

CHAPTER ONE

HISTORIOGRAPHY OF TRIBUTE IN MWATA KAZEMBE'S KINGDOM BEFORE 1890

The beginnings of the kingdom of Mwata Kazembe can be traced in Chinyata's loyalty in the payment of tribute to Mwata Yamvo.¹ One aspect of tribute is that it is an act of obeisance as the giver is a subject of the receiver or of lower rank to the receiver. There is authority on one hand and respect from the other. Tribute was a political tool dividing society between the political elite and the masses but it still differentiated the political elite in accord with the amount of power they possessed.

In the kingdom of Mwata Kazembe, tribute existed in the form of *Ikoto* (tribute money), *Mufungo* (tribute asked for by the Mwata), and *Mulambo* which was tribute voluntarily given to the Mwata.² Oral Lunda royal history shows that gifts and tribute existed in Mwata Kazembe's kingdom. The praise of Nga'nda Bilonda, the first Mwata Kazembe, which was recited by Mwata Kazembe 2 Kanyembo 1 as "ami mutunda mwabilwa ntanda,

¹ Mwata Kazembe XIV and E. Labrecque trans. Ian Cunnison "Historical Traditions Of The Eastern Lunda," *Rhodes-Livingstone Communication* 23(1961), p. 17.

²Jacques Chiley Chiwale, "Royal Praises And Praise Names Of The Lunda Kazembe of Northern Rhodesia: The Meaning And Historical Background," *Rhodes-Livingstone Communication*, 25(1962), pp. 61-62.

bashele babilwa mbushi ne mikoko (he who rejoices over gifts of people and land [from Mwata Yamvo] when others rejoice over gifts of goats and sheep),”³ portrays the new Mwata Kazembe as receiver of gifts because of his lower ranking than that of the giver, Mwata Yamvo. However, the meaning changes when the almost same praise was recited from a position of power by Mwata Kazembe 3 Ilunga Lukwesa after conquering and receiving Shila country as:

Nkonda bilo
Wakondele ubuleyi nebutombo
Mutunda mwabilwa ntanda
Bashele babilwa mbushi nemikoko

That is,

I love
To seize the country by force
I who is given lands and people
Others are given goats and sheep⁴

The above praise portrays the Mwata as receiver of tribute by someone (in this instance, Na Chituti) who respected the power of the Mwata. Thus, it was political power and status which differentiated a mere gift from tribute. A gift was given by those in a position of power to those below their status or between individuals of equal status while tribute, whether forcefully obtained, voluntarily given or in accordance with cultural practice, placed the receiver on a higher political, social and economic ranking than the giver.

³ Chiwale, “Royal Praises,” p. 48.

⁴ Chiwale, “Royal Praises,” p. 16.

Early written records from travellers in Mwata Kazembe's kingdom also indicate the existence of tribute in the form of *ikoto*, *mulambo* and *mufungo*. Lacerda's expedition, which was under Pinto after Lacerda died, paid a form of *ikoto* called *muromo* or gifts introducing them of 200 cloths (two fathoms each) and 200 strings of beads while their *mulambo* consisted of a "multitude of things" which Pinto did list.⁵ Batista and Jose paid *ikoto* and even *mufungo* to Mwata Kazembe's Vassals when they traversed the western parts of the Lunda kingdom of Mwata Kazembe, while Gamitto's expedition and later Livingstone also paid *ikoto* and *mulambo* to the Mwatas they found when they visited the kingdom of Mwata Kazembe.⁶

Since the existence of tribute in Mwata Kazembe's kingdom cannot be disputed, the main objective of this chapter is to investigate how historians explain the role of tribute in Mwata Kazembe's kingdom. A brief outline of statements dealing with tribute from different writers on the kingdom of Mwata Kazembe has been given in order to put the problem this chapter tackles into perspective.

⁵ Burton, *The Lands Of Cazembe*, pp. 96, 100, 102, 108-114, 117, 118, 120, 125, 132, 137, 138, 140-150,

⁶ Burton, *The Lands Of Cazembe*, pp. 176 -186; Gamitto, *King Kazembe*, Vol. 2, pp. 12-17, 22-32, 34-35, 38-40, 57, and 70; Waller, *Livingstone's Last Journals*, vol. 1, 246, 263,303, and 305.

