What should be done?

**THE SINGING DRUM + 373**

Only blame and nobody

Thinks to ask her,

Alone with the curses

And insults ringing in her ears.

Nine months later, a child to be born. Will it be poison for her?

And the unborn child or dumping? Dumping is chosen, life though bitter, Can be sweet, irony doesn't care.

Now she's homeless

From slave girl to street girl.

Street life, more pain, it's not fun here, With the competition, drugs and policemen Taking their liberties.

Another kind of slavery;

How will it end?

***Mary Penelope Mfune*THE SINGING DRUM**

Zambia 1999 Chiyanja

Raised by a family of storytellers, Mary Penelope Mfune was born in 1938 at Chief Mukutuma's village in Ndola Rural District in Zambia's copper belt. Her mother, Kasapato, who passed on this folktale, hailed from Congo Kinshasa, bor­dering western Zambia, and had married a Malawian, Jeremiah KamangaMfune, who came to Zambia in search of employment in the copper mines. The story was originally told to young Mary Mfune and her two sisters in the local Lamba language in the 1940s. Mfune later translated it into Chinyanja, a language corn­momly spoken in Zambia's Eastern Province, and performed a contemporary ver­sion for her granddaughter in 1999.

Mary Penelope Mfune obtained her primary school certificate at Mindolo Primary School and later attended Chipembi Girls' Secondary School, a Protes­tant mission school in the Central Province in the 1950s. She is a retired regis­tered nurse, a widow, and a grandmother, currently living in Lusaka.

"The Singing Drum" and many other African folktales provide lessons on proper conduct, as well as warnings against dangers. The stories are creatively designed to make instruction more interesting and easy to grasp. They are nor­mally told in the evening, often around a fire after dinner, before the family is ready to retire to bed. These tales have traversed many African lands and genera­tions. Zambian folktales, for example, show marked similarities to many tales

found elsewhere .in eastern and southern Africa, due to cross-cultural contacts and exchanges, intermarriage, trade, and migration. Stories were regularly trans­ferred to new terrain. Labor-driven migrations in the twentieth century also ush­ered new folktales into Zambia.

**374 + INTO THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY (1996-2004)**

This short folktale carries a simple lesson: Young girls should always return home before dark. The word *dzimwe,* which is used as the name of the villain in the story, refers to a "beast" in most Bantu languages.

*Nalishebo N Meebelo*

Once upon a time, there was a young girl popularly known as Mwachangale. Mwachangale lived with her parents in the village of Mulundu in the east. She was greatly loved by her parents and many in the community. She had a beauti­ful voice whenever she sang various tunes. Mwachangale enjoyed bathing in the river with her friends every day on her way from school. When this young girl was born, her maternal grandmother gave her the name Mwachangale, and put a traditional necklace around her neck. She wore this necklace at all times.

One day, while returning from school with her friends, Mwachangale went to the river to bathe with them, just as she always did. At the river, she removed her clothes and her necklace, and her friends followed suit. They bathed all afternoon until sunset. When it was time to return to the village, Mwachangale and her friends put on their clothes and began their walk back to the village. Before she reached the village, Mwachangale remembered her necklace. She had left it at the river! She told her friends that she was going back to look for it. The friends begged her not to go back after dark because there was a bad man called Dzimwe to look out for.

Mwachangale went back to the river to look for her necklace. She met Dzimwe on the way. Dzimwe asked her, "What are you doing here child?" Mwachangale answered, "I left my necklace at the river when I was bathing with my friends." Dzimwe then lifted Mwachangale and threw her into his big drum, together with her necklace.

Mwachangale begun to sing:

I am not a drum I am Mwachangale,

Mwachangale. I forgot my necklace at the river,

Necklace at the river. I found Dzimwe had picked it up.

Dzimwe had picked up and put it in his drum,

Put it in his drum, which goes, "lingo lingo liziya wa jimwa buka aye!"

Mwachangale's parents began to look for her because she had not arrived home. Her friends said that she had returned to the river to look for her neck­lace. Everyone in the village was concerned because they loved the young girl very much. The whole village was worried and did not find her for many days.

At that time people in the village of Mulundu heard that there was news of

a drum that could sing. Dzimwe went to this village to show off his singing drum. The people were amazed but did not pay attention to the words of the drum's song. When Dzimwe reached the home of Mwachangle's parents, he played his drum again and the drum sang:

**SEEKING MY HUSBAND IN KENYA + 375**

I am not a drum, I am Mwachangale,

Mwachangale. **I** forgot my necklace at the river,

Necklace at the river. I found Dzimwe had picked it up.

Dzimwe had picked up and put it in his drum,

Put it in his drum, which goes, "lingo lingo liziya wa jimwa buka aye!"

Mwachangale's parents heard the song and were surprised. They recognized the voice of their child. They asked Dzimwe to play his drum again. The drum sang loudly:

I am not a drum, **I** am Mwachangale,

Mwachangale. **I** forgot my necklace at the river,

Necklace at the river. **I** found Dzimwe had picked itup.

Dzimwe had picked up and put it in his drum,

Put it in his drum, which goes, "lingo lingo liziya wa jimwa buka aye!"

Everyone in the village heard this song and realized that Mwachangale was in the drum. They all rose and beat Dzimwe and removed the girl from the drum. Chief Mulundu banished Dzimwe from the village and warned him never to return.

*Translated by Nalishebo N Meebelo*

***Neera Kapur-Dromson*SEEKING MY HUSBAND IN KENYA**

Kenya 1999 English

A fourth-generation Kenyan of Indian descent, Neera Kapur was born in Nairobi during the Emergency, and attended school and college there. From the begin­ning, she was an avid reader and eagerly absorbed stories of the "old days," which were current in her home. Later, she studied the art of Indian classical dance with gurus in India. She continues to perform and to give lecture demonstrations and workshops in Orissi, a form of classical dance from the northeastern Indian state of Orissa. Married to a former director of the Ffench Cultural Center, she sperids part of each year in France.

"Seeking My Husband in Kenya" is part of the opening chapter of a novel; *From Jhelum to Tana.* The novel traces the experience of three generations of

Punjabi ancestors in Africa, especially the women of the family, who are torn among three different cultures. The first chapter contains the journey and arrival of Hardei, the great-grandmother, who travels with a small son through turbulent seas and violent storms to the shores of East Africa in **1904.** She is searching for the husband who never returned from a business trip while she was still pregnant. When she finds him, later in the novel, she asserts herself to an extent that aston­ishes the community. The novel depicts actual physical and psychological condi­tions, which have led to the rooting and intertwining of many threads in Kenyan lives. Kapur is especially interested in the lives of mixed African/Indian families. The *solar topes is a* white colonial hat worn by all the administrative staff working in the African Public Works Departments, especially the railways.

**376 + INTO THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY (1996-2004)**

*Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye*

***Mucci tutt gai jinx di yari, patannan the rohn khadiyan.*When fickle lovers leave the beloved and go away, the beloved can do
  
nothing but weep by the riverside.**

Hardei had been standing at the station for a very long time. Her six-year-old son was getting agitated. He was hungry, so was she, but they had very little money left. Moreover, they had never seen so many strange faces before. They did see some black slaves being brought in at the port when they had arrived in Karachi, but she had not expected to see so many of them in this new country she had just stepped into. "Habashi!" she exclaimed in total amazement without thinking, and held on to the white *dupatta* as if to protect herself from unseen forces.

She was a little afraid. "Am I going to live among them?" she thought momentarily, but was quickly distracted by her son who had just then pulled the *dupatta* off her head, revealing her bosom and the slightly graying hair. "0, *Habshiya,"* she smacked him lovingly and quickly covered her head again. Despite her embarrassment and those of the onlookers, she smiled at her son and held on to him. Stories from childhood appeared before her: "A *Habashan* will take you away if you don't drink your milk quickly," that was how mothers would scare their children. To the likes of Hardei, all people with black skins and frizzy hair were *Habashis.* How or why *Habashis* had acquired the air of apparent ferocity, Hardei could not for the world have told you, but the name evoked terror, and this she had passed on to her child.

*Abash, Havash, Habashi, Habeshi—all* were common terms for Abyssinians. A Semitic tribe of mixed Arab descent, these strangers were to be found in the north of East Africa, in what is now Ethiopia. With a recorded history extend­ing back two thousand years over almost unbroken lines of kings to Menelik I, the reputed son of King Solomon and Queen Sheba, the Abyssinian Christians of the highlands considered themselves superior and highly cultured with numerous rigorous religious festivals and austere fasts.

"So many sahibs and memsahibs!" Here she came across all of them, it

seemed. Her father had talked about them—thefirenghis. Hardei tried to recall why. "Perhaps it had to do with some business deals," she continued mumbling to herself. "Memory fa i s me. I must be very tired." She closed her eyes for „a minute and then looked around again. Back in her town, people were wheatish—some more than others—in complexion. She could not understand it all very well. A chill ran down her spine. In spite of the hot December after­noon, she shivered. Surely, she was tired, or was it the sudden panic—the strange place, new faces and sounds—all that she was not familiar with.

**SEEKING MY HUSBAND *IN* KENYA + 377**

She suddenly cursed herself: "Why have I come? Why did I leave the familiar world behind? Do I even expect to find him here? What if he refuses to recog­nize me?" Question piled upon question, and her heart sank a little. Biting hard into her nails, her anxiety deepened. "What if there is already another woman in my place. Seven years is a very long time." Hardei knew that no man could do without a woman for that long. A thousand thoughts crossed her mind all at the same time. She felt a little dizzy and thoroughly confused. It was unusual for her to feel so unsure of herself. A Punjabi woman was known for her confidence, for strength of character, and for her physique. Perhaps even for a touch of aggres­siveness—for after all, had they not had to fight centuries of invasions. Endless battles had left their scars, but more important, had deeply influenced a will to face new conditions with courage, fortitude, and a sense of adventure.

The sun had just risen. The clouds that had settled were streaked yellow and blue. Was it going to rain? She couldn't say for sure; even the vast sky and the Cumulus clouds appeared different here. Hardei took a deep breath and looked at her son. He had fallen asleep on the hard bench. She smiled and took him into her lap. She was used to sitting cross-legged--on the rough floor, or on the *charpai,* the thin ropes of the cot cutting into her soft bottom; it didn't matter—the position was just so much more comfortable.

Ever since Kirparam's parents had passed away, Hardei and her husband had had to share a house with his father's younger brother and his wife, his Chacha and Chachi. Chachi especially had been hard on Hardei. Still very young and naïve to the ways of the world, Hardei thought to herself; "How difficult they had made my life, especially when there was no news about my husband." Curses and abuses she could manage for herself. It was when she realized that she was pregnant that she decided to run away, back to what was once her home. She sought refuge with her brother, but there too she had to deal with her stepmother.

Her son shifted in his sleep. Hardei patted him and lulled him back to sleep. *"Sofa mere rajkumar .* sleep, my prince," her heavy voice had a drowsy effect on him. Her left hand patted his head, her right hand his small bottom, her lap moved up and down—all rocking his head and body rhythmically. With her whole body swaying to the lullaby, the child went to sleep at once. Chunilal was six, but had yet to see his father. "Will he recognize his own son?" she won­dered. She studied his face closely. ""Was there any resemblance? The same big forehead." She shook her head and smiled.

Time dragged. She was nervous waiting for the train that was supposed to arrive in forty minutes, according to the big clock in the railway station. It seemed ages ago that she had left Miani, a little town on the Jhelum, in north­west Punjab. There too she had waited with her son for the train. Her brother had not come to the station to see them off. He did not want to spend two whole rupees on the return journey. She had been hurt but she knew him by now

**378 + INTO THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY (1996-2004)**

No one had come to see Hardei and her son off at Miani railway station, though it seemed that every other passenger was accompanied by a dazzling fan­fare of colorful, noisy ceremonies. Relatives and friends had come to the station with flower garlands—invariably the marigold, saffron-colored flowers, which left a very distinct fragrance reminiscent of temples and *puja* rooms. Others car­ried *mithais* and shoved boxes of sweets at their friends. Some waved a rupee note or two around the departee's head as *Sagan,* auspicious money for the jour­ney, and then thrust the note into their friend's hands. All kinds of advice filled the air: "Promise that you will write . . . that you will not eat beef . ." A few wept; others Waved their right hands. Hardei felt a little sorry for herself Here she stood alone, with her little son. People with wet handkerchiefs drying tear-filled eyes embraced each other. Perhaps they would never meet again. Miani Station was a place for goodbyes. At that moment for Hardei, it spelled no-man's-land.

A distant hoot announced the train's arrival, a major event in an East African station. The platform came to life. The station became a market place. Hardei woke out of her trance-like state and regained some of her resilient composure. She was in an altogether different world here. *"Chungwa! Ndizi! Chungwat'* African men in red blankets and bare-headed, beaded women were thrusting bananas, oranges, and even live fowl from the platform up at passengers staring at them from open train windows, their right hands outstretched to the goodies.

The Indian station master gave a signal—nearly all station masters so far in East Africa were Indians. Packed high with acacia branches used as fuel, the engine made a preparatory start. Enormous Garrett engines, the biggest and most powerful, had to be wood-fired. Passengers hung around outside, talking until the last minute. Then suddenly, as if shot from a gun, they rushed about looking for their baggage, their children, their carriage . . .

The train began to climb, slowly and laboriously, through the forest of palms to the high hills overlooking Mombasa. Especially suited to growing coconuts, Changamwe, the first stop, abounded with fertility. Huge fruit orchards of oranges, bananas, pineapples, and limes fed the eyes. Soon the coconut palms gave way to a semi-desert, dense with thorn trees right up to Tsavo where sud­denly the sun bared its ultimate ferocity. It was like being in a pan of smolder­ing iron . . . Meriakani, Maji ya Chumvi, Samburu, MacKinon Road, the train seemed to stop at every station for at least ten minutes. Each time, a new Indian station master walked along the platform with his kerosene lamp and then dis­appeared quickly. "One night the station master lingered on the platform after the train had left and was taken away by a lion," a nearby passenger said to Hardei. She stared at him in disbelief.

