

Luba folklore and women's ethno-gendered discourse of wifehood in “Cintu Wa Bujitu”

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This paper investigates Lubà-kasàayi folklore, particularly a folk song, in order to reveal an ethno-gendered construction of wifehood. It aims to show girls' socialization into a sexist and patriarchal discourse and how such a practice ideologically initiates them into their future subservient role of caterers for the husbands' alimentary needs. Moreover, folklore seems to perpetuate traditions, and so the gender inequality inscribed within them, a situation that is particularly apparent in villages.

Key words: anthropological linguistics, ethno-gendered discourse, Lubà folklore, folk song, wifehood

Introduction

In this study I show how wifehood is performed by examining the contribution of both gender and ethnic discourses to the construction of ethno-gendered identity in Lubà-kasàayi society (Lubà for short) in the Democratic Republic of Congo. By wifehood I mean the ways in which women construct their identity through discourse and their performance of the “wife's duties”, particularly their catering for the husband's alimentary needs. I address gender asymmetry as instantiated in a folk song; in fact girls perform a folk song as a game. As with any collective cultural product, a folk song plays a socializing role among community members. It expresses the experiences of the group and can be seen as setting social norms for the community (Baquedano-López, 2001).

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, for instance, great efforts have been made to record and popularize folklore in order to preserve its cultural legacy. However, there is scant awareness that ideologically some of these works (songs, rhymes etc.) carry discourses of the past that oppose modern worldviews. As an illustration, I will examine how in traditional Lubà society folklore is used to lead girls into their future status of wives as subservient helpers of their husbands.

Following anthropological studies on narratives (Baquedano-López, 2001; Ochs and Taylor, 2001), folk rhymes such as *misambu* ‘songs’, *myanu* ‘tales’ and *manaya* ‘games’ are a means of negotiating, maintaining, transforming, and socializing gender identi-

ties according. It is argued that by performing such literary genres that assert the wife's subservience to the husband, girls (as wives-to-be) rehearse a discourse that constructs and promotes a sexist culture. Feminist studies in particular have tended to consider women's marginalisation and their low status in society as man-made conventions (Mulamba and Tshimanga 2006). However, through socialization into the values of a culture, women can find themselves constructing their own images that do not always express emancipation, and even less so gender equality. In other terms, in patriarchal systems such as this one, women are, wittingly or unwittingly, accomplices to their own oppression, particularly through hegemony and ideology. In fact, folklore seems to perpetuate gender inequality through the traditions in which it is inscribed, and this particularly the case in villages.

This folk song can thus be of interest as an example of folk rhymes that girls perform during their playtime, a carrier of an ideology, an embodiment of institutional values and a performer of specific functions, namely, "constructing a wife's identity." It is also a means of teaching several food edicts. Specifically, as a social discourse, it helps to reveal the husband-wife asymmetrical relationships in the domain of domestic catering. In the present case, a represented wife is supposedly defining her own identity in functional terms according to the happiness that she can bring to her husband.

This paper will firstly present a number of methodological considerations, followed by a structural analysis and a discourse analysis of the song. It will also examine the socialization function of literature before offering discussions and conclusions. The appendix includes the whole text of the folk song, together with its translation.¹

1. Methodological considerations

The data of this study lend themselves to "textologie" (textology or Text Analysis), which, according to Dubois and his colleagues (2007: 482), the "scientific study of a literary text from the point of view of its organization and its socio-cultural, psychological and discursive aspects" (my translation). Accordingly, this folk song can be studied from two main perspectives: a literary structural analysis and a discourse analysis.

1.1. Structural analysis

This approach is aimed at unravelling the form of the song, that is, its structure or organization. For Carter and Nash (1990: 211), Structural Analysis is a common approach, adopted by, for instance, Roman Jakobson (1960). It is an application of linguistic formalism to literature. It aims to unravel a text's literariness. The researcher can look at literary aspects of the text, particularly in terms of its structure (Fossion, 1981). He can describe the text as a formal structure, an object whose main quality is its

1 The translation of *ànu* is somewhat ambiguous as this word can mean both 'provided that' and 'only'. However, I have selected the first meaning because a previous reader of this paper, a Cilubà native speaker and a specialist in African Linguistics, felt that the husband's statements implied some threats (as happens in the entry stanzas). Only would just offer an alternative foodstuff whereas *provided that* states an obligation or requirement to satisfy the husband's desire.

distinctive syntactic and phonological shape. Admittedly, other structural paradigms, such as that applied in Propp's (1968) book *Morphology of the Folktale* or in Dundes's (1963) article *Structural Typology in North American Indian Folktales* provide readers with literary studies of a structural nature. The former focuses on the identification of the introduction and the conclusion formulae of folktales whereas the latter looks for motifs, viz. the main actions that make up the folktales.

This paper however uses Fossion's paradigm, or to be precise, its adaptation. In fact, Nsuka (1988) applied it successfully to his analysis of a traditional mourning song in Kikongo, one of the four national languages in the Democratic Republic of Congo. He carried out his analysis at the literary level and the musical level. In the first case, he classified the song as a poetic text. By contrast, in the latter case he identified (1) the structure of the line, (2) the semantic structure of the song, (3) the musical structure based on the principle of the elaboration of the song, and (4) the musical structure based on the principle of the enactment of the song (Nsuka 1988: 87). (My translation).

The steps of the present analysis can be clarified in these terms. The line structure consists of determining the number of lines and stanzas in the text. The semantic structure can reveal the development of events and characters, the message or theme, and the symbols which are used to convey the message itself. The musical structure helps on the one hand to break the song into parts, and on the other, to identify the actants, instruments, etc. that contribute to the melody of the song.

This song displays a similar configuration and can be analyzed within this theoretical framework. Yet, as shown in the analyses (2.0), only some of these elements or some of their aspects are relevant to this research.

1.2. Discourse Analysis

This approach is intended to identify different messages that the song conveys. Discourse analysis is a general term that refers to the study of language use as acts of communication. In fact, it tries "to study how sentences in spoken and written language form larger meaningful units such as paragraphs, conversations, interviews, etc." (Richards and Schmidt 2002). It is not monolithic and has many trends, depending on the issues under study and the ideological agenda involved.

This paper depicts husband-wife asymmetrical power relationships, and gender roles. Therefore, I will draw on Critical Discourse Analysis to address issues related to husband-wife power relationships. According to Fairclough (1995), Critical Discourse Analysis focuses on ideology and power (and its contestation), and goals of working towards progressive social change. It identifies and challenges the assumptions that legitimize the power of the privileged groups. It thus has an explicit emphasis upon emancipatory social theory on behalf of dominated and oppressed groups. Furthermore Critical Discourse Analysis locates "ideology in language structures or language events," (Fairclough, 1995: 70), an idea that provides firm ground for the study of this song as a discourse event and an instance of sociocultural practice in male-female relationships. Each unjust social practice should be counteracted.

