

## MAKUA SONG-RIDDLES FROM THE INITIATION RITES

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These song-riddles (*ikano*) differ in function from the ordinary Bantu spoken riddle. They are either action-songs accompanying a dance or else have a didactic purpose. The meaning of the riddle is not always explained to the children in the rites, but in the case of the didactic riddles the explanation is generally provided with much exhortation from the adults. An expert improviser leads the singing and the solution of some of the song-riddles is known only to himself. Each expert has his own stock of riddles, but a large proportion of these are well-known to other experts and differ only in grammatical forms.

My two principal informants were an old man called Hunkukulu and Chief Namariwa who learned most of his riddles from the first informant. This Chief is now a Christian, by name Isaka, and he no longer performs in public because the singing of these song-riddles has, after consultation with knowledgeable Christian Africans, been forbidden in the adaptation of the non-Christian rites by the Universities' Mission to Central Africa. Although many of these song-riddles are quite harmless, others of them have double *entendre*, and it has been thought wiser to forbid them altogether rather than risk the consequences of only a partial ban. This is all the more reason for preserving as many as possible of these song-riddles. My business has been to record, and to make a note of the double meaning only where it has been explained to me.

It is tabu for an initiated person to tell these song-riddles to an uninitiated child. An initiated male person must not reveal them to a woman, nor an initiated female person to a man. Through the influence of the Mission, however, this tabu has lost much of its force. It will be seen that some of the riddles contain the ritual name of the object indicated in the solution. This ritual name is really the child-name, the name assigned to the object as belonging to the state before initiation, and it is called *ncina nokalai* (the old

name) not in the sense of being the name used long ago, but of being the name of the thing taught to the children in the rites as belonging to their uninitiated state. We must not understand from this that the child-name was actually used by the children before their initiation. They are taught the ritual name for the first time in the rites, and told never to use it again as it belongs to the old uninitiated life in the same way as their own personal name which must be similarly discarded after initiation. They must never reveal this ritual name to uninitiated children.

I have adopted the classification used by Dr. I. Schapera for spoken Bantu riddles. As to the orthography, dental *t* and *d* resemble the English sound *th* in "thin" and "their" with a stop in front of it, and are written *tth*, *ddh* respectively (rather like the pronunciation of *th* in "eighth," of *t* and *th* in "not thick" and of *d* and *th* in "read them.") Dental *t* and *d* are thus somewhat affricated. The sign *f* represents the hushing fricative, represented in English by *sh* ("share.") I have not thought it necessary in this orthography to mark aspiration of consonants, for I have found no examples where aspiration is significant for the meaning.

The dialect of Makua illustrated in these texts is *Ikorowera*, a dialect of Northern Makua, spoken in the Ruvuma district of Tanganyika Territory and Portuguese East Africa.

## 1. NATURAL PHENOMENA :

(1) R. *Ciwuyawuye*<sup>1</sup> *cikale poromoka*.<sup>2</sup>

Let the senses lie properly together.

A. *Ikoŵe yorupa*.

Sleep.

This song is explained as follows :

*Mtu arupaka ikoŵe irufo caya cihomala caŵku-lwi. Coŵkyai cinopaygawe mtu, tthoko uwaha womenttho, umumula, wiuwelela, coŵkyai cihohokolea cihokala ŵamoka mwikoŵeni, kiwo ineria tthoththoni yamalaka urupa.*

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When a man sleeps all his senses are at rest (lit. are finished). Everything that a man does, like looking with his eyes, breathing, listening, everything returns and becomes one in sleep, there is nothing that is done again once he sleeps.

Notes :

<sup>1</sup> *Ciwuyawuye*, derived noun from the duplicated ideophone *wuya* (of activity of the senses).

<sup>2</sup> *Poromoka*, adverb with alternative forms *poromoca*, *poromoci*. Cf. the proverb: *Citthukumanihie cihelie poromoka*. Let them be gathered together and placed properly. This proverb originates in the following story sometimes told to girls in *Ciputu* or else to pregnant women at the giving of instruction before birth of first child:—

*Ahotthama mtu mmoka*<sup>3</sup> *mwali nkanyara mwana, ayarieke*,<sup>4</sup> *nkakuma itthuku. Pahi nkera, Ncina nawe Kawarere. Dkeria, Awahie ndrete mwana oyo. Dkawahia ndrete, iputthu nkacanelaca, kuhalaka*<sup>5</sup> *iputthu imoka. Yeyo iputthu iyo pinttheke.*

There was once a young woman and she bore a child, and when he was born (the child) came out in pimples. So she said, His name is Ugly One. And it was said, Let the child have medicine. And he received some medicine, and the swellings (i.e. the pimples) subsided, leaving one swelling. That swelling is the navel.

The proverb is used at a palaver when different people have been speaking. One man gets up to make a summary of all that has been said, i.e. he gathers the words together and puts them in their proper significance.

<sup>3</sup> *Ahotthama mtu mmoka*, lit. one person set out. A common way of beginning a story in Makua.

<sup>4</sup> *Ayarieke*, adverbial use of the subjunctive in narrative context, i.e. when (the child) was born.

<sup>5</sup> *Kuhalaka*, consecutive construction made up of the informative *ku-*, the simple stem of the verb *-hala-*, and the suffix *-ka*.

(2) R. *Kannona*<sup>1</sup> *urendo wanati, ee | uneta nuhiyu*,<sup>2</sup> *ee.*

Don't you see the safari of the uninitiated girl? / it goes by night.

A. *Mafi.*

Water (The water of the Ruvuma River passes even by night).

The reference is here to taking the girl to the grass hut (*nikuku*) for the initiation. This usually takes place just after sunset.

Notes :

<sup>1</sup> *Kannona*, assimilation of *m+n* < *kamnona*.

<sup>2</sup> *Nuhiyu*, conjunctive formative *ni-* used as an adverbial formative, with elision of the vowel *-i-* before *-u-*.

(3) R. *Akwile*<sup>1</sup> *pirupelo*,<sup>2</sup> *anotthathua nikala.*

It is the dead who lie, he starts at a piece of charcoal.

A. *Wowba.*

Fear.

Explanation: *Mtu apacerie ulumia inoa, kankufya utthathua kila nihuku. Cowopiha*<sup>3</sup> *cinci cihokala welaponi wa*,<sup>4</sup> *mweteke wowowbetu*.<sup>5</sup>

When a person has begun to be bitten, (perhaps by) a snake, he doesn't fail to be startled every day. There are many dangerous things here on earth, walk with fear then.

Notes :

<sup>1</sup> *Akwile*, the relative (perfect stem with relative concord) used pronominally.

<sup>2</sup> *Pirupelo*, copulative formative *pi-* with idiomatic use of applied form of the stative verb *-rupa* (sleep), final *-a* being changed to *-o*. Further examples of this idiom :

*Kiri mlitelelo* (I am waiting) < *-lita* (wait)

*Yari mwemelelo* (They were standing) < *-emela* (stand)

*Ari mkalelo* (He is seated) < *-kala* (sit, remain, be).

<sup>3</sup> *Cowopiha*, possessive pronoun derived from the verb *-wopiha* (frighten), of which the original simple stem in Makua is *wowba* (be afraid).

<sup>4</sup> *Welaponi wa*, locative adverb followed by locative pronoun. The locative suffix *-ni* is retained. Coalescence of *a+i* > *e*, viz. *wa+ilapo+ni*.

<sup>5</sup> *Wowowbetu*, idiomatic use of the word *itu* (thing) after, in this example, an adverb of manner formed with prefixal formative *wo-*. The adverbial formative is prefixed to the Class 6 noun *wowba* (fear). Further examples of the use of *itu* to indicate "well then," "so then" :

*Haleketu* (Well then, goodbye, lit. be left!)  
*Ndrweketu* (Let's go then).

The vowel *e* resulting from coalescence or elision in such examples is an open vowel.

(4) R. *Ntengama-aka*<sup>1</sup> *oyo, utthana no*<sup>2</sup>*wira uhiyu nomora*.<sup>2</sup>

That is my setting, by day it passes, at night it falls.

A. *Ncuwa*.

The sun.

Notes :

<sup>1</sup> *Ntengama*, rare deverbative noun from *tengama* (set, of the sun). Sun-set is normally called *matekuwa-ncuwa*, or *uwila-ncuwa*, or *utthendemana ncuwa*. Informants gave no other meaning for this.

<sup>2</sup> *No*<sup>2</sup>*wira, nomora* : tense forms omitting the subjectival verb concord *u-*. This elision is frequent in the present and immediate past tenses (indicative mood) in Makua.

(5) R. *Kannomwona hapa*<sup>1</sup> *mwako, anyaka mant'e*.<sup>2</sup>

You don't find (the liver, (which is like) a hill, excreting rust.,

A. *Nluku, uwara co, poboco*.<sup>3</sup>

A stone, holding it thus, it crumbles.

