

## STYLISTIC TECHNIQUES AND FORMULARY DEVICES IN THE MWINDO EPIC FROM THE BANYANGA

### PREFACE

As far as I know, no other attempt has yet been made to produce a comprehensive style analysis of the Mwindo epic from the Banyanga. Style analysis of African oral literature is in its infancy (Finnegan, 1970), and little stylistic information is available on the African oral epics (Biebuyck, 1976 ; Bird, 1974 ; Innes, 1974).

The present study is based on the following materials and sources :

1. Intensive examination of the preamble (referred to as paragraph 1) of the Mwindo epic that was sung by the bard Candi Rureke (Biebuyck and Mateene, 1971, p. 147 for the Nyanga text and pp. 41-43 for the English translation and the notes). This preamble (see further for the full text) constitutes the first 16 printed lines of the text ; in the transcription system adopted, it includes 147 words, or 357 syllables. Two important actors are introduced : the chief Shemwindo (father of the hero Mwindo, who is not yet born) and his sister Iyangura (who, as the paternal aunt of the hero Mwindo, eventually becomes his faithful companion). The village of Shemwindo, called Tubondo, is situated in Ihimbi, a remote forest region of northern Nyangaland. A large village, it has seven meeting places of people. Placed in the remote past, the general story begins with a recent set of actions taken by Chief Shemwindo : having married seven wives, he calls his people together in an assembly and makes an unusual proclamation that militates directly against the value code of the Nyanga. In this public statement he requests that his wives bear no sons but only daughters, and he also threatens to kill the woman who would give birth to a son (and eventually her son in addition). After the prohibition was made, Shemwindo « threw himself into the houses of the seven wives » ; he slept with them, and surprisingly soon thereafter *all* seven wives were pregnant. The seven wives of the chief are not ranked into political status categories (e.g., ritual wife, senior wife, etc.), but two among them are known as the beloved-one and the despised-one, respectively.

2. Analysis, for comparative purposes, of the entire introductory segment (referred to as the selected passage), of which the above-mentioned preamble is a part. This section covers the first 181 printed lines of the text (Biebuyck and Mateene, 1971, pp. 147-51 for the Nyanga ; pp. 41-57 for the translation and the explanatory notes). In the printed text, the selected passage covers 1,542 words in the transcription system adopted. In addition to the general setting described in the preamble, this passage is comprised of two self-contained parts :

a. An interlude (pp. 147-49 for the Nyanga ; pp. 41-52 for the translation) describing in great detail the marriage of Chief Shemwindo's sister to the Water Serpent Mukiti (not a divinity but, together with the Dragon Kiriimu and the Specter Mpaca, he is one of the three fabulous beings to whom extraordinary powers are ascribed). Four aspects of the marriage are worked out in detail : the actual negotiations and the courtship between Iyangura and Mukiti, the preparation and transfer by Mukiti of the bridewealth to Iyangura's kinsfolk, the ceremonial transfer of Iyangura to Mukiti's village, and the actual marriage rite. This leads to the decision by Mukiti to place his wife Iyangura under the protection of his headman Kasiyembe and the implicit prediction that one day a man (i.e., the hero Mwindo) will arrive in search of Iyangura. This passage is especially rich in imagery and does not occur in any of the other epics and heroic tales I have collected among the Nyanga.

b. The miraculous birth of the hero Mwindo (pp. 149-51 for the Nyanga ; pp. 52-57 for the translation). This section consists of four parts : — the events leading up to the birth of the hero (six wives bear daughters ; the beloved-wife remains pregnant ; the unborn son fulfills various tasks for his mother) ; — the actual birth of the hero (he decides to be born in a special manner ; midwives are called in when his mother's labor starts ; he appears from his mother's middle finger ; the midwives are stultified and undecided about whether or not they would announce the birth ; finally, they refuse to answer the call for information from the chief's counselors ; the midwives name the hero Mwindo) ; — the threat against the hero's life (Cricket informs Chief Shemwindo about the birth of a son ; Shemwindo rushes with spears to the birth house ; the newborn hero wishes that the spears do not injure the midwives or his mother ; Shemwindo hurls his spears in vain ; the midwives flee ; Shemwindo orders his counselors to dig a grave ; the grave is made and the hero

placed in it ; the hero in the grave predicts many sufferings for his father ; they pile more soil and banana tree trunks on top of the grave) ; — the hero's gifts at birth ; the bard breaks the thread of the narrative to enumerate the hero's possessions and capabilities (he holds a *conga*-scepter in the right hand and an adz in the left ; he has a small shoulderbag of the Spirit of Good Fortune slung across his chest and in that bag there is a long vine ; the hero is born laughing and speaking).

From the point of view of its contents, this passage is not complete. Indeed, the next passage of the epic begins at night when the people see fire like « a fulgent sun » rising from the grave. Time passes ; later in the night, the hero leaves the grave, enters his mother's house, and sits there weeping. The father, Shemwindo, hears it and expresses his astonishment. He checks whether or not his wife has another son and is informed that Mwindo is back. This induces Shemwindo to consider another strategem to get rid of his son. The selected passage stands by itself, however, because the bard halted after the evocation of the hero's gifts and resumed his song the next day.

The episode involving Mukiti and Iyangura, the hero's paternal aunt, is absent from the other Nyanga epics. In the introductory episode of one epic, however, the marriage between the hero's sister, Nyamutondo Mwindo, and Lightning is described in some detail. The special circumstances leading to and surrounding the miraculous birth of the hero are very detailed in epic I and placed in full perspective in two more epics.

3. Examination of the entire text of the Mwindo epic to verify certain patterns of composition and content. (This text is referred to as Mwindo epic I when it is compared to other published epic texts from the Nyanga.)

4. Some general data derived from three other published epics from the Banyanga referred to as epics II, III, IV (Biebuyck, *Hero and Chief : Epic Literature from the Banyanga*, University of California Press, 1978). In this work I have fully translated, annotated, and analyzed three other epics (each of them sung by a different bard), which I wrote down while among the Nyanga. Also included in that book is the extensive summary of an epic narrated for me by a bard who had heard it from another singer in a hunting camp, and the summary of an epic fragment.

Epic II centers around the hero Mwindo but assigns a significant portion of the action to his Pygmy Shekaruru. Epic III initially focuses on the hero Kabutwakenda (Little-one-just-born-he-walked) ; but after he disappears, the entire action concentrates on his uterine brother, the hero Mwindo. The greater part of epic IV is structured around two heroic figures, Kabutwakenda and Mwindo, who are half-brothers (same father, but different mothers). There is strife between the gentle Kabutwakenda and the villainous Mwindo. The conflict turns in Kabutwakenda's favor, but after he dies, Mwindo pursues his infamous acts against Kabutwakenda's son, Destiny. Ultimately, after Mwindo's death (caused by the divinities at the request of his own dead son), Destiny rules in peace.

5. Further general data based on a short epic text about Chief Muhuya and his daughter, Kahindo Ngarya (Biebuyck and Ma-teene, *Anthologie de la littérature orale Nyanga*, 1970, p. 28-47) ; on heroic tales (some of them synthesized in Biebuyck, *Hero and Chief*) ; and on unpublished proverbs, circumcision songs, and eulogistic and euphemistic standard expressions from the Nyanga.

#### INTRODUCTION

The Nyanga live in the rain forest of eastern Zaire.\* The Mwindo epic is formulated in Nyanga, an unquestionable member of the large Bantu group of languages spoken in widely scattered areas of West Central, Central, East, and South Africa. According to the scheme of classification developed by Greenberg (1963), the Bantu languages as a whole constitute a branch within the Benue-Congo subfamily of the Niger-Congo linguistic family.

\* Field research among the Nyanga was done for a brief period in 1952, for the entire period from 1954 through 1956, and briefly also in 1957 and 1958. The main research was done under the auspices of l'Institut pour la Recherche Scientifique en Afrique Centrale (I.R.S.A.C., Brussels). Shorter visits in 1957 and 1958 were under the sponsorship of the Land Tenure Commission for the Congo.

The initial version of this study was prepared at the request of Dr. David Bynum of the Harvard University Center for the Study of Oral Literature for presentation at the meeting of the Modern Language Association. Parts, therefore, of this study address themselves to a non-Africanist audience. In the analysis, I have been inspired by the pioneering studies of Lord and Bynum. To simplify the printing, the tones which occur in the published text of the Mwindo epic have been omitted.

This complex group of Bantu languages has been subdivided into zones by the eminent Bantuist, Guthrie (1948 and 1971). Some well-documented language zones are based on fairly safe linguistic criteria and verifiable data. Other zones, however, are less securely delineated. Nyanga forms a part of the inadequately defined zone D, which consists of six groups. According to this classification Nyanga would be related most closely to Nande, and more remotely to languages spoken by peoples such as Lega, Komo, Pere, and Hunde.

This classification differs from a later one proposed by Meeussen (1953) and Bryan (1959, pp. 92-94). According to this scheme, Nyanga is part of the Lega group of languages, which includes among others, Lega proper, Songola, Mituku, and Genya. There is as yet no definite classification available. On the basis of historical and cultural contacts, however, it is impossible to separate Nyanga from certain dialects found in the languages of the neighboring Komo, Pere, Nande, Hunde, and Lega. These peoples have many institutions and other cultural features in common. For example, at least for the Nyanga, Hunde, and Lega, I have proof that long heroic epics are sung by non-professional bards.

Nyanga is spoken by approximately 27,000 persons scattered over a huge area of mountainous rain forest in eastern Zaire. There are several dialect groups exhibiting many lesser and greater distinctions, particularly in morphology. These differences coincide to some extent with internal political divisions and historical events experienced by diverse subgroups of the Nyanga people. All in all, however, the dialect variations are not of any major proportion, and they do not present any special problem of mutual intelligibility.

The Mwindo epic I is formulated in the Kisimba dialect variant of the Nyanga language. The bard, Candi Rureke, uses the language with admirable competence and shows great mastery in eliciting its poetic and expressive qualities, but the text does not contain any archaic or «unusual» words and expressions. Basically it is the common language of the Nyanga people but developed to a peak of perfection and powerful oral poetic evocation. On the one hand, the text is riddled with familiar expressions, phrases, and verbal constructions that occur also in the rest of the oral literature. On the other hand, the epic bard manipulates common and stereotyped formulas to a maximum of expressiveness and original combinations. He commendably uses a number of constructions which specifically belong to the patrimony of Nyanga heroic literature and, in addition,

creates new poetic and descriptive phrases. Among the many possibilities which his language offers, the individual bard also shows strong preferences for particular standard constructions and modes of expression.

In the Mwindo epic I (Biebuyck and Mateene, 1971), which was sung by Candi Rureke, there are very few Nyangaized foreign words, derived either from the French or from the Kingwana dialect of Swahili. In contrast to two out of three other epics narrated by different bards, there are almost no words borrowed from the closely related Hunde language in Rureke's text. (The other two epics include entire songs and conversations in the Hunde language.)

As a Bantu language Nyanga necessarily shares many of its essential features with the other languages of this linguistic branch. As an autonomous language, Nyanga also exhibits features and tendencies of its own. For a better understanding of the singer's possibilities and *modus operandi*, it is important to briefly mention a few of these general and special characteristics.

With the exception of Swahili, which was recorded in Arabic script at an early stage, Bantu languages are orally transmitted. No indigenous writing system is correlated with them. For the researcher who writes down such a language, according to the criteria determined by the International African Alphabet, there are great problems involved in deciding when distinct « pieces » (a neutral term used by Guthrie in his study of Bantu word division) of the utterance should be set down as one, two, or more words. There are no simple rules. In transcribing the Mwindo epic for publication, I have followed a set of rules for Nyanga word division formulated by the linguist K. Mateene, a Nyanga himself (1968). Consequently, because of the somewhat tentative nature of the adopted word division, discussions of stylistic processes used in the Nyanga epic should not include the « word » as a concept for analysis.

Part of the problem of word division relates to the position of connectives, pronouns and invariables. Other difficulties arise from the extraordinary usage which Nyanga and other Bantu languages make of suffixation as a device for word-building. This is evident throughout the language, not the least in the verbal constructions. Such a fairly simple one-word construction as *kwarikanga*, which often occurs in the Mwindo epic, is comprised of the following

agglutinated morphemes : *kw-* (a locative prefix), *-a-* (formative marker), *-rik-* (the verbal base), *-a-* (a final element which marks the indicative), and *-nga-* (a construction marker which indicates a remote past). The construction becomes much more complicated when infixes are added to indicate the direct or indirect object or when extensions are made to designate various aspects of the verbal action. For example, *nti ba-ma-mu-ker-er-e* (p. 163, then they had just killed for him), includes a nominal prefix in the plural (*ba-*), a marker to indicate a recent past (*-ma-*), an infix (*-mu-*, *him*), the verbal root (*-ker-*), an associative suffix added to the root (*-er-*, on behalf of, for), and the final suffix (*-e-*), which for many verbs is the standard ending for the indicative mood. These word-building procedures offer the singer many opportunities for lengthening or shortening an expression and for nuancing his ideas.