Gender roles are defined by society that determines women's and men's activities, statuses, and psychological characteristics. To address these issues, gender discourse is necessary because it paves the way for understanding cultural discourses which, according to Kiesling (2009: 196), "are similar to ideologies, in that they describe unquestioned background assumptions that people of a culture share". This folk song illustrates women's participation in constructing their own social identity as wives. In other terms, through rhyme, traditional Lubà society makes the wife echo its expectations and image of a wife. The ultimate aim of this investigation is to "continually problematise taken-for-granted, socially sanctioned notions of gender ..." (Sunderland and Litosseliti, 2008: 11).

The data is composed of a transcription of the folk song *Cintu wa bujitu* ('The heavy thing', i.e. cassava bread) recorded by *Sangalayi* ('Enjoy yourselves'), a traditional music band which is based in Brussels. This rhyme is in *Cilubà*, one of the four national languages of the Democratic Republic of Congo. It is mainly spoken in the two Kasai provinces. This song is in the variety known as *Lubà-kasàayi* – L31a according to Malcohm Guthrie's (1948) classification of Bantu languages.

In an effort to make this Lubà folk song understandable to English speakers through translation, the linguistic process of "composition" is used as the main word-formation (noun-compounding) strategy. Therefore, for typical African names (plants, animals etc.) for which there are no English equivalents available, I will use the African terms but post-modify them with English nouns (e.g. *cikotà*-herbal ingredient). In the appendix, I will also supply scientific translations of animal and plant names whenever possible.

As to its context of production, this folk song is typically enacted by girls during their games portraying husband-wife relationships. However, even boys can join the group to avoid loneliness or when there are not many girls available for the game. Players form a circle, holding one another by hand. Turn by turn, each of them dashes to the centre to mimic the wife's role. She makes a statement about her husband's dietary dislikes to lead the enactment of a stanza. She must make sure not to repeat too soon another girl's statement or choice of food; otherwise she has to drop out. In reply, another girl who is in the circle and mimics a husband makes a statement that should sound like a better dish than the one that the acting wife has ruled out.

It is worth mentioning that the song itself is spontaneous, and its content varies according to the players' statements. Herein the game consists in replacing names of vegetables with those of meat, edible insects, or occasionally, of other exceptional vegetables² such as fermented and carbonated vegetables (*cìmpwèndèmpwèndè*, *mwadimvwadi*, *mùlembwalembwa*, *mushilumushilu* etc.).

As such, this folk song illustrates a verbal game in the aim of which is to avoid repeating the same item too soon in the narrative. In oral literature, people sometimes play

2 If we consider this song as a simple game (in the same way as others found in this culture), girls can be replacing names of foodstuffs without necessarily respecting the latter's respective values (interdicts, fat foods etc). In fact, they do not yet know all the food edicts. Only in case it is a memorization game can we expect girls' statements to be fit in the culture.

a game in which one has to quickly mention, for instance, ten names of villages, animals, fruits etc. without repeating one. Different patterns of rhymes are also found in other oral genres using music, notably *myanu* 'tales' and *manaya* 'games'.

In traditional villages, a moonlit night is the appropriate time and setting for children's entertainment and socialization through games, songs, story-telling and evening chat sessions. There is even a caution according to which if someone tells a story during the day, his/her maternal uncle will die. The aim of these speech events is to initiate these new members into the values, mores and practices of the community – via language socialization (Baquedano-López 2001: 343). These events typically take place under a grandparent's (or an adult's) supervision, around the fire. The latter does not participate in the game but can be considered as the generally known 'second audience', viz. one participating in the production of the narrative or the work of art.

2. Structural analysis of the folk song

As mentioned (1.1), the structural analysis comprises different steps. First, the analysis of the structure of the line consists of determining the number of lines and stanzas in the text. Accordingly, the folk song is transcribed into lines. Second, the semantic structure reveals the message or theme, and the symbols. To this end, I will also examine possessives and elliptical structures because they often occur in an unusual way, pragmatically for emphatic purposes. Third, with respect to the elaboration of the song, examination of the musical structure will try to reveal the main sections of the rhyme. Finally, looking at the musical structure will also help to identify the actants making up the melody of the rhyme.

2.1. The structure of the lines

The rhyme has lines of different lengths. The lines are easily identified thanks to the alternation of actants: the wife, the chorus and the husband. Apart from the onomatopoeias which are produced by the chorus, most of the lines are the husband's or the wife's utterances on choices, actions etc. These lines are grouped into stanzas, and each stanza begins with the wife's utterance or rather a statement and ends with that of the husband. The lines between these extremes are made up of the wife-chorus interactions. The husband's statement comes last in the stanza in order to assert his choice, that is, the appropriate food for his diet or his sexual fitness.

This folk song is made up of twenty-seven stanzas, viz. two stanzas of the entry, twenty-four stanzas of the main text, and one stanza of the finale. The entry comprises thirty-five lines: twenty-four lines in the first, and eleven in the second. The main text has twenty-four stanzas (with eleven lines each, except the twenty-sixth stanza which has twenty), that is, two hundred and seventy-three lines in all. Finally, there is only one stanza of three lines for the refrain, and it is repeated thirty times. The rhyme is thus made up of three hundred and eight lines.

2.2. *The semantic structure of the folk song*

This folk song is an ethno-gendered discourse in which a woman is made to assert the wife's subordination to the husband, especially in the preparation of food. It illustrates how the woman constructs her own identity by positioning herself *vis-à-vis* the man in terms of her social role.

The story itself is presented in a particular way: seemingly speaking of the husband's food needs, the wife is actually setting the rules that a wife has to apply in order to please her husband. She reveals her own perception of a husband, or better, this community's construction of a husband with respect to food practices. Instead of talking directly of what a wife is expected to do, the performer (wife) states what a husband cannot accept or what he might see as inappropriate. But implicitly, she takes it to be her own responsibility to make sure that the husband is not submitted to the wrong alimentation. Therefore, a fully-fledged wife must meet these expectations in order both to please the husband and to avoid a beating. By contrast, the husband only vindicates his rights to delicacies, without showing how he can reciprocate the same service to his wife. By so doing, he confirms the husband-wife asymmetrical power relationships of this traditional patriarchal system. Yet, the wife can also take care of the husband (or use him, so to speak) to help him achieve his tasks as the family food provider and procreator.

The actions vary according to the section of the narrative. In the entry, the wife sets the scene by recalling and by worrying about her (and women's) duties or responsibilities whereas her husband asserts his (and men's) authority. In the main text, there are mainly two actions: the wife's ruling out of foodstuffs inappropriate for her husband, and the husband's vindication of his own delicacies. Finally, in the end stanza, the husband only praises cassava bread through different names as his best food (although it cannot be eaten alone without meat or vegetables). The chorus' onomatopoeias serve to back up the utterances by the couple to contribute to the musicality of the rhyme.

This folk song conveys two main messages on Lubà cultural practices. The first is that 'a good wife' must be at the service of her husband (and of her family) and satisfy their food needs. In this society where labour is divided along sex lines, the woman (in her roles of wife and mother) finds that it is her own responsibility to cater well for the husband's food needs, even beyond the financial means of the family. The wife is ready to sacrifice herself to satisfy the husband's (and their children's) needs. For instance, in case of shortage or of hardships, she is the one to starve. Failing to act in this way would mean not being a good wife; in other words, not being a prototypical woman. She has been socialized into such cultural values through a range of means, including in this case, folklore.

