

This map (see page 16) shows the distribution of the Thonga population thirty years ago. Since then a considerable emigration into the Transvaal has taken place (p. 19), and the Low Country of the Leydenburg and Zoutpansberg districts, which is almost entirely white on the map, ought to show many coloured spots representing Thonga villages.



Yunus, Blevi A.  
The life of a South African tribe . Vol I.  
New York: University Books, 1962



YOUNG THONGA MOTHER AND CHILD



THONGA YOUTH PLAYING THE *SHIDZAMBI* BOW

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## FOREWORD

Missionary efforts in Africa are a subject for controversy. The most varied reactions have been evoked—unstinted admiration no less than derisive contempt; administrative approval no less than barely concealed suspicion. About the work of one man, however—Henri Alexandre Junod of the Swiss Romande Mission—there are scarcely two minds. Today in the 1960's, no less than at the close of the last century, his work has significance for African and for 'European' alike.

His reputation has spread widely, largely on account of his best-known work, *The Life of a South African Tribe*. It is nevertheless true that, particularly in the United States—to which he never travelled—few personal details about his life are generally known. It may, therefore, not be inappropriate to set down a brief outline of his life.

Henri Junod was born on 17 May 1863 at Saint-Martin in the valley of Ruz in the Swiss canton of Neuchatel. Religion was predominant in the life of the family into which he was born. His father, a Protestant clergyman, founded the Independent Protestant Church, and was responsible for the separation of Church and State in Switzerland. It was hardly surprising, therefore, that the Junod children, including Henri, were steeped in religion. All the boys grew up to become ordained, and one of the two girls became a deaconess.

Henri studied at the College of Neuchatel at the Faculty of Theology of the Independent Protestant Church, later attending two semesters at Basle and at Berlin before obtaining his degree. In 1885 he was ordained, serving as a clergyman for two years in the parish of Môtiers-Boveresse. He was much interested in science and in natural history, and there appears to have been little doubt among those who knew him at that time that a brilliant career awaited him in this domain had he chosen to pursue it. After some internal struggles, of which we know little more than that they occurred, he came to the conclusion that it was the will of God that he devote his life to service in Africa. To prepare for this vocation he went to Scotland, accompanied by a close

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friend, Arthur Grandjean. In 1889 at the age of 26, the year of his departure for Africa, he married his first wife, Emilie Biolley of Couvet, like himself a Swiss. Most of the children of this marriage were destined to leave their bones in Africa.

Arriving in Mozambique, Henri Junod found the Swiss Romande Mission under the direction of the man who had established it in South East Africa—Paul Berthoud, a relative of his wife. The times were still troubled. The Zulu military power in the region had been broken barely ten years earlier, and the resulting disorders had only terminated with the British occupation of Zululand in 1887. The Swiss missionaries travelled into the interior in wagons drawn by oxen. Open warfare returned to the country with the Ronga-Portuguese war of 1894-95, at which time the mission itself, at Rikatla, was burned. The Swiss missionaries also found themselves the target of hostility from the local peoples. It was by establishing good relations with the Ba-Ronga people under these uncertain conditions that all of Junod's later work was made possible.

Junod tells us how a "chance" remark made in 1895 by Lord Bryce transferred the main focus of his attention from entomology to ethnography. (Junod's incomparable collections of South East African butterflies are preserved to this day in the Museum at Neuchatel, as well as in other Swiss and South African Museums; and a *Papillo Junodi*, together with other species bearing his name, are known to zoology). The years of preparation were over, and he was now to enter consciously upon that part of his life's work that was to establish his reputation. In 1896 his first book, a Ronga grammar and conversation manual, with vocabularies in Ronga, Portuguese, French, and English, together with an ethnographic introduction, was published under the auspices of the Portuguese Government. In 1897 he published his *Chants et Contes des Ba-Ronga*, followed by other works on language and ethnography. In 1896 he returned to Switzerland for three years, after which he undertook the direction of a school for evangelists at Shiluvane in the Transvaal. The change was not so abrupt as might be imagined, for in those far-off days administrative boundaries had not yet assumed their later significance, and—above all—he was still working among the Bathonga peoples. It was while he was at Shiluvane, however, that his first wife died, in 1901, "a victim of the climate." The loss left him desolate. Upon his return to Switzer-