Steam had to be kept up all the time to drive the engine. At stations some­times the driver drew off a pot fiat of boiling water from the boiler. Other times, when he came within easy reach of wood, he stopped the train. Passengers were requested to ascend: "Would you please help cut up some *kuni?"* They were quite happy to oblige. The wood and a dose of paraffin soon started burning merrily, and the steam dial began to register. It gobbled up tons of wood fuel. The wood-fed engine hooted a lot, then stopped at yet another station, where no house,. apart from the station building, was visible anywhere. The driver opened the reg­ulator to let off the steam . . . oof oof oof chook . and the music changed.

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The train vibrated a lot as the metal lines expanded under the hot tropical sun. The train puffed and blew. One hundred miles away from Mombasa, the train finally arrived at Voi for the night halt. A change of guard—always Indian—and a shift of drivers. Voi was the first landmark on the line. The dak bungalow at Voi was reserved for European passengers; here they ate and slept. Behind the good shed little fires sprang up. Natives made their meals of maize and bananas. Indi­ans relieved themselves in the bazaar just behind. In the best of British tradition, trains were compartmentalized into three separate classes. Moreover first-class trains had first-class drivers; others had second-class drivers.

"Anima, amma, look, look," Chunilal screamed in great excitement at his first discovery of large wild animals—his body half-hanging out of the huge window. Hardei held on to his legs. With his feet banging hard against her thighs, and his small body dancing up and down, she feared that he might fall out, but she could also feel some of the same excitement coursing through her as well. Apart from squirrels and the endless monkeys, back home in Miani, Hardei was a witness to this grand spectacle for the first time, something she was to see again and again: herds of zebra, giraffe, Thomson's gazelle, kudu, dik dik—they all looked more of less the same to her right now and her initial fear turned to enthusiasm.

The sun had risen since the last quarter of an hour. Its first rays struck the fields of snow in splendor. Another gift of their journey was a glimpse of the snow-capped Mt. Kilimanjaro far in the distance. With her eyes raised toward the summit, Hardei paused in silent admiration for a long moment before she could find words to express her admiration: "Proud and royal, how like the Himalayas, the abode of gods. Perhaps Shiva meditated here too," she told her son, and bowed in salutation with her hands joined together. "Here some god must also live," she continued, feeling like a child in front of an image of the eternal. Who was not inspired by a view of a snow-capped mountain? Kiliman­jaro—she did not know its name then—stood with greatness and dignity, a monument to aspiration.

The heavy and mysterious mists rose slowly, reaching the snow peaks, each rivaled in its whiteness. A few seconds later, the snows disappeared, the mists had encircled the area. The white mists covering the arrogant summit finally seemed to triumph. Kilimanjaro was usually visible until ten in the morning, the rest of the day enveloped in clouds.

The few intense moments had diverted her low spirits. But as the train approached the town called Nairobi, Hardei grew nervous again. What awaited her here? She wondered in panic whether she remembered what he looked like. She didn't have a photograph—they had not taken one at their wedding. "Come to think of it," Hardei thought to herself, "I had my first glimpse of the man only long after the marriage ceremony, and even then I had dared only to take a quick peek through my long veil, while his *sehra* was being removed. We were both so young," she continued half aloud. "He did not even have a proper beard, and I was still flat-chested. Who told us what to do? It was so awkward." She closed her eyes, sighing deeply within her soul, remembering.

**380 + INTO THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY (1996-2004)**

Very soon, even before the color of henna had drained off her palms, Hardei was put to work in her new house. She felt sorry for herself: "At least they could have waited for the usual bridal period before they asked me to help in the bake shop." It was hard work. Up very early in the morning, she lit the charcoal fire and helped to make all kinds of pastries—halwa, jalebis, purees, pakoras. From time to time Chacha sent his nephew to Karachi to buy spices. "Better and cheaper there," he had said.

The last time Kirparam had not returned from Karachi. Hardei could still recall his goodbye. He had not lingered over it. Typical. A Punjabi man never looked back to wave in nonchalant sentimentality. A quick *"acha"* and he was gone. She had wanted to shout after him, *"Mein kya,* you have forgotten your umbrella," but had restrained herself. The words had frozen in her throat: "Bad omen to call someone back" She thought instead, "He will buy one in Karachi, a better one," and she had smiled to herself then.

Karachi was a port full of beautiful things from faraway places—silks, spices, sugar, rice, and cereals; indigo, wool, and European goods, and more. In her daydreams, Hardei often saw herself in the port of Karachi running from one shop to another, admiring the beads, feeling the softness of the silks. "Even if I could not buy anything, just looking would have been so much fun," she sighed. *"Hai rabba, hai rabba,"* she called out to her god not once but many times, until she could not bear it any longer. The dream lay shattered before her and tears poured. forth. "Perhaps he will take me with him the next time that he goes to buy spices for the shop," she tried to console herself. Such was not her kismet, for eventually, when she did cross Karachi all by herself, it was in a hurried and panicky state, without the leisure she had hoped for.

Alone in Miani, day after day she had gazed through the small iron barred window for his familiar shadow, for the sound of his quick footsteps. At times she caught herself speaking to him, *"Mein kya, I* say. . . ." She did not use his name, of course. "Kirparam," no, no, she could not have called him thus: it was just not done. No wife addressed her husband by his first name, or any other name. At other times, to draw his attention, she would say, "Have you heard . . ." Kirparam himself did not often use her name either. Usually, each drew the other's attention in an indirect way—a cough, a clearing of the throat, sometimes only a sound sufficed.

Nothing seemed to alert him this time. Not her cries, nor her fervent prayers. Hardei pleaded with the gods. The family searched all over the village, spoke with his friends—to no avail. Kirparam did not return from his journey to Karachi. She wandered about feeling fetid and forlorn. At such moments she felt the loss of her mother. She longed for the assurance of some steady love; perhaps a biological need gripped her.

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Now on the train she awoke with a start, nearly frozen. Clouds had thick­ened over the sky. Tall trees darkened the forest they were passing through. Chunilal drew closer to his mother. It seemed to be his turn to feel frightened. She clung to him, held him close to her, hoping to draw some courage herself from his human contact. The train advanced toward its destination—the tin city of Nairobi .. .

Many people hurried to the station to enjoy the exciting atmosphere. . . . The guard, feeling very smart in his *solar topee,* a mark of colonial power, blew the whistle. The train came to a halt. Hardei's heart leaped. She bent forward to look through the window: "Perhaps by some chance miracle he has come to meet us," she thought for a moment, and then immediately chided herself; "How could he know of our arrival?" Her body sagged with the realization that they had not communicated for years.

Slowly she went back to her seat. Kirparam had never written. Hardei would never have known of his whereabouts had she not heard some stories from peo­ple in her town who had returned from "Afrika." He had not even been aware that his wife had been pregnant when he left. Taking a deep breath, she sat at the edge of her seat, ready to rise.

On long low benches the Indians sat, rising like crows in a field to greet the train and storm the coaches reserved for Asians. Bundle-clutching, dhoti-clad Indians hastened to descend from the train. Others with black steel trunks on their heads, their once elegant kurta-pyjamas now limp and crushed. Perspiring profusely, they heaved and pushed their way through the crowd. For every trav­eler there were perhaps a dozen greeters. Driven in rickshaws pulled by Kikuyus covered in sweat; in *gharries;* in bullock tongas, in two-wheel carts drawn by mules, driven by a turbaned Sikh. The hustle and bustle of people talking at the top of their voices, the rickshaw men grabbing the luggage and making off with it. Everybody seemed to be in a hurry. Except Hardei.

So great was the congestion at the Nairobi station, it seemed as though everyone in the capital had converged there. Intensity. Excitement. Commo­tion. Hardei looked around her—for a familiar face perhaps? Turbaned men—Sikhs, Pathans, Arabs, African families carrying bulging cloth-wrapped bun­dles on their heads, babies strapped with a colorful piece of cloth behind their backs. At the far end of the train were the reserved carriages for Europeans only, into which no native or Indian would dare to step.

New settlers had arrived: civil servants in starched khaki uniforms and white *topees,* others in felt hats. Women in their long flowing gowns, large straw hats and white parasols covering their heads, full white gloves enveloping their

**hands and arms. Hardei stared at them for a long while and wondered why they were so covered. Much later she learned that they regarded the sun as a danger­ous animal that would strike them down like a cobra. "What would the mem­sahibs do in our hometown in Miani, where summer temperatures could really scorch? With their white faces going blood red, they would probably quiver under the blazing sun."**

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**Hardei's arm automatically surrounded her son, as if trying to retrieve some comfort, to relocate a necessary security. And then she burst out laughing. Beside her, he stood all red. She touched his face and said *"Gullal,"* for he looked like little Krishna during the festival of *boli, all* covered with *gullal.* Was it not like the first day of spring when one had the joy of painting each other with brightly colored powders, red being the most popular? The sudden strong rays of the sun accentuated the red colors and gave her visual delight. In spite of her anxiety, she laughed and cried at the same time.**

**But then everybody else—all the fellow travelers—seemed to have changed complexion. She wiped her own face with the edge of her white *dupatta,* and it came off red. She looked down at herself—her clothes were covered in red. The ochre-red dust had penetrated everything, filling the eyes, nostrils, hair, and pores of the skin. All the disembarking passengers were united in one common color. This time it was not the sun, but the fine dust of the African plains. Red ochre was the color of the Maasai, the color used by the Samburu, the color of Africa. It enveloped each one. It welcomed every new arrival into the heart of the land. It stamped and marked every disembarking passenger from the train. For a day or two afterward, traces of the Taru desert appeared as red streaks on the wiping cloth.**

**She waited. People started leaving. Newly arrived coolies carried beds made of lemon wood and crisscross hemp on their heads. Slowly the station began to empty. Hardei clutched her son's hand tightly, held the little black trunk in her other hand, and began to walk out. A three-yard-long, one-and-a-half-yard­wide white veil thrown over her head fell in graceful folds nearly to her feet. A loose bodice concealed her bosom, a pair of slippers covered her .feet, its soles clearly cracked. She wore no makeup. After a life spent almost always in the open air, she looked forlorn, solitary, and tired. She hesitated before joining the group of Indians as they left the station and walked down the main road toward the Indian bazaar.**

***Sarah Nyendwoba Ntiro*FIGHTING FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS**

**FIGHTING FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS + 383**

**Uganda 1999 English**

**Sarah Nyendwoha Ntiro was the first female university graduate in East Africa. Born near Hoima town in the Bunyoro-Kitara Kingdom of western Uganda in 1926, she attended some of the best schools in the country, including King's Col­lege Buda, where she excelled in mathematics. She was among the first six women admitted to Makerere College, now Makerere University, in 1945. She enrolled as the only woman in a class of thirty-two mathematics majors, but the mathematics tutor refused to have her in his class. She was forced to change her courses to history, geography, and English. After studying Latin and obtaining the classics qualifications necessary for her admission, she attended and gradu­ated from St. Anne's College, Oxford. She went on to teach at the prestigious Gayaza High School. At Gayaza. Sara Ntiro staged a firm protest against unequal pay between male and female teachers. She refused to accept her salary until the wife of the colonial Governor of Uganda intervened to ensure that equal pay was effected.**

**Between 1958 and 1961, Sarah Ntiro was one of the first two women mem­bers of the Legislative Council, Uganda's lawmaking organ during the colonial period. She was also a member of several Ugandan delegations to the United Nations General Assembly in the period just before independence. Between 1961 and 1964, she lived in London with her late husband, Professor Sam Joseph Ntiro, then Tanganyika High Commissioner to Britain. Returning to Uganda, she established the Uganda Teachers' Service Commission, now the Educational Service Commission, while working at the Ministry of Education, and was a sen­ior administrator in the Vice-Chancellor's Office at Makerere University. The excesses of the Idi Amin regime forced her to flee into exile in Kenya, where she remained for nearly a decade, running a higher education consultancy for African refugees. Ntiro is a member of numerous scholarly, advocacy, and developmental organizations, many of which she helped to establish in Uganda. Among these are the Uganda Society, the Uganda Council of Women, the Young Women's Christian Association of Uganda, the Family Planning Association, the Develop­ment Network of Indigenous Voluntary Associations, and the Uganda Associa­tion of University Women.**

**In 2001, the Uganda chapter of the Forum for African Women Educationists (FAWE) established an annual public lecture and award in honor of Sarah Ntiro, given to women scholars or researchers who have distinguished themselves in their fields. FAWE also chose Ntiro to spearhead a campaign to encourage Ugan­dan girls' participation in the sciences. In 2003, Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia, awarded Sarah Ntiro an honorary doctorate.**

**Sarah Ntiro's discourse here covers a period of particular excitement in Uganda, witnessing the growth of educational and political institutions in the two decades preceding Uganda's independence. Among the schools she mentioned are some of the best-known in Uganda, several of them girls' schools, like Gayaza. High School, just outside Kampala; Kyebambe Girls' High School, near the**

legendary Mountains of the Moon in Western Uganda; and Tororo Girls High School in Eastern Uganda, which was one of the first major projects to be funded by the United States in Uganda. Nyakasura School, also in Western Uganda, is a boys' institution started by a Scotsman, who for a long time insisted on his stu­dents wearing kilts as part of their uniform. King's College Budo, the best-known school in the country; was founded by Anglican missionaries and was the first major coeducational secondary school in Uganda.