The comparison here is between holding a piece of liver and a piece of earth that crumbles. They are both difficult to hold. The liver is goat's liver brought for the boys and eaten by the shepherds in the lodge. The song is meant to explain to the boys why they cannot expect to receive the liver to eat. They would not be able to hold it. The deprivation of some of the tastiest pieces is one of the trials to which the boys must submit.

Notes :

<sup>1</sup> *Hapa*, with voiced *h*, distinguishing the word in pronunciation from the Swahili word *hapa* (here).

<sup>2</sup> *Mant'e*, syllabic *n* followed by ejective consonant *t'*. The usual word for rust in Makua is *ndrenje*.

<sup>3</sup> *Poboco*, an ideophone for crumbling or for softness. An ideophone with the same meaning is *tupucu*, e.g. *itaya yari tupucu*, the earth was soft,

i.e. it crumbled when you touched it. Derived verb, *-tupucua* (be crumbled).

(6) R. *Mwamunaka*<sup>1</sup> *neteke ninari eli*.<sup>2</sup>

My little brother, let us walk while there are two of us.

A. *Irungu*.

Shadow.

Notes :

<sup>1</sup> *Mwamunaka*, diminutive prefix *mwa-* + noun possessive stem; may also mean "my little friend."

<sup>2</sup> *Ninari eli*, descriptive clause of time, consisting of subjectival verb concord + formative *-na-* + defective verb *-ri*, followed by the qualificative pronoun. Cf. :

*Nulumane unari wawwa* (Let us speak together while you are here).

*Utukia anari anetthi* (To be tied up while he is a free-man).

*Kaneuwa anari wakuwiru?* (He doesn't hear even though (while) he is near?)

(7) R. *Itupala eyo kinakwa, nihuku no-okwa nno*.

The bonfire is not yet dead (extinguished), this is the day of death.

A. *Moro*.

Fire.

The bonfire is that prepared on the night before the circumcision and lit very early the next morning. When the fire is dying down the boys have to jump through it (*utthupa moro*). *Utthupa moro* is the common euphemism for puberty in girls. When they have jumped through the fire, food is provided, and the boys are led to the circumcision. The bonfire in the rites is called *icirangari*.

(8) R. *Yawile nuhapua*.<sup>1</sup>

They came and drew aside.

A. *Iygala*.

A puddle.

This is one of a number of songs with double *entendre*. The reference is here to abstaining from sexual intercourse at the time of the menses. With this compare the following song :

*Kahorumia, Mwakuse ndrete wakopela-wao. Wano*<sup>2</sup>*wa kinopwanya moloko unacarale, yakakaho-kolea. Mi panaka*<sup>2</sup> *moloko uhocara, kawawo*

*wowira. Peria,<sup>3</sup> Mwarukule ikokoto pili, mwawonyeke ukopela-uwo. Wandreaya-ilocote<sup>4</sup> humanyatu ayo<sup>5</sup> ukopela-uwo yakihokoloferaka mi,<sup>6</sup> pu-ulama waka.*

I was sent. Take medicine across the river. Now I find the river full, and I returned. I thought to myself, there is nowhere to pass. It was said, Pluck two pebbles and throw them across to the other side. When those people across the river will pick them up, returning (them) to me, that is my safety.

This is explained to the candidates in the rites as follows :

*Mwaroaka utthelani, mwapwanyaka atthiyana anari areta malili, wekina ari nerukulu, mhirupane. Mwewwakaru yowira wowurerya ndrete mnoworya urupana, wottha uwe. Yerakaru wira urihakacia uwe pu-ulama winyu, wotthaca uwe.*

If you go to marry, and find the woman is ill with her periods, or perhaps with child, don't sleep together. If you hear that by drinking medicine you can sleep together, that is a lie. If they say that the miscarriage is your safety (your means for resuming sexual intercourse), that is a lie.

Compare also the following two songs :

R. *Yawile nutthea.*

They came and laughed.

A. *Mtthale.<sup>7</sup>*

Bamboo.

Referring to the sexual act accomplished.

R. *Yawile nupatakula.*

They came and uncovered.

A. *Nikurutthu.*

A butterfly. (It uncovers itself when it spreads its wings. The ritual name of a butterfly is *Mahano Anammaha*.)<sup>8</sup>

Notes :

<sup>1</sup> *Nuhapua*, use of the conjunctive formative with the verb infinitive in narrative construction. Two newly circumcised boys meeting an elder must both go to one side of the path. If they separate one on either side of the path, he may ask them: *Uhapua ninno ninno, marumbo aya ifeni?* This means, To draw aside here and here, what is the meaning? The answer given

may either be: *Nikwaa*, or *Nihiye*. *Nikwaa* is the log of wood used in making the animal trap known as *namarato*, and has bamboo sticks in the ground on either side of it making a way for the animal to come into the trap. *Nihiye* is a grave, where people stand on either side. The double *entendre* may not be apparent to the boys in this example, but the connection with the song suggests that a double meaning is conveyed.

<sup>2</sup> *Mi panaka*, absolute pronoun followed by copulative formation used frequently in narrative construction. Copulative formative *pa-* + the formative *-na-* + the possessive stem. The formative *-na-* may be a deficient verb. Cf.: *panawe* (and he said, thought, did).

<sup>3</sup> *Peria*, copulative formation with passive of the verb *-ira* (do, think, say, suppose, etc.).

<sup>4</sup> *Wandreaya-ilocote*, adverbial clause of time. The uncontracted form is *wawiraleaya-ilocote*, cf. the verb perfect stem in Makua.

<sup>5</sup> *Humanyatu ayo*: *hu-* is preprefixed to the plural prefix *manya-* and indicates respect. It is frequently used before proper names in Makua, and is the equivalent then of "Mr". The reference here, of course, is to the woman, and *ikokoto* stands for the medicine which the man may give her for abortion.

<sup>6</sup> *Yakihokoloferaka mi*, i.e. returning (them) to me, and means response in intercourse.

<sup>7</sup> *Mtthale*, a bamboo. The common explanation given to a European for this song is that when a bamboo is split it makes a noise like a high-pitched laugh, but the double *entende* conveyed in the use of this word is made evident by an explanation of the following song sung during the instruction given to a girl who has just reached puberty or to a woman pregnant with her first child :

*Uluka ntthale kawya.*

*Uluka yoyo tera,*

*Mkani, kutwaheni.*

This song cannot be translated satisfactorily into Eng'lish without first parsing each word in the line.

*Uluka*, lit. to try, means to have intercourse with, in this context; *ntthale*, a bamboo, here

means a virulent man; *kawya*, an ideophone for putting a stick in a hole without finding its bottom. *Ulika yoyo*, lit. trying this one (man); *tera*, an ideophone for clean, satisfactory. *Mkani*, verbal interjection meaning, Look here! in this context said by the man; *kuwaheni*, subjunctive, meaning, Let me give you, i.e. Let me satisfy your sexual appetite.

The idea is that the girl may have had intercourse with a number of men, and, in the case of a pregnant girl, she is asked whether the child is the result of a normal union in the village or of intercourse in the forest. It is the clean man to whom she should look for a husband. So the translation is something like this:

Having intercourse with a man who is never satisfied,

Trying this one who is a contented lover,  
(He says) Look here, let me give you (what you want).

<sup>8</sup> *Mahano Anammaha*, the wife of Mr. Giver. The fluttering or opening out of a butterfly's wings is indicative of a generous action, like someone opening his hands to give. The ideophone to describe this fluttering of a butterfly's wings is *watu*.

(9) R. *Ndrindima, ndrindima*.<sup>1</sup>

Rumble, rumble.

A. *Ukukuta*.

The sound of thunder.

This song is explained as follows: *Kalai akala mwanati ncina nawe Nandrindima, winelia wawe panetania Ukukuta*.

Long ago there was an uninitiated girl whose name was Nandrindima, and her initiation rites were called *Ukukuta*. (They took place at the end of the dry season when the sound of thunder was in the air).

Note:

<sup>1</sup> *Ndrindima* is a rare ideophone to be compared with *ritima*, an ideophone with the same meaning. There is probably some story connected with this song, which I have not been able to learn. It would be taboo for an initiated person to use the ideophone *ndrindima*, for it is the ritual name for thunder.

(10) R. *Ilapo ela yoriria, wahamo wari mtthari wakuwiru*.

This earth (land) is cold, there is somewhere where there is light nearby.

A. *Mtthuko*.

Light.

One explanation given is that the boys use a piece of glass or metal to make the light shine reflected from the sun. A bald man is called *mtthari* in Makua, and his shining baldness is described as bringing cold (*uriria*) to the eyes of the person who looks at him. *Mone* is the duplicated ideophone to describe a cold glare. It is abuse (*uruwana*) for a Makua boy to repeat this song to a bald man. Compare with this another initiation song: *Niwatthoni nihanyua, nihanle mwipurye*.

The answer to this song-riddle is *ntthari*, which can mean either the roof inside a house or a bald man. In this song a bald man's head is compared to that part of the house seen from the *baraza*; the only part where the grass-thatch is visible is that at the sides. So with a bald man, on top he has no thatch, but only at the sides.

