kalulu, jump, jump, jump in the sand.

Kalulu, walk, a – e, Kalulu, walk, walk, walk in the sand.

Quite the contrary! Over much of their history, the Malawian people were suppressed. Under British rule, the men were systematically recruited to perform hard labor in Northern and Southern Rhodesia, whereas the women and children were left to their own devices. With the men far away, the women left behind depended much on craftiness, cunning, astuteness, ruse, and trickery to survive under the adverse circumstances caused by the separation of families, clans, and tribes and exposed to extremely difficult environmental conditions. It is therefore no surprise that Kalulu, the trickster and winner in all but three stories (#18, #25, #38), became the darling of Malawians, particularly those in Northern Malawi, where the conditions of life are harder compared to Southern and Central Malawi. To this day, the South, boasting a wide array of colonial witnesses and the central part with the nation's capital are, to some extent, favored and privileged. The litany of complaints about second-hand treatment of Northern Malawi is long, especially regarding funding of projects, subsidies, government services and alike. An astute mind like Kalulu's is a must for survival in the North. In spite of his special position in the stories of Northern Malawi, Kalulu is literally fighting for his life. Hunted to the point of extinction, he is nowadays rarely seen in and around Karonga. With so many guns pointed at him, he prefers living uphill afraid not only of dogs but also of men (cf. story #45 below)!

#10: Mr. Monkey had no clue what a problem was. People tried to tell him that problems are not good. One person offered to teach Monkey all about problems. So he took his hungry dog, put him in a sack and walked with Monkey up the hill. When they reached the top of the hill, the owner of the dog untied the sack and freed the dog. The dog chased Mr. Monkey, and ever since, monkeys live in the hills because they fear dogs.

Lesson: Be careful what you wish for; you may get more than you asked for.

#16: Cockroach visited Hen. They chatted together, and when it was time for Cockroach to go home, Hen accompanied Cockroach. While the two were on their way to Cockroach's house, Hen became very hungry and wanted to eat Cockroach. When Hen tried to attack Cockroach, Cockroach flew up in the air and escaped into the roof of a nearby summer hut. Out of fear of hens, to this day Cockroaches hide in the roof of summer huts until the night falls.

#45: Kalulu wanted to settle in the village, but Dog was not happy about this. When Kalulu tried to come down from the hills, Dog, waiting on the road, chased Kalulu. Kalulu returned back into the hills. To this day, rabbits are found uphill, and they are afraid of dogs.

Stories #10, #16, and #45 explain animal behavior observed with a keen eye by the local people. They belong to the category of "why" animal stories. In *Land of Fire*, Schoffeleer and Roscoe state, "Africa's large body of 'why' stories, though revealing traditional man's 'scientific' curiosity about his environment, are not as a rule the most fruitful genre to explore, unless – such is our homocentricity – the animal behavior explained makes a statement on the human condition ..." (Schoffeleers & Roscoe, 1985, p. 234). In the three narratives below, the reaction of Monkey, Cockroach and Kalulu is typical of that of a great number of human beings in danger: When facing the alternative "Fight or Flight," they choose the latter.

6. Conclusion

Although the written word is slowly but surely invading the town of Karonga and its surrounding areas, oral story-telling is an integral part of Malawian culture. The encounters with the young, middle-aged and elderly storytellers in Lusubilo's four catchment areas for the purpose of collecting examples of their extensive oral tradition and the ensuing research of secondary literature was revealing. For centuries the African people and, in particular, the people in the Karonga District of Northern Malawi have been creators, narrators, performers and lovers of verbal art. A virtual library of stories, songs, poems, riddles, counting games and many other literary forms have been handed down from generation to generation. Compared to the many oral pieces of profoundly mythic content found in the secondary literature, one might say that the stories narrated, sung and acted out by the friends of Lusubilo depict people and animals that speak and live like human beings, all of whom are dealing in an artistic manner with life as it presents itself every day. Realistic, factual information about the institutions of kinship, marriage, chieftaincy, child rearing, disease, weather conditions, etc., are artfully interwoven with expressions of the soul of Africa, unfathomable for those born into the written tradition of the word.

Observing the lengthening paper trail in Malawi, nowadays produced by government agencies, in schools, mainly on the secondary and tertiary levels, by businesses, churches, international and local aid organizations, etc., one cannot help but return to those times in African history when the written culture was a byproduct of European colonialism. Large parts of the continent were inundated not only with literature from the perspective of the European novel, play, poem, fable and other literary genres but also scientific papers, educational text books, religious literature, newspapers, etc. This had the effect of forcing numerous foreign elements upon the African oral tradition, thus undermining its authenticity.

The enthusiasm, commitment, joy, and self-esteem of the narrators, performers and their local audiences reached by the story collection project of Lusubilo Community-Based Orphan Care were inspiring. Many encouraging signs are pointing to the creative rediscovery of Malawi's (Africa's) deep, age-old oral roots. It is to be hoped that, although orality is fast losing ground and as Malawians become more and more a writing people, the beauty of traditional orality will lastingly shape modern authentic literature, in Malawi as well as the other countries on the African continent.

Appendix I

Story Collection

Nyungwe Area

Collection Date: Monday, November 19, 2007

Storyteller:

Principal Group Village Head Man, Mr. Mchekacheka (70 years old), Mchekacheka Village, Nyungwe Catchment Area

Title:

A title is usually not given or it is spontaneously made up by the storyteller.

Author:

The author of a story is rarely known because the story has been passed on orally from generation to generation.

Language: Tumbuka

#1: There were two caterpillars. One was an orphan and the other one had parents. The parents told their child that, when he would see the trees growing new leaves, then he would know that the rains are about to come. He was told, “Dig a hole and, when the rains come, go hide in there.”