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Ntiro also provides some interesting details about Makerere College, now Makerere University, East Africa's most prestigious institution of higher learning in East Africa, where most of the region's leaders, including Julius Nyerere, Mil­ton Obote, Mwai Kibaki, and Benjamin Mkapa, were educated. The first women students at Makerere were housed in a wing of what is now the Makerere Guest House, which was built of wood. This led to its being nicknamed "The Box"—which is still used as a nickname for the women's main residence at Makerere. Female students are often referred to as "Boxers," a term that, over time, has come to suggest the tough, no-nonsense character associated with classic Makerere women students. The origin of the name appears to be more factual than attitu­dinal, as suggested by Sarah Ntiro.

Wandegeya is a rather down-market suburb of Kampala, just outside the Uni­versity walls, much loved and patronized by undergraduates because of its mod­estly priced shops and recreational facilities.

The notable personalities mentioned in Ntiro's narrative include Lady Darnall Kisosonkole, the dowager queen of Buganda. She was the *nabagereka—queen* and wife—of the late *kabaka* of Buganda and first president of Uganda, Sir Edward Frederick Muteesa II, popularly known as "King Freddie." She attended Sher-bone School for Girls in England, and exhibits the growing tendency of the Buganda aristocracy of the time to identify closely with the British colonials but also a belief in quality education for their daughters.

Sarah Ntiro narrated this early phase of her life—from her birth in 1926 to the early 1960s—in an interview she granted to Susan Kiguli in 1999.

*Austin Bukenya and Florence Ebila*

I was born in Hoima, in the Kingdom of Bunyoro-Kitara. Both my parents were teachers in a missionary-founded school. I was born on a Sunday morning in Hoima Hospital. My mother was taken to hospital in a hammock. In those days there were no ambulances and my parents did not have a vehicle. She was taken to hospital at the time when people were going to church. The services then used to be very long, taking about three or more hours. My mother was taken to hospital, had me, and my birth was announced in the church service—the arrival of the first child of these two teachers. This was in 1926. My parents went on teaching in other missionary-founded schools in other parts of Bunyoro-Kitara. I went to Duhaga Girls' Boarding School in the kindergarten class in 1932. Duhaga Boarding School was for the girls who could afford to pay the school fees. I do not know if my parents could, but the headmistress, who was my godmother, a British missionary called Miss Edith Ainley, was

instrumental in finding ways of promoting my education. She knew about the King George Bursary, which was being given by the government of the day to some children to go to prestigious schools, which were expensive and were out of reach for ordinary people, like King's College Budo.

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That was how I went to primary five at King's College Budo, a co-educa­tional school in the sense that there was a sprinkling of girls and hundreds of boys. But it suited me perfectly, since all my siblings and cousins were males, although Budo was far away from home [in Kampala]. But the school nurse, who was also the matron for the girls, was a princess of Toro kingdom—Princess A. Nyamutoka—and she and my mother had been schoolmates at Toro Girls School. She took it upon herself to see to it that I would not feel homesick and uncomfortable. I did not know Luganda, which was the language spoken in the neighborhood of the school. But Budo had the tradition of speaking English. Children had to speak English during the day. I do not know whether this was because the government had declared English as a medium of instruction and administration in Uganda in 1931 or because it was perceived to be an effective leveling strategy in the school.

At that time Budo's students came from all the tribes in the country and even beyond Uganda, from Kenya, Tanganyika, Nyasaland [Malawi]. Whatever the reason, the use of English was a good idea for learning to communicate beyond tribal borders. My father had been at Budo as a student and the chil­dren of old Budonians were given priority for entry into the school. In Budo I completed the primary part of the school and continued to the Junior Sec­ondary School, then went on to Makerere College about 1946.

I was the first girl to go straight from school into the mainstream of the arts course at Makerere College, as it was called then. There was some affirmative action for people who did not fulfill the required academic standard of entry but who were deemed to have the potential for further studies. Such people were given a second opportunity by offering them entrance to Makerere in the preliminary year and a second chance to take the entry examination. If they were successful in the entry examination then they would join the formal First Year When I went to Makerere, we were about a dozen girls, and I stayed in what is now part of the Makerere University Guest House. The male students rudely called it "The Box" because there were very strict rules for the women students, especially about when to go out and with whom to go out. Every time we went out we had to sign the warden's book, even when it was just going to Wandegeya. If one had to go out and miss a meal, one had to say whom one was going out with and where and state the reason for going out. It was in order if it was a known boyfriend, as long as his name was written down in the Warden's Book. At that time there wasn't this business of just disappearing from the Women's Hostel without telling the warden.

Although there was strict discipline, this is something which I really do not regret, because I have seen so many girls who did not have that kind of disci­pline fall by the wayside. They are now unrecognizable: They have been eaten

**up by the world because they did not take discipline seriously. While I was at Makerere the warden, together with an education officer, Miss Helen Neatby, thought that my time at Makerere had not stretched me academically and that I ought to try and go to a well-established university for further academic stud­ies, because Makerere was still a college loosely affiliated to London University and only giving certificates and diplomas at the completion of courses. So Miss Margaret Graham, who was the women's first warden, got in touch with people in Oxford University and made enquiries about the possibility of entering that university. Oxford said that I would be considered if I had Latin.**

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**When I left Makerere, I went to teach at Kyebambe Girls' School while making preparations to go to Oxford. That was a lovely** *experience for* **me because my mother had been to that school when it was called Toro Girls' School, and we used to tease her that she had gone abroad for higher education. Toro women who had been at school with her were delighted to see Jane's daughter come to teach at their former school. Also, one of the former Mak­erere women students, Majorie Kamuhigi Kabuzi, was married and was living at Nyakasura School, where her husband was teaching. That meant I could go to Nyakasura School for weekends. Boating on the volcanic lakes was one of the weekend's delights. In addition, two of my King's College Budo friends also went to Nyakasura School for teaching practice: the late Erisa Kironde, whom I had been with from primary five at Budo; and Nelson Mugerwa, who until recently was with the Teaching Service Commission.**

**While I was at Kyebambe, there were some expatriate staff who knew Latin well and were willing to teach Latin. After passing my Latin examinations I was admitted to Oxford University, where I went to read a history honours degree. It** *was* **an exciting time, a learning experience as well as an opportunity for interacting with all sorts of people from various parts of the world. The stu­dents of East Africa formed the East African Association. This comprised stu­dents who came from East Africa regardless of their ethnicity or background. There were two students who were the sons of the governor of Tanganyika; others were children of British nationals who were working or had worked in East Africa; others were children of Kenya, Uganda, and Tanganyika. Somehow we all felt that we had a common destiny.**

**I also had a "home" in Oxford because one of the rectors in the neighbouring villages had been in Hoima as a priest and at Buda as a teacher doing mission­ary work. This meant that when other students broke off at the end of a term and went to their homes, I also went to my "home." Since it was a rectory, it had a huge house and I had a room to myself where I could relax and keep my belongings that I did not need at the university, and I could be a member of a family.**

**When I was at Oxford, I made friends with some young Englishwomen who are still my friends. One of them travelled with me, when we finished our courses and were waiting for our examinations results, throughout Europe. In those days we could hitchhike, and one of our stopping places was in Rome.**

**Susan, my friend—she is now Lady Susan Briggs—had been to a convent school where we could stay. It was in one of the convents just outside the Vati­can. The nuns fed us extremely well and were so generous to us. The nuns were very hospitable to us and very protective. They helped us choose the places of touristic interest which we could visit for our enlightenment and enjoyment. They also drew out attention to the dangerous spots for girls in such a huge international city**

**After Oxford I went to Bristol University to do a course in teaching. I did not have to study for a whole year because I had already done a year at Mak­erere. I was at Bristol for one term and got my diploma in teaching. I was very lucky that a friend of mine who was an engineering student at the time in another part of England had a car, which he lent me so I could use it to do my teaching practice.**

**Miss Margaret Graham had also retired from Makerere and lived in Bristol, where she was head of a teacher training college. It was wonderful for me to have a friend from my Makerere days near at hand, and many things worked out beautifully for me, like selecting schools for my teaching practice. One of the schools where I went to do my teaching practice was Sherborne School for Girls. It is a famous school for society girls and was twinning with Gayaza High School. The second Nabagereka of Buganda, Damali Kisosonkole, had gone to school there. I made some friends there too.**

**When it was time for me to come back, I decided to bring with me the bicy­cle I had used in Oxford as a student. This offered me an opportunity to see parts of the world I had never dreamt of visiting. I asked the Colonial Office if I could come by sea since that way I could safely transport my bicycle. I sailed from Britain around Spain into the Mediterranean Sea, into the Suez Canal and the Red Sea, then into the Indian Ocean and up to Mombasa. I travelled by train from Mombasa to Kampala. In Kampala, I found my father and many Banyoro family friends, who excitedly waited for my arrival. The train was very late, but they still waited for me. There was great excitement. We stayed in Kampala for the night, and the next day I went to Gayaza High School to see the Headmistress, Miss Joan C. Cox.**

**Miss Cox had found me in Oxford Street on the last Saturday of shopping before Christmas, after I had left Bristol. In the Christmas season Oxford Street is very crowded, and in this crowd (a sea of white faces), someone screamed at me, *"Katanda yeebazibwe! Nkusanze"* [Thanks be to God! I met you]. It was Miss Cox. Apparently she had been trying to get in touch with me and had failed to do so. She wanted to recruit me to teach at Gayaza High School. Previously I had been asked to go to Budo to teach some courses or undertake other responsibilities. I was asked to be the assistant warden of the girls, a post which meant my working under a European, looking after African girls. This was unacceptable to me. I envisaged a situation where I would be blamed for the girls' behaviour and the European would be commended for the girls' good behaviour and successful performance. I turned down that offer and**

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**was going to return home without securing any employment opportunity. Well, Miss Cox had invited me to go and teach at Gayaza, so on my first morning in Uganda I went and formalized the contract. Then I went home to see my par­ents, father, mother, relatives, and friends. When we got home I had a wonderful reception. One of the missionaries working in Hoima and his wife, who had encouraged me to go and study abroad, had a huge reception for me, which was attended by the whole** *community—chiefs* **and their wives, religious leaders, schoolchildren, passersby—for my home area people were very excited. There I was, at home with my luggage from England, including my bicycle. When I had settled down, my mother called me aside and asked me to do her one big favour.**

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**She requested me not to ride my bicycle, for only the girls in town who were perceived to be loose did that. So that was the end of my dream of riding my bicycle, which had made me sail home through the Suez Canal, spending about a month on the way. I used to watch that bicycle being ridden by a male servant going to the market, or even my brother, but not I, its owner. Well, after about a fortnight I left Hoima and went to Gayaza, and apart from the domestic sci­ence teacher, I was the only African member of the teaching staff. All the other teachers were British missionaries. We worked very well together.**

**One of the problems that came up quite early on during the time I was at Gayaza was the salary I was going to be paid (I do not remember the exact amount) but it was three-quarters less than what the male counterparts were going to be paid. I discussed this matter with Miss Cox and told her that I would go on teaching but I would not like to be paid. I did not want to accept that which I regarded as an insult. It wasn't the amount of money, but it was the principle: that a man—there was one who had been at Oxford with me and had got a lower grade than myself—would** *earn* **more than I by virtue** *of* **his gender. So I decided that I would teach for six months without being paid and then call it a day. I knew I had some obligation to do some work within a government-sponsored school as a way of showing my appreciation for having been given a scholarship to study abroad.**

**Before long the story reached Government House at Entebbe as it was called then. In Government House the lady of the house was an Oxford graduate like myself She was outraged that I could even consider leaving the noble profession of teaching, but I told her that I could not fight a battle by myself. At that time I found out that there was not a single African woman graduate in the whole of East and Central Africa. Well, the people in power thought it would be very embarrassing that an Oxford graduate could not be contained in her home area and practice the profession for which she had been trained. They feared this could be sending out wrong signals to people who were encouraging girls to go on with higher education. So it was decided that, since I was the only one, I should be given what I wanted: "After all, she might even get married before long."**

**From that incident the Ugandan government started paying graduate women like graduate men. Later this spread to the whole civil service. This the principle of equal pay for equal work was launched and established.**

**While teaching at Gayaza I was very happy there, and it is only my students who might make comments on how they perceived me and how I appeared to them. In my second year of teaching, two people who were teaching in my home area where I grew up—that is, in Hoima—went to England for further studies and were not replaced. So I decided, out of loyalty to my home area, to go and teach there and assist the students during the school's third term, when the students were sitting for national examinations. So I taught at Duhaga Junior Secondary School from September 1957 to December 1958 and saw them through the examinations. But I stayed there for about two years until I got married. It was an interesting period also because wherever I went I was a new phenomenon. People did not know how to treat me and they never knew how I was going to react. About the late 1950s, I became the acting head of Duhaga Junior Secondary School.**

**In Y.W.C.A, we were the pioneers of the family planning association. Hived at Makerere as a housewife; my husband was teaching at the Makerere Art School. We lived there until my husband was offered a job in London. One of the things that happened while I was at Hoima in November 1958 was that I was appointed a member of the Legislative Council. Around this time, some Americans wanted to put up a school for girls in Uganda. Most of the schools then were missionary-based, but the American constitution did not allow American funds to be invested in schools with a religious base. So we found a way of going around this. The school hall *was* built with** *alcoves* **instead** *of* **a chapel and each religious group had its own alcove.**

**The other question was whether the school would have enough girls to fill a full-blown secondary school. Two of my friends and I convinced the Americans that there were more than enough girls to fill such a school. I promised them that I would move all over the north of Uganda to sensitize people about the need of educating girls and there would be enough girls to fill a secondary school. Unconvinced, the Americans decided to put the school near the border so that if Ugandan girls could not fill it, they would find Kenyans to fill it.**

