

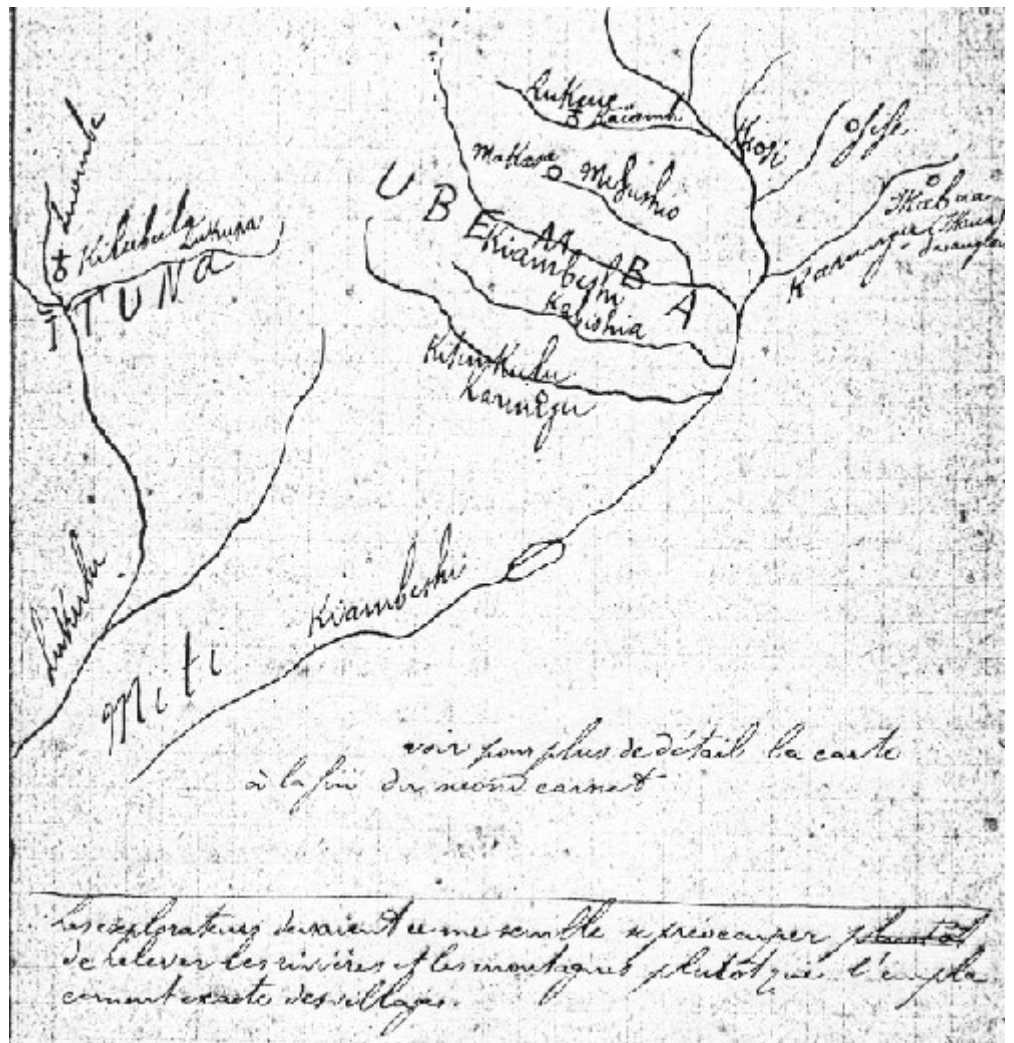
Fr FOULON TELLS HIS STORY

(Note by the translator: Fr Emile Foulon was born in 1871. He entered the Society of the Missionaries of Africa when it was just starting. After he was ordained, he was appointed to the Nyasa Mission in East Africa. He was a member of the team sent by Bishop Dupont to start a new foundation south of the Ituna. The other members of the team were Fr Molinier, the Superior, and Bro. Jacques (Gerard Mulders). They left Chilubula on September 14th 1899 in a southern direction, but it was only on February 11th 1900 that they found an ideal settlement on the Pandishanya River, known since then as Chilonga Mission, 40 km from Mpika. Fr Foulon was in the habit of noting down his Observations on all sorts of subjects and, every now and then, of illustrating them with drawings. He was definitely a man with talents and a keen sense of observation, but whatever he says in his writings must be taken with a pinch of salt, for he shared all the views and prejudices of his time on Africa and the Africans. One thing is clear, however: Fr Foulon did not share the opinion common at that time that Europe was an unsurpassed paragon of civilisation.)

The country: According to the data found on some geographical maps, the name *Ubemba* is given to all the land stretching out between the Bangweolo Lake, the Mweru Lake, the Tanganyika Lake, and the Chambeshi River. The local populations, however, make a clear distinction between those districts and what they call the Ubemba proper, which is inhabited by the BaBemba. According to their view, the genuine Ubemba is situated - in geographical jargon - at latitude 09.20 degrees south and longitude 29.50 degrees east according to the Paris meridian. In fact the Ubemba stretches inside a huge loop made by the Chambeshi River. It is not easy to fit the Ubemba within strict borders, for the Natives themselves have no clear idea about what borders are, anyway, and they have only a very hazy notion of the origins of their country. In fact the Ubemba proper does not seem to be larger than what is called an average 'arrondissement' in France. The Ubemba proper is in fact so small that the BaBemba came to feel wedged in on all sides by neighbouring tribes and thought it a matter of survival for them to conquer them and occupy their lands.

Several European explorers travelled around the districts presently occupied by the BaBemba in the past hundred years. But they were only passing through, they never really stayed for any appreciable length of time. Moreover they did not know the language, and this explains why they did not leave behind many data on the history of the country. Lacerda in 1798 and the two Pombeiro brothers in 1805 walked through the Bubisa. Those two Pombeiro brothers were inmates in the forced labour camp of St Paul of Loanda in what is now Angola, and they were given back their freedom on one condition, that they would travel right through the African continent to join the Portuguese colony of Mozambique. In 1831, another Portuguese, Gemitto, went through the Bubisa, southwest of the Ubemba, but without stopping. In 1867 Livingstone, coming from the southeast, i.e. from the Nyasa Lake and the Shire Highlands, also plodded his way through the Bubisa on his way to Mobemba, at a latitude of 10.14 degrees south (Paris meridian), which was Bembaland. Chief Kitapangwa, who is mentioned in Livingstone's writings, was a Bemba potentate who came later to be known as Kitimkulu. It was this very Kitimkulu that the explorer Giraud came into contact with in 1883. At that time this Kitimkulu, whom Giraud calls 'Malukulu' in his writings, lived northeast of Mobemba, in other words at latitude of 10 degrees south and at a longitude of 29.25 degrees east (Paris meridian). In 1870 Livingstone made his way back into the Ubemba to pay a visit to Chief Kitapangwa, who was a very powerful Bemba potentate at that time, and was well received. There are still people alive who remember the event, and who had in fact attended the meeting between Kitapangwa and Livingstone. In 1883 the explorer Giraud went right through the Ubemba on his way from the Bangweolo Lake. He paid a visit to Mwamba and from there he went to the fiefdom of Malukulu. From there he went in a southeast direction up to Ukene, and then turned northeast, probably because Chief Malukulu denied him passage further north.

N.B. Such names as Kitimkulu, Mwamba, and Kikwanda are generic names that are taken up by certain powerful chiefs when they come into power as a sign that their authority is recognised by their subjects. Thus it is that the Chief Livingstone knew as Kitapangwa became Kitimkulu some years later. Those are, in fact, names given by the people themselves to some powerful Chiefs. Mwamba, Kitimkulu, Kikwanda refer to a function, a position of power more than to an individual. In fact the Chief who takes over the chieftainship of Kitimkulu or Mwamba loses his own identity. he is Kitimkulu or Mwamba, what his former name was becomes irrelevant. This is a source of continuous source of difficulty when it comes to finding one's way in the history of the BaBemba. The ignorance of this custom led to some confusion in the writings of explorers, who quite naturally mixed up chiefs, or mentioned two chiefs when they were in fact dealing with the same man with different names. Malukulu Giraud wrote about was also called Kitimkulu, but he was one and the same man. The name of 'Mwamba' means 'rock'. The name of 'Kitimkulu' comes from Kiswahili 'kiti' and 'mukulu', which mean 'great seat'. In the same way, the BaBemba are in the habit of shifting their villages from one place to another while retaining the same names. Hence the confusion in maps of the same district made by two different people at two different periods: the same village is marked on the map in two different places because it had in the meantime been moved. See Figure. This map was drawn by Fr Foulon, who points out that the early explorers were more intent upon mentioning rivers and mountains on their maps than the sites of villages



