

RESEARCH ARTICLE

# The Quotidian Politics of a Love Story: Researching, Assembling, and Mobilizing the Lunda Legend in the Late Nineteenth Century

David M. Gordon 

Bowdoin College  
Email: [dgordon@bowdoin.edu](mailto:dgordon@bowdoin.edu)

(Received 4 January 2023; revised 12 January 2023; accepted 18 April 2023)

## Abstract

The love story between Chibinda Ilunga and Lueji, one of the best-known legends of Central African history, recounts the genesis of the Mwant Yav dynasty of the Lunda polity. Previous discussions of the narrative pitted symbolic interpretations against historical findings. This article asks why the Lunda love story became so influential from the middle of the nineteenth century. Instead of being an exclusively Lunda genesis narrative, the love story represented the interests and narratives of societies brought together by the caravan trade in Kasai and eastern Angola, including Chokwe, Ambakista, Luba, and Imbangala, all of whom added components to the legend compiled by Portuguese explorer and diplomat Henrique Dias de Carvalho. The legend took on importance as diverse factions competed for political titles and trading profits. In the hands of Carvalho and his informants the love story became a tool to construct a Pax Lunda guaranteed by the Portuguese. By demonstrating the quotidian politics of the love story, the article suggests the utility in the historical contextualization of the telling of oral traditions to appreciate their multiple meanings.

**Keywords:** Central Africa; Angola; Democratic Republic of the Congo; oral tradition; legend; precolonial; historiography; Lunda; Chokwe; Caravan Trade

The peoples of eastern Angolan and Kasai regions tell the story of a leader, Yal Mak who, disappointed with the uncivilized behavior of his sons and would be heirs, Kinguri and Kinyama, decided to give the insignia of rule, the *lukano* bracelet, to his youngest daughter, Lueji.<sup>1</sup> One day, her courtiers encountered strangers bathing in the river. They asked the leader of the group who they were. ‘A hunter of the *Mulopwe* [sacred king] Mutombo, we have meat, we want salt’, he replied.<sup>2</sup> After her courtiers told Lueji of this hunting man, ‘Chibinda Ilunga’, she went to meet him. The following are some of the key incidents of the encounter, one of the most famous and influential legends of southern Central Africa, translated directly from the account of the diplomat, explorer, and ethnographer, Henrique Augusto Dias de Carvalho (henceforth Carvalho), the source most relevant to this article:

<sup>1</sup>Orthography of names and titles differs in several European and African languages, as well as renditions of Lunda history. Titles are introduced in italics. For titles and names that are not common, to avoid confusion and demonstrate equivalence with primary sources, I have used the spelling found in the primary sources, particularly Henrique Dias de Carvalho; where there are clear English conventions, I have followed J. Thornton, *A History of West Central Africa* (Cambridge, 2020). Following Carvalho, I do not distinguish between Lunda and Ru[un]d.

<sup>2</sup>As cited in Thornton, *History*, 218, from H. Dias de Carvalho, *Ethnographia e história tradicional dos povos da Lunda* (Lisbon, 1890), 66–7.

© The Author(s), 2023. Published by Cambridge University Press. This is an Open Access article, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial licence (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original article is properly cited. The written permission of Cambridge University Press must be obtained prior to any commercial use.



Ilunga came to Luéji, and she invited him to sit down on the rock beside her.... Luéji, surrounded by her courtiers, watching silently, listened to the story of Ilunga: his resolution to abandon his polity to which belonged the insignia, the *chimbúia* axe, much admired by the entourage, and passed from hand to hand by them. Luéji then showed him the Lucano [lukano] bracelet, inherited from her father. She thought that the best way to retain such a beautiful hunter would be to speak to him about hunting, so she turned the conversation to this subject. She said there was a lot of game nearby, but that it was difficult to catch, because it did not always fall into the traps placed by her people. If the hunter stayed a few days, he could teach them how to use the weapons that he employed.

Ilunga stayed, and Lueji became convinced that this man was sent by her dead father to be his heir. She convened a gathering of advisers, and told them:

Since she had not found a man to her liking among her relatives to entrust with the inherited lukano, [the spirit of] her father had sent the hunter Ilunga, with whom she was very pleased. So she asked them to proceed with the ceremonies to sanction her choice; even though Ilunga was not related to her, he was a big man; a brother of Canhúca and Cassongo [of Mutombo Mukulu], their neighbors, it should not matter that he was a foreigner, because the children that she would have would also have her blood, and through her that of the *muata* [Yal Mak, Lueji's father]. The elders, who already appreciated the hunter, pronounced themselves in his favor, because they wanted to fulfill the last wishes of Xacala Macala [Yal Mak], and they feared Quinguri [Kinguri], whose irascible temperament they knew, would organize a faction to steal the lukano from his sister and take over the state.<sup>3</sup>

The culmination of the story was handing the lukano bracelet insignia over to Ilunga, who would come to rule in the name of Lueji's future son, the first mwant yav, Nawej I. Following the inauguration of the Mwant Yav dynasty by the foreigner, the angry and dispossessed brothers, Kinguri and Kinyama, went into exile, founding Imbangala and Luvale polities. Lueji's aunt (or sister) Nana Cambamba soon followed, establishing the Chokwe nation.

In the late nineteenth century, the Lunda love story was a political lynchpin throughout Kasai and eastern Angola, especially popular among mobile and caravan trading peoples, including the Imbangala, Chokwe, Luvale, Ambakista, and European explorers. This article explains why the Lunda love story became so politically useful, or, put another way, how the story came to represent the political processes of the second half of the nineteenth century. Political and economic change motivated geographically dispersed traders and titleholders to seek status and authority by telling and becoming part of the Lunda love story. In the late nineteenth century, as the Lunda state disintegrated into warring factions supported by Chokwe mercenaries, the story became even more important in attempts to forge alliances that would foster peace.

The quotidian politics of the telling of the Lunda love story complements a range of historiographic interventions concerning the telling of origin stories, in particular the founding epics of polities described as empires. For example, historian Hadrien Collet emphasizes that the founding narrative of the Mali empire, the Sunjata epic, reflected how 'Mandeian societies made use of the political inheritance of Mali in order to position themselves in a complex network of political and social claims and statuses'.<sup>4</sup> Telling the Lunda love story similarly associated diverse elites

<sup>3</sup>All portions from Carvalho, *Ethnographia*, 68–73. I have followed my own translation, although compared it with Victor Turner who translates a long contiguous section of the same part of Carvalho, in V. Turner, 'A Lunda love story and its consequences: selected texts from traditions collected by Henrique Dias de Carvalho at the court of Mwatianywa in 1887', *The Rhodes-Livingstone Institute Journal*, 19 (1955), 1–26. My translation differs slightly.

<sup>4</sup>H. Collet, 'Landmark empires: searching for medieval empires and imperial tradition in historiographies of West Africa', *The Journal of African History*, 61:3 (2020), 354–5. J. Jansen, personal communication, 18 Jan. 2022.

with a mythical past. Such narratives performed what David Schoenbrun terms ‘groupwork’ with respect to the East African Great Lakes region, tying ‘sovereign knots’ between sociopolitical groups, here not the families, clans, and kingdoms of the Great Lakes, but the mobile caravan traders and sedentary titleholders of western Central Africa.<sup>5</sup>

A focus on the telling of the narrative leads this article to treat the Lunda love story as a legend rather than an oral tradition. Less interested in reconstructing historical veracity than many historians who study oral tradition, the article considers instead how and why the narrative was told.<sup>6</sup> The treatment of the narrative here does not confine itself to the interpretative strategies of anthropologists such as Luc De Heusch, who grounds Central African legends in the context of cultural norms or structures.<sup>7</sup> Instead, departing from approaches that tend to focus on macro historical, political, and cultural generalities, the article describes the daily politics in which the most influential versions of the legend were told and assembled, an underdeveloped interpretative track that has implications for broader historical and anthropological understandings of oral traditions and legends.

Carolyn Hamilton, in a study of oral tradition and documentary evidence about Shaka Zulu, reminds scholars that there are ‘limits to historical invention’.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, not all in the Lunda love story was invented by political exigency. Yet the way in which these limits function depends on cultural conceptions of history and the specific contexts in which these cultural concepts came into play. For early modern southern Central Africans, governed by titleholders bound together in systems of positional succession and perpetual kinship, telling history was a form of statecraft. The notion of *ilyashi* (history) amongst the eastern Lunda of Mwata Kazembe as the ‘affairs and cases of the past which make present affairs what they are’, as explained by anthropologist Ian Cunnison, applies to the Lunda of Mwant Yav.<sup>9</sup> Such mobilization of politics in captivating historical narratives was also not unfamiliar to the Portuguese explorer, Carvalho, given the celebrated love stories that informed Portuguese monarchical traditions.<sup>10</sup> The Lunda love story became a ‘middle ground’ narrative that took its modern ‘universal’ form as it came to represent alliances within eastern Angola and Kasai during the last quarter of the nineteenth century.<sup>11</sup> It functioned — or more accurately failed — as a regional peace treaty promoted by Carvalho. Quotidian politics, added to cultural historical concepts shared by Central Africans and mobilized by the Portuguese explorer, made the legend relevant, malleable, and even durable.

This article considers the regional politics of late nineteenth century eastern Angola by examining how Henrique Dias de Carvalho, and his allies and informants, collected, assembled, and mobilized the Lunda love story. After evaluating the documentary evidence of the Lunda love story from the earlier part of the century, the article turns to the appearance of the Lunda love story in the records of Carvalho’s expedition, examining how Lunda, Imbangala, and Chokwe informants

<sup>5</sup>D. L. Schoenbrun, *The Names of the Python: Belonging in East Africa, 900–1930* (Madison, 2021).

