

The Palm Beach Story, according to Minkayi, one of the killers.  
Taped, transcribed, translated--May, 1961

One morning when we were just about to go--Naenkiwi and I--the plane came over. We were sitting at a place where a house used to be, talking, when Dabu came upriver. He sat down in a house and was talking when I went by, on my way downriver. I went down a little distance in a canoe, and was about to return again when I heard the knocking of Dabu's canoe pole, and he came downriver. "Are you going home again, Dabu?" I said. "Yes. Naenkiwi says those foreigners are a bunch of cannibals." Gikita was sitting talking in his house. He said he was going to get some spears. Nampa was just going by a (certain species of tree) when he met Naenkiwi, who told him how the foreigners had behaved. And then Mintaka came along later and they met her. Naenkiwi ("George") sat down in what was left of a house that had been burnt down. "Well, what's the score?" we asked. "Those foreigners are cannibals. They're going to eat us," Naenkiwi said.

My spears were not far away, in another house. Gikita and Dyuwil were putting red dye on their spears, getting them ready. I had not dyed mine. When afternoon came, they had all dyed their spears, but I just sat there. Finally I told Gami (Minkayi's mother) to go down and bring up my spears so I could dye them. She went. "Just bring a few of them," I said. "Naenkiwi, how many spears have you?" "Two hard ones, and two lightweight ones," he said. "That's enough," I said, and then dusk fell. When it was dawn Gikita and Nimunga had already left. I told my wife to cook some plantains for me to drink, and then I would go. Nampa drank some plain cooked manioc, and off we went. We met Gikita at the foot of a (certain sp. of) tree. We went up the hill, down hills, through an old chagra where we had once seen a jaguar. Just then the plane came "bbbbbb." "Where is it going?" we said, as we went downriver. The plane circled and circled, watching. It was flying at treetop level. Then it flew away. We kept going, wondering which way Minta's footprints went. We went up a hill where there was no trail. Gikita went up and looked around, then we went down to a pool and up again to the top of a hill, where I sat down. While we stood there we could hear voices of the foreigners, so we went in that direction. A little further on Nampa clambered up a tree and looked down. While he was looking the plane took off, heading upriver. "That's where it lands," we said. "That's where its house is. We'll go there," and again the plane landed on the sand. One man had a machete, and as he walked he shouted and called. He walked down the beach, calling, and then walked back up again, calling and calling. Akawu called too. The man said "Come in a friendly way, come without harm, come!" The (Auca) women waded into the river, and the foreigners watched to see how they would come. Minta called to them that she had left her son behind. Twice more the foreigners called, wondering how we would come. While they were looking the other way Gikita suddenly rushed out. They backed up, and were soon up against a wall of trees and bushes, yelling "yaa-yaa-yaa," and he speared one of them.

"Bang, bang, bang," went their guns, but Gikita came towards them without fear and speared again. We were watching, and we said "One has died now!" We hadn't gone out at first, as we had said "Why should we go out there?" The one who had a gun Gikita speared, and while he was ~~lying~~ there jerking around Akawu grabbed him and made him fall. I came out quickly then, and went to the shack they had made of palm boards on the beach. While I was coming I saw a foreigner coming toward the beach. I grabbed up a lance and "buh!" I stuck him. Then I broke the lance that was in him and stuck the other end in him. He

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collapsed, and we kept spearing him again and again, and he cried. While we were jabbing him over and over he said 'Uugh,' and died. Then I was spearing one who had a lance stuck in him. He fell down to a sitting posture when I let go of him. While I was spearing him Gikita and Dywi were spearing someone else. He was lying there crying 'yaa-yaa', and I said 'let me spear him too,' and I rushed over and stuck him through the upper arm into the chest. 'yaaaa' he cried. I now had only one lance left when I saw that Nimunga and a foreigners were wrestling ~~at the edge of the river~~. I don't know which it was, but there they lay, the foreigner jerking Nimunga around and around and trying to get him off his feet. 'They're fighting!' I thought, and ran fast over to them. Gikita yelled 'He's going to kill Nimunga!' so I went over there fast. Gikita rammed a spear into the man with both hands. 'Yaaaa' he cried, and looked around to see who had speared him, and then I speared him 'buh!' "Nimunga! Let him go and spear him!" So Nimunga let go and speared him, and he fell, splash, into the river. His head was in the water.

Then someone shouted "They've shot Nampa!" But I told Nimunga that they had probably used up all their bullets, so we kept on spearing, pulling the spears out and ramming them in again. The man sank into the river, and Nimunga pulled him out of the water onto the sand, so that his head was on the sand and his feet in the water. He was one who was carrying a camera. Those who had fought and wrestled Gikita speared again and again, breaking up his lances so he would have more. He chased him, spearing and spearing, yanking the lances out, sticking them in again. "Let me go down and spear him," I said, and with Nimunga we tore after the foreigner, spearing and spearing. Finally he bled to death.