HISTORIOGRAPHICAL SURVEY

Writers on the history of Mwata Kazembe's kingdom have shown in various ways that tribute was an important factor in the political and economic life of the kingdom. Their works will be considered chronologically in order to show the way the concept of tribute has been explained over time. It will be noted that their treatment of tribute has been tackled and not their overall historiographical orientation. That is, no matter the writer's historiographical tradition, focus will be on what they specifically say about tribute.

In the first case to be considered, Ian Cunnison treated Mwata Kazembe as a vassal of Mwata Yamvo⁷ and in another, presented the Mwata as a receiver of tribute organized by Mwata Kazembe's governors (aristocrats) living in different parts of the kingdom among tributary chiefs whom they offered "protection and assistance in local disputes."⁸ In the same line, although Jan Vansina showed that there existed gift exchanges between Mwata Kazembe and Mwata Yamvo, Vansina asserted that Mwata Yamvo "still looked upon Mwata Kazembe as one of his tributaries and not an equal" and that Mwata

⁷ Ian Cunnison, "The Reigns Of The Kazembes," *Northern Rhodesia Journal*, 3(1956-1959) p. 131.

⁸ Ian Cunnison, *The Luapula Peoples Of Northern Rhodesia: Custom And History In Tribal Politics* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1967), p. 155.

Kazembe sent gifts regularly to Mwata Yamvo.⁹ However, the reference by Lunda kings to Mwata Yamvo as “King of kings” seems to have been in a nominal sense because as Vansina further showed, the Lunda Empire was just an imaginary empire recognised by its inhabitants with the acknowledging of their “distant emperor as ‘king of kings’ being the only tie common to all in the huge realm.”¹⁰ About the tribute system within the kingdom, Vansina argued that the establishment of Mwata Kazembe’s kingdom “implied the payment of heavy taxes.”¹¹

On the other hand, Christopher St. John emphasised the point of reciprocity in the Lunda kingdom exercised by the distributing of goods among the subjects in as much as the Mwata received them. He further argued that the conquered Bisa paid tribute to Mwata Kazembe “for which he always return[ed] ivory.”¹² However, unlike Vansina who asserted the oppressive nature of the Lunda ‘tax’ system¹³, St. John argued that “tribute was a state-organized *system of exchange* rather than simply a burdensome tax.”¹⁴

⁹ Jan Vansina, *Kingdoms Of The Savanna* (Madison: University Of Wisconsin Press, 1966) p. 173, and Jan Vansina, “Equatorial Africa Before The Nineteenth Century,” Philip Curtin et.al. *African History From Earliest Times To Independence* (London: Longman, 1995), p. 238.

¹⁰ Vansina, “Equatorial Africa,” p. 238.

¹¹ Vansina, *Kingdoms*, p. 174, and Jan Vansina, “Upstarts and Newcomers In Equatorial Africa(c.1815-1875),” Philip Curtin et.al. *African History From Earliest Times To Independence* (London: Longman, 1995), p. 390.

¹² St. John, “Kazembe,” p. 210.

¹³ Vansina, *Kingdoms*, p. 174.

¹⁴ St. John, “Kazembe,” p. 212. My emphasis.

Langworthy discussed the role of tribute both in the expansion and decline of Mwata Kazembe's kingdom. In the expansion of the kingdom, Langworthy argued that tribute was not only used in maintaining the capital but also "redistributed to areas of the kingdom lacking a certain commodity such as salt or iron."¹⁵ When some tribute was used in trading for foreign goods, profits were given as rewards to encourage the giving of tribute. Another importance attached to tribute, argued Langworthy, was that "some chiefs were encouraged to remain loyal to Mwata Kazembe because of the economic advantages [accrued from] the redistribution of tribute."¹⁶

About the decline of Mwata Kazembe's kingdom, what emerges from Langworthy's argument is the failure of the Mwata to maintain a large court and to reward Zambian chiefs for their tribute. Furthermore, Langworthy argued that most likely Mwata Kazembe pressed the remaining tributary chiefs for more tribute but giving them less imported cloth only encouraged secessionist sentiments which were played upon by Swahili traders.¹⁷ As Langworthy argued:

the temptations of the subject chiefs to break the monopoly of tribute, which was the *basis of Mwata Kazembe's power* were very great, especially when encouraged by the Swahili and the Yeke.¹⁸

¹⁵ Langworthy, *Zambia Before 1890*, p. 40.

¹⁶ Langworthy, *Zambia Before 1890*, p. 40.

¹⁷ Langworthy, *Zambia Before 1890*, p. 65.

