



Newsletter: July 2014

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Research in Washington D.C. with Kiluku Henerico of our MaKuYa Festival Team

In June I had the gratifying opportunity to visit Washington, D.C. with my Tanzanian MaKuYa Festival colleague Kiluku Henerico. The purpose of the trip was to explore D.C.'s many museums and attend the Smithsonian International Folk Festival that featured China and Kenya. Kiluku was included so that he could build up his own bank of ideas and experiences which he can draw upon for his cultural studies, which ADEA supports at the University of Dar es Salaam, and for his museum work with ADEA/MaKuYa Festival. It has always been my concern that few Tanzanians have exposure to experiences and creative examples that can inform their development. This is an attempt to address this challenge. It was an extraordinary visit as we discovered the broad range of ways that museums, historical sites, and festivals engage and educate their visitors. Below are just a few examples:



Actors (Martha Washington) – Procedure displays – Maps & models



Demonstration of use (instruments) - Biological detail posters – Touch screens



Section views with details (anthill) – Volume models (elephant consumption & poop) – and lots of questions in the exhibits

Festival in Nanyamba Village, Mtwara Rural 2014



On Saturday, May 24, 2014, I, along with the general public, was invited to enjoy the first Cultural Performing Arts Festival of Nanyamba. The one-day event went from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. It was set near the center of town, in the shade of a giant Indian Almond tree. The schedule included 17 performances: a combination of seven dancing groups from villages around Nanyamba and demonstrations of traditional games. The mini-MaKuYa festival was complete with a guest of honor (the district ward officer), a table showcasing traditional life items, and an opening ceremony where all

the groups danced, drummed and played simultaneously. With the number of spectators easily reaching 2000, it was a very successful and well-staged and well-managed event.



The credit for this festival goes to MaKuYa team member Dominic Chonde, who, in his free time from working for the region's water development projects, encouraged the enthusiastic dance performing group leader and elders of Nanyamba to host a small festival in their town. With compensation of only a meal (to which MaKuYa contributed just under half of the 140,000 Tsh shillings food budget) a diversity of old and young performers gathered to entertain. Four



of the groups (Ngokwa, Madudu ya Mtwimbwilimbwi, Makuvala, and Nanyamba) had previously performed for the MaKuYa festival (though several of the performers had changed.) One group was an interesting combination of elders and youth dancing simultaneously to the same drumming, the elders in a traditional Makonde style, and the youth merging traditional and hip-hop choreography. Three women's groups performed varieties of jumping rope involving challenging footwork and varied rope



swinging rhythms. For games they played Dindingi, which involves two teams competing to knock

down their opponents' standing dried corncobs ("watoto," meaning children in Swahili), with small spinning disks made of gourds or coconut shell. Another game, Chidodomola, resembled the game of Jacks played in the USA, where the object of the game is to slide an increasing number of large seeds into a shallow "bowl" dug in the ground, while tossing a ball (or in this case a green orange) in the air. Pia is a dance/game involving a spinning top, with fabric tied to the end of a stick used to keep the top spinning, while the player follows the rhythm of the drums. Mbwas Kulikolo is a competition between two opponents competing to successfully flick a thin metal or wooden stick into a hole cut into a piece of banana plant. The final game, Sidani, is a game seen at festivals in Europe and American, where a wooden "spool," carved like a three-dimensional bow tie, is spun, juggled and slid across a string tied between two sticks.

