

THE IDEGO PAYMENTS ON THE DEATH OF A MALE OR FEMALE
AMONG THE LEGA

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IDEGO - PAYMENTS AND NTIKO - HERITAGE.

On the death of a male among the Lega two categories of persons are engaged in a complex distribution of valuables. The first category of persons are those who may exert claims to ntiko, i.e. who have the right and privilege of being heirs to the property left by the deceased. This category comprises two kinds of persons: a) the close agnates of the deceased ; b) his sororal nephews and nieces, whether real or classificatory ones. To the second category belong persons who have the right of partaking in idego - distributions. To these belong members of the seven groups of 'male mothers' recognised by the Lega. On the death of a female, ntiko-rights are not enforced. Idego-distributions occur but a distinction is made between a married and an unmarried woman. With regard to an unmarried woman the seven groups of 'male mothers' are again engaged, but in the case of a married woman the payments have to be divided between four groups of 'male mothers' and her close agnates.

Sororal nephews never have claims on idego-distributions and it may be interesting to trace in what degree they have rights to the ntiko-heritage, left by their uncle. When his maternal uncle dies a sororal nephew may inherit several things. These are; a wife ; bikulo, i.e. lega money, goats or tools ; an isigi, i.e. the bride-payment given for one of his female cross-cousins. If both uncle and nephew were members of the same degree of the bwame association, the sororal nephew may get certain initiatory objects and certain paraphernalia of his maternal uncle. But he gets these objects only provisionally, for when a younger brother or a child of his maternal uncle becomes initiated to that bwame degree the sororal nephew will have to return all these initiatory objects to him. There are always certain conditions attached to inheritance from a maternal uncle. First of all, if the maternal uncle has left behind brothers or sons, the right of distributing his wives and goods belongs to them only. The Lega say : Ka nkazi kubegania nte ka ndume kasila (tr: "If the female side distributes it means the male side has died out"). This means that initiative is with the agnates and that they can distribute to the nephew according to their wishes. Again, if his maternal uncle died without leaving close agnates, a sororal nephew might inherit all the goods left by him, but he will rarely be alone to distribute them, for a man has many sororal nephews under the principles of Omaha structure and several groups of 'male mothers' are recognised. In that case, the order of primogeniture and the order of classificatory distance will determine of how the goods have to be divided.

Strictly speaking, a sororal niece may not inherit from her maternal uncle. On his death, she may however get chickens, goats, money and pieces of bark-cloth. These chickens are really her property, because they are traditionally reserved for sororal nephews and nieces. The bark-cloth too is hers, provided it will be worn by herself, but if she gives it to her husband it becomes part of mubego. Mubego is the term used for the many gifts which a man gets continually, as long as the marriage link exists, from his wife's family and from her maternal uncles. They form the counterpart of igambia, the many goods given by a man and his agnates to his wife's family and maternal uncles. On the break-up of the marriage link, these Mubego gifts are subtracted from the amount of igambia-payments and actual marriage-payments before the difference is paid by the bride-givers to the bride-takers. To the mubego category belong further the goats and money a sororal niece might have got.

IDEGO-DISTRIBUTIONS TAKING PLACE WHEN THE DECEASED IS A MARRIED OR UNMARRIED MALE.

I illustrate the procedures followed and show the groups of 'male mothers' engaged in the case of an individual called Lumbeku. I like to stress from the outset that the idego-payment is a fixed pattern among all Lega, although the amount of goods given varies from region to region or according to the degree of wealth of the agnates of the deceased. The number of goods given in my present example may be considered as a fairly common one, if not the standard type.

As soon as Lumbeku died a message was sent by his agnates to his real maternal uncles, the Banakeluka, a minimal lineage established in the same mutanda, or sequence of villages, as Lumbeku's group. Being thus informed about the death of their nephew, three male siblings (Beitanyama, Muswala and Melanga) of Lumbeku's mother immediately set out for their nephew's village, accompanied by some of their wives and two other agnates, elders of the two other extended families of their minimal lineage. Sorrow on the loss of a nephew is manifested, on the side of the maternal uncles, by angeriness, suspicion and feelings of retaliation. This means that they make for their nephew's village carrying their spears, meditating even armed retaliation, if they do not get due compensation for their hard loss. The saying is : Basia mubabo, beia ketumba bakongia ge isula (tr: "Give them the mubabo-goods, or the possessors of the corpse make noise on the confines of the village.")