The orphan, who was not allowed to listen, heard the instructions from afar. So, he started digging a hole, and, when the rains came, he hid in the hole. The child who had parents was lazy, thinking, “When the rains come, I will just hide in the hole of my parents”. But the parents died, and the child had nowhere to go. When the first rain fell, the child died.

Lesson: Children should follow their parents’ instructions and advice.

Storyteller: same as above, #1

#2: Chameleon was told to go to the people to tell them that when a person dies, he dies for good. Lizard, on the other hand, was told to tell the people that a dead person is not dead for ever. Lizard was very fast and delivered his message, but slow Chameleon was late. When Chameleon tried to deliver his message, the people said, “We have already heard the message from Blue Lizard, and we do not believe you.”

Lesson: The first message is always the important one.

Storyteller: same as above, #1

#3: There was a small bird, called Titi, and Lion. Lion could kill most other animals but he would always abandon them. Titi would come and clean up the left-overs. One day Titi was found eating the remains of an animal killed by Lion. He boasted, “I killed this animal!” This made Lion very angry. He got hold of Titi and killed him.

Storyteller: Mr. Moses Mvula, retired wood carver, age 86 (still carving!), Kaswera Village, Vua area, Nyungwe Catchment Area

Language: Tumbuka

#4: Kalulu and Elephant married two sisters. Kalulu married the younger sister, Elephant the older one. There was a tradition that the sons-in-law would work in the gardens of their fathers-in-law. So both of them went to work. The handle of Kalulu’s hoe was loose. Kalulu wanted to repair the hoe. Kalulu took it and hit it on Elephant’s tusk and it fell off. Kalulu took the tusk and hid it in the ground.

After Elephant had gone, Kalulu came back, took the tusk and gave it to an “ivory smith”. The ivory smith made the tusk into seven beautiful rings. Kalulu took four of the rings and gave them to his wife, two of them he offered to his mother-in-law, and one he gave to Elephant’s wife. Later on Kalulu told Elephant’s wife that the ring came from her husband’s tusk. Elephant became very angry. He wanted to take Kalulu to court, but Kalulu escaped. The people made fun of Elephant for being so silly to allow Kalulu to use his tusk.

Lesson: Wherever we are, we should show good character.

Technical School Nyungwe

Storyteller: Mr. Jesiah Simeza, farmer, in his 40’s, Masoyafwire Village, Nyungwe Catchment Area

Story Beginning: Chandi, chandi; chiudiza (Are you ready? Yes, we are ready.)

Language: Tumbuka

#5: Hippo lived in the water, and Elephant lived in the hills. One day, Kalulu went to Elephant and asked him, “Who is the Elder, Elephant or Hippo?” Elephant replied, “I am the Elder.” Then Kalulu asked Hippo the same question and Hippo answered like the Elephant, “I am the Elder.” Kalulu had a plan how he could find out who *really* was the Elder. He took a long rope, tied one end of the rope to Elephant and the other one to Hippo in the water. Kalulu was standing in the middle and he whistled to start the contest. Both animals tugged; Elephant pulled so hard that he pulled Hippo out of the water. Elephant won the contest.

Lesson: Do not play off one person against another.

Collection Date: November 20, 2007

Storyteller: Mrs. Witness Nucha, Wife of Mr. Mkandawire, in her 70's, VH Mbatamira, Phapha area, Nyungwe Catchment Area; Teller wanted to tell story #1 again.

Language: Tumbuka

#6: There was a lame man who asked several women to marry him. Many said “No”, to his proposal because he was lame. But, at last, one lady accepted. So, he took his bride to his house. To her great surprise, she found the most beautiful home she could have ever imagined. The others who had refused the lame man were upset when they realized that they had missed a great chance.

Lesson: The lame man was actually Jesus (or the Bible). Many people do not accept him (it). However, when accepting, they find peace and happiness.

Storyteller: Mr. James Mwafulirwa, farmer, 51 years old, Matandala village, T/A Mwilang'ombe, Tilora area, Nyungwe Catchment Area

Language: Tumbuka

#7(Counting Song): There was a family with children. One of the children was a thief. When she was home alone, she would eat the relish (anything but nsima or rice) that was for the whole family. When the parents asked the children why the relish (turkey fowl) had disappeared, nobody told what had happened to it. One day the parents wanted to find out the truth. They lined up the children, making them sit on the floor with their legs stretched out in front of them. They had to sing the following song:

“Who has eaten that turkey? Who has eaten that turkey? We don't know, we don't know. We want to find out. We want to find out. Who has eaten that turkey? Who has eaten that turkey? Maybe, the sun has eaten that turkey, maybe the sun has eaten that turkey.”

Counting the legs, the performer stops counting legs after “Maybe the sun has eaten that turkey.” The leg where the teller stops the counting game is eliminated from the game. The game is repeated until only one leg remains – the leg of the thief.

Storyteller: Virimo Muzembe, farmer, age 63, Village of Mbatamira, T/A Mwilang'ombe, Tilora area, Nyungwe Catchment Area, starting story with Chandi, chandi; Chindiza.

This is a true story that happened in Mwandovi village at the home of Mr. Mwakanyamale nearby Hangalawe.

Language: Tumbuka

#8: There was a man who married a woman. They had one child. When the husband was not at home, another man came and convinced the woman to follow him. As they were leaving, her only child was singing:

“Mother, can you wait for me? The pot is broken. I want to nurse from you. Mother, can you wait for me? The pot is broken. I want to nurse from you.”

After singing this song, the very young child died.

Lesson: For the sake of the entire family, women should be faithful to their husbands.