¹⁸ Langworthy, *Zambia Before 1890*, pp. 65-67. My emphasis.

In this way, the kingdom of Mwata Kazembe was “destroyed by a withdraw of support”¹⁹ from subject chiefs whose loyalty could not be counted upon by Mwata Kazembe who was unable to redistribute to them tributary wealth.²⁰ Thus, what Langworthy argued for is the importance of reciprocity in the maintenance of power in the Lunda kingdom with the failure to reciprocate leading to less loyal subject chiefs who could no longer look to the Mwata to meet their scarcity. Again, tribute was important in trade transactions because the Mwata Kazembe, argued Langworthy, monopolised tribute collection which gave him items to use in trade. What emerges from this conception of tribute is that reciprocating the tribute received guaranteed loyal subjects and that tributary wealth, in the form of either goods obtained from the use of tribute items in trade or the actual tribute given was also redistributed to encourage loyalty and to areas of scarcity as a means of offsetting the scarcity.

Mwelwa Musambachime has also discussed tribute in Mwata Kazembe’s Kingdom by arguing that the “prime motive in the expansion of the state was the collection of tribute-ivory mainly and slaves.”²¹ But for Musambachime, it is not resources that bring about the “emergence of a strong political organization,” rather; it is a strong political organization

¹⁹ Vansina, *Kingdoms*, p. 171.

²⁰ Langworthy, *Zambia Before 1890*, p. 65.

²¹ Mwelwa C. Musambachime, ‘Changing Roles: The History Of the Development And Disintegration Of Nkuba’s Shila State To 1740,’ M.A Dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1976, p. 107.

which utilizes resources to its advantage.²² Musambachime also demonstrated that force was also used to ensure the payment of tribute and in expanding the kingdom. For example, he wrote of Kilwa Island being added to the Lunda kingdom after “a punitive expedition to punish Kaponto and Makamba, who had been reluctant to send their tribute to Mwata Kazembe.”²³

At a different level of relations (not between Mwata Kazembe and his subjects), the concept of reciprocity was reiterated by Andrew Roberts who argued that Mwata Kazembe’s “tribute in salt and copper [was] duly reciprocated by Mwata Yamvo” thereby drawing north-eastern Zambia into a trading orbit covering the southern Democratic Republic of Congo and Angola.²⁴ In this way, tribute takes on more than a political dimension to include the economic aspects of tribute as a form of exchange. Though Mwata Kazembe “was beyond the reach of his overlord Mwata Yamvo,”²⁵ Roberts argued that the reason behind Kazembe’s tribute was that he was “anxious to maintain a share” in Mwata Yamvo’s trade with the west coast.²⁶ Roberts also presents Mwata Kazembe as reciprocating tribute to his subordinate chiefs in form of redistribution and describes the process as follows:

²² Musambachime, ‘Changing Roles,’ p. 112.

²³ Musambachime, ‘Changing Roles,’ p. 108.

²⁴ Roberts, “Pre-colonial Trade,” p. 728. My emphasis.

²⁵ Roberts, *A History Of Zambia*, p. 94.

²⁶ Roberts, *A History of Zambia*, p. 94.

The governors held judicial courts but their main task was the collecting of tribute. This was forwarded to the capital where Kazembe redistributed much of it among the governors: the court was a *clearing house* where the products of the river were exchanged for those of the surrounding woodland.²⁷

Ndaywel e Nziem has not only argued for the Mwata Kazembe paying tribute to the Mwata Yamvo but has also shown that the transformation of tribute into gift exchanges was made possible by Mwata Kazembe's establishment of effective trade links with the Portuguese in Mozambique which increased his autonomy such that "the regular tribute payments of the 1790s [by Mwata Kazembe to Mwata Yamvo] had become more an exchange of gifts by the 1830s."²⁸

On the other hand, in a comprehensive study of Mwata Kazembe's kingdom, Giacomo Macola cautioned against "functionalist-inspired historians [who] exaggerate the significance of tribute exchange as an index of political centralization."²⁹ Noting that the kingdom of Mwata Kazembe "did not collapse in the colonial era with the end of enforced tribute collection," Macola further argued that tributary networks "would not be sufficient to account for the cohesiveness of the kingdom."³⁰ However,

²⁷ Roberts, *A History of Zambia*, p. 95. My emphasis.

²⁸ Ndaywel e Nziem, "The Political System Of The Luba And Lunda: Its Emergence And Expansion," B.A. Ogot (ed.) *General History Of Africa: Vol. V* (Lusaka: UNZA Press, 1999), p. 298.

