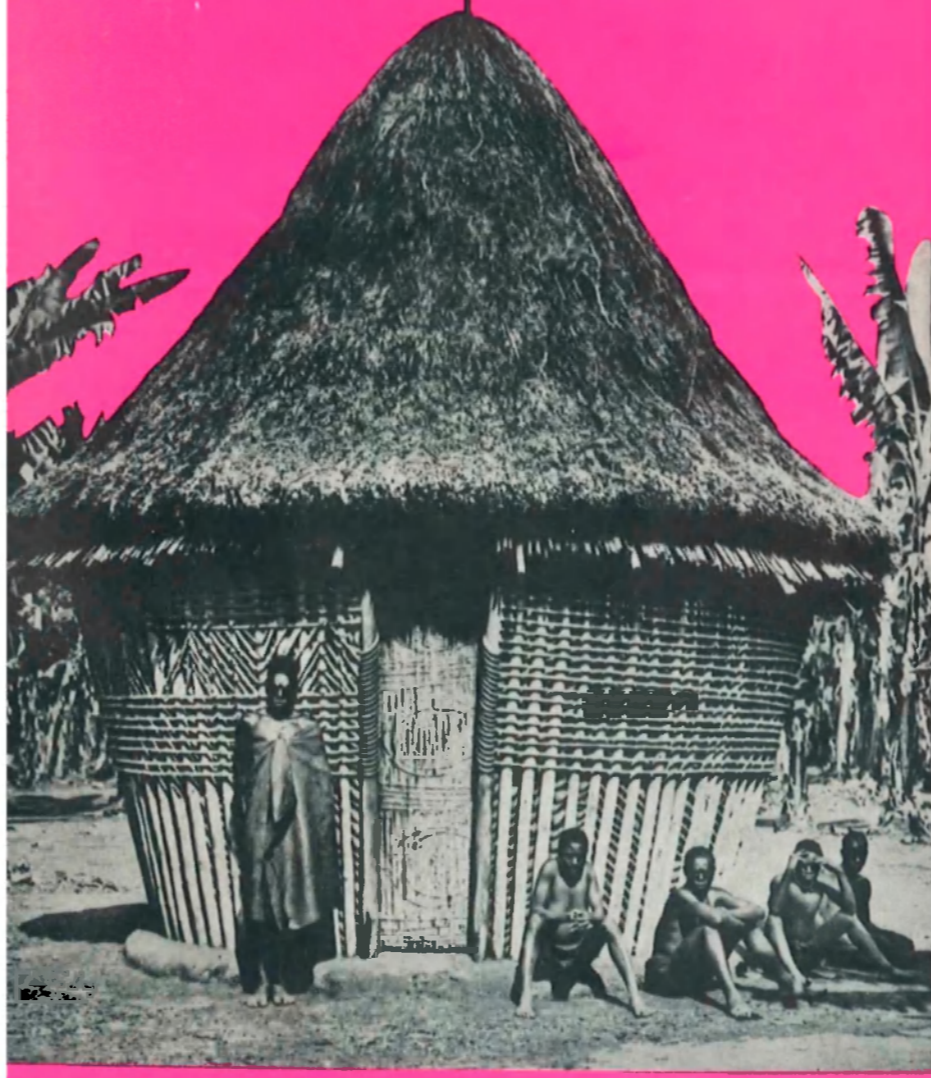


THE PRINCES
OF NYAKYUSA

AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY
OF THE NYAKYUSA
OF THE NYAKYUSA DISTRICT

S R Charsley



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FOREWORD

The Nyakyusa of southern Tanzania have become something of a "household name" among anthropologists. They have attracted the attention not only of Africanists, but also of social and cultural anthropologists who are not particularly concerned with African materials. For obvious reasons, there are relatively few peoples, from among the increasingly large number known, who attract a wide, general interest. In the case of the Nyakyusa there are at least two causes of their special anthropological reputation. One is the unusual character of their social life, and the other is the richness of the literature devoted to them.

Most anthropologists confronted with the name of the Nyakyusa will immediately think of "age-villages". These people had an apparently most uncommon, perhaps almost unique, system of age-villages which were basic social units, building blocks of their society. Villages were (and often still are) compact, composed of well-built houses, fairly close together, usually either side of a broad, well kept, "village street". Ideally at least, each village was occupied by men of approximately the same age, together with their wives and children. Boys left home at about the age of ten years and they built huts together in a hamlet adjacent to, but still part of, their fathers' village. There, as they became adults, they eventually brought their wives. In about their early thirties, very roughly, and in conjunction with their coevals in similar hamlets attached to neighbouring villages, the young men established their own village and attained political, economic and ritual autonomy. In each generation this process was initiated by the "coming-out" of the old chief's two elder sons (coevals of the young men of the hamlets) who attained their own political maturity as princes at this time. These age-villages were not only autonomous, each with its own headman and on its own land: they were built on and gave expression to certain fundamental Nyakyusa values—co-operative good-fellowship, hospitality and generosity, dignity, sexual decency, wisdom. These virtues, it was held, could only, or at least could best, be learned and practised among peers, and by the careful separation of the generations. These are the ideals which are epito-

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mised in the title of the book, *Good Company*, by Monica Wilson, which has been mainly responsible for the anthropological interest in the Nyakyusa.

The second principal reason for the eminence of these people is that they share with a small number of other African peoples the distinction of rich documentation. It is often not altogether appreciated that, of the many hundreds of culturally distinct peoples of sub-Saharan Africa, very few (perhaps no more than a dozen to a score) are adequately described in the published literature on more or less every aspect of their social lives. The Nyakyusa are certainly to be included in that small number. Principally this is the result of the excellent field research and wide-ranging writings of Monica and Godfrey Wilson. Their published works have, moreover, a lucidity and readability above the average in anthropology. This applies particularly to *Good Company*, the focal work. In addition to the age-village system, the Wilsons have reported, *inter alia*, on the Nyakyusa political and judicial systems, divine kingship, family and kinship, religion and rituals and symbolism, witchcraft, law and ethnics, land tenure and economics, history and myth, and on several aspects of modern social change. This is an indicative rather than exhaustive list of the topics treated by them.

But in addition to these comprehensive writings by the Wilsons, there has been much else published about the Nyakyusa. The earliest, and certainly not negligible, ethnographic data come from the eighteen-nineties, through the records of early German missionaries and traveller-ethnologists. The works of the Wilsons refer to the period of their research in the nineteen-thirties. Since then a number of social scientists, missionaries and administrators (some with anthropological training) have written on various topics. In 1954 and 1955 (nearly twenty years after the Wilsons) I was able to spend about ten months among the Nyakyusa, principally investigating economic change and its effect on social life. One or two others have since followed. It is pleasant to be able to record here that further research was begun in 1966 by a small team of Dutch social scientists, thus establishing the opportunity to continue the chronological record and to increase our knowledge of the Nyakyusa in social change.

In 1965 I was invited by the University of Manchester to act as

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external examiner of the M.A. thesis presented there by Simon Charsley. My acceptance of this invitation was assured—as no doubt it was meant to be—by the intimation that Charsley had worked through the earliest records on the Nyakyusa and had in consequence been able to make a fresh analysis of the indigenous political system. The thesis was so impressive that I warmly recommended that a version of it should be published. Later that year I was able to agree with the recommendation of the Committee of the Makerere Institute of Social Research (then the East African Institute of Social Research) that this should be done and to accept their invitation to write this foreword.

This book, the offspring of that M.A. thesis, is not a re-hashing of already well-known material. It is not even just a re-analysis of known materials in the light of latter-day theoretical developments—though that it is in part, of course. Charsley has been able to use the detailed material to be found in the reports of the Berlin Society missionaries, and to re-examine all of the early records still available. This body of data was, of course, not unknown before; but it has not hitherto been exhaustively scrutinised in conjunction with the detailed ethnography and analyses of the Wilsons based in the nineteen-thirties. When the Wilsons carried out their research, the Nyakyusa had already experienced over four decades of varying degrees of European influence and control: ranging from the pre-colonial German Protestant missionaries, through German colonial times, to the colonial regime of the British Mandate in Tanganyika.

This study will be of considerable interest to historians as well as to anthropologists. This is partly because it gives an account of modern beginnings, and partly because it is a valuable contribution to the history of an African people for whom the reliably documented record now stretches over a period of seventy-five years. Although in some cases the records cover a longer span (e.g. Ashanti, Ganda, Kongo, Zulu) these unfortunately still remain exceptions. Social anthropologists are often considered to be a-historical, if not downright anti-historical, in their work; and at a purely theoretical level this assumption has often been well justified. Nevertheless many anthropologists have already deliberately made notable contributions to the historical knowledge of African peoples (e.g. Barnes, Fallers, Schapera, Smith). It is even considered by some

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people that this is the major role to be played by anthropologists in Africa as their conventional subject matter increasingly rapidly disappears. Whilst this is undoubtedly a misapprehension, for anthropologists can as legitimately and successfully study social systems and social institutions today as at any other time, whatever the nature and rate of change; yet they can, and should, significantly add to understanding of the past by the systematic analysis of earlier records. Charsley's work not only makes such a contribution, but it illustrates very well the mode of procedure, the validity and the value of anthropological research in this respect.

Too often, however, anthropologists have underrated the difficulties and problems involved in attempts to reconstruct and understand the pre-colonial, indigenous social system of an African people from information gathered during colonial times. It has frequently been assumed that changes—or "real changes"—have not occurred, or it has been thought that recent changes could conveniently be discounted. To be fair, Monica and Godfrey Wilson made no such explicit claim in reference to their study of the Nyakyusa; but it is nevertheless often implicit in varying degrees in their writings. Moreover, I feel sure that such assumptions have commonly been held by very many of their readers. There has been a marked tendency to extend the social system back in time from the discovered facts and opinions of a later period. And there has been, as Charsley points out, a disinclination to take full account of the fact that the views and values, and the verbal expressions of them, of an African people have been idealised, changed and distorted by the sentiment and oversimplification of recollection, by ideas and values learned later, and by refusals to recognise the reality of changes that have occurred. The Wilsons' material and analysis suffer no more—indeed rather less perhaps—than those of other social anthropologists in this respect. But undeniably it has been extremely difficult, if not impossible, to weigh their results for this bias and to give allowance adequately for the effects of the passage of time and the introduction of new social factors. The Nyakyusa social system in the nineteen-thirties assuredly was not the same as in pre-colonial times; nor have Nyakyusa memories and idealisations been any less fallible than those of any other pre-literate people. By assiduously concentrating on the earlier German

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records in particular, Charsley has been able to use, as it were, a time-machine. Those records are not comprehensive nor systematic in their coverage; but, he suggests, they do give us an invaluable picture of the immediately pre-colonial era, together with some useful case studies.

In this book Charsley is not concerned with tracing the pattern of changes that have occurred in the political system of the Nyakyusa since about 1891. Sadly it must be recognised that we do not have enough information from the nineteen-tens and nineteen-twenties properly to do this. What Charsley sets out to do, and convincingly accomplishes, is to give an analysis of the political system and socio-political processes in the eighteen-nineties. He is concerned not merely to describe the system as it then was, but he shows how it must have worked. That is to say, this book is more than a successful piece of ethnographic historiography. It is a contribution to political sociology.

It is clear, on the evidence that Charsley has produced, that, immediately before the colonial era, the Nyakyusa were not arranged in a number of determinate petty chiefdoms, as later evidence has had it. The indigenous political system was more fluid than that. Charsley wishes to avoid the use of the term "chief" (as a translation of the Nyakyusa word *umalafyale*) because that rendering carries too much of the implication of ruling authority and of the well-established chiefdom of other parts of Africa. The English word "prince" seems more pertinent, for it can carry the implication of potentiality to rule, which may or may not be realised, rather than actual authority. The immediately pre-colonial situation was in fact one where princes were actively competing for power, and where (as Merensky noted in 1894) there were many princes and too few subjects. The implications of all this throw new light on the nature of political processes and on the distribution of authority in the Nyakyusa system. Thus Charsley is able to take a fresh look at the politico-ritual institution—made famous by the Wilsons' work—of the "coming-out", *ubusoka*, which was focal to the political system and to the age-village process. This allows him to examine more realistically the nature of competition for authority, and the kind of authority that was involved. It also enables him to consider some aspects of divine kingship, that topic of perennial interest to anthro-

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pologists and others.

Another topic of considerable anthropological interest which is dealt with is the processes of dispute settlement, where authoritative adjudication was largely absent. In that situation, with no or very weak judges, a principal mode of procedure was that a plaintiff sought to involve those people who were, for one reason or another, in a position to influence the defendant and persuade him to accept a settlement—or, in the first place, to agree to submit to negotiation or arbitration. There were a number of ways to achieve this end, according to the social context of the dispute, but a common one was to seize livestock belonging to a kinsman or close neighbour of the defendant. The deprived owner was then induced to bring pressure on the defendant in order to get restitution. Women, the other major asset of the Nyakyusa, might be seized for the same purpose. This is a forensic technique which has not been well reported, and which is of some importance to students of the sociology of law.

Of course, Charsley is not considering here an African political system which was completely unaffected by the presence of Europeans. The missionaries were there, otherwise these data would not have been recorded; and they introduced new influences, new sources of power. Nyakyusa princes sought to use this new power for their own indigenous purposes, and with some success apparently. Charsley tackles this matter specifically, and especially in his penultimate chapter. Usually anthropologists are compelled to analyse social change only after it has been in process for some time. Here we have an all too rare opportunity to see the beginnings of social change among an African people and before a full colonial regime was established.

There are several other important aspects of this work, but Charsley can speak for himself quite adequately. The final point that I wish to make is this. A basic operational premise in the discipline of social anthropology has long been the necessity and value of first-hand, participant observation as the principal means of obtaining and verifying data. This perhaps more than anything else has distinguished social anthropology from sociology and other social sciences. It has brought, and will no doubt continue to produce, quite invaluable results. That is not in question. Never-

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theless, this emphasis on field research has tended strongly to deter anthropologists from using their theoretical framework and expertise in the examination of data obtained by other people at other times. When, exceptionally, this is done it raises some surprise and even a little disparagement among other anthropologists. This is unfortunate; at least where the documentation is adequately available. Although the field research tradition must certainly continue, it is to be hoped that documentary research may also be encouraged. We are surely far enough away now from the time of the gross errors of earlier anthropologists, such as Frazer, that we no longer need fight old battles nor fear to use data provided by others. Because Charsley was principally concerned with producing a master's thesis as part of his post-graduate training in social anthropology, there was no objection to his dependence on already published material. He has succeeded admirably and entirely within the framework of the discipline. His has been not merely an academic training exercise, but a genuine piece of research and analysis, giving useful results. This is really important, for social anthropologists are in danger of missing valuable opportunities for developing sociological understanding of social systems which, though perhaps no longer existing, have implications for the understanding of man as a social being. Charsley was, of course, fortunate because there were good records to be used and also because he could undertake his examination of them in the light of the analyses already made (for a later period) by the Wilsons and others. Both sets of circumstances are essential: but they must surely co-exist in respect of other African peoples too. And although Charsley's example is not the first of its kind, it is rare enough to raise comment. One hopes that it will be followed by other anthropologists, perhaps stimulated by this present success.

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November, 1967*

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I wish to thank my supervisor, Dr. M. Southwold, and other members of the Department of Social Anthropology for their various direct and indirect contributions to it: in particular, Professor M. Gluckman, Mrs. Annette Jere, Dr. E. Peters, Mr. R. Werbner, and members of the postgraduate seminar.

I must also thank Professor M. Wilson for kindly reading and commenting on a draft, although she was unable to accept some of my major conclusions; Professor G. Shepperson for his help with access to the Livingstonia papers in Edinburgh; and above all Dr. P. Gulliver for the generosity of his foreword and, more generally, for the interest he has taken in the study. This is largely responsible for its publication now, which has been invited by the Makerere Institute of Social Research.

I would like to thank the British Museum for allowing me to reproduce the photographs in this book.

I should like, finally, to pay tribute to the people whom this study is about, the Nyakyusa of the late nineteenth century and the missionaries whose enthusiasm and loyalty they fired. I hope their modern descendants will welcome this contribution to the historical understanding of a few crucial years in the past of this small but exciting part of Tanzania.

I

INTRODUCTION

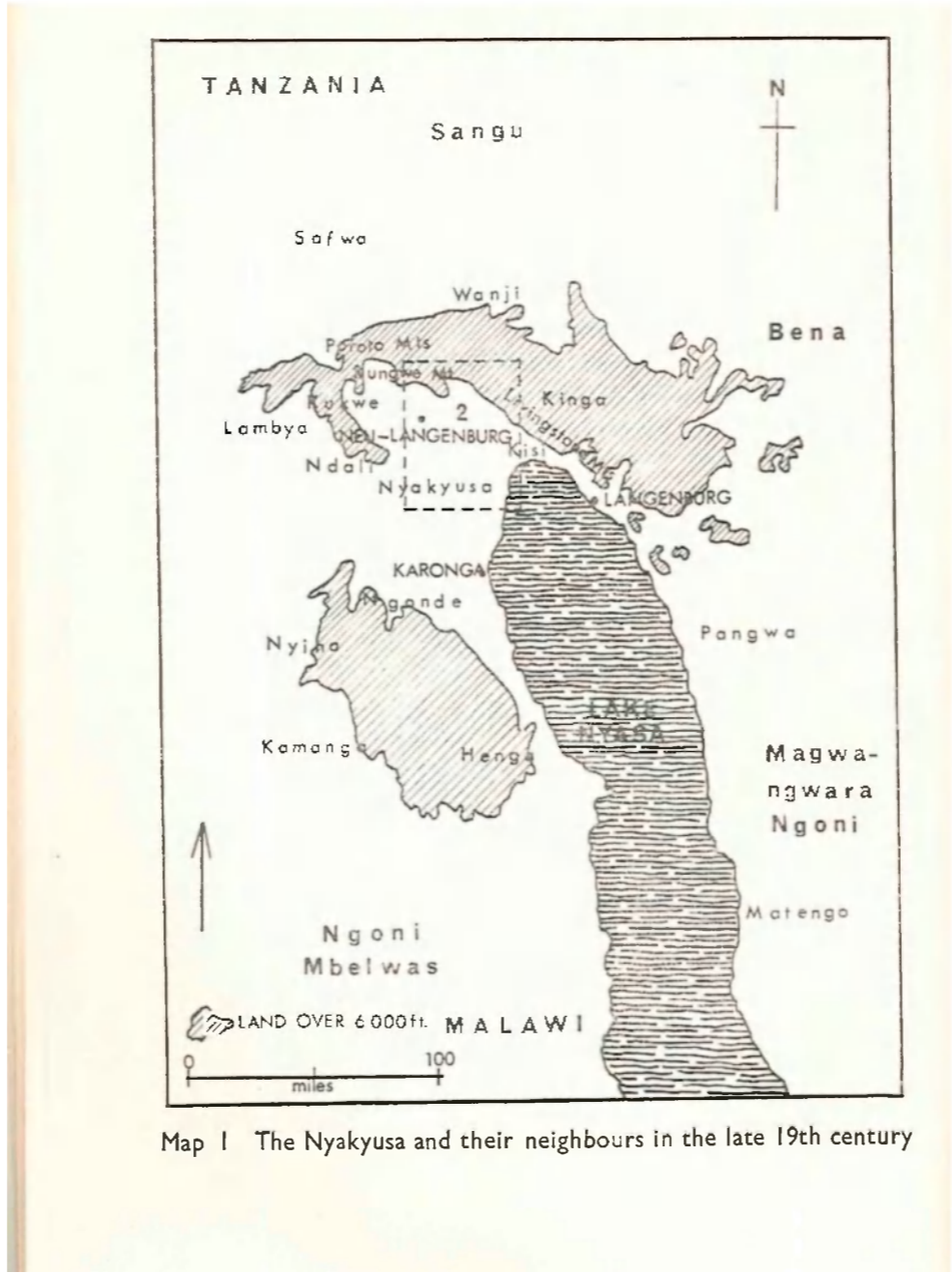
The Nyakyusa of southern Tanzania are among the best known of African peoples in the literature of social anthropology. Their renown in this field rests first on the excellent studies produced by Godfrey and Monica Wilson who carried out fieldwork in Nyakyusa between 1934 and 1938, and secondly on their exceptional forms of indigenous social organisation. Of these the two most remarkable parts have always seemed the residential pattern of age-villages and the rapid proliferation of independent chiefdoms as these divided regularly in each generation. The age-villages have received thorough analysis in Monica Wilson's *Good Company*, (1951), but their wider political setting has never been given correspondingly detailed attention. It is this gap that the present study seeks, with all its limitations, to fill.

There are several good brief accounts of chiefs and chiefdoms readily available in the Wilsons' works, in "The Nyakyusa of South-western Tanganyika"¹ or in *Good Company*, for example. I therefore do not provide here more than a few bald statements to indicate the aspects with which I am primarily concerned. I assume throughout a familiarity with the Wilsons' Nyakyusa material.

The country has been seen as divided into a large number of independent chiefdoms, 100 in 1936. The age-villages composing each were grouped into two "sides" destined to become themselves independent chiefdoms. This occurred once in a generation at the ceremony of Coming-out (*Ubusoka*) when two sons of an old chief took over control of their father's chiefdom, each taking one of the "sides". These then constituted the new independent units.

This study examines the notion of the "independent chiefdom" in Nyakyusa conditions, and the division of chiefdoms and their handing over from one generation to the next. This is done primarily by examining the role of the "chief"—I henceforth use the term

1. Wilson, G. 1951.



Map 1 The Nyakyusa and their neighbours in the late 19th century

“prince” (= *umalafyale*)¹—seeing him within a system of titles, and considering the processes through which princes acquired, maintained or lost power.

The study rests on twin foundations. For the period with which it deals directly the main contemporary source is the extensive body of reports from the Berlin Society missionaries who arrived in the Nyakyusa valley in 1891. This material is of enormous value, but only because it can be interpreted in the light of the second “foundation”, the fine analyses of Godfrey and Monica Wilson. Their writings explain and supplement the contemporary reports, besides providing material to fill out the many total blanks in the pattern these present.

It should be borne in mind, however, that we have to deal with intervals of thirty or forty years. While the people the Wilsons knew were primarily the Nyakyusa of the 1930s, those I know are the people of the 1890s. Even where the individuals may occasionally be the same, like the redoubtable Prince Mwaipopo, the society in which they were living had changed markedly in the meantime. I believe that one of the consequences of these changes, brought about largely by European over-rule, was that the Nyakyusa perception of their indigenous political system, particularly the role of the prince, was altered, subtly, gradually but in the end fundamentally. I do not seek to demonstrate this. Rather I seek simply to display and analyse an indigenous system distinctly different from any which has been described for the Nyakyusa before.

But the studies are a generation apart in another way too. The Wilsons’ work, at least on the political side which was apparently not a major preoccupation for them, is naturally rooted in the period in which it was carried out. The present study is also a creature of its time, the mid-1960s. Our interests, experience and ways of thinking about the kind of problem dealt with here have also changed, so that the present work is necessarily to some extent a re-analysis of material so excellently gathered and presented by the Wilsons. If I regret at times that there is not more data on a particular point, then the regret is real but also in a way unfair; one simply cannot know what is going to seem important to every person who may examine one’s work in the future. It is of course a tribute to the work that people do go on examining it.

1. This change in terminology is explained below on p. 45.

Yet in spite of this element of re-analysis, the study is intended to be complementary to the Wilsons' published works. Thus I have concentrated on the princes and examined aspects such as dispute-settlement, ritual or the Coming-out, only in so far as this has been necessary to the analysis of the role of the prince. This is one limitation on the ground I have attempted to cover. A second is partly coincidental; it is the limitation imposed by the nineteenth century data. The missionaries had many dealings with the princes and consequently had opportunities to discover and report on their doings, but they did not have the same access to or interest in village life, though they did realise from the early years the age basis of village membership.¹ Both for lack of new data and in recognition of the thorough treatment the age-villages have already received, I shall not discuss them here. I take for granted their fundamental importance as the basic unit of Nyakyusa social organisation.

2

MBASI¹

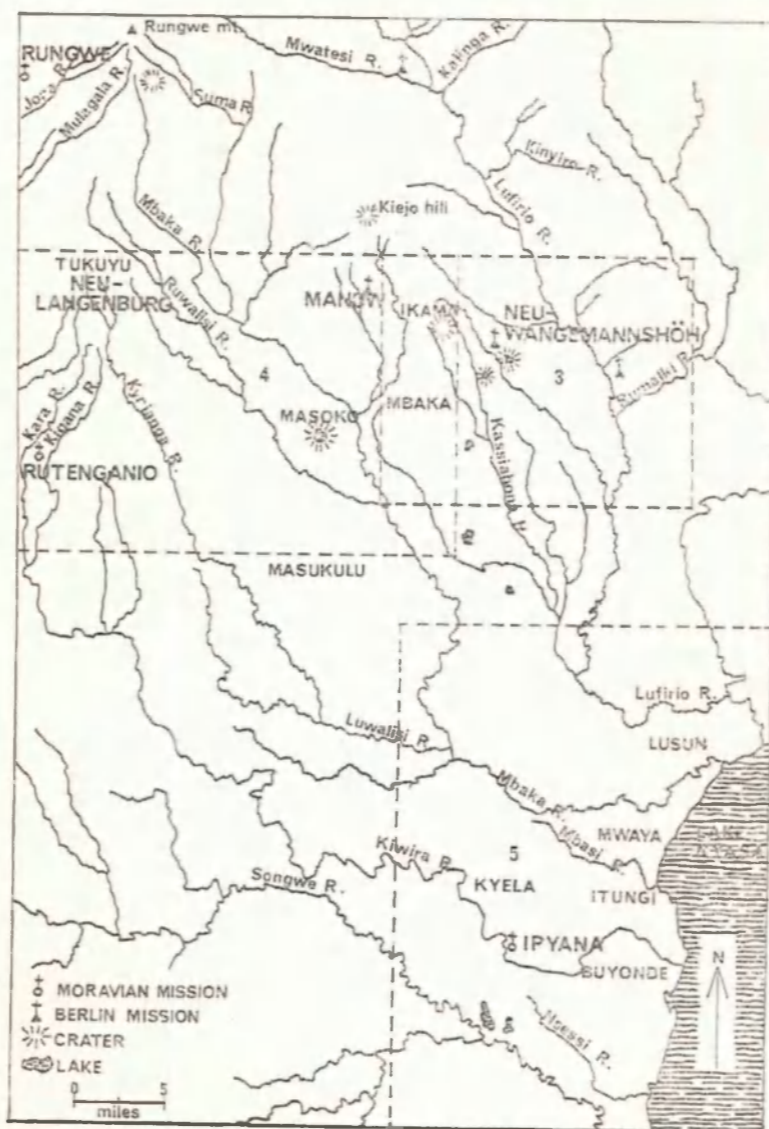
I begin with the story of Mbasí because here, and only here, are data available from which a connected series of events involving the princes can be related. It may be regarded as a loose kind of extended case of princely activity, the incidents selected not, in the first place, to illustrate arguments but because of their place in a natural on-going train of events.

At the centre of this train of events is the Mbasí cult and a struggle between it and the Berlin Mission, newly arrived in Nyakyusa. At one level this struggle is what the story is about. It is for this reason that so much detail was recorded by the missionaries and is available now. But it is another view of the events to which I draw attention. It is also the story of the activities of Nyakyusa princes seeking to use as well as being used by these two independent sources of power, the mission and the cult. The princes were carrying on their traditional rivalries in a way partly traditional but also partly new. In so far as it was new, they were in the process undermining not only a traditional cult but the system of political relations then existing. Thus they were already moving into the period of European over-rule.

I am using this history to lay in at the beginning a store of empirical data on which I can call later in analysis and over which the reader can, if he will, also gain some command. It is also intended to serve as an introduction to the period, the place, and to many of the most important of the people who provide the raw material for this study. These are both princes and missionaries, the latter in their double role of observers and also participants in the events they were recording.

As regards the princes, a more systematic discussion of the identity and interrelation of those appearing in the narrative and

1. The basic source for the Mbasí narrative is Merensky 1894, Chapter XII, 211/29. Information not attributed otherwise will be found there. Schumann (1916, 33/7) has a shortened account which nevertheless includes some information not found elsewhere.



Map 2 The Nyakyusa valley showing the areas covered by Maps 3, 4 and 5

others will be found in the succeeding chapter. Some readers may prefer to take this first; the narrative is certainly likely to be found more meaningful in terms of the analysis there. But it will I hope be found most meaningful of all in the light of the full analysis which I am putting forward in this study.

An annotated index of people and places will be found at the end of the book.

The Berlin Missionaries arrived at the site which they chose for their station on 1st October 1891.¹ It was on the north side of the valley, on the left bank of the Lufilio river some thirteen miles as the crow flies from the lake shore. It was also at a more healthy altitude than the plains. The party had had to cross the whole of the Nyakyusa plain, the most heavily populated part of the country, coming northwards from their point of disembarkation at Karonga. This they had done without difficulty of any kind. They were well received by the local prince, Mwakatungila, a young man who, on the advice of his older kinsman and neighbour, Mwakasula, allowed the missionaries to settle as desired. This was the third mission station in the valley. Its two predecessors were J. A. Bain's short-lived Livingstonia station at Kalamuka in 1888, and the Moravian Rungwe station then only a few months old. Both of these were, however, among the Kukwe of the upper part of the valley. The new station, Wangemannshoh, was the first among the Nyakyusa themselves, being on the edge of the region known as Selya.

From the very beginning Mwakatungila "adopted" the mission. On the 3rd October he invoked their aid to deal with marauding buffalo, the enthusiasm of Europeans for hunting and its practical value to the Nyakyusa being well known. On the 7th following, he tried to obtain their support on a weightier matter which might, if they had acted as he desired, have brought them into dispute with Mwanjabala, the important prince in the plains.² Here he was not successful; the missionaries refused to give him their backing. Having failed here to obtain mission backing *vis-à-vis* another prince, in the next recorded case he succeeded in obtaining it for the exercise of his own power over one of his people. He had taken strong action against a man on the grounds that he had, with violence, forcibly

1. For the background of these missions see Oliver, particularly pp. 165/6.

2. MacKenzie, 29; Merensky 1893.

detained an inherited wife. This in essence was what the prince himself had wanted to do in the first case. On the prince's orders, the man had been beaten and had had his spear and his metal body-rings, the symbols of his manhood and status, confiscated. Merensky, for the mission, endorsed the action, adding however that the man had now suffered enough and that his property should be returned to him. "Mwakatungila assented to everything like an obedient son. The defendant's weapon and rings were laid at my feet, and from there he took them away": so wrote Merensky, the leader of the mission party.¹

Mwakatungila, as the station's nearest neighbour, was in the best position to cultivate the missionaries' favour, but he was not the only one who showed a desire to do so. On 18th October, an embassy appeared from Prince Mwaihojo, led by his brother. Mwaihojo, the missionaries were told, was a leading prince of the district and was then living some three or four miles further up the left bank of the Lufilio River. His embassy now announced on his behalf, "My land, my people, my cattle, all belong to the white men", though the offer may well in fact have been conditional on some of the white men settling at his village.²

A third visitor at the station was a certain Mwamafungubo. He was introduced as the cowherd of Mbasi,³ a god or mythical hero then said to be manifesting in the form of a disembodied voice heard by night at and around a place a little south of Prince Mwaihojo's. He was presented to the missionaries as lord of the underworld. He knew everything, understood all languages, and would correctly answer all questions. Mwamafungubo attended to the everyday affairs of the god; he looked after the cattle, wives and other property, such as hoes, which Mbasi had received from his visitors and neighbours.