Compare also the following song from the *Nikwalu* dance:

*Mtthari nyenyu, nihonga nyenyu,*

*Nikina mwaŵahe ahokohenyu,*

*Ilapo yaatthatha mhokura<sup>5</sup> yela.*

Bald, you! Toothless, you! One of these conditions give to your in-law, you have lived long at our maternal uncle's.

Here the reference is to a man who does not live, according to Makua custom, with his wife's people, but with his own paternal uncle. He is exhorted to go back to live with his wife's people. He has been living so long at his maternal uncle's that he is bald and toothless.

Notes:

<sup>1</sup> *Niwatthoni*, the roof of the house above the *baraza* roof.

<sup>2</sup> *Nihanyua*, it has disappeared.

<sup>3</sup> *Nihanle*, what is left, relative, contracted form of *nihalale* or *nihalile*.

<sup>4</sup> *Mwipurye*, thatch the sides! verbal imperative 2nd pers. plur. present subjunctive.

<sup>5</sup> *Mhokura*, literally, you have eaten. The last line translated literally is: The country of (our) maternal uncle you have eaten that. This is a way of saying that he has been a long time there.

## 2. THE VEGETABLE WORLD :

- (1) R. *Anamwitthatthani*<sup>1</sup> *nikwaha nohintai*.<sup>2</sup>  
The pile (things on top of each other), the distance (lit. the journey) is not far.  
A. *Ikoco*.  
(Fruits of the) *ikoco* tree.

These fruits grow one on top of the other like a string of East African cents. They appear near the ground and are edible. *Anamwitthatthani* is the ritual name for them.

### Notes :

<sup>1</sup> *Anamwitthatthani*, a deverbative noun derived from *witthatthaniha* (to pile one's self up on top of something else). The final syllable *-ha* is elided, a rare occurrence in Makua. The verb *witthattha* means to flip the hand.

<sup>2</sup> *Nohintai* : this word is made up of possessive concord + negative formative *-hi-* + adverb.

- (2) R. *Ntepwerea*<sup>1</sup> *umenle*<sup>2</sup> *uturani wano*.  
*Ntepwerea* which grows on the ash-heap now.  
A. *Mparika*.  
The castor-oil plant.

The explanation given by one old man of this song is that the castor-oil plant flourishes on or near an ash-heap, and that even as castor-oil is used for anointing at the crises of Makua life, e.g. at child-birth, at initiation, etc., so it should be remembered that the people who are anointed must all die and return to the dust, even as most domestic things find their way eventually to the ash-heap. Even the children who are being initiated must one day be only ashes, but at the time of their initiation the parallel is with the flourishing plant growing on the ash-heap.

### Notes :

<sup>1</sup> *Ntepwerea*, the ritual name for the castor-oil plant, probably derived from an ideophone, but the exact significance of the word I have not been able to obtain.

<sup>2</sup> *Umenle*, contracted form of the relative (past indefinite) used with present time sense.

- (3) R. *Akinotukela*<sup>1</sup> *mikopwe, kinooŵa anu-mwaninyu ukiloo*.<sup>2</sup>  
I shall not unfasten my head-dress, I am afraid your mother will bewitch me.  
A. *Ikoca*.  
The *ikoca* tree.

In the girls' initiation rites (*ciputu*) each girl receives a coloured head-band made of beads, and various decorative pieces are fastened on the inside of this band giving the appearance of a coloured thorn-crown. The *ikoca* tree is thorny: The girls are forbidden to undo this head-dress until about a fortnight after coming out of the rites. As it is taken off it is forbidden for the girl to look at it; she must hand it to someone behind her. The reason for this is that it belongs to the old life to which the girl cannot return again. The head-band itself is called *ɣkuruco*.

### Notes :

<sup>1</sup> *Akinotukela*, reversive verb *-tukela*, cf. *-tuka* (fasten).

<sup>2</sup> *Ukiloo*, idiomatic use of the infinitive in a subordinate sentence.

- (4) R. *Mwiri, mwiri homora, uhanle*<sup>1</sup> *piɣkululu*.<sup>2</sup>  
The tree, the tree sheds (its leaves), what is left is the trunk.  
A. *Dkunda* or *ɣkuta*.  
The Hypheane palm.

The reference here is to the unclothing of the candidates.

### Notes :

<sup>1</sup> *Uhanle*, relative, contracted form of *uhalale*.

<sup>2</sup> *Piɣkululu*, copulative formation. *Dkululu* is the ritual name of the Hypheane palm; it is not used for any tree-trunk. Another name for it is *ntthoma*. A tree-trunk fallen down is *ɣkukulu*, but apart from this a live tree-trunk is called just *mwiri* (tree).

There is a Makua proverb: *Naykweli anocuwane woykuta awe*. This means, A mourner is known by his strip of the Hypheane palm. A man bereaved of his wife wears this strip round his neck until he has had ceremonial intercourse

with a female relative of his deceased wife. As a proverb the meaning is that we can only judge or know the facts from the things we see. If a man has spoilt his own case at a *baraza*, he will have shown what he is.

- (5) R. *Uttheke waanlamu nowurya nuukuwela*.<sup>1</sup>  
The beer of my brother-in-law they drink and shout.

A. *Ipupe*.

The *ipupe* tree.

Small birds like bulbuls and hoopoes often congregate on an *ipupe* tree and chatter away. The purpose of this song is to teach the candidates that it is taboo to shout at a beer-drink prepared by your sister or mother, but at a brother-in-law's beer-drink you can shout as much as you like.

Note :

<sup>1</sup> *Nuukuwela*, conjunctive formative used with verb infinitive in narrative construction. The verb *kuwela* (shout) has lost its applied significance and is used often instead of the simple form *kuwa*. The name for the Makua, *Amakuwani*, literally means "where (are) the shouters." Dos Santos in Purchas' Pilgrims (1555) describes the Makua language as rough and high, as though the speakers were fighting.

- (6) R. *Nihanle kawo, nihanle kawo*.  
There is nothing left, nothing left.

A. *N(d)rou*.

Hard-rind wild orange tree.

Explained as follows: *Wakakaruaka n(d)rou, muntthalyacakaya-mu<sup>1</sup> nowunla. Kuwiraka mahuku matthanu, karamba*.<sup>2</sup> *Marumbo aya, awereiaka mtu, atu anera, Mwarwaheke mafi, kumwiheraka mafi, nanfo kawo*,<sup>3</sup> *ahomala ukiwa*.

When (the fruits of) the *n(d)rou* expand, inside where they break up they cry out. After (about) five days, all is quiet. The meaning is, if a man is ill, people say, Give him water, and they bring him water, but he is not (there), he is already dead.

These fruits expand in the heat and split apart. The second meaning I have not been able to discover.

Notes :

<sup>1</sup> *Muntthalyacakaya-mu*, the locative prefix used before the verb which takes the possessive stem. The locative is repeated after the verb form. This is a frequent adverbial use in Makua clauses.

<sup>2</sup> *Karamba*, ideophone for quiet, finished.

<sup>3</sup> *Kawo*, locative inflection with negative subjunctive verb concord. This is a common euphemism for death in Makua.

- (7) R. *Mmini pirithuwani<sup>1</sup> atemulie ipururu*.<sup>2</sup>

The handle of the hoe is bent, let him be adze-ed.

A. *Itatani yonlapa*.

The seed of a baobab tree.

This seed is compared to a piece of wood that needs to be cut and made straight so that the piece of iron which is the hoe itself can be inserted. A baobab seed has a cleft turning in the middle of it. The parallel here is to a disobedient person, he is like a piece of wood that has to be made straight, he needs the discipline of the initiation rites.

Notes :

<sup>1</sup> *Pirithuwani*, from the ideophone *pirithuwa*. The use of the locative suffix with an ideophone is rare.

<sup>2</sup> *Ipuryuru*, shavings.

### 3. THE ANIMAL WORLD :

(a) INSECTS :

- (1) R. *Wakwile mhiamwene<sup>1</sup> makwā ari coro*.<sup>2</sup>

Where the dead person died the bones were all together.

A. *Moygolo*.

A millipede.

Referring to the bones of a millipede which preserve their formation for some time after the millipede is dead. *Mhiamwene* is the ritual name for the millipede.

Notes :

<sup>1</sup> *Mhiamwene*, a name given also to the Germans of a former Government in East Africa, *mhiamwene*, i.e. one who has left or abandoned a chieftainship.

<sup>2</sup> *Coro*, an ideophone for being together.

- (2) R. *Kihowona ekurumwanyu nittho mwa nsene.*  
I have seen a fearsome thing, an eye as of a fearsome animal.

A. *Imanyimanyi.*  
A firefly.

- (3) R. *Icafala aka eyo, icaſala aka kinakwa, ke, ke.*  
That is my *icaſala*, my *icaſala* is not yet dead.