<sup>6</sup>A rich methodological discussion beginning with J. Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History* (Madison, 1985). A clear summary of the dilemmas for historians in the use of oral tradition as sources, including anthropological and social science perspectives, in S. Belcher, ‘Oral tradition as sources’, *Oxford Research Encyclopedia*, 26 Feb. 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.013.363>. The literature is vast, but specific to the Lunda Legend, J. Hoover, ‘The seduction of Ruweji: reconstructing Ruund history (the nuclear Lunda; Zaire, Angola, Zambia)’ (unpublished PhD thesis, Yale University, 1978), and focused article on the Lunda legend, J. Hoover, ‘*Mythe et remous historique: a Lunda response to De Heusch*’, *History in Africa*, 5 (1978), 63–80.

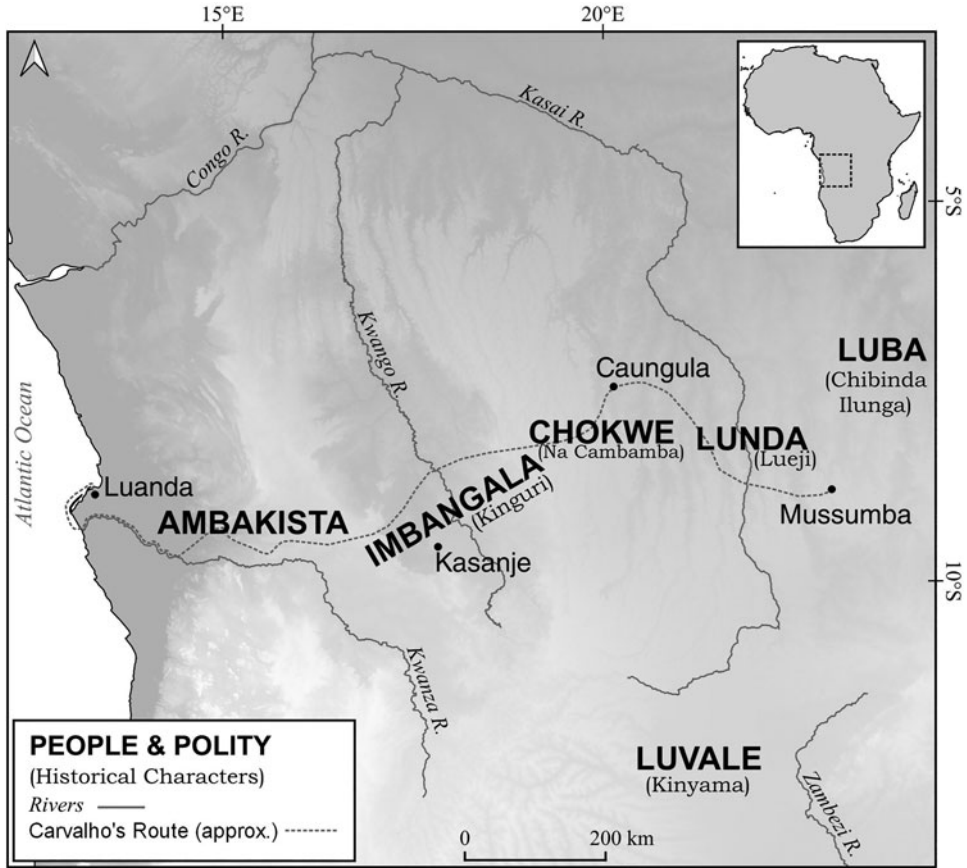
<sup>7</sup>L. de Heusch, *The Drunken King and the Origins of the State* (Bloomington, IN, 1982; orig. Paris, 1972).

<sup>8</sup>C. Hamilton, *Terrific Majesty: The Powers of Shaka Zulu and the Limits of Historical Invention* (Cambridge, MA, 1998).

<sup>9</sup>I. Cunnison, *History on the Luapula* (Cape Town, 1952), 5.

<sup>10</sup>The love story of Pedro and Inês being the most striking example, J. Perkins, ‘“D. Inês tomou conta das nossas almas”: the enduring national treasure’, *Portuguese Studies*, 13 (1997), 43–65.

<sup>11</sup>‘Universal history’ in the same sense as the creation of universal history of the Kazembe kingdom, in D. M. Gordon, ‘History on the Luapula retold: landscape, memory, and identity in the Kazembe kingdom’, *The Journal of African History*, 47:1 (2006), 21–42. Concept of ‘middle ground’ in North American frontier society developed in R. White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815* (Cambridge, 1991).



**Figure 1.** Map of polities and characters associated with Lunda love story, ca. 1885  
Composed by Aharon deGrassi.

shaped the legend. In 1885, Lunda traditionalists told of Lueji to ensure the correct patrilineal succession of the title of mwant yav that took into account the founding queen, Lueji, and her titular inheritors, *lukokesh*a and *nswan murund* (the queen mother and the guardian of royal relics, respectively), thereby legitimizing Carvalho's key ally, Xa Madiamba, in his campaign for the mwant yav title. Through that year and the following, the Lunda love story also became key in developing relationships between Lunda and Imbangala titleholders, specifically Kinguri, and in resolving conflict between Lunda and Chokwe titleholders. After the fall of the Lunda capital, the Mussumba, in 1887, and the reconstruction of the Lunda court in King Leopold's Congo Free State, the Luba roots of Chibinda Ilunga helped to make the Lunda part of the surrounding polities that came to constitute the Katanga province of the Belgian Congo. The article thereby shows how the several main characters of the narrative — the brothers, sister, and lover of Lueji — constituted a fictive family of nineteenth century regional titleholders.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup>In this article Lueji's second brother, Kinyama (Chinyama), as founder of the Luvale is not examined, mostly because he was marginal to the disputes in which Carvalho was involved. For Kinyama's connections to the love story, see the Luvale history, M. Sangambo, *The History of the Luvale People and Their Chiefship* (Zambezi, 1984), 25–30. Likewise, the Lwena of Zambezi titleholder Kanongesha, is not considered here, R. E. Schechter, 'History and historiography on a frontier of Lunda expansion: the origins and early development of the Kanongesha' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1976).

The Lunda love story was not a late nineteenth-century fabrication; aspects of the narrative had probably been circulating for centuries, as suggested by its many clichés and symbols.<sup>13</sup> At its mythical center was Lueji. Imbangala, Chokwe, Lunda, Luvale, and Luba titleholders linked their political histories to this mythical center through the Lunda love story. The genius of Carvalho was assembling these many individual histories into a universal Lunda love story, which involved a comprehensive project of research. Deconstructing Carvalho's assembly reveals the quotidian and context-specific rationales for the dramatic telling of Chibinda Ilunga and Lueji's love story.

### Nineteenth-century documentary evidence of the Lunda love story

There is little documentary evidence of the Lunda love story prior to the middle of the nineteenth century. The first Portuguese accounts in which the Lunda can be identified with certainty, dating to 1755, mention the titleholder *mwant yav*, but not the oral tradition associated with his rise.<sup>14</sup> Diplomatic correspondence from 1805 is addressed to the *lukokesh*a titleholder who would later become associated with Lueji, but there was no evidence of a connection between the title and Lueji at that time.<sup>15</sup> In 1846, Rodrigues Graça visited the Lunda court. He heard of prophecies of a Lunda alliance with the Portuguese, and provided some ethnographic and historical details, but does not record the love story that would a few decades later become such a defining element of the origins of the Lunda state.<sup>16</sup> In 1850, António Neves, on a mission to punish rebels in Kasanje, tells a story that has elements of familial strife, including a sister who conspires with her lover, the *mwant yav* to rid herself of her brothers. There is a reference to a love story, but no mention of the foreign hunter.<sup>17</sup> The German explorer and hunter, Paul Pogge first wrote down the story in its recognizable form following his expedition of 1875–6.<sup>18</sup> Shortly after, in 1878–9, Pogge's compatriot, Otto Schütt, recorded the story.<sup>19</sup> Max Buchner, following his visit to the Lunda capital in 1880, wrote down a slightly more detailed version.<sup>20</sup> The best known, most influential and most cited version, however, is that of Carvalho, unmatched in florid detail. Here, the love story as the genesis of the *Mwant Yav* dynasty covers 54 pages of his 731-page *Ethnographia e História*, a portion of which began this article.

Carvalho's corpus is one of the most substantial of the nineteenth-century European explorers, and certainly the most focused on a single region about which he gathered significant expertise. In addition to *Ethnographia e História* and other volumes, it includes a four-volume published account of the journey, as well as much unpublished material, including an eight-volume unpublished diary. The published account of the journey is really a *description* (henceforth the *Descrição*, following the orthography of its title), and not a daily rendering of events. Instead, the *Descrição* covers discrete topics in many short, detailed chapters that, although organized annually, are not strictly

<sup>13</sup>For structuralist anthropologist Luc de Heusch the legend provided the symbolic basis for divine kingship, bringing together a sterile princess and a hunter who was a provider of children just as he provided meat, De Heusch, *Drunken King*, 164–8.

<sup>14</sup>E. Sebestyén, J. Vansina, and M. C. Leitão, 'Angola's eastern hinterland in the 1750s: a text edition and translation of Manoel Correia Leitão's "Voyage" (1755–1756)', *History in Africa*, 26 (1999), 299–364.