According to Welmers (1973, p. 344), there are three important types of verbal constructions in Bantu languages : primary constructions, which contain only one verb base with appropriate construction markers and affixes (e.g., Nyanga, *w-a-sonj-a*, he summoned together) ; auxiliary constructions, which involve two verbal bases with the appropriate inflectional morphemes (e.g., Nyanga, *w-a-ma-kind-i i-yeb-a*, he had just finished speaking) ; and expanded constructions, which combine primary constructions and adverbial modifiers (e.g., Nyanga negative form *nti nti w-a-sung-a*, he had not yet seen). These three types of constructions occur frequently in the Mwindo epic. In addition, as will be shown later, there is a recurring formula based on the combination of three verbs (the first two with inflectional morphemes, and the third one in the infinitive form, e.g., *wakie*, he did ; *wamakindi*, he had just finished ; and *iyebe*, to say). Such formulas are found in the other epics and in many tales, but Rureke makes a more abundant and consistent usage of them. The multiple modes of verbal constructions with pre-prefixes, prefixes, markers, and extensions added to the base of the verb provide the singer with a rich set of standardized, ready-made expressions of a certain number of syllables or morae. The verbal conjugation in Bantu languages like Nyanga is extremely nuanced and refined by the use of many kinds of markers to express aspects of time (past or today, completive, consecutive, possibility, etc.) and verbal extensions to convey diverse derivative meanings (e.g., causative, reflexive, applicative, stative, contractive, inceptive, associative, intensive, etc.).



Elisions of final vowels and contractions of certain vowel sequences (Kadima, 1965, pp. 59, 66-67) are frequently, but not rigidly, utilized in Nyanga. Elision is seldom used in the epic as a device for shortening expressions by one or more syllables, but it is systematically applied to the *kie* + *kindi* + infinitive form, with the *-i* in *kindi* always being dropped, e.g., *bakie bamakind'ifuka*, when they had finished arising. It also appears in the sequence *na* + a word beginning with the vowel *e-*, e.g., *n'ebakungu*, and the counselors; *na hamakako n'e*, and in front of *her*. The elision in Nyanga seems to be a complicated matter, partly because it is often not put to use where it apparently could be and partly because the singer or speaker always has the possibility of avoiding it by making a short pause or placing emphasis on one of the vowels that might be eliminated. There are other clear cases where elision is avoided: the final vowel of a noun that is placed in a vocative; the final vowel of a personified noun; and the final vowel of a word which, if combined with the subsequent syllable, would be ambiguous in meaning (e.g., might suggest a sexual allusion).

Nyanga is a tonal language, but the tones of words in a sentence are unstable units. In the epics, as in the Nyanga proverbs, I am unable to perceive any tonal models that would be favored. High tones placed on a syllable with a normal low tone, however, can act as augments to stress something already known or already mentioned.

#### THE TEXT OF PARAGRAPH 1 (P. 41-43 AND 147)

In the following pages, I present the text in Nyanga and the literal and free translations of paragraph 1 of the Mwindo epic. I have divided this text into short lines to better indicate the rhythmic pattern involved, and I have marked at the end of each line the number of syllables. In the system of word division that was adopted, this paragraph includes 147 words. There are all together 357 syllables or morae (not to be confused with the agglutinative morphemes, of which there are many more). The paragraph can be divided into self-contained, complete statements, which are called breath-groups. They are separated by a dotted line.

When each separate breath-group is considered, an interesting rhythmic picture emerges. The first group (*Kwabesenga* to *camwi-Himbi*) includes a total of 35 syllables (a perfect 5 x 7 syllables).



The second group (*She-Mwindo* to *Iyangura*) of 21 syllables is again a perfect multiple of 7. The third group consists of 23 syllables (a combination of  $2 \times 7 + 9$ ). The fourth group of 16 syllables combines 7 and 9. The fifth group (*She-Mwindo* to *n'ebarusi*) forms a total of 49 syllables (a perfect  $7 \times 7$ ). The sixth breath-group (*Abati* to *bara-ara*) is very long; it comprises 100 syllables, but even here the irregular word-groups follow a perfect combination of  $8 \times 9$  and  $4 \times 7$  syllables. The simpler seventh group (*Mwinkind'ieca* to *bakari be*) is structured on 32 syllables ( $2 \times 9 + 2 \times 7$ ). The eighth group (*Mumbo* to *yerubungu*) with 54 syllables is not as perfectly constructed but approximates an ideal  $8 \times 7$  syllables. The ninth breath-group of 27 syllables is in accordance with the rhythmic pattern of  $3 \times 9$ .

The most remarkable aspect is that regardless of the above-mentioned combinations, the entire paragraph of 357 syllables can be reduced to a perfect  $51 \times 7$  syllables (further work is to be done on other paragraphs and episodes to decipher their rhythmic pattern).

1. *Kwábéséngá*  

|                                       |  |              |  |                |
|---------------------------------------|--|--------------|--|----------------|
| In a place there was long ago         |  | <i>mwami</i> |  | <i>umá</i> (7) |
| long ago there was in a place a chief |  | chief        |  | one            |
  2. *nti* | *ngí* | *shé-Mwindo*. (5)  
then | it is | Father-of-Mwindo.  
called Shemwindo.
  3. *Íngo* | *mwami* | *wáhimba* (7)  
This one | chief | he built  
That chief built
  4. *ubúngú* | *nti* | *ngí* | *kuTubondo* (9)  
village | then | it is | in Raphia-Palms  
a village called Tubondo
  5. *múcuo* | *cámwiHímí*. (7)  
in the state | of Ihimbi.  
in the state of Ihimbi.
- 
6. *Shé-Mwindo* | *nti* | *wabútwá* (8)  
Father-of-Mwindo | then | he was born  
Shemwindo was born
  7. *ná* | *mwisi 'ábó* | *umá* (7)  
with | their girl | one  
with a sister

8. *nti* | *ngi* | *Iyangura*. (6)  
 then | it is | Iyangura.  
 called Iyangura.
- 
9. *Nă* | *ndo* | *ubúngú* | *rwáshé-Mwindo* (9)  
 And | this | village | of Father-of-Mwindo  
 and in that village of Shemwindo
10. *nti* | *rúri* | *mó* (5)  
 then | it is | in it  
 there were
11. *ndushú* | *sirinda* | *sábea* | *bé*. (9)  
 men's houses | seven | of people | his.  
 seven meeting places of his people.
- 
12. *Íngo* | *mwami* | *shé-Mwindo* (7)  
 this one | chief | Father-of-Mwindo  
 That chief Shemwindo
13. *wábinga* | *bomina* | *barinda*. (9)  
 he married | wives | seven.  
 married seven women.
14. *Shé-Mwindo* (3)  
 Father-of-Mwindo  
 Shemwindo
15. *wakié* | *wamakind'ibingă* | *mbo* (10)  
 he did | he had finished to marry | those  
 after he had married those
16. *bomina* | *bé* | *barinda* (7)  
 wives | his | seven  
 (his) seven wives
17. *wásonja* | *ébea* | *bé* | *bátí* (9)  
 he summoned | the people | his | all  
 he summoned together all his people
18. *banúnké* | *n'ébea* | *bakwákare* (10)  
 young | and the men | senior  
 the juniors and the seniors
19. *bahani* (3)  
 advisors  
 advisors
20. *bakungú* | *n'ébarúsi*. (7)  
 counselors | and the princes.  
 the counselors and the nobles.
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21. *Ábatĩ* | *ba* | *wária* | *bó* | *mukibu*. (11)  
All | those | he carried | them | in council.  
All those — he had them meet in council.
22. *Bákíé* | *iyé* | *bári* | *múkibu* (10)  
They did | already | they are | in the council  
When they were already in the assembly
23. *shé-Mwindo* | *wárika* | *nkati-nkatĩ na* | *bó* (12)  
Father-of-Mwindo | he was seated | in the middle of | them  
Shemwindo sat down in the middle of them
24. *wábíkĩra* | *muréngé* (7)  
he called | sound  
he made an appeal
25. *mbu* | *bānu* | *bomĩna* | *bé* (7)  
that | you | wives | his  
saying: « You my wives
26. *ĩngu* | *wabúťĩ* | *mwáná-muyú* (9)  
this one | if she will give birth to | child-male  
the one who will bear a male child
27. *mubānu* | *bomĩna* | *bé* | *barĩnda* (10)  
among you | wives | his | seven  
among you my seven wives
28. *iwé* | *nti* | *wamuyĩ* (7)  
he | then | he will kill her/him  
I will kill him/her
29. *bānu* | *báťĩ* (4)  
you | all  
all of you
30. *cáhundá* | *mwéndĩyo* (7)  
it is befitting | you go always  
must each time
31. *bānu* | *mubúťáŋge* (6)  
you | you must be giving birth  
give birth
32. *bāna* | *bámukáří* | *bara-ara*. (10)  
children | of female | merely.  
to girls only. »
- 
33. *Mwikĩnd'ĩeca* | *émwĩkó* | *o* (9)  
In having finished launching | the prohibition | this one  
Having made this interdiction

34. *wirekera* | *múmanumbá* | *ábakári* (12)  
 he threw himself | in the houses | of the wives  
 he threw himself hurriedly into the houses of the wives
35. *nti* | *wecáa* | *ndási* (5)  
 then | he launched | the sperm  
 then launched the sperm
36. *kúri* | | *bakári* | *bé.* (6)  
 in the place where are | wives | his.  
 where his wives were.
- 
37. *Mũmbo* | *bomína* | *bé* (6)  
 Among these | wives | his  
 Among his wives
38. *nti* | *bári* | *mó* (4)  
 then | they are | among them  
 there was
39. *ngantsi* | *na* | *nya-kashómbé.* (7)  
 beloved-one | and | despised-one.  
 a beloved-one and a despised-one.
40. *Nya-kashómbé* | *nti* | *wahimbírwá* (9)  
 Despised-one | then | she was being built for  
 The despised-one had (her house) built
41. *kubukoné* | | *hírare* (7)  
 in the place behind the houses | at the garbage heap  
 next to the garbage heap
42. *ná* | *bámpé* | *bomína* | *bé* (7)  
 and | the other | wives | his  
 and his other wives
43. *nti* | *bári* | *múmwangantse* (7)  
 then | they are | in the open space  
 were in the clearing
44. *munkatí* | | *yérúbúngú.* (7)  
 in the middle | of the village.  
 in the middle of the village.
- 
45. *Kwákíé* | *kwámetá* | *matú* | *ántswá* (10)  
 There did | there had passed | days | to be counted  
 After a fixed number of days had elapsed
46. *bakári* | *mbo* | *barínda* (7)  
 wives | those | seven  
 those (his) seven wives

47. báriére | ná | makúre | mongo.(10)  
 they carried for him | and (surprise) | pregnancies | together.  
 carried pregnancies, and (all) at the same time.

## ANALYSIS OF THE PUBLISHED PARAGRAPH 1

When this short text is scrutinized, some outstanding features of form and style are at once apparent. The singer handles with great skill a large number of stereotyped devices, which facilitate the construction and the concatenation of ideas and segments of the narrative. Similar techniques are widely prevalent throughout the epic text, but they are applied in manifold ways. The most significant aspects of this technique can be summarized as follows:

1. The epic begins with a verb that is conjugated in the form of a remote past and preceded by a locative prefix with a high tone augment (*kwabesenga*, in a place there was long ago). The final statement of this paragraph is also introduced by a verb with the same prefix, but it is conjugated as a resultative past (*kwakie*, there did). Similar constructions in the beginning of the statement are found in many instances in the larger selected passage (pp. 147-51). These appear as *kwarikanga* (2 cases), *akwarikanga* (5 cases), *kwasianga* (1 case), *akwasianga* (1 case), and *kwakie* (2 cases). In all of these examples the initial verb is followed by its subject, which is a personal name (Mukiti, Shemwindo), a kinship term (*mwana*), a status term (*mwami*, *bakungu*), or a time indicator (*matu*, *kashangi*). Similar beginnings are presented throughout the epic under the same forms or as *kwetanga* (in the place where passed, went), *kwabekenga* (in the place where fled), and *kwenda-nga* (in the place where went).

2. Two more statements are initiated with a verb (*bakie*, *mwi-  
kindi*), and these forms of conjugation recur widely throughout the  
selected passage and the epic.