**At that time I was heavily pregnant. They were amused and quite rightly at my promise to mobilize people too, because we had our last meeting on Satur­day morning and I had my second son on that Saturday night. When my sec­ond son was born, my husband had been given a job in London and we moved on. Then I lived the life of a housewife, which I enjoyed because I wanted to be near my sons during the formative years. While at Makerere as a student, I had done educational psychology and we had learned how parents were crucial to a child's growth and development. I had grown up with parents who cared for me and I did not see why I could not give the same treatment to my children. There were also stories about child abuse, which I really did not want to happen to my own children.**

**When I was in Uganda, I had a fair amount of exposure by being in the Leg­islative Council, where some members were elected but others were appointed like myself. I was reminded recently that I was the first legislator to talk about**

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**environmental protection. The other concerns I took an interest in were girls' and women's education, as well as their welfare and well-being. Some Indian women lawyers told me that there wasn't a law bringing together all the mar­riage systems. The Hindu and Moslem marriages were not in our statute books. So if there was child abuse or domestic violence in those marriages there was no way of taking the culprits to court, because legally such marriages did not exist. Young Indian girls would be brought in from India for arranged marriages and the girls who did not know English, Luganda, or Swahilli were completely under the thumb of the mother-in-law, and if they had not brought enough dowry, they were harassed and mistreated, and many of them committed sui­cide, but there was no provision to take the people responsible to court. So I brought a Private Members' Bill motion because African men did not want to be involved in other people's marriage problems. Even though there were Indian ministers, they did not want to be labeled people who exposed the goings on in the Indian community. So we were the only people who dared to point out what was going wrong. Once we had tabled the bill, then all the information came in and there was debate and the bill was eventually passed as an Act of the Legislative Council and it became law. This is why I am interested in the case that is going to be the first case in which a Hindu marital problem is going to be subjected to courts of law Before I brought in the Private Members' Bill, this would have not been possible.**

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**To tell you about the environment: One would know that an African had entered a house at Makerere when all the trees and hedges were being cut down. Even the Uganda Electricity Board would come and cut down trees to install their wires and poles. This was really damaging the environment, so I went and raised my concern and asked that there should be a law to make sure that people simply should not cut down trees. That was nearly forty years ago. Once we had tabled the bill, then all the information came in and there was debate and the bill was eventually passed as an Act of the Legislative Council and it became law.**

***Loise Kalondu wa Maseki* A COURAGEOUS WOMAN**

**Kenya 2000 Kikamba**

**Mama Loise Kalondu wa Maseki was born in 1914 in the Kitui District of the Eastern Province of Kenya. No longer very physically mobile due to her old age, she is still energetic and very cheerful, actively involved in her current women's groups and farming activities, which she manages from her chair on the verandah of her house. On the day she provided this interview, she had grown tired, but refused to stop for the evening, saying: "Let's talk my child. What do you want to**

**know? I have thrown sleep out of the window." She happily narrated her story, from the colonial period through the Mau Mau struggles for independence to the post-independence era.**

**Mama Kalondu's independent mind and strong spirit are revealed in such episodes as her confrontation with the white missionaries in her area, whom she defied in allowing her daughter to marry a white man.While raising twelve chil­dren, educating them all, and starting a business that would provide them a finan­cial legacy, she became a model farmer and a leader of other farmers. During the transition period between the late 1950s and 1964, as Kenyans were fighting for political freedom, Mama Kalondu joined other women all over the country in an association called Maendeleo ya Wanawake. This nongovernmental organization, which remains active today, was created to bring development to women at the grassroots level, and to empower women financially so that they might independ­ently manage their affairs.**

**In her late eighties at the time of this interview, Mama Kalondu remains an outstanding, formidable leader, known in Kitui as a role model in modern farm­ing techniques, and as a woman who supported education for girls and encour­aged other women in self-development.**

*Sheila Ali Ryanga*

**When we were young, families or friends used to work together helping each other's families. We called this *mwethya.* I used to go with another girl, and we would cultivate one time on our farm, and the next time on their farm. We used to do the same during harvesting and we would sing good songs as we worked. I was a big girl when we went for *mwethya.***

**Then I met people of God who told me the good news of God. Then I became a Christian and went to Mulango Missionary School [at the Africa Inland Mission], where I met the man I married. His name is Timotheo Maveki. At the Africa Inland Mission we were taken care of by a missionary family by the name of Aveck. Miseveki [Miss Aveck] was a nurse I used to assist. I joined that family when my mother put me in school in Mulango. I stayed with Miseveki and my mother paid school fees of fifty cents until the missionaries discovered that my mother was a widow, Then Miseveki took over the school fees and also bought me clothes. She did that for me while I assisted her with her household chores.**

**I went to school from 1934 to 1937. I was married on a Saturday at 2 P.M. in 1935. My first child was born in 1936. How could I be so foolish as to forget such a happy day? I met my husband in Mulango. He was a primary school teacher. Now I can read the Bible in Kikamba. It is Kiswahili that I don't know well. I was in school while I was married because my mother-in-law generously allowed me to go to school until standard five. In Mulango we were taught how to march and I used to be caned for missing steps. But I learned very well later and was awarded a marching prize for the area. I sang and danced in *wathi,* the peer dance for young women and men, until I married. I danced in *wathi* before I became a Christian and afterwards.**

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**In 1954 my daughter was to marry a white man who was a teacher, but the missionaries said that it was not God's will that a black person should marry a white person. The white man was then transferred from Kitui to a high school in Kakamega in an effort to separate him from my daughter. Bibi Davis, one of the missionaries, did not like the idea of my daughter marrying a white man. She became annoyed and one day, when I passed near her, she kicked me from behind. I was enraged. I turned back to her and told her, "I will kick you till you learn never to kick another Mukamba woman." Then I kicked her so hard she fell down.**

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**Other Akamba women asked me why I had kicked a white woman and if I was not afraid. I replied that I had done to the white woman what she had done to me. Many days later that white woman apologized, saying that we were both Christians and should ask forgiveness of each other. So in 1959, when the mar­riage of my daughter to the white man took place, I told Bibi Davis that she should not interfere with my daughter's marriage because when her daughter decided to get married she would not see me interfering.**

**When the Maendeleo ya Wanawake movement began in the mid 1950s I joined it. One time we went to the Kaloleni section of Nairobi and we were well received by the Honorable Ronald Ngala and President Daniel Toroitich Arap Moi, who was then vice president. We had a meeting of all Maendeleo ya Wanawake groups in Kenya. Our leaders were Mrs. Jul Mbogo, the national leader, and Mrs. Nzioka, who was our leader from Kitui. Also there was Masaa wa Nzia. The coastal leader was Meggy Gona. This was during the early 1960s.**

**We had requests to put forward to the government ministers. We told them that women were tired of staying alone at home while their men went to work in Nairobi. The *ministers* laughed. We then told them that we *were* tired of trying to reach remote villages by walking on foot. We needed vehicles to enable us to help others benefit from Maendeleo ya Wanawake. We were promised vehicles and soon after that we got them. Our Land Rover in Kitui is still running.**

**My husband, the teacher, and I became farm leaders long ago. I used to travel sponsored by the Ministry of Agriculture to see what other farmers were doing in the 1960s. In 1959 and 1960 I attended a training program in agricul­ture at the Better Living Institute in Kitui. This was during the colonial era. Because my husband was busy teaching he allowed me to go to various places and do the training. I used to go to Meru, Nyeri, and Isiolo to be shown how other farmers worked. The Ministry of Agriculture took me and a few others around as farm leaders from our area.**

**In the 1960s and 1970s, the D.C. [district commissioner] of Kitui used to come with the district agricultural officer, elders, and groups of farmers from other areas to see my farm. I raised laying chickens. I bought my chicks from Kigwaru Farm and I sold eggs. After selling these chickens, I bought other chicks from Langata Farm. I stopped chicken farming after my husband died in 1977. Then I prayed to God to give me money to build shops because my hus­band and I had planned during the 1960s to do this. God gave me the money to**

**build three shops. Then I said to myself that a person should leave an inheri­tance for her children. I have six daughters and six sons. Therefore I shared the shops. One shop is for the six daughters and two shops are each** *for* **the two sons. They will inherit them when I die. I built the shops with the money that came from my farming. Are you hearing me, my mother?..**

**During the time of Mau Mau we were living in a certain way. When the gov­ernment announced that all Mau Mau would be arrested, my husband told me to hide all of the letters from the Kenya African Union [KAU]. Even if you are a government agent, I'm still going to tell you. I hid the letters in the bush so that the imperialists would not find them. I hid them by covering them with stones in one place. Then I removed them and hid them somewhere else, for fear that they would be found. I did this repeatedly until sunset. We were nei­ther helping the Mau Mau fighters nor fighting for them. We sympathized with them when jomo Kenyatta was imprisoned by the colonial government. When Kenyatta became president, the colonialists said, "The monkey has come down from the trees," meaning the Mau Mau fighters came out to take over the government.**

**The colonial government burned the houses of Mau Mau fighters and those who supported them. Therefore, when I went to arrange for my son's marriage in 1970 in Gatundu, my Gikuyu in-laws asked me if we really had supported the Mau Mau fighters. They asked about the** *songs that* **we had** *sung. I* **sang the following song about Mbeti, a member of the Legislative Assembly before independence:**

**Mbeti, you should tell the colonialists When Kenyatta takes over the government They should pack their belongings**

**And go back to London.**

**The Gikuyu in-laws allowed the marriage to proceed happily. My daughter in-law's father, Kirori Kirke, showed me the houses where the Mau Mau had killed those who refused to help them, and also the houses of those killed by the colonial government for being Mau Mau.**

**I become surprised these days when I hear Kenyans talking about President Moi. I remember that, during the colonial days, I was caught and forced to pay tax for a cow that I owned. But since Kenyatta's time we have never paid tax on cows. Our independence is good. I wish that they would speak properly to each other as leaders and succeed each other in a positive way. It is bad, even before God. God hates their quarreling.**

**We educated all our children, both boys and girls, because, when we became Christians, we learned about education and also learned that every child comes from God and that they are equal. We took no dowry for our girls because their father said that he would not sell children who had been given to him freely by**

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**God. I asked if I could not even get one goat from the girls' dowries and he told me that he would buy the goats for me if I wanted goats. We educated the girls with difficulty because of limited financial resources and with ridicule from our neighbors for being Christians. My husband never beat me. He loved me very *f%* much and I loved him too. [Sings:]**

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**When you hear ku ku ku, it is a chicken laying eggs.**

**And so a boy is born into that family and teachers are increased.**

**You are crying because of love, You are crying because of love, You are crying because of love. When you hear va va va, it is a chicken laying eggs.**

**And so a girl is born into that family and teachers are increased.**

**You are crying because of love,
  
You are crying because of love,
  
You are crying because of love.**

**Many people did not educate their daughters in those days because they wanted to marry them off early so as to gain cows. Now they regret it. They wish they had educated them like Maseki and Munuve, the two families that educated all their children. They have realized that there is wealth in education. At eighty-seven, I am still involved in the Maendeleo ya Wanawake movement. Women come to me for advice, and we drink tea together. Even now they also come here for the mutual love we have for one another. Currently we have twenty-four members in our local women's group. Maendeleo ya Wanawake has helped us to open schools. We have formed a widows', widowers', and orphans' cooperative bank in which each member has eighteen shares. One can get a loan according to how many shares she or he has invested.**

**Early in 1990 I helped to start our bank in Kakiani. Even now, I'm still its leader. These days we have *mukilye,* that means "lift her up." Each person con­tributes twenty shillings. I contribute under my three different names: Kalondu twenty shillings, Loise twenty shillings, Ng'i Ngwili [the wife of Ngwili] twenty shillings. This way I gain more shares. When it's my turn, I get three times the contributions of the group instead of only one. This is allowed if one can afford it. Those who contribute less, get less money. I also still help women who are mistreated by family members. They come here and stay with me while resolving their problems. Sometimes they help me with some work on the farm and I pay them for it.**

***Translated by Mwende Mutuvi and Sheila 1211 Ryanga***

***Pelagia Aloyse Katunzi*Two RIDDLE POEMS**

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**Tanzania 2000 Kiswahili**

**Born in 1954, Pelagia Aloyse Katunzi completed primary education, married, and had four children before her husband died of AIDS. She then embarked on an anti-AIDS crusade through counseling, educational campaigns, activism, and poetry. She has publicly declared herself to be HIV-positive, and decided to devote the rest of her life to fighting the epidemic. Her poems are an integral part of her AIDS counseling activities.**

**The two poems included here fall within the Swahili dialogue verse tradition. In this tradition, one poet poses a question or riddle, and other poets are expected to unravel it. In the past this was done orally and publicly; these days such dia­logue is usually carried on in newspapers and on the radio.**

**"What Load Is This Without a Reliever?" laments the depth of suffering and loss that so many must bear, often alone and'unaided, when a beloved person dies. The author explains the circumstances of the composition of the poem as follows:**

**I composed this poem when I saw a woman who had lost her three. children [to AIDS]. Now her fourth child was also very ill, exhibiting the HIV symptoms of the deceased siblings. As the mother watched her child, whose soul wanted to depart and yet lingered on, the mother exhibited deep sorrow and lamented loudly. I observed her with sadness. Later that child died. It was then that I realized that DEATH is a load that has no reliever. If it were possible to relieve one of impending death, the mother would have volunteered to die in the place *of her child.***

**"What Sugar Is This That Contains Poison?" poses another riddle, in which the "sugar" is supposed to be sexual love and the poison is HIV/AIDS (UKIMWI in Swahili). Such poems, often recited in public, are a very effective way of pass­ing on the message regarding HIV/AIDS.**

***M.M. Mulokozi***

**WHAT LOAD IS THIS WITHOUT A RELIEVER?**

1. **Editor, I salute you, allow me into your office. Receive this work of mine and print it.**

**I am helpless and anxious:**

**What load is this without a reliever?**

1. **I ask the bards of the Mainland and the Islands. The big load is too much for me, indeed.**

**Dispel my ignorance, inform me:**

**What load is this without a reliever?**

1. **This load, friends, I do not know what it is. That's why I ask you to enlighten me.**

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**I ask for your blessings so I may rejoice: What load is this without a reliever?**

1. **This is no load but a hassle. You cannot carry it on the head, Hold it upright, grasp it by the hand,**

**Or hang it dangling in the air:**

**What load is this without a reliever?**

1. **The load is hard to grasp and hard to shoulder. Indeed, it cannot be shaken even by monsoons, And it is hard to guess what it contains:**

**What load is this without a reliever?**

1. **The load is unmistakable, it cannot be weighed, And it is in no hurry when your heart yearns for it. You can get it instantly for it is close by:**

**What load is this without a reliever?**

1. **All you poets of Kagera, in towns and in the countryside, Those of Arusha and Mtwara, and over there in Dar es Salaam, And you, my joking relations of Mara, unravel this riddle: What load is this without a reliever?**
2. **Finally, here I rest, I won't go further.**

**Past and present do not match.**

**Ladies and gentlemen, decipher this riddle of the load: What load is this without a reliever?**

**WHAT SUGAR IS THIS THAT CONTAINS POISON?**

1. **Allow me, editor, to enter your office.**

**I bring some news through this poem.**

**I want to ask about sugar—clear my doubts for me: What sugar is this that contains poison?**

1. **Snow-white is the sugar;**

**It drives users to crave for it;**

**In the end it kills, alas, this sugar!**

**What sugar is this that contains poison?**

1. Its poison amazes me, for it is tasteless

**Two RrobLE POEMS + 397**

Even when you swallow it; it does not tear your entrails apart, But later it starts working inside your body:

What sugar is this that contains poison?