It was obvious that Mwamafungubo was no ordinary cowherd. Like other important Nyakyusa he had a spokesman, one of Mwakatungila's men; he himself remained completely silent in the interview, which attracted the rapt attention of many local people. The spokesman let it be known that Mbasi knew the missionaries, had in fact summoned them from their own country. He would now send them a present of cattle. The missionaries, however, had

1. *MB* 1892, 358/9.

2. *Ibid.* 355; Merensky 1894, 94.

3. Cf. Wilson, *M.* 1959, 156/9.

identified Mbasi with Satan and so rebuffed his advances.¹ Mwaihojo, Mwamafungubo's nearest neighbour, was visibly upset when two of the missionaries visited him a week or so later. But he seems to have recovered rapidly from his fright, for a few days later he came with a large retinue to pay a return visit to the station. He wished to insist that the local people could not be responsible for the fever from which several of the missionaries were suffering, since all the people were pleased at the mission's presence. As a source of cloth it was good, but better still, it might keep the Magwangwara away.²

The same day that Mwaihojo visited, Prince Mwanjabala came through on his way from his home in the plains to consult Mbasi. Unfortunately no reason for the visit has been recorded. A number of the mission-workers accompanied him to that evening's performance, and through them we have an account of the manifestation.³

Towards the end of November, Mbasi seems to have become convinced of the hostility of the mission, for then occurred his first and only direct challenge to them. The season had been unusually dry and the beginning of the thunder-shower period was keenly awaited. Though we know now that by the calendar it was not overdue, Mbasi announced that the missionaries were responsible for the delay in the rains; they should be killed and their stocks of cloth taken. This was apparently not considered practicable, or it may be somebody's exaggeration of the truth, for Mbasi in the end ordered a boycott of the station. There was to be no selling to the mission and no labour for it. Each neighbouring prince was to set up posts as markers on paths leading to the station, and anyone who passed them was to be punished. Mbasi's orders were almost universally obeyed and for a week or so the station was practically deserted. But then the rains did begin, and the boycott broke up.

How had the various princes aligned themselves over this challenge? Mwakatungila had come on the 28th November to ask the missionaries for rain, and he seems then to have given them their first news of Mbasi's denunciation. He himself refused to set up a post, but it is not clear that his people were as bold as he. His

1. Cf. Schumann 1916, 34; he acknowledges the serious error made in thus identifying Mbasi, but it appears to have stuck among Christians (Wilson, M. 1959, 159). The realm of all Nyakyusa ancestors and gods, not only Satanic ones, was underground.
2. Ngoni raiders from east of the lake. See Chapter 6, 1 below.
3. *MB* 1892, 360.

brother, Mwajjande, certainly was not; he put up a post by his village, and Mwakatungila is said to have punished him for it, though what form the punishment took is not recorded.

Mwakasula, according to Merensky, was in real distress as to whether to obey Mbasi. Merensky saw the prince as a gentle and intelligent old man with a tender conscience torn between incompatible loyalties. It is at least clear that, having held off from the mission for some time, he had recently invested heavily in their friendship. He had come to the station for the first time and presented them with a cow of such beauty that they remarked specially on it. This was a fine gesture for any chief; the missionaries found milking-cows quite unobtainable otherwise, as no Nyakyusa would sell them such a beast however much they offered.¹ For Mwakasula, if we can trust a report about him on his death four years later, it must have been a particularly serious action; he is said to have been notorious for such love of his cattle that he was always reluctant to use them to fulfil his princely obligations of hospitality.² Thus, whatever his character, it is hardly surprising that he was far from happy to be called upon to sacrifice this recent investment in the mission's friendship by action against them. He seems to have chosen the course of inaction; he set up no post, but also did not prevent his people refusing to sell food to the mission-workers who visited his village to buy. After all was over, he was hurt when this was pointed out to him, and he invited the mission people to go home with him to pick out those who had spoken ill of the mission. Nothing beyond the invitation is reported.

There is evidence for only one further prince, Mwaihojo. He, according to Mwakasula, had followed Mbasi's command and set up a post.³

This first, and lesser, episode had been a direct clash between Mbasi and the mission. The second, and main, episode was primarily between Mbasi and Mwakatungila and had the form of a long-continued battle for possession of a woman, Kinyolobi, who was in turn wife to both.⁴ But if this was its overt form, it is safe to say

1. On the other side of the valley and earlier, Bain had found the people much freer with their cattle (Livingstonia, Bain to Laws, 21 September, 1888).

2. *MB* 1897, 210.

3. *MB* 1892, 394. It is not clear how any prince but Mwakatungila and perhaps Mwajjande could have had paths leading to the station.

4. Schumann 1916, 34; "the Konde Cleopatra", who had been married to a number of different princes.

that much more was involved, and was known to be involved. Without the mission as his main and sometimes only ally, Mwakatungila could never have maintained his own position, let alone brought about the widespread rejection of Mbas which was the eventual outcome.¹ The mission was in fact as closely involved in this episode as in the preceding.

It had in a sense begun even before the missionaries reached the country. Kinyolobi, the daughter of a man described as a "sub-chief" under Mwaihojo, had been one of Mwakatungila's wives. Suddenly, according to the report, Mbas claimed her. The prince was not prepared meekly to surrender his wife, and attempted to escape from the difficult situation by persuading her to run away. The boycott was thus not the first time he had defied Mbas, but on this previous occasion, in the absence of the mission, he was not able to maintain his defiance. Neighbouring princes, who were in the main his kinsmen, had threatened him and demanded that, for the general good, he should hand over Kinyolobi and satisfy Mbas. This in the end he did.

We do not know how long Kinyolobi remained with Mbas, but in January 1892, she suddenly came back to Mwakatungila. Since her two husbands lived only three or four miles apart, there was no difficulty about this. There was equally no difficulty for the big men of the prince's village, who, "for fear of his vengeance", returned her to her invisible master. But before long she was back again. Even Mwakasula urged Mwakatungila to return her, but the latter brought the case to the mission, confident, it may be supposed, of their support against "Satan". This in effect he received with the judgment that the decision should be left to the woman herself. She stayed.

This was probably about the beginning of February, and very probably the occasion on which the mission made a further definite contribution to the political struggles of the region by presenting Mwakatungila with a gun for his protection.² The only other gun recorded as in Nyakyusa possession in this region at this period belonged to another and important prince, Mwangomo. He had a considerable reputation as a war-leader, and he it was apparently

1. The rejection was political rather than in popular belief; MacKenzie (186/7) writes that Mbas cults became so widespread in the German period that the Administration suppressed them, but I have no direct evidence of this.

2. *MB* 1892, 409.

who had been mainly responsible for driving Mwaihojo out of his country.¹

Kinyolobi stayed, but early in March Mwakatungila fell ill. The illness worsened, and he moved to the mission. This move led to some improvement; he returned home, but there his condition once more deteriorated and he returned again to the mission. This time he became gravely ill, so ill that hope of his recovery was lost. But recover he did, and this was regarded, by some at least, as another victory for the power of the mission over Mbasi.

Later that month missionaries heard that Mbasi was trying to persuade the princes to attack Mwakatungila. He was unsuccessful, the reason given being that a previous expedition against a prince (Mwakalobo) which Mbasi had sponsored had been a failure.

In April, 1892, Mwakatungila retaliated with direct action against Mbasi. Supported by Kumoga, one of the leading mission-servants who, like the prince, possessed a gun, he went to Mbasi's and seized Mwamafungubo. The pretext for this, whether true or not, was that Mwamafungubo had beaten Kinyolobi's mother who lived nearby in one of Mwaihojo's villages. Mwaihojo observed proceedings but did not intervene. Mwamafungubo was beaten and imprisoned in Kumoga's house. The latter's importance in the operation suggests that Mwakatungila was still without the support of his leading men. The missionaries heard about the prisoner and decided he might be useful to them. They therefore removed him from Kumoga's.

Mbasi had apparently reverted to claiming responsibility for the presence of the mission. Merensky thought this would be a good moment to gather the princes and to make clear the true relation of enmity between the mission and "Satan". The princes were therefore summoned, but Mwakatungila and Mwaihojo were the only two who attended in person the next day. Four other more important princes sent representatives. Only one of these four can, unfortunately, be identified with certainty;² this was Prince Mwakyambo, whose representative assumed the leading position. He favoured the mission's schemes for teaching, but thought that the elders as well as the children should be taught. He then turned his attention to Mwaihojo. Previously, he claimed, Mwakyambo had had the privilege of providing wives for Mbasi. In Kinyolobi's case however, his privilege had been usurped by Mwaihojo.

1. Merensky 1894, 123, 200.

2. Two others were probably Mwakasula and Mwaipasi (Schumann, 1916, 37)

Mwaihojo indeed, according to the report of the speech, he accused of being the originator of the whole affair. Now came out a more detailed version of Mwaihojo's falling out with the other princes: he had, it was said, taken advantage of the confusion arising from a Magwangwara raid to steal cattle from Prince Mwangomo. For this the princes had combined to drive him out, and would, it was said, have driven him much further than simply across the river had not Mbasi spoken up nearby.

In one respect the missionaries' plans had been frustrated; Mwamafungubo had escaped from them during the night, "vanishing without trace", according to Merensky. Mwamafungubo, and Mbasi, in fact moved westward, first only as far as the other side of Selya, to the south of Manow, but soon out of Selya altogether, across the Mbaka into Prince Mwanekule's country. His presence was noted there in 1893 by the Moravian missionaries from Rungwe station in the north.¹ Mwakatungila had seized six of his cattle and distributed them to their former owners, but the rest of his herd he was allowed to take with him. His wives went back to their fathers. His village was deserted.

This was by no means the end of Mbasi however, for later in the year the rinderpest which was sweeping through eastern Africa reached the valley. It apparently came by way of Karonga, though the Sangu to the north-west had already been suffering for some time.² The people tended to regard the mission as responsible for this disaster³ but it was said to have been exculpated by the poison-oracle (*mwafi*) to which appeal was made. Mbasi claimed that he

1. *BG* 1894, 67.

2. Merensky 1894, 224.

3. The Moravian missionary Richard was in partial agreement. Worried by the disrespectful behaviour of the people of the plains—"they treated us a little too much as if 'on an equal footing"—and by their immorality, particularly in connexion with dances lasting till two o'clock in the morning, he wrote: "The Lord has made ready this people. He has already acted through an epidemic which decimated their herds, through an invasion of locusts, and he will carry it further perhaps through the medium of the servants of government who will punish war and murder". The servants of government lived up to his expectations (see Chapter 6 below). Richard was far from typical of the missionaries in his feelings towards the people. Merensky wrote of his nine-month stay: "not only had the country become in that time dear to me, but the people were so well known and congenial that I could not help feeling that I must already have spent a longer time with them. How full was my heart with thanks that God had led us to this people, and that all our doings had been so benevolently blessed by him." Merensky left when the rinderpest was only beginning. (*JUF* 1895, 212/3; Merensky 1894, 316.)

himself was responsible for the epidemic, which he had brought upon the people because they had allowed his wife to be kept from him.

This time he approached Mwanjabala, a leading prince in the plains who tried to buy him off with an elephant tusk. This, not unnaturally, had no effect on the rinderpest. The prince then tried an indirect approach to Mwakatungila through Mwakasula, whom he persuaded to press the other to send Kinyolobi back, at least temporarily. She was sent back, but very soon returned again. Towards the end of the year, Mwanjabala therefore sent a war-party north. What exactly they were intending to do is not clear. They went to Mbasi's now deserted village near Mwaihojo. At their appearance, that prince took fright and set off for the mission station, where Nauhaus was now in charge after Merensky's departure. Nauhaus behaved heroically, at least in the mission reports.¹ He immediately set out to see them; on arriving, he strode straight in among them, and took command of the situation. Surprise over this bold action may well have been effective at the time, but support from Prince Mwakambo, who called on his subordinate princes to resist this meddling by people from the lake plain, and from Mwanjabala's rival, Mwankenja, were probably the decisive influences in persuading the party to return quietly to the south. Soon afterwards Mwanjabala sent to say that the commander of the expedition had exceeded the orders given him; his commission had been only to examine the situation at first hand. The fact that the rinderpest was by this time in decline, if not fully ended, may well have had its influence. Another phase of the struggle had ended in favour of the mission.

The interval before the struggle was renewed was, however, to be brief. The ability to make wild animals, such as lions and leopards, was a talent attributed to one of the main Nyakyusa heroes, the hero indeed with whom Mbasi was identified. The skill was not confined to heroic times; there were also certain individuals in the present who were believed to be able to create suitable wild animals to benefit or to attack others as the case might demand.² It was thus not surprising that Mbasi now threatened Mwakatungila with lions. In mid-January the "lions" arrived; they took the form of almost the first locusts to be seen in the valley for several generations.³

1. Schumann 1916, 36/7 quotes an account of the incident by Nauhaus himself.
2. Cf. Wilson, M. 1959, 69 and 147.
3. MB 1893, 525.

Mwakatungila was by no means the only sufferer, and all now turned against him; in the words of the missionaries, "the triumph of Mbasi was now complete".

Mwaipopo led the local princes in their threats. Mwakasula was again seriously ill—he was an old man and died in January, 1896¹—and he attributed his illness to Mbasi. He therefore also threw in his weight against Mwakatungila. And Mwaijande, the latter's brother, combined with the elders to send Kinyolobi back to her father so that she could go once again to Mbasi as his wife. Mwakatungila was on such bad terms with his own councillors that he left his village to live at the mission. There he remained for some six weeks till the end of February, with Nauhaus doing his best to mediate between the prince and his people. Kinyolobi's father, as it happened, refused to pass her on to Mbasi, and when Mwakatungila finally went back to his village he was able to redeem her at the cost of one cow.

It is worth remarking that, the following month, he seized the opportunity offered by fighting between two brother princes in the region to raid the one who had been defeated for a share of his cattle. This may well be interpreted as a bid to re-establish himself with his people, but, hardly surprisingly in view of his dependence on the mission, he was not willing to pay the price for his raid in a loss of their favour; on a rebuke from them, he returned the stolen cattle.²

The locusts which came at the beginning of the year passed on, but towards the end of the year they came back. There was a good deal of general hostility towards the missionaries, and they now seem rather to have lost their nerve over Kinyolobi; they suddenly decided that they ought to look at the case from the legal point of view. The matter was complicated, but they came to the conclusion, which it would be easy to regard cynically, that Mbasi had the better right to the woman. They therefore turned the matter over to the princes to deal with as they thought best. This amounted to a desertion of their long-suffering ally, Mwakatungila, and Kinyolobi was sent back to Mwamafungubo.

Apart from this, we hear no more of Mbasi for a year. A fascinating incident is then reported, unfortunately in little detail as it did not concern the mission directly. That it was reported at all though, suggests that it must have created considerable interest.

1. *MB* 1897, 210.
2. Merensky 1894, 199 (note).

In April, 1894, Mbasi and Lwembe, the Divine King *par excellence*, were in dispute; Lwembe appealed to the poison ordeal, and the decision went against Mbasi.¹ Once again he had to move.

The final episode which I can relate from this closely linked series happened at the end of 1894 or the beginning of 1895. Mwamafungubo had again lost Kinyolobi and much doubt about him had probably been spread. To re-establish himself his next target was Prince Mwamukinga, said to be the oldest and most senior of the princes of the district. This prince Mbasi persuaded to go to Kinyolobi's father to try to get the woman back, but without success. Kinyolobi complained to the mission, and this brought Mbasi's new efforts to their attention. His manifesting also attracted Kinga attention, for a party came with cattle, hoes, copper-wire and salt for Mbasi, the same in fact as was brought for Lwembe. Mwamafungubo told the Kinga that Mbasi was to speak on a certain night. The missionaries heard of this and sent two catechumens to warn the prince to take no notice, and if possible to answer the voice. All assembled and waited until midnight, but nothing happened. To the prince's councillors this was sufficient evidence, and they then decided in favour of the mission and against Mwamafungubo. He was to lose another wife, Nsepwa, and the Kinga were to go home.²

What happened to Mwamafungubo himself is not known. In the next few years Mbasi was still around, though without making much impression. In connexion with the revolt in December, 1897, it was Lwembe and not Mbasi who provided the ritual backing. The end of the story is perhaps to be found in *Communal Rituals*. In the years before 1914, according to Wilson, "a man, with two boys in attendance, posed as Mbasi and went round Selya by night, growling in a gruff voice that he was Mbasi, and seizing cattle and fowls and food". One night he was captured by some Christians. He was taken to Tukuyu and imprisoned. He died seven months later.³

1. *MB* 1895, 389. For Lwembe see chapters 3,2 (c) and 5,2 below. The Mbasi and Lwembe cults were not entirely unconnected: cf. Fulleborn, 317; MacKenzie, 186.

2. *MB* 1895, 390/1.

3. Wilson, M. 1959, 159. Cf. also Raum, 181/2.

3

A SURVEY OF PRINCES

Some fifteen Nyakyusa princes were mentioned by name or referred to in the course of the last chapter. I now give some account of who these princes were and of their relations with one another within the regions, as far as there is evidence for this. Out of the fifteen, eleven were princes in the region known as Selya, and it is this region that I treat here in most detail. I go on to compare it with the two other regions, what I term the Mpuguso¹ region which lies in the west, mainly beyond the Mbaka River, and the plains region to the south.²

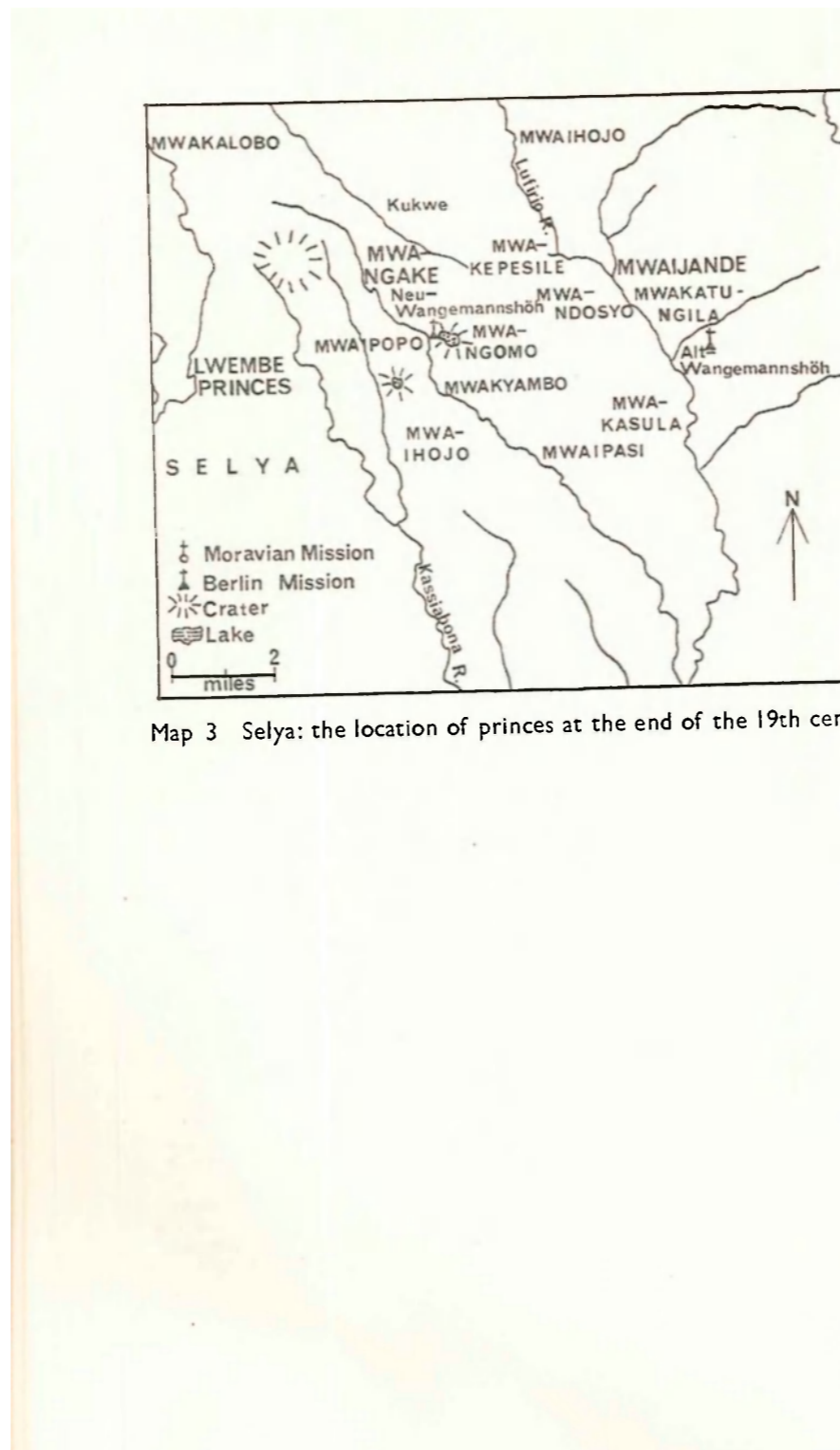
I Selya

The eleven princes mentioned form the majority of those princes for whose existence we have direct evidence from the 1890s; there are about sixteen such princes in all. The settled area of Selya in which they held sway extended some ten miles east to west, and, at its widest point, about five miles north to south. To the east, beyond the Lufilio valley, it was bounded by the mountains, largely uninhabited though constituting the beginnings of Kinga country; to the south was the uninhabited forest; to the west a tract of equally uninhabited, but mountainous, country intervened between Selya and the Mbaka valley; only to the north was there no natural boundary, the lands of the southernmost Kukwe princes marching with those in the north of Selya.³ Within this small area, three main families of princes can be distinguished: in the Lufilio valley were

1. Fulleborn, 303 (note): "The Nyakyusa [proper] are supposed to have come from the region of Rutengano where there is a giant 'Mpogusso'—tree, now struck by lightning, which is sacred for them. In memory of their origin they bury their dead facing this tree..." Cf. Wilson, M. 1959: Genealogy at p. 3, note on Kalesi (18): "Descendants look to Tukuyu when buried." Mpuguso, to the south of Tukuyu, was afterwards the seat of the Native Authority and Appeal Court. See Wilson, M. 1951: Map III Rungwe District. Fulleborn's version of the direction in which the dead face is preferable; Ntukuyu Hill is not known to have had any particular significance for the Nyakyusa before the Germans founded Neu-Langenburg there.

2. *Niebela* in Nyakyusa.

3. Also Mwakalobo (see below).



Map 3 Selya: the location of princes at the end of the 19th cen

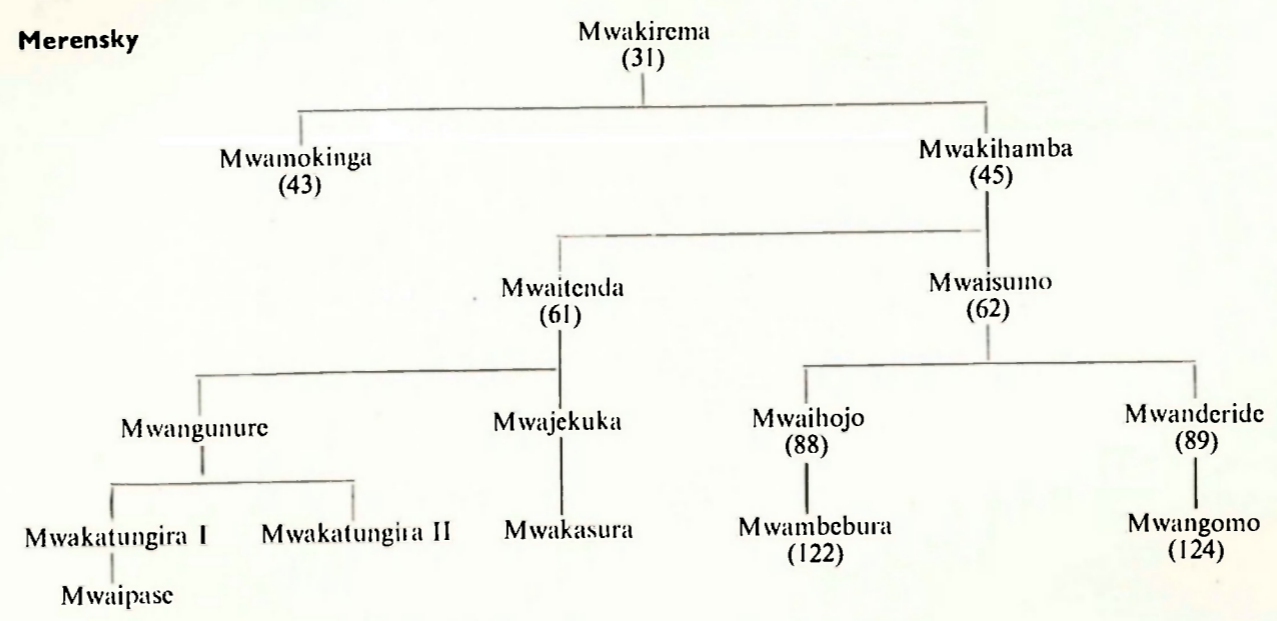
the Nyakihaba; the descendants of Mwamukinga were in the area of small volcanic craters to the west; and further west still were those princes associated with the Lwembeship.

(a) **The Nyakihaba**, of whom Mwakatungila was one, were the most numerous and are the best known. They were divided into two sections, being the descendants of two sons of the eponymous ancestor, Mwakihaba. One of these, Mwaitende, is said by Merensky¹ to have been the father's father of Mwakatungila. This latter was a young man in 1891, but both his father and his father's brother were already dead. This was said to be his reason for "adopting" the mission; he is reported as having told Merensky on first meeting: "You are an old man. You shall be my father. I know that your counsel will be very valuable to me."² He is also shown as Mwakatungila II, the successor of his brother.³ It seems likely that he was very much younger than the first holder of the title; this is suggested by the absence of living "fathers", and by the age of Mwakasula, his father's brother's son but already an old man. Mwakasula is indeed described in one place as Mwakatungila's "uncle",⁴ but I accept the explicit account of the relationship shown in the genealogy. As the narrative showed, Mwakatungila also relied to a considerable extent on Mwakasula, his closest senior kinsman, consulting him on whether to accept the missionaries, and yielding to pressure from him on one occasion over Kinyolobi. They had also apparently acted in concert some two years previously when a Magwangwara raid occurred, sending their cattle up into the hills. There however, a Kinga chief stole a number of them. The two princes came together to ask the mission to intervene in the matter.⁵ As appeared in the narrative, Mwakatungila had subordinate to him a brother, Mwajjande; he was, it will be remembered, to be punished for setting up a post. Yet he had a village of his own, and on one occasion joined his brother's councillors in acting against him. There appears still to have been a Prince Mwajjande in Selya

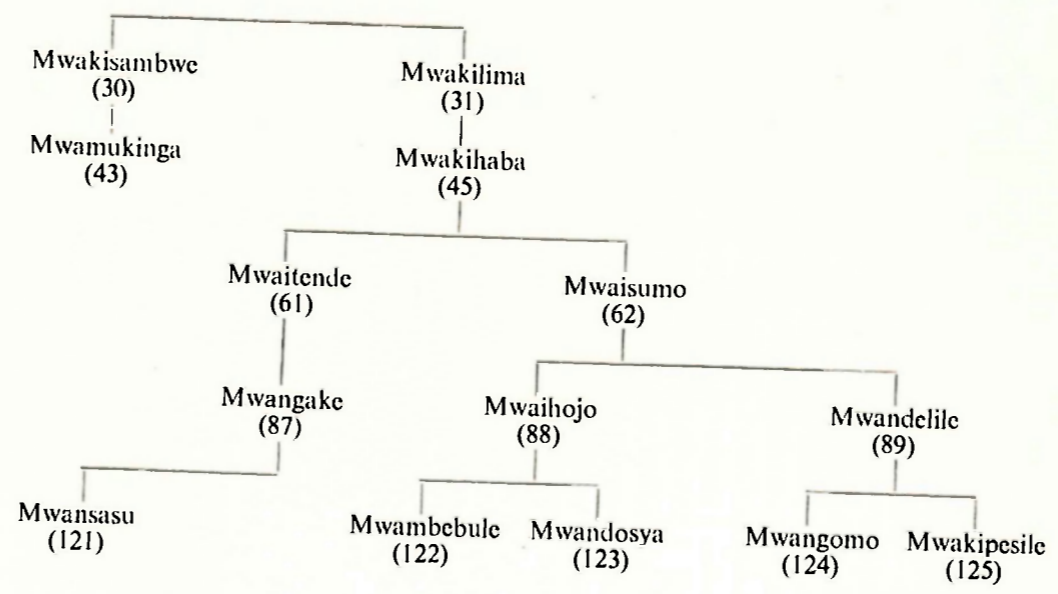
1. Merensky 1894: Genealogy of Chiefs, II. Merensky's two genealogies are, with Monica Wilson's genealogy "The Chiefs of Lwembe's Line" (1959), referred to throughout. Relevant sections are reproduced in Fig. 1.
2. *Deutsche Kolonialzeitung* 1893, 38.
3. Merensky 1894: Genealogy of Chiefs, II. For a discussion of Nyakyusa principles of naming and positional succession, reference may be made to my thesis *The Nyakyusa Polity*, Manchester: 1965.
4. *Ibid.*, 214.
5. *MB* 1892, 360.

Figure 1 THE NYAKIHABA

Merensky



Wilson



in the 1930s.¹ Mwakasula died in January, 1896, but he was apparently succeeded in the title, for he appears on the 1906 map and is mentioned in a mission report for 1908.²

The princes just discussed do not appear in Wilson's genealogy. Instead, Mwangake is shown as the only son of Mwaitende. He lived three or four miles further west and in 1923 had a village a mile or so from Itete. Not only was he still flourishing at this date, but also is reported as young in 1903.³ Genealogically he is shown as of the generation of Mwakasula's father. We therefore have here either an error in the genealogy or a first case of a title effectively outlining the generation of its origin, a basic feature of the indigenous princely system which I seek to demonstrate in this study.

The descendants of Mwaisumo, the other son of Mwakihaba, were to be found a little further up the Lufilio valley. Four of the five known princes here were of the same genealogical generation as Mwakatungila; Mwaihojo, chased across the Lufilio, belonged to the preceding generation. In view of this it is interesting to remember that, in spite of what had happened to him, the missionaries were still told that he was a leading prince; he certainly had several villages. There is no evidence as to whether he was the first holder of his title, or of what happened to him after the Mbasi affair. The two "sons" of Mwaihojo, Mwambebile and Mwandosya, were reported as "minor" princes. In March, 1893, the two brothers fought, Mwandosya being defeated. Many of his cattle were taken by the victor, and the rest were seized by Mwangomo (see below) and by Mwakatungila, who took away some fifteen head. This incident I referred to in the narrative; Mwakatungila succumbed to mission pressure and returned the cattle.⁴ On his and Mwangomo's part the action seems to have had no other basis than the convenient opportunity to acquire cattle at minimum risk.

In the case of the other pair of princes, Mwangomo and Mwakipesile, it seems likely that there was no holder of their "father's" title, Mwandelile, surviving in the preceding generation. Of Mwakipesile we know little save his existence, and that he sometimes used his father's name, Mwandelile, though whether simply as one of his own names or as an inherited title is not

1. Wilson, M. 1951, 124.

2. *MB* 1897, 210; *MB (JB 1908)*, 96.

3. Brown 1923, 52/3; Fulleborn 310 (quoting *MB* 1904, 13-41).

4. Merensky 1894, 199.

clear.¹ He may well have been the young "Muaképesi" whom Giraud, a French explorer, met in Selya on his way south in 1883.² Mwangomo has made a much greater impression on the records. Merensky knew him as an important prince, a capable ruler and a brave warrior.³ It seems probable that he had successfully challenged Mwaihojo for the leading position, driving the latter out after he had attempted to defeat Mwangomo by seizing his cattle, as I recounted in the narrative. This would be a classic case of the kind of competition I see as characteristic of the Nyakusa polity, particularly as the titles of the challengers were not even of the same generation of origin.