A. *Irawe*, or *ikoropa*.  
Mortar, or a snail.

*Icafala* is a ritual name for an adulterous person. Just as a mortar may be lent from one house to another, or as a snail keeps moving from one place to another, so does an adulterous person go from place to place. The word *icaſala* is not used in ordinary conversation, and my informants could not ascribe to it any other meaning.

- (4) R. *Ikoma yancunaka kire cani wowinna?*  
The drums of my friend, what shall I do to dance (to them)?

A. *Niyoyolo.*  
Carpenter bee.

"My friend" is the carpenter bee, who, when the Lima Bean (*Phaseolus lunatus*) begins to flower, buzzes round the blossom. Here the buzzing is compared to the drums of a dance, but there is a pretty little song which the Makua attribute to him as he hovers over the blossom:

*Wadi nani, nani, nani?*  
*Nikangaudye,*  
*Nikangaudye, Wotela, woripa, wokwila,*  
*Mwenyanygara.*

The translation is:

Daughter of whom, of whom, of whom?  
Don't ask me,  
Don't ask me, By white, or black, or red,  
Like me here.

Except for the words indicating colours, the words of this song are in the neighbouring Makonde language. The colours apply both to the blossom and to the carpenter bee.

- (5) R. *Akwile mirimani, ee; akwile mirimani.*  
He who died (it was) the stomach, *ee*; (repeat).

A. *Nyonddholo.*  
Mason wasp.

Explained thus: *Ahopaca uwereia, wano upukelia nikoko, nkayatiminua<sup>1</sup> inoa mirimani utiminua tii.<sup>2</sup>*

He began to be ill, well, gruel was prepared, and a snake wound itself round his stomach and gripped hard.

The mason wasp has rings round its body.

Notes:

<sup>1</sup> *Nkayatiminua*, narrative tense, and the snake encircled.

<sup>2</sup> *Tii*, an ideophone for tying tightly.

- (6) R. *Loŵilo,<sup>1</sup> loŵilo, makura ontu.*

*Loŵilo, loŵilo*, the oil of a person.

A. *Manddha.*

A slug.

The slug leaves a trail in its path. The parallel is with a person's footprints, and *makura ontu* is the ritual mane for them.

Note:

<sup>1</sup> *Loŵilo* is an ideophone for the appearance of footprints.

- (7) R. *Ntthetherya-irimu,<sup>1</sup> irimu inomora, Mluku anonimala.*

Guard of the heavens, the heavens are falling, God is finishing us.

A. *Itthalaku.*

Brown driver-ant.

It is said that as these ants travel the two outside lines stand just as if their hands were uplifted to heaven to keep the heavens from falling.

Note:

<sup>1</sup> *Ntthetherya-irimu*, a compound noun, the ritual name for the driver-ant. The verb *-tthetherya* from which this compound noun is derived has two meanings, to guard, and to add on firewood, etc. An alternative form of this compound noun is *mlitelela-irimu*.

- (8) R. *Ikoma yaNamanjiro uruma.*  
*Namanjiro's* drums sending out (their noise).

A. *Cempa.*

Countess beetle.

Compare with this song the two riddles:

R. *Ikoma yaatthitthi yowopelia utuli.*

My father's drum is beaten behind.



R. *Ikoma yaaku Petembe yowopelia utuli.*

Petembe's drum is beaten behind.

The answer is in each case the same as for the song, and the reason given is that the shrill cry of this beetle comes from its back. This beetle is edible, is about 3 ins. long, and digs itself into the sand.

(9) R. *Tthupani<sup>1</sup> akilumale oyo?*

Who is that who stung me?

A. *Nampittharara*, or *tthukwe*.

A kind of scorpion, or a small bug.

Compare with this another song-riddle from the rites:

R. *Mwamwali ula onderuwa ula pinerawe.*

This little girl, she is a naughty girl, that's what she is.

A. *Tthukwe*.

This is explained as follows: *Akalaka mwamwali ahokalathi, kukelaka tthukwe, kukelaka kulumaka, erakarururula<sup>2</sup> ikuwo cawe wawale miholo mwaatu, onderuwa<sup>3</sup> yole.*

If there is a little girl sitting down, and a little bug goes, it goes and stings her, if she takes off her clothes there before people, she is a naughty girl that one.

To teach modesty, but the effect of the song in the rites may defeat its purpose.

Notes:

<sup>1</sup> *Tthupani*, copulative formative *tthu-* before interrogative noun stem *-pani*.

<sup>2</sup> *Erakarururula*, lit. if she does to undress. The first word is conditional tense form of the verb *-ira* (say, think, do, etc.) with coalescence of subjectival verb concord *a-* + vowel *i* of the stem.

<sup>3</sup> *Onderuwa*, noun derived from the ideophone *nderu*, of shameful conduct.

(10) R. *Mtthithe<sup>1</sup> ilimwe, masi mwia wai?*

Pound (corn, etc) in the dry season, where do you carry (get) water?

A. *Ucese*, also *uwese*.

White-ants.

The work of the termites in the wall of a house is here compared to the work of pounding, but ask the Makua, where does the termite get its water in the dry season? The moisture, of course, is brought from deep down in the earth,

Note:

<sup>1</sup> *Mtthithe*, subjunctive mood.

(11) R. *Amunahumu<sup>1</sup> cilie nikwaha nontai.*

My brother, let the food be eaten, it is a long journey.

A. *Icorope*.

Grasshopper.

Before the grasshopper jumps he tells his companions to make the best of that halt by eating as much as they can find. The next jump will be a long one, and the first of many.

Note:

<sup>1</sup> *Amunahumu*, male relative of chief, as distinct from *acilahumu*.

(12) R. *Ikumwakumwa<sup>1</sup> kimweto,<sup>2</sup> ihopia wari mwali, mwawelani uhinamweto?*

*Ikumwakumwa* has no legs, it has reached the initiated girl, what did you come for having no legs?

A. *Ikune*.

House-bug.

This is an action song. The girls lie on their backs on the ground in a single line, and work their way backwards, by using their elbows, to a given place. They get up and clap hands when this is done.

Notes:

<sup>1</sup> *Ikumwakumwa* is the ritual name for this kind of house-bug, and is derived from the duplicated ideophone *kumwa* descriptive of the method of progress of the bug itself, as though it had no legs. Another informant gives the name *imukamuka* with the same meaning.

<sup>2</sup> *Kimweto*, contracted from *kiri nimyeto*. Notice that the plural form *myeto* (sing. *mweto*) is often pronounced *mweto* in Makua.

(13) R. *Seta<sup>1</sup> maka,<sup>2</sup> seta maka.*

A little way to the coast (repeat).

A. *Iniya*.

A kind of locust.

Explained thus: *Ahotthama mtu mmoka mulupale nimirindi caya urwa umaka, perawe apiaka welusi mpironi kuterekeaka i ima, wano kwiriaka,<sup>3</sup> Lyakani, ndrwe. Kwiriaka, Mm-mm, akithaaka. Pakwileaya<sup>4</sup> ithala. Wanoŵa kutthatthuaka iniya.*

A certain great man set out with his loads to go to the coast, and so it was that when he arrived at a well in the way porridge was cooked, and it was said, Eat, let us go. And it was said (by the porters), *Mm-mm*, I don't want to. That was how they died of hunger. And they changed into *iniya* locusts.

The Natives say that this locust has no stomach and eats only the wind for his food. The name for this locust is of ideophonic origin, for they say that until the early morning this locust cries *iniya iniya*.

Notes :

<sup>1</sup> *Seta*, a contraction of *ufeta*, the verb infinitive with the diminutive infix *fi*, the vowel *-i-* being elided before *-e* of the simple stem *-eta* (go). This diminutive infix is used frequently with verb forms in Makua, e.g.

*ufikurya* (to visit a little)

*ufitaliwa* (to be rather long)

*ufuygwelela* (to be fairly well, lit. to be getting up for a little).

<sup>2</sup> *Maka*, contraction of the locative *umaka*, to the coast. *Maki* is an ideophone for congregating together, and so *umaka* is the place where people congregate together. *Imaka* is the language spoken at the coast, Swahili. Cf. the verb *umaka*, to congregate together.

<sup>3</sup> *Kwiriaka*, narrative form, *ku-* + passive of verb *wira* + suffix *-ka*.

<sup>4</sup> *Pakwileaya*, copulative formation, *pa-* + verb perfect of *-kwa* (die) + possessive stem *-aya*.

(b) BIRDS, GAME-ANIMALS, ETC :

(1) R. *Ncewere*<sup>1</sup> *kana mulupale*.

A leaderless village has no big man.

A. *Myololo*.

Wood hoopoes.

Descriptive of the way these birds congregate and chatter in the trees, as though they were all children without a leader. This song is meant to teach the candidates respect for the chief.

Note :

<sup>1</sup> *Ncewere*, a noun derived from the ideophone *cewere*, of a village without a leader. *Iwani ele yari cewere*, That village was leaderless.

(2) R. *Atthiyana ntiya ntiya*<sup>1</sup> *wofila, wofila, wofila*.