1. It is drunk gracefully by both rich and poor. Its taste in the mouth is pleasing,

Yet in the end it causes distress by turning into poison: What sugar is this that contains poison?

1. The sugar is very mischievous and yet sweet. It kills officers resplendent in their neck-ties, Yet we cannot do without it, for it is essential to life: What sugar is this that contains poison?
2. It has devoured intellectuals of all disciplines. Even great economists have been overcome. How can you and I escape?

What sugar is this that contains poison?

1. American specialists have been brought in To examine the bodies of the dead,

And they established that sugar was the cause: What sugar is this that contains poison?

1. I think whoever dislikes sugar must be deficient; Whoever does not taste this worldly sweetness Must be physically inadequate:

What sugar is this that contains poison?

1. We all love sugar—who disagrees? We drink it willingly although it contains poison. Let's drink it and face the consequences: What sugar is this that contains poison?
2. Now I put down my pen, for I have to rush to work. I hope you will respond and decipher this riddle of sugar. And if you come to abstain you should tell me seriously: What sugar is this that contains poison?

*Translated by M.M. Mulokozi*

***Loise Kalondu wa Maseki*PROTEST AGAINST POLYGAMY**

**Kenya 2000 Kikamba**

**Polygamy has long been a part of many African cultures. Even in communities where it is standard custom and accepted by both men and women, problems often arise when a husband shows preference for a newer, younger wife, and the *first wife feels* neglected. Traditionally, first *wives have* approved and *even* taken part in selecting second and third wives, but in practice this custom has not always been observed.**

**This version of a communal song from the Akamba community was narrated by Mama Loise Kalondu wa Maseki, and transcribed and translated by her daughter. In it, a woman laments and protests the fact that her husband has aban­doned her in favor of a young wife. She lets her husband know that she is still sex­ually *alive and desirable, and can offer as much* as this new girl, *"who came with* her mother"—suggesting that she is an inexperienced baby. In fact, it is the hus­band who does not measure up. She also lets him know that her parents have sent a vehicle for her to go back to her home, showing how they still value her.**

***Sheila Ryanga***

**Take me in a vehicle.**

**Take me in a vehicle.**

**I have been sent for from my home. I have been sent for from my home. This one who came with her mother, What does she have that I don't have? I want a man who is eight feet.**

**The one who came with her mother, What does she have that I don't have? I want a man who is eight feet.**

***Translated by Mwende Mutuvi***

***Goretti Kyomuhendo*RWANDA: IN THE SHADOW OF GOD**

**Uganda 2000 English**

**Goretti Kyomuhendo was born in 1965 in Hoima, Western Uganda, where she received her early schooling before moving to Kampala to study marketing at the Uganda College of Commerce (now the Makerere University Business School). She then earned a master's degree in creative writing from the University of Natal**

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**in South Africa, and became the first Ugandan woman to be awarded a visiting fellowship to the famous University of Iowa Writers' Workshop. She is a found­ing member of FEMRITE, the Uganda Women Writers' Association, and as its coordinator she oversaw the establishment of its publishing enterprise, which put out more than a dozen titles by Ugandan women writers between 1999 and 2002.**

**Kyomuhendo, whose name means 'precious object" in her Runyoro mother tongue, is a prolific writer whose texts have, not without controversy, come to rep­resent the new Ugandan woman's voice: well-informed, articulate, concerned, assertive, and challenging or provocative, depending on where one stands on the issue of female empowerment. Her first novel, *The First Daughter* (1996), was an instant success, and her second, *Secrets No More* (1999) won the Best Novel of the Year Award from the National Book Trust of Uganda. Her third novel, *Whispers From Vera* (2002), was serialized in 2003 in Uganda's leading independent daily *The Monitor.* Both *Whispers* from *Vera* and *Secrets No More* generated heated debate over their frankness about female sexuality. Kyomuhendo has also pub­lished several short stories.**

**In the Shadow of God" was written in June 2000 while Kyomuhendo was attending a writers' conference called "Women and Violence," held in Kigali, the capital of Rwanda. She had been invited to the conference in recognition of her novel *Secrets No More,* which deals extensively with the effects of political violence on women and girls.**

**Rwanda became internationally notorious because of the 1994 genocide in which nearly a million *people were massacred in* ethnic *conflicts.* Rwandese *soci­ety,* like many others in the Great Lakes region (which also includes Burundi, Congo Kinshasa, Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda), was for centuries characterized by conflicts and rivalries among different classes, especially between the pastoral Tutsi and the agricultural Hutu. Belgian colonialism in Rwanda (1918-1960), which codified perceived racial differences and favored the minority Tutsi over the majority Hum, hardened the differences between the two antagonistic castes that *came eventually to be regarded as ethnicities,* despite their *common* lan­guage, Kinyarwanda, and religion, the largely Catholic Christianity introduced by the missionaries. The pogroms began just before independence in 1962, when a Hutu revolt overthrew the Tutsi *umwami,* or king, of Rwanda and his representa­tives, attacking and killing large numbers of Tutsi in the process. Many Tutsi who survived the conflict fled into exile in neighboring countries, especially Uganda. Because of the close linguistic and cultural similarities between them and the people *of southwestern* Uganda, the exiles quickly adapted to their new environ­ment; many became naturalized Ugandans, although a significant number retained their desire to return to Rwanda. Meanwhile the then-ruling Hutu sys­tematically oppressed the Tutsi who had remained at home, and resisted all sug­gestions of peaceful repatriation of the exiles.**

**In October 1990, a group of armed Tutsi exiles calling themselves the Rwan­dese Patriotic Front (RPF), invaded Rwanda from Uganda. Many of the invaders were *well-trained and* battle-hardened fighters who had participated in the Ugandan guerrilla struggles that eventually overthrew Idi Amin and the succes­sion of dictators after him. They advanced with lightning speed, gaining control of most of Northern Rwanda within the first few months of their campaign. The Hutu establishment in Kigali reacted with panic to these developments. Unable**

**RWANDA: INTHE SHADOW OF GOD + *399***

to deal the invaders a decisive military blow and stop their advance, the Rwandese Hutu government resorted to a systematic hate campaign against all Tutsi, including those inside Rwanda. The Hutu-controlled media, including the newsletter *Kangvra* and the station Radio des Miles Collins (named for the numerous green hills of Rwanda, mentioned in Kyomuhendo's text), started advocating the "elimination" of all Tutsi from Rwandese society. The hate-machine described the Tutsi as foreigners and as "cockroaches" infesting the land, and referred to them as "long noses"—a reference to the stereotype of the more Ethiopian-type features of the Tutsi as contrasted with *the more Negroid* features of the Hutu. Meanwhile, the Rwandese government, probably with some help from some European countries, embarked on a plan to strengthen their defense forces and also set up militias, called the Interahamwe (Those Who Strike Together), ostensibly to act as village vigilante groups. These groups turned out to be **the** deadliest destroyers during the "ethnic cleansing" that was to come.

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The crunch came in April 1994 when, after signing an ineffectual agreement with the invaders, the Rwandese president Juvenal Habyarimana was killed in a plane crash near Kigali Airport, rumored to have been caused by a missile, possi­bly fired by the RPF invaders. The killings of the Tutsi began immediately, start­ing with Interim Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana, a presumed RPF sym­pathizer, who was gunned down by her own Hutu bodyguards. The few UN military observers on the ground hastily pulled out, and the world looked on as one of the largest and most savage massacres of the twentieth century unfolded. During the next three and a half months, nearly a million Rwandese, mostly Tutsi but also including all the Hutu who tried to preach or exercise moderation, were massacred: dynamited inside public buildings where they had.sought refuge, shot and, most commonly, hacked to pieces with machetes, or *pangas.* Many of the killing orgies were preceded by gang rapes and defilement of the Tutsi victims. Crucial in these grisly operations were the Interahamwe vigilantes, who *identi­fied* their Tutsi neighbors and then proceeded to wipe them out.

Eventually the RPF managed to overrun Rwanda and oust the Hutu regime. Many of the murderous soldiers and Interahamwe fled into exile, most of them in Congo Kinshasa; others were arrested in Rwanda, where they were arraigned on charges of genocide. An international court was set up in Arusha, Tanzania, to deal with the cases of those who had organized and supervised the massacres; most of them were charged with crimes against humanity. The trials are likely to run through the first decade of the twenty-first century.

The Rwanda genocide shocked and traumatized the entire world, and espe­cially the people of the region. Even in Kyomuhendo's Uganda, which had suf­fered all sorts of disasters since independence, including Idi Amin's dictatorship and a succession of **civil** wars, nothing equaled the scale and savagery of what had happened in Rwanda, which overrode all human and humanitarian codes, includ­ing religion: Several church people were tried, and so far two nuns have been con­victed in Belgium for participating in the genocide. Several major sites of mas­sacres, including churches, remain preserved as "museums" or "souvenirs" of the genocide.

One positive development since the advent of the RPF government in 1994 has *been* the *increasing* visibility **and** empowerment of Rwandese women in both the public and private spheres. Rwanda has one of the continent's highest number

**of women representatives in parliament and in the cabinet. There is also greater equity than in most African countries in the allocation of administrative respon­sibilities, and women, both Hutu and Tutsi, are the undisputed leaders of the healing and reconciliation process in the country.**

***Austin Bukenya, Florence Ebila, and Jackee Batanda***

**For Veronique Tadjo—with love and respect**

**There is a church. There is a group of houses made of red bricks, standing close to the church. There are eucalyptus trees standing in two rows, lining the road to the church. And outside the church, there is a group of women and children singing. Singing songs of praise to the Lord. Sad songs. Sad tones. Their bod­ies answer to the slow, rhythmic drumbeats with gentle, skillfully executed gyrations.**

**Beyond the singing and dancing women, there stand the sprawling, spectac­ular green hills wrapped in fertile volcanic soils; nurturing gardens of potatoes and plantations of bananas.**

**Inside the church, skulls and bones recline. Smiling skulls and sleeping bones. Heads, arms, legs . . . crudely severed from their owners with Iron Age weaponry with Stone Age savagery, whispering silent messages to their specta­tors. The Virgin Mary stands in the corner, solitary and resolute. Her out­stretched hands beckoning to her sinned children to come for salvation. Her eyes seemingly affirm: "I saw it all."**

**Inside the church, the walls bear evidence of the bullets, the butchery, the brutality *of* the killers. Of a *race* gone berserk, ballistic, with hatred, malevo­lence, madness. . . .**

**Outside the church, emblems of death litter the weeping grounds. Some are marked. Some are not. Otherwise peace and tranquility reign both in the weep­ing grounds and the green hills yonder.**

**Who killed them? Why were they killed?**

**They were sinners. They sinned at birth. They sinned to be born under a dif­ferent star. Different from that of the powers that be. They were born with cockroach legs and tanned skins. They were born with pointed noses.**

**They had come to the temple for safekeeping.**

**And they were cleansed of their sin—for good.**

**RWANDA: IN THE SHADOW OF GOD + 401**

**Au.**

***Hannah Tsumah*MEKATILILII THE MIJIKENDA WARRIOR**

**Kenya 2000 Kiduruma**

**Mekatilili wa. Menza is a historical figure who has achieved legendary status among her people, the Giryama, who belong to the Mijikenda cluster of nine eth­nic groups situated along the coastal strip of Kenya. (Others are the Duruma, Digo, Jibana, Kambe, Chonyi, Rabai, Rib; and Kauma). She led a localized but significant resistance movement against colonialism that came to a head in 1913 and 1914, into the early months ofWorld War I.This resistance arose in response to moves by the British to impose taxes, seize lands, and recruit Giryama for forced labor and then to fight in the war; it included efforts to eradicate tradi­tional culture by destroying *kayo,* the sacred shrines and places of worship for the Mijikenda people.**

**After escaping and returning from exile, Mekatilili did lead the Giryama to win some concessions from the British, who could not afford an indigenous rebellion as World War I took hold. Her success ensured her a heroic place in the history of her people. There are almost as many versions of the story of Mekatilili wa Menza as there are communities of the Mijikenda and other coastal peoples. Some see the leadership of Mekatilili wa Menza as a prophecy fulfilled; such a prophecy would indeed be a rarity in a patriarchal community.**