Storyteller: Same as in the previous story (#8)

#9: There was a famine in the village and the animals conducted a meeting. Kalulu was the chairman. He told the other animals that he had sacks of maize and cassava on the hill. He said the animals should wait at the bottom of the hill. Kalulu went up the hill and gathered heavy rocks. He told the animals to open their mouths and to look up to him with closed eyes as soon as he would be back with the sacks. All the animals were waiting for the bags from Kalulu. They waited and waited; finally, instead of food, only rocks fell down on the poor animals. They hit them so hard that Elephant was killed first, then Hippo, and then all the other animals died. Only Lion was clever; he dodged the rock and escaped. Lion confronted Kalulu, “Mr. Kalulu, you have killed my friends. I’ll take you to court. The judge will decide. To avoid the courts, Kalulu said, “You can hit me on the soft sand, but not on the hard rocks.” Lion hit Kalulu on the soft sand. Of course, Kalulu did not die but escaped!

Lesson: Be honest and kind; don’t hurt your friends.

Storyteller: Mr. Nelis Nakulyawo, age 57, VH Mbatamira, Tilora area, Nyungwe Catchment Area, originally from the Chilumba area (Mandovi)

Language: Tumbuka

#10: Mr. Monkey had no clue what a problem was. People tried to tell him that problems are not good. One person offered to teach Monkey all about problems. So he took his hungry dog, put him in a sack and walked with Monkey up the hill. When they reached the top of the hill, the owner of the dog untied the sack and freed the dog. The dog chased Mr. Monkey, and ever since, monkeys live in the hills because they fear dogs.

Lesson: Be careful what you wish for; you may get more than you asked for.

Storyteller: Gogo (old woman) Isabelle Mkandawire, Mbatamira II village, age 87, heard story in Mandovi, Chilumba area, Nyungwe Catchment Area; it is a Ngoni story. The Ngoni people are famous for story-telling and warfare.

#11: There was a clay child by the name of Maganyeza. Maganyeza was told that he should come home when rain clouds formed in the sky. His mother said, “Do not let rain fall on your body because it will melt.” One day the clay child went very far away from home to play. He saw the clouds, but it was too late. The rain washed

over his body before he reached home, and he died. The mother can still be heard singing:

“The rain is coming. The rain is coming. I am your mother calling. I am your mother calling.”

Lesson: Children should be careful when staying away from home.

Storyteller: Same as in the previous story.

#12: A certain man, Tall, married a beautiful woman. The man was a poor mouser, who was often working in the field. When Tall was gone, other men chased after Tall’s wife. When she told Tall one day that another man had proposed to her while he was working away from home, Tall asked his wife to warn him by singing the following song:

“Tall, Tall, I have gone with another man. Tall, Tall, I have gone with another man. Who is he? Who is he? I’ll beat him with my sickle. I’ll beat him with my sickle.”

When Tall returned home from his work in the field, he found the suitor in his home; the suitor took to his heels.

Lesson: Be faithful in your marriage.

Wiliro Area

Collection Date: Thursday, November 22, 2007

Storyteller: Simon Sinyiza, born 1977, farmer, Amon Sinyiza village, Wiliro Catchment Area

Language: Chiwandya

#13: Kalulu and Monkey were friends. They were stealing groundnuts from somebody’s garden. When the owner discovered that his groundnuts were being stolen, he complained to Kalulu. Kalulu said, “Don’t worry; I will catch the thief for you.” So, he made a trap (scarecrow) and pasted it with a sticky tree sap (gum). He then went to Monkey and told him, “There in the garden is somebody who is very rude. He does not answer when you talk to him.” Monkey and Kalulu went to the garden. When Monkey greeted the scarecrow, it did not answer. Monkey became angry and hit the scarecrow. His hands, legs, head ... his whole body stuck to the scarecrow. Kalulu ran to the owner of the groundnut field and told him, “I caught the thief!” And the owner killed the thief.

Lesson: Even our real friends sometimes betray us.

Storyteller: Willess Nanyiza (Mrs. Symonds – married name), born 1957, committee member of Sungabana CBCC, Simfukwe I village, Wiliro Catchment Area; story told in Nambogho area

Language: Chiwandya

#14: A man and his wife had a garden of millet. One day, they planted a gourd in the middle of the garden. The wife was not happy in her marriage; she planned to leave her husband. She had a hoe which she had received from her husband before she got married. When the husband asked his wife to work in the garden, she said that she was sick, and she hid in a gourd. Observed by a bird from afar, she composed the following song in the gourd:

“Husband, you do not understand, husband you do not understand. Songa (a bird), go and tell my family that I have a problem. Songa, go and tell my family that I have a problem. My problem is as big as a Baobab tree. Please, dear parents, return my hoe to my husband’s family.”

While the woman was singing, her neighbors came to dance in the millet field, and, dancing, they destroyed the whole field. When the man discovered that the field was trampled, he was angry and left his wife for good.

Lesson: Carefully choose your spouse.

Storyteller: Emanuel Silindu, born 1980, CFC Chairman, Marco Mwenechilanga village, Wiliro Catchment Area

Language: Chiwandya

#15: There once was a boy and a snake. One day, when Snake was moving, a big stone fell on his neck so that the snake could not move any more. Snake pleaded with Boy to remove the rock, and Boy did. Ungrateful Snake wanted to bite Boy. When Boy realized that he might be bitten, he started to cry. Kalulu, who happened to be nearby, rushed to Boy and asked him, “Why are you crying?” Boy answered, “I have helped Snake remove a big rock off his neck, and yet, he wants to bite me.” Kalulu said, “Let me put the rock back on Snake’s neck.” So, Kalulu did, and both he and Boy left the place.

Lesson: Be grateful for a favor done to you by a friend.

Storyteller: Fanny Chilongo, born 1981, housewife and Sungawana CFC caregiver, Simfukwe I village, Wiliro Catchment Area

Language: Tumbuka

#16: Cockroach visited Hen. They chatted together, and when it was time for Cockroach to go home, Hen accompanied Cockroach. While the two were on their way to Cockroach’s house, Hen became very hungry and wanted to eat Cockroach. When Hen tried to attack Cockroach, Cockroach flew up in the air and escaped into

the roof of a nearby summer hut. Out of fear of hens, to this day cockroaches hide in the roof of summer huts until the night falls.