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land, in 1903-04, he re-married: Mlle. Hélène Kern of Zurich, a German-speaking Swiss whose charm is still remembered, and whose antecedents lay in Alsace-Lorraine. He returned with her to Shiluvane, but in 1907 they moved back to his original mission station at Rikatla in Mozambique. The reason for the change was that the Mission schools in the Transvaal were subsidised by the local educational authorities, and Junod feared that this arrangement would restrict the amount of time that he would be permitted to spend upon religious instruction. From 1909 to 1913 he was in Switzerland once more, serving as a pastor first at the parish of Saint-Blaise, and then at Rochefort. Nor was his pen idle. In 1909, in collaboration with Chatelain, he published a Xangane dictionary and grammar; in 1910 he published a missionary novel, *Zidji* (also translated into German); and in 1912 there appeared the first edition of his great work, *The Life of a South African Tribe*. While Junod was on his fourth and last visit to Africa his second wife died—at Rikatla, in March 1917. He returned to Switzerland in 1921, where he lived in Geneva. He completed the revision of the second and enlarged edition of his *Life of a South African Tribe* in 1926, and it was published the following year. He died on April 22, 1934 at the age of three-score years and ten, his span of life well spent. His ashes were sent to Africa.

Those who remember Henri Junod well speak of a handsome and distinguished-looking man with a large black beard which, in some of his later years, stood out in contrast to his snow white hair. Later still, his beard too turned white, lending him a saintly appearance. While his manner was somewhat Calvinistic—asking much of himself he also, no doubt, asked much of others—this trait was mixed with an inner kindness of spirit. His courage was proverbial. There exists in the American branch of his family the memory of a story he told to the children in the days before 1914 of an occasion when he entered a certain thicket, after receiving a warning from friendly Africans that he must follow their instructions to the last detail, since any deviation would mean his death. It remains unclear, however, whether this episode occurred in the course of his ethnological investigations, or whether he was hunting lepidoptera in enemy-occupied territory during either the Ronga-Portuguese War or the Sikororo War. The verdict of all who knew him is, however, clear: he was a brave man, and "took many many chances."



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His attachment to the Bathonga peoples was deep and sincere, and manifested itself in a great number of ways. In Switzerland he sought to bring back a memory of African surroundings, going so far as to build a replica of an African hut in the grounds of his first wife's estate in Couvet, as well as to arrange for a number of African pastors to visit Switzerland, where they were frequent visitors at the Junod home. Henri Junod was held in high honour in his country, where he was made an honorary doctor of the University of Lausanne, and was also elected President of the International Bureau for the Defense of Native Interests—a name that already sounds curiously anachronistic to our ears, and that belonged to a Geneva organization that concerned itself with questions such as alcoholism, and the injustice of expropriation. It is also not without significance today that, at the League of Nations, Junod (to quote a contemporary commentator) "enjoyed a merited confidence among those men who were concerned with mandates and protectorates." Of his own conception of the motivation that led him to Africa there can be no doubt. In addition to the determination of his early years that his duty lay in the missionary service, he repeatedly expressed the view that the white man had brought so much evil to Africa—and it is understood that he had the evils of alcoholism and the previously-unknown venereal disease particularly in mind—that it was mandatory for other white men to bring to Africa also some things that were good.

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What, then, is the place of Junod's study of the Bathonga in relation to African anthropological literature as a whole?

Now that Africa is entering into the post-independence phase (even if the tide of independence has not yet reached the Bathonga peoples themselves, subjected, as they have been, to white hegemony since the 1860's), it is becoming increasingly difficult to disentangle the three different skeins that, woven together, make up the fabric of African cultural life today, (1) those aspects that Africa has taken from the West; (2) those aspects that are traditionally African; and (3) those aspects that represent African innovations or adaptations. In this respect the contribution of Junod is of particular value for, arriving upon the scene at a relatively early stage, he was able to isolate and to define precisely those aspects that were traditional. He was undoubtedly

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aware that his situation was unique, and that the context in which he worked was soon to pass away. In the years that were to follow not only would some of the African customs die or fade away, but also the African peoples themselves would grow more reticent. Junod's experience in returning to Europe on a Union Castle boat in 1909, when each of three well-known Zulus "who were, I think, going to England for political reasons," proved unable or unwilling to discuss Zulu ideas of witchcraft with him, was a presage of the decades to come. This undoubtedly spurred him to greater efforts to set down the fullest possible description of one group of African peoples before it was too late.

If Junod was fortunate in his period we, for our part, have been fortunate in our author. Had he, like his brothers, been virtually entirely concentrated upon his religious vocation in the stricter sense, we—and African literature—would have been deprived of what E. W. Smith, the anthropologist, has described in the journal *Africa* as "the finest monograph written on any African tribe." Junod's earlier yearning for natural science, however, combined with his sense of vocation, provided a combination that was to produce a remarkable result. The original lustre of the Edinburgh Conference of 1910 (which "proclaimed the necessity for Missionaries of a sympathetic study of Native beliefs and social customs"—a revolutionary concept to many at that time) may have dimmed, but the significance of such studies has not, which is why Henri Junod today retains his importance for us.