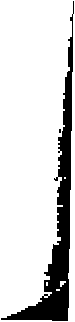
**Hannah Tsumah, who lives in Maandani, near Kaloleni Township in the Kil­ifi District, here tells her version of Mekatilili's life and achievements. Perhaps because she lives dose to Mekatilili's original home, her version closely resembles recorded information. After her standard-eight education, Hannah Tsumah trained as a teacher and taught for many years in both rural and Mombasa city schools. Later she enrolled in adult education courses and passed an examination that qualified her for superior teaching positions. Widowed since the late 1970s, she raised six children, and retired from teaching in 1994 to live on her farm in Maandani.**

***Kayas* are sacred shrines and places of worship for the Mijikenda people, and each tribe had its own *kaya.* These shrines were usually secluded and situated in forests. Traditionally the council of elders lived there. It was said that when a for­eigner came to one, he could not see the way in. However, if one found the way into the *kayo,* he would not see the people within, though those inside would see him. For this reason, whenever wars erupted, women and children would hide there for protection. Ordinarily no one would be allowed in except those desig­nated. Nowadays, *kayos* still exist, but only a few are being maintained.**

***Sheila All Ryanga***

**Mekatilili wa Menza was a Giryama woman and her home was Kaloleni. She lived at the time of the First World War. She was then already a mature person. Since childhood, she was very active and alert. When she was growing up, peo­ple used to live the *kaya* way of life in which the *kaya* elders were highly**

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**respected. When the white men came and started their master-servant relation­ship, Mekatilili was not very happy about it. It made her think of ways to help her people. The white man used to come and take their husbands and sons to work in the European farms without any payment. Medicine men were no longer respected; neither were their powers recognized. The *kayas* and the council of the elders were destroyed by the white men and in their place they instituted chiefs and headmen as leaders. This leadership previously was the domain of the *kaya* elders.**

**MEKATILILI, THE MIJIKENDA WARRIOR + 403**

**The chiefs and headmen were stooges of the colonialists. They did not try to help their people. Mekatilili hated the white men because they had destroyed the *kayas* and made slaves of their husbands and sons. One day a governor went to a certain chief and Mekatilili was there. The governor told the chief to give him young men who would go and fight in the war. It was during the prepara­tions for the First World War. Mekatilili told the chief to tell the white man that, if he wanted African children to go and fight in the war, to try and pick one chick and see what the mother hen would do to him. Mekatilili was telling the white man a riddle, that if he indeed picked a chick, the hen would attack and inflict scratches on him, so as to protect its chicks. The white man did pick the chick and the hen attacked and scratched him. The white man then took a gun and shot the hen and killed it. He was returning a message: that any person who would bring resistance would be killed in a similar way.**

**The bitterness that Mekatilili felt caused her to take her campaign to women in various villages, encouraging them not to allow their sons to be enslaved and sent to war. She told them that the war was between Europeans and did not involve Africans. People listened to her and followed her instructions. Some men refused to offer free labor, some people refused to pay taxes, and others refused to attend the chiefs' meetings. People began agitating for the rebuilding of their *kayas.* The Europeans saw Mekatilili as one who was creating problems for them, so they caught her and brought her to court, accusing her of being a medicine woman and convening women's gatherings. When Mekatilili responded to the accusations, she said she was not a medicine woman. She acknowledged calling the meetings, but said that those meetings could have been called by any other woman who gave birth, because of the pain they felt about their children. It did not need a medicine woman to call them.**

**Mekatilili was an orator with a strong commanding voice that the people lis­tened to. Men followed her because of her fearlessness and her courage in responding to white men. She fought for people to go back to the *kaya,* saying that most calamities came about because people did not adhere to the taboos and instructions of either the medicine men or the *kaya* elders. Also the Euro­peans had made their land unclean and they needed to go back to the *kayas* to cleanse it.**

**The Giryama people, led by medicine men, followed her, both men and women. They all started their journey back to the *kaya* in Giryama. Mekatilili announced that any woman who would not come with her would pay a fine.**

**There were some who did actually pay the fine. When they arrived at the *kaya,* Mekatilili narrated before them all the grievances they had—paying tax by force, the destruction of the *kayas,* slavery; forcing young men to fight in the war, and the establishment of chiefs who were stooges for the Europeans in place of the council of elders. People were moved by her words and agreed with her. Medicine men were called upon to cleanse the land. These, together with the *kaya* elders, administered some oaths for unity.**

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**They administered three types of oaths: the oath of Mwanza, the oath of Fisi, and the oath of Mukushekushe. Whoever broke these oaths would get a mother's curse, or one would simply die. After taking each oath, the herbs used for cleansing the *kaya* were put into water pots which were carried by women. These women sprinkled the herbal water in every place where there was water, including rivers and lakes.**

**Based on the powers of the oaths, people refused to attend chiefs' meetings. Local cases were presented to *kaya* elders as in the past, and no one paid taxes. The chiefs who were stooges were told to stop giving away Giryama children as bribes or reporting where the youngsters were hiding. The chiefs feared the people because the community believed in Mekatilili.**

**Clashes began between the Giryama and the European colonialists. The Giryama could no longer be governed and they were not afraid of guns. Mekatilili *urged people not* to be *afraid of* the white *men.* She went to many places, including Marafa and Galana, urging the people to be united, with the intention of fighting for their rights as citizens. Commands by the white rulers were neither accepted nor implemented. Some medicine men and a man called Wanje supported Mekatilili These urged other people to support her as well.**

**When clashes increased, Mekatilili and Wanje were caught by the white men through the help of the chiefs. To make sure that they would no longer incite their people, they were sentenced and banished to a prison in Kisii [a town in Nyanza Province, in western Kenya], very far from their home. They did not stay in jail long. They ran away and travelled back home, walking all the way from Kisii to the coast. They reached home and had many months of working with the people quietly, without being seen by the white men who by now were looking for them. The white men gave orders, offering a reward for anyone who could report the whereabouts of Mekatilili. Four months later she was caught at her home, at a time when she had already prepared her people for a resistance. . . . Finally the white men saw that they could not contain her nor influence what she was doing. They decided to make her a leader of her people. She told the white men that, if they wanted peace, they had to agree to the re­establishment of the *kayas* and the council of elders. The white govern6rs agreed to her conditions. The Giiyama people were victorious because of Mekatilili. In her old age she settled down at Kaloleni, her home.**

**Her death was miraculous. She was pounding [grain] in the village, and then the earth opened up slowly as she sank with her mortar, pounding until she dis­appeared under the ground. To this day in the village, there is a medicine man**

**who claims to be possessed by Mekatilili's spirit whenever he is healing a sick person. When possessed, the spirit tells him which herbs would heal the sick­ness. Her grave is at the place where she sank with her mortar. To this day, there is a bush at the grave, which is never cleared. Instead it is used as a shrine. The village, however, has moved slightly away from the area.**

**I WANT SCHOOL, NOT MARRIAGE + 405**

*Translated by Sheila Ali Ryanga*

***Esther Mwachombo*I WANT SCHOOL, NOT MARRIAGE**

**Kenya 2001 Kiswahili**

**Esther Mwachombo is from Maandani in Jibana, Kilifi District. Her home was close to Ribe, a former Methodist church mission center for freed slaves, and her father was one of the first local people to become an elder in the Methodist church. Married with several children, she now lives in Kambe, near Kaloleni, Giryama.**

**Whereas in the highlands and the Central Province of Kenya, education for Africans started as early as the late 1890s, among the Mijikenda on the coast, for­mal education was slow to come for boys and girls alike. Often education was viewed as something for the former slaves, who were said to be lazy and had nothing else to do. Through the advocacy of the church missionaries, the Mijikenda community began sending boys to school in the morning, while they continued to herd cattle in the evening. Girls, for the most part, continued to be** *prepared for marriage from* **their childhood. Mwachombo's experience is there­fore quite remarkable, made possible only by her relationship with the missionar­ies and by her own strength of spirit and determination to receive an education.**

**Beginning in the 1940s, Mwachombo was a pioneer in education for girls in Jibana. She became a teacher, a social worker, and a school matron, and worked with several church and national women's groups. She also won renown in her community as an expert on progressive farming practices and an authority on raising chickens for eggs (layers) and meat (broilers), and she continues to receive groups of people who come to consult with her on these subjects. Like other women in this volume, she was pleased to be interviewed. Her life story has become a model for other families considering the value of education for girls.**

***Sheila Ali*** *Ryanga*

**When I first went to school, I made up my mind that I would not get married until I completed school. I desired to learn so much that I did not want anyone to stand in my way. It is after I completed school that boys came to propose to me. I told them that I was considering their requests. There was one boy whom I had asked to wait a while, but instead he did the contrary. He took his family to meet my parents and asked them for my hand in marriage. When they told**

my father their intentions, he called and asked me in front of all of them if I loved that boy. I told them that I did not want to be married at all. My father insisted that I should marry. He arranged the marriage with the boy's family and took part of the dowry to be paid for me. My father preferred that I marry that boy.

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I refused and said that I could not stand in church to say "I do," confessing love which I did not have for the boy. My father refused to listen to me. He said that the dowry had already been taken and he could not pay it back. Therefore I had to get married. My mother supported my father, and insisted that I get married, because in those days, a woman could not express views different from those of her husband.

I decided to go back to the missionaries, to ask them to lend me enough money to enable me to pay back the boy so that he would not have to marry me. That was in 1948. A missionary called George Martlew and one African pastor, upon hearing about my case, told me not to worry but to go on with my teach­ing at the school, and that they would find out what could be done. George Martlew the missionary gave me a message to give my father: "Tell your father that Mr. Kombo and I will visit him at home."

When they came, father was not happy with their suggestions. He asked them why they made girls go to school when they needed to be given in mar­riage. The missionaries answered, saying that refusing to educate girls was something of the past. They told my father to name the amount of money that was paid for my dowry. Then they gave my father money so that he could go and repay the boy who wanted to marry me. The boy got his money back, but my father was furious because he felt humiliated by my disobedience. **It** was not easy for me, to have my mother blaming me and my father quarrelling with *me. I* had disregarded the traditions and had brought shame to my parents. That was the year that I was transferred from Maandani School, to go and work at Ribe secondary school as a matron. . . I encountered problems because it was not usual for girls to go to school in those days. In addition, the idea of refusing to be given in marriage was not only seen as abnormal; it was unheard of in my community.

In those days more than now, a girl's life moved toward marriage. Customar­ily, boys were *more* valued than girls, a *view* that made the education of girls difficult. When a girl attained the age of about ten years, her parents were already preparing her for marriage. When a suitor came to a girl's parents, it all depended on the father. If the father liked the boy and accepted him, then the girl would have to marry the boy whether she liked him or not. She had no choice. Therefore, my refusing to marry a boy who had already paid dowry, and returning the boy's dowry to him, were both shocking to many. My mother was more difficult and gave me more problems than my father. My mother quar­relled a lot about my going to school because, when I was in school, she did not have someone to help her take care of my younger siblings. She feared that she would not be able to teach me housekeeping and cooking in preparation for liv-

ing in my husband's home. But later, when I was working, my mother saw the benefits of educating a girl. When there was the great famine called Njaa ya. Nganu [wheat famine], my parents and my siblings did not suffer. They ate the food that I bought and provided for them. I was able to buy clothes for them and to educate my young brothers. She saw how a girl was able to do many things, which many boys in the community were not able to do. My mother came and asked for forgiveness from me. She confessed that she had not under­stood the concept of education when she disapproved of my going to school. The provisions I could supply during the famine period made her realize that this same daughter who was able to take care of her was the same person who had resisted early marriage.

**I WANT SCHOOL, NOT MARRIAGE + 407**

I started going to school in 1943 at Ribe School. In standard four, I sat for the Common Entrance Examination and passed. I could not go on with school because my father could not pay the intermediate school fees for me. In 1947 the missionaries at Ribe employed me to teach a standard one class for a year. During this time, Mrs. Martlew, the missionary's wife, taught me how to teach small children. In 1948, I was transferred to go and teach at Maandani for one year. In 1949, I stopped teaching and was taken to college to train as a matron. On completion, I became the matron of Ribe Secondary School for four years. Later I was called upon to work as a woman social worker for the church. Through this job, I was taken to Kabete College, where I trained for one year as a woman social worker, after which I was employed as a worker for Maendeleo ya Wanawake, a national association for Kenyan women, in Kwale District. I got married in 1959. I left employment when I began having my children, because of ill health, but I went on assisting groups of churchwomen.

I *was* a leader of *women's groups* when I worked in the church. I organized courses for women to learn about cleanliness, cookery, keeping chickens, and general farming techniques. I learned all these skills from the missionaries and the different places I had visited. I had a small farm for vegetables and tomatoes that was used by the agricultural officers as a model farm, to teach other people better farming techniques. I was a model farmer in my home area. Already, in those days, I was keeping laying chickens for eggs. This was used as a model for other women in my home community, as well as in other areas of the Coast Province. There were very few African *women* then who understood such pro­gressive activities. When I became a teacher at Ribe, I was the first African woman to teach in my home area. Equally, I was the first African woman to be a secondary school matron. Meggy Gona and others came long after me. In 1960 I left the leadership of women's groups and concentrated on general farm­ing and the keeping of laying chickens for eggs. This is because my health had deteriorated and I could not manage activities that involved lots of movement.

*Translated by Sheila Ali Ryanga*

***Charlotte Poda*FROM SLAVERY TO SCHOOL**

**408 + INTO THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY (1996-2004) -**

Kenya 2001 Kiswahili

Charlotte Poda's ancestors were slaves. Like many people descended from slavery, she prefers not to talk about her family's history in detail. She lives in Rabai, on the Kenyan coast, which became one of the centers for freed slaves after the abo­lition of slavery was declared in Europe and the United States. Rabai and other freed slave centers along the coast—Ribe, Kaloleni, Mazeras, and Frere Town in Mombasa—were also missionary centers. (Ribe and Mazeras were Methodist, Rabai and Kaloleni Anglican.) Most slaves who came to Kenya were from Nyasa­land, now Malawi. Indigenous Kenyans who were enslaved were usually taken across the Indian Ocean to India, Oman, and other Asian countries.