²⁹ Giacomo Macola, *The Kingdom Of Kazembe: History And Politics In North-Eastern Zambia And Katanga to 1950* (London: Transaction Publishers, 2002), p. 76.

³⁰ Macola, *The Kingdom Of Kazembe*, p. 77.

Macola also discussed tribute as being given to the Mwata Kazembe both in material form such as ivory and in services such as conscript labour. He even argues that the instituting of a ground-tusk tax by the British colonial officials was probably an adoption of an older African usage of forwarding to the Mwata at least one “of the tusks of any elephant killed in proximity to the loyal capital.”³¹

Another recent book on Mwata Kazembe’s kingdom is by David Gordon who emphasised the “reciprocal relations between Lunda rulers and owners of the land and lagoons.”³² For Gordon, although the conquest and collection of tribute was exploitative and with force, it was “rehearsed in rituals that surrounded the flow of tribute from the owners [of the land] to Kazembe.”³³ Furthermore, Gordon argued that the conquest of the Shila and the story of Na Chituti’s gift “describe relationships of economic and political reciprocity [because] in exchange for their tribute, Kazembe recognised the owners as arbitrators in conflicts over land and lagoons.”³⁴

The last contribution to the discussion of tribute in Mwata Kazembe’s kingdom that can be noted is by Peter Chanshi who argued that tribute was given to the Mwata from all ‘colonies’. The “relentless flow of imitulo

³¹ Macola, *The Kingdom Of Kazembe*, pp. 130-131.

³² Gordon, *Nachituti’s Gift*, p. 50.

³³ Gordon, *Nachituti’s Gift*, p. 48 and p. 60.

³⁴ Gordon, *Nachituti’s Gift* p. 30 and p. 48.

[tribute] locally and abroad”³⁵ to the Mwata made it possible for the Mwata Kazembe, in this instance Ilunga Lukwesa, to “dispatch gifts regularly to [Mwata Yamvo] earning for himself unprecedented respect from the most high tribal kingdom.”³⁶ In eulogizing the power of the Lunda in their “ability to govern, their zeal to influence, unity of purpose, total respect and unflinching personal loyalty to their leadership,” Chanshi even mentions the Lenje and Lozi as among the groups that gave tribute to Mwata Kazembe.³⁷ There is no other evidence showing that the Lenje and Lozi gave *milambu* to the eastern Lunda except from the Lunda royal and official history recorded as *Ifikolwe Fyandi Na Bantu Bandi*.³⁸

Generally, what emerges from the writings about tribute in Mwata Kazembe’s kingdom is that tribute was collected by Lunda governors deployed in different parts of the kingdom. The assumption by Macola about the forwarding of one tusk to the Mwata³⁹ needs to be used with limitations because other evidence from Dr. David Livingstone’s journal shows that Mwata Kazembe did not collect ground-tusk tax. After the traders with whom Livingstone was travelling killed an elephant, they refused to give chief Chisabi one tusk because:

³⁵ Peter R. Chanshi, *The Heritage And Mysteries Of The Mwata Kazembe Dynasty* (Lusaka: Grand Designs, 2007), p. 35.

³⁶ Chanshi, *The Heritage*, p. 30.

³⁷ Chanshi, *The Heritage*, p. 29.

³⁸ Mwata Kazembe XIV, *Ifikolwe Fyandi*, p. 68.

³⁹ Macola, ‘A Political History,’ p. 131

Cazembe, Chikumbi, Nsama, Mereré did not demand at all: his [Chisabi's] counselors have probably heard of the Portuguese self-imposed law and wish to introduce it here, but both tusks were secured.⁴⁰

Again, some writers like Cunnison, Roberts and Nziem⁴¹ have argued that Mwata Kazembe's Kingdom was tributary to Mwata Yamvo's kingdom and vaguely use the distance as a factor for Mwata Kazembe's autonomous existence. Mwata Kazembe's respect for Mwata Yamvo should not be taken literally to mean total subordination because that leaves out the social and cultural environment in which the gifts were made. For example, what cannot be overlooked is that, most likely, what transpired between Mwata Kazembe and Mwata Yamvo was exchange and not just giving by one party, which can be a sign of the cordial relations between the two potentates.⁴² Eastern Lunda oral royal history emphasises the autonomy of Mwata Kazembe's kingdom from the assertion that Mwata Yamvo divided the Lunda kingdom by the Lualaba River, giving Mwata Kazembe authority on the eastern side of the river.⁴³

Further evidence on the issue of gifts exchanges, comes from Pedro Joam Batista's diary. In his 33rd entry of his journal while traversing the western

⁴⁰ Waller, *Livingstone's Last Journals*, vol. 1, p. 358.