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Some History:

Preliminary Remark: The data on the history and the origins of their country one may glean from the Natives in the course of conversations around the fire are vague and very incomplete, as may be expected. The Natives are very fond of narrating their own experiences and adventures, but their version of the facts in which they were directly involved are generally embellished or dramatised versions of what actually happened, and events of the past are usually enrobed in legends. What we call history is, to all intents and purposes, of no interest to them. That is why we must be very careful with what explorers and travellers are reporting in their memoirs about the history of the people whose country they are going through, most of the time with a profusion of details that are very suspicious. Those explorers and travellers did not know the local languages and they had to rely on what the local people were willing to tell them through unreliable interpreters. They had no means of sorting out what

was truth and what was legend in the stories of the Natives, which is the work of the historian. The position of the missionaries is entirely different. We live in the country with the people themselves, we speak their languages. We soon come to realise that what they tell us is fragmentary and unreliable, for they often contradict themselves in their stories. The Natives trust us and they are also aware that they have nothing to gain by falsifying the historical facts. But they can lie easily and unashamedly when they want to impress upon us that they know the history of their country. They have no scruple in messing up events, and in giving them fanciful explanations and interpretations. I must admit that I am puzzled by those explorers who seem to have a sort of intuitive knowledge of the history of the people they come briefly into contact with. I wish I had their amazing ability to coax the truth out of the people. The point is that the Natives live in fear of the white people and are inclined to tell them what they think will please them. There is nothing like objective truth for them. The Natives will try to guess what the white man wants to know, what the white man believes is the truth, and they will answer accordingly. They answer to please, not to enlighten, the inquirer. That is, in any case, my experience with the BaBemba and the BaBisa, the only African tribes are really know.

What can we say concerning the history of the BaBemba and the BaBisa? First let it be clearly understood that it is extremely difficult to obtain precise details about the history of their tribes. They relate certain historical facts, like wars, but they are unable to fix dates for any of those events. At the end you are totally at a loss to know exactly what happened, where and when, it is an awful imbroglio. Their main reference to the past is 'kale', which means 'formerly', 'once upon a time', 'sometime in the past'. For all the events that took place before the arrival of the Europeans, we can only make guesses by reference to known facts outside Africa, and very wild guesses at that!

According to what the BaBemba are wont to say, their tribe would have come from the region around the mouth of the Chambeshi. That would be the real Ubemba or Lubemba. It covers a very small area, and this explains the need for the Bemba Chiefs to wage wars on their neighbours, first to enlarge their territory, then to satisfy their greed for plunder. In the course of his first journey of exploration in 1867, Livingstone came across one of the Bemba chiefs already implanted in the southern part of the Ubemba, Chief Kitapangwa. But there is no way to know whether the BaBemba were already at that time settled down in the Ituna, in the western part of the Ubemba. They were probably trying, already at that time, to gain ground in the north and the east, but they did not always meet with success.

In 1883, the French explorer Giraud found that the BaBemba had been firmly entrenched in the Ituna for quite a few years. At that time the BaBemba had already been locked in war repeatedly with the Angoni, who must have proved to be a tough nut to crack, for the BaBemba failed to gain ground in that direction. Kitimkulu, Mwamba, and Kikwenda, then, turned against the peace-loving tribes in the Bubisa. The BaBisa who had already several times been overcome by the Wanganas (slave raiders at the service of the Arab slave traders) were further decimated by the onslaughts of the Bemba warriors. They took refuge in the mountains of the Senga and in the swamps and islands of the Bangweolo. Those events, so tragic for the BaBisa, must have taken place between 1875 and 1880. The BaBemba settled down in what had been the Bubisa, more particularly in the region of the Lwitikila and Kibwa Valley, and they began to levy a salt tax on the remaining local populations. In fact it was this greed for the Lwitikila salt that probably led the BaBemba to chase the BaBisa and occupy the land for themselves. The WaNgoni were also attracted by the salt marshes of the Lwitikila, but they were too weak to overcome the BaBemba, who were left in the sole possession of the region.

The BaBemba tried also to expand to the north and to the northeast. They organised and led several raids against the WaMambwe, two days' march away north of the present mission of Kayambi. Their soldiers, led by Kitimkulu in person, made deep inroads in what is now Tanganyika, but soon found themselves face to face with a German explorer, Wisemann, who sought the friendship of the local populations and who met the invaders headlong with his Maxim machine-guns. When the BaBemba walked into a hail of bullets and left a few dead on the battlefield, they lost all taste for conquest in Tanganyika. The moral effect of this defeat far outstripped the loss of lives: the BaBemba suddenly realised that, armed with their bows and arrows, their spears and axes, and even their old-fashioned blunderbusses, they were no match for the Europeans with their dreadful firepower. The Whites, they said, were able to rain deadly stars on them during the night, probably in reference to the

tracer bullets of the Maxims. After this memorable clash with Wisemann's soldiers, the BaBemba broke ranks and fled in the general direction of Kayambi. Kitimkulu also came to attack the few Englishmen who were residing at Ikabwa (the Ikawa of the English), but the latter had not the support of the local people, as Wisemann did, nor had they his firepower. They simply barricaded themselves into their houses and kept the attackers at bay for several days. In the meantime, Mwamba, another powerful chief of the Lubemba and a son of Kitimkulu's, was taking advantage of the absence of his father warring in Tanganyika, to invade Kitimkulu's domains in the Lubemba, lay them waste, and take all the chief's wives into captivity. At this news, Kitimkulu was enraged, abandoned the siege of Ikabwa, and came back in all haste to chastise his son. Mwamba's prank saved the British residents at Ikawa. But Kitimkulu came back home just to die, and Mwamba was chosen as the next Kitimkulu. This took place in 1892 and 1893.

Mwamba did not hide his hostility to the British. This explains why the English did not dare to penetrate the Ituna, in the heart of Mwamba's domains, as long as the potentate was alive. Mwamba was, on the contrary, on the best of terms with the Arab traders, dealing mainly in slaves and ivory, for he was relying on them for a steady supply of guns and gunpowder. Mwamba did not know that all the guns that were dumped into his lap in payment for his services were obsolete blunderbusses of the First and Second Empire.

Mwamba's reign did not last long. We have the impression that he had a premonition of his approaching death. He was a bloodthirsty ruler, who spent the whole time he was on the throne in waging war on his neighbours, on plundering, killing, and maiming. It was his soldiers who laid waste the Bubisa and drove the BaBisa away. Mwamba himself stayed in his capital, enjoying the fruits of all the plundering and stealing carried out by his henchmen. It was this Mwamba who was in possession of the salt marshes of the Lwitikila when we moved into what was to become Chilonga Mission. In the year 1896-1897, he had two English travellers arrested. He submitted them to all kinds of vexations, and they managed to get away with their lives only at the cost of dreadful humiliations.

At the beginning of 1898, Bishop Dupont attempted to penetrate the Lubemba in spite of the danger. He went first to Kitimkulu's place, but was very badly received. He had ultimately to break camp and return to Kayambi in a hurry. Mwamba heard of his discomfiture and invited him to come to the Ituna. He allowed the missionaries to open a mission station in his domains. The Bishop returned to Kayambi at once to gather up all that was needed to make a new foundation. This new mission station was actually started in October 1898. Mwamba was addicted to hemp smoking, and that is what ultimately killed him. He died in November 1898. His death was the signal of an orgy of plundering in the capital, according to the best traditions. The elders who formed the supreme council of the Ituna ruler, fell upon the possessions of the dead king and spread the news that the late Mwamba had given his kingdom to the 'Bwana Shikofu', i.e. Bishop Dupont. The latter accepted the Chief's bequest in order to ward off wholesale massacres and bloodshed, which traditionally marked the death of a Mwamba chief. The Bishop's intervention was providential, for it certainly saved many men and women from death and slavery.

As soon as Mwamba was dead, the English rushed in for the spoils like a flight of hungry vultures. It peevd them that Bishop Dupont had succeeded where they had failed: to get a foothold in the Ituna. The head of the English mission (the Agent of the B.S.A.C.) that moved in at the news of Mwamba's demise had been a journeyman baker by profession before taking service in Africa. Devoid of all education and refinement, his attitude towards the Bishop and the missionaries was downright odious: he submitted them to all sorts of affronts and persecutions. In those conditions the Bishop had no intention to found a new mission in the Ituna in the immediate neighbourhood of the English Administration. He found an ideal site at the confluence of three rivers: the Lukulu, the Lwombe and the Lukupa. The new Mission was called Kilubula, i.e. 'Deliverance'. Indeed the arrival of the missionaries and the implantation of a mission station in their midst was, for many Natives, salvation from death and slavery, and - it was hoped at the time - also from the Devil. The country belongs now to the British, who are busy devising taxation for the Natives to pay.