3. In this short paragraph there is a profusion of names for : a. persons (Shemwindo, 6 cases ; Iyangura, 1 case) ; b. kinship positions (women-wives, 6 cases ; wives, 3 cases ; sister, 1 case ; male child, 1 case ; female children, 1 case) ; c. status positions (chief, 3 cases ; young men, 1 case ; senior men, 1 case ; advisors, 1 case ; counselors, 1 case ; princes, 1 case ; beloved wife, 1 case ;

despised wife, 2 cases; subjects, 3 cases); d. terms for places, generic or specific (Tubondo, 1 case; Ihimbi, 1 case; men's houses, 1 case; village, 3 cases; council, 2 cases; behind the houses, 1 case; garbage heap, 1 case; in the clearing, 1 case; in the middle of, 2 cases). All together 46 names appear in the paragraph. This abundance of names is found in the broader selected passage where 284 such terms (about 1/5 of the total text) are included. For example, Shemwindo is mentioned 30 times; Mukiti, 41 times; Iyangura, 22 times; there are 92 terms for kinship and 54 for status positions. The range of names is also larger than in paragraph 1. Besides terms for persons, places, kinship and status positions, the passage offers epithets (Mukiti *minemariba*, Mukiti, Master-of-the-pool); praise terms and expressions (*tita shekaruo*, my father, Mr. Ladle; *wabume ukeraa byara*, a man who has his nails cut); terms for groups, animals, and divinities; and expanded designations for persons (Munamukiti, of the species of Mukiti, Master Mukiti). Formations with the morpheme *muna* (of the species of) occur 21 times in the epic in conjunction with certain names for persons, divinities, personified animals, fabulous beings, and objects. In addition, similarly constructed kinship terms (*munakitu*, of the species of our, i.e., our kinsman) and group names with *bana*, the plural of *muna* (Banamitandi), are abundant. In the entire text, other types of names may be found, such as: a. quasi-matronymics: e.g., p. 155, *mwana wamukari wa Mukiti Iyangura*, the child of the wife of Mukiti Iyangura, for Mwindo; b. quasi-patronymics: e.g., p. 157, *mwihwa wabana-Mitandi*, the sororal nephew of the Banamitandi; c. honorific and praise names: e.g., p. 164, *isinkari waMwindo*, the paternal aunt of Mwindo, for Iyangura; p. 171, *mantire koyo*, my maternal uncle, my mother; p. 164, *tita Mwindo*, my father, Mwindo; p. 182, *sinkari kabuto Iyangura*, my paternal aunt, life-giver, Iyangura; p. 195, *koyo'ani nyamwako*, my mother mine, who carried me (literally, Mrs. Cradling-Rope); d. epithets: e.g., p. 154, *Kabutwakenda* (Little-one-just-born-he-walked) and *Kakwi na Karami* (What-will-die and What-will-be-safe) for Mwindo; p. 198, *Iobora* (Opener) and *Mirabyo* (Flashes) for Lightning; e. symbolic, allusive names. They appear in the songs and are rare. Examples include *Katitiiri*, one who is unable to make his thoughts and words clear in speaking to people; *Runtea*, one who is very tall and lean like a *muntea* vine.

4. There is a tendency not merely to repeat names but also to place them in apposition (*mwami Shemwindo*, Chief Shemwindo) or to link them with the invariable *na* (*bakungu n'ebarusi*, the counselors and the princes). The name is often expanded with the addition of one or more pronouns, e.g., *bomina be barinda*, wives his seven; *ingo mwami*, this (just mentioned) chief. Names are also combined as periphrastic expressions, e.g., *ubungu rwashemwindo*, the village of Shemwindo; *ndushu sabea be*, the meeting places of his people. This kind of specificity is also realized, without the connective, by means of the invariables *nti ngi* (then it is), e.g., *mwisiabo uma nti ngi Iyangura*, his sister one then it is Iyangura, meaning his one sister called Iyangura. These systems of amplification are applied throughout the epic.

5. Paragraph 1 indicates the usage of 20 invariables (*nti ngi*, then it is, 3 cases; *nti*, then, 7 cases; *na*, and, also used as an exclamation or a sign of astonishment, 8 cases; *iye*, indeed, 1 case; *mbu*, that, saying, 1 case). The invariable *nti* appears in all seven cases before a conjugated verb for emphasis (e.g., *nti wabutwa*, then he was born), but its usage is not at all necessary. In the selected passage, the number of these invariables (which range from one to three syllables) amounts to 264. Twenty-two kinds of them are used, some only once, others in profusion (e.g., *mbu*, that, saying, 53 cases; *na*, and, exclamation, astonishment, 97 cases; *nti*, then, 30 cases; *nti ngi*, then he/she is, 7 cases). Wherever these invariables appear, they tend to be part of similar formations, e.g., *nti* followed by a conjugated verb.

6. The augment is of great significance in Nyanga to emphasize that something or somebody is already known or mentioned and to mark specificity and definiteness. The augment occurs in various forms (as a distinctive morpheme *e-*, *a-*, *er-*, *esa-*, *asa-*, *i-*, as a reduplication of the locative prefix *mu-*, or simply as a high tone on a morpheme which otherwise has a low tone). In paragraph 1, there are 14 augments (5 simply indicated by a high tone; the others marked by *e-*, *a-*, *er-*, or *i-*). Throughout the epic, hundreds of these augments are placed before nouns, pronouns, and verbs or on the verbal prefix. In the selected passage, there are 177 cases of augments used in these positions (and this does not include the augment marked by a change of low into high tone).

7. Pronouns of all types (free; possessives; demonstratives for



different degrees of proximity and remoteness, and for reference ; numerals ; interrogatives ; and indefinites) abound throughout the epic and frequently are manifested as redundancies. In paragraph 1, there are 36 pronouns ; sometimes they occur singly, sometimes in groups of 2 or 3, and often they are not necessary to explicate the meaning of what is said. For example, the bard says *wabinga bomina barinda*, he married wives seven ; then he continues in the following phrase, *wakie wamakind'ibinga mbo bomina be barinda*, when he had finished marrying those wives his seven... In the larger selected passage, the singer introduces 238 pronouns, the great majority of them being possessives and demonstratives.

8. The bard exhibits an almost obsessive concern with the indication of place, the presence in a place, and the movement from one place to another. For this purpose, he utilizes only a few nouns that designate a generic or specific place and relatively few adverbs. On the one hand, he plays an intricate game with locative prefixes (*ku-*, *ha-*, *mu-*) and with a large number of pronouns in the locative form (*ko-*, *ho-*, *mo-*, *kurwe*). In paragraph 1, there are 19 of these prefixes and pronouns, which accumulate without end as the text develops further. On the other hand, he constantly uses verbs such as *rika* (to dwell, to be seated), *ruka* (to return), *eya* (to arrive), *enda* (to go), *sia* (to remain), and the auxiliary *ri* (to be) plus a pronoun or noun with a prefix in a locative form. These verbs are rare in paragraph 1 (*rika*, 1 case ; *enda*, 1 case) except for the auxiliary *ri*, which appears twice in a formation with a noun preceded by a locative prefix, and once with a locative prefix itself. In the selected passage, this form of the auxiliary is found 29 times.

9. The vast majority of verbs encountered in paragraph 1 are conjugated in the form of the historical past, which is commonly used for the narrative. This is one of the simplest types of conjugation because it is not characterized by elaborate markers and suffixes. Thus, due to the basic structure of the verbal base in Nyanga and the simple form of the conjugation, most verbs appear in the rhythmic pattern of 3 syllables (*wahimba*, *wabutwa*, *wasonja*, etc.). Even the auxiliary *-ri* (to be) is found in this form of conjugation as a 3-syllable formation because of the fixed addition of the invariable *nti* (then), e.g., *nti ruri*, *nti bari*. One verb (the initial verb *kwabesenga*) is conjugated in the remote past, a form rarely found in the epic. Only a few other types of conjugated verb forms are

present (e.g., resultative, *wakie* ; recent past, *wamakinda* ; infinitive, *ibinga* ; future of tomorrow, *wabuti*). The verbal conjugation in Nyanga is elaborate and allows for the expression of many refined nuances and aspects of time and action. The range of possible conjugated forms occurring in this epic is great but far from being exhaustive. But more significantly, there is a clear-cut preference for the above-mentioned forms, in addition to the habitual and the progressive present.

10. In this paragraph, three striking types of complex constructions appear which involve at least 2 verbs and not more than 3. They may or may not be augmented by one or more invariables.

The first construction type is represented by three cases : — *Kwakie kwameta (matu antswa)*, There did, there had passed (days countable) ; — *Bakie iye bari (mukibu)*, They did, already they were (in the council) ; — *Shemwindo wakie wamakind'ibinga*, Shemwindo, he did, he had just finished to marry. This type of construction is one of the most fundamental recurring features of grammar and style found in the epic. In the above cases, the expression is part of a subordinate sentence. The verb *kia* in its resultative form with different correspondence prefixes is an auxiliary and can be translated as « when » or « after ». The verb *kia* is conjugated in the form of the resultative past (normally *wakire*, *bakire*, *kwakire*, but contracted to *wakie*, *bakie*, and *kwakie*). It is followed in one case by a verb (*kwameta*) conjugated as a recent past. In the second case, it precedes an invariable (*iye*, already) and the verb *ri* (to be) conjugated as an historical past with the prefix for « they ». The expression is more complicated in the third case. The subject Shemwindo precedes the verb *wakie*, which is followed by 2 other verbs (*-kindi*, to finish, conjugated as a recent past, and *ibinga*, to marry, which is the full infinitive form).

There are 48 expressions in the selected passage containing the verb *kia*, always conjugated as a resultative past but carrying different prefixes to establish the necessary correspondences with the relevant subjects. *Kia* is followed by a conjugated verb with a *-ma*-marker (for recent past) in 23 cases ; in 12 instances the subsequent verb has another marker. In 7 cases *kia* is followed by the invariable *iye* (already) and by a variably conjugated verb. But there are other formations which are not found in the initial paragraph : *kia* + *mbu* (that) + a conjugated verb (4 cases) ; *kia* + a locative

prefix added to a noun that indicates a time period (1 case) ; and *kia* + *iye* + a locative prefix added to a noun that designates a time period (1 case). In these 48 instances, the *kia* + *kindi* (finish) + a verb in the infinitive formation occurs 8 times. In the entire epic, the same combination is found 56 times.

The first interesting discovery about this arrangement is that the third verb in the formation consists of 3 syllables in 36 cases (e.g., *wakie wamakind'ibinga*, or such other infinitive verbs as *ibusa*, *isimba*, *ishua*, etc.) ; of 4 syllables in 17 cases ; and of 5 syllables in 3 cases. The second important feature is that this cluster of 3 verbs is intimately linked with a subject placed before or after it or with an object that may be elaborately specified (e.g., *Shemwindo wakie wamakind'ibinga mbo bomina be barinda*, Shemwindo, after he had finished marrying those his seven wives). The second verb in the combination (*kindi*, to finish) is not necessarily bound to the verb *kia*. *Kindi* occurs 100 times in the total text ; on 56 occasions it is used in association with *kia*, but otherwise it stands on its own (as an infinitive preceded by the locative prefix *mw-*, e.g., *mwikindi*, or conjugated as a recent past, e.g., *bamakindi*). It is invariably followed by an infinitive verb. Identical verbs in the infinitive may be added to either *wakie wamakind'* or *wamakindi*. The verb *yeba*, to speak, follows the first expression 4 times and the second, 9 times.

The formula made with *kia* (to do) + *kindi* (to finish) + an infinitive verb (most frequently combining 3 syllables) is by no means the only type of complex verbal construction in the epic. It finds parallels in such sequences as *Mwindo wakie warukira wamamwire isinkari we* (p. 164), Mwindo, he did, he heard the manner she had just spoken to him his paternal aunt ; and *Sheburungu wakie wamarukira wamasubiwa we*, Sheburungu, he did, he had just heard the manner he had just been spoken to.

The second construction type is made with the verb *rika* (to be established, to dwell, to be seated, to sit). In paragraph 1, this verb is mentioned only once in its simplest form : *warika nkatinkati na bo*, he was seated in the very middle of them. However, the verb *rika* appears 109 times in the epic, never in combination with the above-noted *kia* and *kindi*. The preferred form preceding or following its subject is *kwarikanga*, in the place where X or Y usually dwell (live). This habitual form preceded by a locative prefix is used 43 times. Also, the habitual is combined 32 times with other prefixes

so that the verb *rika* is encountered with the *nga* suffix as *rikanga* in 75 of 109 instances.