Then he (or another?) fell into the river, into the Guraray, and Nimunga grabbed him and pulled him up onto the beach again and speared him over and over. Gikita grabbed his foot and pulled a shoe off, and Nimunga pulled off the other one, and then he sank into the river, with just socks on, his head submerged. He was shaking his head from side to side, but he went under and was carried downriver, he sank for the last time, and a spear floated up out of his body to the top of the water.

I was on the other side of the river now. Nimunga was throwing rocks at one of the foreigners, and when he tried to jump out of the way of the rocks he got hit on the head and cried 'yaaa!' Then I speared him in the abdomen, and he jumped toward the river and lay there, hanging over a log, crying. I pulled him out again--I was going to pull him out, but the river was deep and so I let go. I picked up the broken end of a spear and when I saw one who had a spear still in his arm, I speared him. In the arm I stuck one spear, then another, and there he lay, alive against a log in the water, with just his head sticking out. Kimu was sitting up on the bank looking down. "Kimu! Come on and spear!" I called, so he speared and speared, while the foreigner yelled and he pulled out the spears and stuck them in again. Dywi had speared and fled, then Gikita came back out again, and when he was about to chop somebody up with a machete, he cut his hand. The man's clothes were too tough, and though Gikita thought he could cut through them, he whacked, saying 'This'll cut him!' but the cloth was too tough, the machete didn't pierce it, and he cut the palm of his own hand, just as if had been bitten by a monkey. He went off, dripping blood. I took the spear I had killed with and went over to look at the plane. As I came up, there lay a gun. "Well! I'll take this to shoot pigs with!" But later Akawu or someone threw all the stuff into the river, including

she wanted. Then we asked Minta, "What about Nampa?" "I looked for him on the hill, and when I found him I put him down (on the ground)," so we went up and there he lay. "They're all dead," we said. The blood was dripping from his bullet wound in his head. We pulled him by the arm, and climbed the hill. Then dusk fell and the crickets began to chirp. "Poor Nampa, he's almost dead," we said, and then someone said to make a leaf cup and let him drink some mud. Akawu said she would go get water to bathe his head. Gikita dripped mud on the wounds. Next morning we wondered who would carry Nampa home. "Kimu, what about you?" "O.K." Gikita set off early to tell the rest about the spearing, and we followed, carrying Nampa. It began to rain, and then another plane came over, headed toward Dabu's house. "It's probably dropping gifts for Dabu," we said. Dabu was sitting in his house, sharpening spears, watching outside when the plane reached there. Just then we got there too. The day before Dabu had wondered why the plane did not come to his house, and he went to Mankamu's house. "They've already gone to spear the foreigners," she said. "Tomorrow I'll come up and see," Dabu said.

We came staggering up with Nampa to the top of the hill, and threw him down. He was very heavy, so I said I was going on ahead, I had taken my turn. Nimunga and Kimu sat down, Dywui sat down, I went on. . . . (Long detailed account of taking him parway in a canoe, building shelter for him, Akawu looking for others, finding no one, and the houses burnt, Nampa getting maggots in his wounds, finally getting him home.)

Then the wounds got smaller, and he felt better. "My back aches," he said. The witchdoctor had cursed him. We didn't cross the Tsapino River in those days, fearing the downriver people. We were making a canoe, and Nampa came down there, to the place where I had shot a toucan the year before. We heard him whistle a little distance away (Nampa, that is) and we said "Nampa, why do you whistle?" "I'm leaving now," he said. "O.K." Then he tripped over a thorn bush, and said "Even though those guys have machetes, they don't clear the trails as they go! I had to clear the trail as I came." Then the plane came again, bbbbb! It threw out a mirror, and something for Nampa, then something for Kimu. Then it disappeared. Later Nampa was whittling fishspears, and he said "The bullet is rattling in my head."

"Wuta, wuta," it says in my head." Then he began to cry, "Ugh, ugh, my head aches so much, yaa yaa, I am only slightly conscious." ~~Nampa~~ Nampa said to his mother, Akawu, "Cut my canoe in half (to bury me in)." She was sitting in the canoe bailing it out. It was an old rotten one, the one in which he was to be buried. He drank some plain cooked manioc, and then vomited. "I've drunk myself full now," he said, "Let me sleep, and then I will talk to you." Then, "Ugh, uuugh," he died.

"Who will go and tell Gikita? Go tell him quickly." Just as the sun was going down they came and dug a grave. They chopped the canoe off short, put it in the grave, and laid Nampa on top of it. They placed the pieces of canoe over the body, and packed the dirt on top. Then they burned all Nampa's things. "Whose loin-string is this? Nampa's?" It was Nampa's, and they burned it to a crisp. It was the string Akawu had made for him. "Is it all burnt now?" "Yes, it's all burnt."

There were people around Akawu, and she was crying. I came out quickly then, and went to the shack they had made of palm boards on the beach. While I was going I saw a foreigner walking toward the beach. I grabbed up a lance and "ugh!" I stuck him. Then I broke the lance that was in his hand and stuck the other end in his. He