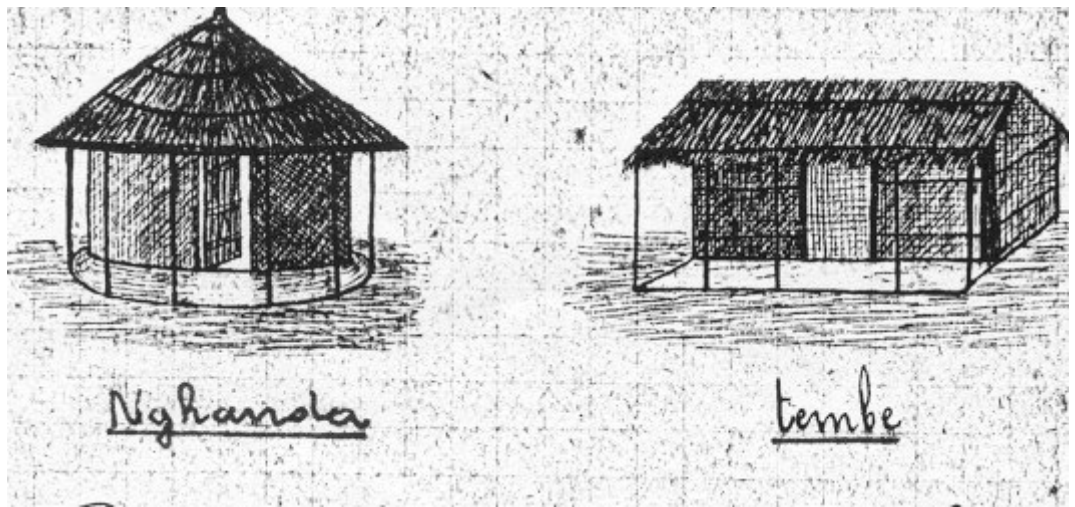
The arrival of the Europeans led to some momentous changes in the attitude and behaviour of the Natives. The BaBemba had grown tired of the tyranny of the BenaNghanu, the reigning royal clan, and they would have certainly slaughtered every single member of the hated clan, had he not been for Bishop Dupont. *No doubt a strong wind of independence is blowing over the whole country:*

the Natives do not want to be lorded over any longer by powerful princely families, and they are even turning their backs to all forms of native authority. Within two or three years, the authority of the local chiefs will have died out and will be replaced by the English administration, all for the better. I don't know what policy the English will adopt, but as long as they are fair-minded and just, as long as they leave the women alone, as long as they do not plunder the goods of the Natives, in other words if they show themselves totally upright, honest and just, they will easily win over the loyalty of the Natives.

As far as we the missionaries are concerned, we are hankering after only one thing: that we are left free to spread God's Kingdom among the local populations. We also sincerely hope that the example of the moral depravity of the Europeans will not adversely affect the Africans. We are ready to shed our blood to uphold our religious and moral convictions. All we ask for is a chance to instruct those Natives in the Christian Truths and contribute to their final salvation.

THE NATIVE HABITATION

The BaBemba, like all other Natives in this part of the African continent, live in *round huts*, which can be very pretty when the owners put their minds to it. The diametre varies between three and four metres. The huts built for the chiefs and their harems are as a rule higher and roomier than the huts of the commoners. The round wall of a hut is made up of poles solidly driven in the ground and close to one another, and linked up



together by bark ropes, reeds, and flexible branches. In other words they are made of wattle and daub. This round wall is then plastered inside and out with a thick layer of mud, made of well chosen clay carefully prepared and mixed with water and patiently kneaded into a sort of homogeneous cement. All around the hut runs a kind of veranda, roughly one metre broad, to



keep rain water away from the wall. The Natives also build rectangular houses with a veranda protecting only the front. They seem to prefer the round hut called 'nghanda' in Kibemba, to the rectangular house called 'tembe'. Both types of dwelling are solidly built so as to stand up to wind and rain, and especially to the assaults of the wild beasts of the bush, which

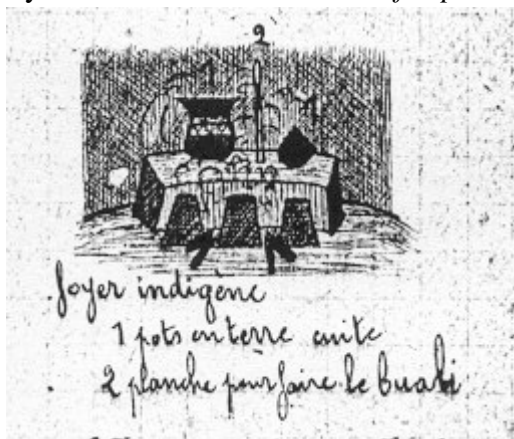


sometimes try at night to break into the huts in search of a prey.

When the rafters of the roof are not strongly tied down or the door not properly fixed, a leopard or a lion can squeeze through and make away with a prey. That is why the Natives don't like to sleep alone in a hut. One thing is sure: they barricade themselves as securely as they can inside their houses as soon as the night has fallen.

The door is secured inside the house by means of two strong poles, one planted vertically in the ground in the centre of the threshold, between 1.50 and 1.80 metres high, the other jammed horizontally between this pole and the walls. When thus secured, the door cannot be easily pushed open from the outside even if submitted to violent shaking. The BaBemba and the BaBisa make the doors of their huts with reeds of a bright yellow hue or with coarse grass, the stem of which is also deep yellow in colour, and which is called 'misense' in their language. Bundles of grass or reeds are solidly bound together with ropes made of the inner part of the bark of certain trees soaked in water until it is dark in colour. The yellow hue of the reeds and the dark tint of the twine match harmoniously and are pleasant to the eye. To close the door of their hut from the outside, the Natives simply hang three or four heavy logs by a rope in front of the entrance, the weight of which is sufficient to press the door against the wall. It is rudimentary, but quite effective to keep animals out. When they are absent on business, the people tacitly rely on their neighbours to keep an eye on things around their houses. It is the accepted custom that your neighbour looks after your house in your absence. The huts are always kept spotlessly clean, and they are meticulously swept every day. The floor is made of wet clay that has been packed hard: it is remarkably smooth and even, once it has dried. From time to time, the women smear the inside and the outside of their houses with white clay. A hut that has been freshly whitewashed looks remarkably clean and gay. The whitewashing has the added advantage of filling up the cracks that are continuously appearing in the mud wall, thus preventing draughts and keeping many insects out.

The first thing that strikes you when you enter a native hut is the *fireplace*. It is one big lump of clay, square or round in shape. In front truncated cones of clay on which are used for cooking. They are the small anthills sticking out of whole bush is dotted wherever they have the same shape as those clay from those anthills is the and those stands are made of. In often using those anthills as cook outside.



are the 'mafwasa', small are aligned the pots that called 'mafwasa' after the ground, of which the you go, both because anthills, and because the material the fireplace fact the Natives are fireplaces when they

On one side of the house, on the veranda that runs all around a round hut, there is a heavy block of clay, on the top of which is embedded a flat piece of hard granite, roughly 25 cm by 30 cm. It is the *local mill for flour or milling slab*. It is a very primitive instrument for grinding grains into flour for the daily mush, but it is very satisfactory. A piece of quartz, not larger than half a brick, is used to crush the grain: it plays the part of the rotating millstone in our European mills. One side of this grinding stone is convex so as to fit in with the hollow in the granite surface. When a woman wants to grind flour – and this is a work that is exclusively for women – she simply kneels down in front of the mill, grabs the grinding stone, and moves it to and fro, pressing hard on the grains that are scattered on the flat surface. She regularly sweeps the grains she is grinding back to the centre of the hollow and every now and then she adds a handful of millet. She continues this monotonous grinding and sweeping and spreading motion until the millet is properly ground into flour. The woman busy at the mill stone usually sings an appropriate ditty. If two neighbours are performing the same task within hearing distance, they will alternate in singing the same ballad. It is not infrequent for women to come to an understanding and build a milling platform large enough to accommodate several women, each one occupying part of the surface with her own flat granite surface in front of her and coming with her own grinding stone. Those arrangements are greatly appreciated, for the women can relieve the monotony of the job by exchanging gossips and singing in chorus or alternately. We are reminded of the public washing-house in the villages back home in France, for its purpose is very much akin to the idea behind the communal grinding stone bed in Africa: to bring the women together and turn into a pleasant social occasion what would otherwise be sheer drudgery. In front of the grinding surface there

is room for a basket or any container to receive the flour when it has been properly ground. Formerly this space was built in clay in the shape of a shaving-dish, which was devised to receive the flour that was sliding down the sloping mill stone. Then the flour was swept out of this dish into a pot by means of a special broom. The flat milling bed gets worn out in the long run, and it becomes necessary for the



woman of the house to ‘sharpen’ it, it as it were, i.e. to roughen the surface once more. To do this she takes an extremely hard piece of stone with a sharp end and hits the surface repeatedly to knock off tiny chips of granite. The surface will once more grind the grains of millet when the woman rubs them with her grinding stone over the rough surface underneath. Each housewife must see to the grinding of her own supply of flour, both what she needs for the daily mush of the family, and what she may eventually sell to passers-by.