The third kind of complex verbal construction illustrated in paragraph 1 is *cahunda mwendiyo*, it is good, befitting, that in the future you go on, followed by a third verb *mubutange*, you must be giving birth (a frequentative). This seldomly used formula is presented mostly in the epic as a simpler combination of *cahunda* + a verb in the future subjunctive (e.g., *cahunda waramye ishe*, it is good, befitting, that he heal his father). *Cahunda* (it is good, befitting) is closely paralleled in the epic by its opposite *casuma* (it is hard, tough).

11. In paragraph 1, there are at least four standard expressions : a. *wabikira murenge* : he called a sound. This standard expression generally introduces a proclamation or a solemn order. It is found several times in the text (e.g., p. 188) and is a close equivalent to *wameca emurembe*, he launched a prohibition, and *warukira murenge*, he heard the sound (voice, call) ; b. *wirekera mumumba* : he threw himself into the houses. This closely parallels similar euphemistic expressions (as « he entered the house ») to refer to sexual activity ; c. *kwameta matu antswa* : there had passed countable days. The construction recurs in the epic (also in its variant form *kwameta kashangi*, there had passed a moment) to refer to a fixed time period ; d. *bariere makure* : they carried pregnancies. Here is a standard form to indicate that the wives were pregnant. All four expressions are widely applied in the tales and recur in the other epics as well.

12. Periphrastic and expletive expressions appear in paragraph 1 under forms such as *ubungu rwa Shemwindo*, the village of Shemwindo, and *mucuo ca mwiHimbi*, in the state (land) of Ihimbi. Similar types of formulas are found throughout the epic ; e.g., p. 148, *ubungu rwa Banamitandi*, the village of the Banamitandi, instead of the generic name of the village ; p. 162, *ubungu rwa ndushu sirinda*, the village with seven meeting places, instead of Tubondo ; p. 183, *binyantire wa Mwindo*, the maternal uncles of Mwindo, instead of the Baniyana.

The bard likes to enumerate categories of people whenever he wishes to emphasize the idea of multitude. In paragraph 1 there is a brief enumeration : he summoned together *ebea be bati*, *banunke n'ebea bakwakare*, *bahani*, *bakungu n'ebarusi*, people his all, young

men and men senior, advisors, counselors, and the princes. At one point (p. 168) the singer introduces Mwindo's comitatus as follows : *Mwindo na binyantire n'isinkari we n'ebaombe beyanga na bo basimbi n'ebasii*, Mwindo and his maternal uncles and his paternal aunt and the servants, who had arrived with them, the singers and the drummers. After his successful search for his father and his return to earth, Mwindo « awakens » all the dead people and then the bard evokes the multitude of people and animals in the revived village (pp. 119 and 187) : « Tubondo filled itself again with the people and the goats, the dogs, the cattle, the poultry, the male and the female ewes, the teenage boys and girls, the children and the youngsters, the old males and females ; in the middle of all those people (were) the nobles and the counselors and the Pygmies and all the royal initiators... »

13. A number of other style features are well illustrated in paragraph 1 :

a. *reduplication* of a whole word or part of it. *Nkatinkati*, in the middle-middle, emphasizes that he was seated in the very middle ; *baraara*, only/merely, stresses the fact that the chief absolutely wants nothing else but daughters. No excessive usage is made of reduplication in this epic (in contrast to the short epic text of Chief Muhuya), but the principle is effectively applied wherever the bard wishes to intensify the meaning. In order to emphasize the astonishment, the eagerness, and the mass of people who have come to view Mwindo after he has risen from the grave, the bard says (p. 151) : *ebea bati basonjanyasonjanya, benda kasunga Mwindo... ; Mwindo wasira na misunganosungano*, the people all assembled and assembled (calling one another), they went to see Mwindo... ; Mwindo was devoured by the viewing and viewing.

b. *alliteration*. In his proclamation the chief says : « *banu bomina be ingu wabuti... mubanu bomina be barinda... banu bati... banu mubutange bana bamukari baraara* ». This is not an unusual case ; sometimes several patterns of alliteration run together in a single sentence or passage (e.g., p. 149, the *Kwasianga Mukiti na banace...* sentence has 6 words beginning with *mu* (*mw*), 11 with *ba*, and 5 with *r*). To achieve this, the bards rely on the system of prefixal correspondences, which are typical in Nyanga, and on the emphatic repetition of words.

c. *repetition* of words and ideas in the same sentence or in a

consecutive chain of sentences. Attention has already been drawn to the abundance of names and their recurrence (e.g., Shemwindo). The system of repetitions also includes verbs, pronouns, prefixes, and invariables as well as larger expressions. In paragraph 1, the term *bomina* (women-wives) appears six times and its equivalent *bakari* (wives), three times. Except for one case, the two terms are always part of a larger expression involving from one to three pronouns and eventually one locative prefix. Thus, the repetition may simultaneously concern several words, e.g., *bomina be* (his wives), or *bomina be barinda* (his seven wives). This repetition, however, is not tediously automatic because the creative genius of the bard develops it into a total expression in which there is a slight difference in wording. In paragraph 1 the occurrences are as follows: *bomina barinda*; *mbo bomina be barinda*; *banu bomina be*; *mubanu bomina be barinda*; *mumbo bomina be*; and *bampe bomina be*. This succession is interrupted twice by the usage of the synonyms *bakari* and *bakari be*, and ended by *bakari mbo barinda*. Throughout the epic, we find these same features. There is much repetition, but the repeated words may have slight differences in form (because of the prefixal and suffixal system); they may be embedded in diverse expressions and placed in varied positions in the sentence. An interesting example can be found on p. 150, in the paragraph « *Abarikanga mubungu... mwibutwa rabo* ». In this paragraph the habitual form of the verb *rika* (to reside) is used five times as *rikanga*, but with either the prefix *ba* (they) or *kwa* (in the place where). In all cases a pre-prefix *a-* is used as an augment. The verb is at the beginning of the sentence and followed by its subject (in the singular or plural) in three cases. In the fourth case the verb is at the beginning of the sentence and forms the subject itself; in the fifth instance it is preceded by its subject. This search for nuance, variation, and balance does not allow the repetitions to be reduced to tedious systems. The diversity of context in which they are presented demands the listener's concentration at all times.

d. *reversal of normal word order*. The only clear-cut case in this paragraph is *abati ba waria bo mukibu*, all those he carried them in the council, a reversal distinctly meant to evoke the massiveness of the meeting. This device is employed on several occasions in the epic. In the selected passage, the bard handles the reversal of word order with great skill in order to avoid monotony and to achieve change of expression in a short passage which centers on the mid-



wives who attend to the hero's mother. The noun for midwives is *bariki*, but it is used in the epic conjointly with the qualifier *bakungu*, old persons. This second term is unnecessary because it is self-evident to the Nyanga that midwives are older and senior women. The use of the two terms either in apposition or linked to each other by a connective allows the singer to make the following reversals without any change of meaning: *abakungu bariki*, the old women-midwives; *bakungu bebariki*, the old women of midwives; *bima mubakungu bariki*, some among the old women-midwives; and *abakungu bima mubariki*, the old women some among the midwives. Moreover, in that same passage, the bard juxtaposes *bakungu bebariki* and *bakari bebakungu* (wives of old women), transposing the position of *bakungu*.

e. *mixture of direct and indirect discourse*. A good example of this unusual blend of direct and indirect discourse typical for Rureke's style, is found in paragraph 1. Shemwindo makes the following address to his wives: « You (*banu*) wives his (*be*), the one who will give birth to a male child among you (*mubanu*) wives his (*be*) seven, he (*iwe*, i.e., Shemwindo himself) will kill him/her; you (*banu*) all must always give birth to female children only ». This stylistic feature is certainly meant to draw the attention of the listeners, but much more is involved. The bard identifies rather strongly with the hero and other personages, just as a character actor would do. The bard, however, is always aware of the compelling force of Nyanga values and etiquette. In dissociating himself from Shemwindo by the use of indirect discourse, the bard disavows any connections or sympathies with the behavior and decisions of the chief. Similar shifts from direct to indirect discourse, or vice versa, are found throughout the epic in conversations, proclamations, and speeches.

f. *proclamations*. The proclamation « You his seven wives... » is short, lacking in detail and elaboration. Except for the solemn apostrophe that initiates it (e.g., you his seven wives... all of you...), the proclamation is casual and straight to the point.

g. *metaphorical usage of the verb*. In paragraph 1, when stating that Chief Shemwindo had his people meet together in a council, the bard uses the verb *ria* (to carry). The verb conveys an idea of the rapidity with which the people get together, as if the chief's word had the power to gather them at once. Elsewhere in the epic, verbal meanings are manipulated in a most refined manner to em-



phasize aspects of an action or a state of being. The use of derivative suffixes contributes to the nuances. For example, the bard describes the exquisite way in which Mukiti dresses for his encounter with Iyangura (p. 147). Then passing to Shemwindo and Iyangura, who are making a similar effort, he employs the verb *bimonya*. The verb has been interpreted in the translation as « overstrained themselves » (p. 45), but literally this is the reflexive causative form in the third person plural of the verb *imona*. This verb, which in other Bantu languages means « to see », indicates specifically in Nyanga « to see an initiation », i.e., to undergo an initiation with all the preparations, pains, and strains that go with it. So, in order to say that Shemwindo and Iyangura made the best efforts to dress well, the bard depicts them as if they were undergoing an initiation. By using the reflexive causative, moreover, he emphasizes that this is a self-imposed hardship (*bimonya*, literally, they made themselves undergo). Throughout the epic such metaphorical usages of verbs are found at the most unexpected moments, admirably highlighting the poetic skills of the singer. For example, Shemwindo, managing to escape at the very moment his village is destroyed by lightning at Mwindo's request, enters the subterranean world at the root of a fern (p. 92). The bard abandons Shemwindo to describe the action on Mwindo's side and then suddenly takes us back to Shemwindo (p. 93): « Where Shemwindo had fled, he went harming himself running into everything... ». The latter expression is an interpretation of *nti iye wicabirange*. The verb *icaba* literally means to cut firewood. The reflexive associative form used here means « to cut oneself to one's own detriment » and refers in hunters' speech to the manner in which an injured animal hurts itself by bumping into bushes and trees. Shemwindo, in his hurry to escape, is described as a wounded animal that has lost direction.

h. *time formulas*. Except for various aspects of time expressed by conjugated verbs, paragraph 1 contains only one of several time formulas: *kwakie kwameta matu antswa*, when countable days had passed. In the larger selected passage, the major types of formulas for time are present: *mukoma*, morning (tomorrow), is employed 5 times and its reduplication preceded by a locative prefix, *mumu-komakoma*, 15 times, mostly in conjunction with one of the two following time formulas. *Bakie ebutu wamaca*, when sky had become daylight, and four variations of this formula appear 12 times. *Wahend'iyenda*, he woke up to go, and other variations which al-

ways include the verb *hend* (to wake up), occur 6 times ; in 5 of these instances, the formula is preceded by the above-mentioned *mumukomakoma*.

14. There are obviously some vital aspects which are not illustrated in the short paragraph but are present in the larger selected passage and in the epic as a whole. It has already been pointed out that the bard disposes of a large number of stereotyped phrases and expressions which pertain to the world of highly conventionalized and symbolic language. (Praises ; euphemisms ; time and place indications ; expressions of sentiment ; conventional ways of addressing groups and persons ; patterns of oratory ; and words of blessing, appeasement, friendship, etc.). An example of such a standard expression is *rwakwi ho ongo rundo*, that will die here you this one, i.e., this is the death (unexpressed but contained in the pronominal prefix *ru*) that you will die. Apart from these widely used stereotypes, there are others similarly constructed in the epic, but these are (as far as I can judge) either the product of the individual bard's creative imagination or part of the immediate epic tradition he represents. These short, evocative, highly poetic phrases are numerous in this epic and presented most often when the bard provides descriptive detail (a feature that by itself is very rare in Nyanga oral tradition). In the selected passage there are numerous suggestive expressions of this kind, mainly utilized to depict beauty, joy, and profound sentiment. A few examples are : Mukiti heard the news that downstream from him there was a chief who had a sister called Iyangura *unyenyanga buri masia amwishi bushwa erihunda*, who was always glistening (like dew) like rays of the sun because of being beautiful (p. 147) ; in the morning Mukiti made himself *buri kanyero kanko*, like the anus of a snail (symbol of cleanliness, p. 147) ; when Mukiti saw Iyangura *bukokobocaange*, the manner she was bursting (like ripe nuts falling down from trees and bursting), i.e., the way in which she was bursting with mature beauty.