<sup>15</sup>Letters of Governor of Angola, António Saldanha da Gama, n.d. but between 1807 and 1810, in A. P. R. Tavares, 'História e memória: estudo sobre as sociedades Lunda e Chokwe de Angola' (unpublished PhD thesis, Universidade Nova de Lisboa, 2009), 45 and n124.

<sup>16</sup>J. R. Graça, 'Expedição ao Muatyanvua', *Boletim da Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa*, 9 (1889).

<sup>17</sup>A. R. Neves, *Memória da expedição ao Cassange em 1850* (Lisbon, 1854), 96–7.

<sup>18</sup>P. Pogge, *Im reiche des Mwato Jamwo* (Berlin, 1880), 224–5.

<sup>19</sup>O. H. Schütt, *Reisen im südwestlichen Becken des Congo nach den Tagebüchern und Aufzeichnungen des Reisenden* (Berlin, 1881), 82–3.

<sup>20</sup>M. Buchner, 'Das Reich des Muatamvo und seiner Nachbarländer', *Deutsche Geographische Blätter*, 6 (1883): 56–67.



chronological.<sup>21</sup> The unpublished diary (henceforth the diary) describes events that occurred on a particular day. While they contain the same general information, the organization of the published *Descrição* makes it more difficult to contextualize events with precision; the *Descrição* is also more diplomatic, concealing Carvalho's weaknesses, his frustrations with his allies and enemies, his sickness, and much that might compromise the integrity of his allies (and thereby Portugal's claims in the region), including the slave trade.

Most historians have gained their evidence from the abovementioned 731-page collection of Carvalho's observations, *Ethnographia e História*. This volume reorganizes, sometimes condensing and sometimes expanding, research that Carvalho conducted with numerous informants over the four years of his expedition. The history in *Ethnographia e História* is separated from the context of its collection. It is an attempt to combine numerous different histories into a single version of the Lunda love story followed by a chronology of kings. The unpublished archival folder that closely matches some of the historical content of *Ethnographia e História* is 'Apontamentos Históricos', dated 28 April 1887. Consulted by a few historians, it is a rough draft of one section of *Ethnographia e História*, not original research notes. 'Apontamentos' is most useful in revealing Carvalho's editing process, while he was sick and disappointed with his mission.<sup>22</sup> In fact, Carvalho had published much of the history prior to writing these 'Apontamentos' in a letter he sent at the end of 1885 to Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa (published in 1886).<sup>23</sup>

The published *Descrição* gives a better account of the original collection of history than *Ethnographia e Historia*. Best of all are the unpublished diaries. This article turns to these unpublished diaries, accompanied by the *Descrição*, to explore Carvalho's research and the micropolitical context in which it occurred. During this period, Carvalho adjudicated and intervened in disputes between his Ambakista employees, Chokwe leaders, Lunda titleholders, and Imbangala traders, all the while trying to persuade them that the rightful heir to the Lunda throne was Carvalho's closest ally, Xa Madiamba, and, at the same time, trying to persuade Xa Madiamba to travel with him to the Lunda capital, the Mussumba, to take his place as mwant yav.

### Lueji's sons: the Mwant Yav dynasty

It is likely that Carvalho had first read of the Lunda love story in accounts of contemporary explorers, in particular the Germans, Buchner and Pogge. If he had, by 1884 he did not consider it important enough to write about it in his diaries. He also might have heard of it from the eldest of the Bezerra brothers, the Ambakista trader, Lourenço Bezerra, who in July 1884 told him of the history of Lunda politics since the middle of the nineteenth century.<sup>24</sup> At that point he also noted the exiled son of Nawej II, Xa Madiamba, as the legitimate aspirant to the mwant

<sup>21</sup>The volumes of his 1884–8 journeys were published through the early 1890s, with a selection of the original manuscripts held at the Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino (AHU) in Lisbon within the collections Secretaria de Estado da Marinha e Ultramar (SEMU), Direção-Geral do Ultramar (DGU), and Angola (ANG), and a limited collections of photos and objects in Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa (SGL).

<sup>22</sup>AHU SEMU Caixa 1092, 'Apontamentos Históricos ou melhor coleções de apontamentos para história dos Muatiãnvuas desde 1820 até esta data 29 Abril de 1887'. The title of these 'Apontamentos Históricos' dates them to 29 Apr. 1887, but the final page to 1886. The final events recorded in the diary suggest that it was written in 1887, as Mbala temporarily came to power. Diary entry shows Carvalho was sick in Apr. 1887. AHU DGU 1154 Lv 1887, 'Expedição ao Muatiãnvua'.

<sup>23</sup>The earlier version of Carvalho's narration, dated 30 Dec. 1885, in H. Dias de Carvalho, 'Expedição Portuguesa ao Muatyan-vu-a', *Boletim da Sociedade de Geographia de Lisboa*, 6 (1886), 145–7.

<sup>24</sup>In Malanje, Lourenço Bezerra, in the course of discussing the route, tells Carvalho the history of the Lunda since the 1850s, during the reign of Noeji (Nawej II), AHU DGU 1150 Lv 1884, 'Expedição ao Muatiãnvua', 10 July 1884. The entry reveals that Carvalho is also familiar with the notes of Buchner, perhaps also communicated with Wissmann, who Carvalho meets at this time and helps him to plan his route. Also see Carvalho, *Descrição*, Vol. 1, 220. The most thorough history of the Ambakista family of Bezerra in B. Heintz, *A África Centro-Occidental No Seculo XIX (c. 1850–1890): Intercâmbio com o mundo exterior apropriação, exploração e documentação*, trans. M. Santos (Luanda, 2013), 309–55, based mostly on Carvalho's accounts of the family.

yav title.<sup>25</sup> Carvalho was interested but unsure of his historical information: ‘When I wanted to inquire about the successions of the Muatas Iamvos [mwant yavs] and the Lucoquexe [lukokeshu] queen mothers, I found myself entangled in a web that perhaps I will only be able to .... unravel later’.<sup>26</sup> Working out this history of succession would become key to his mission and his recounting of Lunda history.

On 25 August 1885, Xa Madiamba, the son of Naweji II and a popular traditionalist claimant to the mwant yav title, joined Carvalho’s expedition. From then onwards, the fate of Carvalho’s expedition became linked to that of Xa Madiamba: Carvalho hoped that once Xa Madiamba became mwant yav he would recognize Portuguese protection and restore Lunda prestige. Nonetheless, by late 1885, Carvalho, camping at the Lunda titleholder Caungula’s court with his newfound ally, confronted the dilemma of his mission.<sup>27</sup> The Lunda state was in crisis due to internal dissent over titular successions, in turn linked to economic crises due to cheap imports and the end of the Atlantic slave trade. This crisis was amplified by the growing power of the Chokwe, who had become powerbrokers in the acquisition of Lunda titles as well as controlling the flow of trade and tribute. Carvalho thought that free trade protected by the Portuguese, with amiable relations between the traders from the west and the interior polities, would resolve the economic crisis suffered by the Lunda state. The political crisis, for Carvalho, needed to be confronted by developing clearer guidelines over succession and over territorial borders. To achieve economic integration and resolve succession disputes Carvalho realized he had to understand history and mobilize it for the purposes of peace and law.

On 17 November 1885, amid a discussion over the politics of succession for the mwant yav title that had been going for four days, Carvalho addressed a large audience, including Xa Madiamba. He complained of the unclear rules of succession, in particular the multiple sons claiming rights, which had undermined the state and enabled the Chokwe to intervene in the politics of succession by installing their allies.<sup>28</sup> This, according to Carvalho, stretched back to the flaws in the succession of titles within the multiethnic Lunda state. It was the first time Carvalho wrote of the Lunda love story:

When Lueji joined with Ilunga, she did not recognize that her state would have such a short reign, due to the.... large concession that she made to the *conquistadores* without requiring compensations and, not regulating access to the State, she thought only about her sons and not grandsons. Since she, as she was the owner [senhora] of the land, and never assumed other women were involved in relations with Ilunga, it is correct that only the children that she had with him were considered sons of the mwant yav.<sup>29</sup>

The problem, Carvalho claimed, was that Lueji never thought of what would occur to her grandsons, and their sons through numerous wives, all of whom would compete for state titles. The state needed to regulate who was a legitimate successor by recognizing only the children of the *mwad* (principal wife) of the mwant yav. The system collapsed after the reign of ‘Iamvo’ (Naweji II), who Carvalho at this point (incorrectly) claimed to be the grandson of Lueji, and who, according to Carvalho, never arranged legitimate lines of succession. This resulted in Chokwe power

<sup>25</sup>From a regional administrator — *kakwata* (an enforcer) — of the Lunda, ‘Xaquilembe’, AHU DGU 1150 Lv. 1884, ‘Expedição ao Muatiánvua’, 13–4 July 1884. Also Carvalho, *Descrição*, Vol. 1, 223–5.

<sup>26</sup>AHU DGU 1150 Lv. 1884, 10 July 1884.

<sup>27</sup>Caungula of Lovua, not Caungula of Mataba with whom Carvalho negotiates Xanama’s *faca* (machete insignia) from Quessengue. Details of time at Caungula of Lovua’s court in Carvalho, *Descrição*, Vol. 2; and in AHU DGU 1152 Lv. 1885, ‘Expedição ao Muatiánvua’.

<sup>28</sup>AHU DGU 1152 Lv 1885, ‘Expedição ao Muatiánvua’, 13–17 Nov. 1885. A version of this discourse, which is recognizable, but heavily edited and changed, is in Carvalho, *Descrição*, Vol. 2, 729–30.

