

Maingwe

(A coffee brown mask from the Mua area)



Themes

1) 'Big chief' syndrome 2) Chewa – Ngoni relations 3) Patrilineal vs. matrilineal line 4) Unity & harmony 5) Village politics

Etymology

Maingwe is the name of a chief within the history of the villages around Mua. It is the name of the first chief, who was revived on the occasion of conflicts over the succession of a particular village.

Description

In the arena, **Maingwe** appears with a pointed head (like that of Kherere), expressing that the village has reached the height of chaos. The head is topped with a crest made of baboon fur. The coffee brown or red face measures 30 centimetres. It displays small eyes (made of silver paper), heavy eyebrows, moustache and goatee (made of baboon skin), flat square nose and slit mouth displaying an ambiguous smile. The ears are circular and slightly pricked. **Maingwe** wears a plain overall without any other ornament to show that he is not pretentious.

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He dances in the style of *Madimba*, enjoying mixing with the women. He pays reverence to them (*kuyangala*). The ladies return to him and seek his company. The men sing for him: 1) "**Maingwe** is not proud! How do you see that? The chieftaincy is yours!" or 2) "You, my son, you don't listen, see for yourself, my son, the legs are hitting each other (you trip over)!" To these songs, the women answer with their own: 3) "You my son, you don't listen to me, you will see for yourself when you reach the grave!" or 4) "The one who does not listen (xx) has stored water in (a bag made of) leaves."

The songs sung by the men proclaim that the first Kalindiza was a humble chief who would be saddened today to see what is happening to his chieftaincy. The songs sung by the women repeat the warning given by the elders to be watchful if the village does not want to meet a tragedy. They warn the villagers that they did little to prevent the impending disaster over their chieftaincy.

The character is very recent to the world of *gule* (2010). It was created when a new chief called Onesta was crowned in November 2011 to be Kalindiza 6. Its appearance at the *bwalo* was a protest against the local T.A.'s decision to favour the Ngoni patrilineal line instead of choosing a chief from the Chewa matrilineal line. The first Kalindiza was a Chewa called **Maingwe**. This character was launched in order to affirm **Maingwe's** identity, and to reclaim his rightful place in the history of the village. The change of the chief's tribal identity is seen as a disruption of the village's identity, a loss of cohesion and unity, carrying enormous consequences for the development of the village and its future. The character of **Maingwe** emphasises the ethnic differences between the Chewa and Ngoni with regard to leadership positions. The songs highlight the inability of the villagers to live in harmony under one chief. With the advent of decentralisation (2006), the various family groups that composed a village were to seek their independence as individual groups against the chief's nepotism and his misappropriation of coupons for accessing fertiliser. Then, the "Big chief" syndrome replaced the cohesion and the unity of the villages: each family group began to claim its own chief.

Historical Note

History of Kalindiza Village

Kalindiza's name derives from "*Kulinda nkhondo*" – to be watchful over the enemy. His name reflects the political climate of those days when the Ngoni were raiding the Chewa villages.

The first Kalindiza was named **Maingwe**, a Chewa, born around 1873. He belonged to the village of Kafulama, the oldest settlement in the area. He was related to the old Mwali, Mkuwenje, born around 1834. **Maingwe** and the village of Kalindiza fulfilled the ritual function of invoking the spirits of the Kafulamas. He performed that role at the instalment of chief Njolo (an Ngoni) in the 1890s. He was given a site to stay near Mankhamba, Mwali's capital. He settled at Dzomba (where later the Mission would build a leprosarium to host a leper colony). Kalindiza had its graveyard at the foot of the hills. When he moved to this site, his was the only village present in the area. Mwali was residing then at Chitule's village. Later, **Maingwe** moved his village higher onto the hills at a place called Themba. This was on the Nadzipokwe river, where the actual cemetery of

Kalindiza stands today. The river was subject to floods and therefore **Maingwe** resettled his village higher on the hills shouldering the Kirk range. He and his people lived there for many years.

Meanwhile other groups of strangers came to beg **Maingwe's** hospitality. One of these groups was that of Kakhobwe, an Ngoni who came down from the plateau, from Kangulitse village near Bembeke. He settled with **Maingwe** as his neighbour. **Maingwe** was then elderly and he deputed to Kakhobwe various tasks, like that of selling cotton. Kakhobwe had taken a wife from the plateau, from Kalilombe village, and brought her to Kalindiza as *ntengwa*. She gave birth to Kakhobwe's successor, Alifeyo. Because Kakhobwe was trustworthy, **Maingwe** made him his assistant (*nyakwawa*), together with Lunguzi. In 1905 **Maingwe** died and was buried behind his village.