⁴¹ See Cunnison, 'The Reigns,' p. 131; Roberts, 'Pre-colonial Trade,' p. 729; and Nziem, 'The Political System,' p. 298.

⁴² See the description of this relationship in Burton, *The Lands Of Cazembe*, p. 176.

⁴³ Kazembe XIV, *Ifikolwe Fyandi*, p. 49.

parts of Mwata Kazembe's kingdom, Batista wrote about the border point between Mwata Yamvo and Mwata Kazembe's kingdom where he found:

The Chief of Cazembe, who renders obedience both to the Muropue and to the Cazembe: the said Cazembe has left him to cultivate all kinds of provisions, wherewith to supply all travellers coming from the Muropue to Cazembe, taking tribute and called them "mulambo," as also for those who come from Cazembe to Muropue, taking the tribute sent by the said king Cazembe to his King Muropue.⁴⁴

The inconsistency of Batista's information notwithstanding, this is a subtle way of describing tribute.⁴⁵ This quotation can be misunderstood if emphasis is placed on 'Kazembe's king Muropue'. What is clear from the passage is that Batista hinted on the political status of Kazembe and Mwata Yamvo as both being superiors to the potentate Cha Muinga Mucenda; then he clarifies the role of the potentate in the flow of gifts from Mwata Yamvo to Mwata Kazembe and vice versa. It can be noted that what Batista described is a form of 'balanced reciprocity' which is more of a direct exchange like trade transactions or mere exchange of gifts between friendly kings, and not the total subordination of Mwata Kazembe.⁴⁶ Lastly, the use of 'King Cazembe to his king Muropue' confirms the eastern Lunda respect for the Mwata Yamvo and also confirms that the statement cannot be isolated from its cultural aspects if full comprehension is to be attained.

⁴⁴ Burton, *The Lands Of Cazembe*, p. 176.

⁴⁵ See appendix A on the inconsistencies.

⁴⁶ On different forms of reciprocity, see Sahlin, *Stone Age Economics*, p. 194.

Another point to clarify from the above historiographical survey is the link between tribute and trade. This link is limited to the use of goods given as tribute in trade transactions and the redistribution of goods gained therefrom to the givers of tribute. However, it should be noted that goods used in trade were not limited to goods given as tribute because tribute collection was not the only means of obtaining goods for trade.

THE NATURE OF EXPLANATIONS

Explanation is embedded in the language of the historian such that even when their sentences seem to be merely part of a narrative, historians will actually be explaining something.⁴⁷ Thus, words, sentences or concepts used by historians establish, suppose, show or confirm connections leading to a comprehensive understanding and picturing of the theme being discussed. This feature of *connections* in historical writing culminates into historical explanations. Explanation or the establishing of connections “runs through and through in history”⁴⁸ and makes narration in history sensible.

In other words, explanation being intrinsic to historical writing helps in making clear puzzling situations or issues that interrupt the flow of our understanding and knowledge of past events, processes and concepts.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Gardiner, *The Nature Of Historical Explanation*, p.68.

⁴⁸ Gardiner, *The Nature Of Historical Explanation*, p. 69.

⁴⁹ Stover, *The Nature Of Historical Thinking*, p. 42 and Dray, “Rational,” p. 106.

Gallie has argued that explanation in history play an ancillary role to “enable us to follow a narrative.”⁵⁰ However, as much as explanation helps in our understanding of history, explanation is, in practice, at the core of history. History is essentially the clarification of the past because an unexplained past exists wholly in disorder and in mystery which can only be made intelligible with explanation and if it is to be called history.

Not to delve into the different forms of historical explanations as there are defined by different authors already discussed in the introduction, it can be noted in this section on the nature of explanations of tribute that there are certain trends which stand out. These trends have an impact on the presentation, study and understanding of history.

The theoretical orientation of explanations that connect tribute to power is evident. Some methodological issues that make historians resolve to the use of theory in their historical explanations include:

The difficulty of grasping the inter-relatedness of every dimension of human experience at any given time; historical change; and the need by historians to show the direction of historical change in general and the destiny of mankind.⁵¹

⁵⁰ W. B. Gallie, *Philosophy And The Historical Understanding* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1964), p. 107.