Storyteller: Kathanga, CFC Nursery School Volunteer Coordinator, Amos Mwenechilanga village, Wiliro Catchment Area

Language: Chiwandya

#17 (Riddle): How can you cross the river with millet, Goat and Hyena in only two trips? Be careful whom you take because Goat eats the millet and Hyena eats Goat. (Listeners guess.)

Solution: First, take Goat and cross the river; then come back to fetch millet and Hyena.

Collection Date: Friday, November 23, 2007

Storyteller: VH Amos Mwenechilanga, born 1935, farmer, Lufira village, Wiliro Catchment Area

Language: Chiwandya; other version of story (#13) told 11/22/07 by Simon Sinyiza

Alternate Version of #13: A group of monkeys and Kalulu were in a field feasting on the farmer's groundnuts. When Kalulu heard that the farmer was complaining, he told him, "I will catch the thieves for you." Kalulu went back to the monkeys and told them to bury their tails in the ground. The monkeys wondered, "Kalulu, why are you not burying your tail?" Kalulu replied, "My tail is very short." The monkeys were satisfied with Kalulu's answer and buried their tails. When Kalulu saw the owner of the garden approach, he escaped. The monkeys were stuck, and the farmer killed all of them..

Storyteller: Chinula Simwanza (m.), born 1964, farmer and CFC caregiver, Amos Mwenechilanga village

Language: Chiwandya; As opening story, teller wanted to tell Caterpillar story (cf. #1)

Alternate Version of #5: Elephant was the leader of all animals in the forest and Hippo was the leader in the water. One day, Kalulu decided to confuse the two animals. He called both animals separately. First he asked Elephant, "Who is greater, you or Hippo?" Elephant answered, "I am the greatest." Then Kalulu went to Hippo in the water and asked him the same question. Hippo said, "Of course, I am the greatest." Kalulu tied the leg of Elephant to one end of a rope. Then he tied the rope around a tree stump. Finally he attached Hippo's leg to the other end of the rope. Kalulu positioned himself in the middle by the tree stump. Both Elephant and Hippo tugged in vain. The rope did not move because it was tied around the tree. Kalulu boasted, "I am the winner of this contest."

Lesson: Do not try to trick others to rise to power.

Storyteller: Patricia Embale (she wanted to tell the story #13). She did not know another story.

Storyteller: Godwin Musopole, born 1981, farmer, Amos Mwenechilanga village
Language: Chiwandya

#18: Kalulu and Cock were friends. One day Kalulu visited Cock's house to have a chat with him. Kalulu found only the wife of Cock. She said, "My husband is not here." Cock hid his head in his wings. So, Kalulu went back home. Kalulu visited Cock for a second time. The wife told him, "My husband is here, but his head is herding cattle." Kalulu went home and cut off his head and died.

Lesson: Do not be gullible; otherwise bad things may happen to you.

Storyteller: Liness Namunyenembe, mid 60's, housewife; Amos Mwenechilanga village, Wiliro Catchment Area
Language: Chiwandya

#19: A man married a woman. When the man went into the fields, the woman said she was sick and she would remain at home. When alone, she turned into a goat and, as goats do, she created great mess in the house. She sang the following song:

"People (husbands) here marry goats and destroy the property in this house. 2x Bae, bae, bae. 2x

The husband came back from the field and found his house turned upside down. He went back to the garden and hid there. The wife sang again:

"People (husbands) here marry goats and destroy the property of this house. 2x Bae, bae, bae. 2x

One day, the husband came home and found his wife turned into a goat.

Lesson: If you do not look carefully for a wife, you may end up marrying a goat or even worse.

Storyteller: Sulen Smukonda, born 1947, farmer, Amos Mwenechilanga village, Wiliro Catchment
Language: Chiwandya

#20: Owl, the King of Birds, told all the other birds that they should conduct a meeting. All the birds were invited to the meeting, but Bat could not attend because the birds did not think he was a bird. One day Hummingbird got sick, and the birds were told that Dr. Bat was an African (witch) doctor. Blackbird went to Dr. Bat's

office to get help for Hummingbird. But Dr. Bat said, “I cannot see the patient because I am not a bird.” Kalulu went to Dr. Bat and pleaded with him to see the patient. But Dr. Bat refused again. Then, Owl, the King of Birds, sent Swallow to Dr. Bat’s office. Swallow was not received either. Last, Owl went himself to Dr. Bat’s office, and he was told the doctor would see Hummingbird. When Dr. Bat saw Owl with his big eyes, he thought, “This must be the patient.” He treated Owl instead of Hummingbird. Hummingbird died.

Lesson: Beware of doctors!

Storyteller: Smart Chilongo, age 20, married, 2 children, farmer, Amos Mwenechilanga village; the story happened close to Wowe in the Nyungwe area in 2003. Wowe is over 100 km away from Amos Mwenechilanga!

Language: Chiwandya

#21: Two young people were getting married some years ago. As family and friends were presenting their gifts to the couple, a man in a car happened to pass by. He got out of the car and asked the groom if he could drive the bride a little bit around. The groom accepted, and the wife got in the car with the stranger, and off they went ... never to be seen again!

Storyteller: Village Headman Amos Mwenechilanga, born 1935, farmer, Amos Mwenechilanga village, Lufira area, Wiliro Catchment Area

Language: Chiwandya

#22: Fish and Monkey were friends. Fish was often visiting Monkey up in his tree, but Monkey never visited Fish because he was afraid of water. One day, Fish asked Monkey, “Can you visit me?” Monkey was embarrassed to admit that he was afraid of water. Fish offered to carry Monkey on his back. So, off they went. When they reached the deep water, Fish said, “My mother is very sick and I have been told to collect your heart.” Monkey thought hard when he heard this and said, “Sorry, my friend, I left my heart in my tree. Let’s go back and get it.” When the two reached the bottom of the tree, Monkey said, “You are really stupid; I need my heart in my body as much as you need yours.”