After **Maingwe's** death, both Kafulama and Kalindiza's villagers began to look for a person to care for the village. The people of Kalindiza chose Kakhobwe since he was already **Maingwe's** assistant. He was not made chief until his old age, when he became Kalindiza 2. After Kakhobwe's death, the succession of the village became totally confused: the Ngoni patrilineal line replaced the Chewa matrilineal line. Alifeyo, Kakhobwe's son, took over the chieftainship as Kalindiza 3. The village then comprised various family groups: Pitala, Lunguzi, M'manga, Kapamba, Bandawe and **Maingwe**. Alifeyo, as Kalindiza 3, was challenged by his nephew, Gomora or Simeon, the son of his sister. Gomora had recently come back from labour migration in Salisbury (Zimbabwe). Gomora's father Katii was an Ngoni from Luwimbi (Songwe) who had taken a wife from Kalindiza village, Anungsiata (the sister of Alifeyo). He had brought her to Songwe as an *ntengwa*. Gomora was claiming the chieftaincy on account that Alifeyo was his maternal uncle according to the Chewa rule. Moreover, Gomora was equally eligible to be a chief at his father's village as a prominent Ngoni. Alifeyo, after quarrelling with Gomora, left his position and went to Golomoti, where he settled at Liwengwa village. Gomora became Kalindiza 4 in 1954. He ruled the village for forty one years. During his life time, Gomora never chose a successor. Informants thought that his eyes were set on Gologorio Cosmas (Simba), his paternal nephew. But some elders objected to him on the account that he belonged to the Kakhobwe group and they felt that the leadership should go back to **Maingwe's** line and that of the Chewa. Gomora was counting on his two trustworthy *nyakwawa*, Pitala and Lunguzi. In 1995 Gomora died.

In 1996 Yeronimo Modesto was chosen to restore the line of **Maingwe**. Yeronimo was the maternal nephew of Chejiya, **Maingwe's** maternal uncle. He was installed in 1996 as Kalindiza 5. He ruled the village up to his death in 2009. Then, the old quarrels over succession were revived once more. Meanwhile, during the period before Yeronimo's death, a number of the family groups that composed Kalindiza village had received their respective chiefs in 2006 (Pitala, Bandawe and Lifeyo). The real competition for the chieftaincy was between the line of **Maingwe** and that of Kakhobwe. One faction favoured Gologorio or his sister Onesta, who represented Kakhobwe's line. Others rallied behind Waya, who represented the line of **Maingwe**. During the funeral rite of Yeronimo, Waya, the matrilineal nephew of Yeronimo, had his head covered with the cloth, symbolising that he was the right successor of Kalindiza 5. Waya ruled the village for two years up to 2011, but because of controversies, he was installed by the T.A. not as Kalindiza 6 but as **Maingwe 1**. Although the village of **Maingwe** can still claim today the larger number of houses

among those forming Kalindiza as of old, Gologorio was by-passed on account that he had stolen the record book (*kaundula*) of Gomora during his funeral ceremony and was alleged to have given a bribe to a *gulupu* (Group village headman) for helping his cause. Onesta, Gologorio's sister, was crowned the same year as Kalindiza 6. The succession line once more went to the Ngoni and that of Kakhobwe, a stranger, who had no roots among the Chewa. It is in this context that the *gule* character appeared in 2010.

Songs

- 1) "**Maingwe** siwo, siwo nyada! Nanga muona bwanji? Bwalo ndi lako!"
- 2) "Mwana wanga, iwe sukumva! Taona lero, mwana wanga iwe, miyendo zaombana!"
- 3) "Mwana wanga, iwe sukundimvera, udzazona wekha, kumanda!"
- 4) "N'chosamva (xx) adachimangira madzi m'masamba!"

Source

Interviews in 2010, 2011 and 2012

Reference

Mua Mission diary. Unpublished manuscript. Pontificio Istituto di Studi Arabi e d'Islamistica: Rome. 1913; The history of Kalindiza village, p. 176