A woman smoothly seducting, by the grinding, the grinding, the grinding.

A. *Uwanda*.

A helmeted shrike.

Explained as follows: *Mtthiyana anofila numwona mtu antthananawe. Wanfilawe anera ntiya ntiya, yole mtu-le kuvuluwaka*.

A woman is grinding and sees a man whom she wants. As she grinds she goes *ntiya ntiya*, and that man falls.

A loose woman is compared to the helmeted shrike, which knows no fear of people.

Note :

<sup>1</sup> *Ntiya ntiya*, an ideophone for smooth seduction, suggested by the way the woman continues with her grinding in such a way as to attract the man.

(3) R. *Ihipa yulupale kihena inolima, inolima ikani*.

It is not the big hoe which does the hoeing, but the small one.

A. *Kokooto*.

Woodpecker.

Explained as follows: *Cikwepe ahokala na iyano yotaliwa cinene, nanfo kanorya utemula mwiri, kokooto ari niyano mwankani pinontemula*<sup>2</sup> *mwiri*.

The grey hornbill has a long beak, but he cannot bore through a tree, the wood-pecker has a small beak, but it is he who bores through a tree.

A Makua proverb says: *Mtu mulupale ahokela na-iyano mwankani*, i.e. A big man has a small mouth. It is the quiet man who gets things done.

Notes :

<sup>1</sup> *Kihena*, or *kihiwena*, pronominal copulative made up of negative subjectival concords followed by defective verb *-na*.

<sup>2</sup> *Pinontemula*, copulative formation; notice the introduction of the consonant *-n-* through the influence of the first *-n-*. In Makua only nouns of Class 1 take the objectival verb concord.

(4) R. *Makwirikwiri*<sup>1</sup> *akwile wonihia*.

He died of laughing at leaving us.

A. *Kokotoo*.

Woodpecker.

This refers of course to the cry like a laugh that the woodpecker gives on finding honey or some other food in the tree, or when flying away.

Note :

<sup>1</sup> *Makwirikwiri*, noun derived from ideophone; means excessive laughter. *Anotthea nikwirikwiri*, he laughs like anything.

(5) R. *Urendo oNamwito kwe kwe, ikoma cinomala uruma kwe kwe ehe.*

The journey of *Namwito kwe kwe*, the drums are finishing beating.

A. *Nahuwo*.

Mole.

Referring to the noise made by a mole underground.

(6) R. *Mahano Naciriro, mahiye ari wamuru.*  
*Naciriro's wife, the graves (the dead) are on her head.*

A. *Ipomopo*.

The trumpeter-hornbill.

An old Makua explains this by saying that the fruit of a secret union in the forest must, if the child dies, be buried properly and not carried by the young mother on her head to be thrown away in the forest. The ritual name of the trumpeter-hornbill is *Mahano Naciriro*, and the crop on the bird's head is compared to a dead child carried on the head.

Another form of this song is : *Ohiwira umahi-yeni, ee*. The one who does not go (pass) to the graves. The girls are told : If you have such a dead child, see that it is buried properly.

(7) R. *Nammirawira howira mommu.*

The flitter has passed by here.

A. *Nantthutthu*.

A small bat.

Explained thus : *Ari mtu ohiuwa,<sup>1</sup> wano perawe<sup>2</sup> uwira wa uwira uwo, anumwane pankoha wira, Nammirawira howira wonno ?*

He (or she) was a disobedient person, well now that's how he was, passing here and passing there, his mother it was who asked, Has the flitter passed by here?

A disobedient child who is always on the move, never doing what is expected of him, because he is never at hand to be told.

Notes :

<sup>1</sup> *Mtu ohiuwa*, lit. a not-hearing person.

<sup>2</sup> *Perawe*, copulative formation, from *pa + ira + awe*.

(8) R. *Nitthipelie<sup>1</sup> nule.<sup>2</sup>*

Let the preparations be made for us, let us be circumcised.

A. *Kucupa*.

Hyena.

The cry of the hyena is compared here to the way this song is sung. When the hyena calls he goes *nitthipelie nule*.

Notes :

<sup>1</sup> *Nitthipelie*, lit, let us be dug for, to dig the hole for the ceremonial *nipanda* tree. The meaning is extended to include all the preparations for the boys' rites.

<sup>2</sup> *Nule*, from *-ula* (be circumcised), but never used in referring to a person's initiation. The euphemism *-inclia* (be danced for) is used instead.

(9) R. *Uka aka oyo naykopo, apwaa uka uho-tapwa.*

That is my gun-powder, O barbel, ah! the powder is damp.

A. *Ntthiki*.

Wild heron.

The bird's cry is said to sound like "*uka aka oyo naykopo*," and the sound made by the barbel or fresh-water catfish resembles the remaining words of the song. Both the wild heron and the barbel play a prominent part in Makua folklore. The following story told sometimes to boys in the rites includes a highly idiomatic song. We shall include it here because of its reference to the barbel. The song is sung during the time in the lodge, but the above song-riddle is the first song sung after the burning of the lodge, when the boys have all been gathered together in one place.

*Ahokala mtu mmoka, nimitu mwanene ari mukwani. Ari ahinaye ukwa nkera, Mi wano kakwaka, mkiwithe wancaykwini. Nihuku nakwileawe atu yahommittha wakwawe nanso. Ufa waya panpwayaliaya mtu ule anakalathile wanhiyeni, atu nka-*

yatthikinaca. *Nkayankoha wira, Nyenyu, mulumace, niuwelele nicuwele wira wekekyai tthinyu wawitthie mcana.*

(The song begins): *Nkolumani. Kulumeke ifeni?*

*Amwara-mkiwe parwale ulufi,*

*Ihaluma ipepele, atawela mmopeni, mope kahociwa.*

*Yatuna unimwarufa. Kanomwarufani?*

*Kinawya mwalo aka, kufale mandindi, utthikilela iluwo,*

*Iluwo piuluwo canampwitthikili,*

*Yarula ykopo, umwatela ykuya,*

*Dkuya hiruneke, iruneke pinacikwidi.*

*Cikwidi ykarunaka. Kiruneleke ifeni?*

*Amaka ala anawa-la. Amaka acifereni?*

*Acifere koygomano. Cumbwi. Ukela wathhi.*

There was once a man and the man himself was dying. Before he died he said, As for me, when I die, bury me at an *ncaykwi* tree (a tree that puts out its leaves only in the dry season). On the day of his death people buried him elsewhere, however. Next morning they found the man sitting on his grave, and they marvelled. And they asked him saying, You here, speak, let us hear and know truly if you are he who was buried yesterday.

(The song begins, and must be explained line by line):

*Dkolumani*, speak: imperative form with formative *mka-* + *uluua* + suffix *-ni*. *Kulumeke ifeni?* what shall I say? (says the man).

*Amwara-mkiwe*, the name of the man's grandmother, lit. She took him—kill me. *Parwale ulufi*, she it was who went to the well, i.e. she caused the man's death by bewitching him at a well.

*Ihaluma ipepele*, lit. a fly has bitten him, meaning here to be judged guilty of witchcraft on consultation of the divining lots. The man went to a diviner, and was told that the woman had caused his illness by bewitching him. *Atawela mmopeni*, she ran to the custard-apple trees. *Mope kahociwa*, the custard-apple I enjoy (it); she thought it better to run away.

*Yatuna unimwarufa*, she wanted to upset us: *-mwazrufa* (scatter). *Kanomwarufani?* Why don't you upset her? (thinks the man).

*Kinawya mwalo aka*, I am looking for my knife (to kill her). *Kufale mandindi*, a bulbul has taken it: *kufale*, omitting subjectival verb concord, for *akufale*. *Mandindi*, a metaphor for a youth (cf. one of the songs sung to a new chief where the same parallel is found). *Utthikilela iluwo*, to cut the *iluwo* fruit of the *mpaka* tree.

*Iluwo piuluwo*, an idiomatic use of the copulative, meaning the *iluwo* fruit was plentiful. *Canampwitthikili*, possessive use of the noun derived from the ideophone *pwitthikili*, meaning hard. The *iluwo* fruit was hard and there was much of it, so the youth would not return the knife in time for the man to kill the woman. The whole point of this song is to explain why the man was frustrated in his effort to revenge himself on the woman.

*Yarula ykopo*, she took a barbel out of the water. The verb *urula* usually means to take off, unclothe. People exercising witchcraft mix some oil of the barbel with other medicines and anoint themselves so that they may not be identified in divination as exponents of black magic. So the woman does this. The barbel oil is called *itthereri*, from the ideophone *tthereri* for slipperiness. *Umwatela ykuya*, to beat *semsem* for (the barbel). *Dkuya* is the Yao name for *semsem*: in Makua *nanhakwa*. To beat the seeds in order to get oil for mixing with the barbel oil.