Occasionally the bard Rureke achieves concatenation of stereotyped traditional phrases and tersely stated « new » creations. For example, in the sentence mentioned above, « When Mukiti saw the way in which Iyangura was bursting with mature beauty... », the singer continues with two well-known stereotyped expressions and ends with a less familiar one (*wishisha mumutima*, he asked him-

self in his heart ; *mbu rero nti ngi ungu*, saying this time she is not the one [whom I expected to see] ; *uri buri ntsembe*, she is like a *ntsembe*-tree). The complete formula, to praise a good dancer, is *rero nti ngi ungu mwimina* (in dancing), but Rureke replaces *mwimina* by his own phrase *uri buri ntsembe*, she is (tall and smooth) like a *ntsembe*-tree.

Throughout the epic, numerous other types of special verbal formations occur. The following are some of the more striking examples :

a. *Enda* (to go) is used 144 times in the epic in many different configurations, not merely to express the idea of physical movement (e.g., *benda kataa*, they went to throw away), but also to mark a duration or continuation (e.g., *ongo wendayo ongo'rikaa*, you will go you always residing, to say you must henceforth always reside). The verb *enda* is often incorporated into a redundant expression such as *wenda keya*, he went to arrive, or *wenda katarie*, he went to climb up.

b. The verb *eta* (to pass, to go) is found frequently in the habitual with a locative prefix (*kwetanga*) in the beginning of a statement to repeat an earlier expressed idea or to link two consecutive types of action.

c. The verb *henda* (to wake up) appears 9 times in a redundant expression that includes « in the early morning » or another verb (*iramuka*) that means to wake up, e.g., *mumukomakoma wahend'iyenda*, in the very early morning he woke up to go.

d. The verb *kuruka* (to return) is often placed in combination with *kurwe* (to his place).

e. The verb *rukira* (to hear, to understand, to perceive) appears 62 times, commonly with the addition of a noun (e.g., news, sound, word) or with the demonstrative *bo* (this, thus). It also tends to occur within elaborate phrases that include the verb *kia* (to do).

f. The verb *sia* (to remain, to be left in) frequently conjugated as an habitual with a locative prefix (*kwasianga*, in the place where remained ; somewhat the equivalent of *kwarikanga*, in the place where dwelled) is used 42 times.

g. The introductions to the numerous songs in the epic offer an interesting example of stereotyped and conventional formulations that are nevertheless combined in many ways. The simpler forms are obviously *wasimba* (he sang), *weba* (he said), *waraka* (he howled), and *nti usimbange* (then he was singing), but these can

be recombined as *wasimba waraka weba*, he sang, he howled, he said (pp. 159, 178) or *waraka weba*, he howled, he said.

h. The verb *sung* (to see) is found on 144 occasions and in 50 different conjugated forms. Although in the overwhelming number of cases (71 times) the verb occurs in its simplest forms (*wasunge*, *wasunga*, *basunge*, *basunga*), in others it is almost hidden by heavy suffixation (e.g., *mumasungayo*). In 48 cases this verb is part of a larger formation with *kia* (to do).

i. The phrase *itura mwasi* (to give, announce the news) is used 28 times in many combinations, mostly to repeat an idea already contained in the previous sentence.

j. Other widely recurring forms include *siba* (to know, to be able), *koca* (to be capable, able), *fundwa* (not to be able), *utunge* (as far as is concerned), *sonda* (want to, being on the point of), *usasiri* (intend, being on the point of), *casingwa* (the reason why), *tanga* (precede), *bushwambu* (because of), *hiyo* (above), *kunanda* (upstream), *kumbo* (downstream), *nguru* (strong, much), *kumunda na* (inside of), and *nkati na/ya* (in the middle of).

k. Particular stylistic effects are frequently achieved by means of other techniques such as :

— changes in the final suffix of the verb : e.g., instead of *itibita*, to run around, *itibicaa* (an « extensive » suffix is added) to mark repetitive running around all over the place.

— modification of the regularly used tones : e.g., *kabontsobontso kairirisiwa*, what then ! a newborn baby is mistreated !

— insertion of the invariable *na* (and, with) to realize a certain effect of astonishment, explicitness, shock and crescendo : e.g., *ku-mbuka kusira na congo*, on earth there is no good at all.

Staging, overlapping, and fullness of detail as techniques of the redundant style have been analyzed by Jones and Carter (1976) for a South African population. Often, several of these features are combined. This fullness of detail, both from a temporal and an aspectual point of view, is sometimes well developed by the bard. The following example illustrates the technique of temporal staging and overlapping. After seven days have passed, Mukiti takes the bridewealth and goes with all his people to Shemwindo to marry his sister, Iyangura. The journey is described as follows (p. 48 and 148) :

« ...*mumukomakoma Mukiti wasembira endiko...*, in the early morning Mukiti took the marriage payments to go... ; *benda kwashe-*

*Mwindo kamurikure*, they went to Shemwindo's to give him the payments ; *mwituka kurwe wenda karere mubungu rwaban'Iyana...*, on leaving his (village), he went to sleep in the village of the Banyana ; *baincira na kuro...*, they slept there ; *mumukomakoma Mukiti wasimana wenda kirunda mubungu rwa Banamitandi...*, in the early morning Mukiti stood up, he went to throw (himself) into the village of the Banamitandi ; *waincira kuro...*, he slept there ; *bakie mumukomakoma wisica kwikura...*, when (they were) in the early morning he set himself at the village outskirts ; *wenda na keya kwabishibe...*, he went finally ! to arrive at his father-in-law's ; *bakie baya kuTubondo...*, when they arrived in Tubondo ».

In several passages, there are good examples of aspectual staging. Aspects of an activity or action are suggested in rapid succession. One of the most interesting illustrations occurs in a passage where Mwindo, following the orders of Muisa, sets out to cultivate a banana grove for the god (p. 98-99 and 173-74). The various essential phases of cultivating bananas are suggested concisely :

« When the sky had become daylight, Mwindo equipped himself with his billhook ; Mwindo went to cultivate... Mwindo placed the billhooks on the ground ; all by themselves they laid out the fresh trails. Having finished the trail, they cut the grasses. Having cut the grasses, the banana trees planted themselves... Mwindo sent a bunch of axes down ; the axes by themselves finished felling the trees. Finishing there, he sent a bunch of billhooks down on it ; those billhooks went across the banana grove cutting the newly grown weeds... the billhooks having finished cutting their weeds, they now cut gaffs ; the gaffs themselves propped up the banana trees. The gaffs having finished sustaining the trees, the banana stems were ripe »...

Proclamations, councils, dialogues, speeches, and songs are interlaced with the narrative. Proclamations are simple, short, and introduced by a standard expression. The emphasis is on the formula of address : p. 189, *banu bami banu murikire hano*, you chiefs, you, you are seated here. There is much dialogue in the epic, but it generally does not reflect the casual discourse of daily life. Rather, the dialogue is concise, dense, parsimonious in words, and affected. It is precisely in these brief conversations that the sudden shift from direct to indirect discourse, and vice versa, happens. On p. 44 and 147, Mukiti has arrived to court Shemwindo's sister ; he has received hospitality and then he says : « You, his (i.e., my) maternal uncle, I have arrived here where you are because of this one, your sister Iyangura ». Shemwindo thereupon makes another gift to Mukiti, saying « that he (i.e., Shemwindo) will answer you (i.e., Mukiti)

tomorrow ». Mukiti replies : « Yes, my father, possessor of the ladle, I am satisfied ». The conversation halts there. Elsewhere a peak of formalism is reached in a briefly phrased solemn address. Before leaving Mukiti's village, where they have brought Iyangura as Mukiti's wife, the bridal attendants say (p. 51 and 149) : « Do not make our child here, whom you have just married, into a *nyaturico* (a mother of holes, i.e., a woman wearing ragged clothing), into a *nyamirembe* (a mother of hanging things, i.e., a woman wearing soiled clothing) ; do not make her into a servant to perform labor ».

The speeches delivered at the general assembly by Shemwindo, Iyangura, and Mwindo (p. 123-25 and 188-90) are masterpieces of formal synthesis of past actions and events, of confession of guilt, of indictment against past offenses, and of reconciliation. The sentiments are expressed in an unusually florid style. For example, in the concluding part of his speech, Shemwindo speaks as follows :

« From that moment on, my son set out in search of me ; he went to take me away in the abyss of evil in which I was involved (*mwi-riba rebibibibi biti bisungange we*, literally, in the whirlpool of the evil evil things, all, that I was involved in) ; he went to seize me at the country's border (i.e., very far away). I was at that time withered like dried bananas. And it is like that that I arrive here in the village of Tubondo. So may the male progeny be saved, because it has let me see the way in which the sky becomes daylight and has (given me) the joy of witnessing again the warmth of the people and of all the things here in Tubondo ».

There are 61 songs in the epic. Some are very long, while others are based only on a few lines. Certain songs are separated from one another by just a very short statement (such as the repetition of a standard phrase that is introductory to a song), but largely the songs occur at clearly separate intervals. Most of the songs are light in tone, providing the singer with the opportunity to relax, ponder, put his thoughts together, and involve the audience. Differently from the rest of the text, the songs are frequently sheer concatenations of loosely connected thoughts, meditations, reminiscences, succinct proverblike statements, proverbs, riddles, and abstracts of tales. There are, however, other songs in the epic. One of them constitutes a sweeping catalog of material objects possessed by the Nyanga (p. 84-87) ; a number of songs are challenges or appeals ; some are power formulas in which the magic of the word is underscored ; and others include syntheses of past or future action.

The formulas and other stylistic features that underlie the con-



struction of the Mwindo epic do recur in the other Nyanga epics, in the heroic tales, and to some extent in the tales at large. The full analysis of the similarities and differences has yet to be made. The following samples provide some indication of the similarities. In the short epic text about Chief Muhuya and his daughter Kahindo (Biebuyck and Mateene, 1970, p. 28-47), one of the key formulas is made with the auxiliary *kia* (to do). The formula containing this verb occurs 56 times, in the same formative types as are prevalent in the Mwindo epic: *kia* (in the form of a contracted resultative past: *wakie*, *bakie*, *kwakie*, *kakie*) + a conjugated verb; *kia* + the conjugated verb *kindi* + a verb in the infinitive; and *kia* + the invariables *iye* (already) or *mbu* (that, saying) + a conjugated verb. The very complex triple verb formation *kia* + *kindi* + an infinitive is presented 10 times in this short epic text, exactly in the same manner as it is found in the Mwindo epic, i.e., *kia* with a variable prefix conjugated in the resultative past, *kindi* conjugated as a recent past, and an infinitive verb of three syllables (in 7 of the 10 cases). In this short epic, seven and nine syllable constructions are basic to the rhythmic pattern. In both texts there are many parallel, if not identical, formulas and constructions (compare, e.g., *wabinga bomina kakiri*, he married women plenty; and *wabinga bomina barinda*, he married women seven; *kwakie kweta matu*, there did there passed days; and *kwakie kwameta matu anstwa*, there did there had passed days countable; and scores of others). Muteresi Shempunge, who sang this short epic, is an even greater master in the subtle usage of alliteration and reduplication.

Some superficial comparison between the Mwindo epic I and the Mwindo epic II at once indicates that the earlier mentioned formula constructions with *kia* are abundant and patterned along the same lines in both epics. The highly complex triple verb formation noted already occurs in exactly the same shapes and contexts (e.g., *wakie wamakind'ibingwa*, she did she had just finished being married). Identical standard expressions, conventional word groupings, and rhythmic patterns are represented in both texts (e.g., *wabikira murenge*, he called a sound, for a proclamation; *ebomina be babi bo*, the wives his two those). When we compare one heroic tale with the Mwindo epic I, the number of overlapping stylistic procedures is impressive. Besides the typical verbal constructions (such as those with *kia*, to do), the two texts have features in common such as prefixation of *muna-* (of the kind of) before names or the use of



epithets. Many standard expressions appear in identical form in both texts (e.g., *wasia usingange n'ebukure*, she remained dragging herself along because of the pregnancy, occurs in the tale with different prefix of correspondence but has the same meaning as *yasia isingange nobukure*). Others are semantically equivalent, but they include a different synonymous term (e.g., *bana babakari baraara*, children female only, as opposed to the tale, *bana babomina baraara*, which means the same). In still other cases, the expressions are variants of one another but have the same meaning (e.g., *wabikira murenge*, he called a sound, and *warekera murenge*, he shouted a sound, or *wira murenge kubunu*, he threw a sound into the mouth).