The second message is related to the food habits of this society, among which cultural food edicts: (1) cassava bread remains the staple food and, (2) vegetarianism is frowned upon; meat is a delicacy. Assimilated to meat are all the other creatures that belong to the animal kingdom: rats, caterpillars, red ants, grasshoppers, rhinoceros coleopters, green beetles, crickets, crabs etc. Sometimes one type of meat or meat-like food is preferred to another. In the following pairs, the second element is preferred to the first: *a piece of pork*

fat/barbecued goatskin, monkey meat/palms-rat and a thick piece of hippopotamus skin/the nsenjî-rodent's intestine content. Finally, dog meat is also ruled out, except when it is seasoned with cikotà-seasoning herbs. But in practice, this meat has become so popular nowadays that even women for whom it was traditionally a prohibited foodstuff eat it.

Among vegetables, some such as aubergines, *konyi mutengela* flowers, and crushed grains seem closer to meat than others. They are assimilated to meat and are thus preferred to prototypical vegetables. Finally, there are also cases of one vegetable being preferred to another for no apparent reason at all. Such is the case for the pairs *nyembà lubwici leaves/nzaula leaves* and *mvuadimvuadi/matamba kalejî* (fermented cassava leaves/cassava leaves). One explanation is likely: the husband (the character) was under pressure to supply a quick answer in order to fill-in the gap so as to abide by the rules of the game, as aforementioned (1.2).

From an anthropological perspective, it can be noted that the choices of foods are not made at random in this song. Foodstuffs (meat, vegetables, cereals etc.) have different values either as nourishments, aphrodisiacs, sexual fortifiers and/or healers, local or foreign foods. Hence, some of them are culturally gender specific: for instance, the *çkòjâ*-rat for men, but the big-eyed *mpanga*-rat for women. As cultural interdicts, *mpanga*-rat and *nsokù* muntu-monkey are not appropriate foods for men. The former is a woman's meat whereas the latter is believed to impact on offspring or procreation. It is believed that the parent (particularly a pregnant woman) who ventures to eat it would procreate a child resembling the monkey either physically or in behaviour.

Accordingly, the wife usually rules out those foodstuffs which can adversely affect her husband's health or sexual fitness, as well as foreign foods (bread and rice) as they are deemed inappropriate. In reply, the husband makes a statement as a better alternative.³

3 The choices of foodstuffs are made neither randomly nor systematically. Apart from the tendency to prefer meat and meat-like foods over vegetables, sometimes it is difficult to justify why one food is thought better than another. For instance, in stanza (5) *boowa* 'mushroom', a meat-like food, is dismissed to the benefit of *çidibulwenji*, a spice. Similarly, in stanza (12) *kampeketampeketâ*-caterpillar is preferred over *mbevu mikànga* 'fried grasshoppers'. Culturally, the wife rules out the foods which are either culturally prohibited or which can endanger the husband's health and sexual fitness. Fatty foods, fermented and bicarbonate foods are thought to interfere with a man's sexual fitness. Yet, it is hard to justify the dismissal of bitter foods since most aphrodisiacs tend to be bitter. Finally, *mâmpà* ('bread') and *mupunga* ('rice') are ruled out as foreign or not local foodstuffs. Nutritionally, bread must be better than stale cassava bread. By contrast, rice is not grown in this area and cannot be praised as the staple food.

Overall, the following patterns can be identified:

	Items	Examples
1	Vegetables	Cilùngàlùnga: 'sweet potato leaves' Ntèmbwàntèmbwàa: 'ntèmbwàntèmbwàa- leaves'
2	Fat foods	Dibengu dya nguluba: 'a piece of pork fat', Cinkamba cya nguvu: 'a hard piece of hippopotamus skin'
3	Fermented and bicarbonated foods	Çmpwendèmpwèndè: 'bicarbonated cassava leaves' Mwadamvwadi: 'fermented cassava leaves', Mùlembwalembwa: 'hibiscus' Mushilumushilu: 'ferns'
4	Bitter vegetables	Busa: 'bitter hibiscus leaves' Tunkumbunkumbu: 'tunkumbunkumbu-fruits' Mùtèetà: 'bitter muteta-leaves'
5	(Foreign) non local foods	Mâmpà: 'bread' Mupunga: 'rice'
6	Cultural interdicts	Mpanga: 'mpanga-rat' Nsokù muntu: 'monkey'

With respect to language use, this rhyme contains cases of figurative language and an unusual use of possessives and elliptical structures.

2.2.1. Figurative language in the rhyme

The following statements and phrases illustrate the text's figurative language and contribute to the literary quality of the folk song:

1. I, the wife of the sweet potato which breaks the earth

This utterance has a sexual connotation. Metaphorically, the wife calls herself "the wife of a sweet potato which breaks the earth", an allusion to sexual intercourse. The sweet potato and earth allude to the male and female organs respectively. This symbolism connotes the woman's satisfaction with her partner's sexual performance. Breaking the earth is a sign of maturity for a sweet potato. Likewise, to deserve such a praising periphrastic qualification from the wife, the husband must have proven to her his own maturity via his sexual manhood. Breaking the earth is a very clear allusion to the male's arousal and engagement in intercourse.

There is another plausible interpretation of this symbolism: mother earth as the universal symbol of procreation. Breaking the earth – intercourse and the deposit of male semen in the woman's womb for creation – is not only done for pleasure, but it leads to procreation. The earth symbolizes the woman so that this expression implies complicity between the husband and the wife in the procreation process.

2. Cintu wa bujitu: 'the heavy thing'

To emphasize the choice of cassava bread as his main food, the husband uses these seven terms synonymously: *nshìma*, *bidyà*, *byajì*, *kafumba*, *bukuma*, *bidyàjì* and *cintu wa bujitu*.

In comparison to rice, for instance, cassava bread is perceived as heavier and capable of staving off hunger for a longer time. Hence, the husband has used this last term in his refrain to enhance this symbolism. As a matter of fact, children are socialized in such a way that they do not declare they have had a meal unless they have eaten cassava bread. All other foodstuffs, including rice, bread, beans, sweet potatoes etc. are considered as merely snacks or light meals. Cassava is praised because it is a local crop whereas rice and (bread) wheat are foreign ones.

The phrase *cintu wa bujitu* itself is ungrammatical. The connector *wa* should be replaced by *cya*, in accordance with the agreement rules of *Cilubà*: the prefix of the connector is dictated by the noun prefix (*ci-* in *cintu*). This adds to the fun of the rhyme itself.

3. *Çikòjà mpempa* : 'çikòjà -rat'

The usual expression is *çikòjà mpempa nshìma*. It can be translated literally as 'çikòjà-rat that helps to consume cassava bread'. This rat is claimed to be more appetizing than other types of meat to the extent that it induces people to consume large quantities of cassava bread. In this rhyme, *nshìma* ('cassava bread') is retained, undoubtedly to conform to the poetic constraints of the line length. Yet, this use of the elliptical form makes the full meaning of the phrase itself accessible only to the insiders of this community. Such is the case for the allusion to the appetizing potential of the dish. It can be said that culturally the collocation of *çikòjà* and *nshìma* symbolizes a perfect (appetizing and reinforcing) meal for men.