<sup>29</sup>AHU DGU 1152 Lv 1885, ‘Expedição ao Muatiánvua’, 17 Nov. 1885.







different historical characters. Lueji, according to the twentieth-century version of the oral tradition (but not that of Carvalho), was infertile, and so the descendants of Chibinda Ilunga, the mwant yav titleholders, derived from his second wife, Kamong a Ruwaz. Such a claim ran counter to Carvalho and Xa Madiamba's efforts to ensure only the children of the mwad (or Lueji) could come to the throne, and increased the number of potential aspirants to the mwant yav title. Chibinda Ilunga's second wife emerges in the narrative as Xa Madiamba fails to take up the throne, which is instead usurped by Xa Madiamba's and Carvalho's rival, the son of Xanama, Muxidi (r. 1887–1907).<sup>34</sup> The inclusion of Chibinda Ilunga's second wife in the legend made the blood lineage with Lueji less important to the acquisition of the mwant yav title: instead, the idea of a second wife legitimized alternative claimants to the mwant yav title, including those Carvalho and the traditionalists considered to be the young and ambitious men who, in their view, were destroying the Lunda state. By contrast, for Carvalho and his traditionalist Lunda allies, the key to Lunda succession was Lueji; the progeny of Chibinda Ilunga, representative of the *conquistadores*, with other wives, should be sidelined.<sup>35</sup>

To justify the choice of Xa Madiamba, and that of Portugal as an arbiter in succession disputes, Carvalho gathered further information from Xa Madiamba's entourage, which at this point he considered the legitimate Lunda court in exile. He discussed Lunda ancestry with Xa Madiamba and other Lunda elders. For example, on 26 December 1885, Carvalho gathered information from Caungula, a fictive 'cousin' of Lueji who received his title due to his conquests of Mataba.<sup>36</sup> Even the famous tortoise-shaped sketch of the Mussumba illustrated in *Ethnographia e Historia* was derived from a sketch Carvalho made of Xa Madiamba's court at Caungula during December 1885 (see Figs. 2 and 3).<sup>37</sup>

The allies assembled at Caungula at the end of 1885 — Carvalho, Ambakista, Imbangala, and Xa Madiamba's Lunda court — intended to journey to the Mussumba, where Xa Madiamba would take his place as the mwant yav by placing the *lukano* royal bracelet on his arm. He could then put an end to the disputes over succession that were destroying the Lunda state and negotiate a lasting peace with the Chokwe. Before departure, however, there needed to be a ceremony to place *lukanga* anklets, symbols of authority, on Xa Madiamba and his mwad to further legitimize their quest.<sup>38</sup> A frustrating delay, during which Carvalho learned of the importance of ritual objects for Lunda forms of sovereignty. It also gave him opportunity to continue his research into regional history.

### Lueji's brother: Kinguri and the Imbangala

Part of the audience at Caungula's court on 17 November 1885, when the future of Lunda was discussed, were a band of Imbangala traders. They had brought presents for Xa Madiamba, with whom they hoped to journey to the Mussumba. Among them were those who would become Carvalho's best collaborator and informant from late 1885, the Imbangala titleholder, Lueji's angry older brother, Kinguri (Quinguri).

Noting the Imbangala presence at Caungula's court, Carvalho began to make inquiries as to how they fitted into the regional networks of power. On 10 December 1885, in the first of several subsections in the unpublished diary titled 'Informações', Carvalho, in rough and provisional notes, related the Lunda love story with a focus on Imbangala ties to Lunda, and in particular the origin history of the Kinguri title:

<sup>34</sup>On Carvalho's view of Xanama and Muxidi's illegitimate line, AHU DGU 1152 Lv 1885, 'Expedição ao Muatianvua', 17 Nov. 1885.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup>AHU DGU 1152 Lv 1885, 'Expedição ao Muatianvua', 26 Dec. 1885.

<sup>37</sup>AHU DGU 1152 Lv 1885, 'Expedição ao Muatianvua', 29 Dec. 1885. Published in *Ethnographia e História*, 226–7.

<sup>38</sup>AHU DGU 1152 Lv 1885, 'Expedição ao Muatianvua', 23–8 Nov. 1885.

Lueji lua' Condi (Conti) the Suana Murúndu [the First] married the hunter [Txibindi] of the Luba and gave rise to the dynasty of the *atianvuas*, when she joined with him, [but] because of the humiliating ceremonies she wanted to subject her relatives to the *barrigão* (her beloved), led her brothers and discontented relatives to try to leave. Thus Quinguri qu'Conti [the elder brother], telling her that he was going to find a place to settle, where the sun sets, and there would establish his State.... he went to Luanda. He allied his forces with the Portuguese in the war of the Jingos and as he wanted to stay in the lands of Muene Puto, the [Portuguese] chief of the province gave him lands in Ambaca to settle, with a Jagga title and on that occasion handed him a flag with a black crown and a couplet in blue letters that more or less said 'His Majesty gave this flag to the Jagga Quinguri who will pass it on to his successors and they must always render obedience and vassalage to His Majesty'.<sup>39</sup>

This version appears informed by the Ambakista interpreter Antonio Bezerra and existing documentary sources. The language suggests that Carvalho was carrying notes on history with him. For example, he terms the lover of Lueji by the idiosyncratic 'barrigão', the usage that António Neves had employed in 1850. He also refers to documentary records of the first Portuguese interactions with Jaga. Nonetheless, less than a fortnight later, on 19 December 1885, Kinguri comes to Carvalho to confirm the story, adding a few details, which Carvalho again recorded in provisional notes:

Quinguri qu'a Condi and his brother Jala, relatives and friends, left the Mussumba [the Lunda capital] with the intention of only stopping where the sun sets, armed with their arrows, they hunted and beat the people who complained and opposed their passage.... they crossed the Cuanza [Kwanza] and passed the Libollo where they joined Calunga and Matemba.... where they passed the river and followed the right bank, [and] apparently in Massanga were accompanied [by the Portuguese?] and went to Luanda and were interrogated by the Cap. General....They [Kinguri and company] also confirmed what happened there with the Jinga war and going to settle in Ambaca.<sup>40</sup>

Kinguri's testimony confirms those of the above Ambakista Bezerra's account, but is more focused on the geography of Kinguri's journey into exile and the alliances forged during it: history here moves across the landscape. In this telling, Kinguri confirms the contacts with the Portuguese and the reception of the Portuguese flag, thereby signaling his ongoing loyalty to the Portuguese and by extension to Carvalho. Most of all, Kinguri insists on his relevance by placing himself at the center Lunda love story. He became the heir to the Lunda throne, deprived by Lueji and Chibinda Ilungu's usurpation, and sent into exile.

Through December 1885, Kinguri and his companion Angonga came to stand out as friends and informants of Carvalho, almost to the same extent as Xa Madiamba, as indicated by Carvalho in the published *Descrição*:

In these circumstances we were helped by the constant company of the Ambanzas [traders] Quinguri and Angonga, serious men who entertained us not only with the study of languages, traditional history, practices, and customs of all the people that they knew, but also in descriptions of their travels to the south and north of the Muatianvua region, and also in discussion about Lunda business, and the way we would get out of the bad situation in which we found ourselves.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>39</sup>AHU DGU 1152 Lv 1885, 'Expedição ao Muatianvua', 10 Dec. 1885.

<sup>40</sup>AHU DGU 1152 Lv 1885, 'Expedição ao Muatianvua', 19 Dec. 1885.

<sup>41</sup>Carvalho, *Descrição*, Vol. 2, 797.

Kinguri helped Carvalho since he wanted to proceed to the Lunda Mussumba under the protection of Carvalho's expedition. The growing audacity of Chokwe raids had taken their toll on Imbangala caravans; that year, 120 people had been killed on one guarded caravan, with 20 'raparigas' (girls) stolen along with their trade goods.<sup>42</sup> Kinguri's crew eventually formed the rearguard of Carvalho's expedition.

The strategic testimony of Kinguri in Carvalho's diary sheds light on a longstanding historiographic discussion. When Carvalho notes the links between Kinguri and the Lunda in 1885, he suggests the possibility of consulting archives to determine when, exactly, Kinguri arrived in Angola and hence dating the rise of the Lunda — which, in 1885, he estimates to be at the beginning of the eighteenth century.<sup>43</sup> Using Kinguri's contacts with Angola as a way to date the Lunda consolidation spawned much historiographic discussion.<sup>44</sup> Based on archival reports of Kinguri, historians initially dated the onset of the Lunda court to the early seventeenth century; more recently, however, historians have claimed that Kinguri was an Imbangala titleholder added to the 'core' Lunda tradition only in the nineteenth century.<sup>45</sup> John Thornton, one of the pioneers of this historical revision, suspects that the narratives of Kinguri and Kinyama (or Chinyama), 'were probably constructed in order to establish places in the Lunda tradition of the period for important neighbors'.<sup>46</sup> Or, from the less Lunda-centric perspective of Vansina, the story of Kinguri emerged on the periphery, and made its way into Lunda traditions, less a consequence of the expansion of the Lunda than the agency of new elites who sought legitimacy in regional narratives of status and power.<sup>47</sup>

The role of the Kinguri titleholder at Caungula's court in telling Carvalho of his connections to Lueji supports the possibility that Kinguri was a later addition to the core narrative. Yet the Kinguri narrative was not exceptional in this regard. It seems that there was no core narrative. The Lunda love story was a tale of familial and conjugal relationships, developed not at the Lunda court but on many regional peripheries. The histories belonged to separate titleholders who joined themselves to Lueji. It was only assembled into a universal history by the likes of Carvalho and his agents at a particular political moment. The process is further illustrated by considering how Carvalho incorporated the Chokwe in the Lunda love story.