Lesson: When all are clever, there are no losers.

Mwanganya Area

Collection Date: Monday, November 26, 2007

Storyteller: Sefelina Namwayi, born 1963, orphan caregiver, housewife, Mwangolera II village, Mwanganya Catchment Area

Language: Chinkhonde

#23: A man and a woman had twin girls, Ngoza and Lyombo. They were told to draw water from the well, one with a gourd, the other one with a tin. Lyombo broke the gourd. She was afraid of being beaten by her father and ran away into the hills. The mother followed Lyombo into the hills to give her food. She sang:

“Lyombo, Lyombo, where are you.” 3x

Lyombo answered:

“I am here.” 3x

After some time, the father discovered that his wife was feeding Lyombo, and he quietly followed his wife to see with his own eyes what was happening. When he found his wife feeding Lyombo, he killed Lyombo.

Lesson: Parents are responsible for their children’s well-being.

Storyteller: Christina Namwayi, born 1954, treasurer of CBO, housewife, Mwakwama village, Biba area, Mwanganya Cathment Area

Language: Chinkhonde

#24: A man had three wives. They went to work in the field. One of the women returned home to get the hoe she had forgotten. At home she took a turkey, killed it, cooked it and, without hesitation, ate it. Then she rejoined her family in the field. When the fieldwork was completed, the man and his three wives went back home. They cooked nsima (large lumps of maize – the Malawian staple) and wanted to add turkey relish, but it was gone! The husband asked his wives who had eaten the turkey relish. None of them admitted to it. He took the wives to a deep well and said, “Whoever has eaten the turkey will drown.” So the wives circled the well singing, “Who has eaten the turkey? Who has eaten the turkey?” The first wife walked around the well without any problem. The second one did likewise. The third wife still did not admit to having eaten the turkey, and when it was her turn to walk around the well, she drowned.

Lesson: Act honestly at home and in the community.

Storyteller: Field Mwanganya, 34 years old, Lusubilo Field Officer, CBO coordinator, farmer, Mwanganya village, Mwanganya Catchment Area

Language: Chinkhonde

#25: Kalulu and Squirrel were hunting. Kalulu had a resounding voice; Squirrel’s voice was very low. When Squirrel had killed an animal, he would whisper, “I have killed.” Kalulu would shout, “I have killed!” All the animals were happy when they heard Kalulu’s loud voice. One day, Squirrel killed a person instead of an animal and whispered, “I have killed,” while Kalulu hollered, “I have killed!” The other animals came and found that a person had been killed. They were very angry. When

Kalulu saw the crowd of animals coming toward him, he said, “Squirrel has killed.” But nobody believed him, and Kalulu paid for Squirrel’s deed with his life.

Lesson: Do not keep everything for yourself; leave something for others.

Storyteller: Simileposhosa Mwenitete (f.), born 1985, farmer, Mwenitete village, Mpata area, Mwanganya Catchment Area

Language: Chinkhonde

#26: Mr. Tembo had a groundnut garden. One day a group of monkeys and Kalulu ate his groundnuts. Kalulu reported to Mr. Tembo that many monkeys were in his garden. Kalulu said, “Let me tell you how you can kill the monkeys.” He advised Mr. Tembo to go to his garden and pretend to be dead. Kalulu then returned to the garden himself to eat more groundnuts with the monkeys. While they were eating, they discovered Mr. Tembo supposedly dead, with ants all over his body. Kalulu and the monkeys carried the “dead body” to Mr. Tembo’s house, singing: “Tembo is dead.” 3x Then Kalulu told the monkeys to close all the doors and windows. He slipped out very quietly, leaving the monkeys behind. After Kalulu had shut the door, Mr. Tembo “woke up,” and killed all the monkeys. Only Kalulu survived.

Storyteller: Field Mwanganya, cf. #25 above. *Kalulu and the Well* (#27) is one of the commonest and most popular trickster stories in Africa (cf. Chimombo, Operation Kalulu, undated copy). There are several versions in existence. The end of this story is the same as in #9.

Language: Chinkhonde

#27: There was a shortage of water in the village. The animals decided to dig a well. Kalulu refused to help. When water was found, the animals excluded Kalulu from getting water. They hired Elephant to watch the well. Kalulu came to the well with a pot of honey. He asked Elephant, “Will you try my honey?” Elephant tasted it and allowed Kalulu to draw water. Other animals were hired as watchmen and offered honey by Kalulu, and all of them let Kalulu draw water. Only Tortoise was clever. She was under the water; Kalulu could not see her, but she could see Kalulu who boldly stole water. She caught Kalulu. The other animals came to the well to kill Kalulu. Kalulu told them, “You cannot kill me by hitting me on the rock, but you can hit me on the sand. Elephant hit Kalulu with his tusk on the sand ... and Kalulu escaped.

Lesson: Do not underestimate the weak and the small.

Storyteller: Lizzie Lyambwile, born 1981, village treasurer, Mwaghulambo village, Kaporo area, Mwanganya Catchment area

Language: Chinkhonde

#28: A family had ten children. The parents owed a lot of money. Therefore they decided to protect the remaining money by investing it in a summer hut. One day the parents went on their way to find work. While they were out, the creditors knocked on the door of the summer hut to recover their money. The creditors were asking, “Can you open?” 2x In the house, the children were answering, “Who are you?” 2x The creditors continued, “Where are your parents?” The children replied, “They are looking for weapons to kill you.” The creditors went in the house through the roof and took one of the children. Upon returning, the parents found only nine left. Next time the parents were gone, the creditors came back to abduct all the children, and the parents found none left. The parents went to the creditors’ village to return some of the borrowed money to them. The children, seeing their parents, refused to return home with them because the creditors had generously fed them; at home only hunger awaited them. The village headman took pity on the parents and gave them a good plot to grow food for the children. Now there was enough food for the whole family.