In every village each house normally has its own granary.

It is a round hut built off the ground on a foundation of wooden poles, with only one aperture on top. That is



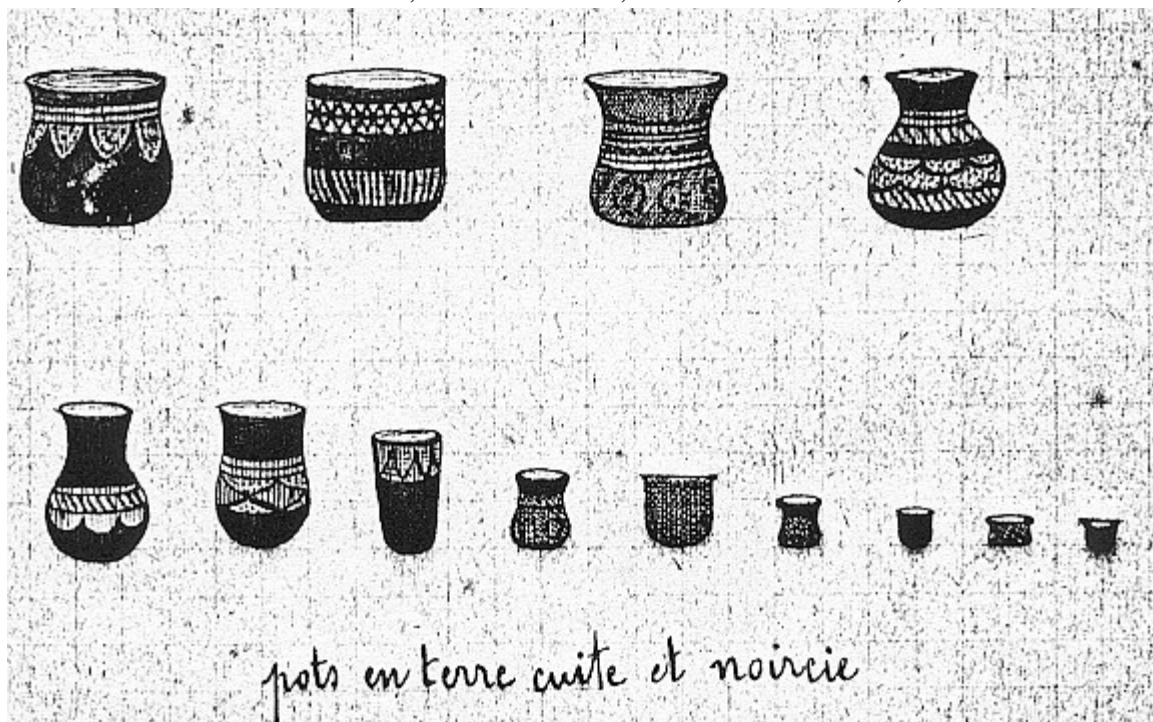
the storeroom of the family. That is where most of the foodstuffs for the year are usually kept, especially the cereals, away from dampness and crawling predators of all shapes and greediness. The granary or grain bin – the ‘butala’ – is usually cylindrical and is made with wattle and daub. It varies greatly in size, both in width and height, according to the importance and wealth of the owner. The great chiefs possess large size granaries, usually within the fortified compound sheltering their families and entourage. Those granaries are, to all intents and purposes, for public use. They serve as a reserve from which the chief takes foodstuffs to give as a present to passing strangers. No wonder they can be at times extremely large: as much as five metres broad and five metres high. The Natives can also at times bury their provisions underground or hide them away in some unknown corners of the bush, especially when they expect invasion and plunder. Those hiding places may be some four or five hours’ walk from the village, in some unexplored or unfrequented sector of the bush. To climb into their granaries, the Natives make use of a long, sturdy tree branch in which they cut notches of various depths. This makeshift ladder looks, from a distance, like a wooden saw with teeth spaced out roughly every thirty centimetres.

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HOUSE FURNITURE & EQUIPMENT

The house furniture and equipment in a native house are scarce and essentially functional: a few earthenware pots made of baked clay and dark in colour, baskets of various shapes and sizes woven with reeds or strips of bamboo and usually decorated with various designs, a few calabashes which are nothing else but scooped out gourds, one axe, a few mats of reeds bound together with twines, and sometimes a pickaxe or a hoe. The wealthiest citizens or the good hunters have zebra skins and leopard hides, or skins and hides from any other animals for that matter: they are used as sleeping mats or seat covers.

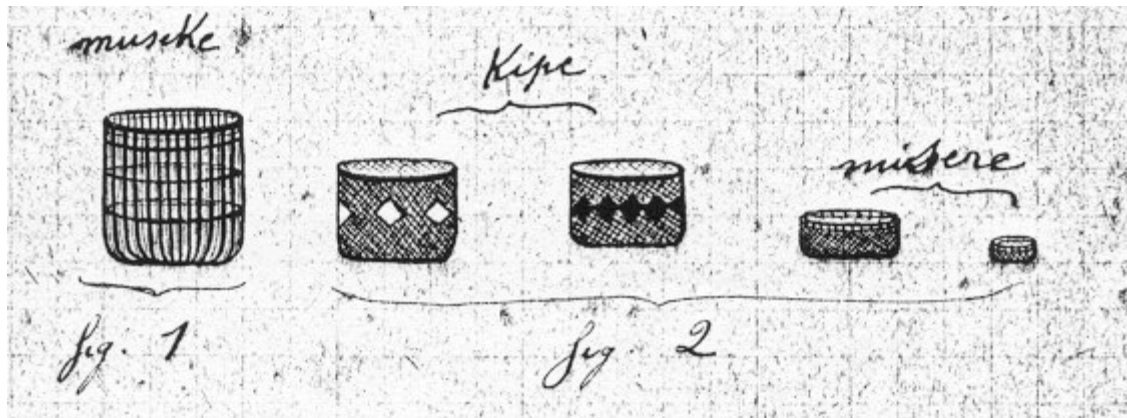
The *earthenware pots* are put to various uses. Some are used at the fire place for cooking, others are taken to the rive for fetching water and storing it into the house for daily use, others still are set aside to brew beer. The local beer, called 'bwalwa, is made with 'male', i.e. the kind of millet that



is usually grown in this part of Africa. Here is the way the women make those earthenware pots. They collect a grayish sort of clay very common in the country, mix it thoroughly with water, and knead to the proper consistency. They are careful to eliminate the smallest atom of gravel before kneading into balls of wet clay of various sizes. They take every one of those balls and start shaping a pot out of each. A piece of reed or bone, a sliver of bamboo or even a small spearhead, and their trained professional eye, are their only tools. Once they have modelled a vase or a water pot – a 'mutondo' – they leave it alone for twenty-four hours. The following day, they mould the neck and lip of the vase or pot. The women are fastidious potters, they are perfectionists: they mould and re-mould the whole vase in every date time and again until they are satisfied. The vase or pot is then left in the sun to dry thoroughly. Before it is completely dry, however, they trace intricately delicate designs in he clay with a sharp reed cut at a sloping angle. Then comes the baking of the vase or pot: the women dig a whole in the ground which they fill with grass, maize stalks, and dry twigs; they set fire to the lot and place the vase or pot in the red embers. The process will be repeated until the vase or pot is baked to their entire satisfaction. The vases and pots are usually black, a colour that is the result of the way of baking them in an open fire. Sometimes the women smear the vases or pots with castor oil before setting them in the fire so as to give them a certain varnish. Those earthenware pots and vases are put to various sues, Some are used to draw water at the water hole, and they are brought back to the house full to the brim and stored away for the various needs of the day. Others are used to brew beer, the local beer called 'bwalwa'.