Mwangomo is also particularly interesting because we know of at least three incumbents of the Mwangomo title. The Mwangomo to whom I have been referring died from the effects of a snake-bite on 4 May, 1893.⁴ In the following years, Mwangomo appears occasionally in the records, until, on the night of 8/9 December, 1923, he again died, strongly suspected of being the victim of action to hasten his end, as befitting a Divine King.⁵ Yet in 1935 there was still a prince of this name in the same part of the country as there had been 40 years previously. After more than 60 years, in 1955, the situation was, according to Wilson, still exactly the same.⁶ How the latest Mwangomo was related to the first, it is impossible to say. I shall demonstrate, however, that the long survival of titles cannot simply be ascribed to "modern times".

I thus summarise the situation among the Nyakihaba:

1. If the slightly problematic Mwangake is omitted, they display a remarkably exact development in the form described by the Wilsons, i.e. with two "sons" of every ruling prince in one generation becoming themselves ruling princes in the succeeding generation.
2. The ruling princes were almost all of one and the same genealogical generation.
3. The co-existence of Mwaihojo and his two sons could be seen as illustrating the transitional phase between generations. Mwaka-tungila had perhaps subordinated his brother, Mwaijande, and so perhaps had Mwakasula. There is even, in Mwambebule and

1. *MB* 1896, 214.

2. Giraud, 175: "un grand chef".

3. Merensky 1894, 210.

4. *Ibid.*, 202.

5. Brown, quoted Chapter 5, 2 below.

6. Wilson, M. 1951, 191; Wilson, M. 1959, Genealogy.

Mwandosya, an example of fraternal rivalry likely to lead to this kind of result.

4. But there are pointers to be observed even here: the age discrepancy between Mwakatungila and Mwakasula, the persistence of the Mwangomo title, and, most important, the affair of Mwaihojo and Mwangomo.

(b) Moving a little to the west one would reach the descendants of **Mwamukinga**. This is the area in which the Wilsons did their most detailed work; the genealogy of the "Chiefs of Lwembe's Line" is noticeably fuller in this section than it is elsewhere, and is based on the evidence of three important informants in key positions in the line.¹ Because of this I am able here first to survey the situation in the 1890s, and then to examine the history of Mwaipopo and his father, Mwaijonga, as it can be found in the Wilsons' works.

Mwamukinga was considered to belong to the same genealogical generation as Mwakihaba though Wilson and Merensky differ slightly as to the exact relation between them; Wilson makes them parallel first cousins, while according to Merensky they were brothers. The remarkable fact, in terms of which a plausible explanation of this difference can be suggested,² is that the Mwamukinga title still had an incumbent in the 1890s. As I related in the narrative, it was he, or rather his councillors, who were responsible for the final defeat of Mbasi in the affair of Kinyolobi. The missionary description of him on that occasion as "the oldest and therefore the most senior" prince of the region³ is most apt for the incumbent of a title originating in the third or fourth ascending generation from the latest generation of ruling princes. The report went on to note that, on account of his seniority, he constituted the last resort in difficult legal matters. This echoes interestingly a statement of Monica Wilson's: "appeals in difficult cases may be taken from either of the young chiefs and their village headmen to the old chief and his village headmen".⁴ The principle is clearly here the same,

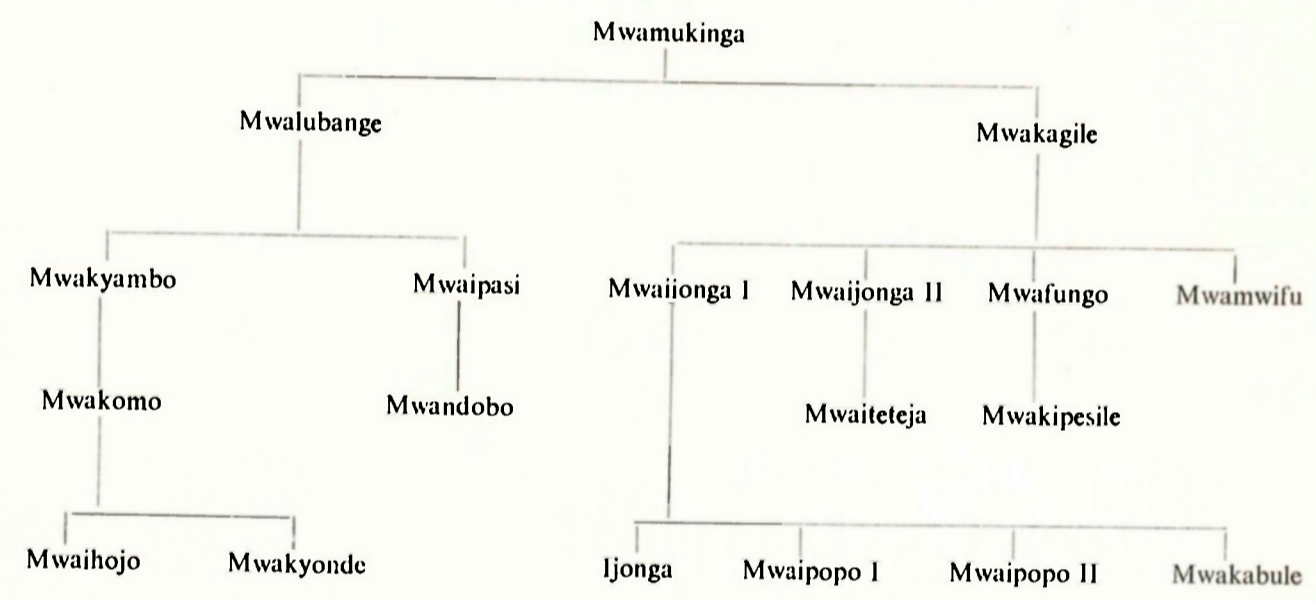
1. These are numbered in the genealogy 86, 116, and 148.

2. Mwamukinga and Mwakihaba in the genealogy represent two distinct sections of the line. Merensky's information, collected from the second section at a time when Mwamukinga was the senior title in the region, shows a closer link with the title for his section than the version collected by the Wilsons from Mwamukinga's own descendants. See Fig. I above. Fig. II shows Mwamukinga's descendants.

3. *MB* 1895, 390.

4. Wilson, M. 1951, 29. Cf. Wilson, G. 1951, 281: he had originally written "in cases of inheritance" for "in difficult cases".

Figure II THE DESCENDANTS OF MWAMUKINGA



but a "period of transition" had apparently in this case endured through three generations, i.e. a period of the order of ninety years in length, if the Wilsons' estimation of generation length is accepted.

If any titles survived from the generation following Mwamukinga's, they have escaped the records. From the following generation, however, there are three titles, i.e. all those shown. Mwakambo and Mwaipasi were the sons of Mwalubange, Mwaifonga the son of Mwakagile. Mwaipasi has left records of nothing more than his presence, not far from Mwakasula, throughout the 1890s,¹ but Mwakambo, or his representative, appeared in the narrative above as one of the more important princes of the region. The missionaries described him as an *Oberhauptling* (superior chief) who had some authority over the other princes; his representative had taken the lead at the missionaries' conference.² Of the next generation, there is no sign of Mwakomo; and Mwandobo, son of Mwaipasi, is not noted until 1906.³ It is 1906 likewise before there is indubitable evidence for Mwaifojo, Mwakomo's son, though there is a probable reference to him for 1896 and Wilson asserts that he was already ruling before the arrival of the missionaries in 1891, this probably on the evidence of the prince himself and his close kinsmen.⁴ He is also said to have seized the country of his brother, Mwakonde, soon after his Coming-out.⁵ It is probable that this could only have occurred before the German Administration was fully established. In this line there are thus to be observed three titles, Mwamukinga, Mwakambo, and Mwaifojo, existing contemporaneously, yet in origin spanning five generations.

For Mwaifonga, son of Mwakagile, there is only one piece of contemporary evidence, and this reveals little. The missionary, Johnson, travelling north through the valley in 1883 noted that he passed through "Majonga's", and this does appear to have been in the region of Selya.⁶ From Monica Wilson, however, much more information is available. According to this information, with Mwaifonga there also came out as ruling princes two brothers, Mwafungo and Mwamwifu, but Mwafungo did not last long. He died young and is said to have lacked an heir, i.e. a junior full-

1. Merensky 1894, 93; *MB* 1899, 763, etc.

2. Merensky 1894, 220, 265.

3. *MB (JB)* 1906, 106.

4. Wilson, M. 1959, Genealogy; *MB* 1897, 199; Map 1906.

5. Wilson, M. 1959, 69.

6. Johnson 1884.

brother, etc. Mwaijonga therefore inherited, taking over his villages and his widows. A genealogy in *Rituals of Kinship*, showing a Mwafungo alive in 1935, casts some doubt on this lack of an heir; there was perhaps therefore rather more political initiative in the matter on Mwaijonga's part than the story suggests.¹

By one of the inherited wives, Mwaijonga had a son, Mwakipesile, and this son came out in the next generation, receiving the villages which had belonged to Mwafungo. This can be seen as a kind of leviratic effect such as can occur in Nyakyusa succession, but it seems as likely to be connected with a shortage of properly eligible sons available at the right moment. Ipopo, Mwaijonga's senior wife, had apparently no son when the Coming-out was due. She did however have a daughter, Ijonga, and one of her co-wives—whether the senior wife of the second "side" or another, is not known—had a son, Mwakabule. There thus came out Ijonga, Mwakabule and Mwakipesile. Ijonga is said to have been deputising for the then unborn son of Ipopo. A certain Mwaiteteja, son of a full-brother of Mwaijonga, exercised for her the role of a ruling prince, for which she was disqualified by her sex.

In due course sons were born and grew up. There is little doubt that during this necessarily lengthy period, or at least during much of it, Mwaijonga or one of his successors would have remained the important prince of this small group. Of the sons the first seems to have died early, but the second, Mwaipopo II, asserted himself and lived long. He is said to have defeated and subordinated Mwaiteteja, Mwakipesile, Mwakabule and the heirs of his father's contemporary, Mwamwifu. It is not surprising therefore that he was, like Mwakambo, termed an *Oberhäuptling* by the missionaries.² He is also found attempting to assert his overlordship over a neighbouring prince, Mwakalobo. It was against this latter prince, it will be remembered, that Mbasi was said to have incited an unsuccessful attack. He was an important and effective prince and in him Mwaipopo appears to have met his match.³ Mwaipopo's presence registers in the records from the beginning in 1891, thus providing independent

1. For this paragraph and those following: Wilson, M. 1959, 90/1; Wilson, M. 1957, Table (a). This latter source gives a more detailed account of the kin of Mwaijonga and Mwaipopo. It is not fully consistent with the Genealogy in *Communal Rituals*.

2. *BG* 1896, 22.

3. Merensky 1894, 264/5.

support for Wilson's assertion that he was ruling before that date.¹ In the narrative he appeared as a leader of threatnings against Mwakatungila over his refusal to send Kinyolobi to Mbasi.

(c) Beyond the Kasiobona River, in the extreme west of Selya, were to be found the **princes associated with the Lwembeship**. Lwembe enters the records from 1893, when the missionaries tried to arrange for him to mediate the dispute between Mwaipopo and Mwakalobo referred to above. This he refused to do.² In the narrative he appeared in the following year in dispute with Mbasi. Thereafter he continues to appear intermittently, but there is slight doubt over his identity. Wilson states that Mwakisisya was the last Lwembe to be installed, and that, on his death some time before 1914, his son Mwanjala was ordered to take up the office but did not do so. He is said to have died three years after his father.³ Both princes appear in contemporary reports, as on occasion does "Lwembe" without further identification. In 1899, Fulleborn tried to visit "the old chief and priest, Makassissi, renowned as a magician and rain-maker", but unfortunately he was not at home. Though the description fits well, Fulleborn appears not to have considered Mwakisisya, later at least, as the Lwembe. Mwanjala is mentioned as a priest in a mission report from 1901, and Fulleborn quotes a further report of 1904 describing him as the present Lwembe and the son of "the famous rain-magician Makassissi". It is tempting to suggest that Mwanjala had succeeded his father, in some sense at least, by this last date, but this is clearly not what Fulleborn believed, or what he obtained from the mission report, which I have not myself been able to examine.⁴

The slight doubt must therefore remain, and this is not surprising. I have not been able to locate Lubaga, the seat of the Lwembe, with any certainty, but it was probably some two miles to the south of Manow mission station. Yet in spite of this proximity the Lwembeship is not well documented. The Lwembe cults seem to have involved occasional human sacrifice, and for this reason a good deal of secrecy was probably observed. There

1. Merensky 1894, 177; Wilson, M., Genealogy.

2. Merensky 1894, 264/5.

3. Wilson, M. 1959, 28.

4. Fulleborn, 277, 313 and 318 (quoting *MB* 1904); *MB (JB* 1901), 46.

may indeed even have been a deliberate attempt to mislead over the true identity of the Lwembe.¹

Wilson states that there were two lines associated with the Lwembeship and to both of them she attributes "chiefdoms".² I have been discussing the representatives of one of the lines; of the other I have found no trace in contemporary records.

I have now completed the survey of the princes of Selya in the 1890s. I have noted the very many princes to be found within this small area, and their varying importance. I must also draw attention to the different development of the three main lines as they appear in the genealogy. Mwakihaba's line shows a rapid proliferation of ruling princes, with seven or even eight in the third descending generation. Mwamukinga's line, on the other hand, shows only three in the same generation, and of these three, one was apparently soon to drop out; Wilson states that Mwaipasi's line was without a "chiefdom".³ The Lwembe lines, as shown in Wilson's genealogy, seem to carry this lack of proliferation even further; both lines are shown as having originated in the generation preceding Mwamukinga and not to have developed thereafter. Evidence concerning the Lwembe lines is weak; the early secrecy on which I commented above extended in some measure even to the 1930s.⁴ I cannot therefore do more than to suggest that this lack of development in the line may be due to the form of succession to the Lwembeship. There was only one such office, in distinction to the case of the ruling prince who was qualified for his office by the Coming-out, regardless of the fact that the prince of the previous generation to whom he was subject, i.e. a "father", still retained his own position. The Lwembeship could therefore only be acquired after the death of the previous incumbent. There would thus not have been the scope for proliferation. What is not known, however, is whether and to what extent the Lwembe or other members of these lines were also ruling princes, i.e. held offices similar to other ruling princes. This is a most serious gap in the information.⁵ The form of the development of the other two lines I discuss in the paragraphs below.

I stated above that princes were observed to be of very varying

1. Cf. Wilson, M. 1951, Map III; Wilson, M. 1959, 28; MB 1897, 217.

2. Wilson, M. 1959, 21 and Genealogy.

3. *Ibid.*, 90.

4. Cf. Wilson, M. 1951, Map III; Wilson, M. 1959, 28; MB 1897, 217.

5. Further instances of the tendency of non-proliferating lines to be associated with priestly offices are noted below.

importance, but this variation has two dimensions. In the first place the kind of importance varies according to the generation of origin of the princely title. In some sense titles remain subordinate to generationally senior titles of the line; I noted above the quotations concerning appeal to seniors in difficult cases. The Mwamukinga title provides the prime example in Selya of a title set apart generationally.

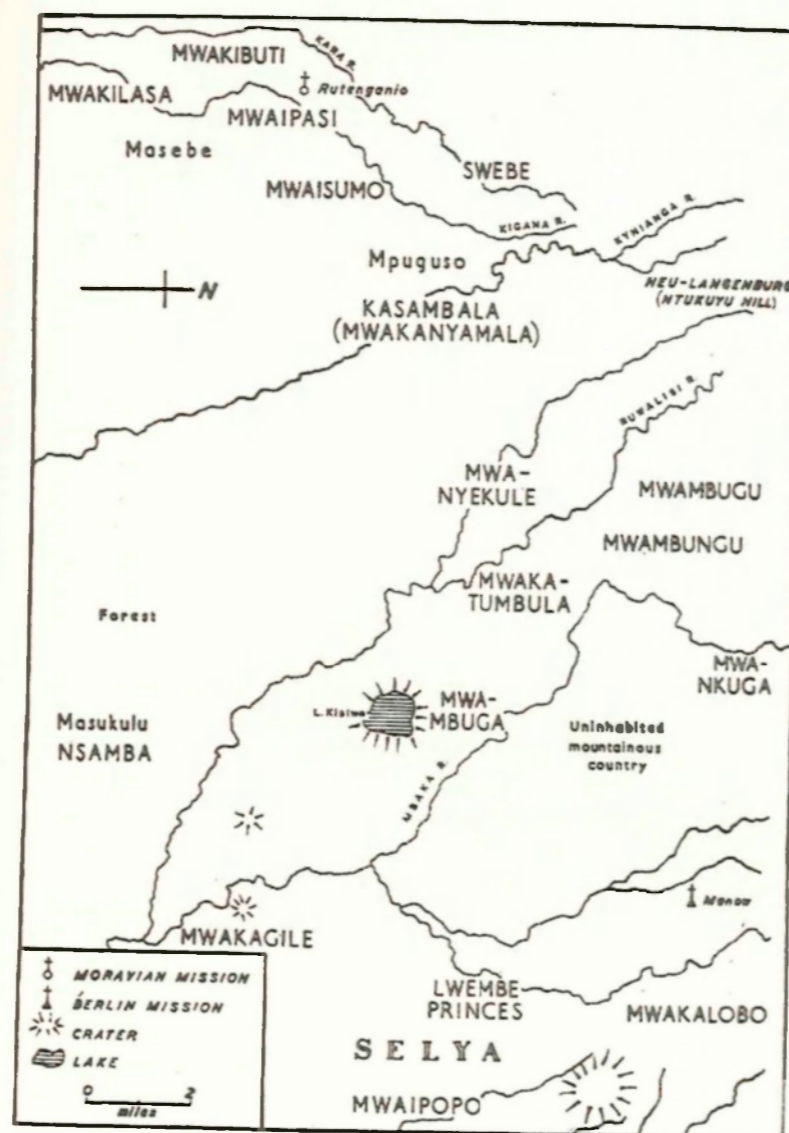
The other dimension is the straightforward differences in power. In Selya Mwaipopo provides the biggest success story for which we have information; I have shown his leading position and the way in which he swallowed up two generations' proliferation in his line. It is largely his activities which account for the form of the line in the genealogy. In Mwakihaba's line on the other hand there appears to have been no such dominant prince over a considerable period, though it may well be that Mwangomo was developing in this direction when he was checked by the European presence. He had already driven away Mwaihojo, who was probably a neighbour,¹ and had plundered one of the latter's sons in circumstances which, but for missionary intervention, would probably have led to his extinction as a ruling prince.

The problems of why some titles should persist over a long period and others not, and of why some princes should be able to attain more importance than others, and the possible interrelation of these, will be discussed below when I come to analyse the role of the prince, the Coming-out and the bases of power in this society.

2 Mpuguso

The Mpuguso region lies mainly to the west of the Mbaka, though the princes of this region also overflow round the base of Kieyo Mt. into northern Selya. Mwakalobo represents the most easterly point of this overflow. Besides this the area comprises a centre on the western side of the Mbaka drainage system, stretching south almost from Tukuuyu in the north to Lake Kisiwa (Masoko), a distance of some eight miles; a region called Masebe to the west of this and on two tributaries of the Kiwira, the Kara and Kigana Rivers; and there were also a few princes further to the south in the forest. As in Selya, it is this forest which provides the southern boundary; to the north and west, without any physical barrier between are the Kukwe.

1. *MB* 1892, 367.



Map 4 The Mpuguso Region: the location of princes at the end of the 19th century

Mpuguso is the least well documented of the three regions I am distinguishing. Whereas there were three mission stations in Selya, there was one only, at Rutenganio, fully in Mpuguso. Further, this station belonged to the Moravian mission, whose published material is not of quite the quality and detail of the Berlin mission's publications. The Wilsons also worked in Selya, but not at all, or only very little, in the region under discussion. It is therefore not surprising that the evidence is sparse and often inconsistent. I shall do no more than briefly summarise the position.

The princes of the central region and its eastward extension are the Nyakibinga. These were principally Mwakalobo and his "brother" Mwankuga, and Mwanyekule, with whom Mbasi took refuge at one stage in the narrative. Wilson makes Swebe a brother of Mwanyekule, but missionary evidence and his geographical position suggest otherwise, though not conclusively.¹ Mwanyekule's two sons, Mwakatumbula and Mwambuga, also appear. The Mwakibinga title itself, originating according to Wilson in the third ascending generation from Mwanyekule, was probably also still alive or only recently ended; a Mwakibinga gave an ox and a young cow to Bain at Kalalamuka in 1888, and this is a substantial gift, suggesting a prince of importance.²

To the east, at and around Mpuguso itself, was a lone prince of an apparently non-proliferating line, Kasambala Mwakanyamale. Some eight miles south-east from him, in the forest at Masukulu, lay another prince of a similarly static line, Nsamba Mwalwembe. Him indeed Wilson describes as a "priest-chief",³ and this does suggest that priestship linked to princship may perhaps, as I suggested above in connection with the Lwembe, have some importance in preventing proliferation. It is difficult to believe that Kasambala could have been associated with a priestship without this fact appearing anywhere in the records. Nevertheless he did have Mpuguso within his sphere. The Wilsons' apparent ignorance of it suggests perhaps that Mpuguso and any accompanying cult may, in the years intervening between Fülleborn's visit in 1899 and the Wilsons' work in the country, have for some reason been forgotten.

1. Wilson, M. *Genealogy*; BG 1894, 279.

2. Livingstonia, Bain to Laws (21 September, 1888). Elton (326/7) passed through the country of the "Mwenyekuri—Makuminga" in 1877. The names can probably be identified with Mwanyekule and Mwakibinga, though the latter is less certain.

3. Wilson, M. 1959, 73.

A second prince, Mwakagile, was also to be found in the forest. His antecedents and connections appear somewhat doubtful,¹ but inspection of the map suggests the probable reason for his presence in this particular area. There are a number of small volcanic craters on both sides of the Mbaka at this point, and these would probably have contained soil of exceptional fertility.

To the west of Kasambala were to be found a small group of princes who have been recorded as the "sons" of Mwakibuti. These "sons" were three in number, Swebe, Mwaipasi and Mwakilasa. It was from Swebe that the missionaries obtained the site for their station, but the grant had to be ratified by Mwakibuti.² This prince, who may possibly be identified with Wilson's Mwalambo since he is shown as the father of Mwaipasi, was old and retired. He provides us with a classic example of the Nyakyusa prince who has indeed handed over to the succeeding generation, though, it will be noted, retaining his authority in matters such as the granting of land. The missionary Richard visited the prince's village in July, 1894, and found that he lived apart in a lonely valley with his wives and a very small number of others. He was said then to be of advanced age, but he lived on for another thirteen years. When he died his funeral was celebrated with full traditional rites and people came from as far afield as the lake plains to attend.³

This brief survey shows that Mpuguso region was, though rather less congested with princes, not very different to Selya in general pattern.⁴ Here also were to be found the proliferating and the non-proliferating lines, the long-surviving titles (e.g. Mwakibinga), the princes of varying importance, although there is not the evidence to display these in detail or to be completely certain of them.

1. Wilson (Genealogy) shows Mwakagile's father as Mulangi, but it is not clear whether she considers him a brother of Mwakibinga. He also appears on Elton's main map as "Milango" and his people "Marangi".

2. *BG* 1894, 279, 371.

3. *JUF* 1895, 61 and 1908, 168/9. Perhaps the rites were not quite complete; according to the mission report, a compatriot ought to have been buried with the prince to accompany him to the other world. Fighting between village contingents in the course of the funeral was, it is said, relied upon to produce the necessary corpse. In this case the deceased's sons called in Christians from the mission to prevent any such occurrence, and this they did.

4. Mwaismo, shown on the map, was related to the Mwakibuti group. He apparently had villages both in Masebe and on the Mbaka below Mwakagile, where Wilson shows his "chiefdom" to lie (1959, Map II). Mwaipopo similarly had a colony in the forest to the south with about five miles of uninhabited country intervening (Wilson, M. 1959, 89).

3 The lake plains

The historical traditions of the region already discussed are few and simple. Into the valley from the direction of the Kinga are said to have come the ancestors of the present lines of princes.¹ By proliferation over the centuries the pattern to be observed in the present gradually formed itself. Monica Wilson accepts her genealogy as a substantially accurate account of this process, and dates the entry into the valley of the first ancestors "with some certainty" to between 1550 and 1650.² In considering the plains on the other hand, there are traditions which seem to be much more straightforwardly historical and in which the time scale is very restricted.

The inhabitants of the plains in the indefinite past are said to have been people who can be termed Saku. They probably already belonged to the Nyakyusa-Ngonde cultural and linguistic group. It is said that two of the sons of one of the early Kyungus of Ngonde fled across the Songwe to avoid themselves being enstooled. One of them, Katamba, established himself through matrilineal links as a prince in the plain. In succeeding generations his line is said to have proliferated as did Nyakyusa lines later, both in turn pushing aside the Saku chiefs or princes.³

Later a prince of Kalesi's line, Mwakyusa, allied with the Saku against the princes of Katamba's line and successfully drove them out; this is expressed by saying that he drove the Kyungu across the Songwe.⁴ Fülleborn dates this event to the middle of the nineteenth century, but from the genealogy and a consideration of interlocking events in Ngonde, Bemba and Ngoni historical tradition the middle of the first half of the century would seem a more likely estimate.⁵ After the victory Mwakyusa's line asserted itself and proliferated as had Katamba's and the Saku were again pushed aside. The process seems to have been continuing in the early 1890s with Mwankenja driving out Mwapuele.⁶ The Saku were then confined to a small area north of the Lufilio under the Livingstone escarpment.⁷

1. See, e.g. Wilson, M. 1959, 1/3.

2. Wilson, M. 1958, 12.

3. Wilson, G. 1939, 14.

4. Fülleborn, 303; Wilson, G. 1939, 26; Wilson, M. 1959, Genealogy.

5. Cf. Wilson, G. 1939; Tew; Brelsford. The argument turns on the story of Mpeta of Ngonde, exiled to Saku country, who afterwards became Kyungu Mwakasangule and fought Bemba and Ngoni.

6. Merensky 1894, 91.

7. Gulliver (1958) reports that there were then only about 400 men in Saku chiefdoms.



Map 5 The lake plains: the location of princes at the end of the 19th century

So much for prologue. This amount of history is necessary to understand the differences between the princes of the plains and those higher up the valley. The plains, even in the late nineteenth century, carried a much heavier population than did the uplands,¹ and the distribution of princes shown on the map gives a general impression of their greater importance than those in the other two regions. The pattern in more detail I shall examine below, but these general features can be attributed first to the recency of the arrival of the line, about three generations at the period under discussion, and secondly, to the fact that expansion against non-Nyakyusa was still continuing, giving princes an easy scope for self-assertion elsewhere denied them.

The plains princes can be divided geographically into three sections, a southern section to the south of the Kiwira River, a northern around the lower Lufilio River, and a central around and to the south of the Mbaka. Early reporters saw this threefold division in terms of three "chiefs", Mwakyusa in the south, Mwamakula in the centre, and Mwankenja in the north. Genealogically the two extremes are linked against the centre. The Mwakyusa who drove out the Kyungu is said to have had three sons. One of these was the ancestor of the Masebe princes, but the other two, Mwakipesile and Mwambungu, were plains princes. The princes in the south and in the north were the descendants of Mwakipesile, and those in the centre of Mwambungu.

In Mwambungu, as in Mwamukinga and Mwakibinga, we have a title which appears to have been maintained over a long period. There is indeed no evidence for it from the 1890s, but it was still in use in 1877 at the time of the first European visit. The several reports are confused and there was doubt as to whether Mwambungu (usually "Mbungu") and Mwamakula ("Makula" or "Makulu") were one and the same or two different people. Laws, the founder of the Livingstonia Mission and a member of this first European party, seems finally to have been convinced that they were not the same person, and his account of the last days of their stay on the

1. Early population figures are bound to be of dubious accuracy, but the Moravians, for example, considered (*JUF* 1899, 367) that round Rungwe station there were 4-5,000 people, round Rutengano 3-4,000, and round Ipyana 7-9,000. This last figure was later revised upwards to 10-20,000 (*BG* 1903, 215). An Administration hut-count in 1898 gave approximately 6,000 huts in Mwankenja's country on the lower Lufilio.

Mbasi River provides strong evidence for this and suggests that Mwambungu was the senior of the two. The party had had dealings with Mwamakula, alias "Makawete", but on Saturday, 20th October, fearing trouble, they withdrew from the shore and anchored in mid-stream. The next morning "a canoe came down asking why we went away without seeing the chief Mbungu, and saying they were sent by him". He was invited to come down to the ship, but the messengers said he was afraid to go on the water in a canoe; the missionaries should therefore go to the bank to meet him. Later in the day another canoe came, this time with the message that "Mbungu and Makuru were going along the bank, and wished us to come ashore and see them at a dry place, as Mbungu was frightened to go in a canoe". Thus there is no doubt that the Mwambungu title was still in use, and evidence that it was not held by Mwamakula, though this evidence cannot be conclusive as Mwambungu was never actually seen.¹ Johnson however does claim to have visited Mwambungu's village four or five miles north of the Mbasi in 1883.²

Mwaisaka is shown in Wilson's genealogy as Mwambungu's son and Mwamakula's father; Merensky differs slightly in showing "Mwisaka" and Mwamakula ("Mwanjabala") as brothers, both being sons of Mwambungu. Wilson's version must, I think, be preferred although Merensky's account was collected forty years earlier. She had two key informants in this line, one being shown as a son of Mwaisaka, and the other as a great-grandson. There is no obvious reason why it should be advantageous to convert a brother into a father, whereas it might well be advantageous to Mwamakula to claim to be of a senior generation, particularly as the genealogy shows this to have been in fact the generation of the other leading princes at that time. We do not unfortunately know the source of Merensky's genealogies, but we do know that he had considerable dealings with Mwamakula, whom he treated for an eye complaint.³ Mwaisaka himself, as "Malisaka", is noted definitely from 1877 as a "chief" on the Mbasi River.⁴ He also appears on Kiepert's map of 1895, but this does not necessarily indicate more than

1. Laws 1877.

2. Johnson 1884.

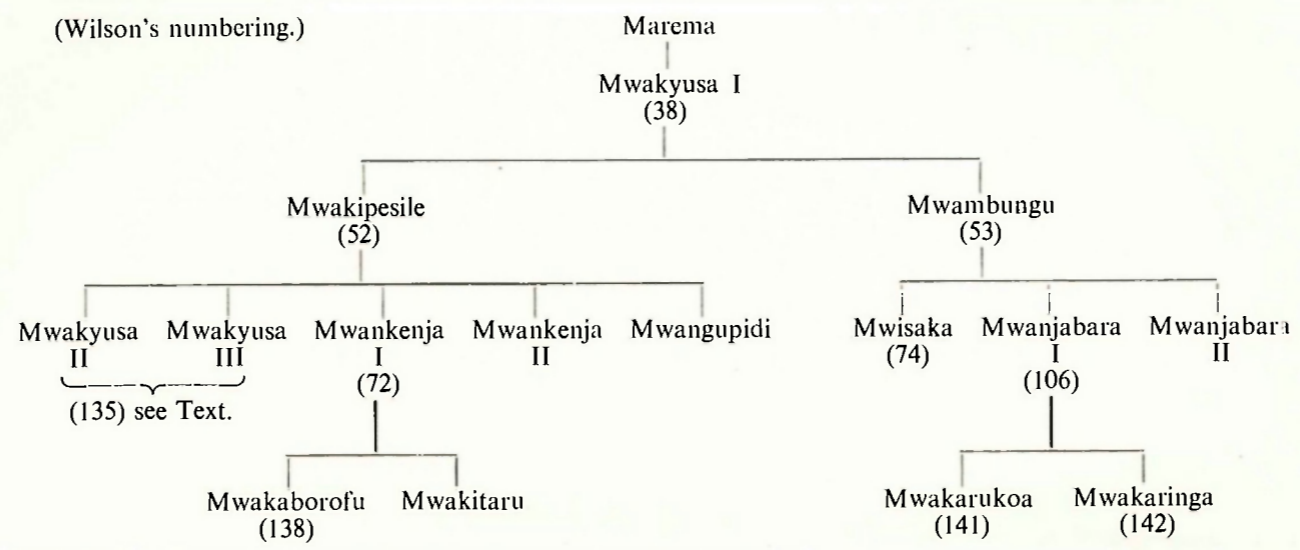
3. Merensky 1894, 90.