### Lueji's Sister: Na Cambamba and the Chokwe

The story of Chokwe connections to the early Lunda are also found in Carvalho's 1885 research. Informed by what he had heard at Caungula's court and then confirmed by Kinguri, Carvalho records how Lueji sent her dissident sister (sometimes aunt), Na[na] Cambamba, into exile, telling her: "áíôko a ku Nguri," [Go there also, to Kinguri]. The phrase "áíôko," meaning to go from the

<sup>42</sup>According to Kinguri, AHU DGU 1152 Lv 1885, 'Expedição ao Muatianvua', 24 Dec. 1885.

<sup>43</sup>First estimate of the myth in the diaries, AHU DGU 1152 Lv 1885, 'Expedição ao Muatianvua', 23 Dec. 1885. He recalculated Kinguri's contacts with the Portuguese in Carvalho, *Ethnographia*, 78–9.

<sup>44</sup>In the seventeenth century, the Italian Capuchin missionary, Giovanni Cavazzi de Montecuccolo, described Kinguri as a fierce Jaga leader. J. A. Cavazzi de Montecuccolo, *Descrição histórica dos três reinos: Congo, Matamba e Angola*, trans. G.M. de Leguzzano (2 volumes, Lisbon, 1965): Vol. 1, 190; Vol. 2, 31. According to Cavazzi, his name *nguri* derived from the term for lion due to his ferocity.

<sup>45</sup>The earliest recorded version of Kinguri's departure from the Lunda was in 1850 when António Rodrigues Neves wrote down an account so substantially different from the versions recorded in the late nineteenth century that it suggests the later form of this narrative only developed in the 1860s to 1870s. Neves has Kinguri in conflict with older sister 'Manhungo' who has him removed from his attempt to succeed. Neves, *Memoria da expedição*, 96–7.

<sup>46</sup>Thornton, *History*, 226. On Chinyama, see 310–11.

<sup>47</sup>For Vansina the 'story of Kinguri's exodus from Lunda is an Ambaquiasta and Imbangala fabrication that first took place in 1840s in.... the termini of the major trade routes from the Lunda commonwealth'. J. Vansina, 'It never happened: Kinguri's exodus and its consequences', *History In Africa*, 25 (1998), 393. Vansina generalized this claim, arguing for lack of migration in dynastic states, in J. Vansina, *How Societies Are Born: Governance in West Central Africa before 1600* (Charlottesville, 2004), 250.

Lunda, Carvalho was told by the Kinguri titleholder, was the origin of the ethnonym, Chokwe.<sup>48</sup> The connection between Chokwe and Lunda ancestors was also recorded by others. Chokwe lord Ndumba wa Tembo told explorers Hemenegildo Capelo and Roberto Ivens that his ancestor was the Lunda female dignitary, “Lucoquessa.”<sup>49</sup> The most remarkable evidence linking Chokwe to the Lunda love story are Chokwe sculptural renditions of the Lunda love story’s hero, Chibinda Ilunga, as depicted in Fig. 4, first collected in the late nineteenth century, although not identified by scholars as Chibinda Ilunga until 1956.<sup>50</sup>

Why did the Chokwe tell the story and sculpt the Lunda hero? By the late nineteenth century, the Chokwe, skilled hunters of large game and elephants and gatherers of beeswax, were also conducting long-distance trade, competing directly with the Imbangala and Ambakista, and raiding their caravans.<sup>51</sup> Prior to the Portuguese abolition of the trade in 1830, the Lunda had gained influence, wealth, and power through the slave trade, among other ventures.<sup>52</sup> By the middle of the century, with greater penetration of global commodities alongside a declining value of slaves, the Lunda searched for new ways to prosper from international trade. Around 1841, according to detailed testimony recorded by Carvalho from a Chokwe elder, Mona Quésse, who had witnessed the events described, Mwant Yav Nawej II heard of his relative (‘seu parente’) Ndumba wa Tembo’s profit from elephant hunting using imported rifles. Nawej, sending Ndumba wa Tembo gifts, told him to forget old rivalries and unite the children of their ancestors. In return he requested that Ndumba wa Tembo send hunters, who could, with mwant yav’s sons, hunt the plentiful elephants in his territory. Ndumba wa Tembo, also keen to ‘reactivate the family relationships between the Lunda and his people’ (‘se-reatassem as relações de parentesco entre os Lundas e os seus povos’), sent a master hunter, Xa Maquéca di ngombe (Xa Makeka a Ngombe). This hunter claimed that the Chokwe, since they were related and belonged to mwant yav’s state, had left of their own free will and had rights to settle and hunt there. So pleased was Mwant Yav Nawej II with the profitable results from the Chokwe hunters that he requested Ndumba wa Tembo allow Xa Makeka a

<sup>48</sup>AHU DGU 1152, Informações de Quinguri, 25 Dec. 1885. Then published in Carvalho, ‘Expedição Portuguesa ao Muatyan-vu-a’, 138, and in Carvalho, *Ethnographia*, 90. Carvalho’s origin story of the Chokwe was then repeated by other ‘eye-witness’ accounts, notably, early twentieth-century Portuguese ethnographer, A. de Fonseca Cardoso, where claims -aiokwe term synonymous with ‘expatriado’ in ‘Em terras do Moxico: Apontamentos de etnografia angolense’, *Trabalhos da Sociedade Português de Antropologia e Etnologia*, 1 (1919), 18. Alternative etymology of ‘djokwe’ from Torday, meaning to hunt elephant, also with different stories of origin, in British Museum, Torday Volumes, Manuscripts KYS (TOR), Vol. 27069, Ch. 218. For questioning of this account, see M. Lima, *Fonctions sociologiques des figurines de culte « hamba » dans la société et dans la culture tshokwe (Angola)* (Luanda, 1971), 51–2. Yet, even if Carvalho’s reconstruction is flawed, as Lima suggests, it is more important to the argument here that this version was in circulation in the late nineteenth century.

<sup>49</sup>H. Capelo and R. Ivens, *De Benguela às Terras de Iacca*, Vol. 1 (Lisbon, 1881), 173. This text was the first recounted the Ndumba wa Tembo titleholder telling of his Lunda origins from the ‘Lucoquessa’ titleholder. Repeated in J. Redinha, *Campanha Etnográfica ao Tchiboco (Alto-Tchicapa) Notas de Viagem* (Lisbon, 1953), 17; J. Redinha, ‘Dumba-ua-Tembo Regulo de Tchiboco’, in *Museu de Angola – Boletim Cultural* 1960, Vol. 2 (Luanda, 1960), 1–11, esp. 6; and, most influentially for modern English-language historiography, J. Miller, ‘Cokwe expansion, 1850–1900’ (unpublished MA thesis, University of Wisconsin–Madison, 1969), 4. Redinha views them as a racial elite in Redinha, *Campanha Etnográfica*, 66. A rich and mythical elaboration of ties Kinguri and his followers, some of whom would come to form the Chokwe polities, was written by M. Van den Byvang ‘Notice historique sur les Baluunda’, *Congo*, 1:4 (1937), 426–38; 1:5 (1937), 548–62; and 2:2 (1937), 193–208, 429–35.

<sup>50</sup>Identification first made by Marie-Louis Bastin at the Museu de Dundo in 1956, and first reported in M. L. Bastin *Tshibinda Ilunga, heros civilisateur : à propos de statuettes Tshokwe représentant un chef-chasseur* (Brussels, 1966), 1, 95.

<sup>51</sup>See Carvalho’s comments on the Chokwe-Bangala rivalry and a lack of Lunda competitiveness, *Descrição*, Vol. 2, 841–2.

<sup>52</sup>The role of the slave trade in consolidating the Lunda polity in J. Miller, *Way of Death: Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade, 1730–1830* (Madison, 1988), esp. 215–18, confirmed by primary sources, especially Leitão, in Sebestyén, Vansina, and Leitão, ‘Angola’s eastern hinterland’, 323, 347. Also emphasized in J. Thornton, ‘The chronology and causes of Lunda expansion to the west, ca. 1700–1852’, *Zambia Journal of History*, 1 (1981), 1–13, although with limited evidence, Thornton has recently suggested that control centered around pursuit of salt, copper, and textiles, rather than slave trade, in J. Thornton, ‘The expansion of the Lunda: a new look at motivations’, in J. C. Curto (ed.), *New Perspectives on Angola: From Slaving Colony to Nation State* (Peterborough, Ontario, 2021), 11–33.





**Figure 4.** Chokwe figure allegedly representing Chibinda Ilunga, collected by Otto H. Schütt

Source: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Ethnologisches Museum / Claudia Obrocki.

Ngombe become his *chibinda* (hunter). After Mwant Yav Nawej II returned from an unpopular war, Xa Makeka hunted with Nawej's son, Carvalho's great ally, Xa Madiamba, who killed the first elephant of the hunt. Nawej II rewarded his *chibinda* Xa Makeka with forty slaves, and sent another thirty slaves with three tusks to Ndumba wa Tembo.<sup>53</sup>

Relations between the Chokwe and Lunda did not remain peaceful, however. Carvalho claims the Lunda complained that the Chokwe, in addition to exhausting all of the game, 'wanted to become owners of their lands and robbed them of their women'.<sup>54</sup> Rivalries continued into the later nineteenth century, with questions over whether Chokwe belonged, whether they had originally left voluntarily, and whether they had rights to return. These historical events and contestations map closely onto the key elements of the Lunda love story: the arrival of the hunter who provides wealth; teaching the Lunda to hunt; relations with Lunda women; and the rivalry that leads to dispersals and wars.