*Dkuya hiruneke*, let not the *semsem* deny, i.e. let the medicine not be the means of hiding the truth about the woman's evil. *Iruneke panicikwidi*, let the squirrel deny it (if he can). Meant to emphasise how impossible it will be for her to deny the truth. No one will speak for her.

*Amaka ala anawa-la*, these people who are coming. Here *amaka* means people congregating together, and is an example of the original use of the word that has come to be used for the Coast people, the Swahili. *Amaka acifereni?* What may the people have brought?

*Acifere koygomano*, they have brought a case, i.e. they have come together to hear the case of alleged witchcraft brought by the man against the woman. *Koygomano* is a noun (class 4) meaning debt or case, derived from the ideophone *koygomo*, of crookedness, through the

derived verb form *-kongomana* (be crooked). *Mwiri wokongomana* is a crooked tree; *nlowe nokongomana* is a difficult word (it is crooked). *Cumbwi*, an ideophone for plop! throwing something in the water it goes *cumbwi*. Here it is meant to indicate that the man's case could not be substantiated, it fell flat. *Ukela wwatthi*, to go under. The case failed because, it is said, the woman had protected herself by the use of *itthereri*, the barbel oil.

- (10) R. *Ndrupa<sup>1</sup> wanakwatthapa<sup>2</sup> kunotutia ni-mwene.*

The hard skin-bag was not rubbed hard by the chief.

A. *Kapa.*

Tortoise.

A skin-bag is rubbed to make the surface soft. Here the meaning is obvious.

Notes :

<sup>1</sup> *Ndrupa*, pl. *mirupa*. The plural word means skin-bellows. A *d*-sound is interposed between the consonants *n* and *r* in Makua, to sound as *ndr*.

<sup>2</sup> *Wanakwatthapa*, again a possessive derived from the ideophone *kwatthapa*, of hardness.

- (11) R. *Ntirya ntirya mwanaka ahola.<sup>1</sup>*

*Ntirya, ntirya*, my child is circumcised.

A. *Ikuluwe.*

Wild-pig.

*Ntirya* is the ritual name for wild-pig, and is an ideophone for the noise it makes in rooting about looking for food. So the father will look about for food for his boy.

Note :

<sup>1</sup> *Ahola*, coalescence here from *a-ho-ula*.

- (12) R. *Mtuwiri mnopa ikara.*

The round thing, you make a pad.

A. *Ikuka.*

Python.

*Mtuwiri* is the ritual name for the python, and is not used in normal conversation. *Ikara* is the grass pad worn by porters, sometimes made also of a cloth wound round and round.

- (13) R. *Mombore, Mombore, nikuwa nihokaama.*

*Mombore, Mombore*, a bone has stuck (in my throat).

A. *Karamu.*

A lion.

*Mombore* is said to be the lion's brother, and is the ritual name for a lion. The roar of a lion is represented by the words "*nikuwa nihokaama*."

- (14) R. *Kinolya ipepe nuurera waka.*

I eat mud (but remember) my beauty.

A. *Nancari.*

Very small fish like whitebait (Swahili, *dagaa*).

Explained thus: *Mtu nokala narerile warakawe kinocuwanea. Ahohiwararu, anolya combone.*

If a person is good what he wears isn't known (i.e. does not count). Even though he does not wear (fine clothes) he eats good things (i.e. he is clean inwardly).

This kind of fish is found on the mud at the side of the water at certain times of the day, and the people say it eats mud. It is white and beautiful in appearance in spite of this. This song is sung before the boys eat. Even though they may not get choice food (sometimes sand is put in their porridge) they must be good like this little fish.

- (15) R. *Matumanepo<sup>1</sup> manyi we cicale,<sup>2</sup> amwali matumanepo.<sup>1</sup>*

The tattooers, O mother, like that; O girl, the tattooers.

A. *Iyoto.*

Monitor lizard.

The lizard's skin is compared to the human skin with tribal incisions. This song from the girls' rites gives the ritual name for the monitor lizard, *matumanepo*.

Notes :

<sup>1</sup> *Matumanepo*, a compound noun, from a combination of the verb *-tuma* (tattoo) and the noun *inepo* (tribal markings), with plural prefix *ma-* (sing. *a-*). The lizard's markings are described as *inepo kwirr*. *Kwirr* is an ideophone.

<sup>2</sup> *Cicale*, an adverb.

- (16) R. *Miruku cawe, ee, (repeat).*

His intelligence, ee, (repeat).

A. *Akole.*

Apes.

For this song-riddle the only explanation received is that *miruku cawe* is the ritual name for apes.

(17) R. *Mwana oNluku kanonea.*

The red insect called (God's child) does not appear.

A. *Nandriya.*  
Chameleon.

In the rains there is a bright red insect to be seen on the paths and in the fields. In the dry season it does not appear. It does not change colour like the chameleon. *Mwana oNluku* is the ritual name for the chameleon.

(18) R. *Neninne<sup>1</sup> neninne, salakela, ikereca<sup>2</sup> inorwa, inokela unatiwira<sup>3</sup>; kwiria, Inama yani?*

Who is that? Who is that? *salakela*, the spots are going, they are going into hiding; it is said, What animal is that?

A. *Haŵara.*  
Leopard.

Told me by a chief. He said it is as though the honey-bird is asking the first question. *Salakela* is the leopard, the ritual name. The honey-bird is *firei*.

Notes:

<sup>1</sup> *Neninne*, ideophone of the honey-bird's cry.

<sup>2</sup> *Ikereca*, spots, idiomatic use of the singular.

<sup>3</sup> *Natiwira*, hiding-place.

(19) R. *Mcewere-uwalala norela ŵatthi.*

The clever one without a leader, lays eggs on the ground.

A. *Ikaka.*

Wild guinea-fowl.

Here we have the same nominal use of the ideophone *cewere* explained in 3(b), 1, forming with the noun *uwalala* (Class 5, sharp intelligence) a compound noun, which is the ritual name for a guinea-fowl. This bird lays its eggs on the ground in spite of being a high flier.

(20) R. *Amwali wetakaca ahoreiya njilo.*

The girl goes about, she has received a load on her head of a grinding-stone.

A. *Niwiriri.*

A kind of white snake.

The reference here is to a girl who goes about by night and eventually conceives a child by an unknown father. She was bitten by a white snake, referring to the intercourse.

(21) We include here this riddle story told to the boys sometimes in the rites:

*Arwa atu eli umaka umafeygoni, mtu ninlamu awe. Yapangaka mafengo ale mmoka nkatthuma ikuwo yopila,<sup>1</sup> mkina nkatthuma ikuwo yohipila. Pahokolenleaya umaka uwo ipiro-iriyari ųkayeria, Ndrwe nitthapule ikuwo ceiyo nimwone utthumile yombone. Dkatthapulaca. Mmoka ole kukotaka. Wanoŵa kwonaka ikuwo imoka yopila ele, ųkamwi-ŵa mtu nanawe. Ipome ele ųkayathalua ųkayakela unthakuruni, ųkayathathua. Mwanunini yole?*

Two men went to the coast to work, a man and his brother-in-law. When they had done their work one of them bought a coloured cloth, the other bought a plain cloth. When they returned from the coast, half way, they said, Let us undo those cloths to see who bought the good one (the better one). And they undid (their loads). One of them refused. Now when he saw that one coloured cloth, he killed his companion. The blood spread and went into a leaf, and it changed into a bird. What bird is that?

The answer given to me was *Mkaligambe*, but this is the Yao for "He who was sorry for himself," and is part of a Yao song attributed to the bird mentioned in the story. The actual name of the bird in Makua none of my informants seemed to know. It can be taken to be some red bird common to S. Tanganyika.

Note:

<sup>1</sup> *Ikuwo yopila*, described as a cloth which, if you look at it, it appears to nod (*hicila*).

(c) DOMESTIC ANIMALS, ETC:

(1) R. *Kururuku-ntiye, ihomarua.*

*Kururuku-ntiye*, it has broken down.

A. *Ikunda.*

Pigeons.

This is descriptive of the sudden downward and upward flight of pigeons. *Kururuku-ntiye* is said to be the noise they make as they swoop down and away. *Ihomarua*, the formation is broken.

Compare another riddle-song with the same answer:

*Manyanlapa akumile ipiro yoMeto.*

Explained thus: *Atu yahorwaka uMeto. Wakhokolenleaya mpironimmo yakayawanya ikunda cinakoronle mwirini, yakawonyera maluku, yakayawara ikunda iye.*

Baobab trees, he came from the road to Meto.

Explanation: People went to Meto. When they returned, in the way they met pigeons resting in a tree, and they threw stones at them, and took those pigeons.

(2) R. *Kirupe wawu, kinlate mmera.*

Let me lie down here, let me imitate a promiscuous person.

A. *Mwalapwa.*

A dog.

*Mmera* is described as a person careless of where he sleeps. A dog sleeps anywhere. The purpose of the song is meant to be to teach the candidates to sleep at home, not to wander about at night and get into bad habits.

(3) R. *Inama coMeto inyaka ciri metoni.*

The animals of Meto, the horns are on their feet.