⁵¹ Tosh, *The Pursuit Of History*, pp. 154-155.

Historians use theory as they try to show the nature of tribute whilst fitting it into Lunda social structure. At the same time, directly or indirectly, historians engage in explaining change in Mwata Kazembe's history by discussing the effect of tribute on the historical process in Mwata Kazembe's kingdom.

For example, when Roberts writes about the collection of tribute which was redistributed among governors and the process of exchanging river for woodland products,⁵² Roberts is essentially using the theory of redistribution to explain the status of subjects as tribute givers whilst showing tribute as a means of offsetting scarcity in society. In the same way, Langworthy uses the theory of redistribution to explain the maintenance of loyalty to the Mwata and to elucidate historical change by referring to tribute as a contributing factor in the 'rise' and 'decline' of Mwata Kazembe's kingdom.⁵³ Again, Gordon uses reciprocity to explain the social, economic and political relations in Mwata Kazembe's kingdom.⁵⁴

It should be noted that when historians explain tribute in relation to power in Mwata Kazembe's kingdom, they are not only engaged in explaining events but also in explaining historical processes and concepts that change

⁵²Roberts, *A History Of Zambia*, p. 95.

⁵³ Langworthy, *Zambia Before 1890*, pp. 40, 65 and 67.

⁵⁴ Gordon, *Nachituti's Gift*, pp. 16-60.

with time. However, the theoretical orientation in explanations of tribute amplifies the static conception of tribute and power because it generalises the link between tribute and power.

Clearly, redistribution and reciprocity have been used as the theoretical basis for explaining the link between tribute and power. Reciprocity has revolved around the idea that “people should help those who help them in giving and returning the equivalence.”⁵⁵ That is, the giving of returns for what is received. Redistribution (or pooling) has been used as a form of reciprocity where “wealth is gathered to a political centre and then redistributed to people in return for their obedience to the ruler.”⁵⁶

One implication of this theoretical orientation in the writing of the history of Mwata Kazembe’s kingdom is that Eastern Lunda history becomes more speculative than factual. The basis for using reciprocity in explaining tribute and power in Mwata Kazembe’s kingdom is that the “conquerors [Lunda] remained indebted to the conquered.”⁵⁷ This assertion ritualises every relation between Lunda and indigenous people because events that happened become symbols whose meaning is reflected in relations between the Mwata, the aristocrats and the conquered people. For example, the

⁵⁵ Schneider, *Economic Man*, p. 115.

⁵⁶ Schneider, *Economic Man*, pp. 248-249 and Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics*, pp. 188-189.

⁵⁷ Gordon, *Nachituti’s Gift*, p.16.

giving to Mwata Kazembe the head of Nkuba, a defeated Shila chief, by two aristocrats who were in charge of the expedition makes the Mwata to be indebted to the aristocrats.⁵⁸ Considering that the Mwata was not always in charge of military expeditions, this assertion is too general and the power of the king too indebted to have any characteristic of authority. That is, while it was Kalandala and Nswana Ntombo who conquered the Shila in their service for Mwata Kazembe, their reward is generalised in explaining relations between the Mwata and all aristocrats. However, if Mwata Kazembe became indebted to the aristocrats (even the conquered peoples) for every duty they performed for the kingdom, this would leave him little power as a conqueror and ruler. The essence of power and meaning of conquest is lost.

Gamitto recorded an incident showing the presentation of war trophies and execution of some prisoners of war which helps in vilifying Gordon's theorising of historical acts.⁵⁹ After presenting a skull to the Mwata, a warrior in a humble gesture, kneeling on both knees cried *avidye, avidye* (literary thanking the Mwata) before dancing the *Mutomboko* for the Mwata. After dancing, he raised hands towards the Mwata as if worshiping him which was a sign that "To Pambi, or to the Mwata, there is no equal."⁶⁰ This

⁵⁸ Gordon, *Nachituti's Gift*, p. 30.

⁵⁹ Gamitto, *King Kazembe*, vol. 2, pp. 66-68.

⁶⁰ Gamitto, *king Kazembe*, vol. 2, p. 67.

was repeated by other warriors. It is clear that doing service for the Mwata was an honour and not the other way round, and it also shows that the Mwata was not indebted for the services done for him and the kingdom.