Carvalho's specific use of the Chokwe-Lunda origin story responds to a focused political conjuncture within this broader and longer-lasting Lunda-Chokwe conflict. At Caungula's court in

<sup>53</sup>Carvalho, *Ethnographia*, 556–63 for story, and followed by Chokwe-Lunda conflicts as a result of the Chokwe colony. This section of the published version in *Ethnographia*, based on revisions of the manuscript, AHU SEMU Cx 1092 Lv I, 'Apontamentos Históricos', esp. fols. 2–5. Here Carvalho reveals his source as the elderly Chokwe diviner, Mona Quése. However, it is evident that the story in *Ethnographia* and in 'Apontamentos Históricos' is a florid retelling, with substantial reorganization, of the original story told by Mona Quése, and which can be found in Carvalho, *Descrição*, Vol. 3, 443–5, which is transcription of diary entry in AHU DGU 1146 Lv 1886, 'Expedição ao Muatianvua', 5 June 1886.

<sup>54</sup>Carvalho, *Ethnographia*, 560.

1885, witnessing a conflict between the Chokwe followers of Mona Moxico and the Lunda of Caungula, Carvalho sought to demonstrate that the Portuguese could be effective brokers of peace. He encouraged a series of meetings to resolve the conflict, during which much history was told. The nephew of Caungula, Camexi (Kamesh), needed to exude authority in the hearings to persuade Carvalho, who had previously complained that the emissaries of Mona Moxico, Caungula's opponent, were not getting a fair hearing:

[Camexi] began with the history of the Lunda, the people that always belonged to Muatiãnvua; how the settlers were grouped, such as the [Chokwe titleholder] Ndumba ua Tembo. Those who afterwards followed elephants; but these facts do not mean these people were no longer Lunda like us and not subject to the power of our lord Muatiãnvua.<sup>55</sup>

Here Carvalho likely first heard of the oral tradition — or at least its mobilization in a political context — of the Chokwe relationship to the Lunda, the migration of Ndumba wa Tembo, and, although not mentioned here, potentially the common ancestry of Lueji and the Chokwe maternal lineage of Lueji's sister Na Campamba. Camexi also indicates that the collective Lunda-Chokwe ancestry indicates that they were subjects of *mwant yav*, a detail absent in Carvalho's published version.<sup>56</sup>

On 23 December 1885, Muzekile, the nephew (or son) of the then 'interim' Mwant Yav Mucanza delivered news of the Chokwe killing of Mwant Yav Muriba (r. 1884–5) and capture of the insignia of the Lunda state, encouraged by the son of Mwant Yav Xanama, Quiboco, who had named himself Muxidi (Mushid) after the Bayeke leader to the east with whom he had spent time in exile. The delivery of the news occurred in the midst of a long conversation with Xa Madiamba, and prompted Carvalho to write down, in detail, the importance of the insignia of state, as well as his first effort at a genealogical list of kings and outline of their history.<sup>57</sup> The only path to restoring the Lunda state was now peace with the Chokwe, which would involve not only a recognition of Chokwe within Lunda but also the promulgation of Lunda laws of succession that would prevent Chokwe interventions in Lunda affairs. To achieve this, Carvalho needed even more information about the recent history and family relations of the Mwant Yav dynasty, to ensure that Xa Madiamba was in fact a candidate for *mwant yav* supported by both Lunda and Chokwe.

Two days later, in a meeting with Carvalho on 25 Dec. 1885, Muzekile described the recent battle between Muriba and the Chokwe allies of Muxidi (Quiboco) in detail, contextualizing the conflict in Lunda history since the fall of Mwant Yav Xanama (1883).<sup>58</sup> This news convinced Carvalho of the need to proceed to the Lunda capital, the Mussumba, as soon as possible, but not before establishing peace with the Chokwe by rescuing the Lunda insignia of state. Xa Madiamba, the expert hunter trained by the Chokwe and legitimate heir to the *mwant yav* title, would be the one to restore the ancient Lunda-Chokwe alliance, as well as develop an alliance with Portugal, fulfilling the prophecy of Xa Madiamba's father, Iamvo (Nawej II) of an alliance with the Portuguese that would restore the lineage of Lueji.<sup>59</sup> In the view of Carvalho and his allies, the Portuguese expedition had aligned prophecy with history.

Their first task was to rescue Lunda state insignia, in particular the *mukwali* or, in Portuguese, *faca* (literally knife, but a *mukwali* more closely resembled a sword used like a machete) that Mwant

<sup>55</sup>AHU DGU 1152 Lv 1885, 'Expedição ao Muatianvua', 17 Nov. 1885.

<sup>56</sup>Reading range of informants in the original diary makes it unlikely that the Lunda chronicle was assembled from this event, although it could have informed it, and certainly made the need for additional information necessary. Thornton contends this recitation key in 'The expansion of Lunda', 20.

<sup>57</sup>Muzekile arrives with news on 23 Dec. 1885, but has audience and discussion on Dec. 25 in AHU DGU 1152 Lv 1885, 'Expedição ao Muatianvua', 23–25 Dec. 1885. Incorrectly dated in Carvalho, *Descrição*, Vol. 2, 779.

<sup>58</sup>AHU DGU 1152 Lv 1885, 'Expedição ao Muatianvua', 25 Dec. 1885.

<sup>59</sup>Prophecy of 'Quinawezi' who died in war and claimed his spirit went to Portuguese, who would return to restore his rightful reign, as told to Joaquim Rodrigues Graça, 'Expedição ao Muatyanvua', 432.

Yav Xanama gave to the Chokwe lord Quissengue in exchange for his military support, and which freed Quissengue from obligations to the Lunda paramount as long as he held it. As part of the rescue of the mukwali, which forms Carvalho's most important accomplishment of 1886, Carvalho collects more Lunda and Chokwe history through the Chokwe diviner, Mona Quésse (mentioned above), and the Chokwe dignitary and diplomat Xa Cumba. On 5 June 1886, Mona Quésse told of the initial exile of the Chokwe, along with Kinguri, and how relations were restored by the Lunda and Chokwe paramours, as above, Naweji II and Ndumba wa Tembo, in the exchange of hunters, slaves, and ivory that formed the basis of a Lunda and Chokwe alliance. According to Mona Quésse, conflict between the Chokwe titleholder Quissengue and Lunda emissary, Quimbondo, compromised these relationships. Ultimately, the Lunda titleholders employed Chokwe factions, including Quissengue, who intervened on the side of Xanama to become the power behind the Lunda throne. In the face of Lunda dismemberment and Chokwe aggression, Carvalho wrote, through Mona Quésse's testimony, Kinguri had at last got his revenge.<sup>60</sup>

Quissengue thereby became the Chokwe titleholder who had to be convinced to support Xa Madiamba and the new Lunda state under Portuguese protection. Carvalho's second informant, Xa Cumba, played a crucial role in negotiating the rescue of the Lunda mukwali machete from his perpetual 'son' (but actual uncle) Quissengue.<sup>61</sup> Negotiations with Quissengue proceeded, symbolically organized around the ransom of Xanama's mukwali. In these negotiations, history would again be mobilized: the Chokwe and Lunda were represented, by Carvalho and others as the 'filhos de [children of the sisters] Na Cambamba e de Lueji'.<sup>62</sup> In the final peace ceremony, supervised by Muene Puto, Carvalho published the speech that mobilized the common ancestry of Chokwe and Lunda through the love story:

[W]e came today to put an end to the disagreements between the children of Na Cambamba and Luéji luá Conti, the former older than the latter, but who came from the same mother, [with their] disagreements promoted by the ambitions of her brother, Quinguri, who, exiling himself to go and set up the state of Cassanje, dragged his aunt [Lueji's sister, Na Cambamba] with him, who in turn went south to organize the state of Quiocos [Chokwe] as well. Luéji remained with her Ilunga, who added others to his primitive states of the Tubungos [the Lunda elders], through conquests, without touching those of the emigrants [the Chokwe], and thus, those of Muatânvua remained for a long time...far away.... [I]n recent years, the lack of sense of those who surrounded the Muatânvua, led to abuses, and hence, the deceptions and constant intrigues, kept the children of Angola, who brought them business, away.<sup>63</sup>

The delivery of Xanama's mukwali from Quissengue to Xa Madiamba was meant to end these family disputes and, under Portuguese guidance, introduce a more sensible politics that would allow peace and trade to flourish; it would restore the alliances of Lueji's original family. Carvalho's

<sup>60</sup>Carvalho, *Descrição*, Vol. 3, 443–5, an imprecise transcription of diary entry from in AHU DGU 1146 Lv 1886, 'Expedição ao Muatianvua', 5 June 1886. The accounts of *Descrição* and diary generally match, except, the exchange of slaves is omitted, or 'servants' are mentioned instead. Moreover, the diary entry implies the Lunda use of the Chokwe, rather than Chokwe agency in destroying the Lunda. The *Descrição* refers back to the founding myth, and the ultimate revenge of Quinguri; this is absent in the transcribed version of Mona Quésse's account in the unpublished diary.