A. *Ntthupi.*

Cockerel.

Referring to the kind of spur behind the foot of a cock, and compared to fastenings round the ankle worn in an initiation dance called *tthothontho*.

(4) R. *Naburudani inupa awe kankweca.*

*Naburudani* does not sweep his house.

A. *Ilaku.*

A chicken.

*Naburudani* is the ritual name given to the chicken.

#### 4. CROPS, FOOD, ETC. :

(1) R. *Uwani carumani?*<sup>1</sup>

In the village what news?

A. *Matthapa orupa.*<sup>2</sup>

Relish left over from the evening meal.

Only grown-up people (initiated) may eat the relish left over from the previous evening meal. The fact that people are talking about this relish

implies that some child has eaten what is forbidden. This is a way of saying that someone, not necessarily a child, has committed an offence, and the offence is the talk of the village.

Notes:

<sup>1</sup> *Carumani*, verb form with the interrogative suffix *-ni*. The verb is *ruma* (sound forth, reverberate). *Nlowe nani ninoruma uwanyu?* What word is sounding forth at your home? This is a common way of asking for news. What is the news at your home?

<sup>2</sup> *Matthapa orupa*, relish of sleeping, i.e. the relish of the meal before sleep.

(2) R. *Mkungure kunantuwa, ntuwa naya nipele erukulu nthu. Uyaria mwana, ula orapa, ula wokuca.*

*Mkungure* has no flower, its flower is a teat, a big abdomen. Bearing a child, this one to bath, this one by washing.

A. *Mfirimanga.*

A native cucumber.

This cucumber is said to have no blossom. Its only flower is the teat-like apex of the fruit, and the rounded shape of the body of the cucumber is compared to the female abdomen. The child is the younger cucumber, but the significance of the washing and bathing I have not been able to ascertain. *Mkungure* is the ritual name of the cucumber.

There is a Makua proverb: *Mfiri unokwa wola-wihia*. The cucumber dies by tasting it. This was said to a Christian couple who had begun to live together before being married in church.

(3) R. *Afana aka ayo, ahale alelieke rata.*

Those are my children, let them stay behind and be brought up nicely.

A. *Ncuku.*

Pumpkin.

Referring to the way the pumpkin grows. It is as if the pumpkin on the main stem addresses the fruit behind it growing on the secondary offshoots of the main stem as its children.

(4) R. *Ikoma yaMwambira, yaMwambira, kawo, akunelie nimikawo.*

The dance of *Mwambira*, of *Mwambira*, he is not there, let him be covered with ladles.

A. *Inika*.  
Bananas.

Explained thus: *Ukalawaya yatthikiliaka watthi, kuwuluwaka mwiri wojkyai wamoka nimkoŋga aya*.

Because if it is cut beneath the whole tree falls with its trunk.

This needs further explanation. My informants say that the reference here is really to a pregnant woman who dies before giving birth to her child. Bananas are not cut off the tree separately, but with the whole of that part of the trunk where the fruit is growing. So too when a pregnant woman dies, the child in her womb dies with her. *Mwambira* is the ritual name given to a woman dying in such circumstances. *Kawo*, lit. she is not, i.e. she is dead. It is as though she had been covered with a ladle, the child was not born. *Ikoma yaMwambira* is the ritual name for bananas.

- (5) R. *Amwali ahowuluwala, aneta nintonto*.  
The girl has grown old, she walks with a staff.  
A. *Uyulu, or ureŋka*.  
A mushroom.

The stem of the mushroom is compared to a staff.

##### 5. THE HUMAN BODY AND ITS FUNCTIONS :

- (1) R. *Ewale yomwako yatthamaka kincwa ttho*.  
The *ewale* bee of the hill, if it departs it does not come again.  
A. *Nittho nopwea*.  
A blind eye (lit. a broken eye).

*Ewale* is a kind of honey-making insect which appears from underground, and once it has come forth does not return to the same hole in the ground again. The finality of the circumcision is implied here. Once it is done with, it is finished for ever. If a man's eye is broken, well, that's the end of it. Another form of this song is :

R. *Amirao omwako etthamaka kanova ttho*.

The boys of the hill, if they depart they do not come again. These are the candidates in the lodge. They do not return again once they have been through the rites.

- (2) R. *Mtthupi kuwari mirenga,<sup>1</sup> campinuwile imbinu*.

The cock was not tails-up, (its) back was raised up.

A. *Irukulu*.  
Pregnancy.

Referring to the concave back of the cock. The shape is the reverse in human pregnancy.

Note :

<sup>1</sup> *Kuwari mirenga*, lit. was not tails. The word *ndreyga*, pl. *mirenga*, is used of the tail-feathers of a bird. The word for tail is *mwila*, pl. *mila*.

- (3) R. *Ukucu oNaykanga inama cinomala utthupa*.

The animals are jumping over *Naykanga's* fence.

A. *Irori*.  
Beard.

When a bearded man eats, his hand passes over his beard in order to put food into his mouth.

- (4) R. *Kawira waakwaka uwanyaya kummiria*.  
I went to my friend's, but his home is not passable.  
A. *Menttho*.  
Eyes.

The eyes can reach where the body cannot pass. Compare :

R. *Namparawara utapa wikonde*.  
The swift rejoices in the air.

The answer is the same. Just as a bird has unlimited space to enjoy itself in the air, so too the eyes can dwell upon a distant view.

Compare again :

R. *Utapa wIponte*.  
To rejoice at *Iponte*.

The answer is again the same, and means that a man looking across the Ruvuma to the hill called *Iponte* in P.E.A. has pleasure in letting his eyes rest on the distant hill. The common European idea that a view means nothing to an African is repudiated here, although the emphasis in the Makua mind is apparently more on the marvel of the eye than on the actual beauty of the scene.



- (5) R. *Ndrupa-mwarete kunocara.*  
A small bag made of the skin of the shrew does not fill.  
A. *Nyaru.*  
The ear.

Even though this kind of bag may be full it bears the appearance of not being full at all. So the human ear can take in endless sounds "with-out being full."

- (6) R. *Mwakuwwo mwakuperumbe<sup>1</sup>, mwamwaraka kanohimanya.*  
A little cloth like finger-flesh, if you wear it, it does not meet.  
A. *Ihattha.*  
Finger-nail.

The flesh of the top joint of the finger does not go right round the finger because of the finger-nail.

Note :

<sup>1</sup> *Mwakuperumbe* : *mwa* is adverbial. In *mwa-kuwwo*, *mwa-* is diminutive, and in *mwamwaraka*, *mwa-* is subjectival verb concord + formative -a-.

- (7) R. *Ikwerewere yampironi kinopica ulama mtu.*  
Sickness on the way (to ease one's self) does not delay a man from being cured.  
A. *Mawi.*  
Faeces.

Referring to the circumcision. The temporary illness is meant for the eventual benefit of the candidate.

- (8) R. *Utthupini wakenleaka niwaka nihokihoma.*  
In the forest where I went a spear pierced me.  
A. *Miyonjo.*  
Urine.

Referring to the circumcision operation.

## 6. DOMESTIC LIFE, ETC. :

- (1) R. *Ilapo ndrwe nitthame nihie Kwatame.*  
The earth, come let us leave it, let us depart, let us leave Kwatame.  
A. *Itura.*  
Ash-heap.

The boys are secluded from the village during their time in the lodge. They must leave everything, even the ash-heap, which always indicates the presence, past or present, of people. *Kwatame*, is a Yao phrase meaning Come, let us dwell, *Kwa tame*. It is here the ritual name for the ash-heap.

- (2) R. *Namwiruru enyu ee, namwiruru ula.*  
You procrastinators, this is a procrastinator.  
A. *Itura.*  
Ash-heap.

Explained thus : *Tthoko ilapo mahuku okoto atu anotawa, nanfo itura kinokopowa utawa, atu ku-rwacaka. Akina kucerewaka urumelela nlowe nontunanaya nowira wopiha uhamo ndrwe nitthame. Kalai manyatu ayo yahehania anamwiruru, ukalawaya itura yakala na-iruru.*

Like a country in days of war, people run away, but an ash-heap is not able to run away, the people go. Some delay to respond to the word of their friend that there is danger : Let us go, let us run away. Long ago those people were called *Anamwiruru*, because the ash-heap had *iruru* (slowness).

- (3) R. *Kahoriria inupa yaamanyi konaka, wanahimia uriria mahiyeni kukela.*  
I was cold looking at my mother's house, even though it is said to be cold (all) go into the graves.  
A. *Nfati.*  
Grave-house.

The grave-house is called "my mother's house." Another form of this song-riddle is :

- R. *Ipula inokirupa, inupa yaatthattha konaka.*  
The rain falls on me, seeing my maternal uncle's house.

Explained thus : *Ukalawaya kamo, inarupa ipula itimakelaka nihiyeni.* Because he is dead, the rain falls on him, running (the rain) to the grave.

Once you are dead, whether it rains won't make any difference, even though a grave-house is built over your head.