4. *Cibelèbelà*: 'dog meat'

This term is a euphemism used to avoid the word *mbwà* ('dog') which is offensive to the majority of people who do not eat it. This animal is known through different lexemes such as *mbwà*, its diminutive *kabwà* and also *cibelèbelà* when dog-eaters want to talk among themselves about it without attracting other people's attention.

Like *çikòjà-rat*, dog meat was associated with manhood in remote villages since traditionally only initiated males were allowed to eat this dish. Nowadays however, because of hardships and the relaxation of customs in towns, even women eat these special 'delicatessen' without actual initiation. Nevertheless, the edict restricting the consumption of dog flesh is still prevalent in remote villages.

5. *Mupunga*: rice

Mupunga refers to 'paddy', an implication that it is not an adequate food for human beings. The everyday term for rice is *losà*. At the end of the rhyme, it is contrasted to cassava bread to highlight food habits. *Lubà* people who consider it less efficient than cassava bread appreciate it in a pejorative way. Some people even jokingly call it the "birds' meal".

In short, the items above show a strong link between folklore and the insider's knowledge of cultural practices. Whatever food is inappropriate for the husband is also ipso facto inappropriate for visitors.

2.2.2. Possessives and elliptical structures in the rhyme

From the linguistic perspective, this folk song interestingly uses the possessive case and elliptical forms for emphatic purposes. As is the case in most Bantu languages, possessives in *Cilubà* generally come after the qualified noun (postmodification). The unmarked possessive structures would be *mulùma wanyì* ('my husband'), *dinanga diebe* ('your love'), in which the second element is each time the possessive adjective.

However, for emphatic purposes, as is the case in this song, the possessive may occur before the qualified noun (noun premodification): *wanyì mulùma* ('my husband'), *wanyì mème* ('my own') (literally 'mine me/I').

These emphatic forms reflect how strong the wife's claim on the husband is, regardless of his camouflaged indifference. Asymmetrically, the husband's formula *meme wabu* ('I, theirs'), by keeping the marked form of possessives, lacks this emphasis which is present in the wife's statements. There is thus a subtle difference of meaning between *wanyì mulùma* and *mulùma wanyì*, the two translations of "my husband", with respect to the degree of commitment. There is obviously an additional reference to the fact that the husband may easily have more than one wife (*wabù*, 'theirs'), or the understanding that many women may be looking at him.

The use of elliptical structures also carries pragmatic meanings. In this narrative, the husband uses the structure *mème wabù ànu*. According to the context, it is the elliptical form for *mème wabù ànu mème mudia* ..., literally 'I, theirs, provided that I eat'. It is the emphatic form for *ànu mème mudia* ('provided that I eat'). It can also be interpreted as a plea that a good diet is necessary for the husband to fulfil his social roles, among which is to take care of his wives.

Stylistically, for the sake of emphasis, the narrative uses "fronting", that is, "The movement of an element from its place in the predicate of the clause and its relocation as the first element in the construction" (Carter and Nash, 1990: 251). This process is a well-known grammatical strategy meant for attracting the listener's or reader's attention.

In the present case, via fronting, the husband vindicates his rights to specific dishes or delicacies. This is an awkward dialogue in which the wife strives to please her husband. By contrast, like a capricious child, the latter gives his own choices that she must satisfy. He seems to be blackmailing her by posing his own conditions. Hence this structure can be appropriately translated through conditionals "Provided (that) I eat" or "Unless I eat," which imply the threat "otherwise ..." This would also mean "you want me to be your husband, make sure that I eat properly".

2.3. The musical structure of the rhyme based on the elaboration of the song

With respect to the elaboration of the song, the analysis of the musical structure first identifies three main parts in the rhyme: the entry, the main text and the refrain or finale. The first two stanzas constitute the entry. Stanzas (3) to (26) make up the main text: there are the wife's statements and her husband's responses to them. Lines (15) to (20) in stanza (26) are exceptionally an exchange between the husband and the chorus. Yet, throughout the rhyme, the chorus responds to the wife via the onomatopoeia 'uh!'

Finally, stanza (27) is repeated thirty times and represents the refrain. In all, out of the eleven utterances, five are made by the wife, another five by the chorus, and only one by the husband. For the sake of spatial economy, I only present the first stanza of the main text here (i.e. stanza 3) to illustrate the husband-wife interactions.

The main text: stanza 3

Speakers	Text	Translation
Wife	: Wanyì mulùma!	My husband!
Chorus	: Ee!	Uh!
Wife	: Wànyì mèème!	My own!
Chorus	: Ee!	Uh!
Wife	: Wanyì mulùma kàdi ... mâmpà mu òndà.	My husband should not eat ... bread in the morning.
Chorus	: Ee!	Uh!
Wife	: Yekèlekèlee!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	: Ee!	Uh!
Wife	: Ekèlèlè	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	: Ee!	Uh!
Husband	: Méme wabù ànu ... nshìma milààla.	Provided that I eat ... stale cassava bread.

The ellipsis indicates the pause, that is, the time of hesitation that the husband takes before uttering his choice. It announces the most important information that the audience would be expecting.

2.4. The musical structure of the rhyme based on the enactment of the song

Finally, the musical structure reveals three actants or participants in the folk song:

- 1) The wife: she makes statements about her husband and his dislikes (cultural edicts on food), and utters some onomatopoeias which make up the melody;
- 2) The chorus: it simply responds to these statements with an onomatopoeia;
- 3) The husband: he states his preferred dish as an alternative in response to his wife's utterances.

Drum beats and handclaps back up the actants and contribute to the melody. The song is thus a collective production.

3. Ethno-gendered discourse of wifhood

This folk song can also be studied from the perspective of gender discourse and anthropological linguistics: the construction of gender identity (wifhood) via language socialization. As with any literary work, it conveys one particular social message, which is the young girl's socialization into the social values of her community. Here the focus is on cultural food edicts applying to the husband. The young girl unconsciously internalizes (and unquestionably) values and behaviours, even those which are detrimental to her own interests.

The wife's statements illustrate how women can construct their social identity in the course of enacting a narrative (Baquedano-López, 2001: 343). They are made accomplices in constructing the discourse that normalizes men's injustices towards women. This ethno-gendered sexist discourse is all about the couple's duties and rights: in this male-dominated society, the wife seems to have duties but no rights; the husband seems to have rights but no duties. They have asymmetrical roles to play according to the domains of social life. In this song, for instance, women are in charge of the home role which importantly includes food preparation.

Sociological and economic studies have often pointed out the traditional African woman's burden with her responsibility to the family (Unicef, 2006). In these societies, the wife has more responsibilities. She is the one to have the largest piece of land to till. Even when the husband and the wife come home together from the field or from any other work, the husband will take a rest and wait for the wife to cook the meal despite her own fatigue, if she has no helper. In cases of hardship or shortage of food, the traditional African woman, as a mother and a wife, is expected to serve the available food to her children and the husband. She should thus sacrifice her own interest to the benefit of others.