<sup>61</sup>Xa Cumba role as informant for history and language acknowledged in Carvalho, *Descrição*, Vol. 3, 163; for details provided by Xa Cumba on Chokwe hunting of elephants and settlements in the mid-nineteenth century, Carvalho, *Descrição*, Vol. 3, 317–19. For Xa Cumba's role in delivering letter to Quissengue regarding ransoming of mukwali, Carvalho, *Descrição*, Vol. 3, 411–15, Xa Cumba's return with Quissengue's encouraging reply (523–4), with original letters dated 6 Apr. 1886 and 18 May 1886, in AHU Cx. 1092. For Xa Cumba as agent in final negotiations with Quissengue, Carvalho, *Descrição*, Vol. 3, 764.

<sup>62</sup>AHU DGU 1156 Lv 1886, 'Expedição ao Muatianvua', 26–31 Aug. 1886; the negotiations that stretch over five days are abbreviated in published version, Carvalho, *Descrição*, Vol. 3, 763–75.

<sup>63</sup>Carvalho, *Descrição*, Vol. 3, 778.

speech appears only in Carvalho's published *Descrição*, where negotiations with Quissengue appear far more amiable than in the unpublished diary (the substantial exchange in slaves that were part of the deal are also underemphasized in the former). The fact that it appears in the published *Descrição* and not in the diaries suggests that at least some of the mobilization of the Lunda oral tradition in Carvalho's published works was aimed to amplify Lunda glory, to promote his own expertise in Lunda affairs, and to give his text a sort of historical closure, all for a Portuguese audience.<sup>64</sup> Nonetheless, it is also reasonable to assume that Carvalho and his allies thought that they were restoring the Lunda family that had broken apart following the love affair between Lueji and Chibinda Ilunga.

By the time Carvalho arrives at the besieged Lunda capital at the beginning of 1887, he has most of the elements that would go into his *Ethnographia e Historia*, a substantial rewriting of the Ambakista, Imbangala, and Chokwe narratives he had heard over the previous two years. The events at the Mussumba and the aftermath would however lead to Carvalho's emphasis on another key aspect of the Lunda love story, the Luba origins of the hunter, Chibinda Ilunga.

### Lueji's in-laws: Mutombo, Cassongo, and the Luba

After Carvalho's history was published and throughout the twentieth century, the Luba origins of Lueji's lover Chibinda Ilunga received disproportionate historiographic importance. In what is perhaps one of the most cited phrases of the historiography of this region, Jan Vansina in his seminal *Kingdoms of the Savanna* (1966) declares: 'The crucial event in the earlier history of Central Africa has been... the introduction of Luba principles of government into Lunda land under Cibinda Ilunga and their transformation by the Lunda'.<sup>65</sup> In an influential synthesis of Congolese history, Isidore Ndaywel é Nziem — remaining faithful to Vansina's original claim of Luba influences on Lunda — aligns the legend with archaeological findings, claiming a dispersal of Luba political culture around the fourteenth century, with Chibinda Ilunga the literal founder of the Mwant Yav dynasty.<sup>66</sup> The scholar of Lunda history, Jeffrey Hoover, meanwhile, claims a 'Chibindian Revolution' around 1600, led by a roaming 'Luba band' (evoking comparisons with the 'Shakan Revolution' with the bow and arrow for Chibinda Ilunga playing the same role as the short stabbing spear for Shaka Zulu).<sup>67</sup> John Thornton suspects that the narrative refers to the seventeenth-century seniority of a Luba kingdom to the west.<sup>68</sup>

Despite these general but influential hypotheses, generations of historians have not had much success in their search for the family of the Luba hunter.<sup>69</sup> The Luba designation is vague and is not matched in early Luba chronicles. Carvalho and the nineteenth-century German accounts claim that Chibinda Ilunga was Mutombo Mukulu's son or subject.<sup>70</sup> But Mutombo Mukulu is

<sup>64</sup>Equivalent speech seems to have been made on 28 Aug. 1886, AHU DGU 1156 Lv 1886, 'Expedição ao Muatianvua', 28 Aug. 1886. In the unpublished diary, overall negotiations with Quissengue were lengthier than appeared in *Descrição*, continuing through Aug. and Sep. 1886.

<sup>65</sup>J. Vansina, *Kingdoms of the Savanna* (Madison, 1966), 97.

<sup>66</sup>I. Ndaywel é Nziem, *Histoire générale du Congo: De l'héritage ancien à la République Démocratique* (Brussels, 1998), 138, 150.

<sup>67</sup>The bow and arrow is key to the oral tradition; for Hoover, this revolution involved the introduction of Luba 'concepts and protocol'. Hoover, 'Seduction of Ruwej', 348. The then influential literature on the Shakan Revolution most famously J. D. Omer-Cooper, *The Zulu Aftermath: A Nineteenth Century Revolution in Bantu Africa* (London, 1966), a historiography questioned by numerous historians beginning with J. Cobbing, 'The Mfecane as alibi: thoughts on Dithakong and Mbolombo', *The Journal of African History*, 29:3 (1988), 487–519.

<sup>68</sup>Thornton, *History*, 218–19.

<sup>69</sup>Hoover, in 'Seduction of Ruwej', points to the number of Luba institutions that also support the claim of Luba influence. However, it is doubtful that the claim of Luba influence would have been made if not for the oral tradition itself, since it is difficult to assert the direction of the spread of political institutions and titles.

<sup>70</sup>Thornton, *History*, 218. Carvalho settles on Mutombo as Ilunga's father in *Ethnographia*, 59. German accounts: Pogge, *Reiche*, 224; Buchner, 'Muatianvo', 68; Schütt, *Reisen im südwestlichen*, 136. It is probable that the source of Mutombo as

absent in later Lunda renditions of the oral tradition.<sup>71</sup> Even in the nineteenth century, there are inconsistencies: for example, in Carvalho's published 1885–6 rendering of the tradition, rather than Mutombo, Chibinda Ilunga's father is Cassongo (who is his brother in the later version).<sup>72</sup> Carvalho had learned of Cassongo and Mutombo from the nephew of the Lunda titleholder, Caungula, Camexi also called Suana Fumo. Despite Carvalho describing Camexi as a 'good historian' in the published *Descrição*, in the diaries Carvalho cannot match up the genealogies of the Mutombo titleholders given by Camexi with those of the Lunda; Camexi admits that he might not know all of them.<sup>73</sup> In addition, the day following the entry of this information, Carvalho complains that Camexi is in debt to traders and demands payment for the historical information; Carvalho doubted the reliability of some of his stories.<sup>74</sup>

The Cassongo and Mutombo Mukulu titleholders nonetheless remain integral to the legend. The Luba ethnonym, by contrast, represents nothing very precise at all. Still, trying to identify the original Cassongo or Mutombo falls into the same trap as trying to find the original Kinguri. Mutombo Mukulu, literally the 'great tree', is such a symbolically loaded name that one should probably be suspicious of its factual veracity.<sup>75</sup> Both Mutombo and Cassongo are nonetheless common and geographically dispersed titles: they too might have been later additions to the narrative designed to strengthen regional ties. Like Kinguri, the Mutombo and Cassongo titleholders were important because of their role in nineteenth-century outposts of trade and political alliance.

In Carvalho's rendition, Cassongo came to join his brother Chibinda Ilunga after his union with Lueji. Cassongo's descendants, through the matriline, were the Cassongo titleholders, with three of them sent to strategic outposts. But the Cassongo titleholders, just like Kinguri, could have been older and independent of the consolidation of the Lunda state.<sup>76</sup> Regardless, Cassongo represented a relationship to mwant yav without being the blood kin of Lueji. This replicated the political arrangement that they had in relation to the Lunda in the nineteenth century: they, as Carvalho claims, 'had honors of the Muatianvua in spite of living independently'.<sup>77</sup> Their independence placed them outside the Lunda family of Lueji, instead related to the foreigner, Chibinda Ilunga. Of the three Cassongos, Muene Puto Cassongo, who settles on the Kwango River and oversaw trade coming from Portuguese Angola, appears the most important, at least in Portuguese sources.<sup>78</sup>

The nineteenth-century recording of the legend settles on Mutombo Mukulu as Chibinda Ilunga's father.<sup>79</sup> As with the Cassongo titleholders, Mutombo Mukulu was an important ally existing outside of the direct Lunda family, hence his outsider 'Luba' origins. In the 1870s, Chokwe traders killed the Mutombo Mukulu titleholder.<sup>80</sup> In 1891, his successor kept away harmful ancestors

---

Ilunga's father for all the German accounts, and potentially even Carvalho's *Ethnographia*, was the Ambikista Bezerra brothers; the German accounts might also be referencing each other.

<sup>71</sup>For example, not mentioned in the Lunda ethnohistory, *Ngand Yetu* (Cleveland, Transvaal, South Africa, 1963), 11–13.

<sup>72</sup>Carvalho, 'Expedição Portuguesa', 134–5

<sup>73</sup>For Camexi as 'good historian', Carvalho, *Descrição*, Vol. 2, 756–68. For genealogical inconsistencies, and Camexi requesting remuneration for his information, AHU DGU 1152 Lv 1885, 'Expedição ao Muatianvua', 27–8 Dec. 1885.

<sup>74</sup>AHU DGU 1152 Lv 1885, 'Expedição ao Muatianvua', 29 Dec. 1885.

<sup>75</sup>The translation as 'great tree' is Carvalho's in *Ethnographia*, 59

<sup>76</sup>For example, Leitão suggests 'quiluba' were independent but subject to the Lunda by the middle of the eighteenth century. Sebestyén, Vansina, and Leitão, 'Angola's eastern hinterland', 327, 347 (fol. 13 in original).

<sup>77</sup>AHU DGU 1152 Lv 1885, 'Expedição ao Muatianvua', 27 Dec. 1885.