Charlotte Poda was educated in a mission school in Mombasa in the late 1940s. Very often, former slaves and their children were employed as teachers and clerks because of their education and their close association with whites. Poda became known not only to local missionaries and colonial officials, but also to influential Africans who would become leaders of an independent Kenya; as her story demonstrates, she could hold her own in both the black and the white communities.

In this selection, Charlotte Poda talks about her founding of an independent black school, which she successfully maintained, with the help of local women, against the objections of both the local tribal chief Sand white missionaries and colonial administrators. In the 1950s, the curriculum in British-run schools included only'what Europeans thought Africans should know, whereas in inde­pendent schools such politically charged topics as land ownership could be freely *taught.* The *mushrooming of independent African schools* like *Charlotte Poda's,* which met with considerable resistance, was an important facet of the movement toward independence.

*Sheila Ali Ryanga and Ali Wasi*

**My name is Charlotte Poda Mwatsama. I was born right here in Rabai, but I never lived here during my childhood. First of all, my mother passed away when I was a child and I grew up with only my father at home. My grand­mother lived with us but in her own house. In those days it was the custom to live with your grandmother, but I really did not feel like staying with her. At one time my grandmother took me to her ex-slave friend who was a Banyoro by tribe. Her name was Binti Juma. These two were such close friends that they could be mistaken for sisters or close relatives. Binti Juma lived in Mombasa, in an area called Majengo. Binti Juma lived with her husband, Akilimali Bin Omani, who was from the Zaramo tribe in Tanzania. Binti Juma had no child of her own, so she asked my grandmother to let me go and live with her. She was to bring me up as she would her own child, a practice that was common in those days. Binti Juma, however, was a Muslim, and there was the fear that I**

would be forced to convert to. Islam. My father's fears were allayed when they assured my father that I would remain a Christian.

**FROM SLAVERYTO SCHOOL + 409**

I am grateful to Binti Juma and Akilimali Bin Omani, because I lived with them happily and my father's requests were fulfilled. Every Sunday I was encouraged to attend Sunday school. I was given thirty cents, twenty cents of which was my return bus fare between Majengo and the Cathedral. The remaining ten cents was for me to give as alms. I stayed with this family until I started going to school in Mombasa. The only missionary school in those days was at Manyimbo, and the European teachers were Ms. Lloyd and Ms. Valerie. I later moved from the home of Binti Juma and Akilimali Bin Omani to live with these teachers.

At the Mombasa Cathedral there was a stone building called Ladies' House. I lived in this building with these European teachers. They took over paying my school fees, since my father's relatives opposed further schooling for me. They could not understand why a girl had to continue with schooling instead of get­ting married. The subjects I studied included home science and methods of assisting the European women in translating and interpretation. You know, in those days everything was done by and for Europeans. In 1940 I began to see a young man in Mombasa, after which I returned home to Rabai, where I stayed until my wedding day on 13 June 1941.

***The Struggle to Start a School***

Before 1960, Madam Maria and I got the idea of starting a nursery school. We asked why not, since in other regions women had started their schools under trees as they waited to build classrooms. We thought we could start a nursery school for African children without informing the governing authorities. But we took the proposal to the primary school committee in the area. The com­mittee was not opposed to our proposal, but they did not pass it on for approval to the relevant hierarchies. In 1960, the women's group invited the Honorable Ronald Ngala, who was then a Kenyan activist advocating for independence. We informed him of our intention to register a mother's union at Rabai. In order for the union to be registered, the group had to stipulate the aims and objectives of its operation. Ngala intervened and told the authorities that our union should be registered because the mothers wanted an organization that would spearhead the founding of a nursery school and entertainment for young people. The union was registered with his help.

After the union was registered, the next problem was getting the land where the school could be built. We tried to acquire a church building that had been put up by Ludwig Krapf, the missionary and founder of the mission center at Rabai. The church elders initially accepted the idea, but later on changed their minds and said the building belonged to the church and was for church use only. My husband took the matter to the European district commissioner, Mr. Kelly, who accepted the mothers' union proposal. He also proposed to give his own cash donation toward the nursery school because, since that building had

**been abandoned by the Europeans, he saw no reason why the women could not
  
use it as a nursery school. But the church elders continued to object to the idea.**

**410 + INTO THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY (1996-2004)**

**When I decided to start the nursery school under a mango tree, I began with six children of African political leaders in the area. The next opposition came from Ms. Chilson, a European social worker. She joined the colonial chief in opposing me, and started another nursery school nearby. Her school building was put up quicldy compared to our school, whose support came only from the parents of the few children. The local women said that I should continue with the school even if it had a thatched roof instead of iron sheets. We all agreed that we did not want our children to go to Shikadabu nursery school, which was in the same compound as the colonial court.**

**Ms. Chilson's school offered toys to attract children, but the African moth­ers said they were not interested in those toys, since our children were used to playing with coconut shells. Ms. Chilson offered milk to the children in her school, but the African mothers said that their children did not need milk. They instead offered to provide our children with porridge. Every mother brought some flour and they prepared the porridge on the school premises. So our children drank porridge instead of milk.**

**The business community was on our side. One day the Honorable Ronald Ngala brought us a visitor, Mr. Francis Khamis, a journalist who sought to know why we were putting up our own school, when there was one already in the surrounding area. Before I could answer him, the women said, "This has nothing to do with you. It's our business." But there were also two women, one from Kisauni in Mombasa, and the other from Tsunza, near Mariakani, who thought we were disobeying the government by not taking our children to Chilson's school. Still, other mothers and some of my teachers brought us chairs and even clothes for the nursery children.**

**Mr. Bengo, an elderly man who had land in Rabai, offered us a place to put up the school. We built the school ourselves, using our own hands. The chief, who paid homage to the Europeans, came and ordered us to stop, since we had not sought for his permission before putting up the school building. He sent the village elders to stop us, but we did not listen to them. We just continued with our building work. The chief tried to intimidate me by bringing the colo­nial police, the district commissioner, and the education officer, who were all Europeans, in a Land Rover to our school. The police asked why I had defied the chief's orders. The district commissioner did not understand why his col­leagues were opposed to the school.**

**After this incident, Ms. Chilson later offered me SOO shillings—which was a lot of money in those days—but I refused her offer. She wondered what tribe I came from, saying that a Rabai woman would not have refused such an induce­ment. The local women stood by me, and when the chief threatened to arrest me, they volunteered to be arrested instead of me, claiming that they were the ones who had brought their children to me to teach them: "Arrest us together with the children, for we are the ones who gave her the children." Some Euro-**

**peans brought more donations to support the school, but we were suspicious of them. The women refused to accept the donations, thinking that it was part of the conspiracy to close their school. So the school went on and the children increased in numbers. Some of the women who originally came from Nyasaland [Malawi] used to assist whenever my child was ill or hospitalized in Kaloleni Mission hospital, so that I could attend to the school's needs. As they looked after the children, they would sing in their mother tongue, Kinyasa, as follows:**

**TWO POEMS + 411**

**Push hard as you give birth.**

**The child is not due yet.**

**Let's wait, the child is not yet due. It's not yet due, let's wait.**

**In those days, mothers used to give birth at home and other women used to sing to keep the mother who was in labor company. Such songs too were used as lullabies.**

***Translated by Sheila Ali Ryanga and Ali Wasi***

***Katherine Wanjiru Getao*Two POEMS**

**Kenya 2001 English**

**Katherine Wanjiru Getao was born in 1960. Her paternal grandfather was a dis­tinguished clergyman from Kiambu with a special concern for women's educa­tion, and her father was a publisher and civil servant. Two of her aunts had been pioneer students at Makerere College. She attended Kenya High School and then continued her education in England, eventually earning a master's degree at the University of Essex and a doctorate at the University of Lancaster. She now directs the Institute of Computer Science at the University of Nairobi. However, she is most widely known as the author of the "Flakes" column in the Saturday magazine section of the *Daily Nation,* a Kenyan newspaper.**

**Getao has been writing poems ever since she was a schoolgirl. She says she writes poems instead of keeping a diary, so as to re-create and remember feelings and experiences. While only a few of her poems have been published, her voice is individual and unmistakable. She can occasionally be persuaded to read a poem at a poetry festival or memorial program. The poems included here deal with a woman's domestic life. In "Homework," a recitation of daily chores reveals pow­erful feelings of rebellion; we are left wondering what might happen next. In "Woman," a much darker poem, the water the woman carries becomes emblem­atic of her own predicament—denied freedom and burning with longing for another kind of life.**

***Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye***

**HOMEWORK**

**412 + INTO THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY (1996-2004)**

I bend at the hearth And bow at the pot To stir my sullen stews.

I crouch at the basin

And submerge my fingers in water To soothe the soil from my clothes.

I kneel by the armchair

And lie down on the mat

To gather my rebellious dust.

I stand to attention by the door And raise my arms for the children To welcome my rowdy souls home.

I lie on my bed

And surrender my body to my oaths To conquer my omnipresent husband.

**WOMAN**

Here in the shadow of the mountain my callused feet beat paths into the red

slopes as I carry water from the stream where it longed to run helter-skelter to the

ocean, and I captured it and took it, sloshing and screaming, to pots, where I burned it with fire. This is what I

have become. Woman. A bent head, silent, voiceless as a dream. It screams and screams.

***Qabale Iasi, Shane Halake, and Darmi Dida
  
ALLISOO* IS AN INSULT**

***ALL/S00* IS AN INSULT + 413**

Kenya 2001 Borana

The Borana are a pastoral community living in the northern part of Kenya and southern Ethiopia. Like many nomadic peoples, their way of life is increasingly threatened by urbanization and changing patterns of land use, as well as drought. Borana women have traditionally occupied a subservient position in their society, widely perceived as beasts of burden who are virtually owned by men. They do not attend public meetings, which are the preserves of men. Even if they are liti­gants or witnesses in cases, women offer their pleas as remarks while facing away from the gathering, with heads covered, and are required to leave immediately afterward.

*Allisoo* are humorous, satirical songs in which Borana women ridicule men and masculinity. The songs are not directed toward a particular person, but rather describe typical situations. The singers recount the follies of men in their daily experiences, undercutting their social standing. Their songs attempt to demolish grandiose male self-images, and invite men to consider their own flaws.

Performed during the *filla,* or naming ceremony, which allows some transgres­sions to be tolerated, women sing *allisoo* within the conventions of *goosa. Qoosa* is an amorphous term that refers to a generic category of satirical songs and verbal art performed about men by women, about women by men, and clans and age sets among themselves. The *goosa* sung by groups of women challenges the traditional social order by recounting the follies of men in their daily experiences. Women's *goosa* serves as a verbal weapon for women who have been relegated to sub­servient positions by a male-dominated culture. As is often the case, female humor has a subversive function, allowing women to criticize men and manhood freely, and to resist male power by making fun of it.

This kind of song is passed from one generation to the next with creative addi­tions. Although *allisoo* is known in some form by all women in Borana, and thus has been collectively written, this pirticular version was performed in June 2001 by three women of Madho Adhi village, in the Sololo Division of Moyale District in Kenya. The occasion was the *filth* of Wario Huqa's child. The singers, the song, and the occasion were all common to villages in Sololo and among the Borana in general. For the most part, three soloists led the satirical song in turn while other women made up the chorus. Throughout the song, the three soloists, Qabale Kosi, Shane Halake, and Darmi Dida, articulated in multiple voices the feelings of the group.