From an ideological standpoint, it can be argued that people rely on ideologies of gender essentialism to understand and construct their own and others' social identities. To quote Ochs and Taylor (2001: 432), "... all social identities, including gender identities, are constructed through actions and demeanours." – for instance, what a prototypical wife should be. Otherwise, she is not accepted at all, or she is not considered as a 'fully-fledged wife'. In this traditional society, probationary marriage is proof enough of this ideology. The bride spends a given period of time, usually a month, with her husband. During this probationary period, she should prove her ability as a wife (or her wifhood) from different perspectives, including her cooking skills. She is being monitored by elder women who will also assess her fitness and give the go-ahead or withhold permission for the marriage.

From the performative perspective, the wife's identity is thus basically constructed in functional terms. As a matter of fact, quoting Butler (1991), Sauntson (2008: 273) argues, "Gender is something we 'do', not what we 'are.'" In the present case, 'a wife is not what she is, but what she does to meet her husband's alimentation needs.'

There now follows a detailed analysis of the wife's actions through which she is gendering her identity. In the first stanza, we notice that the wife remembers straight away

that she has not yet fulfilled one of her duties as a wife, viz., to cook food for her husband. In this society, the husband does not feel concerned by cooking tasks. Instead, he makes the wife shoulder this responsibility alone. Hence, in response to the wife's utterance (*the òkòjà-rat is not boiled yet*), he becomes angry. As mentioned, for a traditional Lubà husband, such an incident could incite him to punish the wife in order to assert his power.

In the second stanza, the wife is apprehensive that her elder sister might be beaten. Indirectly, she confirms the assumption made in the first stanza according to which the husband, usually through a beating, might punish a wife's failure of any kind. In reply, the husband justifies men's acts in such cases. He advances a potential breach of conduct that might bring about a beating for the woman, namely gossiping or talkativeness (*She has been beaten because she is very talkative*). In other terms, it is taken for granted that cooking is the wife's duty or responsibility, and that giving a beating is the husband's right used to redress the wife's misbehaviour, or simply to correct her errors.

Admittedly, this folk song does not reflect the social changes that are already taking place: women's emancipation, the application of family law, the popularization of human rights, etc. Nowadays, man's physical superiority over woman is sometimes challenged: there are also cases of husband beating, mainly in urban areas. Most urbanites Moreno longer observe traditional practices strictly.

The main text focuses on the construction of wifehood. It is the social initiation of girls as wives-to-be into the community's alimentation habits and practices for two reasons: to please the husbands and to avoid receiving a beating. This list of the husband's do's and the wife's caveats constitute to some extent the alimentation culture which makes 'the perfect wife'. The wife makes negative utterances to rule out the food-stuffs that, for one reason or another, her husband should not eat, notably vegetables and snacks (bread and rice). She is boasting that she can do whatever is possible in order to satisfy her husband by supplying him with the best food. She contributes to making her husband a fit sexual man. She seems already rewarded for her efforts as she further proclaims herself proudly through the statement "*I, the wife of the sweet potato which breaks the earth*".

As argued earlier, this sexual allusion expresses the wife's satisfaction with her husband's sexual performance. Moreover, in such societies where polygamy is prevalent, wives (or better, co-spouses) compete for their husband's attention and the right to co-habit with him. This is achieved, among other things, through feeding him or catering for him. The wife who offers supper is baiting and courting the husband for the night. She must manage to serve her food before her co-spouses, or at least to lay the table in advance so as to block them in this competition.

It is noteworthy that in polygamous families, co-spouses receive their husband's nocturnal visits according to a well-defined schedule. However, the husband can occasionally disrupt it, for instance, due to courtship by another spouse. As might be expected, such an act gives rise to jealousy, and occasionally to feuding, among co-spouses.

With respect to the speech event itself (discourse organization), the stanzas present unusual dialogic exchanges and asymmetrical husband's and wife's respective commitments. It is strange that each stanza opens with the wife's utterance *wanyì mulùma* ('my husband'), enhanced in the third line by the utterance *wànyì mème* ('my own'). The wife openly expresses in the first person singular her possessiveness of the common husband. She seems to address the chorus which acts and responds as a bystander. In contrast to this, each stanza ends with the husband's reply to the wife's statement. It begins with *mème wabù* ('I, theirs') which seems to be also addressed to the bystander. Both main actors are informing the audience and the chorus of their marital life.

In fact, instead of *mème wèbè* ['I, yours' (singular possessive)] which would directly refer to the wife, the husband refers to third person addressees. Stated differently, the wife addresses the husband directly in a one-to-one relationship whereas the latter considers himself as belonging to more than one person (or better, to more than one wife). He is distant and detached from the wife. The phrase *mème wabù* has as an alternative *mème wa bènè* ('I, of others') which expresses some kind of personal distance and less commitment.

Furthermore, in this asymmetrical love relationship, only the wife proclaims her concern for and praise of the husband. She reveals her satisfaction with the husband as a sexual partner, and she voices her worries about fulfilling her wife's duties related to preparing her husband's needs. Conversely, the husband does not show any concern for the wife. At no point does he allude to his wife's likes and dislikes to show that their love is balanced and that either partner cares to satisfy the other partner's needs. As discussed earlier (2.3), the husband's reply is in fact a vindication of his rights to specific dishes. Present-day gender relationships would call for the husband's reciprocity. Yet, culturally such reciprocity cannot be achieved. Women tend to talk of their partners' sexual performance whereas men are said to exchange on sex with close friends only.

The fronting of the possessive forms conveys an emphatic discourse which puts pressure on the wife to satisfy the husband's (capricious) choices. Even when he indirectly praises his wife through the utterance "We, the husbands of model wives," nothing is said about what he means by a 'model wife.' The criteria of appreciation of a wife remain culturally implicit (taking care of the husband, properly feeding the family, fertility etc.). Yet, it can be hypothesized that they are ideologically constructed in masculinistic views. In this patriarchal society, sex roles are clearly defined. Women's daily life is dominated by housework; hence women's care for the family members' welfare. In conclusion, the wife produces an ethno-gendered discourse that pinpoints the ethnic attributes of a 'good wife'. Her gendered identity should meet the society's expectations.

Like some Japanese girls who construct their 'woman-ness', among other attributes, on the basis of the (big) size of their breasts in order to attract men sexually (Kamada, 2008), in this folk song the woman constructs her 'wifeness' with regard to her ability to satisfy her husband's appetite. Failing to fulfil such a social duty or responsibility is seen as a social blunder which is detrimental to a wife's positive social image. This is another case of 'the discourse of deficit' (Sunderland, 2004 cited by Kamada, 2008) in the construction of this ethnic wifeness. Implicitly, there is thus 'the container metaphor' to

justify that there are different degrees of 'wifehood' depending on the women's socialization into and expertise in cooking and catering for the husband.