On their arrival, they did not make for their nephew's hut but stayed at the confines of the village, accusing his agnates and launching all kinds of **invectives at them. This was a sign for the agnates to make a first step of reconciliation.** For that purpose they had amassed the first goods which consisted of three parts :

- a) mivulovulo: a lavish dinner comprising meat, bananas, pounded earth-nuts, rice, salt and palm-oil.
- b) mesonga: a he-goat called kelemba kya mesonga or mpene za makwa, a substitution for the loss of working power. This goat was provisionally set aside.
- c) mubabo: a payment of twenty kelunga. Kelunga is one of the most current measures of Lega-money, consisting of forty double rows of small pieces of shells of nkola-and nkese molluscs which are threaded on raffia-fibres. The length of each row is measured from the top-point of the middle finger up to the middle fold of the arm. Nowadays 20 kelunga are evaluated 80 frs. This money too was provisionally set aside.

This first amount of goods was primarily provided by members of Lumbeku's extended family, although other agnates of his minimal, and even minor and major, lineages had contributed to piling-up these goods.

The maternal uncles were partially satisfied with this first payment. They now consented to assist at the idelo, mourning ceremonies, which may take about a month. In the mean-time, other interested parties had been informed about the death of their nephew and had sent their representatives. The close agnates of Lumbeku went further in search of the necessary idego-payments, for everything has to be ready before

the end of the mourning. The idego-transactions start with the mekulu-proceedings. Two speakers are chosen, generally an agnate and the senior real maternal uncle of the deceased. The senior maternal uncle, in this case Beitanyama, placed a long walking stick on the ground. It represented the corpse of the dead nephew of which the real maternal uncles, in this case the Banakeluka, were possessors. Now began a dialogue between the two speakers in which they asked one another to cite the names of the several other groups of 'male mothers', now present, who had legitimate claims to idego.

1. Beitanyama asks where Lumbeku's mother's mother came from. The second speaker, on behalf of the agnates, replies that she was a girl of Banakonga-lineage. Beitanyama now places a small stick obliquely against the walking stick on the left side.
2. He then asks where his mother's mother's mother came from. She was a girl of Bananzibu-lineage. A second stick is placed in prolongation of the first one.
3. Who were his mother's father's mother's brothers? They were of Banikumia-lineage. Beitanyama places a third stick on the left side of the walking-stick, obliquely against it and parallel to the two former ones.
4. Where did his father's mother come from? She was a girl of Bagunga-lineage, Beitanyama places a fourth stick obliquely on the right side of the walking stick, at the same height as the first one.
5. Who were the maternal uncles of his father's mother? They were of Banamwalu-lineage. Beitanyama places a fifth stick in prolongation of the fourth one.
6. Finally, who were the maternal uncles of his father's father? They were of Banangumbu-lineage. A sixth stick is placed parallel to the two former ones, on the height of the third stick.

It was now time to present the idego-goods to be divided among the seven groups of 'male mothers', symbolically represented by the large walking-stick and the six smaller sticks. These goods were split into two parts: the goods directly given to the real maternal uncles; and the goods set apart for the other six groups of 'male mothers'.

To the real maternal uncles, in this case the Banakeluka, the following goods were given: 100 kelunga, i.e. 400 double rows of the kelunga-measure of Lega money, described above as equivalent to 400 frs.; 1 big she-goat called kebuti kya maliba (600 frs.); ten axes (masara) which equal the value of a he-goat (300 frs.); one spear (ishumo); one large knife (mwene); one sickle-shaped knife (mugusu); one piece of bark-cloth (isusi) used for the care of small children. Another 70 kelunga, ten iron tools and one he-goat was given to the six other groups of 'male mothers'. They distributed them according to the following scheme :

1. Banakonga, maternal uncles of Lumbeku's mother, received 20 kelunga, two iron tools and the he-goat.

2. Bananzibu, maternal uncles of his mother's mother, received ten kelunga, one iron tool.
3. Bagunga, maternal uncles of his father, got 20 kelunga and one iron tool. They protested saying that it was not sufficient and got another five iron tools.

Let us remark here that the distribution of goods is always characterised by the mbiso-proceedings, that is to say that, on every occasion, the giving party tries to give as little as possible, hiding away provisionally part of the prestation due. This, each time, elicits a mass of protests but always ends with the addition of some more goods.

4. The Banamwalu, maternal uncles of his father's mother, received 10 kelunga and one iron tool.
5. The Banikumia, maternal uncles of his mother's father, only got five tuko twa kelunga (20 frs.)
6. The Banangumbu, maternal uncles of his father's father, received five tuko twa kelunga.

With regard to these six groups of 'male mothers' it should be pointed out that the persons having a right to these idego-payments belong to the small and closely knit group of direct and collateral descendants which provides the linking woman. The goods have to be divided within the framework of this small kin-group by their senior representative.