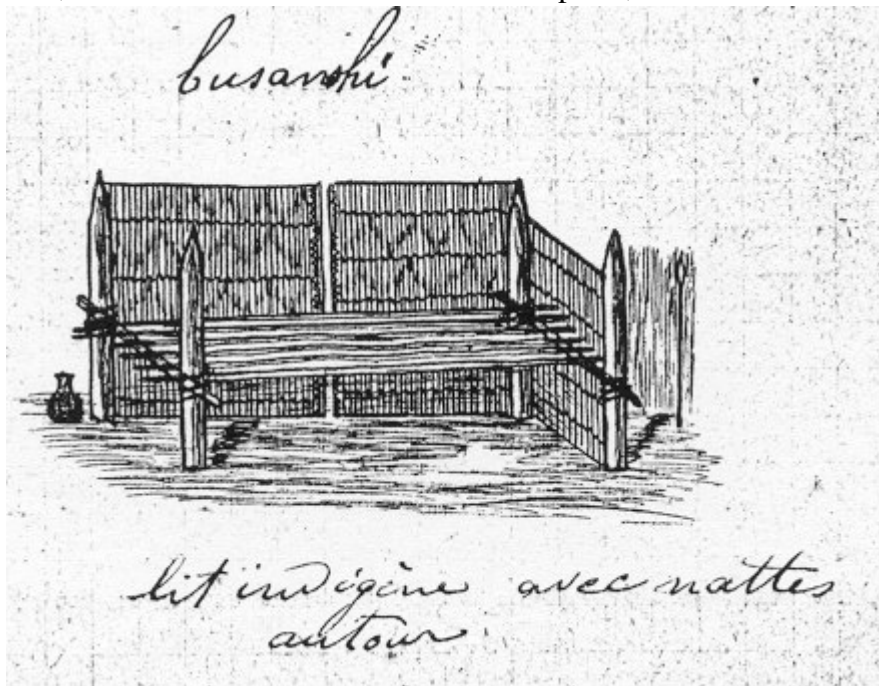
To make this 'bwalwa', the women take millet to the bank of the nearby rive and spread it on a mat very near the water. The millet sprouts in this damp surrounding. Once it ha sprouted, the women pound it into a rough sort of flour, which is placed in a vase and covered with water. Fermentation begins at once, and the mixture is turned into 'bwalwa'. When the beverage is deemed to be ready for consumption, it is brought to the party of men gathered together for the occasion. Warm water is added up regularly to the beverage to accelerate he fermentation and increase the percentage of alcohol. The men are usually sitting around the calabash armed with hollow reeds: one end of the reed hey dip into the beer, the other end they stick into their mouth to suck in the beer in long draughts. At other times, they circulate the calabash, each one drinking a long draught of beer before handing the container to his neighbour. They proceed very much in the same way as the ancient Romans and Greeks when they were drinking mead from the same cup, which was handed around from guest to guest. The Natives have two great gastronomic pleasures: to drink 'bwalwa' and to eat meat sprinkled

with salt. It is common to see the Chiefs spending the whole day and most of the night drinking 'bwalwa' and smoking hemp. This native beer or 'bwalwa' has a fairly high percentage of alcohol, and this partly explains why drinking bouts usually end in drunkenness. But this drunkenness does not last: any man that was as drunk as a lord when he stumbled away from the party and collapsed in a heap on his sleeping mat will be perfectly steady on his feet after two hours' sleep and ready to down another beer pot.



What about the *various baskets* that are scattered inside and outside every house? They are made of reeds (fig. 1) or of woven strips of bamboo Fig. 2)

Let us speak now of *native bed* called 'busanshi' in Kibemba. This native bed is for the comfort of the men, not of the women. It is made of four poles, not thicker than a man's forearm, solidly fixed in the floor of the hut.



Those poles are linked together by other poles, solidly bound together by twine made of bark. Most of the time, a mat or an animal hide is thrown over this structure. It is often fitted on one side, usually the side of the wall, with a border of mats. The women must be content with sleeping on the floor, stretched out on a mat or an animal skin, usually close to the hearth, where a fire is kept burning the whole night. For there is always a fire burning in every house every night throughout the night.

The Natives are very tough . They can stretch out in the open air on any hard surface when they are on a journey, with a handful of grass spread under them, and the sky as their roof, and the wide bush as their room, and sleep throughout the night the sleep of the just, hardly incommoded by an occasional bark or grunt or even roar.. But they will never fail to light a good fire nearby, which replaces the blankets they don't have and keep roaming predators at a safe distance.

But the Natives do not sleep without a *pillow*, which is a piece of wood hollowed out in the middle for the head or neck of the sleeper and supported by four short legs. The pillow is no more than thirty centimetres long and twenty centimetres broad, and it is a one-piece affair carved out of a yellow, very hard tree trunk. You fairly often meet on the road mainly old men and women, going about on their journey carrying their pillow



with them. The trouble is that most of us takes this piece of furniture on their heads for a seat, when it is in fact their pillow for the night.

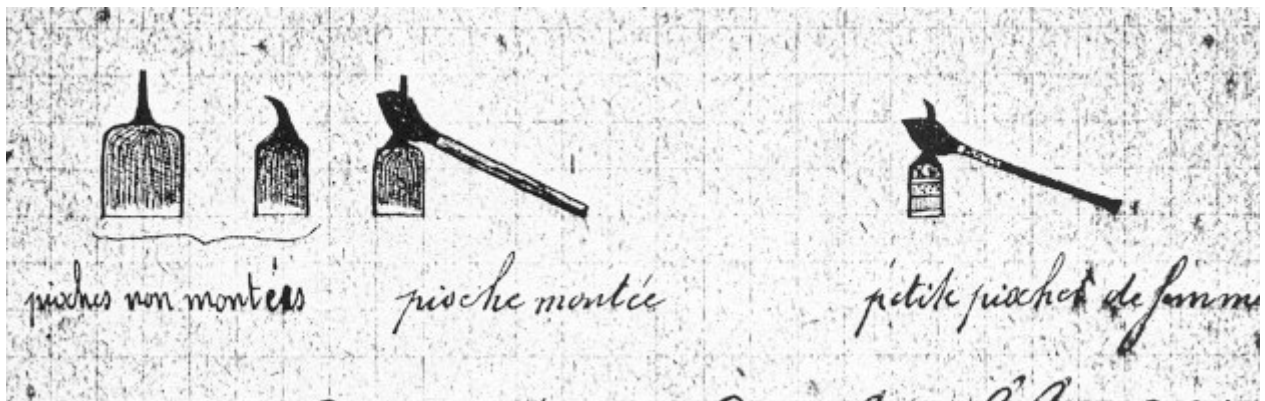
The native seat or stool – the ‘cipuna’ - when there is one in the house – is made of a piece of tree trunk that has been carved out on top to accommodate the user’s backside, and which has been cut out underneath into four feet, or into one single sturdy leg with bell-shaped bottom to stand upright on the floor. The seat itself looks very much like the wooden plates that are still used for eating in some remote corners of the countryside in the poorest parts of Europe.



The most common tools among the Natives – tools that are found in every household – are the axe and



the hoe. Every man as well as every woman has an axe while they are going about their daily tasks.



They practically never part from this companion, it is always kept close at hand. For the knife is at the same time the knife to cut with, to slash anything and everything with, and the weapon to keep at bay any four-legged – and at times even two-legged – aggressor. It is a piece of iron of varying size and length, having the shape of a long, narrow triangle, the broader side being the cutting edge. The common length is roughly 20 centimetres, and the cutting edge between four and five centimetres broad. The way the axe is fitted into a handle is very peculiar: the handle is a strong stick with a broad head, usually at an angle with the thinner part. This head has been holed in such a way that it can be easily lifted and wielded to perform any required task. The hoe is, of course, used for tilling the ground. The iron is not triangular, but rectangular, and sharpened at one end to bite into the soil. The haft is similar to the handle of the axe, and fixed very much in the same way.

A common sight in a house is the *libende* or mortar with a pestle to pound things in, and more particularly the ingredients or making oil and all sorts of condiments, and the *ililindo* or kit-case or trunk to store things away. The *lindo* (short for ililindo) is not made of metal or wood, but of bark. That is where the men and women store away all their riches, more particularly the imported objects. It

plays the part of the safe in a European house. This piece of furniture is also used sometimes to keep cereals and flour. It is round in shape, with an average height of 30 or 40 centimetres, and a radius of 15 centimeters. The *bende* (short for *ilibende*) is a tall wooden container shaped like a chalice, sometimes with elaborately wrought carvings or drawings. The Natives use this container to shell grains and to pound them into oil or condiments. Mainly used for squeezing oil out of grains. The 'bende' is usually carved out of a solid block



of wood, big or small depending on whether the artisan wants a large or a small container. Some can be as much as one metre high.