<sup>78</sup>The history of Muene Puto Cassongo and his relationship to Chibinda Ilunga is published by Carvalho in the context of conflicts over the border of King Leopold's Congo in 1890. 'Occupação dos territórios de Muene Puto Cassongo', 16 Apr. 1890, transcribed in Carvalho, *Descrição*, Vol. 2, 878–81. Orig. AHU DGU 1157, fol. 37, Carvalho, 'Proposta ocupação dos territórios de Muene Puto Cassongo', 16 Apr. 1890.

<sup>79</sup>Carvalho settles on Mutombo instead of Cassongo as the name for Chibinda Ilunga's father after the exile of the Lunda court following the invasion he witnessed in 1887. He also might have even been making his version consistent with the already published German accounts, Carvalho, *Ethnographia*, 65.

<sup>80</sup>F. S. Arnot, *Bihé and Garangaze; or, four years further work and Travel in Central Africa* (London, 1893), 98. Oral tradition recorded in E. Verhulpen, *Baluba et Balubaisés du Katanga* (Antwerp, 1936), 103.



and spirits by displaying around one hundred heads of Chokwe who had plundered his polity.<sup>81</sup> Mutombo Mukulu also received Lunda exiles; after the Chokwe's defeat of their one-time ally in 1887 during the reign of Mwant Yav Muxidi (r. 1887–1907), a significant portion of the Lunda court — including perhaps the mwant yav or his son — took refuge at Mutombo Mukulu.<sup>82</sup>

Evidence from the Mutombo Mukulu polity also points to the consolidation of nineteenth-century ties with the Lunda. The name given to Mutombo Mukulu's polity, Kalundwe, means cassava through much of the region — an American root crop that spread via Atlantic trade routes. Within Mutombo Mukulu's polity, Kalundwe refers specifically to a variety that a Mutombo Mukulu titleholder acquired from the Lunda in the 1880s.<sup>83</sup> The Lunda love story has also been told by Mutombo Mukulu, except with different characters: here the travelling hunter who marries the female titleholder is Lunda, not Luba!<sup>84</sup> It is unlikely that the inclusion of one of the principal players in the Chokwe-Lunda alliances and conflicts of the late nineteenth century, Mutombo Mukulu, actually refers to the misty conception of the Lunda state.<sup>85</sup>

Traders and cosmopolitans told the Lunda love story to explain and to connect the titleholders within the Lunda court to a broader realm of regional family, including the Chokwe of Na Cambamba, the Imbangala of Kinguri, and the Luvale of Chinyama. The love story was a collection of regional tales and traditions that wove nineteenth-century titleholders, traders, and allies together into a fabric of authority and status on the savanna. Those related to Chibinda Ilunga were not Lueji's siblings; they were outsiders — 'Luba' — recognizing an affiliation with the Lunda but not part of Lueji's family. After 1891, the Lunda court, fleeing the Chokwe advance, took refuge with their Luba in-laws. Incorporation of the Lunda court into the Katanga province of the Congo Free State represented the ultimate failure of both Carvalho and his ally, Xa Madiamba.<sup>86</sup> The Lunda found themselves surrounded by polities consolidated under the colonial Luba ethnonym.<sup>87</sup> The stakes of refuge and alliance in colonial Katanga further encouraged Chibinda Ilunga's Luba origins.

<sup>81</sup>Arnot, *Bihé and Garangaze*, 98.

<sup>82</sup>L. Duysters, 'Histoire des Aluunda', *Problèmes d'Afrique Centrale*, 40:12 (1958), 95–6. Miller's claim that Mushiri took refuge at Mutombo Mukulu ('Cokwe Expansion', 69), has been repeated in the historiography [?][?] most recently in Tavares, 'História e memória', 89. Duysters claims that Mushiri took exile at Tshialamba at Bene Samba, even while recognizing that many fled to Mutombo Mukulu. Arnot claims the son of mwant yav took refuge at Mutombo Mukulu, in *Bihé and Garangaze*, 98, but it's unclear which son, or when.

<sup>83</sup>For Kalundwe and cassava, with variety from Lunda in 1880s, Verhulpen, *Baluba et Balubaisés*, 231–2. Lunda pioneered cultivation of cassava in the early nineteenth century, but diffusion of cassava was limited to trading regions, in J. Vansina, 'Histoire du manioc en Afrique Centrale avant 1850', *Paideuma*, 43 (1997), 255–79. After 1850s, cultivations became widespread. Contrast with interpretation of T. Reeve, *The Rainbow and the Kings: A History of the Luba Empire to 1891* (Berkeley, 1981), 59, who has cassava spread to Mutombo Mukulu extensively in the seventeenth century, but only cites Verhulpen (above), who indicates its adoption in the late nineteenth century. For general overview, C. K. Jackson, 'An agricultural and cultural history of cassava in Zambia' (unpublished PhD Thesis, Università degli studi di Pavia, 2020), 56–65.

<sup>84</sup>Verhulpen, *Baluba et Balubaisés*, 88, 233–36.

<sup>85</sup>Given the influence of Mutombo Mukulu throughout the nineteenth century, there is sufficient reason to question the entire basis of a pre-eighteenth century Mutombo Mukulu polity, even as Reeve projects it further in the past, evidence indicates that height was in the nineteenth, probably the middle, following Graça's records, Reeve, *Rainbow*, 120. Reeve informs Thornton, *History*, 146–7. Evidence for pre-1800 exchanges between Mutombo Mukulu and Lunda are non-existent, even as claimed, without evidence, by Vansina, *How Societies Are Born*, 257.

<sup>86</sup>E. dos Santos, *A Questão da Lunda (1885–1894)* (Lisbon, 1966). The failure of Xa Madiamba poignantly told in the diaries of Carvalho's successor, Simão Cândido Sarmiento, AHU Manuscritos da Biblioteca, Simão Cândido Sarmiento, room 7, boxes 13–4.

<sup>87</sup>From Mutombo Mukulu and other outposts, the Lunda exiles were able to reestablish their kingdom under the initial Belgian administration and then indirect rule, surrounded by Luba polities. On Belgian indirect rule, see E. Bustin, *Lunda under Belgian Rule: The Politics of Ethnicity* (Cambridge, MA, 1975), 41–98. Significantly, in the recording of the story by Sangambo in the later Luvale version — informed by research at the Lunda Mussumba — Chibinda Ilunga's ancestor is replaced by the generic Luba hero Mbidi Kiluwe ('Mbilikiluwe'), Sangambo, *History of Luvale*, 5.

## Conclusions

Scholars have previously discussed the Lunda love story in either historical positivist or structuralist symbolic ways. This article instead appreciates the political context in which the legend and documentary record of it was generated. Africanist historians have done so in comparable cases, especially with the oral and written records of Shaka Zulu.<sup>88</sup> Yet the distinctive production of knowledge about the so-called empires of southern Central Africa has not fallen under similar scrutiny. There has also been a failure to use the available documentary record to better situate legends (and oral traditions) in their quotidian political contexts. In the case of the Lunda love story, this context shows why the legend was so relevant in the late nineteenth century. Aligning the legend with the politics and actions of its narrators allows the puzzle to come together. It also sheds a critical light on the overarching and general historical and cultural claims made by Jan Vansina and Luc de Heusch, along with the many scholars who followed them.

The Lunda love story is a collection of individual histories assembled into a universal origin history of the Lunda, an ‘amalgamation of an amalgamation’, in terms of it combining many histories stretching across southern Central African caravan trading routes and in terms of Carvalho’s many sources.<sup>89</sup> Reading it as a singular version is misleading, as these are histories that belong to lineages and titleholders, all of which told of their relationships to the Lunda love story, but, as Carvalho wrote them down, and, as he sought to employ them to construct a Pax Lunda guaranteed by the Portuguese, rendered a universal Lunda history. Stories from those who were once on the periphery, such as the Chokwe and Imbangala, could here take center stage.

The Lunda love story was about the Imbangala creating connections along their trade routes, the Chokwe celebrating their distinctive hunting and trading prowess, and the Mutombo and Cassongo titleholders forging alliances with the Mwant Yav dynasty. During the decades of growing Chokwe dominance, from the 1870s to 1890s, Lunda elders, the descendants of Lueji, also celebrated the narrative: it represented the mastery of the representatives of Lueji over worlds of fertility and fecundity, peace between insiders and outsiders, Lunda *amizade* (amity), lucrative regional alliances, the dangerous political ambitions of youth, and a celebration of a previous order of Lueji’s Lunda royal family. Far more subtle than political propaganda and like all convincing history and legend, the love story allowed multiple parties to articulate their interests, ambitions, and desires through a representation of the past.

**Acknowledgements.** Gratitude to colleagues who helped to improve this article. Anna Paula Tavares, Carlos Almeida, and José da Silva Horta at the Centro de História da Universidade de Lisboa hosted me during research for this article, provided opportunities to present aspects of it, and offered gentle critique. The anonymous readers and editors provided valuable comments and opportunities for revisions. John Thornton advised on evidence. Aharon deGrassi, Inês Ponte, João Figueiredo, Ricardo Roque, and Roquinaldo Ferreira, through comments and in their publications, forced me to reflect on my emphases and interpretations. Please address queries to [dgordon@bowdoin.edu](mailto:dgordon@bowdoin.edu).

<sup>88</sup>In particular, and among many others, Hamilton, *Terrific Majesty*, and D. Wylie, *Myth of Iron: Shaka in History* (Athens, OH, 2006).

<sup>89</sup>‘Amalgamation of an amalgamation’ is John Thornton’s phrase, from personal communication, 5 Jan. 2022.