More important is the type of redistribution which takes place within the lineage of true maternal uncles. Let us therefore turn again to our example. The Banakeluka minimal lineage is composed by three extended families: Banakasololo, Banamube and Bananyange. Kasololo is the extended family group to which belonged Nyampala, mother of Lumbeku. Their senior, Beitanyama, charged to make an harmonious redivision of the idego-goods, disposed first of all of 110 kelunga-measures of money (100 given to him as idego and ten remaining from the 20 kelunga given as mubabo, the ten others having been distributed among members of his lineage present at the mourning ceremonies.) He gave ten kelunga and one iron tool to the Banamube extended family. He gave another ten kelunga and one iron tool to the Bananyange extended family. The remaining 90 kelunga, 11 iron tools and the she-goat were left to be divided among members of his own extended family. These Banakasololo consisted of two branches, in this case the Mwezi and Sabakubumba families. There were thus two possibilities. It might be decided not to distribute the idego part, but to give it to an unmarried member of the group as an isigi, bride-payment. Or the valuables might still be further divided according to following pattern: the Sabakubumba family might get 30 kelunga and four iron tools, while the greater remaining part might be left to the Mwezi family, Mwezi being the father of Lumbeku's mother. The Mwezi family consisted of three living males and two females of whom the elder one, Lumbeku's mother, had died. There was no further division of the goods within their group, except for the piece of bark-cloth given to the younger female. Beitanyama, the senior, would take care of them until some necessity such as an insufficiency of bride-wealth, or wealth for law-cases, initiation ceremonies or exchanges forced him to award them to one of his

had been a compounded one, i.e. if Mwezi had also had children by another of his wives, this fraction of half-siblings would have got its part, say twenty kelunga, the spear and one axe.

IDEGO-PROCEEDINGS WHEN THE DECEASED IS AN UNMARRIED WOMAN.

The transactions are here simpler and the amount of goods exchanged is less considerable. The mululu-proceeding is less complicated, for it is only the walking stick of the maternal uncles which is placed on the village-ground. Mivulovulo, mesonga and mubabo preliminary exchanges are of the same pattern, except for the mubabo money-payment which only amounts to ten kelunga. The groups of 'male mothers' claiming a right to idego-payments are only three: her own maternal uncles; her father's maternal uncles; and her mother's maternal uncles. The amount of idego itself is more reduced: five tuko twa kelunga and two iron tools are given to the maternal uncles of her mother; five tuko twa kelunga are awarded to the maternal uncles of her father; one piece of bark-cloth is given to her mother or little mother; and 80 kelunga, a she-goat and eight iron tools remain the property of the real maternal uncles who divide them in the same way as described above.

IDEGO-PROCEEDINGS WHEN THE DECEASED IS A MARRIED WOMAN.

In this case the woman's maternal uncles as well as her male agnates go to receive the payments at her husband's village. The mivulovulo, mesonga and mubabo payments are of the usual type, but it must be noted that they are directly transmitted to her agnates and not to her maternal uncles. It is their task to give part of them to the maternal uncles. One stick only, that which represents her agnates, is placed on the village-ground. Thereupon the following idego has to be given: 120 kelunga, one she-goat, ten iron tools, the knife with which she used to plant young banana-shoots (muluga or kemungu) and one piece of bark-cloth (isusi).

The agnates first remit 30 kelunga and the ten iron tools to her real maternal uncles, who have to take ten kelunga and one iron tool from their portion to be remitted to the maternal uncles of their sororal niece's mother. The piece of bark-cloth becomes the property of a sister or daughter of the man whose daughter died, whereas the digging-knife is given to one of his wives or to one of the wives of his elder brother. The agnates themselves cede another ten kelunga to her father's maternal uncles and another five tuko twa kelunga to her father's father's maternal uncles. The remaining 85 kelunga are to be distributed within the group of the dead woman's agnates, whereas the she-goat remains the exclusive property of her father or elder brother.

Let us choose an example to show how these 85 kelunga are parcelled out. Suppose the dead girl, Mpasa, belonged to Banamubembe sub-clan, which consists of eight maximal lineages, of which the membership is very reduced nowadays because of a high mortality-rate and absence of men as migrant labourers. These eight maximal lineages have become established in one large village, although some of their older members have continued to live in neighbouring bush-villages. In this village they are divided into four hamlets called: Banakeluka, Banikumia, Banitungwa and Banamuganza.