Moreover, emphasising reciprocity fails to explain the place of the Lunda who were not aristocrats since not all Lunda were rulers. Cunnison's assertion that the word 'Lunda' was synonymous with 'ruler' or judge such that whether "assessors of the court are themselves Lunda or of another tribe, it is as Lunda that they pass Judgement,"⁶¹ cannot be generalised to ignore "the great syncretisation which occurred in linguistic and material culture between the Lunda and conquered peoples."⁶² Even when the word 'Lunda' can be used to describe people under Mwata Kazembe, it is evident that indigenous terms to categorise the conquered people still existed, for example the Shila; but this stratification provides no evidence that tribute was paid only by the conquered.

The Eastern Lunda "ascriptive ethnic stratification"⁶³ was not a reciprocal overture for the conquered but a political tool to make Lunda political system compatible with local institutions and also to make it practical in considering the vast lands conquered which could not be occupied and

⁶¹ Cunnison, *The Luapula Peoples*, p. 147.

⁶² Jeffrey James Hoover, 'The Seduction Of Ruweji: Reconstructing Ruund History (The Nuclear Lunda; Zaire, Angola, Zambia),' Vol. 1, Ph.D. Dissertation, Yale University, 1978, p. 319.

⁶³ Hoover, 'The Seduction Of Ruweji', p. 319.

administered effectively by just Lunda newcomers.⁶⁴ Certainly, conquest did not obligate the Lunda to leave conquered people in charge; this is true when one considers the putting of Kashiba, a Lunda, in charge of a conquered land and the governors put in charge of conquered territories were not nominal figures but exercised full authority over local rulers.⁶⁵

Again, emphasising the redistribution of tributary wealth indirectly denies the existence of tribute. This is because, although redistribution is shown to have acted as a motivational factor for the giving of tribute, the Mwata in reality was not receiving tribute but acting as a custodian of goods to be exchanged on behalf of his subordinates. That is, the Mwata was simply a middleman. However, tribute is not something received or sometimes forcefully obtained on behalf of the subordinate giver but something received or sometimes forcefully obtained on behalf of the receiver.

Another problem of theoretical history in the treatment of tribute is the problem of quantification. While reciprocity and redistribution deals with tribute which involves material goods, the equivalent reciprocated is not measured while the scarcity assumed to justify redistribution is just a mere assumption. The nature of evidence on tribute in Mwata Kazembe's

⁶⁴ Edmond R. Schecter, 'History And Historiography On The Frontier Of Lunda Expansion: The Origins And Early Development Of The Kanongesha,' Ph.D. Dissertation, University Of Wisconsin-Madison, 1976, p. vi.

⁶⁵ On some Lunda governors, see Musambachime, 'Changing Roles,' p. 108.

kingdom makes quantification difficult because of insufficient quantifiable data on tribute. But this does not allow historians to insert in assumptions or generalisations as this misrepresents the role of tribute.⁶⁶ This error in statistical sampling brings into history impressionistic writing that makes it difficult to measure what is explained.⁶⁷ For example, writing that Mwata Kazembe *regularly* sent gifts to Mwata Yamvo; that security afforded by the Lunda kingdom meant payment of *heavy* taxes; or that *much* tribute was redistributed⁶⁸ makes history relative, depending on the writer than on available evidence because the words used are not specific. When the historian asks how regular, how heavy or how much in terms of tribute, the answer that can be given will not be definite.

The diffusion of theory in history also becomes a problem when generic statements bring in a form of telescoping in the presentation of available evidence. Telescoping is associated with oral history but it is evident in written history on tribute. This fallacy of composition⁶⁹ projects the same functional role of tribute in Mwata Kazembe's kingdom throughout its existence. Even when historians know about the reigns of various Mwata

⁶⁶ Fischer, *Historians' Fallacies*, pp. 104-105.

⁶⁷ Fischer, *Historians' Fallacies*, p. 276.

⁶⁸ Vansina, *Kingdoms*, p. 171 and 174; Chanshi, *The Heritage*, p.30; Nziem, "The Political Systems," p. 298 and Roberts, *A History Of Zambia*, p. 95.

⁶⁹ Fischer, *Historians' Fallacies*, p. 219.

Kazembes since the time of Chinyanta (about ten kings before 1900),⁷⁰ tribute is generally explained in relation to the kingship thereby assuming it played the same role throughout the reigns of the Mwatas. This historiographical error makes the issue of tribute more probabilistic than factual. In other words, explanations of tribute in Mwata Kazembe's kingdom that have a theoretical orientation are nomological explanations.