Junod was not temperamentally a member of that category of eccentric and restless persons, so familiar to African history, who make their mark as innovators, striking out, if need be, in the face of the whole world to establish new ways or new concepts. That he was a personality of unusual dimensions there can be no question. One might say that he had within him the three metamorphoses of the spirit mentioned by Nietzsche—the camel spirit, which bears the heaviest burdens; the lion spirit that says "I will"; and the Child spirit that is innocence and a new beginning. Unlike Lugard, he did not come to Africa to cure a broken heart. Unlike Joseph Booth—another remarkable contemporary, working as a missionary in nearby Nyasaland—he did not come to Africa as a result of an Australian atheist's challenge: "Are there no savages in Central Africa, and if so why do you not go to them instead of casting these doubtful pearls where no one wants

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them." Rather Junod went for the same reason that other members of his family left their native land—because they felt a call and then were sent by the Mission. At the place to which he was sent he performed the work that he was sent to do as he saw best how to do it. Had he found himself in the same geographical field of endeavor as another famous pioneer Swiss missionary, the Rev. J. G. Christaller of the Basel Mission, who first set down the Twi and Ga languages of the Gold Coast in writing (publishing his first Twi dictionary in 1874), he would doubtless have done as well.

Junod arrived in Africa some three years after the famous Berlin Conference of 1885-86, which had provided, among other things, that religious toleration should be practised in the Portuguese-administered territories—a fact which explains the entry of a Swiss Protestant missionary into Portuguese Catholic territory. He arrived, in other words, at a watershed in African history, when the age of exploration, symbolised by Livingstone and Stanley, was over, and when the age of imperial settlement and conquest, represented by Rhodes and Johnston, was to begin. Indeed, by a historic quirk of fate, Sir Harry Johnston (three years senior to Junod, but with ten years more African experience) landed at Lourenço Marques to take up his post as British Consul there in the same year—1889—that Junod arrived to begin his work for the Swiss Romande Mission. Like Junod, Johnston included zoology, botany, and anthropology among his interests, and—in addition—was known, despite his cynical disposition and freethinking turn of mind, to favor the company of missionaries. One cannot help wondering whether, amidst the press of differing interests that held them both in those first dramatic years, they ever managed to meet.

The development of anthropological literature about Africa would seem to have begun, in a systematic fashion, with the publication of Sir James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* in 1890. Before that date a great amount of assorted data, much of which defied classification, had been accumulated by that type of explorer of which Henry Barth and Joseph Thomson are representative examples. But the major emphasis had been on geography, with astronomy, geology, botany, languages, and ethnology being treated in a more desultory fashion. The publication of *The Golden Bough*, of which the seminal influence is still at

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work, provided a theoretical framework within which further ethnographic researches could be pursued. As we have mentioned we have Junod's word for it that the "revelation" that set him to observe the characteristics of the Bathonga with all the assiduity that he had previously reserved for zoology came to him as a result of Lord Bryce's "chance remark" in 1895. Although we know only that the conversation took place, it would have been surprising if Bryce—then the British Ambassador to Washington—had been unacquainted with Frazer's work, (particularly in view of his allusion to "our Celtic forefathers"), or if the name of Frazer had not been mentioned. We do know that by 1909 Junod was conducting an investigation on the basis of questions provided him by Frazer, and that the results of this investigation were incorporated into the first edition of his work. We may, therefore, regard him as one of the first-generation settlers on Frazer's newly-discovered continent. Upon landing Junod did not seek to become a frontiersman wild but rather, like a good Swiss, marked out a modest area of land, and dug and tilled the soil with care. He did not, like his great contemporary, Frobenius, adventure forth, report the marvelous, and draw poetic conclusions. Frobenius has a sweep and style which appeal to the imagination. Junod's strength lies in the concentration of effort which led him scientifically to observe a people, whom he held in the greatest affection, from every conceivable aspect, and in the greatest detail possible. Frobenius dealt in tribes, nations, and continents. Junod was the student of the Bathonga.

It is, incidentally, of interest that the Bathonga are by no means as unified as certain other African tribes—one has but to think of the Baganda or the Ashanti—and in this respect Lord Hailey's description of them as constituting a "cluster" would seem particularly apposite. Junod was certainly conscious of this, as his statements show. The point has, however, been taken that his concept of the clan as the fundamental unit of the Bathonga remains ambiguous. His statement that the Bathonga nation "is but an enlarged family" has been criticised on the grounds that rather than representing a patrilineal grouping, the tribe represented a linguistic and cultural unit, not necessarily linked by ties of blood.