Famous for her sharp tongue, Qabale is in her mid-thirties, married, with four children. Whenever the village engages in verbal performances specific to women, she is called upon. Consequently, she and the others have become known as village singers. None have education or formal skills' from which they could earn their living. Neither is their group formal in any sense of the word. They sing because they know how to, because they enjoy singing, and also because the occa­sion is a communal one to which everyone contributes talents. When women are requested to come and "open their mouths for the people of *thefilla,if* as the locals

**would say, they oblige gladly because each of them may be in need of such service one day.**

**414 + INTO THE TWENTY--FIRST CENTURY (1996--2004)**

**In this song they emphasize the enduring spirit of the women seething under a male culture that subordinates them. This kind of song is passed from one gen­eration to the next with creative additions, in which the central theme of resent­ing male power marks it and gives it its resilient identity.**

***Fugith Wako***

***allisoo,* I say to you,**

***Allisoo* is an insult, listen to me.**

**He walks in the village and asks about the market day. The market is tomorrow; he sells his cattle;**

**He receives the money; he asks for the beer hall. One liter of alcohor is one sip for you.**

**The price of one bull is one day's expense for you.**

**The money is not shared with his wife and son—this is shameful He slaughters the blue bull and turns his back on cattle.**

**He prepares and stores the meat by himself.**

**He turns his back on cattle and faces the meat.**

**He comes home wobbling and quarrels about a fan. After getting the fan, he quarrels about everything.**

**In the center of the cattle pen, he quarrels for enclosure. In the 'center of the house, he quarrels for food.**

**I am going to market, give me food, he says.**

**I do not want it soft, make it hard, he says.**

**The hard one is unpalatable; make it soft, he says. He slaughters a calf; he claims it is an ox.**

**An old cow dies; he says it is a mature heifer.**

**A dog snatches the lung; he says it is the breastbone.**

**Did you hear the case of the mean one? I haven't; tell me.**

**He roasted the raw hide, did you hear?**

**He tied together the string meat, did you hear? Did you hear the case ofthe owner of millet? He counted the millet grains, did you hear? He counted the entrails, did you hear?**

**He asked me for the small intestines, did you hear? As he is untying the food container, did you hear? His mother-in-law caught him, did you hear?**

**She asked what was happening, did you hear? It is the norm of drought he said, did you hear? As he licked the container, did you hear?**

**The bracelet got stuck, did you hear?**

***ALLISQO* IS AN INSULT + 415**

**The bracelet cannot be broken, did you hear? The container cannot be smashed, did you hear? His hand cannot be cut, did you hear?**

**As he melts the fat, did you hear?**

**The dog snatched his member, did you hear?**

**Consumer, my consumer,**

**He consumes cups of porridge,**

**He consumes yellow maize with its coat,**

**He consumes fruit with their peels, He consumes tubers with a knife, He consumes kudu with the horns, He consumes giraffe with hooves, He consumes chewing gum with its wrappers,**

**He consumes *miraa* with sugar, He consumes alcohol with bottles,**

**He consumes and squeezes out a fart.**

**Oh, oh, father of whoever,**

**We are meant for each other.**

**We understand' each other in speech.**

**Oh, oh, my runner,**

**He is mine who has no back; he must lie down.**

**He is mine who takes little food.**

**Oh, oh, he has the nose of a milk container.**

**He drips mucus in the cold season.**

**He has a dry face in the hot season.**

**I will leave a word for you in death, will remember you in sleep. Oh, oh, the one whose tuft of hair is cut,**

**The foolish one with mucus in the nostril,**

**Oh, oh, the one whose knee is like a pipe,**

**He is a glutton with veins on the belly,**

**People hate to see him.**

***Translated by Fugich Wako***

***Mbuyu Nalumango*POUNDING SONGS**

Used to grind food grain, such as maize, peanuts, sorghum, finger millet, and cas­sava, for easy consumption, the mortar and pestle is a common apparatus in most parts of rural Zambia, as it is in much of Africa. Maize forms the staple food for the majority of the Zambian population and is either eaten whole or ground into a fine powder, which is used to prepare porridge for breakfast or to make a thick mush usually consumed at dinnertime, accompanied by stew and vegetables. Women in Zambia's communal societies typically prepare food in large quanti­ties, in order to feed an extended family.

The process of pounding is an art, which requires precision in order to avoid spillage of food or damage to hands. In most cases two people carry out the pounding process using two pestles and one mortar, hence the importance of accurate timing during the act. The women alternate their movements up and down with the pestle in the mortar and rely on communal pounding songs to direct their motions and intervals. Because the process is lengthy and may prove monotonous and tiring, women also enjoy singing as a form of entertainment and an aid to endurance.

Some songs call attention to important issues in society, such as gender biases and traditional norms. Other songs bemoan a woman's heavy burden and express anger at men, who appear to live easy lives at the expense of women. In some cases women will rest from the singing and simply share jokes. Performed by Mbuyu Nalumango in 2001, the following communal songs were sung in Kikaonde, a language of northwestern Zambia; Chinyanja and Chitumbuka from the east; and Silozi from the Western Province. Nalumango is a member of the Zambia Women Writers Association and has edited several literary works. She is currently the head of a national publishing company in Lusaka, Zambia.

*Nalishebo N Zyfeebelo*

**LET ME TRY WHETHER I CAN POUND**

Zambia 2001 Kikaonde

Let me try whether I can pound.

Let me try whether **I** can pound harder. Let me try to pound, pay attention.

Let me try the way I used to in the past.

Let me try harder, the way I used to in the past.

Let me try the way **I** used to in the past, pay attention.

There are bananas in our village.

There are plenty of bananas in our village.

There are bananas in our village, pay attention.

When my breasts were still firm, Young men used to come

416 + **INTO THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY (1996-2004)**

to see how young women pound. My mother sent them away.

**POUNDING SONGS + 417**

My child is still young.

She does not remember to boil water.

She only knows how to pound. I am old and forgotten

And my husband is gone,

But I know he will come back tomorrow.

My husband is divorcing me.

He loves those who wear makeup. I want to return to my home.

**LET US POUND, LET US POUND**

Zambia 2001 Chiyanja

Let us pound, let us pound.

Oh, let us pound with our feet apart. When the chief's wife enters the shop, She actually has her feet apart,

With a fly whisk and walking stick in her hands. Oh, let us pound with our feet apart.

**OH,** GRANDMA

Zambia 2001 Chitumbuka

Pounding is painful.

If only one could just eat.

Oh, Grandma.

When your friend's child has grown bigger, Take the child and put it on your back.

Oh, Grandma,

Where will you find a white customer? Oh, Grandma.

**I AM POUNDING FOR MR. JOHN**

Zambia 2001 Silozi

I am pounding for Mr. John.

He is lying there in idleness, Mr. John, With his big stomach, Mr. John,

Like a toad, Mr. John.

Look at the chunks he takes off, Mr. John. Look at the way he swallows, Mr. John.

**His throat is like a bottle, Mr. John. Ci ci ci ci, Mr. John.**

**418 + INTO THE TwENTy-Fmsr CENTURY (1996-2004)**

Ci **ci ci, Mr. John.**

**OH, MY VISITORS**

**Zambia 2001 Silozi**

**Oh, my visitors, Oh, my visitors, What are they going to eat?**

**No, sir or madam, I have a bit of maize meal for myself;**

**In a bowl with a cover.**

**I only ask that a young boy**

**Should prepare some porridge for me.**

***Translated by Nalisbebo N Meebelo and Mbuyu Nalumango***

**Six RURAL PROTEST SONGS**

**These songs address several interrelated aspects of Ugandan reality today: internal war, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the position of women, and the need for unity The performers, Santa Apoto, Sarah Atoo, Beta Aida, Lalweny Fanta, and Christine Lamwaka, are residents or former residents of rural Acoliland, in Northern Uganda, a region seriously neglected throughout the colonial period. While providing educational and economic opportunities to the Bantu areas south of the River Nile, the British colonists relegated the Nilotic peoples of the north, bordering the Sudan, to near oblivion, recruiting them only into menial and unskilled occupations, especially the lesser ranks of the army and the police.**

**The early years of independence held hope for the Acoli, as Milton Obote, a member of the closely related Lango community, became Uganda's first prime minister in 1962. This, coupled with the numerical strength of the north in the security forces, seemed to promise a move toward a fairer sharing of power and economic resources between the north and the south. But in 1971 Idi Amin, then army commander, colluded with another clique within the army and overthrew Obote in a bloody coup. Fearing a backlash from the Acoli and Lango soldiers, Amin and his supporters organized a series of "cleansing" massacres that left a mass of widows and orphans in its wake. Some Acoli officers and other soldiers fled into exile, to return for the struggle that eventually ousted Idi Amin in 1979. With the return of Obote to power in 1980, the north-south hostilities continued until 1985, when the Acoli faction within the army staged a successful coup against Obote, only to be overrun in turn by Yoweri Museveni's guerrillas, who seized power in 1986.**

**The ousting of the Acoli-led military junta by Museveni's mainly Bantu**

**southern and western forces seemed to convince the Acoli community that they were facing extermination. Large numbers of Acoli armed fighters fled into southern Sudan or remote areas of Acollland. The first wave of resistance, under the name of the Holy Spirit Movement, was nominally led by Alice Lakwena, who inspired her fighters with promises of invincibility and supernatural protec­tion against all forms of attack. Lakwena's forces advanced to within sixty-odd miles of Kampala before Museveni's government troops stopped and scattered them. She fled to Kenya in 1987, but remnants of her fighters launched the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), under Joseph Kony, to continue the struggle.**

**The LRA insurgency, which has been raging over large areas of northern Uganda since 1987, is the subject of Santa Apoto's song, "I Am Sitting Down to Write a Letter." Like the husband of the persona in the song, many Acoli men left their homes and "went to the bush" to join the insurgency As in the song, however, people have become increasingly disillusioned about the prolonged con­flict, for contrary to its claims, LRA has turned into a monstrous terror gang preying mainly on the Acoli people themselves, plundering, raping, maiming, and killing helpless civilians, and abducting young boys and girls to use as child sol­diers and sex slaves for Kony and his commanders.**

**In response to the LRA raids, the government has relocated villagers into camps, away from their fields, their sources of food and work The camps them­selves have been described as environmental and sanitary disasters. Equally disas­trous has been the total destruction of the fabric of Acoli cultural and social struc­tures. As many knowledgeable observers have pointed out, it is impossible to ensure standards of moral or social decency in the crazed war situation that has created the topsy-turvy world of the camps. Although the singer in Beta Aida's "Apoto the Girl" seems to blame the fate of the young victim of AIDS—or as it is widely called in Africa, "Slim"—on her promiscuity, an unspoken subtext is the impossibility of healthy or decent survival in such conditions.**

**Lalweny Fanta's When We Say" uses the age-old wisdom of the proverb with beguiling simplicity, to identify the basic problem in Acoliland's and Uganda's sit­uation as a whole: a lack of unity and cooperation, and the stubborn rejection of reconciliation by every side. Ethnic, religious, and political differences have esca­lated so that force and violence appear the only alternatives. Is it too much to ask Ugandans, the poet sings, to put their five fingers together and "hold the min­gling ladle"?**

**Sarah Atoo's "Without Women asks its question—"Where would the world be without women?"—with some irony, since without women there would be no world at all. Ultimately, the song describes the work of women as their "drink," using the image of sustenance to remind listeners that the nourishment provided by women is what ensures "that this world may remain very firm." In "The Mon­strous Disease," Atoo sings of "Slim"—HIV/AIDS—describing the disease's dec­imation of homes, even whole village populations, and then urging listeners to take measures that might diminish its power.**

**Christine Lamwaka's "We Are Now Equal" is addressed to Joseph Kony, leader of the Lord's Resistance Army. Lamwa.ka refers to Kony as a "boy," and tells him that he is defeated. Women, she says, are his equals: He is not gaining from the war and neither are they.**

***Austin Bukenya and Florence Ebila***

**SIX RURAL PROTEST SONGS + 419**

***Santa Apoto, I*** AM **SITTING DOWN TO WRITE THIS LETTER**

**420 + INTO THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY (1996-2004)**

Uganda 2001 Acoli

I am sitting down to write this letter,

This letter to my husband,

My husband who left his home.

He left to join the rebels,

The rebels his brother died fighting for,

His brother who turned a deaf ear,

A deaf ear to his mother,

His mother who begged him to stay at home.

I am sitting down to write a letter,

A letter with words I can't put on paper,

Paper that my friend over there gave me.

She gave it so I might pour my heart out,

My heart, which is weary and tired,

So tired worrying about my husband,

My husband who left me with seven children,

Seven children who need food, clothing, school, and medicine.

I am sitting down to write this letter,

My friend who gave me the paper will write the words for me, My words, which my husband must hear.

He should hear because I am his wife,

His wife who bore his daughters and sons,

His sons who ask for their father every day,

Every day which I live in agony,

Agony because my husband is married to this senseless war.

I am sitting down to write this letter.

I am not sure it will reach him.

If it reaches him, I pray my sorrow wears his heart down, A heart threaded with revenge and hate,

Hate which is digging a grave for him,

A grave his body must never lie in,

Because he will die and rot in the grasses afar,

Because he will leave me in our marital bed.

I will sit and write another letter, Another letter to this war.

I will write to war like this: War, give me back my husband.

**SIX RURAL PROTEST SONGS + 421**

Untangle your hands from his legs. Let him come home to his family. Let his spirit be of peace.

Let my husband be free of war.

War, you have stolen all our men away. Let them come back to their families. Let crops sprout with joy.

Let children roll in soil with happiness.

Let wives' beds fill with warmth at night.

War, let us be, let us be.

***Beta Aida,* AP0TO THE GIRL**

Uganda 2001 Acoli

Apoto, Apoto, Apoto,

Who didn't know Apoto, the girl? That small girl, sturdy as a mortar, Dark and smooth-skinned

As if shea butter

Covered her body.

Apoto, Apoto, Apoto,

Who doesn't know this girl?

Now she lies in her father's but Over in the hills,

This once striking girl now wasted. Have you seen Apoto today?

Apoto, Apoto, Apoto,

All your looks will go with you

To the lonely grave you looked for.

Oh, little girl,

Your breasts came out only yesterday;

We all saw them.

We, the women and men of this land, saw you grow; Now we watch you die.

Apoto, Apoto, Apoto,

You are a heap of bones in the hut. Why did you have to open your legs

**To anyone, any man who whistled after you?**

**422 + INTO THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY (1996-2004)**

**Now Slim, the thinning disease, has caught you.**

**No one can blame Slim.**

**We all know it was you, my child. You roamed every bachelor's house.**

**You squeezed every woman's husband behind her hut. We all weep for you, Apoto.**

**No one can look at you now**

**Only those who gnash their teeth can bear your sight. Why did you, Apoto, beauty of this land?**

**Why Apoto, why Apoto, why Apoto?**

**Why did you have to end this way?**

**Like this, like this, like this!**

**Apoto, Apoto, Apoto,**

**You laughed at us when we told you To wait for your beloved,**

**The one God has chosen for you,**

**That man whose children you would bear. But look at you now:**

**You are wasted**

**Because you opened your legs**

**To all the men on God's earth.**

**Didn't you know your times**

**Are times of bloody war?**

**Didn't you know Mr. Slim?**

**This gentleman would catch up with you?**

**I don't laugh at you, Apoto, But I have to say,**

**You sought your fate alone. Tomorrow when you die We shall bury you,**

**But I will wait patiently**

**For any girl who dares be like you,**

**Any girl who saw you then and now,**

**Any girl who dares seek death,**

**Dares greet those in the land of the dead.**

**Tell them in that *land* they are not**

**Getting any more from our side, Not anyone who will seek**

**Their fate as you did,**

**Not anyone who will look**

**For death even whether or not he wants her then.**