Here is the way the women proceed to extract oil from groundnuts or castor-oil plants. The groundnuts and the castor-oil plants are first shelled, and then they are spread in the sun for several days to dry. When they are deemed to be dry enough, they are dropped into a 'bende' and pounded energetically until they have been turned into very rough flour, which is once more spread into the sun. When it is suitably warm, it is thrown back into the 'bende' and pounded again. From time to time some warm water is added to the mess to ease out the oil substance. When the oil begins to appear, the woman makes small balls out of the oil substance, which they squeeze hard in their hands to get the oil out. The Natives are very keen on oil, and especially castor oil, for they used it to smear their bodies and their heads, rubbing it in patiently. This oil gives their black skin an extraordinary sheen. *Our men and women thus smeared with castor oil look remarkably clean.* The oil made of groundnuts is excellent, and has slight laxative properties. The people living in the South of France know very well that groundnut oil is of high quality, for they fraudulently mix it with olive oil to sell the mixture as pure olive oil.

FOOD:

The local diet is very simple. The women make mush with millet flour, which can be eaten alone, but which is preferably eaten with cooked green plants, usually leaves from some plants growing in the bush. There are three main types of relish dish made with leaves (*Note that Fr Foulon uses the word 'sauce', he does not speak of munani in conjunction with green relish*): (a) the 'kacesha' (*Fr Foulon writes 'kahicia'; nowadays the word 'cimpapila' is more common*) made with the tender leaves of beans, looking very much like spinach (b) the 'hapalala' (?) made with tree leaves (c) the 'pupwe' mad with the leaves of an odoriferous shrub bearing the same name. On top of their mush, which they call 'bwali', the BaBemba also eat sweet potatoes and beans, almost every day. People are often seen eating their bwali out of the same dish. Each man takes some mush with the right hand, rolls it into a ball, depresses the centre of the ball with his thumb, and dips the ball into the relish – if there is any - and pops it into his mouth. This is done in the twinkling of an eye, and is repeated at an amazing speed until mush and relish have been cleaned out. The sweet potatoes are normally served cooked, but the people like also to chew them raw, especially when they are on a journey. The sweet potatoes grown in this country are not as sweet as those cultivated in Tunisia and Algeria.

Other vegetables the Natives are fond of are the 'mumbu' (Livingstone potato or yam, a kind of potato that is very stringy), the 'kalundwe' (a root that is also very stringy, and from which starch is obtained; called cassava in English), the chickpeas, the hard peas, the groundnuts, etc. In time of famine, they can feed on all sorts of roots, from certain trees and plants.

The relish the Natives prefer is meat sprinkled with salt, what they call munani, but this is the menu for a feast day. The people are not very fussy about the quality of the meat, but it must be cooked. The BaBemba and the BaBisa *never* eat raw meat. Not only they do not mind, but also they even seem to prefer meat that has gone high. They do not care if the meat is crawling with maggots. They do not seem to notice when it is smelling to the high heavens. They seem to enjoy meat we would toss away because of the stink. When a man travelling in the bush happens to come across a

piece of game that has been dead for a few days and not totally devoured yet by carnivorous animals, he will cut out as many lumps of meat as he can carry, whatever the state the meat is in. For him, such a find is providential and cannot be passed by. He may have smelled this meat from far away, he may find that it is teeming with maggots as big as his finger, he does not mind. When he is at home, he may shake the meat to get rid of the worst of the maggots, but he will throw the rest in an earthenware pot, ready to be cooked. For him, any meat is good to eat. When they want to preserve meat, the Natives cut it up in strips, which they smoke, i.e. they hang it over a fire that is fed with wet leaves or wood. They are thus able to keep meat for several weeks.

Many BaBemba are in possession of old guns with percussion caps, but they don't have the ammunition for them. Since the Arabs are denied access into the country, the BaBemba are no longer able to acquire gunpowder and pellets. The shortage of pellets is not too bad, for they easily replace them by bits and pieces of scrap iron, and even stones, varying in size according to the kind of game they want to hunt. But there is no substitute for gunpowder. That is why the BaBemba have fallen back on their bows and arrows and spears for hunting.

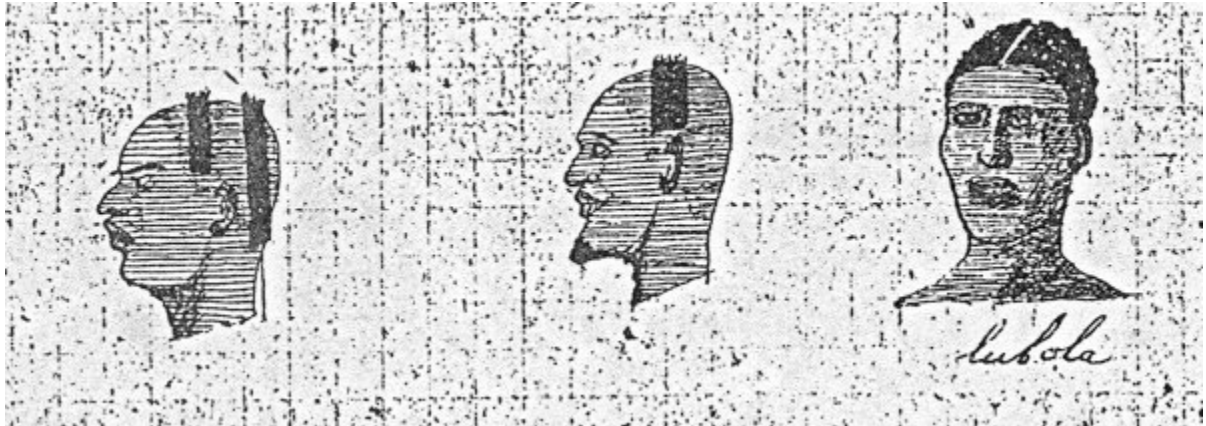
Since fresh meat is a rarity in this part of the world, the Natives go in for edible ants and caterpillars, and for fish when they can get hold of some, as more palatable forms of relish than cooked leaves. They collect big, fat, hairy caterpillars, which they dry in the sun and store away. They do the same with locusts and flying ants. As for the fish they pull out of rivers and lakes, they also dry them in the sun or smoke them over a smoky fire, but fish does not keep as well and as long as meat and other perishable foodstuffs.

You know from a distance when Natives have eaten rotten fish or high meat with their mush, for their breath carries an indefinable but pungent smell, which all but chokes you. Any meeting with a group of people turns unpleasant in no time because of the smells that soon hover over the crowd, the more so since they feel quite naturally flatulent after eating their type of food and have no scruple in relieving themselves in public. Europeans feel terribly incommoded in such pestilential atmosphere. When I have to take part in a meeting, I always fill up my pipe very thoroughly and puff hard on it and exhale clouds of tobacco smoke to overcome the wave of smells that beats around me. We are told that smoke dispels microbes. Microbes there must be, in their legions, in such a miasmatic atmosphere, thick enough to cut with a knife. If so, pipe smoking is definitely a welcomed relief.

The Natives eat very moderately in normal circumstances, for their fare is usually Spartan. But whenever there is plenty to eat, they will stuff themselves to bursting point, to the point of being sick. They stick to this Spartan diet, not out of virtue, but by necessity. None of them can remain frugal in sight of plenty. They simply gorge themselves with food whenever - and as long as - it is available. Sitting at a meal, they will tuck into the food as long as there is something to chew in front of them. But when they are travelling around, when they are on the road, they can put up with thirst and hunger without complaining. They are satisfied with two meals a day, one in the morning, the other in the evening. In fact they often have one important meal a day: in the evening. This is certainly true of anybody going on a journey, for the general opinion is that food renders the traveller heavy and prevents him from plodding along smoothly and steadily.

Hairstyles and Coiffure

The people who are eager to look smart will make sure that their hairstyle is fashionable. Many shave their hair completely to make sure that they have a clean head. That is why the frequently wash their



head and smear it with castor oil.