4. Laws 1877 and 1878. Cf. Elton 320/3; Stewart; Merensky 1894, 90. "Malisaka" was also sometimes thought to be an alias of Mwamakula.

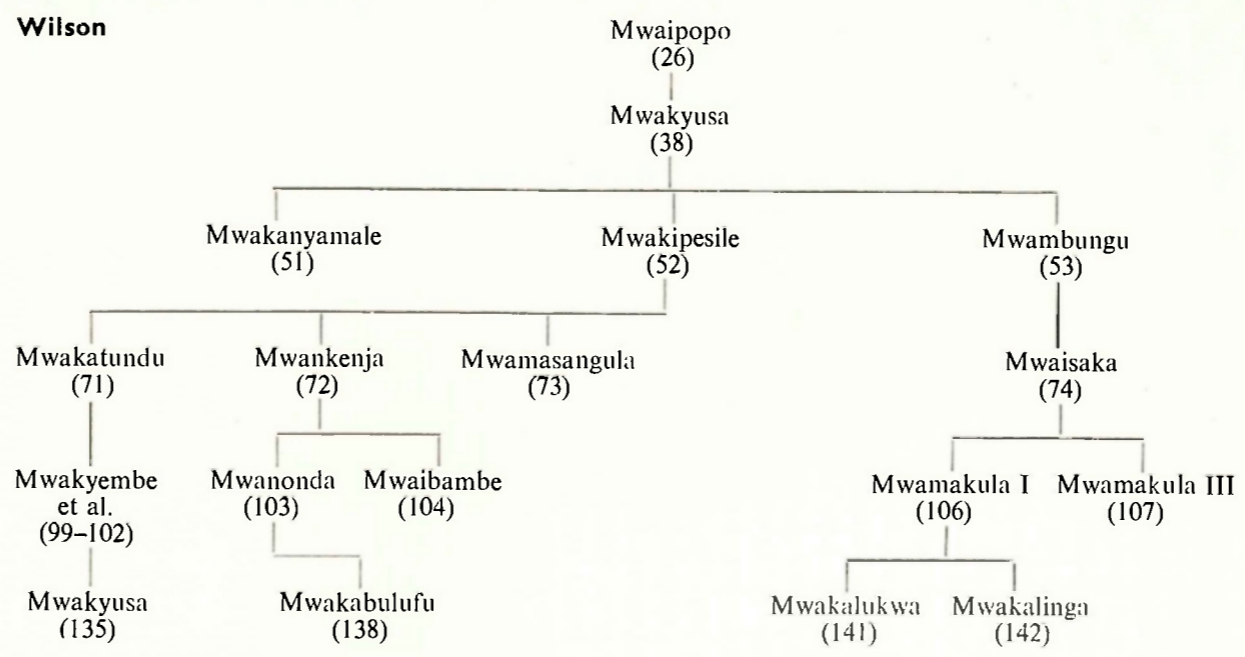
Figure III THE PLAINS PRINCES

Merensky

(Wilson's numbering.)



Wilson



that he had appeared on the map published in Elton's work fifteen years earlier.

The first point to note about Mwamakula himself is that this name and its variants are equivalent to the name generally used in this thesis, Mwanjabala and its variants. It is probable that Mwamakula was the name favoured by the incumbent of the office first met by Europeans, while his successor favoured the other; the name Mwamakula is reported between 1877 and 1885,¹ and Mwanjabala between 1882 (?) and 1897 (?),² both the extreme dates being slightly uncertain. There is thus little, though definitely some, overlap in time. There is positive evidence from 1888 that succession had by that date already taken place.³ Judging from Wilson's genealogy it seems likely that the second name did not outlast its owner. Wilson shows Mwamakulas I and III, but not II, who was presumably Mwanjabala.

Mwamakula was certainly the most important Nyakyusa prince in his time. This was generally acknowledged by all reporters. He is said to have defeated both the Magwangwara and the Sangu, and Giraud reports while still in northern Selya that "the natives speak much of a certain Makula, who seems to be their big chief".⁴ Mwanjabala would have taken over his leading position; Merensky records arriving in 1891 at "the town of Mwanjabala, the most important chief of the Konde".⁵ His defeat by his neighbour Mwanjenja, in 1893 over disputed fishing rights in the Mbaka is, however, perhaps a pointer to a slipping command.⁶ The two sons of his predecessor, Mwakalukwa and Mwakalinga, appear to have been well established by the mid 1890s.

The first problem now, in turning to the descendants of Mwakipesile, is the identity of that Mwakiyusa who appears in the records between 1879 and 1891.⁷ Wilson apparently believes him to be the

1. Laws 1878, etc.; Livingstonia, Bain to Laws, 25 August and 23 November, 1885.
2. Moir 1882(?); the next known reference is Livingstonia, Bain to Laws, 18 October, 1886; *MB* 1898, 194. This last is a reference to Mwanjabala's country in connexion with the rising of December, 1897, but there is no direct evidence for the prince's existence at the time, though he is shown on the 1906 map.
3. Kerr-Cross 1890. This almost certainly refers to a visit to Mwanjabala made *en route* for Kalalamuka in August, 1888. Also Merensky 1894, 130.
4. Giraud, 174.
5. Merensky 1894, 90.
6. *Ibid.*, 136.
7. Moir 1923, 64; Merensky 1894, 90.

son of Mwakymbe,¹ the man who was the one and only Paramount Chief of the Nyakyusa and died in 1933. Merensky on the other hand shows two Mwakiyusas as sons of Mwakipesile. Wilson may of course have been muddled in this matter, but for two reasons this does not seem a very satisfactory means of dealing with the difficulty. In the first place, the Wilsons must have been well aware that Mwakymbe had until very recently been the Paramount and that his brother was, during the time that they were in the country, his highly successful successor. To suggest that this man's son had been ruling in 1890, while not impossible, must surely have been a matter which would excite careful attention. Secondly, it does appear as a matter of fact that a new and young incumbent of the title did appear between 1889 and 1891. In November, 1889, Fotheringham reported that Masoni, the son of Mwakiyusa (whom he describes as "old"), had rebelled and been driven out by his father.² Thus he was at least of an age to have a grown son, and quite probably indeed old, as Fotheringham wrote. In contrast, Merensky in September, 1891, met Mwakiyusa, "one of the leading superior chiefs (*Oberhäupter*) of the Konde peoples", and found him young and friendly.³ There can be little doubt that the first Mwakiyusa met was in fact a son of Mwakipesile as Merensky indicates. If Wilson's suggestion is then accepted, he would have been succeeded by a classificatory grandson. That it is not an own-grandson adds to the oddness of the situation, but Merensky shows no heirs for Mwakiyusa, and if heirs were lacking this might perhaps explain the resort to the classificatory grandson.

To build far on the basis of the suggestion in Wilson's genealogy, which is not even explicit, is very probably to build on sand, but it is nevertheless perhaps worth carrying the train of argument forward as far as it will go. If there is here a case of a title being kept alive by an incumbent drawn from the second descending generation, then it becomes very necessary to consider whether the Mwakiyusa title originated in the generation of Mwakipesile's sons. It would be equally possible that this title was in fact originally that of the Mwakiyusa who first established himself in the plains. If importance

1. This conclusion is inferred from the genealogy which shows no Mwakiyusa in the generation below Mwakipesile, but marks the junior Mwakiyusa as "Ruling in 1890". According to Gulliver (1958), there was still a Mwakiyusa recognised as chief in 1955.
2. Fotheringham, 285.
3. Merensky 1894, 90.

has any bearing on the survival of a title, then this one would seem a likely candidate for survival. The close study of positional succession in anthropology dates from a period later than the Wilsons' field-work. It is therefore reasonable to suppose that they may not have been fully sensitive to those elements of such a system of succession which did exist among the Nyakyusa. It may well be that in collecting data for the genealogy they have picked up the first Mwakyusa and the contemporary incumbent of the office, but have altogether missed those between. Merensky, almost contemporary with one of the crucial successions, has similarly picked up the first Mwakyusa and those of his own time, imagining however that the two latest incumbents were brothers.

Once the old Mwakyusa was gone, it is clear that his successor was not able for long to maintain the title's pre-eminent position.¹ This was taken over between 1892 and 1894 by Prince Mwakatundu. After Merensky's period in the country no more is heard in the records of Mwakyusa, but he probably did not disappear altogether as he is shown on the 1906 map to the south of the Kiwira near Ipyana. When the Moravians established this station on the lower Kiwira in 1894, they came into close touch with Mwakatundu, whom they describe as the most powerful of the petty princes of the country. He was, they say, older than the others in the district, who were in the main his kinsmen and to some extent his dependants.² Wilson shows him as the son of Mwakipesile and the father of Mwakymbe. Merensky does not show him at all, but this does not indicate that he appeared suddenly and from nowhere. He is first reported in 1887 when it was he who gave shelter to the party of white men after they had evacuated Karonga in November of that year during the war with the "Arabs". This was on the Nsesi River not far north of the Songwe.³ Lugard's map shows him near the mouth of the Kiwira on its north bank, and this seems to be about where Merensky found him in 1891, although the first Berlin map already shows him to the south of the river.⁴ There is no reason to think that he had one village only, so these reports are not necessarily contradictory.

1. If he was indeed a grandson of Mwakatundu, the change-over would be all the easier to understand.
 2. *JUF* 1895, 219 fol.
 3. Nkonjera, 232.
 4. Lugard 1894; Merensky 1894, 90; *MB* 1892, 265.

Mwakatundu himself died in 1896, leaving two sons known from the 1890s.¹ Of Mwasulama, the junior, little is known, but his brother, Mwakyembe, later Paramount Chief and holder of the King's Medal, early excited attention. He was a turbulent prince who crossed swords with the German Administration on a number of occasions, the first being in 1894 when he is said to have "provoked" Lieut. Bauer, commander of the German forces in the District, and to have wanted to fight him. Mwakyembe then expressed the intention of driving all Europeans out of the country.² A third son of Mwakatundu, Mwakilima, is shown on the map in the very south of the country, but nothing further is known of him.³

There remains now only Mwakatundu's brother, Mwankenja, and his line on the Lufilio in the north. The earliest reference to Mwankenja dates from 1882(?),⁴ but it is only from the arrival of the Berlin mission that any detail is available. By that time he, like Mwanjabala and Mwakyusa, was not the first holder of the Mwankenja title. He is said to have succeeded his brother, whose son Mwakabulufu was the heir.⁵ In his case, however, there is no sign of any declining importance of the title. His defeat of Mwanjabala in the fishing-rights war has been mentioned above, as has the fact that he had recently defeated and driven out his northern neighbour Mwapuele.

According to Merensky, the sons of Mwankenja I were Mwakabulufu and Mwakitalu, while according to Wilson his sons were Mwanonda and Mwaibambe, Mwakabulufu being Mwanonda's son. Of Mwakitalu nothing is known, and the existence of Mwanonda is doubtful. Fülleborn gives it as a "family name" of Mwankenja.⁶ In this case the Wilsons had no important informants in this line and it may well be that Mwanonda has here been put into the record as a person, whereas it should in fact be no more than a name. Mwakabulufu appears in Kiepert's map of 1895 on the Lufilio and is reported from 1892 to be trying to appropriate goods in transit from Karonga to the Berlin missionaries higher up the river.⁷ By the time of the 1906 map, he is shown as controlling

1. *MB* 1897, 208.
2. *BG* 1895, 160; *JUF* 1895, 222.
3. He already appears in a similar position, with Mwakyembe nearby, on Kiepert's Map (1895).
4. Moir 1882(?).
5. Merensky 1894, 130.
6. Fülleborn, 351.
7. Merensky 1894, 202.

much of the southern bank of the lower Lufilio, with Mwaibambe opposite on the northern bank. This latter certainly had villages as early as 1892, and in the following year was described as "no mean chief", near the mouth of the Lufilio.¹

The distribution and divisions of the princes of the plains are thus of great interest, though the evidence is unfortunately unclear or contradictory on several of the most important points. In the light of the survival of the Mwamukinga and Mwakibinga titles, the survival of the Mwakyusa title, the possibility of which I have discussed above, is not unlikely; it dates in Wilson's genealogy from the same generation as do the two others. This evidence from the plains does, however, raise, though it has not the certainty to solve, the problem of the sources of incumbents to keep alive such old titles. Besides the Mwakyusa case, this would be particularly so in relation to Mwambungu if the suggestion contained in some sources that he and Mwamakula were one and the same has any validity. I have given above the evidence for thinking that this is not so, but as a possibility it cannot altogether be ruled out.

As regards the question of the proliferation of princes in the plains, an important factor appears to be that the beginnings of German Administration coincided more or less with the beginning of the careers of a new generation of princes. Their energies, which might have been directed to challenging one another, were therefore perhaps absorbed in opposing or allying with the Administration.² In addition, the latter of course set out to curb and prevent the more direct forms of challenge traditionally available. Under these circumstances proliferation appears to have proceeded more or less according to rule, with two "sons" of Mwankenja, two of Mwanjabala, and three of Mwakatundu. It may be of course that more detailed evidence would disturb this apparent neatness.

1. MB 1892, 412, and 1893, 524.
2. See Chapter 6, 3 below.

4

THE RULING PRINCE

I Social fragmentation

In the preceding chapters I have written of Nyakyusa "princes" whereas the Wilsons wrote of the same people as "chiefs". The Nyakyusa term is *umafyale* (plur. *abanyafyale*), and a minor consideration in favour of the change is that "prince" seems a more exact translation. Both "*umafyale*" and "prince" carry the possibility of denoting a ruler but do not necessarily do so; "chief" necessarily implies one who rules. Nyakyusa are divided into two categories, the princes (*abanyafyale*) and the commoners (*abatitu*), though these are not in any way castes since princship dies out in lines which do not contain ruling princes. By "ruling prince" I denote those who have been established through a Coming-out and not subsequently deprived of their following, those people previously termed "chiefs".

But I make the change mainly because the term "chief" carries with it not only the implication of ruling, but the implication of ruling either as a subordinate within a hierarchical structure of rulers or as the sole ruler of an independent miniature state. The latter type of situation was later thought to have applied to the Nyakyusa past; Monica Wilson writes, for instance, of over 100 "independent chiefdoms" being recognised by the people themselves in 1936.¹ I contend that either idea is highly misleading; or rather that the Nyakyusa polity had elements of both which, together with other features, amount to a different type of system altogether. Later, under colonial rule, some Nyakyusa princes did become chiefs, subordinate rulers in a hierarchical structure; while the Wilsons were in the country there were six "chiefs", and a number of the ruling princes who had not secured chiefships had become "headmen", subordinate in terms of the new system to these chiefs.²

1. Wilson, M. 1959, 19.

2. Cf. Wilson, G. 1951, 284. Many of the developments are noted in the *Reports of the Provincial Commissioners, 1929 onwards*.

The core of the distinction I am suggesting is to be found in the primacy of people over land, the social group over its territory. A prince does not first possess a territory, and then people who fall under his jurisdiction by living within it. Rather, he has a certain kind of relationship to groups of people who are his followers, and has a territory only in that these people occupy a particular piece of land. I do not argue this directly here, but it will be found implicit in the analyses of the rest of this chapter and will arise again more explicitly in the analysis of the Coming-out in the next chapter. I wish here to draw attention to other features which tend to make the idea of independent chiefdoms unacceptable for the Nyakyusa.

There is first the question of scale. In *The Analysis of Social Change* the Wilsons took the Nyakyusa as their example of a society of smallest scale. While it is not necessary to contest the point that the span of Nyakyusa relations was relatively restricted, this can be exaggerated. In demonstrating the restrictedness, Monica Wilson refers to a hypothetical journey between Selya and Tukuyu, some twenty-five miles which according to an informant would have, in the old days, taken three days to accomplish; the traveller would have had to be constantly seeking shelter from potential enemies.¹ This has the implication at least that such journeys were undertaken. Two further points should be made.

The hypothetical journey must be considered not only in terms of miles, which are few, but also of the social geography of the route. The travellers would have passed through or near villages belonging to at least six, and possibly several more, different princes of different lines. He would have moved between two of the major social divisions of the country, between Selya and what I have termed the Mpuguso region. Map 3 above, of Selya, in particular brings home the extreme proximity of the villages of different princes and hence, if one wants to think in terms of territories, the extreme smallness of these.

If numbers of people are considered, the same kind of picture emerges. Nyakyusa country is relatively densely settled and apparently has been so, in the areas settled at all, for a considerable period. Yet in these densely-settled areas, the figures for "chiefdom" size which the Wilsons give are from 100 to 3,000 adult males. This would give at a generous estimate total populations of between

1. Wilson, M. 1951, 11.

and 15,000. A highly unreliable estimate based on the 1931 census figures¹ and the "over 100" indigenous chiefdoms frequently noted by the Wilsons, suggests an average population in the 1890s of under 1,500. The larger totals would certainly refer to the plains. Projecting these figures backwards in time is highly problematical, yet the Wilsons provide some basis for this when they write: "here is no evidence that the average size of chiefdoms changed appreciably. The population and territory occupied by them was expanding, and this expansion, coupled with the absorption of smaller chiefdoms, probably meant that the average size and density remained more or less constant."² It does not seem probable that these averages from the 1930s are an underestimate of the size of the princes' followings half a century earlier.

Secondly, it may well be that the informant could and did remember correctly a time when such a journey took three days. That what was remembered, however, might not in fact have been normal times, but times when there were particular active hostilities between princes. When Fotheringham was in Ukukwe on behalf of the British Government in 1890, for example, he found such hostilities in the land that only one of the princes was willing to travel to Kalalamuka's to meet him; although the other princes were keen to conclude treaties, hoping for support against the enemy, Fotheringham had to visit each of them in turn to do so.³ In contrast to this the Berlin missionaries at Wangemannshöh received in their first month visits or embassies from Mwaihojo, Makagule, Mwakatungila, Kajala and Mwamafungubo among the plain princes and notables, and from Mwankenja, Mwanjabala and another of Mwakyusa among the plains princes. Indeed Merensky regarded it as a sign of the peacefulness of the country that princes were able to travel almost without escort so far away from their homelands.⁴ That princes and embassies could travel in this way does not necessarily entail the same possibility for ordinary people, and their movements are generally not documented, it is impossible to know directly that this was a similar and commonly exercised possibility for them.

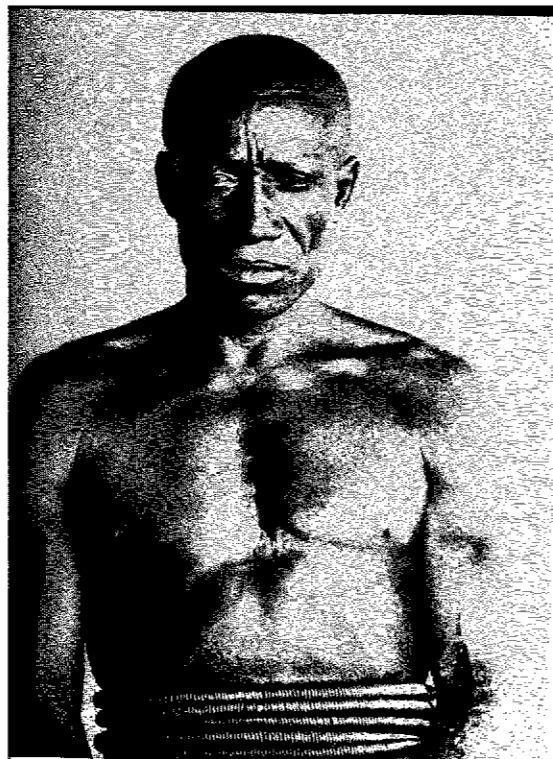
¹The figure of 148,289 for the combined Nyakyusa and Kukwe populations of the Rungwe District has been challenged by R. de Z. Hall (1945). The figure should perhaps be about twenty-five per cent lower.
²Wilson, G and M., 59.
³Fotheringham, 288.
⁴MB 1892, 356.

There are, however, a number of pointers which do suggest this, and I shall mention a few of them here. My later analysis will show the importance for Nyakyusa life of the possibility of moving. According to an estimate made by Godfrey Wilson, about eighty per cent of all married men had at some time in their life and for some period moved from the "chiefdom" where they had their first gardens.¹ This moving is not only "political" but is also largely to be attributed to witchcraft beliefs. Briefly, sickness or misfortune, being interpreted as an attack by a local witch, might induce a move away so as to be out of range; conversely, a person might be forced to move after being successfully accused of witchcraft. Likewise thieves, adulterers and homicides would find it expedient to move.

From the opposite point of view, Nyakyusa set great store by the welcoming of strangers to their villages, hoping that they would settle and thus increase the strength of the village. Gulliver notes that this value was still so strong in the 1950s that even under conditions of land shortage, a village headman would often do his best to keep any land that fell vacant for any newcomer who might materialise, rather than distributing it to his land-hungry fellow villagers. He would receive their general support in so doing.² With the frequency of movement and this attitude towards strangers, it seems most unlikely that in normal times movement across the country would have been as difficult and hazardous as the Wilsons have perhaps given the impression. This is, finally, reinforced by the consideration that bonds of kinship are not limited to the followers of a single prince. This is pointed up by the reason for the three to four-day duration of funeral celebrations which the Wilsons were given: they were told that the long period was necessary to give time for the more distant kin to travel to the place of mourning.³

Thus, the very small size of the population and its territory under one prince, in a land in places densely settled, the direct evidence of the travels of princes and others, the importance of mobility in Nyakyusa culture and the unconfined bounds of kinship all suggest that it is possible to exaggerate the social fragmentation of the country.

1. Wilson, G. 1938, 32. Gulliver (1958) considered this an over-estimate but he appears to have thought it intended to apply to those away at any *one* time, rather than to those who had *ever* been away.
2. Gulliver 1958, 256.
3. Wilson, G. 1939 a., 5. Cf. Wilson, M. 1957, 25 for wide attendance at funerals.

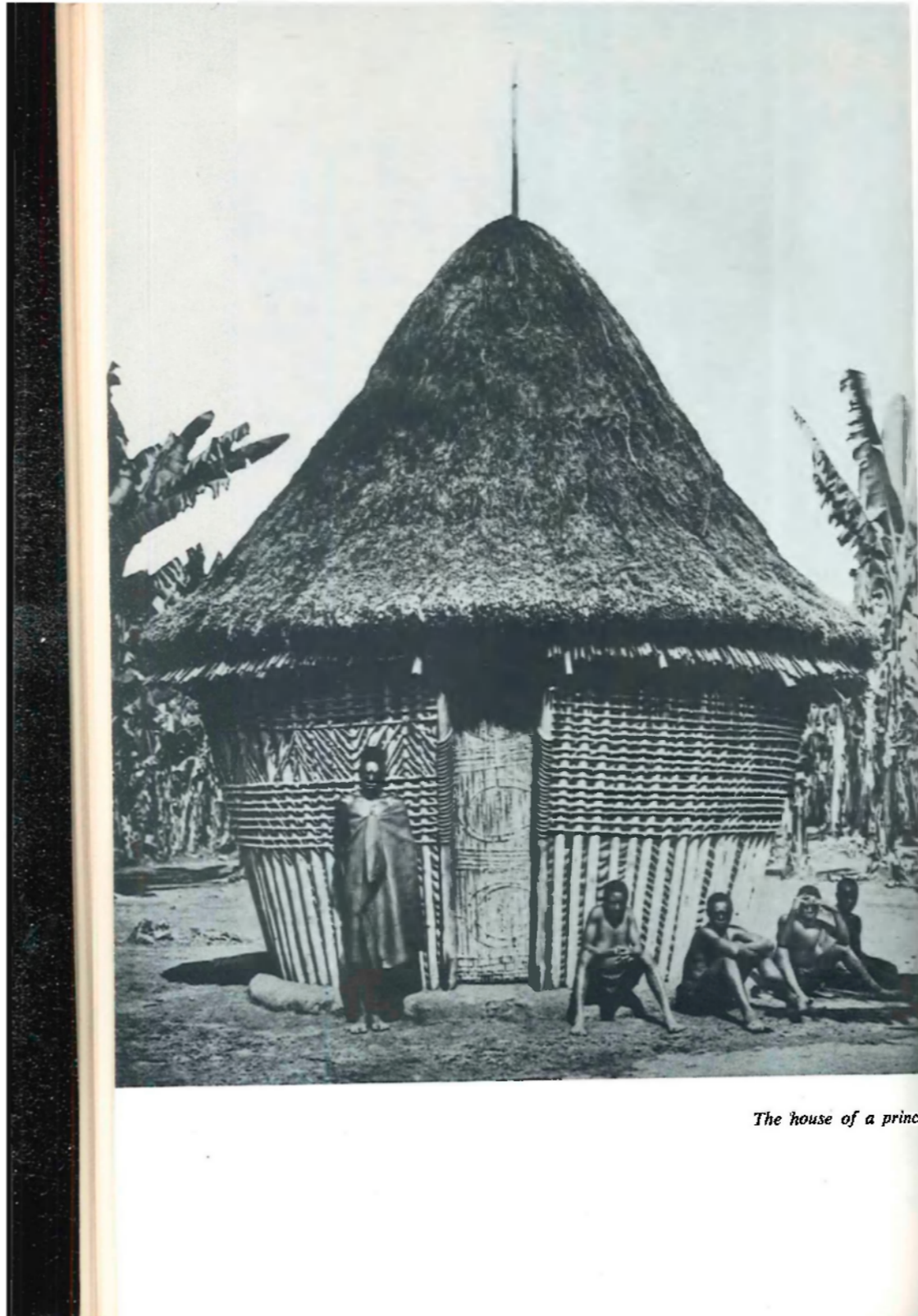


Prince Mwankenja



Konde-Leute (Wabundugulu) des Sultans Manjara aus der Kassiabona-Manow-Gegend im Konde-Oberland.

Der dritte Mann vom rechten Flügel ist der Sultan Manjara selbst.



The house of a prince

2 The settlement of disputes

The form of the Nyakyusa polity, the definition of the fragmentation which was, with the limitations just discussed, certainly a feature of it, and some of the principal social processes within it appear best in the context of dispute-settlement. Here it is possible to see clearly the distinctive role of the prince and the way this fits as one element into a system of which it cannot be seen as the king-pin.

However, the discussion is handicapped by a shortage of case-material from the early period, since the missionaries never penetrated village life in the way that the anthropologists were later to do. It is necessary to fall back on generalised ethnographic statements from that period, and these are not based on systematic research nor adjusted to an analysis of the kind or in the detail here attempted. Nevertheless when they can be fitted with an analysis based primarily on the Wilsons' reports for the later period, they do have evidential value.

In the 1930s the arbitration of disputes by friends and neighbours of the parties was strictly speaking illegal, but it remained widespread.¹ The case would be taken to a respected friend, often to the assistant headman of the village section of one or both the parties, but not necessarily to the holder of any recognised office. It would then be presented in public before him, perhaps with the participation of further friends and neighbours. The arbitrator might find himself in some cases unable or unwilling to reach a conclusion, or having reached a conclusion this might be unacceptable to one of the parties. The matter would then have to be referred to the village headman. Before him a similar process would be carried through. Though his opinion would be likely to carry greater weight, his position is fundamentally the same as the respected friend's, i.e. that he might consider the case too hard for him and even if he did give an award had no means of forcing its acceptance. The case might therefore be forwarded once again, now to the senior headman of the "side". He is again in an exactly similar position, and the case might again and finally go forward to the prince.

To say that the case goes ultimately to the prince is not to say that he has any final, autocratic word. According to Godfrey Wilson,

1. Godfrey Wilson (1938, 15) goes so far as to state that "the power of great-commoners to settle disputes by arbitration in their separate villages is still the basis of the legal system".

"the chief and great commoners together hear and decide cases within the chieftdom . . . Cases are conducted and witnesses interrogated by chief and great commoners together and the decision which the chief pronounces is an expression of their general opinion".¹ It should also be remembered that "difficult" cases, particularly those involving inheritance, might be referred to a senior title where such existed.² It seems likely, however, that when applied to the indigenous position even Wilson's statement suggests a stronger role for the prince than in fact was general. It may well reflect the strengthening of the prince's position, as a chief, *vis-à-vis* his headmen and commoners generally, which Administration support for the chiefs is said to have brought about.³

The custom of acting in the prince's name and attributing to him what, objectively considered, was never his may also lead to an over-estimation of the prince's real importance. The most striking manifestation of this is the employment of spokesmen and envoys who behave exactly as if they themselves were the prince they represent. In the Mbasi narrative, Mwakumbo's envoy to the missionaries' conference and the leader of Mwanjabala's war-party acted thus. In neither case can it even be confidently said that those speaking in the name of the prince actually received their instructions from him. Godfrey Wilson makes a similar point in relation to the prince's role in the distribution of land (see below). In view of all this it may be reasonable to accept Merensky's account of the legitimate role of the prince in hearing cases. He asserts that the prince presides, but himself remains silent. His headmen ("councillors") conduct the case and pass judgment, the prince being limited to adjourning the case if the judges are unable to agree.⁴ This is not of course to deny that some princes may have been able to assert themselves and play a far more active part in the proceedings.

The fact that cases appealed come before a bench of judges which includes two of those who will have already given a judgment on the matter is important for the process of settlement as a whole. The previous judge is indeed generally asked to explain the case to the new court.⁵ In the first place this should influence the parties in the direction of accepting the decision at an earlier stage since

1. Wilson, G. 1951, 286/7.
2. Cf. p. 24 above.
3. Cf. Wilson, M. 1959, 13 for a prince's account of the matter.
4. Merensky 1894, 133.
5. Wilson, G. 1937, 28.

the prince's court has this obvious built-in bias towards accepting decisions already given. On the other hand, it should also encourage headmen to give judgments which they will later have no difficulty in defending before their peers.