Drawings from the 1908 expedition book we located last year in Germany show samples of most of these games proving that these games have been a part of the Makonde history for a long time. Of

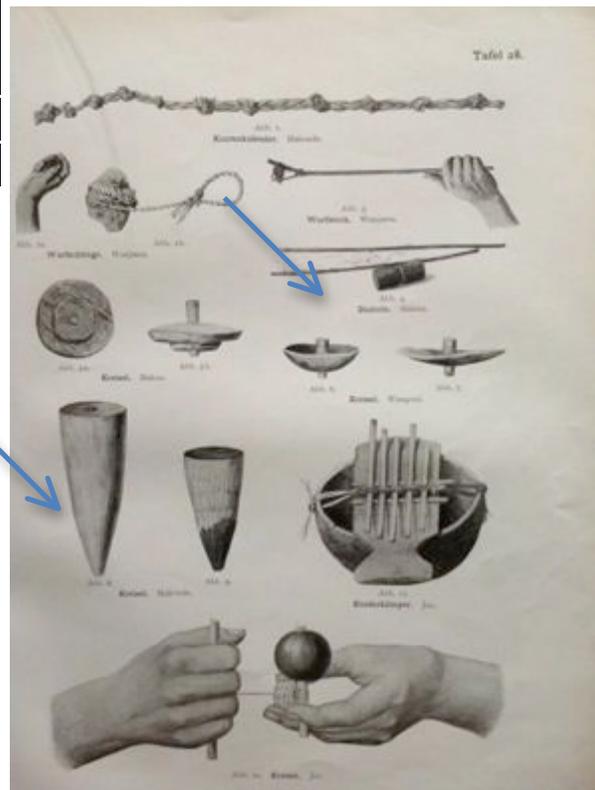
particular interest is the small pair of drums with a long string stretched between them as I did as a child with paper cups (shown being used in picture on right). They now call this the “simu” (telephone), but it is a local game have played since before 1908 (as the pictures of book pages shows).

This festival is a small sample of our much larger MaKuYa festival. My hope is to support Dominic in his vision to encourage such village-based festivals across the region. The advantages are that more groups get to perform, larger numbers people get to experience the magic of a festival at a much reduced cost, it allows the MaKuYa team to find new groups view the quality before our event, and it is locally driven. There is already talk in Nanyamba of making their festival an annual event.

We owe a special thanks to Dominic Chonde for his passion for culture, and for the Finnish, Swiss and other embassies and organizations that supported our MaKuYa Festival in its infancy and do so currently. MaKuYa is beginning to bear children in the region.



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and



(above) Pages from the 1908 book documenting the expedition of Dr. Karl Weule.



Dindingi – one team facing off another.
Mtwara Rural Cultural officer Abdala Nahama with other local officials and elders. (below)



Traditional life item



Children climbing the trees for better views





Village interviews:

In early May I conducted qualitative interviews with my Michigan State University colleague, Dr. Daniel Roberts, and my former ADEA colleague Philipo Lulale. It was a fascinating exercise of interviewing three different groups of 17-24 year olds (most of whom worked in farming):

1. Youth who had studied through form 4 (10th grade more or less).
2. Youth who had have some primary school education.
3. Youth with no formal education at all.

In our study we asked a series of questions about their knowledge related to farming and their environment, and how they acquired the knowledge (our primary interest). We conducted interviews in four villages within an hour proximity of each other. This was my first experience doing such research. It was fascinating to see that, as ADEA had discovered the surprising variance of traditional practices experienced in neighboring villages, so I discovered farming practices exhibit a variety. As would be expected, villages closer to main roads were exposed to more ideas and even more likely to attend school. I look forward to analyzing the interview this upcoming fall, and will let you know what I find.

One enormous takeaway for me was an answer to my question, “Is bad formal education better than no formal education?” The answer is “Yes.” We found that the youth with no formal education had a very difficult time responding to questions and processing new ideas requiring reflection. In a developing democracy, such skills are essential to its citizens.



Here Philipo and I sit in the village of Naputa with youth with no formal schooling. As a “thank you” we gave the participants sodas and rice. Here we are watching video footage from the MaKuYa festival. Interviews were done in towns where ADEA had already established relations through festival performing groups. These connections, along with Philipo’s excellent organizational and diplomacy skills, made conducting interviews and finding participants very easy.

And here ends my latest newsletter. Many thanks for your support and friendship.

Sincerely, *Douglas, Kupikita, Oloikurrukurr*

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