In this respect it would have been interesting to have had Junod's

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comment on Professor Potekhin's thesis\*, according to which the Bathonga would be neither on the one hand a tribe (such as the Ba-Ronga, the Tembe, or Khose), nor yet a nation (which requires "a common territory, a common language, a common culture, a common economy"), but what he calls a "narodnost," that is to say a group composed of persons of different tribal origins who, without being necessarily akin by direct family ties, live together and have evolved social classes. Potekhin cites the Zulu and Ashanti systems as examples of the "narodnost," and as the Zulu Manukosi amalgamated the Thonga clans, this would presumably have included the Bathonga also. In the process of social evolution, therefore, the "narodnost" is seen as the half-way house between the tribe and the nation.

But what of the Bathonga today? No observer of Junod's stature has emerged to tell us the sequel to his book, and—under contemporary political circumstances—it is, for the moment, virtually precluded that any qualified Bathonga commentator would be permitted to take up the torch that awaits its runner. Some general impressions may, nevertheless, be gleaned. The Bathonga people have become increasingly involved, economically, with the working of the South African and to a lesser extent the Rhodesian mines. On the basis of 1950 census figures it has been conservatively estimated that about 40 per cent of the Bathonga males work in the Union of South Africa alone. Expressed in other terms it is estimated that the average Bathonga male spends only six months of the year at home, the other six months being spent working abroad. (These estimates, incidentally, do not include those Bathonga males who have left the countryside to live in Lourenço Marques). In the mines the Bathonga workers have established a reputation for spending longer periods underground than other groups, and also for being less subject to seasonal absences in order to return home. As most of the Bathonga live in Mozambique, it will be clear that the absence of a substantial proportion of the Bathonga males abroad will have added to labor problems already experienced by the Portuguese administration. The predicament of the Portuguese is, however, one from which they can hardly extricate themselves. After the pacification of the

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\* I. Potekhin: De quelques questions methodologiques pour l'etude de la formation des nations en Afrique au Sud du Sahara: *Presence Africaine*: Dec. 1957-Jan. 1958.

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Bathongas in 1895, the Transvaal mining interests specified that the port of Lourenço Marques—the shortest route for shipping the gold of the Rand overseas—would only be permitted to develop in return for the right for South African interests to recruit contract labor in Portuguese territory. The Bathonga, in short, have provided a labor pool for the South African mines. Altogether over 50 per cent of the African males in Mozambique are now estimated to be wage-earners—a clear indication of the extent to which life has changed since Junod's day.

It is also reported that, under the impact of modern conditions, traditional customs have been much modified. One of the results of the impingement of the outside world upon the Bathonga peoples has, however, been a great increase in the number of accusations of witchcraft: a type of reaction which has also been observed elsewhere. Meanwhile other forces are also at work upon the context in which they live: the United Nations has become directly concerned with conditions in Mozambique, and African political parties from the territory have established themselves, albeit as yet in exile.

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When the first edition of this work appeared in 1912, Africa and the world were, to all appearances, very different from what they are today. The world was still in the first flush of that liberalism and internationalism that preceded the first world war. The white man's task in Africa appeared still, despite the revelations from Leopold's Congo, as a sacred mission, and was accepted as such by African opinion—an opinion that was formed not only by the persuasive power of Lugard's Maxim guns or their equivalent, but also by contact with such men as Junod, whose motives were so patently of the best, and who showed such patient readiness to understand and to appreciate African ways. Yet, by the time that the first world war had delivered the first shock to white hegemony, that quasi-religious conviction that the little African boy whispered to himself as he watched Junod play the organ—"White people are only overcome by death"—was already beginning to fade. The second world war accelerated the process immeasurably, and in so doing revolutionized relations between black and white. By the late 1950's African states were in being and the

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tide of self-rule was spreading south. The vortex of change has not yet reached Delagoa Bay but it is clear that here too the change is coming.

Not only have relations between black and white been altered but so have African aspirations. The word "detrribalised," associated with the creation of a South African proletariat, was not in vogue in Junod's day, although it may perhaps have already been in existence. It would, doubtless, be going too far to assert that the Thonga have become detrribalised—traditions are, after all, sacred to us all, and are not lightly to be abandoned. However, a latter-day Junod might well encounter among the Bathonga the reaction that was met with by Anthony Sampson, formerly editor of the South African magazine *Drum*. When he enquired as to why the circulation of that magazine was declining he was told with uncompromising bluntness that the peoples of South Africa wanted to hear no more about lobola and the ancient ways: that was already well known. They would rather hear about contemporary life and its distractions and pleasures—cars, sports, entertainment; in a word, about modern life.