Lesson: Poverty often causes problems.

Storyteller: Godfrey Sembo, 25 years old, Chairman of CBCC Mwandambo, farmer, Mwandambo village, Mwanganya Catchment Area

Language: Chikhonde

#29: Hyena and Kalulu were good friends. They lived together in the bush. Unfortunately, they had no food. They discussed this issue and concluded, “In town, there must be food.” Traveling to town, Kalulu slept on the road, pretending to be dead. A driver found him and thought he was dead. In the car, there was some food: bread, sugar, mangos ... The driver loaded “dead” Kalulu in his car. Kalulu “woke up,” took the food and escaped from the car. Hyena and Kalulu happily shared the food. Now it was Hyena’s turn to “sleep” on the road, pretending to be dead. Hyena was a coward; when the car approached, she said, “Huwi, huwi!” and ran away. Kalulu scolded Hyena’ “Next time, do not run away when the car comes.” Hyena “slept” again on the road; the car came again and killed Hyena.

Lesson: Do right wherever you may be.

Storyteller: Godfrey Sembo, cf. #29 above

#30: Lion and Cow were friends. Each had one child. To provide food for the children, Lion hunted animals while Cow was collecting grass. One day there were no animals and no grass for Lion and Cow. The two children left behind were very hungry. They said, “Let us fight each other; the one that falls down shall be killed and eaten.” Lion’s child fell first. He said, “Let’s try again. Last time, we did not proceed properly.” So, they started fighting again. Again, Lion’s child fell down, and this time he died. When Cow came home she found only her child alive. Together they ran away from home. Later Lion came home with meat. He was very angry to find his child dead and pursued Cow and her child. Cow had meanwhile

reached Cock's house. Cock asked Cow, "Why are you running?" Cow answered, "We are afraid of Lion." Cock said, "I am a chief. Nothing will happen to you." And Cock invited Cow and her child into his house. After a short while, Lion arrived. Cock asked, "What are you looking for, Mr. Lion?" Lion answered, "I am looking for Cow and her child." When Cow heard this, she started to cry. Cock said to Cow, "You are wanted by Mr. Lion." Cow said to her child, "Let us pray first." After praying, the cow and her child went to Lion and started fighting with him. Equipped with divine power, they managed to kill Lion.

Lesson: Do not lose hope. Never give up.

Storyteller: Bridget Botha, age 60, nurse, Lupoka village, Bolero area, Rumphi District
Language: Tumbuka

#31: A husband and a wife had two children, Tullanganya and Tulamanya. The wife drowned, leaving her husband and the two girls behind. The man remarried. The second wife hated the children. She dug a hole and buried both of them. The children died.

Lesson: Treat all the children as you would treat your own.

Collection Date: Tuesday, November 27, 2007

Storyteller: Mines Ngomba, age 69, CBCC Treasurer, Mwenitete village, Mwanganya Catchment Area
Language: Chinkhonde

#32: Five girls were chatting under a tree. A lame man appeared. One girl could not help but laugh at him.

The girls went to collect mushrooms in the forest. There it rained. They took shelter under a tree. When the rain ceased, the girls stepped out from under the tree, one by one, singing:

"The one remaining under the tree will turn into a pillar." 2x

After this song, the girl that had laughed too much turned into a pillar.

Lesson: Do not make fun of disabled people.

Storyteller: Same as in the previous story (#32)

#33: A boy was suffering from leprosy. Nobody in the village wanted to be with him. He was shunned. The parents made a small hut for the boy to keep him away. Whenever the mother brought food to the hut, she sang:

“Can you open for me?” The boy answered, “You have made a hut for me in the bush.” 2x

One day an animal came to the hut and ate the boy.

Lesson: Do not stigmatize a person suffering from an illness.

Storyteller: Joice Ngomba, born 1958, farmer, Mwentete I village, Mpata area, Mwanganya Catchment Area

Language: Chinkhonde

#34: There were two women. One had an incurable wound on her swollen back. The healthy woman made fun of her. The sick woman resented her. She took her wound and put it right on the other woman’s back, and the other woman died.

Lesson: Do not laugh at a disabled person.

Storyteller: Topsy Mwakalogho, born 1971, wood carver, farmer, Mwenitete I village

Language: Chinkhonde

#35: There once were a black and a white woman. Hyena wanted to marry the white lady, but Kalulu loved her too. He was jealous of Hyena and went to the lady, asking her, “Why do you love Hyena?” He is only my worker. I can prove it to you.” One day Kalulu pretended not to feel well and asked Hyena to give him a ride. When they approached the white lady’s house, she noticed Kalulu sitting on Hyena’s back. Kalulu said, “Didn’t I tell you that Hyena is my worker. Not long thereafter, the white lady married Kalulu.

Storyteller: Lea Nyamugala, age between 70 and 80; when the Byipya (boat on Lake Malawi) sank in 1946, she was very young; farmer, Mwenekawe village, Kasis area, on the Kaporo side, Mwanganya Catchment Area

Language: Chinkhonde

#36: A man had two wives. Both of them had children, one child each. One of the women died, leaving her child to the other one. The stepmother was very cruel to her dead sister’s child: She took her stepchild and pushed her under a stone. The child would sing:

“Mother, Mother, I am here, under the stone.”

When the child’s father heard the singing, he looked for his child, found her and rescued her from under the stone.

Lesson: We must take care of other people’s children as we do of our own.