Available evidence from literate travellers in Mwata Kazembe's kingdom shows that various forms of exchange existed but not all can be classified as tribute exchanges involving reciprocal gifts.⁷¹ The first major recorded dealing between the Portuguese and Mwata Kazembe which equate almost to tribute was the 'mouth' given by Lacerda's expedition under Pinto. Against the Portuguese assumption of return gifts for their Mulambo, Pinto records their disappointment when the Mwata did not return even a message.⁷² The diary of the Pombeiros further provides information that Mwata Kazembe did not even monopolise tribute considering that they paid

⁷⁰ On the chronology of the Mwatas see the controversy in Ian Cunnison, "The Reigns": 131-138 and Andrew Roberts, "Tippu Tip, Livingstone And The Chronology Of Kazembe," *Azania*, 2(1967): 115-131.

⁷¹ Burton, *The Lands Of Cazembe*, pp. 96, 100, 102, 108-114, 117, 118, 120, 125, 132, 137, 138, 140-150, and 176 -186; Gamitto, *King Kazembe*, Vol. 2, pp. 12-17, 22-32, 34-35, 38-40, 57, and 70; Waller, *Livingstone's Last Journals*, vol. 1, 246, 263,303, and 305.

⁷² Burton, *The Lands Of Cazembe*, p. 110.

their way through Mwata Kazembe's kingdom to his vassals, some of which amounted to *mufungo* since it was demanded for from them.⁷³

When Gamitto's expedition was in Mwata Kazembe's kingdom, the Portuguese again presumed reciprocity as they:

Tried to convince the messengers that the expedition owed Kazembe nothing, that the Milambo was a present whose significance depended on the free will of the person who gave it and which [ought] to be repaid according to its value.⁷⁴

In this instance, the Mwata's response is cardinal in clarifying the issue from a Lunda perspective. Though the Mwata gave some gifts to the Portuguese, he denied his action being any form of recompense.⁷⁵ Gamitto adds from an unknown source that repayment was usually made when visitors were about to depart, but it is clear that the Mwata maintained his point of view on the issue of reciprocity when, after giving the Portuguese two female slaves, a small tusk, a leopard skin and a string of copper, he re-emphasised the point that these were not a recompense but a token of his satisfaction but for Gamitto, this was Mwata Kazembe Keleka's way of avoiding repaying the full value of what he got.⁷⁶

⁷³ Burton, *The Lands Of Cazembe*, pp. 176, 178-186.

⁷⁴ Gamitto, *King Kazembe*, vol. 2, p. 23.

⁷⁵ Gamitto, *King Kazembe*, vol. 2, p. 26.

⁷⁶ Gamitto, *King Kazembe*, vol. 2, p. 34.

Furthermore, Livingstone received from Mwata Kazembe Muonga the same gifts as the two traders with him because the gifts did not depend on the tribute they gave him and were not a recompense of any kind.⁷⁷ Again, in 1893 when Dan Crawford took a shirt as *Ikoto* for seeing Mwata Kazembe X Kanyembo Ntemena and received a “large present of food, four hoes, and forty yards of calico”, the last aimed at helping him pay his way to Lofoi, the autonomy of the Mwata from the tribute he received was reflected in his loftiness even towards white men, complained Crawford, with whom he refused to shake hands because they were “infra dig for him.”⁷⁸

CONCLUSION

Historians have explained the importance of tribute in the kingdom of Mwata Kazembe differently but what stands out about the nature of their explanations is the generalisation and reliance on theories. “Historical abstractions are necessary for the understanding of history”⁷⁹ but when they are not based even on impressions of contemporary observers, abstractions lose their historical value and objectivity. Tribute was not only an abstract concept but was a reality for the eastern Lunda and it is the work of historians to explain the material and real role of tribute without blurring it with abstractions. Whilst showing the limitations of theory in historical

⁷⁷ Waller, *Livingstone's Last Journals*, vol. 1, p. 253.

⁷⁸E. G. Tilsley, *Dan Crawford: Missionary And Pioneer In Central Africa* (London: Oliphants Ltd., 1929), pp. 270-271.

⁷⁹ G. Kitson Clark, *The Critical Historian* (London: Heinemann, 1967), p. 135.

explanation, this chapter also drew the historian's attention to the existence of problems of statistical sampling, and the importance of using evidence in explaining the role of tribute in Mwata Kazembe's kingdom.