And yet, as Africans take command of their own destinies once more, as new ways are superimposed upon the old, some of the older values become blurred as the memory of former customs grows dimmer. One of the consequences of this is that written records of these customs become the more highly prized. It is reported, for example, that since the independence of Ghana the demand for the writings of M. J. Field, the English anthropologist, who wrote studies on the Ga peoples between the two world wars, has increased as the younger generation, conscious of the changes, seek to read of the traditional ways as they were set down a quarter of a century ago. The same writer in her recent *Search for Security* has also recorded the social situation which has supervened following the decline of tribal ways.

One may therefore hazard the guess that in the literature of South East Africa Junod may come to hold a place comparable to that held by, for example, R. S. Rattray in West Africa. Both African and European will surely appreciate his clarity, uncomplicated by the methodological jargon which is the bane of recent anthropological literature. Junod himself, in writing, was clearly aware of the value that

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his work would have for comparative ethnology at a later date. And yet it is only now that a beginning is being made in this respect. It is only comparatively recently that Professor Joseph Greenberg of Columbia University posited the existence of a "Niger-Congo family," in place of the "long continued tradition of assigning a separate status to the Bantu." If this thesis should be upheld, the apparent importance of the so-called "Bantu Line"—the 'frontier' dividing Black Africa into two, which runs roughly between Eastern Nigeria and the Cameroons—would recede. At least linguistically we are now told that the languages of Black Africa appear to be related. A *prima facie* case to demonstrate that many customs are also shared might also be established by comparing (for example) those pages of Junod which deal with circumcision rites among the Bathonga with pages in West African literature which deal with the same subject. Junod's description of the "sungi" or lodge bears the most striking resemblance, in its essentials, to K. L. Little's description of the Poro "bush schools" among the Mende of Sierra Leone, who live well over 4,000 miles away. Similar descriptions may also be found in the pages of the Guinean writer Camara Laye, and others.

Yet it is, perhaps, in his description of psychic life that Junod has made his greatest contribution. Here he was truly a pioneer observer, treading a literary path that was later to be travelled by such disparate personalities as Messrs. R. S. Rattray, G. Parrinder, J. B. Danquah, and le Pere Tempels. It is here that Junod has shown his greatest genius. The man of science and the man of imagination seem to have merged into one inspired seeker after truth, while the missionary of Calvinistic antecedents falls silent, suspending judgement until the fascinating process of learning shall have been completed.

We live in a political age. No doubt before long the writings of Junod, like the writings of all others who have written on Southern Africa, will be put to the test by the Africans themselves. One feels little doubt as to the outcome. Writing within the context of his times Junod showed that he already discerned the gathering storm clouds, and indicated the position that he would follow as the situation developed further. Both segregation and the proposed deportation from Southern Africa of the black man he rejected as "absolutely imprac-



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ticable." From his final pages we sense that he would have been ready to say much more on the subject had the matter progressed any further at that time.

Despite contemporary strictures against tribalism as a reactionary force which lends itself to foreign intrigues, we know what Junod meant in his heart when he ended his book with the words: "May God preserve the life of the South African Tribe!" The words represented a prayer for the preservation of the soul of the people he loved. And how final, how decisive, how self-committing is that other exclamation, whose echo remains with us yet: "Africa would no longer be Africa if there were no more Africans."

KEITH IRVINE

## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Not the least remarkable aspect of this book is that its author, whose mother tongue was French, wrote it in English. As E. W. Smith, the anthropologist, noted in his review of the second revised edition, in *Africa*, Vol. 1, (1927), Junod's English had considerably improved by the time he prepared the later edition. The translation into French was not done by Junod and appeared after his death; it was published by Payot, Paris, in 1936, under the title *Mouers et Coutumes des Bantous*, and with the original title as a sub-title. The present edition is a complete reproduction of the second, revised English edition of 1927. Thanks are due to Barnard College and the Columbia University Libraries for providing a rare copy for reproduction purposes.

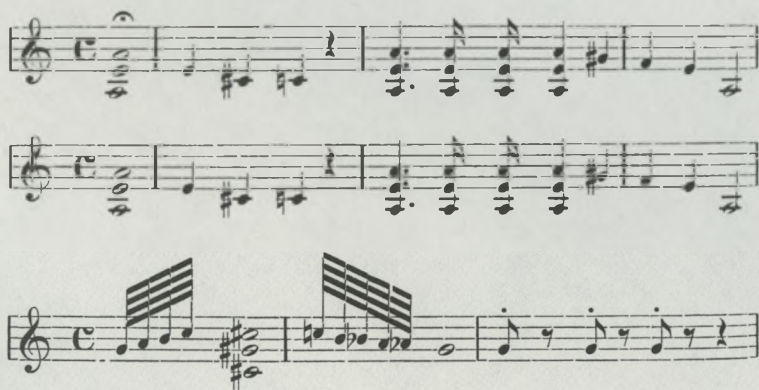
We have retained in the table of contents and in the text the references of the author to the Latin notes for medical men and scientists, i.e., those observations of sexual life which the author could not bring himself to set down in English. However, the Latin notes themselves have been translated into English and will be found in place of the Latin on pages 516 ff.