Admittedly, also in other cultures 'wifehood' seems to be associated with cooking expertise to some extent. That is, like beauty, this skill is seen as an inherently positive asset (and not a duty) for females. In her paper *I Want a Wife*, Judy Syfers fantasized the following prototype of the American wife:

I want a wife who cooks the meals, a wife who is a *good* cook. I want a wife who will plan the menus, do the necessary shopping, prepare the meals, serve them pleasantly, and then do the cleaning up while I do my studying. [...] (1980: 216).

Although this excerpt is persuasive fictional prose, it all the same represents some traditional men's expectations of and gendered identity of a wife. Judy Syfers argues that a wife is such a useful companion, who fulfils all the boring tasks in the family, that even a wife would want one.

4. The socialization function of literature

The final aspect worth investigating in this rhyme is the education and/or socialization role of literature, say, folklore. Fowler's (1981) catchy title *Literature as Social Discourse* highlights the role of literature in society. For him,

"To treat literature as discourse is to see the text as mediating relationships between language-users: not only relationships of speech, but also of consciousness, ideology, role and class. ... [Literature] is an open set of texts, of great formal diversity, recognised by a culture as processing certain institutional values and performing certain functions." (Fowler, 1981: 80-81).

The analysis of this song has shown that there is a message aimed to prepare girls for their future role as wives-to-be, viz. to become subservient to their husbands. It is focused on one aspect, i.e., the preparation of food in the family, and delineates gender roles. From the anthropological perspective, the study of gender roles allows us to assess how far folklore, through language socialization, transmits cultural values and mores to women, and how this practice builds and sustains women's stereotypical images of themselves.

Discussing the socialization function of narratives at *doctrina* (a religious class in Spanish), for instance, Baquedano-López (2001: 356) observes, "... The language socialization practices of *doctrina* linguistically and interactionally reaffirm membership in a particular Latino community, linking children to the world views of their community"

Herein, by singing and enacting this folk song, girls are unwittingly participating in constructing a biased culture in which they will evolve later on as wives. By passing down such a culture from generation to generation, oral literature in general, and the folk song in particular can be said to perpetuate woman's low status and marginalization – particularly in remote villages.

5. Discussion and conclusions

In this paper, I intended to investigate the meaning of ‘wifehood’ for *Lubà-kasaayi* women as instantiated in a folk song. In line with anthropological studies on narratives, I examined the socialization function that this folk song – together with other factors and literary genres mentioned above – has played in villages in turning a girl into a fully-fledged wife in this ethnic community. According to the performative view of identity and the post-structuralist view, gender is “composed of cultural discourses. Performances are embedded in cultural discourses, and the meaning of performances can only be understood through a decoding of the social semiotic significance of these performances” (Kiesling, 2009: 196).

In the present case, ‘wifehood’ is constructed in functional terms: a wife is thus not what she is essentially, but what she is able to do for her husband, properly feeding him for instance. Throughout the rhyme, the wife rules out the dishes that she believes inappropriate for him – cultural edicts over fatty foods, fermented and carbonated vegetables etc. While she strives to fulfil this subservient role, the husband unexpectedly vindicates this service as his rights, without reciprocity.

Above all, I aimed to highlight the role of literature in general and of folklore in particular in perpetuating cultural values. Folklore can perpetuate tradition with all its weaknesses and strengths. Unless it is used critically, it can lead to fixity of the society’s values through transmission of cultural practices from generation to generation. Its impact is counteracted by social changes, and mainly by globalisation which offers people alternative values to choose from. Through contacts with other local, national or foreign cultures such as those in cosmopolitan urban areas, people are changing their world-views. The woman’s emancipation movement, urbanization and technological progress which have improved living conditions are levelling gender roles and minimizing the division of labour along sex lines. Even cultural beliefs, demeanours and mores that are engrained in folklore are not spared. Since folklore operates better or can be efficiently enacted in its natural context, i.e., village social life, urbanism – city dweller’s way of life – may be an agent of cultural changes in many cases even though some of them may not necessarily be positive.

With respect to its context of production, folklore is recorded as a cultural protection from extinction of traditional mores, songs and other legacies. Admittedly, the revolutionary political discourse of African leaders often heralds cultural revival in order to protect African cultural legacy and to counteract mental alienation. The late Congolese President Mobutu, for instance, was known for his “Policy of authenticity” which consisted of valuing Congolese customs, replacing Christian with African names, changing the country’s political terminology (institutions, titles etc.) as a way of resisting neo-colonialism. Some past practices however, such as a woman’s subservience to a man, do not deserve to be revived or perpetuated.

The structural analysis showed that this song has a well-defined literary schema: an entry, a main text and a refrain. By way of contrast, the discourse analysis revealed the husband-wife asymmetrical relationships at least in preparing food. Ideologically, as in

other patriarchal societies in Africa, the traditional Lubà people maintained such relationships. The wife is perceived in functional terms in relation to her husband; hence girls are initiated into their future role as wives in order to make them useful to their future husbands. As Jaffe (2009: 391) argues, "Language ideologies are reflected in explicit statements about language ... and are also embedded as presuppositions of discourses".

This ties in with Critical Discourse Analysis which questions among other things, the power relationships in the taken-for-granted situations. It has an emancipatory mission to rectify the situation by redressing or by improving the fate of the oppressed group. Conversely, in folklore, power relationships are stabilised by tradition and tend to be passed down from one generation to the next. Critical Discourse Analysis would thus induce us 'to read against' this folk song in order to challenge its normality. It can be assumed that the Lubà society is not the only one to have maintained such unbalanced husband-wife relationships in the D.R. Congo or in Africa, given the similarities among cultures.

In terms of gender roles, this folk song was a rehearsal of a Lubà ideological discourse still current in remote villages. Girls mimic a much wider discourse of male superiority and female subservience. They also illustrate how women are made accomplices in the construction of a discourse approving of men's domination over women. However, since folklore is a public creation, the authors of this folk song are anonymous and their genders cannot be determined with certainty. In the same way, through public productions, gender understanding and equal respect can be rebuilt and paid to both man and woman as partners in a new environment.

Finally, the anthropological perspective highlights the socialization function of some literary genres. This folk song is not simply a game, but an opportunity for the community to convey to the youth the stereotypical image of the wife – and some food edicts. In other words, literary genres can be used as a means "to create social identities" (Baquedano-López 2001).

In conclusion, the educational and socialization function of literature comes to light in this folk song. In their paper *The Stases of Scientific and Literary Argument*, Fahnestock and Secor (1988: 438) assert, "The arguments of literary criticism are fundamentally epideictic, celebrating the shared values of a community (...)" Therefore, literature serves as a means of propagating the community's worldviews. Admittedly, there are some aspects of the past that should be abandoned or resisted. Without such a strategy, the policy of cultural revival, which invites people to practise their tradition and culture, can become detrimental to women's emancipation.

In this paper, I have hopefully raised awareness of the degree to which folklore at large – and this folk song in particular – may contribute and has contributed to the ideological dynamic framework of the husband-wife asymmetrical relationships. By so doing, I also demonstrated how cultural productions might be able to contribute to social changes in a global world.