- (4) R. *Mwali comwiko kwe kwe, mwali comwiko mhilye.*

A young girl, things that are taboo, *kwe kwe*,  
a young girl, don't eat things that are taboo.

A. *Umuci*.

Blood-relationship.

Don't sleep with your own sister; commit no incest.

- (5) R. *Mtthiyana nikwerekwere*,<sup>1</sup> *arendre*<sup>2</sup> *wene*,<sup>3</sup> *maana kamo, mdrima*<sup>4</sup> *ole uhia uhia*.

A faithless woman, let her be beautiful in vain, because she is not (in the number of decent women), that desire leave it.

A. *Mtthiyana olaḡalawa*.

An adulterous woman.

Explained thus: *Mtthiyana ayaraka mwana, ḡano kwetaka pufyaru*,<sup>5</sup> *mwana kukwaka. Mtthiyana ole kamo utthiyani tthotthoni*. If a woman bears a child, and goes about loosely, the child dies. That woman is not in womanhood again, (i.e. she has lost her right to be respected as a decent woman.)

The purpose of this *Ciputu* song-riddle is to teach the girls the importance of the taboo of continence during the infancy of the child. According to Makua custom, it is taboo for the parents to have intercourse until the child begins to walk.

Notes :

<sup>1</sup> *Nikwerekwere*, from the ideophone *kwere* of fickleness. There is a bird called *nikwerekwere* in Makua, Hildebrand's Francolin.

<sup>2</sup> *Arendre*, contracted form of *arerile*.

<sup>3</sup> *Wene*, ideophone for in vain.

<sup>4</sup> *Mdrima*, pl. *mirima*, heart, spirit, desire.

<sup>5</sup> *Pufyaru*, adverb *pufya* with intensive enclitic *-ru*, entirely.

- (6) R. *Icuḡe yomwinanoni inandrera*<sup>1</sup> *kakinuntthaka*.<sup>2</sup>

The sweet stalk of millet within the boundary however sweet I shan't break it.

A. *Umuci*.

Blood-relationship.

Against incest.

Notes :

<sup>1</sup> *Inandrera* for *inanrera*.

<sup>2</sup> *Kakinuntthaka*, the verb simple stem is *-unttha*.

- (7) R. *Ikonya ihaḡara, ee*, (repeat).

The crocodile has seized them, *ee*, (repeat).

A. *Otukia*.<sup>1</sup>

Prisoners.

The ritual name for forced labourers under the German Government is *Ikonya-ihawaḡara*.

Note :

<sup>1</sup> *Otukia*, qualificative pronoun formed from the possessive *a-* + the verbal noun *utukia*, with coalescence of *a+u>o*.

- (8) R. *Walocwele*<sup>1</sup> *ntotwe, ee*, (repeat).

What the jumping-shrew was stupid about, *ee*, (repeat).

A. *Mtthiyana*.

A woman.

Explained thus: *Alopwana pungwile*<sup>2</sup> *kukumaka kuḡira etakacaka; apwanyaka atthiyana kulumana kukumihaka arupia kwaḡahaka*<sup>3</sup> *kuhalaka watthela*.

A man gets up and goes out and walks about; when he meets a woman they speak together and he brings out money and gives her, and what remains is to marry her.

The foolishness of prostitution.

Notes :

<sup>1</sup> *Walocwele*, an idiomatic form of the verb perfect, for *walocwenle* or *walocwelile* or *walocwelale*. The simple stem is *-locwa*.

<sup>2</sup> *Pungwile*, copulative formation with copulative formative *pi-* + verb *-ungwa* with perfect stem ending.

<sup>3</sup> *Kwaḡahaka*, an example of the use of the objectival verb concord in the narrative formation with prefix *ku-* and suffix *ka-*. The 3rd pers. pl. *-a-* is used for the objectival v. concord as honorific plural, and so also in *watthela*, in which the *-a-* is infix between the infinitive prefix *u-* and the simple verb stem, the vowel *u-* becoming *w-* before another vowel.

- (9) R. *Ntemura, mkiḡahe mafi*.

A real man, give me water.

A. *Mtthiyana ohimwokola owanyaya*.

A woman who does not refresh her husband.

Explained thus: *Nlopwana nakumile umatani, ammahe mafi tthoko, pintunenyu wopana mwaha*.

A man come out of the *shamba*, let her give him water first, then you will converse.  
Attend to your husband's wants.

- (10) R. *Mkukurya, inupa yaamanyi.*  
Nosey-parker, the house of my mother.  
A. *Mwana owiya.*  
A dishonest child.

Explained thus: *Anumwane akalaka watthe, mwana oyo kukelaka mpani nuwiya eiye capeiye iye.*

If his mother is outside, that child goes into the house and steals the things that have been cooked.

Don't steal. *Mkukurya* is a name for a boy who is always nosing round, uncovering dishes and pots to see what he can get. The ideophone is *kukurya*, of snooping.

- (11) R. *Tthidiliwi<sup>1</sup> mwapu<sup>2</sup> unowya.*

Gadding about, the pot is burnt.

A. *Mthiyana olawalaŵa.*

An adulterous woman.

She is in a hurry to be gadding about, and scorches her pots.

Notes:

<sup>1</sup> *Tthidiliwi*, an ideophone for gadding about.

<sup>2</sup> *Mwapu*, earthenware pot for water. The reference here is to pottery.

- (12) R. *Amwali uwanuhu kanowira, anowowā mkunyorumbwe.*

The young girl does not pass our home, she is afraid of *mkunyorumbwe*.

A. *Itthala.*

Hunger.

*Mkunyorumbwe* is the ritual name for hunger or famine.

- (13) R. *Nimwamwa mwa mwa.*

A. Explained thus: *Marumbo aya, itthumi. Mwa, marumbo aya urupa ikalakattha. Mwona-karu cicammo mhikele mwantune, mpacere tthoko umtuna mthiyana oyo.*

Its meaning, the labia minora. *Mwa*, its meaning is, to lie flat on the back. If you find it thus (a woman on her back) don't attempt her, begin first to love her.

Commit no assault.

Notes:

<sup>1</sup> *Nimwamwa*, the ritual name for the labia minora.

<sup>2</sup> *Mwa*, an ideophone for lying on the back. Compare the quadrisyllabic ideophone *kalakattha*, with the same meaning.

- (14) R. *To<sup>1</sup> to panantoro<sup>2</sup>.*

A. Explained thus: *Marumbo aya, mthiyana oyaraca pito, mwakelaka mwanrupaatthanaka anotolani ulopwana winyu.*

Its meaning (is), a very fertile woman is *to*, if you sleep with her at her pleasure she will deprive you of your manhood.

A youth should not make a union with a woman who has had a number of children, but marry someone of his own age-grade.

Notes:

<sup>1</sup> *To*, an ideophone, of sucking, depriving, drawing out. The same ideophone is used in another sense, *mpika ilelo to*, right up to today, it emphasises present time, this very moment.

<sup>2</sup> *Nantoro*, a noun derived from the ideophone *to*, and means here a woman with exaggerated sexual urge.

- (15) R. *Nimkole<sup>1</sup> ipwere<sup>2</sup> ke ke.*

A. Explained thus: *Mwakelaka mwanpwan-nyaka mthiyana wohiteyguwa, mhikele mwanlipihe cinene. Unyepa uwe mnokontemula.*

If you go in (to a house) and find an immature woman, do not force her. The sexual act will pierce her (womb).

It is not uncommon for Makua men to live with girls who have not yet pubertized.

Notes:

<sup>1</sup> *Nimkole*, 1st pers. present subjunctive: the verb is *-kola* (treat gently).

<sup>2</sup> *Ipwere*, vagina of immature girl; vagina of mature woman is called *nipwenthere*.

## 7. UTENSILS, AND OTHER OBJECTS:

- (1) R. *Nnati nikorokoco anolya enemenle.*

A naughty girl eats standing up.

A. *Irawe.*

Mortar.

Explained to me as admonition to a girl who is using a mortar in pounding food, not to be picking food as she prepares it. Informants insist that there is no second meaning.

- (2) R. *Mkaneleke kinowuererihani.*  
 Hang up for me I will make you beautiful.  
 A. *Nimeto.*  
 Razor-knife.

Referring to the custom of hanging up the razor in a place where it will be smoked to prevent rust.

*Nihuku nowotia makura nimeto nikufie kwuleliaka ahikie ole.*

On the day of the anointing, let the razor be carried and the anointed one shaved.

- (3) R. *Ipula pirupeke, nikwata naka niwole.*  
 Let the rain fall, and my sore heal.

A. *Mnyate.*

A crack.

According to informants, referring to the way cracks disappear with the rain and the path is smoothed out.

- (4) R. *Mferenje utthana kwimmaka uhiyu kumoraka.*

The *mferenje* tree blossoms in the day-time and sheds its blossom at night.

A. *Ikuwo.*

Clothes.

Clothes worn by day and taken off at night.