#### MANIPULATION OF FORMULAS BY THE BARD

The « linguistic competence » of a bard like Candi Rureke is outstanding. He possesses a refined knowledge of the structure of his language and its possibilities. The many repetitions and standard phrases notwithstanding, the bard is always in search of nuances, « optional permutations », synonymous or near-synonymous expressions, and changes of grammatical form. On p. 83 and 164, Mwindo finds himself, with his aunt and others, in a lonely place without shelter. Mwindo says *tusame kuno*, let us sleep here. The aunt is worried and shouts *twasame hani*, where will we sleep..., and shouts again *twarere hani*, where will we sleep. The bard is careful in using the verb in three different forms, and this pattern is repeated elsewhere in the text. For example, on p. 47 and 148, Shemwindo tells Mukiti to collect bridewealth to marry his sister and says *iye wenda daa kanonka unonka bingi unonka bikeke nti iye ongo'nonkengi bo*, already you go (intensively) to win valuables; whether you win many, whether you win few, then already you are henceforth winning them for them (i.e., us).

The poetic creativity of the bard culminates in avoiding repetitions where they would most readily be expected. This is well illustrated in a short passage (p. 174-75) where Mwindo and the god Muisa get involved in a contest of force. Muisa sends his *karemba*-belt to subdue Mwindo, and the latter retaliates with his *conga*-scepter.

Muisa speaking to his belt :  
*wereko mbu*  
 he said to it (the belt) that

Mwindo speaking to his scepter :  
*mbu*  
 saying

*ongo karemba ke*  
 you, his (my) *karemba*-belt  
*ongw'endanga kwa Mwindo*  
 you are going to Mwindo  
*ukia umamusunga*  
 when you will have seen him

*nti umukunyaa na*  
 then you will have to bend him

*nti umuhanda*  
 then you must plant  
*n'ebunu hantse*  
 (his) mouth to the ground  
 0

0

0

*ongo conga ce*  
 you, his (my) *conga*-scepter  
 0

*ukia umeya kuri Muisa ekumbuka*  
 when you will have arrived where  
 Muisa is in the village

*nti umusimata na nguru*  
 then you will have to smash him  
 with force

*nti umuhanda*  
 then you must plant  
*n'ebunu mwoto*  
 his mouth to the ground  
*erwami nti rwakime*  
 his tongue must penetrate  
*n'ekumunda n'eroto*  
 inside the earth  
 etc.

The belt attacks Mwindo  
*Kakie kasunga*  
 when it saw  
*keya na hari we*  
 it went to where he was  
*kamusimata*  
 it crushed him  
*kamuhanda*  
 it planted  
*n'ebunu hantsi*  
 (his) mouth against the ground  
*erufumba rwatuka*  
 froth came out  
*waruka na mbu wasetunja*  
 he lacked the way of getting out  
*we emuka*  
 his breath

The scepter attacks Muisa :  
*Cakie mbu*  
 when it  
*ceye kuri Muisa*  
 arrived at Muisa's place  
*camusimata na*  
 it crushed him  
*camuhanda*  
 it planted  
*n'ebunu hantsi*  
 his mouth against the ground  
*erwami rwatima n'eroto*  
 the tongue dug into the earth  
 0  
 0

*emashu n'etubi twarana*

urine and excrement agreed  
(to get out)

*twaruka na ngu wahiha to*  
they lacked the one who could  
remove them

0

0

*emashu n'etubi twaruka na  
mpunga*

urine and excrement lacked  
*mpunga*-leaves

*na ngu wasehiha to waruka na*  
and the one who could take them  
away was also missing

*emuka waruka na*  
breath did not find

*nku kwasesaire o*  
there where to come out it

Filled with alliterations, these sonorous passages basically describe the same situation and sequence of events. Although there are identical terms and expressions in both, the two passages sound very different because of changes in the word order, in the conjugated verbal forms, and in the words themselves. Diversity in the degree of emphasis, reversal of certain sequences and small additions also contribute to the general variation. Most remarkably, there is a different rhythmic pattern. The segment in which Muisa speaks to his belt uses 42 syllables (6 x 7 pattern); Mwindo addresses his scepter in 54 syllables (6 x 9 pattern). The attack by Muisa's belt is described in 63 syllables (9 x 7 pattern) and the feat perpetrated by Mwindo's scepter in 72 syllables (8 x 9 pattern). A similar balance between tradition and creative originality may be detected when an identical scene is elaborated in two different epics (sung by two different bards).

The theme of the encounter between the hero Mwindo and the divinity Kahindo appears in both epic I (Biebuyck and Mateene, 1969, p. 95-101 *passim* for the English, and p. 172-76 *passim* for the Nyanga) and epic II (Biebuyck, 1978, p. 152-53 for the English; the Nyanga text is reproduced here for the first time). Kahindo is the daughter of the divinity Muisa (epic I) and of the divinity Nyamurairi (epic II). This meeting takes place, so to speak, in the first circle of the subterranean world. Although differently narrated, the circumstances that lead to Mwindo's subterranean journey are identical in the two texts, both in explicit and implicit terms. In the epics a disastrous event has occurred: Mwindo's maternal uncles (in epic I) and his people (in epic II) have been wiped out by Mwindo's enemy (the father's people in epic I; the warriors of a rebellious chief in epic II). The home village of Mwindo, inhabited

by his inimical father, has been destroyed by Lightning at Mwindo's request, and everything has perished there. Mwindo's father, however, has managed to escape to the subterranean world, where he has received protection from the divinities (epic I). In epic II, after an unsuccessful battle with Chief Itewa in which his people were decimated, Mwindo returns home in the company of his two dogs and his scepter. It is implied that the father had escaped to the subterranean world, but this is revealed only much later in the text.

In epic I, after the destruction of the home village, Mwindo returns to the glen where his aunt was waiting. Both return to the village, and Mwindo calls all things back to the village and resuscitates his maternal uncles. In epic II, Mwindo leaves his village again to fight Itewa; he wipes out Itewa's people and returns home with the spoils. He appeals to the divinities for force and revivifies all his people. The village is now replenished and prosperous. In epic I, Mwindo makes the critical decision to go search for his father. He gives instructions to his aunt and leaves her holding a rope connected to him that is to keep her informed of his activities. He rushes out of the village and arrives at a *kikoka*-fern. In epic II, Mwindo abruptly decides to visit the subterranean world; he gives instructions to his people and leaves them his hunting dogs, who will inform him if there is trouble in the home village; he arrives at a *kikoka*-fern. The subsequent events are described in both epics in the following terms:

## EPIC I

*Wakie weya hakikoka*  
When he arrived at the place  
of the *kikoka*-fern  
*hakimirenga ishe*  
at the spot where his father  
had entered  
*na we wakura ekikoka*  
he also pulled out the *kikoka*-  
fern  
*wakimire hitina raco*  
he entered at its root  
*weta na, wenda na*  
he passed, he went

## EPIC II

*Weya hari kikoka*  
He arrived at the place where the  
*kikoka*-fern was  
0  
*wakura co*  
he pulled it out  
*wakima na hakukurire we co*  
he entered at the place where he  
had pulled it out  
*akwetanga we wenda*  
where he passed he went

*kasaire hitukuriro*  
 to appear at the wading-place  
*wakie mbu weya ho*  
 when he arrived in that spot  
*wakumana ho mwisi*  
 he encountered there the  
 daughter  
*wa Muisa Kahindo*  
 of Muisa (called) Kahindo  
*Kahindo wamukokere*  
 Kahindo embraced him  
*mbu karibu nko Mwindo*  
 saying this is my welcome  
 Mwindo  
*Mwindo warisia mbu ae*  
 Mwindo answered saying yes  
 0

0

0

0

0

0

*Iwe Kahindo nti*  
 She Kahindo then  
*usambange binyora*  
 was sick with yaws  
*ebinyora bya nti*  
 the yaws of her then  
 0

*kasaa hitukuriro*  
 to appear at the wading-place  
 0  
*wakumana ho mwisi*  
 he encountered there the  
 daughter  
*wa Nyamurairi Kahindo*  
 of Nyamurairi (called) Kahindo  
 0  
 0

*nti iye usimbange*  
 then he was singing  
*Mwindo mbu*  
 (he) Mwindo, saying  
*Enkori tunyamembe twakinda*  
*miti*  
 E Hawk, the termites destroy the  
 trees  
*Mwindo Mboru wakie*  
 Mwindo Mboru, when  
*wamakind'ikumana*  
 he had finished meeting  
*Kahindo Mwisi a Nyamurairi*  
*ekusi*  
 Kahindo, daughter of Nyamurairi,  
 at the river  
 0

0

*nti ebinyora*  
 then the yaws  
*byamurisa emubi uti*  
 filled the body entire

|                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <i>byaretukire murino</i>        | <i>nti byaremutuke</i>                 |
| they started at the tooth        | then they began                        |
| <i>byeya na munkukunyu</i>       | 0                                      |
| they arrived at the perineum     |  |
| <i>byahita n'emindi byeya na</i> | 0                                      |
| they descended the legs          |  |
| they arrived at                  |  |
| <i>mumpanda sebisando</i>        | <i>mumpanda yemume</i>                 |
| the toe of the soles of the feet | at the toe male (big)                  |
| 0                                | <i>byeya na mubusuntsu webuteo</i>     |
|                                  | they arrive at the tussock of the hair |

In these two passages the overlapping of common formulas is more pronounced than in many other cases. With identical or related terms, similarly constructed phrases and sequences of action, both singers in their own manners demonstrate preferences: a change of verbal form, a repetition, an addition of a descriptive phrase, and an insertion of complementary detail about the action or situation. To describe this encounter between Mwindo and Kahindo, however, both bards use an almost equal number of syllables (144 in epic I and 150 in epic II) and structure their narratives on a nearly perfect combination of the 7 and 9 syllable rhythmic pattern, with predominance of the 7 syllable breath-group.

Following this passage the two texts diverge, partly because they reverse some of the events. In epic I, Mwindo attempts to pass by, but Kahindo stops him, asking where he is going. He reveals that he is journeying to Muisa to search for his father. She asks him to halt and to listen to her advice because it is not an easy enterprise to visit Muisa's place. She then gives him, in great detail, clues and advice on how to handle Muisa's trickeries. Softened by this approach, Mwindo decides to wash her wounds and to heal her. He then departs for Muisa. In epic II, as soon as the suffering Kahindo sees Mwindo, she passionately admires this wonderful young man. She asks him to wash her wounds; Mwindo performs the work and reveals his intention to go to Nyamurairi. He faints, apparently as the result of the strenuous work, but he recovers again. When he is leaving, Kahindo gives him clues and advice. Singing, Mwindo climbs the slope and arrives at Nyamurairi's village.

The actual advice given by Kahindo is conceived differently. In epic I, Kahindo first identifies the appearance of Muisa, who is a big man rolled up in the ashes near the fireplace of his men's house. Then she provides a number of situations with the relevant stratagems necessary to escape. If Muisa greets you, then you greet him in the same manner, using the term « my father », as he does. If Muisa gives you a stool to sit on, then you refuse, saying « is a man's father's head to be used then as a stool ». If Muisa asks you to drink beer from a calabash, you refuse saying that even though a man is changed into a child he should not therefore drink his father's urine. If Muisa gives you his blessing of strength, then you return the same blessing to him. If Muisa gives you banana paste to eat, then you reply that even if one is a child one should not therefore eat his father's excrement. Flattered by these good and beautiful words, Mwindo decides to wash Kahindo's wounds before leaving.

In epic II, Kahindo first shows Mwindo which road to take. Then she explains to him how he must act in various situations. If Nyamurairi, in his men's house, gives water for washing, then you ask him, « E, father, shall I wash in the beer which you drink », and you refuse categorically and continue to refuse even if he insists. When you arrive in his place, then you must sing a song confirming that you are not one of those people who killed the Chief's dog Ringe. Thereupon Mwindo, singing a new song, leaves for Nyamurairi's place. The theme in both epics is similar : Nyamurairi is going to deceive Mwindo, but it is easy to circumvent the tricks by using the appropriate verbal magic. In the two cases, Kahindo has not made any reference to the Herculean tasks that Mwindo will be asked to perform after he has successfully managed the verbal trickery. The theme, however, is formulated in a completely different fashion and with much more elaboration in epic I.

Even when a certain detail sounds very similar, it is still developed in an original manner. In epic I, if Mwindo receives beer, he must reject it because it is Muisa's urine. In epic II, if he receives water to wash, he must refuse it on the grounds that it is beer which Nyamurairi uses to drink. Nevertheless, the bards use a number of common formulas, which are yet different in actual verbalization. Identical ones (*ukia umeya*, when you have arrived ; *mbu ae tita*, saying, yes my father ; *nti utima*, then you refuse) are offset by those which express a similar idea or phase of action :



|                               |                                   |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <i>wendange kure Muisa</i>    | <i>wetanga hihaa</i>              |
| while going to Muisa          | while passing at that place there |
| <i>umakime harushu</i>        | <i>weyerenga harushu</i>          |
| if you enter the men's house  | arriving at the men's house       |
| <i>nti umusubie</i>           | <i>nti umwire</i>                 |
| then you answer him           | then you tell him                 |
| <i>mbu urise ko</i>           | <i>mbu ishue o</i>                |
| saying that you must drink it | saying that you must wash with it |

## THE RHYTHMIC PATTERNS OF THE MWINDO EPIC

There are definite, definable rhythmic patterns prevalent in the Mwindo epic. The simplest patterns are based on semantically discrete word groups of 7 and 9 syllables or morae. These two basic groups do occur independently, but very often breath-groups predominate that are structured on multiples of 7 or 9, and on various combinations of both. Frequently recurring patterns consist of 14, 16, 18, 21, 23, 25, 27, 30, 32, 34, 35, 36, and 49 syllable statements.