Shola Area

Collection Date: Wednesday, November 28, 2007

Storyteller: Keti Nankhonde, 36 years old, housewife/farmer and CBCC cook, Peter Mwangalaba I village, Shola Catchment Area -- The story is reminiscent of *Ali Baba and the 40 Thieves*

Language: Tumbuka

#37: Kalulu and Hyena were friends. One day Kalulu found Hyena at home, very weak from hunger. Kalulu said to Hyena, "Had I known, I would have carried some food to you. I know about a room full of food." This room was a storage room for the lions' meat. Kalulu and Hyena decided to look for food in this room. Kalulu taught Hyena the magic song that would open the door to the lions' storage:

"My door, open, open."

The door opened, and Kalulu and Hyena helped themselves to all the meat they had ever wanted. After the feast, the two went home. The next day, Hyena went to the storage room by herself. Upon her arrival, Hyena used the magic song Kalulu had taught her.

"My door, open, open."

And the door opened. Hyena helped herself to all the meat she wanted. After the meal, Hyena, ready to leave the storage area, sang:

"My door, shut, shut."

But nothing happened. The door remained shut, and Hyena was locked in. Mr. and Mrs. Lion, the owners of the room, came unexpectedly. Hyena, in an attempt to save her life, hid under the meat. But her tail was not covered. Mrs. Lion noticed it and said, "Strange, our meat has grown a tail." Hyena heard this. Quickly she dug a hole and gathered dust. As Mrs. Lion was trying to pull Hyena's tail, Hyena jumped up and threw a lot of dust in the lions' eyes.

Storyteller: Same as in the previous story (#37) -- The story is akin to Rudyard Kipling's *Why Rhinoceroses Have Wrinkly Skin*: The rhino took off his skin to go swimming at the beach. When he put his skin back on, there was sand in it. It was so itchy that he scratched until his skin had wrinkles.

Language: Tumbuka

38: Kalulu had a car. He used to take his car for stealing bananas and chicken. One day he was stealing with Hyena, and the two of them cooked the stolen bananas and chickens. When the meal was ready, Kalulu said, "I am very sick. Hyena, can you get me some medicine." While Hyena was fetching the medicine, Kalulu finished the meal all by himself. Hyena came home, and all the delicious food was gone. This scheme happened several times. After a while, though, Kalulu had to change his

scheme: He removed his skin and ate the food. When Hyena came home from the doctor, she could just see a red animal. She became very frightened and ran away. Hyena started to wonder why the red animal would always appear when she and Kalulu had cooked the bananas and the chickens. She really wanted to know what was happening. And she saw the following: Before the meal, Kalulu would take off his skin, soak it in water and eat the bananas and the chickens. After the meal, he would put on the skin and, well nourished, he would go home to rest. After Hyena had observed Kalulu, she went to the water, took the skin out and hid it in the sand. When Kalulu returned from his meal, he found the skin in the sand. It was totally dried up, and Kalulu died.

Storyteller: Elube Mwamlima, age 13, Standard (Primary) 5, Mwanganda village, Shola Catchment Area; Elube was introduced as the granddaughter of Katerin Sapi, approx. 85, (When James Mwanganda's father, the recently deceased chief, was born, she was a little girl. James Mwanganda is the storyteller of #47, cf. p. 49).

Language: Chinkhonde

#39: There was a husband who hated his wife. He made a plan how to kill her. He sent his wife to a deep well. The wife refused at first, but her husband was cruel and forced her to go. When the wife tried to draw water, she drowned.

Storyteller: Febi Nyrenda, born 1969, CFC cook, Mwanganda village, Shola Catchment Area

Language: Chinkhonde

#40: There were two boys who were very poor. They set out to look for a job, and they found a rich man. This man gave them work. The two boys worked for many years without being paid. One day they told the man that they wanted to quit their jobs and go home. The man gave one boy a basket of maize and the other one a bundle of grass. The boy who had received the maize was very happy with his pay because he would always have food on his way home. The boy with the grass, however, had nothing. But when the boy with the maize reached his home, he had eaten everything he had received. The boy with the grass came home to his parents with the grass. The parents were upset, scolding him, "You have worked all these years for nothing else but grass!" When the boy untied his bundle, a wonderful house came out of it. And his parents were delighted.

Lesson: Do not give up. God will reward you in time.

Storyteller: Cf. #40 above

#41: Swarms of mosquitoes lived in a certain area. The animals in this area had a rule: Those who do not swat any mosquito during the night, will be paid a cow. Kalulu had a clever plan: Every time he swatted a mosquito, he would tell the other animals the following story as he was hitting the mosquitoes on his body, “I have a cow; here it is red; here it is yellow; and here it is black.” The other animals did not realize that Kalulu was killing all the mosquitoes that pestered him, and Kalulu received the promised cow.

Collection Date: Thursday, November 29, 2007

Storyteller: Jean Nagomba, age 48, CBCC Committee Member, Kasote II village, Shola Catchment Area

Language: Chinkhonde

#42: Two twin sisters, Ngoza and Kasiwa, received marriage proposals from young men in the disguise of animals. Ngoza accepted. Kasiwa declined. Ngoza moved in with her husband. She asked her sister not to follow her, but Kasiwa did not listen. On the way to the young man’s house, the animal suitors left the two girls with an old woman. The old woman asked the sisters, “Where are you going?” Ngoza said, “I am on my way to my husband’s house.” The old woman retorted, “These young men are not human beings but animals.” The old woman made a drum and hid the two sisters in it. Taking the girls to their parents’ house, the woman carrying the drum sang:

“Mbitikumbi (sound of the drum), mbitikumbi. Kango’ ma Kakalilanga (sound of the drum), kango’ma Kakalilanga.

The animals came running to the old woman’s house, but the old woman and Ngoza and Kasiwa had already left for their parents’ house. The animals followed suit. In order to get rid of their daughters’ unusual suitors, the girls parents’ poured hot water from the drum over the animals when they arrived at their house. All the animals died.