I have so far done little more than to outline the bare structure of the authority hierarchy in relation to the settlement of disputes. There is a general principle to be observed throughout Nyakyusa attempts to achieve settlements, and hence to maintain the rights of individuals, whether the parties are neighbours or live on opposite sides of the valley. Monica Wilson writes: "As is evident from the examples cited, friends and village headmen arbitrate not only in cases between neighbours, but also in those between members of different villages, *the plaintiff always applying to the friends or headman of the defendant for an opinion on the case*" (my emphasis).¹ In spite of the first part of this sentence there is unfortunately not the case material fully to demonstrate the procedure. One of the cases cited does indeed illustrate the principle of bringing into a case people as closely as possible connected with the defendant, and it *may* also be between members of different villages, though this is not stated. I therefore quote the brief account of the case in full:

One man, A, accused another, B, of stealing the cow-bell off one of his cows, when A's herd was grazing near B's homestead. The case was first brought before B's immediate neighbours who thought him guilty, and ordered him to produce the bell. He refused and the case went to the village headman, who also found B guilty and ordered him to pay 10s. fine. B accepted this judgement but had not yet paid the fine when the case was reported.²

This is of course a modern case, but even here the operation of the principle can be seen. The rationale of the procedure is simple. From the point of view of the plaintiff, it is an attempt to gain the support for his case of those in a strong position to influence the defendant. They are likely, it is true, to favour the defendant to some extent, but this disadvantage is likely to be outweighed by the ease and absence of expense in a settlement by this method. There is no compulsion on the plaintiff to accept a decision if he considers it unfair. From the point of view of the arbitrator, not only

1. Wilson, M. 1951, 142.

2. *Ibid.*, 141.

is there prestige in arbitrating successfully, but he is also in a position to achieve for his friend the most favourable settlement the latter is ever likely to obtain. Thus in the example above, return of the bell became on appeal a ten shilling fine. This must also be important to the defendant in deciding whether to accept the award.

Where disputes were between kinsmen they might sometimes also be taken to other kinsmen for arbitration, though they would not necessarily be so taken. One of Monica Wilson's other cases, for example, concerns a son who brought his father before Kasitile, one of the foremost royal priests in Selya and one of the father's most influential friends.¹

Throughout Nyakyusa settlement procedures, as I have explained, great reliance was placed on the parties concerned accepting decisions reached, i.e. on the action of informal pressures. Such reliance was by no means absent even in connection with the decisions of the prince's court. There the consensus of the headmen representing all the villages under a single prince must have carried considerable weight. Where such consensus was not obtainable, it seems that there was little that the prince could do about it. Where villages as a whole were in dispute, over boundaries, for example, there is said often to have been inter-village fighting.²

The prince's court, however, could and did enforce its judgments; it is said that the prince's junior kinsmen and the men from his "capital" might be used as police to this effect.³ It could also order the poison oracle to be consulted to discover otherwise elusive truth, though there was also much more or less voluntary appealing to this oracle in its mild Nyakyusa form, particularly in witchcraft cases.⁴

So far I have been considering the procedure only for what are generally distinguished as civil wrongs, i.e. those for which the injured party is entitled to sue for damages, but against which no action is taken by any central authority or on behalf of the society as a whole.⁵ There is not the evidence to allow any detailed discussion of the offences, etc., on which were based the claims, the settlement

1. Wilson, M. 1951, 141.

2. *Ibid.*, 45.

3. *Ibid.*, 137.

4. The oracle was a mild poison drunk by the parties, failure to vomit being the sign of guilt. See Wilson, M., 1951, 115 and 241-6, also p. 106-7 below.

5. Godfrey Wilson's "Introduction to Nyakyusa Law" (1937) is, like its Malinowskian model, stronger on "custom" than on "crime". Much of the analysis of arbitration in *Good Company* has its origin here, but criminal procedures are virtually ignored.

of which I have discussed above. It is clear, however, that the civil sphere was almost all-embracing, and this can be seen as a measure of the weakness of political centralisation among the Nyakyusa. Of four notable offences, homicide, adultery, cattle-stealing and supernatural offences, the first two certainly belonged exclusively to the civil sphere. Offenders would flee to escape a more or less serious risk of vengeance, from the husband and his brothers in the case of adultery and from a rather wider agnatic group in the case of homicide.¹ Homicide, and perhaps to a lesser extent adultery, also put the kin of the parties in mystical danger if they should eat together. Only cattle-stealing and supernatural offences such as witchcraft were met in a way suggesting that they can be regarded as crimes against society. In the case of cattle-stealing the offender would be fined one or more head of cattle, besides having to make good the stolen beasts. The first beast of a fine would be slaughtered and publicly consumed and if there were a second this would go to the prince.² Within what unit this would be effective I cannot say. For supernatural offences the penalty was expulsion, the property of the offender falling to the prince. A person accused of witchcraft could appeal to the ordeal. Accuser and accused would then have to report the case to the prince, who would provide official witnesses to the ordeal.³

Where cases were between the followers of different princes the same principle described above operated, namely that the plaintiff sought to involve in the case on his behalf somebody as close as possible to the defendant. Women and cattle provided the principal means of doing this.

One of the Wilsons' informants gives a generalised hypothetical case of the use of women for this purpose:

In the old days if one man A, had 'eaten' the cow of another, B, living in a different chiefdom, and failed to repay it, though

1. Wilson, G. 1951, 259; Wilson, M. 1950, 122/3 and 1951, 149. The violence towards adulterers in the past is thought to have been responsible for the rarity of adultery in pre-European times. But adultery and divorce were not in fact rare (cf. Schumann 1916, 22: he describes the "frivolous" attitude of the Nyakyusa towards marriage as one of the mission's early problems. Men eloping with married women, he describes as an everyday occurrence. Few women of thirty were still with their first husbands, and very often a woman was currently married to her fifth or sixth husband, occasionally to up to a twentieth husband). The violence of the past is also probably exaggerated.

2. Merensky 1894, 132.

3. Wilson, M. 1951, 115 and 241/6.

B came frequently to claim his cow, and if the wife of a village neighbour of A visited in B's country, B might seize her and take her to his chief, saying: 'This woman is the wife of C, a neighbour of A, who has "eaten" my cow.' Then the chief sent to the chief of A's country, saying that they had caught the wife of C and they wanted the cow due from A. Then A would send the cow and B would send back the wife of C with a bull to say: 'Thank you, you have settled my case'. Then the husband, C, might demand a hoe as well. If A denied his debt when the message came, and asserted that B's friends had seized the woman without cause, his chief would send him to B's chief, saying: 'My man denies the charge. Let them drink *umwafi*.' Then A and B would take the ordeal in B's country.¹

There is no question here of arraigning the defendant before his prince; it is a case of the general principle observed above. C was not merely a fellow subject of the same prince as A, but a village neighbour, likely therefore to be able to mobilise pressure within the village to secure the desired end. The princes' role here is essentially as a link between the parties, perhaps simply on the basis of common princeliness, perhaps as kinsmen. Closeness of kinship might be expected to make for more effective and readier co-operation in this respect, but there is not the evidence to say whether in fact it did. A second point to note is that there was no question of penalising C for the wrong done by his fellow villager; he is paid for the inconvenience of his wife's detention with a bull—far less valuable than a cow—and perhaps a hoe, another standard article of payment, as well. The seizing in this way of a wife or cattle is a means to a settlement, not the settlement itself. No corporate responsibility of the village for its members *vis-à-vis* outsiders is here displayed.² A third point to be noted is the movement around the country assumed both by the method itself and throughout the story.

As an early example shows, the defendant's own wife might also be seized for the same purpose, though a man who knew there was a case against him in a particular part of the country would presumably keep his wives away from it. In 1897 a woman is reported as having come to Manow mission to the north of Selya to try to obtain medicine from the missionaries to prevent her being constantly seized by people with cases against her husband.³

1. Wilson, M. 1951, 266. The source was "an old pagan man".
 2. Cf. Wilson, M. 1951, 149/52.
 3. MB 1897, 217.

Above, a woman was used to secure the return of cattle, but it might as well have been the other way round, women and cattle being the two major, almost the two only, sources of dispute between people living at a distance. This is true of women for two reasons, first because, though most wives were, as might be expected, drawn from nearby, there is no endogamous unit and wives might be found beyond the limits of the country of one's own prince; and secondly because, contrary to the belief of modern Nyakyusa, adultery and divorce were common before the arrival of Europeans and frequently involved the need to elope to a distance.¹ The exchange of cattle was of course involved in these marriage transactions, divorce meaning the return not only of the original cattle paid but also the progeny. In addition it was the custom for men owning substantial herds to entrust some to friends elsewhere for herding; an early Moravian convert for example had had cattle with acquaintances "in another country", which had been seized by a German punitive expedition.² Two years earlier the Moravian Bachmann had declared this to be a custom which gave rise to unending quarrels. He tried to bar people who did this with their cattle from being taught, and indeed also to forbid marriage payments on the same grounds.³ Unfortunately these are the only two references to the custom I have been able to discover and there is therefore not the data for any analysis of its significance.⁴

Before I go on to consider cattle-stealing and the significance of cattle in providing a basis for order, I must briefly discuss a little more generally the mechanism I have described. Though it provided a possibility of settling disputes and maintaining rights and would, I think, often have worked out satisfactorily, it should not be imagined that perfect harmony reigned, or even that the degree of order was comparable to that attained in centralised African states with powerful rulers. The Nyakyusa polity remained highly fragmented.

There is not the case-material properly to discuss the working out of the principle, but it can safely be said that success would by no means automatically have followed its invocation. It seems likely

1. See Note 1, p. 53 above.

2. *JUF* 1899, 371.

3. *BG* 1897, 355.

4. It can probably be seen as an insurance against the chances of war, witchcraft accusations and disease, but also as a means of concealing wealth (cf. Wilson, M. 1957, 31).

that relations between the villages of the parties involved would have been crucial to the chances of success. In the first place the seizing of a woman or cattle, though intended to open a case, would not necessarily have been accepted in this sense by the fellow-villagers of the man whose property was seized. If relations were already bad between the villages, then it might well be treated as an unwarranted attack, to be avenged by the village as a whole or by a section of it. Even if it were not so taken, it might yet prove impossible for the man whose cattle or wife had been seized to mobilise pressure on the defendant even to assume that role, let alone to settle the claim. The relative importance of the two people would probably weigh here, but also again the relations between the villages. The greater the intercourse between their members and the greater their proximity, which would be likely to go together, the easier is mobilisation of pressure likely to have been, for a continuing dispute would endanger further wives and cattle of villagers. Conversely it is of course likely to have been, in general, true that the further apart people lived and the less intercourse they had, the less likely would disputes have been to arise anyway.

Where the prince had the power to take an initiative in the matter, then this might, to some extent and in certain cases only, have been able to counteract initial difficulties of mobilisation. But where the prince himself was involved as defendant, then this same power, in so far as it existed, would have frustrated the process. Unless he had no possibility of initiative, the prince would hardly be likely to co-operate in forming the link which might force him to a disadvantageous settlement. In cases between princes I would expect there to have been some possibility of arbitration by a fellow prince, particularly a senior kinsman of the defendant, but I have no direct evidence that this would have happened; the Berlin missionaries had no success in their attempt to get first Lwembe, then Mwakambo to arbitrate between Mwaipopo and Mwakalobo, but I suggest why this should have been so when I discuss the case in Chapter 6 below. The cattle-raiding by which the dispute was in fact conducted was probably the typical outcome in such cases.¹

Returning now to cattle-stealing, in the early records there are a number of cases of this, reported to the missionaries in attempts to enlist their aid. Only rarely, however, did some further purpose in

1. Merensky 1894, 264/5.

the action not emerge and it is very often a case of one cow only being stolen. When Mwanjabala sent, for example, to complain that Mwaipopo's people had stolen a cow, it came out that one of the latter's men had run off with a married woman to Mwanjabala's.¹ The stealing was thus probably an attempt to initiate action against the adulterer on the lines described above, but which failed, either because the distance, spatial and genealogical, was too great, or the intercourse too little, for an effective link, or because Mwanjabala saw that the mission represented a new possibility of securing a more advantageous settlement than could have been achieved by indigenous means.²

Cattle may, I think, be seen as one of the main bases for order and the maintenance of rights throughout the society. Cattle-stealing, it will be remembered, was no mere civil wrong but one in which the local group as a whole was involved. While the taking of a married woman in furtherance of a case would only mobilise the husband, his immediate kin and friends, taking cattle would have a much greater impact, more immediately mobilising headmen and princes.

I drew attention above to the fact that the theft was frequently limited to one cow only, yet cattle were not herded singly, nor were they given any particular protection while in the pastures. Monica Wilson writes that "Before the establishment of peace by European authority, . . . cattle were commonly herded by young men, armed, and only the calves were entrusted to boys, who herded them near the homesteads".³ But this seems to be a further case of remembering the past as tougher and more unruly than it really was, perhaps in reaction to the alien-imposed restrictions of the present. It may well have been that in times of particular unrest, as when foreign raiders were in the valley, the young men did guard the cattle, but there are at least two testimonies from before the beginning of Administration that this was not generally so. Giraud writes of the plains that "The cattle are more particularly entrusted to the care of children who amuse themselves pursuing them all day long among the tall grasses round about".⁴ F. L. M. Moir, referring to the same period, writes of the large herds tended by "little naked herdboys".⁵ There is thus no evidence that it was not, then as in the 1930s, mainly

1. *MB* 1892, 410.
2. See below, Chapter 6.
3. Wilson, *M.* 1951, 20.
4. Giraud, 189/90.
5. Moir 1885.

boys up to the age of eight to ten years who did the herding. It is indeed a singular fact that the herds should not have been more adequately guarded. It must, it seems to me, reflect a fairly high degree of general order in the country, in spite of all the reports of raiding and stealing, and to be functionally connected with the importance of the seizing of cattle in maintaining that order.

Finally in this section I wish to contrast the tenor of what I have said above with that of a summarising statement of Monica Wilson's at the beginning of *Rituals of Kinship*. "An adulterer or cattle-thief was speared by the injured party and his kinsmen, if they could catch him. If they could not, they might attack any member of his age-village. This commonly led to war between the villages, but short of this, the kinsmen of the dead man claimed compensation from the thief or adulterer and his kin, not from the avengers."¹ Once again a more violent world appears in which the stress is laid on revenge rather than on compensation; the injured party would here seem to get nothing but the satisfaction of hurting the original injurer.

I cannot cite evidence to prove that such things never happened. On occasion they may well have done so, but besides one definite statement by Merensky to the contrary, the total impression of the Nyakyusa which is to be derived from early reports weighs against this course of action being followed as a general rule. If I can summarise some of the aspects of the total impression in a few words, the Nyakyusa appear to have been relatively tender-minded towards killing, though often not averse to fighting in the limited form it generally took. But though they may have been easily roused to violence in the face of an affront, they seem as quickly to have subsided and to have been ready to take a reasonable course, to extract as much personal advantage as possible from the situation, bad as it might be. The scale of damages given by Merensky is suggestive in this respect:

Striking another so as to draw blood	—	one beast.
putting out an eye	—	four beasts and a sister to wife, since no woman would voluntarily marry a one-eyed man.
<hr/> homicide	—	ten head of cattle and a wife. ²

1. Wilson, M. 1957. 2. This is similar to a more detailed passage by the same author (1950, 122/3).

2. Merensky 1894, 133.

These payments are very large compared with the level of marriage-payments which seems to have obtained. Fulleborn states that a prince's daughter might command ten or twelve cows, while a commoner's only three. Other sources confirm these as reasonable figures¹. Thus if Merensky's figures for damages bear any relation at all to fact they show (a) the very high value put on life and the avoidance of suffering in this society, and (b) the great premium placed on *not* retaliating to violence by further violence, but instead on suing the offender. Merensky indeed, as mentioned above, explicitly states that cattle-stealing does not escalate into what he calls "feud", nor "feud" into war. He goes on to say that the men of different villages or princes may come to blows with one another in disputes over stolen cattle or over wrongs at a salt-pan which is important as a salt-lick for the cattle. The dispute may become heated and the parties jeer at one another and try to seize each other's cattle. In the course of this, one or a few young men might be killed, but revenge for this would then only be taken by again stealing from the opponents as opportunity offered.²

3 Economic activity and the control of resources

In relation to the distribution of land, the prince's position is largely, as in dispute-settlement, that of a figurehead.³ The matter can be put succinctly in quotation from Godfrey Wilson's *Land Rights of Individuals*. Any newcomer who receives land in a village "is commonly said to have been given it by the chief".⁴ A headman would generally consult his prince about the allocation of land, but the grant is not invalidated if this is not done: "Normally land for building and gardens is granted to a stranger by the villagers concerned acting through their great-commoner, not by the chief, who is usually informed but seldom interferes." "It is quite clear from my evidence that, though the normal custom is to consult the chief when a newcomer is given land, yet the newcomer's title is in no way invalidated if the great-commoner omits to do so at the

1. Fulleborn, 344; *JUF* 1894, 155; *MB* 1897, 218; Wilson, M. 1950, 121. Hall (1943) gives figures for the 1920s intermediate between the traditional and those reported by the Wilsons. The rates were radically, though temporarily, upset by the rinderpest epidemic of 1892.
2. Merensky 1894, 136.
3. Cf. Gulliver 1958, 7: "A villager said: 'A chief does not own the chiefdom, or the land. We, the people together, own it.'"
4. Wilson, G. 1938, 41.

time and simply tells the chief later after the grant has been made."¹ Nevertheless the prince does have some rights in the allocation of land in that he can probably take land for his own use and for allocation to his close kinsmen, though he is likely to prefer to act through the headman.²

Among the Nyakyusa neither the Wilsons nor any of the early sources report any element of control of agriculture by the princes, though Monica Wilson states that headmen and princes in Ukukwe have some role in fixing the beginning of the clearing of the fields, while in Ngonde there are elaborate communal first-fruit rituals.³ Lehmann, however, who spent three months in field-work in 1939 near Masoko, reported that there had previously been important ceremonies there at the beginning of the hoeing season in which the prince had an important part. He reports also that the prince's permission had to be obtained before the harvest could be begun: "First the oldest male villagers informed the chief that it may now be the just time to give the crop free for the people, saying: 'The people is hungry, we will now give them to eat!' Then the chief ordered that six or eight (maize) corn-cobs were brought to him, and he sent these corn-cobs by a messenger to the (holy) offering-grove where they must be put down. After that had been correctly executed, he gave the permission for reaping the new crop."⁴ Although too much reliance cannot be placed on Lehmann's evidence, it is true that the Wilsons never worked among the Nyakyusa of the Mpuguso region, to whom Lehmann's prince probably belonged though he cannot be identified. These are the Nyakyusa living closest to the Kukwe. Even in the account given above it is clear that no personal initiative on the part of the prince is implied; it is the "oldest male villagers" who effectively open the harvest. The prince's role is ritual rather than political.

Fishing was often performed by poisoning a stream. If the fish were in short supply, it is said that the prince might sometimes exercise some control by preventing the poisoning for a period. There is no evidence that it would not have been, as seems more likely, the headmen who would have taken the decision and enforced it. The Nyakyusa were not in general interested in hunting, but their country abounded in wild animals which damaged crops and might

1. Wilson, G. 1938, 34/5.
2. *Ibid.*, 41.
3. Wilson, M. 1951, 51/4.
4. Lehmann 1951a, 139.

at times endanger life. It therefore sometimes became necessary to hunt in order to mitigate these dangers and the men of the prince's country might then be called out in his name, rather as they might be for war.¹

4 Fighting

As with the settlement of disputes, the princes had no monopoly of military leadership. Headmen and even assistant headmen might, as the following case shows, lead their men independently to fight. The incident here reported was one element in a notorious, prolonged and inconclusive court case heard before Mwaipopo. The Wilsons' immediate informant was Mwaisumo, their clerk. It will be noted that the people of Mwakalembo's village are spoken of as his followers.²

That Mwaipaja of whom they speak was the assistant village headman—a senior man. The followers of Mwakalembo [a village headman] made love to the wives [of Mwaipaja's men], they approached them when they [the women] went to draw water. Mwaipaja was angry and called out his men to fight with the followers of Mwakalembo. Mwaipaja was defeated and fled. The followers of Mwakalembo took his homestead. Mwaipaja was driven out: he built at Lupata where Kalunda and his men are now. [Lupata was at least half a mile away from his original home].³

It is not clear in this case whether Mwaipaja was or was not an assistant headman in Mwakalembo's village, i.e. whether this was a case of intra-village fighting, or of fighting between a village and a village section. The latter seems slightly the more probable, but in any case the point that headmen and assistant headmen might act as military leaders without reference to the prince is illustrated.

Even where villages or village sections as a whole were not involved, fighting might arise about which neither prince nor headman could or would do anything. A case reported in 1894 by the Moravian missionary Richard from Ipyana station in the plains shows how quarrels leading to fighting might blow up in which the prince, in this case one of the more important of the plains princes, would be unable to take any effective action. There may of course

1. Wilson, M. 1951, 58/9.
2. See below, Chapter 5.
3. Wilson, M. 1951, 189.

have been much more involved here than Richard knew. He quotes the case in illustration of the lack of respect paid to princes.

Some young men [not far from the mission] put up a hut near the home of several other natives. These latter protested. The chief came and traced a dividing line intended to separate the two properties, but the youngsters ignored this. Indeed they set up their hut on the line itself. The quarrel grew more vicious; they came to blows and, a few moments later, two dead and two seriously wounded lay on the battle-field . . . Richard summoned the chief and reproached him seriously, but he protested his innocence, declaring that he had done all he could to avoid the spilling of blood.¹ [This was probably Prince Mwakalinga.]

Turning now to fighting between princes, Merensky stresses the prince's dependence on his headmen. If the prince wants to declare war, he puts the matter before his elders, presumably the headmen, and they may dissuade him. A collective decision to make war is necessary and even when it has been taken the prince makes a point of obtaining an explicit assurance that he will not afterwards be accused of cruelty in starting the war. As the war will be conducted in the prince's name, this would presumably be a danger if things went wrong.²

Merensky states that war should be openly declared and fought out by day and this did perhaps sometimes happen. It is reported from the Rungwe region, i.e. among the Kukwe, that a spear and an ox were there sent to an opponent as a formal declaration of war.³ Merensky also notes, however, that there might be a surprise attack by night; and in cattle-raiding, the most usual kind of fighting between princes, surprise was probably general. The suggestion that this was so emerges, for instance, in a Nyakyusa hypothetical case quoted by Monica Wilson: It is there suggested the Prince Mwangomo would attack his neighbour Mwaipopo; "he came in the night with his people and seized the cattle, both those of the chief, Mwaipopo, and those of the commoners".⁴ An explanation of the use of war-paint by the old royal priest Kasitile has a similar implication of surprise. He suggested that it was useful in distinguishing attackers from attacked, since only the former would have had the opportunity to don the paint.

1. *BG* 1895, 50; *JUF* 1895, 126.
2. Merensky 1894, 136.
3. Fulleborn, 305.
4. Wilson, M. 1959, 13.

As I have noted, fighting between princes frequently took the form of cattle-raiding. I discuss below the importance of cattle as a basis for princely power, and here I need only say that the seizing of cattle was particularly effective both in enhancing the prince's own position and in striking at the power of a rival, all princes being in some measure in competition. The prince would certainly secure a major share of the booty, particularly of cattle obtained.¹ A quotation in the preceding paragraph suggests that there would be no distinction made in seizing cattle between those belonging to the prince himself and those belonging to his people, and it is indeed difficult to see how any such distinction would be practicable. Nevertheless, in the report of the dispute between the brother princes, Mwandosya and Mwambebile, in which the former was plundered not only by the latter but by Mwangomo and Mwakatungila as well, the impression is given that it was the prince himself whose cattle were being taken.² This may well, however, be another case of the prince standing for his people as a whole.

Fighting between princes frequently of course had more far-reaching roots, even when it took the form of cattle-raiding, than a simple seeking to enrich oneself at the expense of another. In December, 1892, for example, Mwaipopo raided one of Mwakalobo's villages, stealing twelve cattle but losing three men in the process. Mwakalobo, though losing the cattle, had only one man and one woman wounded. The dispute of which this raid was an incident has been referred to above; it concerned Mwaipopo's claim to overlordship and its rebuttal by Mwakalobo.³ I have also referred above to the fishing-rights war of the same year between Mwanjabala and Mwakenja. There were no missionaries stationed in the region at the period and there is no real evidence as to the manner in which this war was conducted, whether by raiding or by pitched battles.⁴ Nauhaus's report implies a series of encounters in

1. Merensky 1894, 130.

2. *Ibid.* 199.

3. *Ibid.* 264.

4. MacKenzie has an account of the form of a pitched battle, but, as is general with his work, it is impossible to know whether this refers to the Nyakyusa or only to the Ngonde. He writes that the opposing forces lined up facing each with a "hero" in front whose role was to taunt the enemy. Fighting was mainly by the throwing of spears, though with some stabbing at close quarters. The forces would retire after short bouts, controlled by the prince blowing a war-horn. Early sources, Laws and Moir for example, provide some confirmation in reporting suitable armaments; Nyakyusa did carry bundles of throwing spears and a stabbing spear in warlike circumstances. (MacKenzie, 174; Laws 1878; Moir 1923, 89.)

which Mwanjabala's forces were always defeated, but little reliance can I think be placed on the detail of the report. Casualties in this war between the two most powerful princes in the land are said to have amounted to seven killed, six of them Mwanjabala's men.¹

The prince's first importance in war was probably a responsibility for ritual preparations to ensure success. MacKenzie describes how the prince would pray in the house of his senior wife and how new fire would be made, but there must be doubt as to whether this is even intended to apply to the Nyakyusa.² There is, however, a report of the renewal of the tails, emblems of princely office connected with war, in Mwaipopo's chiefdom in 1937, and this does confirm the particular importance of the senior wife in this field. The renewal of the tails in fact involved the treating of four giraffe or zebra tails with medicines. This was said to have been done formerly in the context of war and to have lapsed when the possibility of war came to an end. In this case it was performed in connexion with the passing on of the tails from Mwaipopo's mother³ to his senior wife Kalinga. At the handing-over and treating were Mwaipopo himself with two unnamed kinsmen, together with three commoner priests whose titles had originally been those of village headmen under Mwaipopo's father, Mwaijonga. Kalinga, Mwaipopo and one of the priests performed the actual treatment of the tails with ointment. Monica Wilson writes that it is "common knowledge . . . that the tails are 'for seizing cattle', and they are associated with 'manure and blood'. We were told at the conclusion of the ritual: 'Formerly we should have gone tomorrow, after this treating of the tails, to fight.'"⁴

If the prince actually went to war, and the incident of Mwanjabala's war-party shows that he did not necessarily accompany every military expedition, then Merensky reports that he would himself take part in the battle surrounded by a special bodyguard.⁵ Prince Mwakalinga appears to have been in the forefront of the forces prepared to oppose the Germans in the Rising of 1897, since he was one of about 50 killed in the entirely one-sided engagement.⁶

1. Merensky 1894, 136.
2. MacKenzie, 174.
3. There is slight evidence that the prince's mother may have traditionally occupied an important position. Cf. Giraud, 188.
4. Wilson, M. 1959, 61.
5. Merensky 1894, 137.
6. *BG* 1898, 182.

5 Ritual

In relation to agriculture and to war this topic has been discussed above. In the following chapter I discuss in some detail the Coming-out. Among the private rituals of his subjects those surrounding death are the only ones in which the prince has a part. The Nyakyusa say that this is so because the prince is like a senior kinsman of his subjects. The explanation is perhaps rather to be seen in the importance of his subjects to the Nyakyusa prince; given the beliefs about the origins of misfortune in the mystical attacks of neighbours, deaths often lead to moving, and to minimise the risk of losing the bereaved family, the prince may reasonably wish at this moment to reassert the link between his subjects and himself. When a death occurs messages should be sent not only to the kinsmen but to the headman and the prince also. The prince is expected to attend funerals, and a fixed portion, the breast and ribs, of one of the beasts sacrificed is allocated to him. But he has no active part to play in the proceedings, so that his presence is not essential and he may send a representative, often a son.¹ He must, however, provide the drums for the dancing or, as Hall, an ethnographically-inclined District Officer, has it, his authorisation is required for the beating of the drums.²

Senior kinsmen are always important to the Nyakyusa and particularly so if they are dead.³ Commoners have a cult of their own ancestors about which not a great deal appears to be known,⁴ but far more important is the cult of the princely ancestors. These are thought to control the welfare not only of their descendants but of their countries and people also. With the proliferation of princes, the more generations removed from the present the ancestor the greater the range of his influence over his descendant princes and their people is thought to be. According to Monica Wilson, "in theory", presumably in Nyakyusa theory, when sacrifices to the princely ancestors are required a beginning should be made with the most distant ancestor, proceeding next to those of the following generation, and so on in this way. "But", Wilson writes, "this does not happen in practice nowadays and we doubt whether it ever did"; "in 1935 a celebration at the grove of Mwajijonga preceded

1. Wilson, M. 1957, 14/5.
2. Hall 1943.
3. Cf. Wilson, M. 1950, 136.
4. Cf. Wilson, G. 1951, 257; Wilson, M. 1951, 121/3.

one at the grove of his great-grandfather Mwakisambwe by a month".¹ In fact, as only groves which are of particular importance in some way survive over long periods, there is by no means a complete series of groves parallel to the genealogy. The lack of order in practice is also to be seen whenever ancestors are invoked. Many names are generally listed, without any strict distinction between those who are of the direct line and those who are not, and with little sign of any methodical ordering.²

There are two main kinds of rites in the ancestor cult which are relevant here, but there is not the evidence to draw any distinction, if such existed, between the ends to which they were directed. These ends were concerned with troubles affecting the people as a whole, seeking either to avoid trouble foreseen or to alleviate trouble present. Typically such troubles would concern the weather, too much or too little rain, not enough sun; lack of success in economic activity, crop failures, a shortage of fish; diseases in men and cattle, and other natural disasters; war.

The first of the two kinds of rites are the esoteric sacrifices at the burial groves of former ruling princes. These groves have hereditary priests attached to them and it is these who play the major part in the rites. There is a part to be played by princes but these need not necessarily, it seems, be ruling princes. Thus in Monica Wilson's two examples, the sacrifice at the grove of Mwajonga was attended by the ruling prince Mwaipopo, while that at the grove of Mwakisambwe was carried out in the absence of any ruling prince.³ The rites do, however, depend upon their co-operation, for the prince must provide the beast, cow or black bull, to be sacrificed, and this is perhaps his greatest importance in connexion with these rites.

The second kind of rite is exoteric and involves the prince more centrally. This is a rite of public prayer conducted by the prince. The Berlin missionary Schumann witnessed such a rite performed near Manow mission station by Prince Mwakalobo in the great rinderpest epidemic of 1892, and I quote his account of it.⁴ I know of no other record of the practice of a similar rite among the Nya-

1. Wilson, M. 1959, 71.

2. *Ibid.*, 79, and see below for a nineteenth century example.

3. *Ibid.*, 74/81.

4. Merensky 1894, 115.

kyusa, though the account may be compared with the closely similar rite observed by the Wilsons among the Kukwe.¹

When Schumann reached Mwakalobo's the young men had not yet arrived, but they soon did so, fully armed. The warden soon began. Then the chief went into his great wife's hut, fetched the calabash bottle filled with beer which had been mixed with water, and proceeded with it to the back-door of the hut. At once the assembled people formed an oval ring before him, holding their tough shields in front of them. When all was in order a deathly silence reigned; one could have heard a leaf fall to the ground. Then the chief began to speak in prayer: 'I call upon you, do not frighten us, I say, the scourge here above² which is killing us, may it abate. I say: Thou my father Mwakalasi, thou Mwakalendile, thou Mwansasu, thou Mwaitalako, thou Kalembusya, thou Mwaipopo, thou Mwakibinga stand by me! Hear the word that I speak, fall down before God³ and say 'Wherefore should Mwakalobo's cattle die? Let the plague abate!' See, thou gavest me the hoe, maize, the banana, beer!' . . . Then Mwakalobo took the calabash bottle, poured some of the beer it held into his cupped left hand, drew it into his mouth and sprayed it over the shields in the circle around him until the bottle was empty.

There are unfortunately reasons why the accuracy of the section of Monica Wilson's genealogy in which Mwakalobo falls cannot be unquestioningly accepted, yet the seven ancestors invoked deserve comment which can only be based on this same genealogy. According to it, Mwakalasi was indeed Mwakalobo's father; Mwakalendile and Mwansasu were his father's brother's sons, though Mwakalendile was also the father of Mwankuga, who is said in the literature to have been Mwakalobo's brother;⁴ the following two names cannot be traced; Mwaipopo is shown as Mwakalobo's great-grandfather, and Mwakibinga as his grandfather. Thus three generations of the line and its nearest collaterals are covered.