We have been fortunate to be able to add to Henri Junod's final version of his book the one aspect it really lacked. His version does contain some 110 illustrations but they are indifferent photography. We have now been able to add thirteen full page photographs taken by A. M. Duggan-Cronin (published in his five-volume work of photography, *The Bantu Tribes of South Africa*, edited by Junod's son, Henri Phillipe, in 1935). We have limited our selection to photographs of Bathonga still living in Portuguese East Africa. It was perhaps the last possible moment in which to photograph them in their traditional ways. Already a great many of them had gone to work in the mines of the Union of South Africa and World War II a few years later speeded up this process immeasurably.

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### THE LIFE OF A SOUTH AFRICAN TRIBE

Mulalen was Sokis' little daughter. They bring with them presents, five hundred reis, a hen, a goat, some light beer, perhaps a mat for the widow because hers has been thrown away or a piece of mourning cloth. The inhabitants receive them politely, and spread mats on the ground for them. They tell each other the news (*djungulisana*). Then after having *luma*, they eat and drink. The Ba-Ronga have their drink already prepared: it is the red wine which Banyan merchants sell to them all over the country. The visitors get drunk. They dance, and the mourning ceremony turns into an orgy with dances and songs of all kinds. The singing during this Great Mourning consists either of war songs executed by the men, which are very impressive, or of ordinary dancing songs, the licentious ones being particularly appropriate and being performed by women. (Annotatio 9). In fact they are the proper mourning songs, those which are specially chosen when it is wished duly to lament a great man. I have witnessed these performances at a mourning ceremony of the "breaking of the hut" and shall refer to this subject again. In Vol. II. Part V Ch. II. B. I shall quote some of the mourning songs which have a peculiar stoic character. Here are two others from a collection made by Mrs Audéoud, the wife of one of our missionaries. They were sung at the death of the chief Tshutsha, near Makulane in the Maputju country. One of these was a war song accompanied with drums. It sounded as follows :



Ronga

## THE EVOLUTION OF A MAN FROM BIRTH TO DEATH

The other is a curious apostrophe to the wizards who were believed to have bewitched the deceased, and means : " Good bye, wizard! Good bye, wizard! You will kill people. You come to kill people, you come during the night. "

But the *closing day* arrives at last, the *day of the sprinkling* (shuba). When the grave-diggers have well perspired in their vapour bath, the doctor takes the pot in which the medicine is still boiling. All the women sit down with their children on their backs, the men stand in a line, holding their assagais and sticks in their hands. The doctor sprinkles his decoction over them all with a branch covered with leaves. The children cry because the burning drops hurt them. The women try to hide behind each other. The men gesticulate as if striking enemies with their assagais ; this is to show that their arms are strong and that they can now go to the war, as it would have been taboo for them to join the army before this purification had taken place. Should a man be absent from home, his sticks are also brought to the sprinkling to be purified (1). Then the doctor goes with his pot, sprinkling all the village, the huts, the doors, the backs of the roofs, the fence, the belongings of the deceased which are kept to be distributed amongst the heirs. After this operation, the village is pure as far as material things are concerned. The contamination which had fallen on all of them by reason of their owner's death is removed. Before the sprinkling it would have been dangerous to remove anything. Now if any one should have left anything in the kraal before the death, he can come and recover it. This is the act by which " the mourning is scattered " (hangalasa nkosi).

Visitors go home, having put on their *malopa*, if they are Ba-Ronga ; strings of milala palm leaves round their heads, their necks, arms, and legs, if they belong to Northern clans. The custom of wearing a white handkerchief round the head is spreading. If a goat is killed, every one wears a bracelet made of its skin round the wrist, and the widow and the principal grave-digger

(1) In the Northern clans, says Viguet, a little of this mixture is kept to sprinkle visitors during the following days, because " they are taboo for the things of the village, not having been cleansed ; " (ba yila psa le mutin, hikuba a ba basisiwanga.)

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Before going into battle, certain rites have to be accomplished. In order to stimulate a war-like courage and to imbue the warrior's minds with a certainty of victory, it is necessary to proceed to the performance of the war-songs (*guba*), of the war dances (*gila*), and to administer the medicine which will render the soldiers invulnerable.