The number 9 is not important in Nyanga symbolism, but it is of great significance among some neighboring groups (e.g., in Rwanda poetry). Seven, however, is a pervading number in Nyanga culture and its conventional meaning is apparent at once from the epic text itself. The village of Shemwindo has « seven meeting places of his people » (p. 42) ; it is « the village with seven meeting places » (p. 78) ; and the village Tubondo is « with seven meeting places, with seven entrances » (p. 141). Chief Shemwindo has married « seven wives » (p. 42) and so the hero Mwindo has « seven mothers » (p. 123). After Mukiti has been accepted as the prospective husband of Iyangura, her people « fixed him seven days for bringing the valuables » (p. 47), and « after the seven days were fulfilled », Mukiti takes the payments to them (p. 48). The marriage ceremonies ended, the bridal attendants of Iyangura leave, « having been given seven bunches of money as a departure gift » (p. 51). When the hero, enclosed in a drum, is thrown away into the river, « it rained for seven days » (p. 60). Lightning strikes « seven times » the house in which Mwindo is seated (p. 76). In an act of revenge, Mwindo calls for Lightning to destroy Tubondo : « I want seven lightning flashes right now » (p. 91) ; « Tubondo, seven lightning flashes » (p. 92) ; and « there appeared seven lightning flashes » (p. 92). Lightning « sent down seven lightnings » to pulverize

Ntumba's cave (p. 105). Mwindo calls his aunt to provide him with « seven portions of food » to feed hungry children (p. 106-7) and « seven pastes with meat » come to join him (p. 107). Mwindo addresses « the seven groups that are here in Tubondo » during a solemn council (p. 122) and orders his « seven mothers to be seated in one group » (p. 123). One of Mwindo's Pygmies sees the Dragon Kirimu who « had seven heads and seven horns and seven eyes » (p. 131). Mwindo is punished in the celestial realm by Rain who « fell upon Mwindo seven and seven times more » (p. 138); and on leaving the celestial realm, he is admonished by Lightning, Rain, Sun, and Star, who « pulled his ears seven times and seven more » (p. 138). Finally, Mwindo cautions his people to listen to his decrees, threatening that « he who will go beyond what Mwindo has said, he will die (from) seven lightnings » (p. 141).

In all these cases the number « seven » marks completeness, perfection, abundance, exhaustiveness, and power. Implicitly, seven stands in contrast to other numbers, such as four or six, which are used only once in the epic to help emphasize the incompleteness and unsuccessfulness of an action or event (p. 128, « During Mwindo's enthronement, he was given only four women; he went on getting himself married... »; p. 55, « Shemwindo threw the spear into the house six times, each time reaching nothing but [at] the pole », to mark the vainness of his attempts). In the other epics and in the tales, seven is also an often-mentioned symbolic number. Some phrases and refrains in songs always occur seven times.

Beyond the oral literature, the importance of seven as a symbolic device in Nyanga culture appears in several contexts. In the number system, 14, 21, etc., are computed as *arinda abi*, *arinda ashatu*, etc., i.e., 2 (times) 7, 3 (times) 7, in contrast to the other multiples of the primary numbers, which are designated as 10 and 1, 10 and 2, 2 (times) 10 and 2, etc. In purification rituals, the ablutions in the river are organized in 2 sets of 7. In some ethnohistorical traditions, seven chiefs are said to have come to Nyangaland.

Seven and also nine syllables are important rhythmic devices employed in many of the highly concise, sung or spoken, statements of the Nyanga: proverbs, songs or stereotyped calls and dialogues of the circumcision ceremonies, circumlocutions, and euphemisms. A few examples will illustrate this feature.

The Nyanga proverbs are based on 1, 2, or 3 short statements. The overwhelming number of proverbs consists of 2 statements,

separated by a clear-cut caesura, to the point that the second part of the proverb is frequently not « spoken » but « thought ». Few of the proverbs have a perfect balance of syllables in both lines. Even when they exhibit this balance, the number of syllables in each line ranges from 5 to 10. In a sample of 29 proverbs where the second line has more syllables than the first, the preference is for the second line to contain 7 syllables (17 of the 29 cases) or 9 syllables (10 of the 29 cases). In 13 cases where the first line is longer, the tendency is for the first line to contain 9 syllables (8 out of the 13 cases) and less frequently, 7 syllables (2 out of the 13 cases).

During various phases of the secret circumcision rites, much of the conversation between the initiates and their tutors or with outsiders is carried on by means of a variety of « talking sticks ». The initiates or their tutors beat the sequences of the high and low tones of brief stereotyped statements, many of which are based on 7 syllable phrases. Thus, when it is going to rain, the circumcised men who are not yet healed are calling on their sticks as follows :

*Kakumbu ka mutende* (7 syllables ; Little bag of initiate)

*Katorokwi na mbura* (7 syllables ; may it not be beaten by rain)

The Nyanga possess a vast repertory of highly conventionalized poetic circumlocutions, many of them euphemistic in scope, for a variety of events and functions considered to be of a delicate nature. They pertain to different situations and activities such as dying, recovery from a coma, death, sexual intercourse, praises (of a good dancer or of a chief), astonishment, anger, anxiety, shame, sneezing, etc. A considerable number of these standard expressions are constructed on the 7 syllable principle, e.g., *kubashumbu mburano*, in the (world of the) spirits (there is) counsel, to bless a person who is sneezing ; *watukayo hokebo*, he came from there where (others) get lost, to refer to a person who recovers after being near death.

Both in the terse statements of the circumcision rites and in the circumlocutions, there are also rhythmic patterns of 9 syllables, including simple stereotyped questions such as *ubura buni nyabatende*, what are you saying, *nyabatende* (a formula with which the initiates address women from a distance). Nine syllable patterns also occur in the periphrases and circumcision songs illustrated by the following two examples. When a person is near death, the Nyanga say *butaci ukiri uriho*, it will not dawn and he is still here (i.e., in the village,

in the world). Two of the longer best known circumcision songs are constructed almost entirely on the 9 syllable line: e.g., the song beginning with *nkuru yatuka mubukuko*, Turtle comes out of the carapace.

Throughout the epic the bard, Candi Rureke, creatively manipulates the possibilities of the grammatical and syntactical systems of his language and of the stereotyped phrases and circumlocutions available in his culture. He is, of course, deeply indebted to the verbal artists who preceded him in the epic tradition and from whom he has learned his song. He is himself a creative artist constantly inventing the appropriate expressions to fit his purposes. It is fairly easy to pinpoint some of the techniques and sources most efficiently used by the singer to obtain his 7 or 9 syllable formulas (for the sake of brevity, I restrict most examples to the 7 syllable systems; but there are also instances of 9 syllable systems for all categories discussed):

1. Stereotyped expressions widely found in the rest of Nyanga oral literature and other conventional speech usages. The following 7 syllable repetitive statements may be mentioned: *buri hano na haa*, like here and there; *kiri nku ngi kiri ko*, what is there is what is there; *kashangi karehyani*, a moment which is long as when; *wishisha mumutima*, he asked himself in his heart; *bokane muma-kuba*, they flew against each other's chests; *bashishara nguru mbu*, they were very perplexed saying; *witinge ekubunu*, he grasped the mouth (in astonishment); *rwakwi ho ongo rundo*, this is the one (i.e., death) that you will die; *wabikira murenge*, he called a sound, i.e., he made a proclamation, a statement, an appeal. The stereotyped phrase *wabikira murenge* (he called a sound) occurs 10 times in the epic and *babikira murenge* (they called a sound), once. The variant *warekera murenge* (he threw a sound), which is built after the model *warekera enderi kubunu* (he threw sweet words into his mouth; literally, sweet grains; an oral will, a prophetic statement) is presented twice. A similar expression emphasizing the point of view of the receiver of the message is *warukira murenge* (he heard the sound). The formula is abbreviated to *wabikira mbu* (he called saying) on two occasions, and slightly lengthened by the addition of *mbu* (saying, that). The formula is extended more substantially on p. 174 to *wabikira emurenge emwihi n'emore* (14 syllables; she called the sound, nearby and far, or short and long; translated as she uttered a cry, low and high) and

shortened again by one syllable without change of meaning but with reversal of word order to *wabikira emurenge more n'amwihi* (p. 187).

This capacity to shorten and lengthen standard expressions in various ways without changing their fundamental meanings is one of the clues to the bard's technique. The alternatives, which in each case are determined by the needs of a larger sentence of which this formula is a part, are the following :

|   |  |
|---|--|
| plain formula :   | <i>wabikira murenge</i> (7 syllables)                  |
| slightly expanded by addition of an invariable :                    | <i>wabikira murenge mbu</i> (8 syllables)              |
| shortened by omission of the object :                               | <i>wabikira mbu</i> (5 syllables)                      |
| expanded by the addition of adjectives, invariables, and augments : | <i>wabikira emurenge emwihi n'emore</i> (14 syllables) |
| shortened expansion by reversal of word order :                     | <i>wabikira emurenge more n'amwihi</i> (13 syllables)  |

2. Appositions and other linkages of names, expansions of names through the use of pronouns and other morphemes and periphrastic expressions. These cases abound in the text and following are a sample of typical choices :

|                               |                                      |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <i>Mukiti na Shemwindo</i>    | Mukiti and Shemwindo                 |
| <i>bakungu n'ebarusi</i>      | the counselors and the princes       |
| <i>ngantsi na nyakashombe</i> | the beloved-one and the despised-one |
| <i>mwami wabo Shemwindo</i>   | Chief their Shemwindo                |
| <i>bomina be barinda</i>      | wives his seven                      |
| <i>Banashemwindo bati</i>     | the Banashemwindo-group all          |
| <i>ubungu rwa Shemwindo</i>   | The village of Shemwindo             |
| <i>sinkari Iyangura</i>       | paternal aunt Iyangura               |

3. Repetitions, redundancies, and periphrases. Some illustrations are :

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| <i>kubukone hirare</i>   | behind the houses on the garbage heap<br>( <i>hirare</i> is clear enough for a Nyanga) |
| <i>munkati yerubungu</i> | in the middle of the village (instead of <i>mubutara</i> )                             |
| <i>endiko ya yebehe</i>  | this bridewealth of valuables ( <i>ndiko</i> is clear enough for a Nyanga)             |

These redundancies are especially clear in the complex verbal formulas for time and place.

4. The poetic creations. Here are included the many poetic and evocative phrases that, as far as can be detected, have no precedent in the rest of Nyanga oral literature or speech conventions. These phrases seem to belong to the particular epic tradition of the bard or appear to be the product of his own genius, whether or not they are entirely different in structure from current expressions. For example: Mukiti dressed very well, *buri kanyero kanko* (p. 147), like the anus of a snail (so neat he was); Mukiti saw Iyangura *bukokobocaange* (p. 148), the manner in which she was bursting with mature beauty; Mukiti received much food in the village of his maternal uncles, so that he and his people *nti bari buri mbuha* (p. 148), then they were like a blister; the hero's father asks swimmers to throw his son (locked up in a drum) into the pool *rahakita-binduka* (p. 152), of where nothing ever moves.

5. The verbal formulas. The secondary verbal constructions that include two or three verbs, with or without invariables, pronouns, and derivative suffixes, appear to be an inexhaustible source of correct 7 and 9 syllable formulas.

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| <i>wakie mbu wasunge</i> | when he saw (literally, he did that he saw)                        |
| <i>bakie basungana</i>   | when they saw each other (literally, they did they saw each other) |
| <i>bamakind'irengera</i> | they just finished eating  |
| <i>batakoce iruka</i>    | they are unable to return  |

The 9 syllable structures are favored in this type of formula, for example:

|                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| <i>wakie wamakind'ibinga</i> | when he had finished marrying  |
| <i>bakie bamasungana bo</i>  | when they had seen each other in this manner   |
| <i>wakie iye uri kurwe</i>   | when he was already in his (village), literally, he did already he was in the place of him |

Many of the time formulas constructed along these lines also fall into the 9 syllable pattern, e.g., *bakie ebutu wamaca*, when the sky had become daylight; *bakie mumukomakoma*, when (they were) in the very early morning.