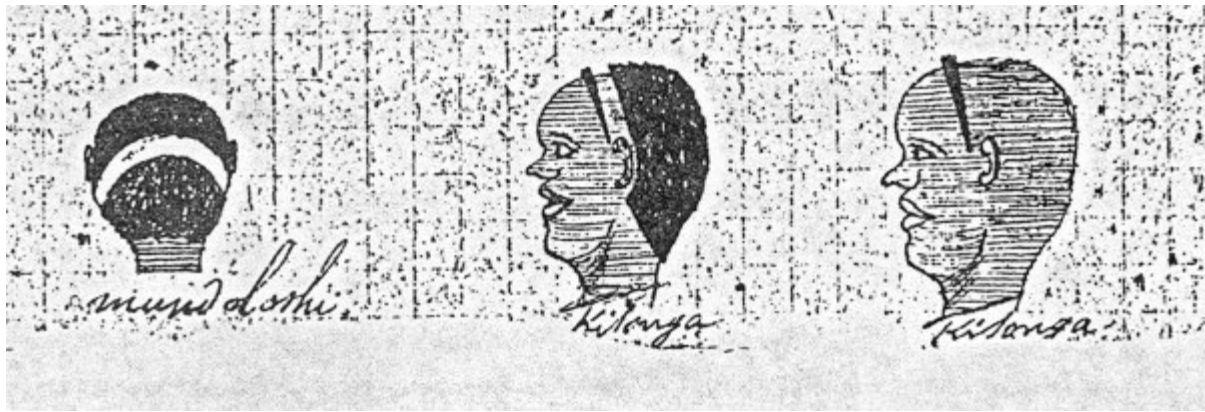
Some affect wearing long hair, but they are very few. Most of the people cut their hair very short in



intricate designs using very sharp razors

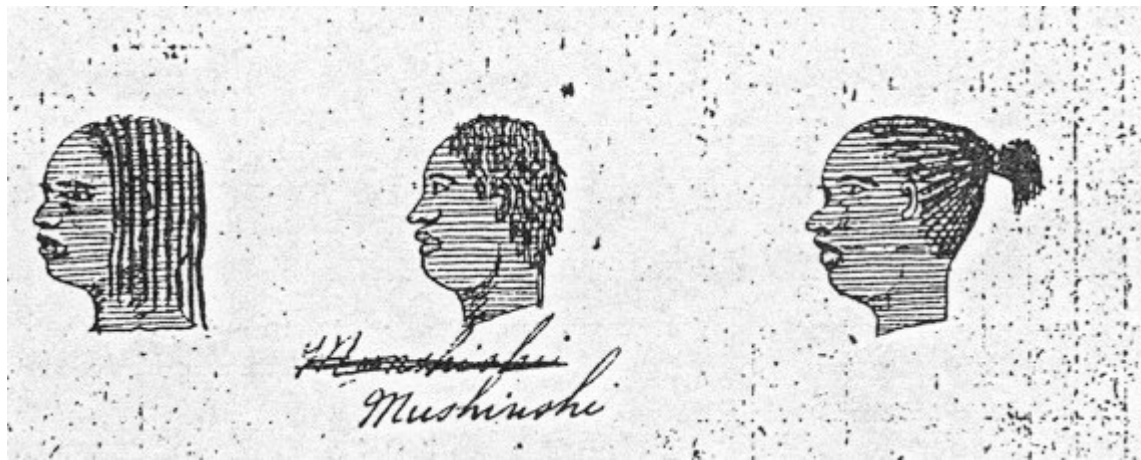


The shapes very greatly according to the places where the people live, and also with the sex. Certain hairstyles are reserved to the men, others to the women, others still are common to both, but there is no



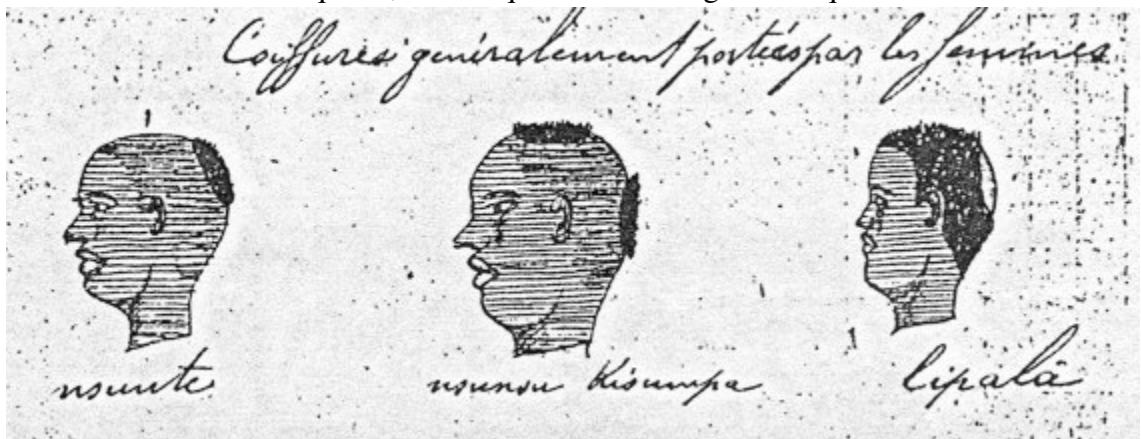
clear-cut rule as to which is for whom.

Fashion varies greatly from one tribe to the next, and also from one faction to the next within the same



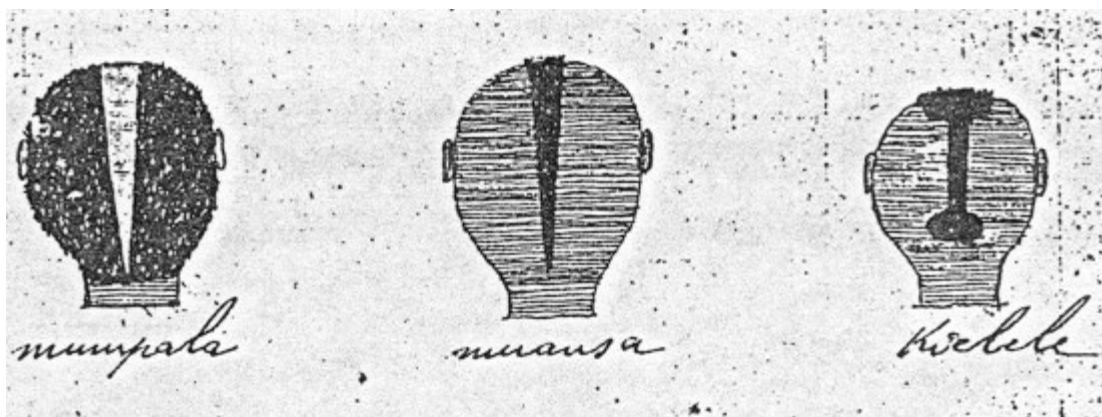
tribe.

We must never forget that the tribes have been in the habit of mixing a lot in the past three hundred years as a result of wars and conquests, the conquered absorbing the conquerors almost as much as the



opposite.

Fashions have changed.

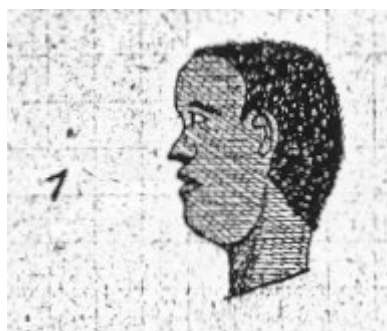


There was a lot of borrowing from one tribe to the other

The *kiteta* is a hairstyle that is very common. The upper part of the forehead is completely razed, and the rest of the hair is cut regularly so that it is never more than five or six millimetres long. This particular hairstyle makes for cleanliness, and at the same time it is very smart, perhaps of the African race.



The upper part of the rest of the hair is cut regularly so that millimetres long. This particular the same time it is very smart, perhaps of the African race.