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Appendix

The full text of the folk rhyme with its translation

Stanza 1 : the entry

Speakers	Text	Translation
Wife	: Yekèlekèlee!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	: Ee!	Uh!
Wife	: Ekèlèlè!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	: Ee!	Uh!
Wife	: Yekèlekèlee!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	: Ee!	Uh!
Wife	: Ekèlèlè!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	: Ee!	Uh!
Wife	: Meme mukaji' àà cìlùngà mpanda malaba.	I, the wife of the sweet potato which breaks the earth.
Chorus	: Ee!	Uh!
Wife	: Yekèlekèlee!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	: Ee!	Uh!
Wife	: Ekèlèlè!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	: Ee!	Uh!
Husband	: Twêtu babàya' àà bakàjì bàà citembu.	We, the husbands of the model wives.
Chorus	: Ee!	Uh!
Wife	: Yekèlekèlee!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	: Ee!	Uh!
Wife	: Bîndi musòmba cìkòjà ke nцитumba.	I'm sitting here while the cìkòjà-rat is not yet boiled.
Chorus	: Ee!	Uh!
Wife	: Kèncitùmpà.	It is not yet boiled.
Chorus	: Ee!	Uh!
Wife	: Kèncitùmpà.	It is not yet boiled.
Husband	: Kencitumpa ngabùfikidi munda.	It is not yet boiled, therefore I am angry.

Stanza 2

Speakers	Text	Translation
Wife	: Yekèlekèlee!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	: Ee!	Uh!
Wife	: Ekèlèlè!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	: Ee!	Uh!
Wife	: Bìndì musòmba yàà nemùtuuta.	I'm sitting here while my elder sister is perhaps beaten.
Chorus	: Ee!	Uh!
Wife	: Nemùtuuta.	She is perhaps beaten.
Chorus	: Ee!	Uh!
Wife	: Nemùtuuta.	She is perhaps beaten.
Chorus	: Ee!	Uh!
Husband	: Mbamutùta mupicìsha kabwabwa.	She has been beaten because she is very talkative.

Stanza 3: the main Text

Speakers	Text	Translation
Wife	: Wanyì mulùma!	My husband!
Chorus	: Ee!	Uh!
Wife	: Wànyì mèème!	My own!
Chorus	: Ee!	Uh!
Wife	: Wanyì mulùma kàdi ... màmpana mu dindà.	My husband should not eat ... bread in the morning.
Chorus	: Ee!	Uh!
Wife	: Yekèlekèlee!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	: Ee!	Uh!
Wife	: Ekèlèlè	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	: Ee!	Uh!
Husband	: Mème wabù ànu ... nshìma milààla.	Provided that I eat ... stale cassava bread.

Stanza 4

Speakers	Text	Translation
Wife	: Wanyì mulùma!	My husband!
Chorus	: Ee!	Uh!
Wife	: Wànyi mèème!	My own!
Chorus	: Ee!	Uh!
Wife	: Wanyì mulùma kàdi ... òlòmbolombò.	My husband should not eat ... òlòmbolombò leaves (<i>piper umbellatum</i>).
Chorus	: Ee!	Uh!
Wife	: Yekèlekèlee!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	: Ee!	Uh!
Wife	: Ekèlèlè!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	: Ee!	Uh!
Husband	: Mème wabù ànu ... tükùndè mu ntete.	Provided that I eat ... eels in crushed grains sauce (<i>citrullus lanatus</i>).

Stanza 5

Speakers	Text	Translation
Wife	Wanyì mulùma!	My husband!
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Wànyi mèème!	My own!
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Wanyì mulùma kàdi ... kàtondo boowa.	My husband should not eat ... mushroom.
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Yekèlekèlee!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Ekèlèlè!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Husband	Mème wabù ànu ... òdibulwenyi.	Provided that I eat ... òdibulwenyi leaves (<i>ocimum gratissimum</i>).

Stanza 6

Speakers	Text	Translation
Wife	Wanyì mulùma!	My husband!
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Wànyi mèème!	My own!
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Wanyì mulùma kàdí ... mpanga malònzù.	My husband should not eat ... big-eyed mpanga-rat.
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Yekèlekèlee!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Ekèlèlè!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Husband	Même wabù ànu ... cìkòjà mpempa.	Provided that I eat ... cìkòjà-rat.

Stanza 7

Speakers	Text	Translation
Wife	Wanyì mulùma!	My husband!
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Wànyi mèème!	My own!
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Wany muluma kadi ... mudibu ntumpu.	My husband should not eat ... mudibu-leaves (<i>cucurbita moschata</i>).
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Yekelekele!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Ekèlèlè!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Husband	Meme wabu anu ... mpuku mitumpa.	Provided that I eat ... boiled rats.

Stanza 8

Speakers	Text	Translation
Wife	Wanyì mulùma!	My husband!
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Wànyi mèème!	My own!
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Wanyì mulùma kàdì ... mùteetà bululu.	My husband should not eat ... bitter mùteetà-leaves (<i>solanum aethiopicum</i>).
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Yekèlekèlee!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Ekèlèlè!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Husband	Même wabù ànu ... mēshi àà mangaya.	Provided that I eat ... mangaya-caterpillars.

Stanza 9

Speakers	Text	Translation
Wife	Wanyì mulùma!	My husband!
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Wànyi même!	My own!
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Wanyì mulùma kàdì ... nsàmpùnsàmpù .	My husband should not eat ... red peas' leaves (<i>vigna unguiculata</i>).
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Yekèlekèlee!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Ekèlèlè!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Husband	Même wabù ànu ... mankènènà awu.	Provided that I eat ... red ants.

Stanza 10

Speakers	Text	Translation
Wife	Wanyì mulùma!	My husband!
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Wányi mèème!	My own!
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Wanyì mulùma kàdi ... mvwadimvwadi.	My husband should not eat ... fermented cassava leaves (<i>manihot esculenta</i>).
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Yekelekele!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Ekèlèlè!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Husband	Meme wabu anu ... matamba kaleji.	Provided that I eat ... cassava leaves (<i>manihot esculenta</i>).

Stanza 11

Speakers	Text	Translation
Wife	Wanyì mulùma!	My husband!
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Wanyi meme!	My own!
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Wanyi muluma kadi ... mupala buala.	My husband should not eat ... mupala- leaves (<i>cleome gynandra</i>).
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Yekelekele!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Ekèlèlè!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Husband	Meme wabu anu ... kamanyimanyi.	Provided that I eat ... kamanyimanyi- grasshoppers.

Stanza 12

Speakers	Text	Translation
Wife	Wanyì mulùma!	My husband!
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Wànyi mèème!	My own!
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Wanyì mulùma kàdi ... mbevu mikànga.	My husband should not eat ... fried grasshoppers.
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Yekèlekèlee!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Ekèlèlè!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Husband	Même wabù ànu ... kampeketampeketeta.	Provided that I eat ... kampeketampeketeta -caterpillars.