Storyteller: Winnie Nyasulu, age 28, CBCC Committee Member and housewife, Kasote II village, Shola Catchment Area

Language: Tumbuka

#43: There was a family with many children. Whenever a child was born, the husband would use witchcraft and kill the newborn child. When the wife gave birth to twins, she feared her husband would kill these children too. She therefore went to the bees. The bees said, “Don’t worry and bring your children to us.” The mother entrusted her children to the bees. When she came to breastfeed the children, she would sing a song:

“Na’nga’ (crying of babies); the hole (where the bees are living) is crying.” 2x

The husband, wondering about the disappearance of his children, asked his wife about their whereabouts. The woman, afraid that her husband would kill the children at the first chance, said, “This is none of your business.” One day the husband followed his wife to the hole of the bees. When the wife had fed the babies and left the hole, her husband sang his wife’s song. The bees were surprised that the voice of the woman had changed. They swarmed out of their hole, attacked the unsuspecting husband and killed him. The wife lived a long and happy life with her children.

Lesson: Choose your future husband carefully.

Storyteller: Albert Sichoni, born 1940, farmer, Mwambuli II CBCC Chairman (applied the story to his personal experience), Mwambuli II village, Shola Catchment Area

Language: Chinkhonde

#44: Kalulu and Monkey were good friends. The people in the village did not like Monkey because he was known to be a troublemaker. Kalulu promised the villagers to kill Monkey. He saw a mango high up in a tree. He asked Monkey, “Can you get it? You are an excellent climber.” Monkey climbed up. When he tried to pick the mango, the rotten branch broke, and Monkey, falling from the tree, broke his neck and died.

Lesson: If you create problems, people will not shy away from hurting you.

Storyteller: Tryness Nachali, Mrs. Symbeye, CFC cook, housewife and farmer, Mwambuli II village, Shola Catchment Area. The story was told in Mwangwewo, Nthola area, when Tryness was a primary school girl.

Language: Tumbuka

#45: Kalulu wanted to settle in the village, but Dog was not happy about this. When Kalulu tried to come down from the hills, Dog, waiting on the road, chased Kalulu. Kalulu returned back into the hills. To this day, rabbits are found uphill, and they are afraid of dogs.

Storyteller: Rose Nagamba, Mrs. Munthali, age 31, CBCC caregiver and housewife, Mwanyongo village, Shola Catchment Area

Language: Chinkhonde -- The story reminds of *The Frog Prince* by the Grimm Brothers

#46: There was a woman who wanted to get married. One day, as she was moving in the bush and looking for a husband, she found a snake. Snake asked her, “Can you carry me on your back?” The woman accepted and carried Snake. When they reached home, the woman cooked a meal for Snake. Snake asked her, “Can you boil water and pour it on me?” The woman did so. And Snake turned into a beautiful white man with a mansion filled with luxurious furniture.

When the friend of the woman saw the good things that had happened to her friend, she wanted the same for herself. She went out to look for a snake, found one, and asked the snake if she (the friend of the woman) could carry it on her back. The snake was so heavy that the woman's friend dropped it. The snake was infuriated, beat the woman and killed her.

Lesson: If you want to imitate another person, do it exactly his/her way.

Storyteller: James Mwanganda, born 1956, Irrigation Promoter, Agro Dealer, and CBCCC caregiver, Mwanganda Village, Shola Catchment Area

Language: Chinkhonde

#47: There was a rich king who had only one son. One day a beast came and kidnapped the king's son. He hid him underwater in the lake. Later the king found out about the kidnapping. He called a big meeting and told everyone that his only son had disappeared. He ordered all the animals to help him bring back his son, saying, "If somebody can help me, I will reward him with great treasures." To assist him in the search of his son, the king found a dreamer, who had to dream about where the king's son might be; a boat driver to drive the boat in search of the son; a boat repairer, who had to mend the boat; a spear shooter to shoot the animals damaging the boat; and a professional thief to rescue the king's son. The king went on his search with the boat driver, dreamer, boat repairer, spear shooter and the thief. The thief had to dive underwater in order to rescue the king's son; the spear shooter had to kill the beasts that damaged the boat. The boat was pulled on shore by a group of wild beasts and damaged. It needed mending. The boat repairer mended it, and the boat driver took the king and his son back home to the palace, where they lived happily ever after.

Presenter of Song: Rose Niyrenda, in her 60's, retired primary school teacher, St. Mary's Catholic School, Karonga

#48: Kalulu, vina, a – e, Kalulu, vina, vina, vina pamchenga.
Kalulu, Nyada, a – e, Kalulu, nyada, nyada, nyada pamchenga.
Kalulu, duka, a – e, Kalulu, duka, duka, duka pamchenga.
Kalulu, yenda, a – e, Kalulu, yenda, yenda, pamchenga.⁷

⁷ Kalulu, dance, a – e, Kalulu, dance, dance, dance in the sand.
Kalulu, boast, a – e, Kalulu, boast, boast, boast in the sand.
Kalulu, jump, a – e, Kalulu, jump, jump, jump in the sand.
Kalulu, walk, a – e, Kalulu, walk, walk, walk in the sand.

Appendix II

Map of Catchment Areas

Figure 1: The four catchment areas, Mwanganya, Wiliro, Shola and Nyungwe, are located within a radius of about 50 km from the town of Karonga. All stories were collected in these four regions.

Appendix III

Linguistic Map

Figure 2: The main languages in the northern region (cf. Appendix II) are Atumbuka (Tumbuka) and Ankhonde (Chinkhonde). Lesser spoken languages in the same area are Chiwandya (Wiliro Catchment Area, Karonga District) and Chindala (Wiliro Catchment Area, Chitipa District) (Schoffeleers & Roscoe, 1985, p. 8).

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