It is impossible to know how usual or unusual were such occasions of active ritual leadership by the prince, but it is interesting to note that the Wilsons apparently discovered no evidence of such rites among the Nyakyusa proper and only chanced to encounter one at Rungwe, the account of which contains several hints that the participants had not held such a rite for a considerable period and

1. Wilson, M. 1959, 105 foll.
2. The realm of ancestors and gods is below.
3. I cannot here discuss the theology of the prayer.
4. Merensky 1894, 255; *MB* 1892, 549.

were uncertain at times as to what should be done. It is speculative but perhaps reasonable to suggest that for two reasons rites of this kind are likely to have resisted changed circumstances less well than the rites of sacrifice. In the first place the esoteric rite requires only the faithfulness of a few experts and the occasional co-operation of the prince for its maintenance, whereas the exoteric rite is likely to be much more sensitive to the changed climate of opinion even among pagans which Monica Wilson found that missionary work and other European influences had brought about.¹ Secondly, it may be that as the princes have become chiefs, gaining a real power over their people such as they could never previously exert, ritual leadership which they may once have been keen to exercise has lost significance in their eyes by comparison.

6 The bases of power

I have now examined the legitimate role of the Nyakyusa prince and found its political content extremely restricted, much of what content it had being ritual. This does not mean that individual princes could not be people of great influence.² They could defeat and subordinate others, and they could undoubtedly act high-handedly at times towards their people. If this were not so there would have been no point in the admonition of the prince at the Coming-out described in the following chapter. The prince was also given medicines to develop in him impressiveness, fierceness towards enemies and a spiritual power, but it was recognised that a balance had to be struck between the cultivation of these qualities, desirable in their place, and the harsh treatment of his people likely to accompany their too great development. The medicines and their quantity had to be closely adjusted to the individual personality.³ The instance of Prince Mwakalinga, reported as being held in high regard by the people because he did not take their property and as a judge was no respecter of persons, carries the implication that others were less correct.⁴

1. Wilson, M. 1957, 4; cf. 1959, 83/4.

2. Cf. Gulliver 1958, 7 and 39: "In fact the traditional *umalafyale*, chief, only represented his chiefdom as a unit, and his lack of real power corresponded to the lack of cohesion within the chiefdom." This can be accepted as a proposition about princes in general, with their lack of any inherently powerful office.

3. Wilson, M. 1959, 58/9.

4. *MB* 1897, 208. It also implies a rather more active role in judgment than I have portrayed here. My analysis applies primarily to Selya as did the

I now discuss the bases of power, how some princes could obtain personal, if precarious, power and why the role itself was so lacking in institutionalised powers. It is a significant pointer to this weakness that the prince had no control over the appointment of those who would be his subordinates if the "chiefdom" were envisaged, as would be quite unjustified, as having a hierarchically organised authority structure. It is a further significant pointer, this time to the kind of change from prince to chief occurring, that, according to a report by Z. E. Kingdon, a District Commissioner, a tendency had grown for the *malafyale* (i.e. prince or "headman") to suggest appointments to headmanships which would then be accepted.¹

The prince was certainly highly dependent upon his headmen, who, as the leaders of the people and largely chosen by them, were in a strong position *vis-a-vis* their prince. Their power over their people might be minimal, yet at the same time, as the representatives of their people, over the prince their power could be considerable. It will be recalled that at one stage in the Mbasi affair, Mwakatungila was, as Merensky puts it, "so humiliated by his councillors" that he retreated to the shelter of the mission. It was some weeks before the missionary Nauhaus was able to bring about a reconciliation of the two parties and secure Mwakatungila's return.² The headmen might, it is said, even use violence against a recalcitrant prince; Mwankenja's father, Mwakipesile, is supposed to have been beaten into more submissive behaviour by his headmen.³ In *The Case of the Rebuked Prince* quoted in Chapter 6 below, a prince, the important Mwangomo, was tried by his own headmen and found at fault. As is the Nyakyusa way, this dependence is also expressed in mystical terms, the headmen being the leaders of mystical activity concerned either with protecting the prince against witchcraft attack, or if attack is deserved, with being its leaders in the form of "the breath of men" (*embepo sya bandu*).

Merensky saw the precariousness of the prince's position. He writes: "The chiefs of this people have no easy life. If they become old or behave in such a way that they lose favour with the people, their office is taken from them. If a chief is quarrelsome, strikes

Wilson's, but I should hope that it would be more or less accurate for the other regions, from which I have not hesitated to draw evidence where it is available.

1. Kingdon, 187.
2. Merensky 1894, 227.
3. *Ibid.*, 130.

people, or is miserly, slaughtering no cattle for the people and giving no presents to the councillors, then the Elders will come and remonstrate with him." I have already noted above that he might get beaten in such circumstances. He might also be taught a lesson by being brought false news of an attack, and being told to fight alone when he tried to summon his people to arms. Thus the real dependence of the prince upon the people could be brought forcibly to his attention. And Merensky goes on: "Or it may happen that the people really do forsake him in a family feud (i.e. among the princes), and transfer their allegiance to the neighbouring enemy . . . The possibility of being deposed is ever-present for each chief."¹

This was Merensky's judgment of the situation on the basis of the first two years of the mission's experience. Schumann, with 25 years of personal experience behind him, confirms this early impression. He explains how the country teems with princes, so that there is a shortage of subjects for them. People will move if they disagree with a decision taken by the prince, and the latter will often bribe them with an "atonement payment" to secure their return. And "Every chief is happy over every new arrival".²

Schumann has here accurately diagnosed one of the main roots of the precariousness of the prince's position. Every Coming-out produced two or more new princes without even eliminating *one* already established prince. Under these circumstances it is almost inevitable that the Coming-out itself should mean relatively little in the process of establishing a prince. Certainly a prince is unlikely to establish himself unless he has been through the Coming-out but its effect is rather to limit competition than to be a substitute for it. Like the headman, the prince must compete initially to establish himself, and later to maintain or improve the position won.

But the excess of princes only follows from the rule for the Coming-out because there were no resources to be captured which would differentiate fundamentally between the more and the less successful. It might for example have been that certain areas of the country offered substantial economic advantage over other areas to those who lived within them, as indeed became the case later with the introduction of cash-crops. If such had been the case, which it was not, then the prince controlling such an area would have had an important and permanent advantage over any prince unable to do so.

1. Merensky 1894, 130.

2. Schumann 1916, 22.

Neither apparently were there trade routes of any importance to be controlled by those able to put themselves in a position to do so. The slave and ivory trade, and the firearms and cloth which followed in its wake and were an essential part of it, had touched the valley only lightly by the beginning of the European occupation. Thus no prince was in a position to obtain mastery among his peers by virtue of the superior arms which alliance with the slavers would have brought, nor to have become a source of the new wealth in cloth, through which his standing *vis-à-vis* his subjects might have been substantially enhanced.

Some princes were, however, more important and successful than others. Prince Mwaipopo, for example, was undoubtedly one of these, both in the pre-European period and later. Lacking any attractive or coercive force to monopolise, how is it that the Nyakyusa princes attracted and retained their subjects? The first and general answer is that they did so by fulfilling the general expectations of the good prince. This involved behaving properly towards his headmen and people in the way outlined in the first part of this chapter, and of course not all did so, as I have discussed above.

More specifically it was the obligation of hospitality which the Nyakyusa regarded as central. The prince should feed his people, and since food in general was not scarce, this meant primarily that he should provide them with beer and, even more, with beef, the most prized of all foods. The significance of this is not primarily nutritional; the Nyakyusa were well fed as a rule, and with fish and milk available were probably not short of animal protein. Slaughtering for his people is, rather, significant as the expression *par excellence* of the relationship between prince and people. Although the princes had no monopoly of cattle, it was they who were particularly associated with it; Lwembe was said to have brought cattle to the valley. The commoners hunger for meat, and it is the satisfaction of this hunger which is seen as the motive for witchcraft, the specifically commoner form of mystical power. The prince must provide meat to satisfy the witches' lust and thus prevent them satisfying it on their fellows. In this way, feeding the people is also protecting them.¹ The prince must also provide cattle for sacrifice, again by means of cattle to protect his people.

There are further factors to take into account. It might well be imagined that the prince would have to be powerful enough to

1. Wilson, M. 1959, 111.

ensure that his neighbours could not raid his villages with impunity. This would require him to have as many subjects as possible, all giving him their complete loyalty. But in fact I have never seen this mentioned anywhere by the Nyakyusa as a consideration and it may well be that the prince is not looked to for protection of this kind, the village rather being seen as the unit for defence.¹ This is perhaps another case in which expectations based on a conception of "independent chiefdoms" prove erroneous.

It is also significant that important princes had many wives, according to Godfrey Wilson between fifteen and forty or more.² Giraud in 1883 claimed to have seen Mwamakula's fifty wives.³ They are important first because they produced the basic provisions for the prince's hospitality, particularly beer which only women could brew, but more so as bearers of daughters, as I shall explain below, and for the links they create between the prince and their kin. The passage of marriage-cattle among the Nyakyusa creates a bond of "kinship" (*ubukamu*) between the affines, which is supposed to be permanent.⁴ As at many points where further analysis would be of great value, there is unfortunately no body of evidence on the origins of the wives of princes. The two senior wives of each prince should, according to the Wilsons' earlier accounts, be the daughters of nearby princes,⁵ but even of such marriages there are no details to be found. The only case I have been able to trace which may be such a marriage concerns a wife of Mwankenja who was a sister of Prince Mwakasula. This case only appears in the records because the lady had deserted her husband and he appealed to the mission to try to secure a settlement.⁶ It is therefore no more than speculation to suggest that the prince's marriages were of political significance.

Finally, as the prince is the protector of the general well-being of

1. Gulliver (1958, 6) writes: "... in the larger chiefdoms there commonly existed intermittent animosity which might break out in raiding or even civil war. The integrity of these larger chiefdoms was weak—for example, when the Nyakyusa were attacked by Sangu and Ngoni war-parties, and later by the Germans, villages of the same chiefdom conspicuously failed to join in the common defence." This statement is based on accounts obtained from Ngoni in Songea, people of Ngoni descent living in Nyakyusa country, and Nyakyusa themselves, all being unanimous on this point (personal communication).
2. Wilson, G. 1951, 285.
3. Giraud, 188.
4. Wilson, M. 1950, 124/5.
5. See below, Chapter 5.
6. Merensky 1894, 204/5.

his people, he was presumably vulnerable to natural disasters. In practice this would be likely to amount to little, for so small were the princes' domains that it is unlikely that any natural disaster would fall only on the people of one prince. Thus firstly, one's own prince was clearly not alone at fault, and secondly, there would usually be nowhere safer to which to move in the face of common disaster, as there might be thought to be in personal disaster.

I now end this necessarily inconclusive discussion of the bases of princely power by considering the economics of cattle from the point of view of the prince. He must expend these in public purposes, and it may be useful to consider their source. Once a herd is in being, it could, in the healthy Nyakyusa conditions, be expected to increase naturally, and the larger the herd the greater the increment to be expected. Besides this, it seems that the major source is likely to have been from the marriage payments the prince's daughters could command.¹ As the rate of payment depended only on the status of the bride's father and there was a large differential between the rate for a commoner's daughter (up to three cattle) and for a prince's (ten to twelve head), the latter would have been able to provide himself with a substantial income by himself marrying the daughters of commoners, who might be expected to bear a reasonable proportion of his own more valuable daughters. Even if the prince's two senior wives were the highly priced daughters of other princes, their marriage payments would in any case be at least partially met by others on his behalf.² He would further have an irregular income from fines and the property of people driven away for witchcraft, though in this latter case he would also be losing subjects. Where people were actually preparing to move for some reason, a second-hand case retailed by Mwaisumo, the Wilsons' clerk, suggests that a prince might be tempted to seize cattle on a suspicion of witchcraft. In this particular case the headmen, keen perhaps to secure the movers' later return, deterred the prince from his intended course of action.³ And finally, cattle could be obtained by raiding. There were thus probably adequate sources from which any reasonably successful prince could fulfil his obligations.

1. Godfrey Wilson (1936, 284/5 and 1951, 285) gives inheritance and the marriages of kinswomen as the major sources. His earlier account goes on: "a chief has far greater rights both of inheritance and of receiving marriage-cattle, than those possessed by a senior son of a commoner."

2. See below, Chapter 5.

3. Wilson, M. 1951, 243.

In the light of this analysis of the importance and supply of cattle, it is worth considering more particularly the succession situation. I have suggested that any power the prince may wield beyond the very small influence which his office carries with it must be based primarily and ultimately on the possession of cattle and probably, to a lesser extent, of wives. If then these possessions provide some measure of the importance of a prince, his successor, since he takes over both cattle and wives, will at the same time acquire the basis of the importance of the title, at whatever level that importance may be. But it will by no means necessarily remain fixed thereafter. If it is small, then there is still the possibility that a successor who is himself rich and successful may enhance it through competition for followers and cattle with other princes. And if it is great, then, though the successor is thereby given a good start, he may yet lose the importance by failing to compete successfully. The Mwakyusa title considered in Chapter 3, from being one of the greatest, seems to have declined rapidly into insignificance after a succession. Mwanjabala, it will be remembered, appears to have had only moderate success with the Mwamakula title, while the successor to the Mwankenja title by contrast flourished.

The position of the young prince at the Coming-out is, however, very different. No redistribution of cattle is involved either for the prince or for his people, and he is unlikely yet to have acquired many wives or at least the daughters who are so important as a source of cattle, though the practice of infant betrothal may already be bringing him in some income from this source. Initially therefore he is likely to be in a weak position, in no state to assert his independence of the senior generation. The only means immediately open to him by which he can improve his position is raiding; his young subjects are likely to be in a similar cattle-starved situation. In this light should be seen the emphasis on cattle-raiding in connexion with the Coming-out. It is likely, therefore, to be in a prince's early years that he shows most interest in raiding, not merely as the means for a virile young man to prove himself, but as a necessary means of establishing a basis in cattle for his incumbency.¹

1. Gulliver has pointed out that there is some difficulty in relating this argument to my assertion on pp. 57-8 above that it was normally the young boys who looked after the herds, rather than the young men acting as guards. I can only reiterate that, though this seems to have been the usual situation, in times of special danger, whether from neighbouring princes recently "come out", from people with disputes to further, or from foreigners, special precautions are likely to have been taken.

5

THE COMING-OUT

The ritual which arouses the greatest excitement in Bu-Nyakyusa and in which every man, woman, and child participates, is the 'coming out' when the two heirs of the chief are acknowledged as rulers, and the government of the country is handed over to them and their village headmen. It was usual traditionally for two sons to succeed their father, and divide his country between them.

The 'coming out' was traditionally the occasion when authority was handed over by the elder generation to the younger. The old chief retired and he was *expected to die shortly*.¹

My object in this chapter is to examine the view of the Coming-out expressed in these propositions. It should be clear from the beginning that they represent a view of a system supposedly traditional. It is acknowledged that in the 1930s it was no longer able to work in this way; chiefs did not hand over the government to their successors at the Coming-out, nor did they die soon afterwards. It is my contention that, as an account of any traditional system, this view was the product of serious warping by the experience of forty years of European Administration, during which, as one of the Wilsons' informants put it, the Europeans had created chieftainship.²

I have already shown that titles did not necessarily or quickly disappear. I have examined the weakness of political centralisation and suggested that this involves a corresponding lack of institutionalised strength in the office of ruling prince, so that incumbents had to compete for personal influence and power if they were to attain any importance. And I have argued further that, with the large number of princes and the scarcity in relation to them both of subjects and of cattle, the prince in fact had very little option over whether or not to compete; if he did not, or did not do so successfully, then he would be most likely to be reduced to a position of direct

1. Wilson, M. 1959, 49 and 50. Her emphasis.

2. *Ibid.* 13.

subordination to a "brother" prince or to be dispossessed altogether. Here I examine the Coming-out in the light of this analysis, to determine whether it can only be interpreted as a *succession* rite, as the Wilsons have taken it to be. Also in this chapter I consider the expectation that the old prince will die shortly after the Coming-out, and the more general question of the Nyakyusa prince as a Divine King, of which this is a part.

I The Coming-out

The Coming-out occurred but once in a generation. The anthropologist in the field for a limited period could therefore not be certain of ever observing a celebration and indeed the Wilsons never did so.¹ Neither, as far as I have been able to discover, is there any first-hand account of a Coming-out anywhere in the literature. MacKenzie, unfortunately not the most reliable of reporters, comes nearest in reporting an account given to him by a prince named Reuben of his own recent Coming-out (in 1921).² It is likely, though not certain, that Reuben was the junior heir of Mwakymbe, the Mwakysusa who is shown in Wilsons' genealogy being the senior heir.³ This would thus be an instance from one of the leading houses of the plains. Godfrey Wilson arrived at the Coming-out of the heirs of the Kukwe Chief Mwangoka in 1935, the day after all the important events were completed. The Chief himself had apparently died previously although he was succeeded in his title.⁴ On the basis of evidence collected in the 1930s Godfrey Wilson produced a generalised description of the rites and this was largely followed by Monica Wilson in *Good Company*.⁵ In that work there is also published a general text on the subject by Mwaikambo, their clerk and himself the son of a Kukwe chief.⁶ In 1955 Monica Wilson was able to collect evidence concerning the Coming-out of Mwanyilu in Mwaipopo's chiefdom which had taken place some 16 months previously.⁷ Presumably as a result of this, Wilson's 1959 account differs in certain details from those published earlier. The

1. Wilson, M. 1959, 49 (note); cf. Wilson, G. 1951, 278.
2. MacKenzie, 76/7.
3. Cf. Wilson, M. 1951, 26.
4. Wilson, M. 1959, 49 (note); cf. Wilson, G. 1951, 278. Cf. Wilson, G. 1936 (a); *PC* 1947, 108.
5. Wilson, G. 1951, 278/81; Wilson, M. 1951, 22/31. Below I refer only to the latter source, except where there is particular reason to give both references.
6. Wilson, M. 1951, 186/7.
7. Wilson, M. 1959, 49 (note).

evidence available for the analysis of the Coming-out is thus less extensive and detailed than is perhaps desirable in view of the central importance attributed to the series of rites.

It is reported that it is the headmen who bring pressure to bear on their prince, when a "generation" has elapsed since his own Coming-out, to hold the celebration. The prince is reluctant "to relinquish his own honour and power".¹ I am contending that, with regard to the pre-European situation, he was not being asked to relinquish his honour and power at all. Indeed, as will be seen, if there was any serious relinquishing to be done, it would be by the headmen themselves.

When the decision has been taken, according to the earlier version, the "sons of the chief's contemporaries are summoned to attend, according to their age-villages, at the old chief's principal house".² This is somewhat misleading in that it implies a restriction on village membership by genealogical generation which does not in fact obtain. According to the 1959 version it is "all the young men" who are summoned,³ but again this is misleading since it is only those young men who are members of age-villages which have not yet come out, and are not considered either already too old to come out or still insufficiently mature to do so.

According to the Wilsons' earlier accounts, the headmen now discuss with the old prince the appointment of headmen for the new generation and where the young men are to be given land. Mwaikambo differs interestingly in emphasis in his text in writing simply that "The village headmen take council together and choose . . .", i.e. omitting the prince from the consideration. They may choose to confirm those who have previously been acting as headmen in these villages but subject to the headman of the village which founded theirs as a boys' village; or, if these have not proved wholly satisfactory, they may choose others.⁴

When the choices have been made and the young men have "come dancing and swaggering with all their cattle",⁵ one of the old headmen goes among them and catches hold of each of the new headmen in turn, first the headman of the senior village of the old prince's

1. Wilson, M. 1951, 23.

2. Wilson, G. 1951, 279.

3. Wilson, M. 1959, 49.

4. Wilson, G. (1936, 279) wrote that leaders of the boys' villages were *never* reappointed. This was corrected to "not necessarily" in the 1951 version.

5. Wilson, M. 1959, 51.

senior son, then of the senior village of the second son, then of the second senior village of the first son, and so on. It seems that there should be at least eight new headmen in all; eight is the figure usually given, though Godfrey Wilson in one place does allow that each young prince may have between four and eight.¹ Reuben claimed to have had eight himself.

All those seized, together with the young princes, are then secluded in the house of the mother of the senior of these princes for a period which apparently varies from a few hours to a month, though it seems doubtful whether all the headmen would be kept shut up for any long period. Those secluded must remain quiet and refrain from washing, a serious restriction in Nyakyusa culture. There is great secrecy about the seclusion, and this perhaps accounts for the fact that it is mentioned in neither MacKenzie's nor Mwaikambo's accounts, and not emphasised in the Wilsons' earlier versions. On the other hand there may be a real cultural difference here between Selya and the rest of the valley, particularly Ukukwe; the earlier accounts may well have been based largely on Kukwe evidence since, as I noted above, this was where Godfrey Wilson came closest to an actual celebration, and Mwaikambo was also a Kukwe.

During the seclusion where it is important, there appear to be two types of action. Firstly the old senior headmen use this time to admonish the young princes, and perhaps the headmen, for their faults and failings and to instruct them in their future roles. They are instructed in particular in the way they should treat their commoners, with courtesy, consideration and generosity. The second type of action consists in ritual symbolising a "marriage" between each young prince and his senior headman, perhaps representing the commoners in general. Each of the princes washes with medicines in the doorway of the house with his own senior headman, as the husband washes with his bride in the marriage ritual.² He then lies with a commoner—there is uncertainty as to whether this is the same senior headman or some other—under a black cloth: "The commoner who lies with the chief is 'one body with him', 'his wife', and continues through life to share with him certain medicines."³

1. Wilson, G. 1938, 14.
2. Wilson, M. 1957, 90 and 93.
3. Wilson, M. 1959, 52.

There is, however, no evidence of any political role for this commoner. The black cloth which covers them is said to symbolise clouds and hence plenty; harmony and co-operation between princes and commoners are thought essential if nature is to remain beneficent towards the people. For a detailed discussion of the medicines the reader may refer to Monica Wilson's section headed "The Chief's Medicines":¹ suffice it to say here that several kinds of medicine are not only drunk by princes and headmen to develop in themselves the qualities and abilities, natural and supernatural, which their roles demand, but are also scattered about in the seclusion house. The use of such medicines is not confined to the Coming-out though they are much in evidence during it.

The period of seclusion is ended by the actual "Coming-out" which gives its name to the whole sequence of events. A junior kinsman of the young princes knocks on the door of the seclusion house, and calls out: "Come out! War has come!" At this, the young princes, followed by their senior headmen, dash out, and either the princes or their senior headmen—Monica Wilson states that there is a difference of opinion among Nyakyusa over which it is, though the evidence connects "the spear of chieftainship" more with the headmen than with the prince²—grasp the spear held out to them at the door of the house. The headmen also receive medicated zebra tails. In the earlier accounts this was followed by a rush of the young men towards a neighbouring prince's country with a great shouting of war-cries. According to the evidence of a headman remembering his own Coming-out, "In the old days we would have invaded that country for cows and brought them back and eaten them".³ In fact, as can be seen, on the occasion remembered they had not done so, and it is indeed difficult to see how this could ever have been done; the neighbouring princes' people would certainly have known of the rituals and would either have driven their cattle away or have stayed to fight, making a bloody occasion of it, or more probably have done both. It is worth noting that it was not the young prince in any case who was supposed to lead the charge, but the senior headmen.

The series of events which make up the Coming-out is not complete, but I pause here to note that the events I have described

1. Wilson, M. 1959, 57/63.

2. *Ibid.*, 52/3; Wilson, M. 1951, 25.

3. Wilson, M. 1951, 25.

represent a classical cycle of *rites de passage*. The princes and headmen are first separated from their fellows, are then secluded, their abnormal ritual state being expressed by the prohibition on washing, and finally they are re-incorporated in their new statuses as headmen and ruling princes. But this does not carry the implication that they are replacing any previous incumbents of pre-existing offices. The headmen are clearly not doing so, and there is no reason to think that the princes differ from them in this.

There are, however, as I pointed out in Chapter 3, certain largely ritual offices which do undoubtedly pass from one generation to the next, the new incumbent of the succeeding generation replacing the previous incumbent. The latter has in fact died, thus necessitating the succession. Of this kind are various royal priestly offices, such as the Kasitile-ship in Selya, and pre-eminently the Lwembe-ship itself. In these cases succession is of course to the office, together with its title.

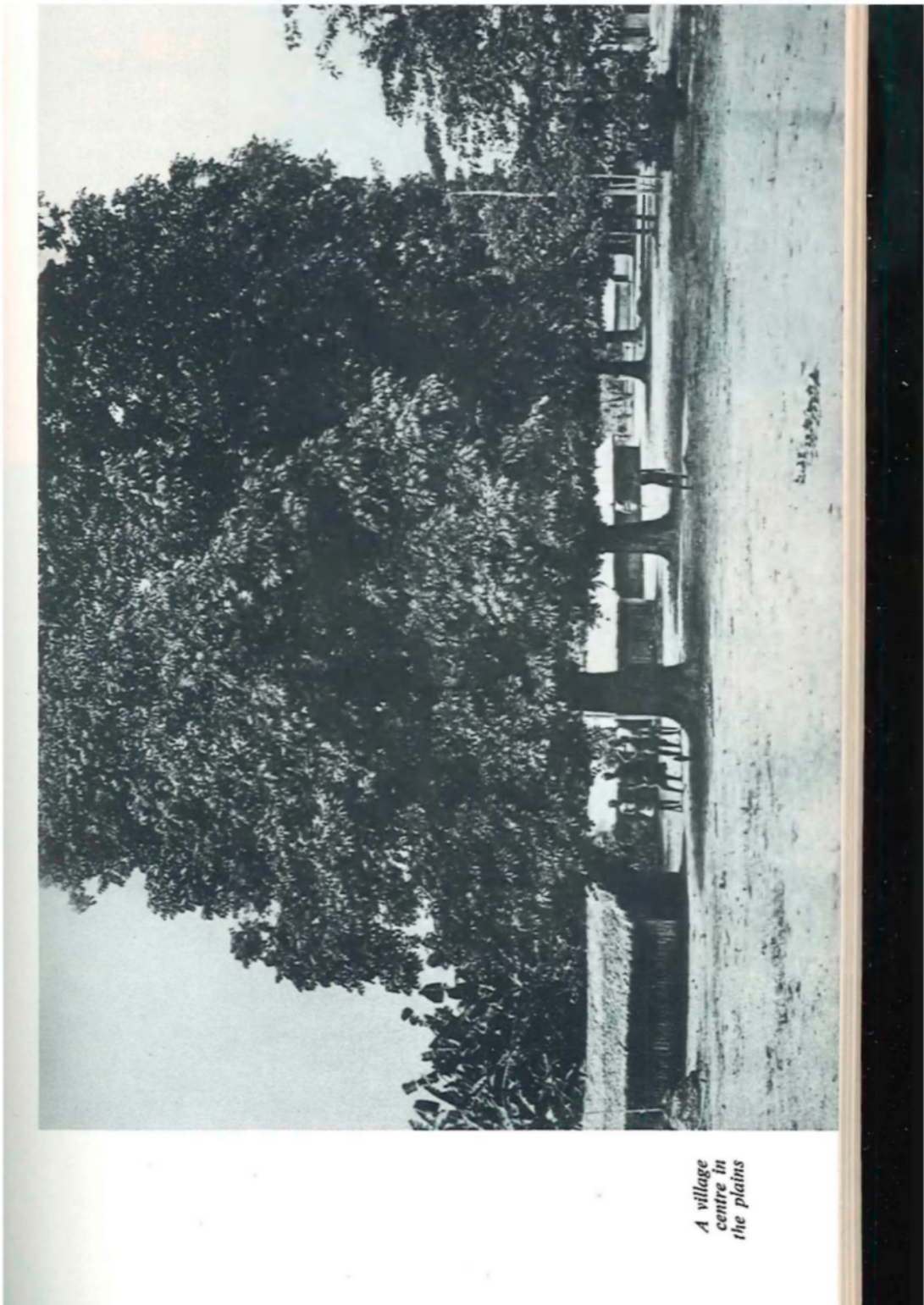
The little information available about the installation of the Lwembe suggests that installation and what occurs at the Coming-out should perhaps be even further distinguished. Details are few, since it appears that no Lwembe has been installed since before the beginning of the European occupation. Nevertheless, the oldest priest of Lubaga, the seat of the Lwembe, who was a very old man in the 1930s, claimed to have himself witnessed the last full installation. The Kinga priests whose predecessors had played an important part in it also had traditions concerning it.

According to the old priest of Lubaga, the Kinga priests brought down from their mountains a skin and head-pad of leaves. "The priests catch the chief [i.e. the Lwembe] and set him on these; and then he cannot run away, it is taboo."¹ It is this element of installing the Lwembe actually *on* something with some kind of mystical significance which clearly distinguishes between the procedure for the Lwembe and for the ordinary princes, though why he should be sat on a *head-pad* is not clear. The Kinga priests also spoke in this connexion of "a cloth to wear and a stool and an axe which were kept in the inner part of the hut of the Lwembe's great wife".² Enstoolment of chiefs, their investiture with cloaks, etc., are common³ in this area as a means of installing chiefs—the Kyungu at

1. Wilson, M. 1959, 23.

2. *Ibid.*, 23 (note).

3. E.g. Safwa (Kootz-Kretschmer) and Bena (Culwick), but not Mambwe (Watson, 167).



*A village
centre in
the plains*



A herdsboy with cattle



*Fish dam on the
Kivira River*

Mbande (Ngonde), for example, had a sacred cloth put upon him and was set upon a stool named "Kisumbi", while the priest addressed him: "Thou Kyungu, thou art he!"¹ The ordinary Nyakyusa prince, on the other hand, is invested with no physical symbol, except possibly a spear in some cases.

The symbolic and comparative evidence, therefore, seems to accord well with the previous conclusion concerning the tenuousness of the Nyakyusa princely office. It suggests indeed that one might even go further and deny that, for the prince, any office at all is involved in the Coming-out. It should rather be regarded, it might be said, as merely qualifying the prince to seek to establish a ruling position for himself in competition with other princes of his own and of preceding generations. But this would be an extreme formulation, and I return to the topic again below.

So far I have described and discussed only the first cycle of *rites de passage* in which only the office-holders are directly concerned. There is also a second series which concerns the age-villages coming out as a whole. In the Wilsons' accounts the two series are successive, though in MacKenzie's they are run together. I have already mentioned that the secrecy shrouding much of the first series makes it impossible to be certain whether reported differences reflect real differences. In the Wilsons' version, when the first stage is over the young princes separate, each leading his followers to the place where his senior village is to be built. There temporary shelters are built, in which all the followers of the prince live together for a month or two; Reuben spent a month thus. They must not at this stage live in old houses or on their old village site. During the period together, the young men lead, as MacKenzie puts it, "a happy, care-free life",² all, even those already married, living as bachelors and under a taboo on sexual relations; Monica Wilson does, however, quote one informant as including women among the commodities with which the young men in their carefree state made free.³ MacKenzie states that, in addition to the sexual taboo, shaving was also forbidden. The other things with which they made free during this period were cattle and food. This is said not to have given rise to fighting within the domains of the old prince, though they might

1. Wilson, M. 1959, 41.
2. MacKenzie, 77.
3. Wilson, M. 1959, 54.

also raid elsewhere. In 1921 at least, abundant food and cattle were made available to them by the "fathers".