### E. WAR SONGS.

The performance of war songs is called *guba*. I have already fully described the Mpfumo national song, (p. 373) which would seem to be more adapted to celebrate a coronation than to serve as an incentive to battle ; it is however used indiscriminately for both purposes.

Another war-song which is very popular in the Mpfumo clan is the following :

Zulu : U ngwa si mu thini, Mayeye ?  
U banga muhlaba, u bulala bantu !  
Ronga : U ta ku mu yini, Nwayeye ?  
U banga ntlhaba, u dlaya bhanu !  
What will you succeed in doing to him, Nwayeye ?  
You take the country and slay the people !

This is a question addressed to Nwayeye, the rival of the chief Zihlahla ; Nwayeye was placed in authority near Lourenço Marques by the Portuguese between 1860 and 1870. He accepted the position, but was unable to retain it any length of time, and the recollection of his failure is perpetuated in this song which is intended to extol the royal family of Mpfumo.

A third song, also in vogue with the Mpfumo warriors, runs thus :

Zulu : Zi m' thini ? A ba ze zi ba bona, abantu bezizwe !  
Ronga : Hi ta ku yini ? A ba te hi ba bona, bhanu ba matiko !  
What shall we say ? Let them come and let us see them, the  
people of the enemy's country !

This is a defiance hurled at the adversaries.

## THE ARMY

In Nondwane, they also sing this last song ; another runs as follows :

Zulu : Ngambala ! ngi file...O..o..o.. Zinkomo zito !  
Ronga : Nwamboten, ndji file ! O..o..o.. Tihomu teru !  
My friend ! I am killed. Oh ! oh ! oh ! Our oxen !

The warriors doubtless refer to the ruin which would be entailed were the enemy to carry off their cattle, and thus they encourage one another to fight stubbornly !

Another Ronga song performed in the guba ceremony is this :

Zia yi khalelo muhlu ya se mananga  
We are weeping for the giraffe of the desert.

The giraffe may be the chief of the clan whom the warriors are determined to protect, or perhaps the enemy's chief whom they will go and kill.

This song is also one of the great guba songs of the Nkuna clan, but the words are slightly different. I have collected two others :

Hi yi kwa makhosi !  
Si phuma ka makhosi, Si gambuza !  
U mkhonto use sandhleni, Eji ! Eji !  
U mkhonto usao gobee...

War comes from the chiefs !  
It is ordered by the chiefs ! We go and kill !  
The spear is in our hands ! Eji ! Eji !  
The spear kills and bends in the wound !

The oldest of the Nkuna guba songs, which was already in use before the arrival of Manukosi, at the beginning of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century, when the army still formed in line and not in circle, runs as follows :

Hi bo yima hi bo yima !  
Mi teka burena mi nyika tinuba (?) ta bambe.  
Let us stand fast, let us stand fast !  
Do not let your strength go, it would help the enemy to conquer.

The words of this song are Thonga, as the Zulus had not yet imposed their terminology on the Thonga yimpi.

One of the finest war songs is that sung in the armies of Maputju

## THE LIFE OF A SOUTH AFRICAN TRIBE

and Tembe, an antiphon seemingly very ancient, which changes from the minor to the major, producing a truly grandiose effect : (For the music of most of these songs, see Vol. II. Part V.)

"At break of day," sings the solist,....  
"Who was it that crowned thee, Muwai, king of Maputju?" reply  
the warriors.

Muwai is the great-great-grandfather of the chief Mabai, deposed in 1896. He reigned at the close of the XVIII<sup>th</sup> century, his son Makasana having been chief from 1800 to 1850. Muwai is compared to the rising sun, or at least the song recalls his coronation, which must have taken place very early in the morning, at daybreak. It is evidently in praise of the royal family that the entire army chants this glorious souvenir.

Loko ku ti qa, loko ku ti qa  
U bekwe ngubane Muwai ?  
Muwai, ka Mabudu ! Muwai ka Mabudu !  
U bekwe ngubane ?

At day break — At day break  
Who was it that crowned thee, Muwai ?  
Muwai, king of Maputju ! Muwai, king of Maputju  
Who was it that crowned thee ?

As we see, the war songs are tolerably short ; a declamation of three or four words by a soloist (musimi) who dances in the middle of the circle, and a chorus sung by all the warriors, stamping their feet on the ground and striking their shields with their assagais. (Hence the exclamation "Eji" found at the close of some sentences.) Or sometimes the whole throng brandish the assagai in a rythmical fashion, raising it first to the right, then to the left, afterwards inclining it to the side, and lastly downwards as if to pierce...

When the great war-induna wants the song to stop, he gives a signal. At once all the shields are elevated and a sibilant murmur runs through the ranks : shi-shi-shi-shi, or a special click : nqu-nqu-nqu. Hence the verb *nqunquzela*, to stop a war song.