THE VARIOUS FORMS OF KITETA

1. The hair is made to taper towards the forehead
2. The hair is made to taper towards the rear of the head
3. The hair is made to taper forward, but is shaved above the forehead and allowed to grow thick like a helmet, unfortunately difficult to keep clean (what with the sweat and the dust!) and likely to become a nest of lice and fleas

OTHER FORMS OF HAIRSTYLES

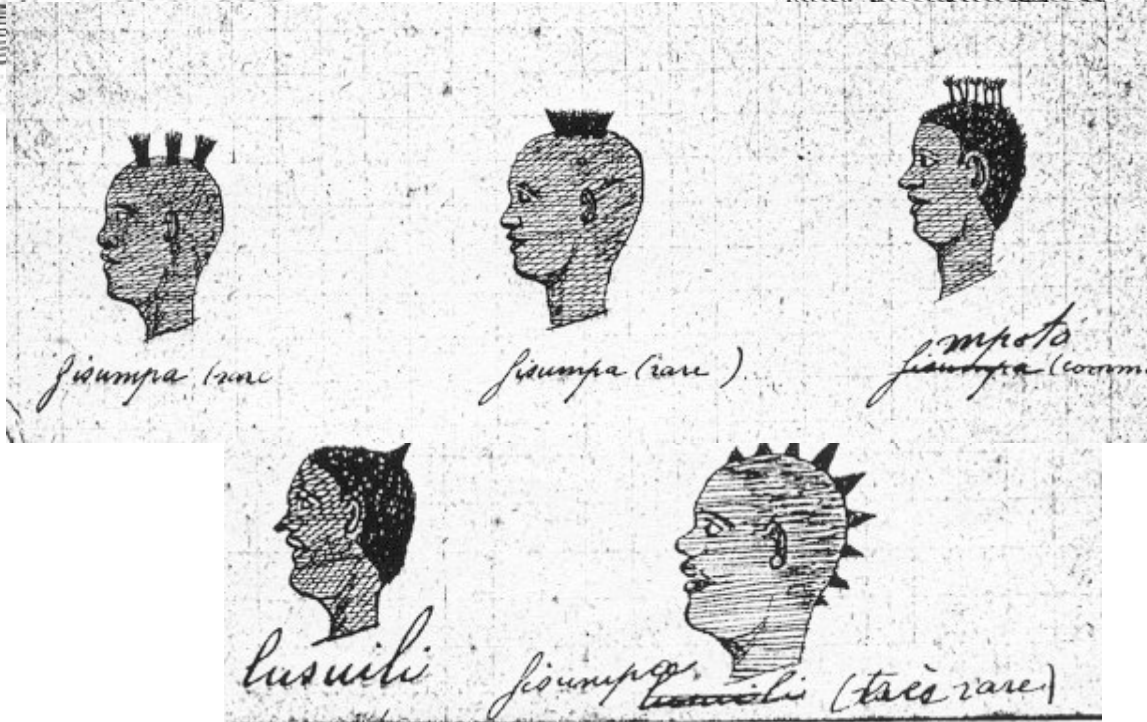


TATTOOS:

The BaBemba and the BaBisa are fond of tattoos, like all other tribes, but they never use them to disfigure their bodies or features.



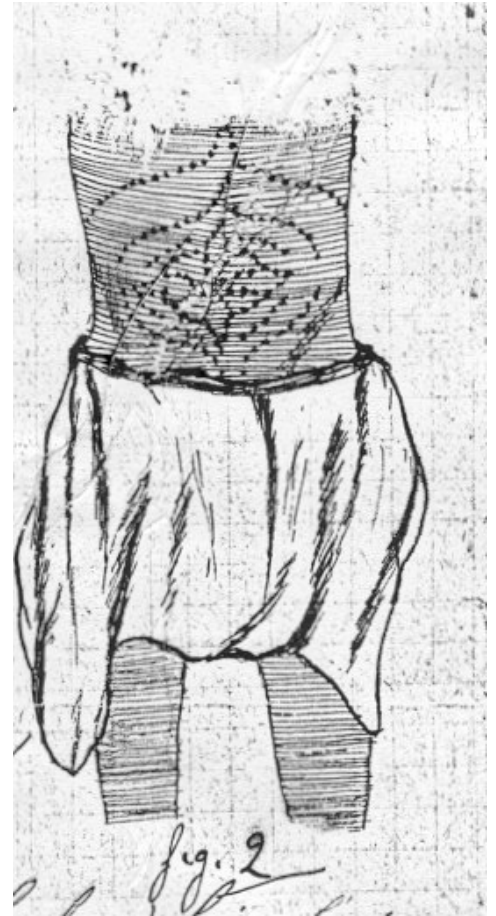
They are tattooed mainly on the face (fig 1), the chest (fig 2 bis) and on the back (fig 3). On the face the tattoo is usually one line drawn vertically in the middle of the forehead, and three lined



marks on each temple. The latter are sometimes crossed by a line starting from the corner of the eye and reaching the top of the rear lobe.

The tattoos on the chest and the back are more frequent on women than on men, and the designs they display take different forms that always end up on a straight line right across the body or the chest. The tattoos worn by a person are, of course, a symbol of the tribe he or she belongs to. But they are still quite a number of people displaying tattoos with which they were marked when they were held in slavery. They are rough lines evidently cut with a knife without the slightest consideration for the pains inflicted on the patients, shaped like incisions that are sometimes half a centimetre broad. In order to make sure that this sign of slavery will always be clearly visible and indelible for the rest of the man's or woman's life, the juice of a certain plant was injected in the deep knife cut, which caused the wound to scar over very quickly, and the slave mark to stay there for good and for all to see.

In principle slavery has been abolished, or at least slave trade has been rendered well nigh impossible. IN FACT, slavery is still very much alive and an integral part of African society. The Chiefs of any importance have a whole harem people with women they call their wives and concubines, but who are in fact just slaves, over whom they have the right of life and death. The Natives refer to them openly as slaves (basha). So do they of some of their employees and servants.



Tattooing is usually the work of the mother, or of a woman looked to as a witch. The person who is to proceed with the work of tattooing any part of the human body takes a flat, broad needle, pushes it into the flesh, forces the cut open, and introduces charcoal powder into the cut. The incision will swell out and gives a lot of pains for a few days, but then the skin grows over the lips of the cut and closes it up completely, and the unbearable pain disappears. The spot that has been thus treated takes now a very distinctive sepia colour.

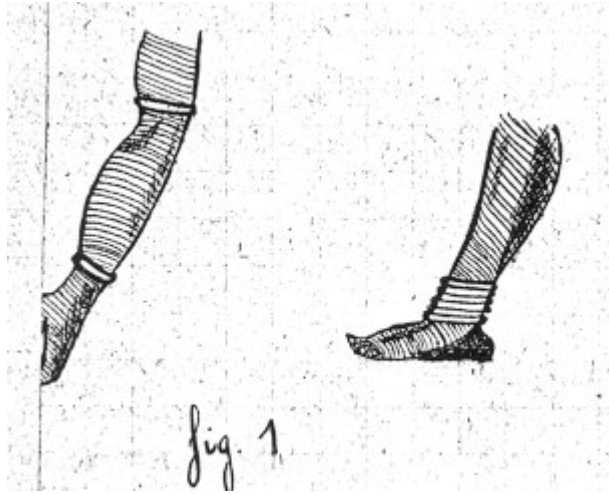
PERSONAL ADORNMENTS

For Men: The Benba and Bisa men do not go in much for gewgaws and baubles. Men usually wear



copper bangles around their ankles and legs, wrists and arms, and above their elbows, i.e. copper rings or copper wires coiled around their limbs they are supposed to adorn. They sometimes wear as many as four heavy copper rings round each ankle, which they ostentatiously display and noisily rattle when they are strutting around. This is more particularly true of the Chiefs. Others have rings cut out of rhinoceros or hippopotamus hide instead of copper bangles. Some are even seen parading and strutting with ivory bracelets and rings. See Fig. 1.

Polished shells are also worn as adornments. Men are very fond of displaying 'mpande' on their foreheads or their naked chests. A 'lupande' is as a rule a piece of polished shell, very hard, and sparkling white in colour. (Fig. 2).



Others cut similar shells in a triangular shape and string them together in the shape of a

necklace, Such triangular polishes shells worn around the neck are called 'mpingu' (singular 'lupingu') (Fig. 3).

Others wear necklaces of *small horns* (Fig. 4 of the little gazelle called 'mpombo' in Kibemba, or the mountain goat called 'kibushi-mawe'. Those horns contain talismanic powder protecting the wearer from the traitorous attacks of wild animals in the bush. As a rule it is simply ashes from wood fire mixed up with goat's droppings and tree leaves.

For women: Women are even fonder of all sorts of bodily adornments than men are, but they go mainly after bangles and rings of all sorts around wrists and arms, ankles and legs, and after necklaces.



Fig. 3
hinau

Some wear up to seven necklaces one on top of the other, in blue, white, or multi-coloured hues. The number of necklaces a woman wears depends mainly on the wealth and generosity of the husband. The women often wear around the waist belts of round pearls strung up together, which can be as thick as the width of two fingers held together. Some women wear bracelets of blue and white pearls around their wrists. It is their reserve of cash, as it were, their purse. When they are on a journey, whenever they want to buy something, they break those bracelets and use the pearls as money. To buy whatever they need or they have a fancy for. The Bemba women do not go in for this horror called the



'pelele', so popular with the Angoni women, and rarely found among the BaBisa. It is a shell thrust through the upper lips, which sticks out like a duck's bill. It is really ugly and horrible to look at. I have never seen one single Bemba woman disfigured with this so-called embellishment. I met a few Bisa women inflicted with this horror, As for the Angoni women, they practically all wear the 'pelele'.