The Banakeluka-hamlet groups together the descendants of two maximal lineages, Banantengi and Banayunza, the founders of which were siblings. Banikumia-hamlet is occupied by the descendants of Walikungu-lineage. Banamuganza-hamlet comprises the descendants of Muganza-lineage, a group of former serfs who have been incorporated. Banitungwa-hamlet groups the descendants of five maximal lineages: the descendants of Itongwa and Isabumba, children of the same mother; the descendants of Yango and Mwenda, children of another wife of Mubembe; the descendants of Kyalanga, a man who formerly joined his sister who had become Mubembe's wife. Mpasa's maximal lineage was Banitungwa and hence it was only Banitungwa-hamlet which might claim rights to the idego-distributions. Ten kelunga were given to the Isabumba-lineage; five tuko twa kelunga were remitted to the Kyalanga-lineage and another five to Yango-Mwenda-lineages. 65 kelunga remained the property of the Itongwa-lineage itself. This lineage is split into five major lineages, Numbe, Bubala, Kegunda, Kabungu and Muganga, the major lineage of Mpasa being Kegunda. The descendants of Kabungu could participate in the idego-transactions since they are descendants through the female line since Kabungu had only left behind daughters. Each of the three other lineages, got ten kelunga, whereas the remaining 35 kelunga were the property of the Kegunda-lineage. This last lineage being very reduced in membership, the 35 kelunga will, as a rule, not be redistributed but reserved as a contribution to the bride-payment of one of their members.

SOME GENERAL REMARKS CONCERNING IDEGO.

It was pointed out above that idego-transactions are universal among Lega and that they operate in the same directions. This is true. Everywhere the two stages of preliminary payments (grouped under the name mubabo) and the idego-payments proper are distinguished, although a different terminology may be used, e.g.

<u>Beia</u>	<u>Bakyunga</u>	<u>Baliga</u>	<u>Basimwenda</u>	<u>Bamuzimu</u>
Mubabo	Mubabo	Kagenge	Kakingi	Kagenge
Idego	Idego	Idego	Busi'u or Ileho	Busiku

Valuables distributed differ from region to region, though goats and iron tools are universally used. Among the Bakyunga of Shabunda-territory, for example, shell-money has almost entirely been lost during war-expeditions. It is replaced there by a greater number of goats (up to four) and iron tools (up to 50). Among the Basi-mwenda of Mwenga-territory shell-money has been lost very long ago and replaced by other monetary standards, mazinge (copper discs) and tulanga (oval pearls). Among the Bainyendu of Mwenga-territory tebele (oval pearls) and mlinga (copper bracelets) are regularly given. In some regions too, other valuables may be added to those mentioned in our example, such as hunting-nets, dogs, salt, oil and beer.

2. The idego of the Babembe, who form the extreme eastern wave of the Lega-complex, is less important and consists of the payment of only one goat, called 'asa'o or mbuci ca 'asa'o. The groups of maternal

On the death of their nephew, the real maternal uncles get the goat and make the following distribution of it: one leg and the back for themselves; one leg and one shoulder for the maternal uncles of their nephew's mother; one shoulder for the maternal uncles of their nephew's mother's father. The exclusion here of all maternal uncles on the side of the father is the more remarkable as the Babembe, in other circumstances, recognize five groups of maternal uncles. As an example, the day a woman definitely joins her husband's village, she carries with her two goats (mbuci ca ibombwe lya wetu mwiwa), which are remitted to her husband's real maternal uncles. The first goat is parcelled out as follows: one leg and the back for the real maternal uncles; one shoulder and leg for the husband's mother's real maternal uncles; one shoulder for the husband's mother's father's maternal uncles. The second goat is distributed as follows: one leg and the back for the husband's close agnates; one leg and one shoulder for the husband's father's maternal uncles; one shoulder for the husband's father's father's maternal uncles. If their nephew has died very young, the payment of two chickens to his real maternal uncles may suffice.

3. At present, idego-payments are losing much of their importance among Lega. Owing to an important economic development and to the rise of new social and religious values, greater stress is now laid on a closely knit extended family group because of the loss of effectiveness of more extensive kinship links. The general tendency now is to maintain the idego-payments within the extended family. The males of the extended family incline to monopolize within their ranks the rights to idego to be paid for their daughter. The real maternal uncles tend to restrict to their group the claims to idego and to exclude the other groups of 'male mothers'.