The tabooed period comes to an end when the young men separate out again into their villages, now on their new sites which have been given to them "in the centre of the country". This territorial rearrangement can be seen as giving symbolical expression to the attainment of political maturity and independence by the age-villages involved, with the idea of leaving behind their peripheral origins and moving into the centre of things, taking over responsibility for their own country. But though there can be no doubt that these ideas were present, the evidence suggests that such a movement to the centre by the villages of both the princes did not always occur. It seems probable that often only one of the princes moved to the centre while the other moved elsewhere. The way in which they are said to have spread through Selya and the other parts of the country suggests this, and the "Plan of Mwaipopo's Chieftdom",¹ showing how the second "side" in Mwaipopo's own generation moved out, provides a case in point. Viewed for the generation as a whole therefore, the rearrangements which actually occurred may appear less clearly as a simple division and taking over of the former unit by those now in any real sense "in power". This is particularly so since it was the old headmen who determined the new dispositions. Nevertheless the rearrangement was a major upheaval in the previous residential pattern, and it seems desirable to go beyond this simple symbolical explanation of its occurrence, to look for some more tangible advantages gained by it.

It cannot, I think, be seen as having an important economic basis. Before the introduction of cash-crops, and indeed for many years afterwards, there was no shortage of cultivable land, nor of land for homesteads and their accompanying banana plantations.² Allocations of either could be obtained from the headman by a stranger settling in a village, and established village-members could freely take in any virgin land they wished. The property which did change hands at the Coming-out was thus of negligible economic value; and conversely, what were of value, namely certain lands of exceptional fertility in the old volcanic craters which abound in parts of the country, and cattle with their great social as well as economic significance, did not change hands.

1. Wilson, M. 1959, facing p. 100.
2. Cf. Wilson, G. 1938; Gulliver 1958, 3.

It is not then the need to re-allocate resources to the "growing points" of the population which leads to the rearrangement. To see what it is, I must first make explicit certain implications which the term "age-village" does and does not have. In the first place it is by no means necessarily a discrete unit of settlement. Godfrey Wilson makes this point: "Boundaries between age-villages are not always apparent to a stranger; a solid hundred acres or so of houses and bananas may turn out to consist of two or three villages, each with its own organisation, and each having blocks of garden lands separate from the others."¹ An examination of the "Plan of Mwaipopo's Chiefdom in 1955" reinforces this point, though the congestion had probably increased to some extent over the years.² Neither should "age-village" carry a bricks-and-mortar connotation, or even one in terms of land. The Nyakyusa say "A village consists in men, not in land".³ *Ikipanga*, the term translated as "age-village", is in fact applied not only to the village, but to the followers of a ruling prince at one extreme and to a section of a village at the other. It is also applied to the local congregation of a church.⁴ It seems likely, therefore, to have something of the generality of meaning of "social group", perhaps with some idea of a common relationship to a particular office.

Villages, in this sense, of different generations grow up tightly intermingled, and the members of any one village have important ties of kinship to a variety of parental villages round about. If the villages which have been attached to the young prince at the Coming-out are to have any common identity and unity, territorial and otherwise, then they must be disentangled physically from the senior villages to whose headman they have previously owed allegiance. But if it is important to bring these young villages together into a discrete unit within which the prince can exercise his new role, it matters little if the villages of the senior generation are scattered in the process. This is so because, as I am seeking to show, the old unit under the senior title is not splitting up with the formation within it of the new units; there is segmentation but not fission.

1. Wilson, G. 1951, 276.
2. Wilson, M. 1959, facing p. 100.
3. Wilson, M. 1951, 45.
4. *Ibid.*, 43 and note.

In discussing this important topic I have run ahead of the course of the Coming-out which I am tracing. During the tabooed period before the temporary settlements break up, there occur several other events which must be considered, the most important of which is the making of new fire. This must be made by friction; each of the young princes in his own territory begins the task and it is completed by his two senior headman together. Success in this is regarded as vital for the subsequent success of the prince and his headman. Once the fire is made, all the old fires are extinguished and the new fire is distributed, from senior headman to the other headmen, and from them to their village members, who collectively cook with it. Members of the villages of the preceding generation are said to be included in the distribution, but the means by which the fire reaches them are not recorded. The whole procedure, according to the 1959 account, "is interpreted as a symbol of the ending of the old chieftainship and the establishment of the new".¹ The princes are said to have brought fire into the land when they came down from Bukinga: "Fire is lordship (*ubutwa*)."²

The fundamental assumption of the present consideration of the Coming-out is that its major features are likely to have developed and become to some extent stereotyped in the period preceding European intervention and that these features are likely to have survived, partially at least, into the later period in which the indigenous polity had been more or less radically altered. The attempt in fact proves the usefulness of examining statements about the past and this witness to the past which I assume to be enshrined in the series of rites in the light of each other. There is, however, no reason to imagine that they would be so completely stereotyped as to remain impervious to changed conceptions. What is done with the fire and the interpretation of it I consider to be a point at which new conceptions have in fact entered. But it would of course not be legitimate simply to accept those features consonant with my general analysis as supporting it and to reject as modern innovations features not so fitting.

That there was a making of fire in connexion with the Coming-out cannot, I think, be challenged, although Godfrey Wilson omits it entirely from his account; it appears both in Reuben's evidence to MacKenzie and in Mwaikambo's text, and it is interesting to

1. Wilson, M. 1959, 52.

2. *Ibid.*

note in this connexion that Watson reports for the Mambwe the making of new fire by friction as an important element in the installation of a chief.¹ What is open to challenge, however, is the distribution of the fire and the significance and importance put upon it. Here Godfrey Wilson's omission is to be noted, as is the implication of Mwaikambo's text that the fire is made for the use of the young men themselves; as they must live in new houses, so "they do not take fire from the houses of men".² But even supposing that the fire was made and distributed as described, it should be realised that, both among the Nyakyusa and some of their immediate neighbours, the making of new fire and the clearing out of the old fire and the ashes was by no means exclusively connected with events which could be seen as installations. For both the Safwa and the Ngonde, though the procedure was connected with the chiefship, it signified a "cleansing" of the country, either annually or in time of trouble or prophesied trouble.³ In Ngonde, a national attempt to get rid of rats included this kind of "cleansing" as late as 1937, and among the Nyakyusa the Wilsons were able to find clear evidence of similar practices at an earlier period.⁴ Thus a distribution of fire throughout the whole of the old prince's domain, if indeed it did occur, might be seen rather as a precautionary "cleansing" in a time of upheaval at which a large proportion of the population would be on the move. Any suggestion that the young princes are thereby taking ritual control of their "father's" domain is contradicted by the rule reported that the ritual supremacy remains in the senior generation until the old prince and all his brothers have died. Doubt on this topic is bound, however, to remain.

The second group of events during the tabooed period is concerned with the ritual planting of two saplings of different kinds of tree, the one valued as a bark-cloth tree and the other for its shade. The two are planted in the centre of the young prince's country, near his first house. The detailed symbolism of the trees is complicated and not altogether clear, but their success is thought to be linked with the success of the prince and his people; as they grow and flourish, so should it. Situated as they are in the centre of the

1. Watson, 167.

2. Wilson, M. 1951, 186.

3. Koetz-Kretschmer; Wilson, G. 1939, 33.

4. Wilson, M. 1959, 102/5.

country, the trees are said to mark the division into two "sides". At their foot the prince should finally be buried, and around them will then grow up a sacred grove.

Finally, or it may occur earlier, the young prince marries his two senior wives, though these are not necessarily the first wives he has married, indeed are unlikely to be the first. On this stage of the Coming-out, the 1959 account diverges considerably from the earlier versions. In general these differences are in the direction of diminishing the control which is said to be exercised by the preceding generation, while at the same time transferring to them the expense of the marriage payments. As the evidence of the 1953 Coming-out of Mwanyilu clearly bulked large with Monica Wilson in composing the later account, it may well be that these differences do represent the true direction of change, bringing the events of the series more into conformity with the current notion that in the Coming-out the junior generation should be taking over.

In the earlier versions two suitable girls approaching puberty are chosen by the old headmen; in the later account, the prince's own new headmen are charged with this. These girls should be the daughters of neighbouring princes¹ or the daughters "of men of note" (Reuben), and they are carried off from their homes with a show of force. Later, herds are assembled as marriage payments to regularise the position, the young prince's men contributing some² or all of the cows,³ or the headmen of the preceding generation doing so, to be recompensed later when the first daughters of the two girls are themselves married.⁴ The girls live until they both reach puberty at the home of one of the men of the old prince. This man, with his neighbours, takes the place of the girls' parents when, having matured, they are together initiated and married in the young prince's country.⁵ In the 1959 version on the other hand, the girls live with a commoner contemporary of their husband-to-be, and it is he and his neighbours who take the part of the parents in the initiation celebrations. After the marriages a "long, narrow stone" is ritually erected near the prince's trees "as a symbol of his marriage to the mothers of his

1. Wilson, M. 1951.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Wilson, G. 1951, 281.
4. Wilson, M. 1959.
5. Wilson, G. 1951.

heirs".¹ Hearth-bricks are then set up for each of the wives and the fire ritually kindled earlier is given to them. They also drink medicines.

So ends the whole series of rites. It leaves behind it what has been called "a delicate balance of prestige and power".² The young prince and his headmen have jurisdiction in the villages of his own and junior generations, while the old prince and his headmen retain their jurisdiction over the more senior villages unchanged, besides having an appellate jurisdiction over the junior villages. However, with the weakness in political centralisation which I displayed above, the difference between direct and appellate jurisdiction must be insubstantial from the prince's point of view, though there is not the case material from which to say how this would have worked out in practice. The headmen of the old generation, on the other hand, have by the Coming-out lost their control over the junior villages which had effectively been sections of their own villages until that time. The old prince retains all "religious duties", and when he dies these pass to his heir, a full-brother, together with his wives and cattle.

"All general or political power" is said by contrast to pass to the young princes.³ I have contended that there was in fact little institutionalised office to which a new incumbent could succeed, and this is particularly true if, as is here suggested, the ritual responsibilities of the prince's position are withdrawn. Thus I consider that any mechanical view of this process in terms of rules must be largely erroneous. At all stages all princes were traditionally in competition and it is in these terms, in spite of the lack of direct evidence, that the succession situation must be viewed. It is by no means inevitable that the old prince at the time of the Coming-out will in fact be the true father of the young princes; there may already have been a series of holders of the title. Each successor takes up the legacy of his predecessor in people and cattle and wives, but the legacy must be actively maintained if it is not to dissolve. The balance between princes of succeeding generations in such conditions must depend upon their relative personal success; a series of successful incumbents, I have contended, can maintain a title active and important over a very long period. Offices do have a term in that they belong

1. Wilson, M. 1959, 56.

2. *Ibid.*, 29.

3. Wilson, G. 1951, 282.

to villages and collections of villages originating in particular generations, which are likely to disappear as the original members die. But though this is an important basic consideration, death is by no means the only cause of the decline of villages, nor is it the inevitable cause of decline; the Nyakyusa were mobile, as I have discussed above in Chapter 4, and deaths might in a successful village be more than compensated by the immigration of heirs and of strangers.

As I also discussed in the last chapter, one of the prince's main sources of strength is his herd, and in this respect it is likely to be a number of years before even a successful young prince can rival a successful old one. Godfrey Wilson notes that in all cases he had investigated he had found that the succeeding prince of the senior generation had given some of the cattle he was inheriting to the princes of the junior generation. Wilson was unable to explain this; it was not apparently prescribed by custom.¹ I suggest that this again can be seen as a product of the changed circumstances. In the old days, when his position largely depended upon them, the prince would never have freely given cattle away, but when the prince has become a chief with an office recognised and salaried by the Administration, his position no longer depends crucially on cattle. He can therefore afford to conform to the new notions of the "traditional" system in which the old generation hands over to the new.

2 Killing the Divine King

The expectation that princes of one generation will die shortly after the Coming-out of the following generation must, I think, be seen largely as the product of a need to reconcile a changed conception of the "chiefship" and of the consequent new significance of the Coming-out with the unavoidable fact that princes in modern times did in fact survive long after its occurrence. Mwakalukwa, for instance, is recorded as living fifteen years after the Coming-out of his "sons".³ It is of course true that, by the time the celebration is due, the old prince will often be indeed old, but the more he is of an age to die conveniently soon after the celebration, the more likely it is that he will have died before it. He will then have been

1. Wilson, G. 1951, 282.

2. See page 93 below.

3. *Ibid.*, 283. He died shortly before the Wilsons' arrival, in about 1932 (Wilson, M. 1957, 61).

succeeded by a brother, who may be very much younger than his predecessor. It is therefore by no means *inevitable* that the old prince should be old. And even old men are frequently found to live long enough to surprise and even infuriate their younger competitors.

The Nyakyusa, however, are reputed not to have relied wholly upon natural death. The idea that a prince who was not in good health or who died a natural death would endanger the well-being of his country was clearly present among the Nyakyusa. It was said to be the task of the headmen to remove their ailing prince. There is circumstantial evidence from as late as 1923 that such action might still be taken at that period.

Evans-Pritchard, in analysing *The Divine Kingship of the Shilluk*, has connected regicide with the competition of political segments for the kingship in a situation of sufficient "moral density" for "the segments to be represented by a common symbol in the kingship", but in which the incumbent of the office is unable to rise above his association with one particular segment.¹ He has linked it with rebellion seen as a sanction for the proper fulfilment of the role, but at the same time putting forward a structural reason why in certain societies proper fulfilment should not be possible.² As part of this analysis he has come to reconsider the evidence for the actual execution, as it were, of the Shilluk *Reth*, and he concludes that, though *Reths* were frequently killed in the competition between the segments for the office, they are unlikely to have been killed in the ways prescribed for Divine Kings.

The Nyakyusa are of immediate relevance to these hypotheses for, first, there is considerable evidence that princes, and particularly the Lwembe, were indeed killed by their headmen; and second, because there is no question of incumbents representing segments which might be competing for the office. It is worth here, I think, giving the 1924 report in full, tending as it does to establish that Nyakyusa princes might indeed be killed.

The report is by the Rev. Dr. D. M. Brown, one of the Livingstonia missionaries who took over the German missionfield for a period after the First World War. He was stationed mainly at Itete in Selya, the station which had been the Germans' Neu-Wange-

1. Evans-Pritchard 1948, 37/8.

2. Cf. e.g. Gluckman 1940, 42/3 and 1963, 12/7.

mannshoh, and it is from there that the report comes. He quotes his diary for December 1st of the previous year:

Chief Mwangomo arrives at hospital—a living skeleton. Having heard that he was ill I have sent Fred [a medical assistant, not himself a Nyakyusa] to his village to see him, and if necessary bring him in. But on entering the village and asking for Mwangomo he was greeted with 'Mwangomo? Why, Mwangomo is dead!' Certainly they were treating him as such—no food, and little attention—just waiting for the funeral. Without doubt he is very ill, with a bad dysentery. Under emetine injections and a suitable diet the 'dead' man rallied wonderfully and, though weak, was quite cured of the complaint that had brought him so low. Meanwhile, as I learned afterwards, funeral parties had been arriving from places several days journey off!!

Friday 7 reads: Deputation from Mwangomo's village asking that he may be taken back. Pointed out that he was doing well in hospital, and expressed the hope that he would not die if they took him back.

Saturday 8, 5 p.m. Sausi (one of Mwangomo's sons) arrived and asked that he might take Mwangomo away. Repeated my fears, but agreed at last that he should go this evening. He died in the night!

Monday 10: Much drum beating for Mwangomo. (There was none on the Sabbath, as we managed to put a stop to that.) I make no accusations, but in view of the fact that, for superstitious reasons, in the old days no chief of any importance was allowed to die of disease or senile decay, and that funeral parties had been arriving while Mwangomo was yet alive, one is warranted in being suspicious.¹

The evidence is of course not conclusive; we cannot be justified in drawing a more definite conclusion than did Brown, who knew, as we cannot, the true state of the prince's health and why he allowed him to be taken home. Nor do we know any of the details of the circumstances surrounding the prince at the time which would allow an analysis of the killing, if such it was. Nevertheless the evidence is useful and must carry weight, supported as it is by the general testimony on the subject published by Monica Wilson and obtained from the royal priest Kasitile and from Angombwike, a Christian of Mwaipopo's country who was the Wilsons' "house-boy".²

1. Brown 1924.

2. Wilson, M. 1959, 63/5, 126.

All this evidence for the actual killing of princes comes from Selya. This may be due, for the Wilsons' material, to the fact that this was the only part of the country in which they were on sufficiently intimate terms with informants to be given such statements. It does mean, however, that there is no evidence of such practices outside this one region, which was connected particularly closely with the Lwembe cult at Lubaga. The Lwembe was the Divine King *par excellence*; the cult almost certainly included human sacrifice, and the Lwembe himself was most probably killed by the hereditary Nyakyusa and Kinga priests who had selected and installed him. "Men feared greatly to be chosen, for they feared to be 'killed by the grove', and indeed the Lwembe rarely lived long."¹ Monica Wilson has taken the Lwembe cult to be an integral part of the general Nyakyusa cult of the princely ancestors, but there is some slight evidence suggesting that this may only have become true in recent times.² In any case, the cult was more closely linked by physical proximity and influence to Selya than to the rest of the country, whether or not Lubaga belonged in origin exclusively to the people of Selya and the Kinga. It is quite possible therefore that there was a difference in "divineness" between the princes of Selya and of other parts of the country.

Taking it as established that, in a part of the country at least, princes might be ritually killed by their headmen, it has to be considered when this would be done. It is not sufficient to say that it was when the prince was seriously ill or dying, even though these may well have been the concepts with which the headmen worked in such circumstances, for the decision would always have had, covertly at least, to be of the form that the prince was *sufficiently* ill or *sufficiently* certain to die to invoke the customary action. Such a decision would have been bound to be partially determined by the circumstances of the case, of which the state of the prince is but one. What then are the others?

According to Angombwike's evidence, the crucial circumstance was whether the Coming-out of the succeeding generation had been held or not; before it the headmen would only kill the prince "if

1. See Wilson, M. 1959, 21/40, for a full account; MB 1897, 217.

2. The question demands detailed discussion, which I cannot undertake here. The evidence concerns the probable earlier existence of Mpuguso as a centre of the ancestor cult of the Nyakyusa proper, as opposed to the people of Selya, and the other cults of Kyala and Mbasi. See Chapter 3, 2; Wilson, M. 1959, 156.

he were clearly going to die", whereas "after the coming out they hastened his death—but only if he were ill".¹ This conforms with the view of the Coming-out which I have argued to be a modern misconception of the indigenous system. If this is so, some alternative explanation must be found.

The first point to be borne in mind is that headman offices, like those of princes, are heritable, and with no suggestion of any restriction by generation. Thus the original headman of a village may be succeeded by a son. The continuation of the headman's office depends on the continuation of the village to which it is attached, and one of the factors importantly affecting the continuation of villages, as has been pointed out, is the behaviour of the prince. It is therefore in the interests of the headmen to maintain a viable prince and it is this, I suggest, which lies at the root of the practice of killing princes when old or ill; a prince who is not competitive does in a real sense endanger his country, risking the disintegration of its villages. As I have stressed, to kill one prince does not mean the end of the title and office; the Mwangomo whose death was reported above was a successor of the Mwangomo in the narrative of Mbasi and elsewhere, who died in 1893. He was succeeded by another Mwangomo; for there was a prince of that name in 1935, and still in 1955, sixty-two years after the death of the first incumbent of whom we know.² Thus I must conclude, a little paradoxically, since any idea that the killing was a product of rivalry between segments must be rejected, that to kill the prince might indeed serve to defend the princelyship, by installing a new incumbent better able to uphold the office. The importance of this conclusion is that it shows that there may be other interests in the kingship than the acquiring of it, capable of providing a basis for the ideas and even the practice of customary regicide.

But in spite of all that has been said, it is bound to be generally true that, over a long period, princely offices will lose their political significance, leaving behind a ritual residue which, as the office acquires greater and greater seniority with the passage of generations, should indeed increase. The headmen as the mystical protectors of the prince while he is alive are transformed into the priests of his grave when he is dead, though this applies mainly to the senior headmen. When almost all political content has passed from the

1. Wilson, M. 1959, 63.

2. Merensky 1894, 202; Wilson, M. 1951, 191; and 1959, Genealogy.

office, the dividing line between prince and ancestor has almost disappeared. For the princship there is no future, but for the senior headmen at least there remains the possibility of a position of some influence as priests of the ancestor cult. Ultimately therefore there may be no incentive even to keep the last incumbent of a princely office alive.

Divine Kings have been much discussed in anthropological literature since Frazer drew attention to the widespread belief in Africa and elsewhere that on the health and strength of certain kings depends the well-being of their people and of the natural world they inhabit. When health and strength fail, it is said, such kings are therefore killed and replaced by a new king of sound constitution. The priest-king and his precarious reign in the groves of Nemi during Roman times provides the model of the Divine King and the starting point for Frazer's study *The Golden Bough* (Abridged edition, London 1929). See particularly Chapter XXIV, "The Killing of the Divine King".

6

THE BEGINNINGS OF CHANGE

In the preceding chapters I have sought to analyse the role of the prince as it was at the beginning of the European occupation. It is a fact, however, that all the data used originate from after the moment at which Europeans became a significant element in the polity of the Nyakyusa. In this last chapter therefore, I turn my attention specifically to the process by which European overrule was first established, this being also the context in which the nineteenth century data used elsewhere originated. It is convenient to begin by going back rather further to set the social system I have partially described in its wider temporal and geographical frame, and to see how other external factors were already preparing the way for the penetration of European administration.

I The outside world

Except to the south and the south-east where the Lake and the Ngonde plains are found, the Nyakyusa valley is bounded by high mountains with a high plateau region beyond. There is little doubt that few Nyakyusa ever ventured willingly out of their warm and fertile valley into this less hospitable country. Yet, if Nyakyusa themselves did not have dealings outside the valley, this is not to say that the valley was the full extent of their social world. People from outside came to them.

The lake regions of central Africa were, in the second half of the nineteenth century, highly unsettled. Bemba, Yao, Ngoni from several centres, Sangu, Hehe and lesser predators, in conjunction with or opposition to the almost ubiquitous Arabs in the later part of the period, made life difficult and uncertain. Yet it was in the middle of this area in 1879 that Joseph Thomson stumbled on his "Arcadia", described in one of the best known passages in the literature of African exploration. The people of the valley were neither dispersed nor concentrated into stockades, as were many of their neighbours; the bundles of cruel spears they carried were

the only regular sign of the troubled times. They seemed to possess little cloth and hardly any guns, the two most significant possessions of the age, and to be a people set apart from the trading and violence of their time.¹

This is in large part true and it is not difficult to see the probable reasons. As a possible predator themselves, they lacked an institution of slavery to provide a basis for trade,² as they also lacked any habit of leaving the valley, which would have been necessary to capture foreigners. They were perhaps too fragmented politically to provide any clear seat of power with which the Arabs could ally, yet at the same time too united to prey on their fellows for the benefit of foreigners. In addition, they did not occupy a natural or necessary route to anywhere and, in historical terms, the Arabs had undoubtedly allied already with the Nyakyusa's enemies before they ever reached the valley itself.

As a people to be preyed upon, it would be wrong simply to regard them as isolated by geography and therefore immune. To the extent that they were left alone, it was probably because there were easier prey around if the object was merely to obtain slaves; the Nyakyusa had a reputation as fierce fighters. Yet the valley had additional attractions in the cattle and ample food to be found there, and for the sake of these at least it did attract the attention of many of the raiders of the region.

At the time when the missionaries arrived, the Sangu chief Merere claimed suzerainty over the Kukwe of the upper part of the valley although a force of his had been defeated about four years earlier by Prince Mwamakula in the plains. As a consequence of this the Kukwe disputed his claim.³ Merere's last raids were in 1892 when he was said to be trying to recoup his losses in cattle in the rinderpest epidemic. It had attacked his herds on the plateau some time before it reached the valley.⁴ Already, fifteen years before, Cotterill travelling through the country with Elton, had registered some Sangu presence in the upper part of the valley.⁵

Evidence for Ngoni relations with the valley goes back much further. Ngoni traditions suggest that they were raiding there even before they reached Ufipa in the early 1840s on their journey

1. Thomson, 266/82.
2. Merensky 1894, 125.
3. *Ibid.*, 249.
4. *Ibid.*, 248.
5. Elton, 327/33.

north.¹ In Ufipa they split after the death of their leader, Zwangedaba, and two of the main sections had further dealings with the valley. These were Mbelwa's people who settled finally in Malawi, and the so-called Magwangwara of the Songea District of southern Tanzania. It is probable even that Mbelwa lived in the upper part of the valley for a time after the departure from Ufipa and the breaking away of the Songea Ngoni.² Certainly both later raided the valley at times, the latest of the Songea Ngoni raids being apparently about 1889 when they were driven off from Selya by Prince Mwakalobo.³ Thus Ngoni may be credited with appearances over a period of fifty years.

Whether the Arabs themselves were ever active in the valley, except in conjunction with their ally Merere, is doubtful, although an armed party of coast Arabs was observed in Kisi country at the northernmost end of the Lake in 1888.⁴ But even if they had never been active enemies, they were clearly recognised as potentially hostile, since the plains princes were keen to aid the Europeans of Karonga in their struggles against the Arabs there in the North-End War of 1887/9. Several times they brought armies south; they provided shelter north of the Songwe when the station at Karonga had to be evacuated; and they brought cattle and grain to support the re-established station in the midst of the devastation brought about by the war.⁵

A last invader was the Henga people who escaped from subjection to the Ngoni in the late 1870s. They took up residence to the south of the Songwe where they allied with the Arabs. Their lake-shore settlement was destroyed by a European-led Nyakyusa army in 1887, but even after this they continued as late as 1890 to devastate parts of the south and west of the valley.⁶

All this adds up to considerable and generally increasing military activity in the late nineteenth century. Some of it, such as the Henga and Arab incursions, probably did not reach back far into the past, but Ngoni raids may well have spanned half a century. We do not even know that before this the people of the valley had been left alone, though this is suggested by some tendency, which appears

1. Chibambo, 24.
2. *Ibid.*, 29 (Mbelwa's tradition); Ebner, 71/2 (Songea tradition).
3. *MB* 1892, 360 and 498.
4. Livingstonia, Bain to Laws, 20 August, 1888.
5. Fotheringham.
6. Chibambo, 44/5; Nkonjera; Fotheringham, 128, 144; Merensky 1894, 249.

in early reports, for the Nyakyusa to regard pre-Ngoni times as a golden age in which men did not yet fight with iron spears. These were said to have been adopted in response to the tough hide shields of the Ngoni.¹ But even in this there is little reason to regard the history of the Nyakyusa valley as very different from the history of surrounding countries; the same forces which disturbed the region as a whole, the arrival from the south of the Ngoni, the inland penetration of the Arabs and the introduction of firearms, had similar effects on the valley.

The Nyakyusa had a considerable reputation as warriors and the princes did provide some possibility of concerted action against these raiders. Mwamakula is recorded as having defeated both Merere and the Magwangwara. Mwasoyoge, a Kukwe prince, drove off the last Sangu attack in 1892, while Mwakalobo, as noted, also drove off the Magwangwara. In 1887 the plains princes were able to take an estimated 5,000 men south to relieve the siege of Karonga, while Merensky in 1894 considered that Mwamakula could produce an army 6,000 strong under his leadership.² Although these figures are probably considerably exaggerated, it is clear that on occasion the Nyakyusa, through their princes, could be militarily effective against outsiders.

Yet they remained a preyed-upon rather than an aggressor people themselves. In spite of the occasions just cited, which must have required some co-operation, it seems more usually to have been difficult for princes to co-operate for military action, such were their rivalries. Even, for instance, in the rising against the Germans, considered again in the last section of this chapter, although feeling in support of it was general, it is reported that Prince Mwakalukwa refused the support of another prince "because he wanted the horse belonging to the mission all to himself".³ There is no evidence of any concerted plan for the rising, except in so far as every prince was awaiting its success to plunder nearby Europeans. Mwakalinga and possibly one or two others led a force to meet the Germans, but his defeat and death in the first engagement put an end to the rising when it had hardly yet begun.

While individual princes might successfully beat off raiders, they were unable to combine to prevent them penetrating to the

1. Merensky, *loc cit.*
2. Fotheringham 105, 117; Merensky 1894, 140.
3. *MB* 1898, 195.

very heart of the country, as did the Magwangwara in 1888 or shortly before.¹ Still less under these circumstances, with potential raiders in all quarters, could they have carried the fight into the enemies' own countries. The high passes and the nature of the high plateau beyond, so different to the Nyakyusa valley, would also have played a part in preventing war expeditions; they continued for many years into the period of European over-rule to make the Nyakyusa unwilling and unhappy travellers in any but the southerly direction in which such barriers do not lie.²

As will be seen, the incoming Europeans appeared to the Nyakyusa to offer a channel through which relations with these external powers could be handled, as well as offering some direct protection. This was important to the way in which control of the country was assumed.

2 The missionaries

There is no sign in the records of the earliest years of contact with Europeans that the Nyakyusa tried to involve their visitors in the internal politics of the valley, though as I have noted they were keen to ally with the British against the Arabs and their allies outside the valley, at and around Karonga. Each visit in these early days was, however, a more or less transient phenomenon. The Nyakyusa attitude towards resident foreigners was from the beginning rather different. It was clearly known that Europeans could be persuaded to settle, and some at least appreciated the potential advantages of this. The Livingstonia missionary, J. A. Bain, had hardly settled at his new station at MweniWanda's on the Tanganyika-Nyasa plateau, in 1884, before an envoy arrived from the Kukwe prince Kalalamuka, to try to persuade the missionaries to go there.³ A succession of envoys with gifts came with the same purpose from then on, until in 1888 Bain and two others did found a station at Kalalamuka's.

Having achieved his white man—Bain's two companions did not survive long at the station—Kalalamuka was determined to use him. He was somewhat frustrated in this by two factors, the policy of strict non-intervention pursued by the Livingstonia mission and the real weakness of Bain's position—a single white man with a single

1. Livingstonia, Bain to Laws, 21 September, 1888.
2. Hall 1945.
3. Livingstonia, Bain to Laws, 20 November, 1886.

gun—reinforced by his great awareness of this weakness.¹ Nevertheless Kalamuka persisted in his attempts to involve Bain in his affairs to such an extent that the missionary threatened to leave.² But in spite of these refusals, the final Nyakyusa judgment on the seven-month existence of the station does appear to have seen it as valuable in one positive manner. When the Sangu Merere and his Arab allies devastated Mwasoyi's country, bordering on Kalamuka's, in March, 1889, the fact that the raiders withdrew finally without extending their operations to Kalamuka or other neighbouring princes was locally attributed to Bain's presence.³ It is therefore hardly surprising to find Mwasoyi reported in November of the same year as wanting a white man to settle with him.⁴

The German missionaries entering the country in 1891 had no such policy as Livingstonia's of non-intervention. In addition they were more numerous and had more arms. The Berlin party on the Lufilio had, for instance, seven white members and a correspondingly large band of African servants, some at least of whom also had arms. This strength is worth noting, for it undoubtedly ensured for the party an initial standing in the country which might otherwise have been lacking. Their reception by Mwanjabala, for example, was very different to that accorded to Bain some six years earlier once it had been realised that his party "were not elephant hunters and had neither guns nor powder to give him and that it was only a poor missionary".⁵ It was not, however, by any dependence upon their fire-power that the missionaries created an influential and important position for themselves; nor did they ever intend this to be their method. In this section I examine the position they did create in the sixteen months before any administration of the country was attempted, and which they continued to exercise to some extent in the succeeding years. I then consider how this position was created, and what its effects on the existing Nyakyusa polity were.