6. Other types of expressions with the right syllabic structure. Some of the praise terms and epithets in apposition to nouns fulfill the prosodic requirements, e.g., *sinkari wa mumube*, paternal aunt of the body (i.e., very close and very dear) ; Mwindo Kabutwakenda, Mwindo Little-one-just-born-he-walked. Some reduplications achieve the 7 syllable structure by simple repetition of the entire radical, e.g., *basonjanyasonjanya* (p. 151), they gathered and gathred in mass (calling one another) ; he was devoured by *misunganosungano* (p. 151), the many longing looks. The bard always has the opportunity to expand or to shorten these many standard word groups by addition or subtraction of invariables, augments, pronouns and derivative suffixes.

Many segments of the text are not simply reducible to statements of 7 or 9 syllables, but rather constitute self-contained, indivisible wholes based on the multiples of these numbers. The following illustrate this situation.

14 syllables : *kashangi kare kamahwire nyungu ya buntu* ; a moment long (enough, i.e., as long as it takes) to have cooked a pot of banana paste

18 syllables : *bakie iye bari muntuka-kuni na mwienda-kuni* ; they did already they were in (i.e., at the point of) coming-from-where and going-to-where

21 syllables : Mwindo exclaims : *rero tita usira isasi kabontso-bontso kairirisiwa* ; this time, my father has no mercy (because) a small baby is willingly maltreated !

32 syllables : Mwindo *wakie wamakind'irisa enceo yenkambu yakumushee isinkari hima n'ebikumi* ; Mwindo did, he had finished eating the hospitality gift of the bovine which had given to him his aunt together with the maidens.

The bard who does not « write » verses, however, is not limited by simple 7 or 9 syllable lines or their multiples.

The Nyanga singer is accompanied by a percussion stick. Although there seems to be a complex interweaving of rhythms, the percussion stick is handled according to a basic pattern of 7 or 9 beats :

(7) *emusindu kutuka*, the last one to leave ;

(9) *wasia na nsinde sabine*, he remains with the lingering troubles of his peers.



The bard himself holds the rattle, which he shakes during the singing. According to the Nyanga, the person who holds the rattle is the leader of the song (*mutondoori*). In Nyanga terminology, rattles « speak » (*iyeba*) like drums. The bard is really the master in control of the rhythmic pattern of the performance, and he decides on pauses and changes of speed. The percussionists (always closely connected with the bard as friends and relatives) providing the background rhythmic accompaniment must stay in unison. Jones (1954, p. 26-27) has indicated how the African finds the greatest aesthetic satisfaction « in the complex interweaving of contrasting rhythmic patterns ». He has isolated the following essential principle : whatever rhythmic devices are used, there is practically always a clash of rhythm. Even a song apparently monorhythmic will turn out to be constructed of two independent but strictly related rhythmic patterns : one inherent in the melody, the other belonging to the accompaniment. Jones has noted further the astonishing freedom of melodic rhythm within the short limits of claps. In his musical study of Swahili epic poetry (1975-1976, p. 105-29), he concludes that the « song-tune » has its own rhythm.

The full technique of the Nyanga bard is clear only when the larger units of meaning and rhythm with which he constructs his epic are examined. Such units may be called breath-groups. Working with the above-mentioned types of formulas, the singer attains rhythmic balance by judicious and ingenious combinations and manipulations. Through his outstanding linguistic competence, he expands or reduces the sentences in various recurring ways : reduplications, repetitions, periphrases, changes of verbal suffixes, and additions or pronouns, invariants, and augments. Analysis of the following very complicated and rather long, but by no means unusual, breath-group can illustrate these techniques (p. 149) :

*Wakie wameca emurembe* (10)

He did he had passed the interdiction  
After he had passed the interdiction

*wesantse se sibi bo* (7)

of the paths his two in this manner  
of these two paths

*na mubungu rwe ndo* (6)

and in the village his this one  
and while in this his village

*nti kurikire Shemwami we* (9)  
 then there was established Shemwami his  
 there lived his Shemwami  
*mukiri nti ngi Kasiyembe* (9)  
 great then it was Kasiyembe  
 (great) called Kasiyembe  
*Mukiti were emutambo* (9)  
 Mukiti said to the headman  
 Mukiti told his (headman)  
*we ngo mukiri Kasiyembe* (9)  
 his this one big Kasiyembe  
 big (headman) Kasiyembe  
*ongo wendayo ongo'rikaa* (10)  
 you will go you dwell always  
 you, go to dwell  
*na mukari ngu Iyangura* (9)  
 with wife this one Iyangura  
 with my wife Iyangura  
*hende eririba* (6)  
 at the borders of the pool  
 at the borders of the pool  
*na we Mukiti wenda* (7)  
 and he Mukiti goes  
 and I Mukiti shall from now on  
*urikaa hano* (6)  
 to dwell always here  
 always reside here  
*hasikengi esantserya siti* (10)  
 in the place where are collecting the dry leaves all  
 where all the dry leaves collect (in flowing down)  
*n'emyoo iti hareenga yo* (10)  
 and the fallen trees all in the place where are obstructed these  
 where all the fallen tree trunks are obstructed  
*munkati n'eririba* (7)  
 in the middle of the pool  
 in the middle of the pool

In this short text, the singer makes use of the following elements :

1. Augments. There are seven of them in the forms *e-* (*emurembe*, *emutambo*, *aririba*, *emyoo*, *eririba*) and *esa-* (*wesantse*, *esantserya*).
2. Pronouns. Sixteen of them are included in the form of nu-

merals (*sibi*), demonstratives (*bo, ndo, ngo, ngu, hano, yo*), possessives (*se*), free pronouns (*rwe, we, we, ongo, ongo, we*), and indefinite pronouns (*siti, iti*). Some of the pronouns came in a triple succession (e.g., *wesantse se sibi bo*), others are repeated in short succession (*ongo... ongo; siti... siti*).

3. Invariables. The 7 invariables are *na* (5 times), *nti* (1 time), *nti ngi* (1 time).

4. Repetitions of a word in its entirety. Examples are Kasiyembe (2 times), Mukiti (2 times), *eririba* (pool, 2 times), *mukiri* (big, 2 times), and *ongo* (you, 2 times). The verb *enda* (to go) is repeated twice but in a slightly different form of conjugation (*wendayo* and *wenda*). The verb *-rik-* (to dwell, to reside) occurs 3 times in various forms of the conjugation (*kurikire, ongo'rikaa, and urika*). The indefinite pronoun *-ti* (all) appears with separate prefixes of correspondence as *siti* and *iti*.

5. In this passage, the bard also handles one form of the widely used verbal formulas made with the auxiliary *kia* (to do; *wakie wameca emurembe*) and with the verbs *rika* (to dwell, to be established; *nti kurikire, ongo'rikaa, and urika*) and *enda* (to go; *wendayo, wenda urika*).

In addition, the technique of alliteration, which is greatly enhanced by the system of prefixal correspondences, is thoroughly utilized, e.g., 7 words begin with *mu*, 9 with *n*, 9 with *w*, 4 with *ha*, and 6 with *e*. Probably the work of the bard himself or his immediate predecessors, the passage also contains an elaborate poetic description of the pool « where all the dry leaves collect in flowing down, where all the fallen tree trunks are obstructed in the middle of the pool ».

The rhythmic balance attained in this self-contained passage is remarkable. The passage is divided by three short pauses to mark off the four distinctive semantic components of the statement :

1. *Wakie wameca... to... ntingi Kasiyembe* : 41 syllables (a combination of 3 x 9 and 2 x 7).
2. *Mukiti were... to ... mukiri Kasiyembe* ; 18 syllables (2 x 9).
3. *Ongo wendayo... to ...hendeririba* : 25 syllables (a combination of 2 x 9 and 1 x 7).
4. *Na we Mukiti... to... munkati n'eririba* : 39 syllables (a combination of 3 x 7 and 2 x 9).

The role of the above-mentioned small additional elements (augment, invariables, pronouns, and suffixes) and of the repetitions in achieving these rhythmic patterns is obvious.

#### A CONCLUDING NOTE

I have met many great singers and narrators among the Nyanga, including the bards Candi Rureke, Shekwabo, Nkuba Shekarisi, Sherungu, Bitanda, and Mutereso Shempunge. Candi Rureke, who narrated the epic analyzed in these pages, may be the greatest of them all. The text that he produced is a linguistically flawless document, a masterful piece of precisely formulated thought and logical coherence, and a rhythmically well-balanced piece. With the greatest competence, Rureke applies the structural principles of his language to serve his constructions, enriching the flow of his narrative with finely nuanced expressions. He handles with skill the « fixed means of expression » of which Parry wrote, combining phrases and positioning them in a great variety of ways, which clearly are the hallmarks of his style or at least of the style of his own immediate predecessors. He also has a predilection for certain grammatical features and manipulates normal word order more intensively than other singers. In dialogues, proclamations and speeches, he is more inclined than others to employ a mixture of direct and indirect discourse, marked with sudden shifts.

Mr. Rureke shows a definite preference for certain formulas, which he and his immediate predecessors seem to have selected from among an enormous number of possibilities. This is particularly striking in reference to the restricted number of time formulas employed in his text. The Nyanga possess a large selection of descriptive phrases for various periods of daytime, such as the early morning preceding the people's departure for the fields or for the hunt. Rureke prefers to situate the beginning of an action in *mumukomakoma*, a reduplication of *mukoma* (morning) to mark « early morning ». This period of time is preceded in Nyanga time classification by such distinct « very early morning » periods as *mboo senda kwirambo*, the buffaloes go to *irambo* (places to drink and to lick salt); *butu wabimba*, sky swells; and others. The *mukoma* time phase itself is divided into distinctive chronological stages conceived in terms of specific recurring sequences of activities, e.g., « old man kindles the fire in the men's house », « people open their

houses », « what makes monkeys dream », « sun breaking through », and « people eating early morning meal ». None of these many possible time related descriptive phrases are employed by Rureke. He limits himself to the standard expressions *mumukomakoma*, in the early morning, or *bakie ebutu wamaca mumukomakoma*, when sky had become daylight, in the early morning. The more rarely used reference to « evening » occurs in the general formula « when sky had become dark », and in the much more nuanced indication of a specific phase of the evening *mumurusisi*, in twilight.

At first sight, Rureke is also more of a purist. Few foreign terms are found in his text ; when they do occur, they are Nyangaized (e.g., *marami*, for the French *madame*, is used once). In other epics, entire dialogues or songs are in the related Hunde language (the Hunde are eastern and southern neighbors of the Nyanga), and sometimes a remarkably sudden language shift happens. The real reason for Rureke's purism seems to be that Rureke and the epic tradition which he adheres to are further removed geographically and historically from the Hunde world than the other bards.

The interweaving of 7 and 9 syllable rhythms is not an exclusive feature of Rureke's song. Although more detailed and comprehensive evaluation of the Nyanga epics must be undertaken in this regard, the 7 and 9 syllable patterns are found in the other epics and definitely in other features of Nyanga oral literature and stereotyped speech. In his analysis of a sung tale from the Hunde, Mateene (1970, p. 2) has noted that the singer made fairly regular pauses, « dont la longueur varie autour d'une moyenne de sept syllabes ». The tale is interlaced with often repeated 7 syllable phrases, e.g., *kalamo na maala*, salvation and force. The 9 morae patterns have been found in Rundi lullabies and Rwanda pastoral poetry (Coupez and Kamanzi, 1957 and 1965). The appearance in Nyanga oral literature of the 7 and 9 syllable rhythms and their combinations raises interesting historical questions, which cannot be answered in the light of our existing knowledge of prosodic systems within and across ethnic groups in this part of Africa. The Nyanga and certain remote subgroups claim common origins in East Africa and joint migrations into Zaire. The Nyanga and some Hunde subgroups have also been profoundly influenced by the Twa Pygmies. These Pygmies have played a significant role in the ritual systems of both ethnic groups, not the least in reference to the enthronement rites of chiefs. The role of Pygmies as companions and singers of

the hero-chief is prominently stressed in the other epics. (It is much more limited in Rureke's text.) Those bards I have known among the Nyanga had close Pygmy connections. In one way or another, they traced their epic tradition to a singer who, if not a Pygmy himself, then had extremely close affinities with the Pygmies. Tentatively, I am inclined to think that the 9 syllable pattern goes back to the Pygmy influence, and that the 7 syllable pattern belongs to Nyanga and Hunde traditions that predate the Pygmy cultural impact. Benefiting from a long history of Nyanga and Pygmy cultural interplay, the Nyanga bards of the twentieth century have managed, somewhat uneasily, to cope with the double tradition.

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