Stanza 13

Speakers	Text	Translation
Wife	Wanyì mulùma!	My husband!
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Wànyi mèème!	My own!
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Wanyì mulùma kàdi ... mùlembwalembwa.	My husband should not eat ... hibiscus (okra, corchorus olitorius).
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Yekèlekèlee!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Ekèlèlè!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Husband	Même wabù ànu ... konyi mutengela.	Provided that I eat ... konyi mutengela-flowers (ceiba pentandra).

Stanza 14

Speakers	Text	Translation
Wife	Wanyì muluma!	My husband!
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Wanyi meme!	My own!
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Wanyì mulùma kàdì ... mushìlumushìlu.	My husband should not eat ... ferns (<i>pteridium aquilinum</i>).
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Yekèlekèlee!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Ekèlèlè!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Husband	Même wabù ànu ... cipopolo mbaya.	Provided that I eat ... cipopolo-coleopters.

Stanza 15

Speakers	Text	Translation
Wife	Wanyì mulùma!	My husband!
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Wanyi mème!	My own!
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Wanyì mulùma kàdì ... busa buanji.	My husband should not eat ... bitter hibiscus leaves (<i>hibiscus cannabinus</i>).
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Yekèlekèlee!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Ekèlèlè!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Husband	Même wabù ànu ... cingu ntongoji.	Provided that I eat ... cicada.

Stanza 16

Speakers	Text	Translation
Wife	Wanyì mulùma!	My husband!
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Wànyi mème!	My own!
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Wanyì mulùma kàdi ... ntèmbwàntèmbwàa.	My husband should not eat ... ntèmbwàntèmbwàa-leaves (<i>mussaenda arcuata</i>).
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Yekèlekèlee!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Ekèlèlè!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Husband	Mème wabù ànu ... kanyìnyì kumisha.	Provided that I eat ... smoke-dried meat.

Stanza 17

Speakers	Text	Translation
Wife	Wanyì mulùma!	My husband!
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Wànyi mème!	My own!
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Wànyì mulùma kàdi ... cìlùngàlùnga.	My husband should not eat ... sweet- potato leaves (<i>ipomoea batatas</i>).
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Yekèlekèlee!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Ekèlèlè!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Husband	Mème wabu ànu ... dngònga dyosha.	Provided that I eat ... smoked rhinoceros coleopters.

Stanza 18

Speakers	Text	Translation
Wife	Wanyì mulùma!	My husband!
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Wànyi mèème!	My own!
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Wanyì mulùma biandi kanangi nzaula.	My husband does not like nzaula leaves (<i>chara</i>).
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Yekèlekèlee!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Ekèlèlè!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Husband	Même wabù ànu ... nyembà lubwici.	Provided that I eat ... nyembà lubuici-leaves (<i>lippia multiflora</i>).

Stanza 19

Speakers	Text	Translation
Wife	Wanyì mulùma!	My husband!
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Wànyi mèème!	My own!
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Wanyì mulùma kàdi ... mùlengalenga.	My husband should not eat ... amaranths (<i>amaranthus hybridus</i>).
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Yekèlekèlee!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Ekèlèlè!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Husband	Même wabù ànu ... mintuntu myosha.	Provided that I eat ... smoked crickets.

Stanza 20

Speakers	Text	Translation
Wife	Wanyi mulùma!	My husband!
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Wànyi mèème!	My own!
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Wanyi mulùma kàdi ... tunkùmbùnkùmbù.	My husband should not eat ... tunkùmbùnkùmbù-fruits (<i>solanum aethiopicum</i>).
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Yekèlekèlee!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Ekèlèlè!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Husband	Même wabù ànu ... nkàlà matembwa.	Provided that I eat ... crabs.

Stanza 21

Speakers	Text	Translation
Wife	Wanyi mulùma!	My husband!
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Wànyi mèème!	My own!
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Wanyi mulùma kàdi ... cìmpwendèmpwendè.	My husband should not eat ... bicarbonated cassava leaves.
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Yekèlekèlee!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Ekèlèlè!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Husband	Même wabù ànu ... ludimba luanyika.	Provided that I eat ... dried frog.

Stanza 22

Speakers	Text	Translation
Wife	Wanyì mulùma!	My husband!
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Wányi mèème!	My own!
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Wanyì mulùma kàdi ... dibengu nguluba.	My husband should not eat ... a piece of pork fat.
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Yekèlekèlee!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Ekèlèlè!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Husband	Même wabù ànu ... kabèwù koosha.	Provided that I eat ... barbecued goat skin.

Stanza 23

Speakers	Text	Translation
Wife	Wanyì mulùma!	My husband!
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Wányi mèème!	My own!
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Wanyì mulùma kàdi ... nsokù muntu.	My husband should not eat ... monkey.
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Yekèlekèlee!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Ekèlèlè!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Husband	Même wabù ànu ... mpùku wa mutumba.	Provided that I eat ... palmist-rat.

Stanza 24

Speakers	Text	Translation
Wife	Wanyì mulùma!	My husband!
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Wànyi mèème!	My own!
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Wanyì mulùma kàdi ... cinkamba cya nguvu.	My husband should not eat ... a thick, hard piece of hippopotamus skin.
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Yekèlekèlee!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Ekèlèlè!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Husband	Même wabù ànu ... butùkù bwà nsenjì.	Provided that I eat ... the nsenjì-rodent's (<i>eulacodes swinderianus</i>) intestine content.

Stanza 25

Speakers	Text	Translation
Wife	Wanyì mulùma!	My husband!
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Wànyi mèème!	My own!
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Wanyì mulùma kàdi ... cibelèbelà.	My husband should not eat ... dog meat.
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Yekèlekèlee!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Ekèlèlè!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Husband	Même wabù ànu ... cilùngà cikotà.	I eat it ... only if it is seasoned with cikotà-herbs (<i>cymbopogon densiflorus</i>).

Stanza 26

Speakers	Text	Translation
Wife	Wanyì mulùma!	My husband!
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Wànyi mèème!	My own!
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Wanyì mulùma kàdi ... mupunga nànssha.	My husband should not eat ... rice.
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Yekèlekèlee!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Wife	Ekèlèlè!	(Onomatopoeia)
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Husband	Même wabù ànu ... cintu wa bujitu!	Provided that I eat ... the heavy thing (cassava bread)!
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Husband	Même wabù ànu ... cintu wa bujitu!	Provided that I eat ... the heavy thing (cassava bread)!
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Husband	Même wabù ànu ... cintu wa bujitu!	Provided that I eat ... the heavy thing (cassava bread)!
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Husband	Même wabù ànu ... cintu wa bujitu!	Provided that I eat ... the heavy thing (cassava bread)!
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Husband	Même wabù ànu ... cintu wa bujitu!	Provided that I eat ... the heavy thing (cassava bread)!
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!

Stanza 27: refrain (30 times)

Speakers	Text	Translation
Husband	Cintu wa bujitu, nshìma, cintu wa bujitu!	The heavy thing, cassava bread, the heavy thing!
Chorus	Ee!	Uh!
Husband	Cintu wa bujitu, nshìma (bidyà/byajì)/kafumba, bukuma/bidyàjì), cintu wa bujitu!	The heavy thing, cassava bread, the heavy thing ... !

Notice: ellipses represent hesitation before the choice of the item.