The Berlin missionaries established their first station at the beginning of October, 1891, on the north-eastern borders of Nyakyusa country.⁶ This was Wangemannshoh. A second station,

1. Livingstonia, Bain to Laws, 21 September, 1888; and 23 March, 1889.
2. Livingstonia, Bain to Laws, 6 December, 1888.
3. Livingstonia, Bain to Laws, 23 and 27 March, 1889.
4. Fotheringham, 290.
5. Livingstonia, Extract for Laws of Letter by Bain, 25 August, 1885.
6. See Merensky 1894.

Manow, was founded eight months later on the slopes of Kieyo Mt. to the north-west of Selya. The first station, as appeared in the narrative of Mbasi, was in the country of a young prince, Mwakungila. On the third day that the missionaries were there the prince came to ask them to shoot buffalo which were raiding his people's fields, and within the first week he had brought them a case, in which he was a party, to settle.¹ This was only the beginning, for soon they were being called upon by both princes and commoners to intervene in disputes. Within the first year indeed, not only Mwanjabala, the leading prince of the plain, but also his great rival, Mwankenja, had both appealed for mission support in disputes with other princes.² *The Case of the Rebuked Prince*, which occurred in November, 1892, well illustrates the local strength of the mission's position by that date.

Kumoga, the mission's adviser on African law and custom, was in dispute with Mwangomo, then one of the most prominent of the local princes, over a gun. The mission's story was that the two had exchanged guns by a formally concluded agreement, but that Mwangomo had later changed his mind and wanted to reverse the deal. To this Kumoga would not agree. One day when he and a companion were passing through Mwangomo's country, the prince forcibly seized the guns from both of them. Missionary Nauhaus, by then in charge, as soon as he heard of this went straight to the prince's village and complained to his senior councillor (headman). The prince was subsequently arraigned before his own councillors. Nauhaus put the case that the prince had injured not just the friend of the missionaries, but him, Nauhaus himself, since it was he who maintained order throughout the whole country as far as Merere's and the Magwangwara. This point of view the councillors accepted. In his defence the prince argued that he had always been the friend of the mission, which was indeed true. He had, he said, only wanted to punish a badly behaved son of theirs. In this he was clearly implying that he had meant no challenge to the mission. Judgment nevertheless went against him. The guns were returned and a sheep given to the mission.³

The first significance of this case is of course Nauhaus's claim for the mission as the maintainer of order. Whatever the value which should be attached to the councillors' acceptance of the claim, it was, fairly clearly, at least not completely absurd and reflected some

1. Merensky 1894, 95 and 204/5.
2. *Ibid.*, 205.
3. *Ibid.*, 201.

appreciation of the role of the mission as an embryo Administration. It is not only the claim, however, which provides a demonstration of the mission's strength. Nauhaus's behaviour in initiating the case displays a certain degree of understanding of Nyakyusa political offices and ability to use this understanding. And the outcome of the case, depending as it did on councillors who are unlikely to have had any particular interest in currying favour with the mission, can be seen as reflecting the high prestige generally accorded it.

A German Administration arrived in the region at the beginning of 1893, but this by no means meant any quick end to the missionaries' political importance. Indeed, at the beginning they might even on occasion deal successfully with situations which had rebuffed the forces of the Administration. Such was the case, probably early in 1894, when a force was sent to secure the return from a Safwa chief on the borders of Ukukwe of ten women whom he had captured from Prince Mwasoyi. The Safwa declared their readiness to fight, but the German commander of the Administration force felt otherwise and withdrew. The Moravian missionaries in the area offered mediation, and over a period of months secured the return of the women and indeed also a fine paid in instalments.¹

Even later, when the strength of the Administration had been built up, the missionaries remained for some time its only resident agents and intermediaries between the District Office and the people. As Bishop Hamilton wrote, of the Moravian missionaries in particular: "Repeatedly they have been in a position to promote mutual understanding between the colonial officials and the tribal leaders. Theirs has been the task repeatedly to mitigate bitter feelings against the new rules, to curb and tame wild spirits, and to bring the restive to a readiness to obey and abide by the demands of law and order."² The case of Prince Mwakatundu, summoned to the District Office at Langenburg in November, 1894, well illustrates this. The prince refused to go and told the Moravian missionary Richard from Ipyana station nearby, who tried to persuade him otherwise, that the missionaries had deceived them. As Richard reports it: "We had told them that God had sent us to their country to establish peace, and now we wanted to make war. Therefore God had not sent us; we had come from our own chief. What had the Germans done to

1. *BG* 1894, 245; Hamilton, 21.

2. Hamilton, 24.

have the right to claim him as their subject?"¹ Nevertheless, whatever the means, the missionaries had established their position. In this case Richard's efforts did in the end persuade the old prince to obey the summons.

The missionaries were able to secure this commanding position for a number of reasons. In the first place they shared all the properties and advantages common to most of the Europeans who had appeared in the valley. They were the possessors of cloth, brass wire, guns and other European products which the Nyakyusa wanted and could obtain from them in return for labour, food and other commodities which had previously been practically valueless. A resident European could be expected to supply an endless flow of good things. They had also from the earliest days been valued as hunters of the wild game which did much damage to the Nyakyusa crops, but against which, lacking guns, the people themselves could do little, or at least were prepared to attempt little on their own. I have recorded above Mwakatungila's request for help against buffalo.

As hunters and suppliers of goods the missionaries were of some use to the Nyakyusa and would probably, in response to this alone, have been given a position of some prestige in Nyakyusa society, but they had more important advantages still.

I have examined above the principle or mechanism through which disputes could be brought to settlement, but I also suggested that it must have depended for its effectiveness on a fairly high level of friendly intercourse between the villages of the parties to the dispute. It could also be ineffective where the princes themselves were in dispute or were for other reasons unable or unwilling to co-operate to make the link which could bring about the settlement. If the princes were kinsmen there may have been the possibility of taking the case to arbitration by a senior prince, but otherwise institutionalised means of resolving certain kinds of dispute would have been lacking.

The evidence is not extensive, but it seems clear that some princes at least realised and exploited the possibility of using the missionaries to provide the bridging element otherwise lacking in such cases. This appears to be what was happening in three cases in which major and powerful princes of the plain yet called upon the mission

1. *JUF* 1895, 220. The Administration's desire to check the independent and assertive behaviour of Mwakatundu's son, Mankyembe, was the immediate issue.

to handle for them disputes with princes in Selya. Mwankenja was in dispute with Mwakasula and with Mwaipopo, and Mwanjabala was also in dispute with the latter, all during 1892. As I shall show below the mission did not always succeed easily in rising above particular alliances to a position in which they could span differences and divisions among the princes. Yet they did have considerable success in this. Nauhaus's claim to be the maintainer of order over the whole country was, as I said above, not wholly absurd.

An even more absolute lack of channels through which relations could be mediated existed between the Nyakyusa and their foreign enemies. I have suggested in the first section of this chapter that there was growing pressure from these, which made this lack of means of mediation increasingly seriously felt. Thus, in addition to handling the more structurally distant internal relations, Europeans were put by the Nyakyusa into the role of handlers of external relations, a role they were usually very ready to accept.

We saw above Bain's passive, yet positive, protecting role at Kalamuka, which apparently depended on the mere fact of his presence. The Berlin missionaries' position was from the beginning stronger, for, although the forces at their disposal were very limited, they had a compensating asset in the keenness to court their favour displayed by the Nyakyusa and their neighbours alike. Before they had been established a month, envoys arrived from both the Sangu Merere and Monemtera, a Kinga chief. The missionaries rapidly found themselves engaged in inter-tribal diplomacy as they negotiated with Merere on his claims to suzerainty over the upper part of the valley. These were denied by the people concerned, who claimed that the yoke had been thrown off in a victory over Merere some years previously. He, however, maintained his position and at one stage offered to sell the Kukwe to the Moravians.¹ On the other side of the valley, the Berlin station was established on the borders of Nyakyusa and Kinga country and it was not long after their arrival before two Nyakyusa princes entered a complaint against chief Monemtera for stealing cattle from them. This complaint in fact came too early, for the missionaries did not yet consider themselves in a position to play the inter-tribal role demanded of them, and so took no action.² In this they may even have underestimated their potential in Nyakyusa-Kinga relations which was

1. Merensky 1894, 249; *MB* 1892, 357/8, 396.

2. *MB* 1892, 360.

clearly revealed a few months later by the probably unsolicited action of the same chief Monemtera, who sent to the mission a goat and an iron hoe, an article of some value, as recompense for the action of one of his men in stealing a piece of cloth from a mission herdsman.¹

With its position strongly based in the factors I have already discussed, the mission could also be used by individuals in furtherance of their own interests. This, it may reasonably be supposed, was of benefit to the mission in allowing them more opportunity for the exercise of a quasi-administrative role. Being generally observed, the exercise would be likely to lead to a growing acquiescence and a willingness to accept the mission as authoritative. Not always, however, could they hope to avoid paying some price by becoming too closely identified with particular princes. Thus, for example, they bought land for their second station at Manow from the local prince, Mwakalobo. He showed himself friendly and was soon bringing to them complaints against his brother.² Unfortunately it turned out that Mwakalobo and his neighbour Mwaipopo were in a long-standing state of mutual hostility, Mwaipopo claiming to be Mwakalobo's rightful overlord and Mwakalobo denying this. Mwaipopo evidently saw the mission as a new ally for Mwakalobo and claimed to see the sale of land to them as a direct challenge to himself. It was only with great difficulty, and temporarily, that they managed to avert active hostilities which were apparently to have included a direct attack on the station.³ Here as in other situations, though not shy of intervening in Nyakyusa affairs, the missionaries did finally succeed in rising above any possible entanglement in local rivalries to establish a general acceptance for themselves more and more widely as their stations spread throughout the valley.

Appeal to the mission was attractive in certain circumstances. Although they intended to give full value to the laws and customs of the people in dealing with cases, they were by no means exactly equivalent to an indigenous authority. In the first place, even if their knowledge of the principles of Nyakyusa justice had been fully accurate, their understanding of the indigenous processes through which these principles were embodied in settlement was, at best,

1. *MB* 1892, 410.

2. Merensky 1894, 255.

3. *Ibid.*, 264.

not highly developed. Secondly, in certain areas there was bound to be divergence between Nyakyusa and missionary values, so that, in the later colonial formulation, they could observe "native law and custom" only in so far as they were "not contrary to natural justice". And thirdly, political expediency was a factor which not even missionaries could be expected to eliminate entirely from their judgments. Thus there was always the possibility of securing through the mission and its influence results which would not have been obtainable otherwise.

The first two divergences will come out in my discussion of *The Case of the Commoner's Complaint* below. The third, political expediency, is visible in the first case brought to the missionaries, *The Case of the Messenger's Sister*. The first divergence may also well be involved here.

Soon after their arrival a messenger appeared, coming from Prince Mwanjabala. He had come to ask for more of the ointment which the missionaries on their journey had given the prince for his eyes. The messenger was accompanied by his sister, who had previously been the wife of Mwakatungila's deceased brother but had returned home on his death. Now Mwakatungila as his brother's heir claimed the right to take the woman as his own wife. This was apparently not acceptable to either the woman or her brother, and the prince brought the case before the missionaries. In their view he had an undoubted right to take the woman, according to the law of the people. But Merensky decided that the woman should not be detained, but that Mwakatungila should sue for her before Mwanjabala.¹

It is interesting here that the missionaries did not dismiss the case on account of any objection to holding the woman against her will, but instead referred the matter to Mwanjabala, thus compromising between their understanding of the law and the obvious inexpediency of risking antagonising the most important of the Nyakyusa princes. On this occasion therefore Mwakatungila did not succeed in securing his own ends. He nevertheless cultivated the closest relations with the mission and during his subsequent struggles with Mbasi more than once owed the survival of his position *vis-à-vis* his fellow princes and his people to the support of the mission.

The Case of the Commoner's Complaint I quote and discuss at length since it is important from a number of points of view. It shows that it was not only princes who early realised that the

1. Merensky 1894, 204/5; MB 1892, 156.

mission could be used; it shows the missionaries' lack of understanding of indigenous processes; and it shows how this lack, together with a difference in values, could begin to undermine the indigenous process with a very minimum of direct intervention by missionaries. There was still something interstitial about the point of entry, but the effects of intervention on behalf of commoners were bound to be more immediately subversive of the existing polity.

A certain man living under Prince Mwaipasi seized a cow belonging to one of Prince Mwaibambe's people, who complained of his loss to the mission. It was said that the thief had previously been subject to Mwaibambe, but had committed adultery with the prince's wife and fled to Mwaipasi's, leaving his cattle, which the prince had then confiscated. The mission accepted this story and sent to Mwaipasi to get the thief to give the cow back. But the latter refused, maintaining that he had been wronged and appealing to the poison ordeal. However, the influential prince Mwakyusa at Mwaipasi's at the time, advised that, as Europeans at Karonga did not, he knew, approve of the ordeal, it should not be allowed. The original demand should be complied with. The cow was returned, and the owner came to thank the missionaries for it.¹

It is unfortunately not entirely certain who the Mwaipasi and Mwakyusa of this incident were, as there are at least two possibilities for each of the names. Nevertheless, from a consideration of all the details of the case I have little doubt that the Mwakyusa was the great prince of the plains of that name, while the Mwaipasi was either the prince at what later became the Moravian Rutenganio mission station, or the prince in Selya. Mwaibambe was a plains prince on the Lufilio river.

On the problematical prelude of adultery and flight, I shall not comment; the truth was in dispute and no decision reached. Nor do I comment on why the man should have removed himself so far away in the first place. It is, however, important in the case for two possible reasons. If the "thief" had been no more than that, he could have stolen a cow without travelling a considerable distance, perhaps even crossing the whole valley, to a part where he was well-known in order to do so. That he did so shows that he had a further purpose. It is, rather, an example of the typical Nyakyusa means of initiating a case. He took the cow, it may reasonably be supposed, in order to re-open the case by involving in it one of

1. *MB* 1892, 412/3.

Mwaibambe's men. To the mission point of view, an innocent man was thereby being made to suffer for the wrongs of others. This "innocent" would normally have taken the matter to his prince, so that through contact between the princes what was at issue could be established. But here it was the prince himself who was the intended defendant in the case. He may therefore have managed to avoid co-operation in the matter, leaving his man without means of redress. Hence the latter's appeal to the mission.

The reaction to the mission's message was such as might be expected to the demand of any prince, an appeal to the poison-ordeal. This both sides to the dispute would have to undergo. Both Mwaibambe and Mwaipasi were members of the line of princes descending from the great Prince Mwakyusa who is said to have led the first expansion into the plains; in Wilson's genealogy the two princes were second cousins. The Mwakyusa in the report may have been involved in the case not only as an important prince but also as a senior kinsman of the two princes immediately concerned. He had had considerable dealings with the British from Karonga over more than a decade and his reference to the disapproval of the ordeal by the Whites there is not therefore unexpected. Whether or not this was his true and full reason for advising as he did in this case, and whether or not Mwaipasi had other reasons for being unwilling to further the matter against Mwaibambe, the total effect was to win the case for the mission. The process was short-circuited before any decision as to where right lay could be reached. Thus mission influence entered here into an otherwise wholly Nyakyusa universe of dispute as but one factor among many. Though unbacked by any force capable of compelling acceptance of its decision, it yet managed to prevent the working out of the process to provide an acceptable conclusion to the dispute.

The effects of this missionary period for the Nyakyusa polity were, then, to begin the changes which would become steadily more insistent with the development of administration. These were most immediately in the field of relations between people of separate princes and between princes themselves. Indigenous processes by which relations in this field had been regulated began to be undermined in the ways I have discussed and at the same time, as the authority of the mission developed and more stations were founded, it began to provide a substitute even for these processes. Before the

establishment of a regular Administration, it thus became itself a quasi-administration, continuing in this role later as an unofficial part of the Administration itself. This is the most important aspect. The availability of the mission to commoners probably did have some slight tendency to weaken the position of some princes *vis-à-vis* their people, though as I have discussed, their position was never strong. Other princes were undoubtedly able to enhance their positions through their association with the missionaries.

3 The administration

The Administration arrived at the north end of Lake Nyasa in January, 1893, some eighteen months after the arrival of the first German missionaries. It was in the form of a party led by H. v. Wissmann, Imperial Commissioner and Commander-in-Chief, and later Governor of German East Africa. He had come to take possession of the territory in the south secured to the Germans by the Anglo-German Agreement of July, 1890. The party settled at Rumbira Bay under the Livingstonia Escarpment on the opposite shore of the lake from the Nyakyusa plains.¹ The station they founded there, Langenburg, remained the administrative centre of the District of that name until the end of 1900.

In the previous August the Sangu chief, Merere, had again raided into Ukukwe, where the Moravian missionaries now were.² One of the first actions of the new Administration was therefore to send Dr. Bumiller at the head of a force of seventy-five askaris and a large number of carriers to Merere to acquaint him with the fact that he was now to be subject to the German Empire.³ Thus the first effect of the new arrivals was to deprive the missionaries of their role in intertribal diplomacy. The security of the Nyakyusa from outside attack from this point on would rest with the Administration.

Journeying to and from Merere through the valley, Bumiller's initial effect there was to reinforce mission authority. I have mentioned above the Manow missionaries' involvement in the disputes of Mwaipopo and Mwakalobo. At the end of December, 1892, hostilities were renewed when Mwaipopo attacked one of Mwakalobo's villages, losing three men in the attack but driving off twelve head of cattle. The mission intervened on Mwakalobo's behalf

1. Merensky 1894, 303.
2. *JUF* 1893, 17/20.
3. Merensky 1894, 265.

and tried to persuade, as the best they could manage, his opponent to take his claims to the arbitration of the Lwembe or, when he refused, to Prince Mwakyambo. The latter also refused, saying that when opportunity offered he too would raid for cattle. The missionaries were probably not wrong in thinking that arbitration was a possibility, but only in thinking that these princes would be prepared to arbitrate between the mission, as they clearly saw it, and Mwaipopo, with whose claims, as fellow members of his line, they most probably sympathised. An *impasse* was therefore reached, but this was broken by the approach of Bumiller in February on his return from Merere. According to the missionary report, mischief-makers kept quiet, quarrels suddenly resolved themselves, and Mwaipopo even returned all the cattle he had stolen from Mwakalobo. With the backing of the askaris the missionary point of view suddenly prevailed across the board.¹

The advent of the Administration was by no means universally welcomed, but neither was it universally opposed. In the plains a definite pattern can be seen. I have discussed above the threefold division of the plains, expressed in the earliest reports in terms of the three princes, Mwakyusa, Mwamakula and Mwankenja. I have also mentioned the minor war over fishing-rights between the two last named in November, 1892. The pattern with regard to the incoming Administration appears to have been thus: it was well received by the central princes, of whom Mwanjabala (Mwamakula) was the senior; was received with caution by the southern princes; and probably with some trepidation by Mwankenja in the north. Mwanjabala probably hoped to use the Germans as allies to avenge his defeat in the fishing-rights war and did not hesitate to speak against Mwankenja. His was indeed not the only voice raised against that prince; he had in general a reputation with Europeans as a trouble-maker, and at that particular moment was sheltering a nephew who was wanted for murder by the British at Karonga. In view of all this, von Wissmann was planning, as one of his first actions, to mount an expedition against Mwankenja. This no doubt would have suited Mwanjabala well. However, the Berlin missionaries offered to approach Mwankenja and persuade him to surrender the nephew. This they did and were successful. The

1. Merensky 1894, 264/5.

prince sent a messenger to Langenburg to sue for peace and to offer to atone for his previous bad behaviour.¹

There were further signs of the central princes' greater enthusiasm for the Germans at this period. Mwakalinga, the "son" of Mwanjabala and, with him, one of the voices raised against Mwankenja, was apparently the first to accept the Imperial flag from von Wissmann in 1893, presumably signifying allegiance to the Emperor.² Further, the same prince in the following year invited the Moravian mission to establish itself in his country on the left bank of the Kiwira River. This was the founding of Ipyana station.³ The other side of the river was the country controlled by Mwakatundu of the southern section, and he, by contrast, had refused permission for a station. He told them plainly that difficulties would be sure to arise between his people and the mission's, and that this would give the Administration a chance to intervene in his affairs.⁴ This he was determined to avoid. Three months later he was still resisting; I have already quoted his views on German rights given to the missionary, Richard, when the latter was trying to persuade him to obey the District Officer's summons.⁵ It was not only Mwakatundu himself, but also particularly his "son" Mwakyembe, who were hostile to the Germans and unwilling to accept the new order. It was this Mwakyembe who, in 1894, is found "provoking" Lieut. Bauer of the Administration, and challenging him to fight. In 1895 he appears to have indulged in old-style cattle raiding against a neighbour, Mwamasangula, and to have virtually ignored the mission, which tried to intervene, and after that the Administration itself. As late as 1907 he was reported as still hostile to the mission, keeping himself and his wives away.⁶

The hostility of the southern section of the plain to the Germans may possibly have had its origins, as it had its ending, in preference for the British. They, it should be remembered, had never administered the Nyakyusa before 1916. It was this southern section which had the most intimate and continuous contacts with the people at Karonga, particularly the trading Moir brothers, in the years before 1891. It was in fact in Mwakatundu's territory on the Nsesi

1. Merensky 1894, 305; *Deutsches Kolonialblatt* 1893, 354/5.
2. *Deutsches Kolonialblatt* 1893, 354.
3. *JUF* 1895, 124.
4. *BG* 1895, 47.
5. *JUF* 1895, 219/22.
6. *JUF* 1908, 154.

River that the African Lakes Company party had taken refuge when they had had to evacuate Karonga.¹

I discussed above the inter-relation of kinsmen-princes and showed that the country could not be regarded as divided into discrete territorial units, ruled by chiefs as miniature independent states. It is important to consider the form of the administration in the light of this analysis. Unfortunately, direct evidence on the subject is scanty, but the affair of Mwakatundu's summons, already twice alluded to, is worth citing again. It suggests at least the Administration's difficulty in dealing with, even comprehending, princely inter-relations. When Mwakatundu finally got to Langenburg and was interviewed by the District Officer, it came out that the prince had received no direct summons to appear, the summons having been directed to Mwakymbe. The District Officer had understood that it was the latter who was the chief and held the power and authority. This had upset the old prince—or this at least was the excuse he chose to make—and he now declared himself ready to take full responsibility for the behaviour of his "sons".²

Not only does this suggest the Administration's difficulties; it also suggests the kind of "chief" they were looking for, the autocrat with the miniature independent state. This judgment is somewhat reinforced by a general statement on the primarily military task of Administration in the Districts of the interior, which appeared in the *Kolonial Handbuch* for 1896:

In the administration of justice they [District Officers] limit themselves to judging disputes between the chiefs, thus preventing the appeal to arms usual previously. They avoid getting involved in internal affairs and thereby ensure that the customs of the natives should continue to be respected, and that the influential chiefs should remain friendly towards the Germans, without their respect for the Administration suffering.³

This was undoubtedly the general policy also followed in the Langenburg District at this period. Self-help was forbidden; complaint was to be carried to the Administration instead. But little more was attempted. Indeed it is difficult to see how very much more could have been with the staff available. This, according again to the *Kolonial Handbuch* (1896), consisted of the District Officer

1. Nkonjera, 232.
2. *JUF* 1895, 222; *BG* 1895, 160.
3. *Kolonial Handbuch* 1896, 279.

and a white sergeant of police, with twenty-five regular askaris and fifty irregulars.¹ Thus there was a positive need to rely on "chiefs" and to distinguish internal from external affairs, so that the burden on the Administration could be kept to a level which could be carried. Both the actions and the general trend of policy of the Administration therefore continued the undermining of the indigenous system of inter-linking which had been begun by the missions, and led in the direction of territorially discrete chiefdoms.

Nevertheless, perhaps because the discrete chiefdoms did not in the beginning exist, perhaps because the missionaries had already laid the foundations for less strictly confined intervention, action was not completely limited to dealing with disputes between princes. The possibility of doing more must certainly be attributed to the presence of the missionaries at their six stations (1896) throughout the valley. Two incidents in mid-1894 illustrate the policy of limited intervention then prevailing and the Administration's attempts to do more. The first incident concerned Mwakatundu again: Richard from Ipyana reports that the prince had had a man killed for adultery with his sister. Richard was giving this as an example of princely behaviour of which one could not approve, but there is no suggestion that the Administration intervened.² A little later he reports again on a killing, but this time the Administration did want to intervene and to punish the murderer. The princes, however, had seen this as an infringement of their rights, and apparently refused co-operation. This seems to have been one of the reasons for the summoning of Mwakatundu and others to Langenburg.³ One further case may be quoted, this from 1896 or '97, since it helps to fill out the picture of an Administration willing to intervene if called upon to do so, but keen to avoid riding roughshod over Nyakyusa customary behaviour even when this was quite unacceptable to German ideas of justice. The case concerned the mutilation and drowning of his wife's child by a certain Mwakalebela. This was an adulterine child born to a wife who left him but later returned. Mwakalebela failed to obtain compensation from the adulterer and this was said to give him the right to kill the child. But the mother complained and the Germans intervened. The missionary reporter noted: "As this way of acting is the custom of the people,

1. Kolonial Handbuch 1896, 346.

2. BG 1895, 47.

3. *Ibid.*, 56.

he was to pay only three cattle, which he did, although with some delay.¹

The District Officer's power was based ultimately on the possession of forces with which to conduct punitive raids. In the first years particularly, these might take the form of an European-led expedition culminating in a pitched battle with the offending prince.² A few such contests rapidly demonstrated, to those for whom it had not been obvious from the first, that Nyakyusa warriors were no match for breech-loading rifles. Thereafter the usual instrument of the Administration appears to have been the band of askaris, with no white commander, sent out to execute the District Office's business in the valley.³ Lack of staff made such a procedure inevitable, but it quickly led to serious abuse. The askaris with their rifles became something of a law to themselves, and on several occasions behaved high-handedly or worse towards the local people.⁴

Whether entirely because of their behaviour, as the missionaries tended to think, or because of a combination of factors of which this was but one, resentment against the German occupation built up during 1897, embracing the missionaries as well as the Administration. In November there were rites carried out by the Lwembe to whom many princes sent beasts for sacrifice. Following these rites it was prophesied that all the whites would leave the country.⁵ In the plains more active steps to that end were being taken, ironically by the central princes, Mwanjabala, Mwakalukwa and Mwakalinga, who may be supposed now to have realised the failure of their attempt to use the Germans as allies for their own advantage. It is interesting to note that Mwankenja took no part in the rising.⁶ What was intended it is impossible to say in any detail. A force was gathered in Mwanjabala's country, i.e. north of Mwaya, and of this the District Office got word. The District Officer and the District Secretary commandeered a boat belonging to the Berlin mission. They transported a force of about fifty askaris across the lake, met the Nyakyusa force among the banana groves of the villages, and shattered it with rifle fire before it made any effective

1. *MB* 1897, 211.

2. E.g. v. Eitz, the District Officer's defeat of Mwisote in the far north, May, 1894. (*Deutsches Kolonialblatt* 1894, 548.)

3. E.g. *MB* 1897, 210.

4. *MB* 1898, 190/3: soldiery on the rampage in Selya.

5. *Ibid.*, 195.

6. Fulleborn, 392.

attack. Thirty to fifty Nyakyusa were killed, including Prince Mwakalinga himself.¹

The Rising may be taken as marking the drawing to a close of the first period of German over-rule, the brief six years which had begun with the arrival of the missionaries in 1891. I have found no contemporary analysis of the Rising's significance or results. Its only immediate recorded consequence was that the Nyakyusa were forbidden to carry spears. But whether as a result of the Rising or of the perception of the potential of the valley and its people, the Administration soon moved in on them. At the end of 1900 the headquarters moved to Neu-Langenburg, founded on Ntukuyu Hill, but this major move had been preceded two years earlier by the setting up of two administrative sub-stations, on the Kasiobona river in Selya and in Masebe, the region to the south of Mpuguso. At the same time, in 1899 or 1900, the first tax, on huts, was imposed.² For the Nyakyusa, the colonial period had begun in earnest.

1. *MB* 1898, 190/5; *BG* 1898, 181/6; Fulleborn, 292.

2. Fulleborn, 293, 385 (note); *JUF* 1900, 352; *Deutsche Kolonialzeitung* 1902, 351.

7

CONCLUDING SUMMARY

In the first part of this short study I attempted to establish the distinctness of the indigenous political system from what had developed out of it by the 1930s. Nyakyusa country was no comfortable backwater left to develop its own eccentric ways, but a busy country occupied by a vigorous, competitive and self-assertive people who were able and willing to challenge hostile incursions. In this they were sometimes successful in spite of a political system not well adapted to mobilising large forces for concerted action.

I have tried to show that this political system cannot be regarded as a series of discrete chiefdoms, ruled as miniature states by their chiefs. In the first place every prince held his title within a system of titles dating from different generations, with a lasting superordination of senior titles. No title had a fixed life-span; its maintenance from the very moment of its creation at a Coming-out was dependent on the activity and success of its incumbents. His own efforts determined the power a prince could wield, for, with little political centralisation, his office itself held scarcely any institutionalised power. In prosecuting and handling disputes, the fundamental unit was the village with its headman. If the parties were not in the same village then the plaintiff would have to mobilise the fellow villagers of the defendant to bring pressure to bear on him for a settlement. The seizure of a woman of the village, or more particularly of a cow, was the mechanism through which the mobilisation was achieved. There was no question of arraigning a person before his prince for judgment. The prince's main importance here was as a linking device and this was made possible by his position in the system of princely titles and genealogical relationship stretching more or less effectively over considerable areas of the valley. But this dispute-settling mechanism had no certainty of success, and even among his own people the prince had no monopoly of the use of force. A dispute between different villages or even sections of villages might lead to fighting. Neither did the prince control land

or other economic resources. Much of his institutionalised importance was in fact purely ritual, in connection with the cult of the princely ancestors who were thought to protect the country.

Yet if his office itself provided the prince with little automatic power, there was still the possibility of acquiring a considerable measure of personal power. I have shown how, in the absence of resources he could monopolise, he could do this only by the successful performance of the expected role of the prince. With the large and ever increasing number of princes, the scarce resources from his point of view were followers and cattle, the two being closely connected since he could not fulfil the expectations of his followers unless he was well provided with cattle. The particularly favourable position of the prince in relation to bridewealth was an important basis for this provision, though there were raiding and other sources in addition. The prince not only needed to compete for followers if he wished to be powerful; he had necessarily to compete or he was in danger of losing all to his rivals in the system.

The Coming-out I have shown not to involve the retiring of one generation in favour of the next. Rather it was concerned first with establishing in their new statuses the young ruling princes, headmen and villagers, but without the implication that any of them were replacing predecessors in these statuses. It has never been suggested that the headmanships were not newly created offices; there is no reason to regard the ruling princships differently. Secondly, it was concerned with reorganising the country to pull together the young prince's immediate followers into a coherent unit. The older villages could be left to go wherever convenient since the whole country still retained its relationship with the prince of the senior title; their location was therefore of no particular significance.

Against this background I have argued that the princes probably were on occasion killed; the Divine King was killed. This I have analysed as the killing of an incumbent for the benefit of the title. In this competitive system it was in the headmen's interests to preserve the viability of their prince. A prince who was not competitive endangered his country not only mystically but in reality, since this would lead to the gradual disintegration of his villages and the consequent disappearance of the headman offices. Killing one incumbent provides the possibility of installing another more competitive.

Finally, I have examined the way in which European influence and then control entered into the Nyakyusa political system.

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JUF—*Journal de l'Unité des Frères*: Moravian Mission.

MB—*Missions-Berichte*: Berlin Society Mission.

JB—*Jahresbericht* (Annual Report).

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