4. Customarily idego was paid for everybody, except for:

a) the Kanyamwa. Kanyamwa is the spouse of a man initiated to the highest degree of the bwame-association and a woman who has herself passed through the bunyamwa rites. Lega when speaking Kiswa/hili and comparing new customs with the old ones, maintain that the bunyamwa-rites had the same meaning as ndoa, or marriage as conceived by Catholics or Protestants. By this they want to stress the character of indissolubility of the marriage-link between this mwame and his wife initiated into the bunyamwa. A kanyamwa could never again be married to another man. She could never be inherited out of her husband's close family-group, and idego could never be paid for her. On the occasion of her initiation into Bunyamwa, two or three goats (kwabuga) were given to her father or elder brother, this being the very last claim her patri-group could put upon her. The two or three goats belonged to her father or elder brother, who usually gave part of them to her maternal uncles.

Nowadays, because of the suppression of the bwame-association and an extreme craving for money, idego is being paid for a woman who had been initiated to bunyamwa.

b) Kyalubunga and kinamulungu. Kyalubunga is a child born of an unmarried woman and a stranger in adulterous union. Kinamulungu, referring to a

custom which only occurs among a small group of Lega is a child born of an unmarried woman and a kinsman of hers in a union which is not considered as being adulterous, since the father wants his daughter to bring forth one or two children in his village before being married;

5. It formerly happened that a man himself might be given as idego-payment, if his family had refused to award the idego-valuables to his maternal uncles. The Ba-Gilanzeli-clan presents an interesting example. Actually a lineage called Banakasalaguzi has been incorporated in this clan. It is said nowadays that Kasalaguzi had three children: Kaseke, a male, Nyabibe, a female, and Kentolo, a male. In fact, Nyabibe was a daughter of Lwambo, an elder classificatory brother of Kasalaguzi. She had been married to Lukwe, a child of Kasalaguzi, to whom she never bore any children. In the present genealogy Nyabibe is mentioned as a child of Kasalaguzi, and not as his daughter-in-law. She there represents two names, that of her husband, Lukwe, and that of her husband's sister, Ngalia. This Ngalia had been married to Ba-Gilanzeli-clan and had given birth there to a son, Itetente. On the death of Ngalia, her husband's family refused to pay idego to her family, whereupon Kaseke, senior of Kasalaguzi-lineage, took his nephew, Itetente, as a substitute for idego-payment. Itetente was now incorporated into the group of his maternal uncles where he inherited the wife of his maternal uncle, the so-called Nyabibe;

6. A Mulega often died in a Kasala-revenge, i.e. an individual of another clan of tribe came and killed an enemy of his without warning. This happened rarely but might give rise to a real war (izombo). Both parties considered it senseless to engage in a war because of a mere personal revenge. They therefore decided to meet ge ibamba, as a place situated between their territories. The lineage group of the murderer then agreed to give goods as a substitution for the loss caused to the lineage of the deceased. These goods were generally not accepted and had to be replaced by a girl, called malonga or kemonano, the girl of reconciliation. Soon after, the maternal uncles, informed of the murder of their nephew, set out for his village in a really war-like manner to ask full explanations. "Why did you not engage in a war? We were ready for revenge." The only means then to appease them was by the payment of idego, which in this case was often an unlimited one, lest the maternal uncles would turn to armed attack.

7. It happened sometimes that a man committed homicide by misadventure, e.g. during a hunting party. In this context, we know examples where a father wanted to give his son as idego to the maternal uncles of the slain man. This rarely succeeded for the mother of this son fled with him to her agnates.

8. We have pointed out previously that idego goods are amassed co-operatively by the lineage group of the deceased. There are however instances of another means of getting the necessary goods. I will illustrate this with an example. The predominant aspect of Lega-culture is the bwame-association, of which the various distributions of goods are one of the most interesting characteristics. An important payment (musego) is there given to the mukomi, the mwame who within a certain degree, and within the limits of a certain group, has been the last one to be initiated

and who comes to remit to the new initiate a basket of collectively possessed initiatory objects. This payment then is usually given during the initiation itself. But it may happen that musego is paid long before the actual initiation in order to help a mukomi who is in need of idego-goods to be paid for a dead kinsman. This happened in the case of Beikalantende. Kebangala, an initiated mwame of his clan, had been indicated as his mukomi, but several months before the initiation his mother died. Kebangala, who lacked the necessary goods to be paid for her, explained his trouble to other bame of his group, who decided to ask Beikalantende for the musego-payment.

9. There are often reciprocal payments presenting themselves on the death of an individual. If for example a wife had gone to her father's village with her husband's consent and had died there the father had first to pay ibanga nsenda to her husband: one goat, 20 iron tools, one hunting-net, four chickens. After that he could lutumbi, announce his arrival to receive the idego-payments. If a man died his wife's family might have to pay kasa (one goat, ten iron tools and one hunting-net) when it was established that the woman had behaved badly and had committed for instance adultery or sorcery.