And then the war dance will take place.

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### F. THE WAR DANCE.

The *guba* is itself a kind of war dance, as dancing does not mean a change in the dancer's position. Nodding with the head, gesticulation of the hands and slow motions of the feet constitute a dance (*kina*). In some *guba* songs, there may be a backward and forward movement of all the warriors to widen or narrow their circle. I have even seen men crossing the *mukhumbi*, two by two, or three by three, during the *guba*.

But the true war-dance is the *gila* (Ro.) or *giya* (Dj.) the representation of deeds of valour by warriors who have killed an enemy in battle. The massed chorus of the *guba* is most imposing, but still more deeply does the *gila* impress one by its wildness. Look at this elderly man who suddenly detaches himself from the circle, stamping with all his might on the ground. His feet beat the earth in cadence, one blow being long, the three following ones short: -ooo. He goes on, making the ground shake, brandishing his weapons with all his might, perspiring from his efforts and pronouncing Zulu words which the throng interrupts by wild shoutings, as if to encourage him... Then he returns to his place, and the whole army concludes the performance by a kind of whistling: zu... iiiiii. .... prolonged on a high and piercing note, which suddenly descends to a deep and guttural tone: i. aaaaa..... He has hardly resumed his place in the ranks when a young man springs into the circle, jumping like an antelope, holding his *assagai* and gesticulating all the while, as if transfixing an invisible enemy. His eyes glare like those of a wild beast, and immediately the army entones a song, his song, the one which has been composed to glorify his deed. Possibly his return to the ranks will be greeted by another shout: I..a...Nda-u! — Lion! comparing him to a lion returning to his forest which nobody will dare to attack. The encouragement given by the warriors to the *bagili* and their great final cry are called *khuza* or *khunzela*.

"At that very moment," says Mankhelu, "the hearts of the young men tremble in their breasts! Their hair stands on end..."



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An extraordinary war spirit comes over them all..." And every one having witnessed these performances in the Thonga or Zulu mukhumbi will confess that they are wonderfully impressive. It is a mixture of dramatic, epic and lyric poetry, three literary genres which are still confounded, the whole being enhanced by a deep, wild music and subject to the laws of a certain artistic style.

The fighting instincts are excited to the highest pitch by these patriotic choruses and dramatic representations. Thus should the troops be slow in making a start, the young men go dancing to the chief and beg him to "grant them permission" to go forth and slay, or rather to "give them men" to slaughter (*ku nyika*). The Native idea appears to be that the chief holds the lives of the enemies in his hands; without his permission they cannot go forward, but this once given, they rush enthusiastically to the fray. They even go so far as to taunt him with being an old woman, a coward, because he will not let them go at once (1).

When the excitement has reached the culminating point, and it has been definitely decided to fight, the time has arrived for the magic treatment by which the warriors will be rendered invulnerable.

### G. ADMINISTERING THE WAR-MEDICINE.

This custom is probably of ancient origin, but I have reason to believe that, amongst the Ba-Ronga, it was practised without any great formality until the advent of the Zulu influence, when it was brought into much greater prominence and invested with more solemnity. "Drinking the war-medicine" took place on several occasions during the revolt of 1894 to 1895. At *Zihlahla* this potion was administered to all warriors before the rebel attack

(1) Gungunyana, on one occasion, when his warriors were importuning him with similar requests, sent the more ardent spirits to wage war unarmed against the wild beasts, and I was told they actually succeeded in capturing a leopard alive and brought it back to the chief!

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on the town of the 14<sup>th</sup> October 1894 ; also prior to the ambuscade in the outskirts of Lourenço Marques, on the 7<sup>th</sup> January 1895, and before the battle of Morakwen, the 2nd February following. According to my informant, the chief doctor of the army prepared the medicine in a huge dish with leaves and roots cut into slices. These ingredients possessed an effervescent quality ; the medicine-man stirred up the decoction and with it sprinkled the whole army formed in a circle. After this every warrior was fully persuaded that he was invulnerable, that the bullets would be deflected on either side of him, or, even should they hit him, they would be flattened against his body and fall harmless to the ground. The charm could only be broken by the warrior turning his back to the foe. Then the bullets might pass through him. I have met with very intelligent Natives who were perfectly convinced of this fact, although open to reasonable argument on all other points. They told me that certain Natives who were bowled over by grapeshot, picked themselves up after the fight, came to life again, or rather regained consciousness and then, with their fingers, extracted the bullets, which had all remained imbedded in the skin!

A *Nondwane* warrior described to me, in the following terms, the administering of the magic potion, as it was done on the 7<sup>th</sup> January 1895 before the battle of Morakwen. The whole army was assembled at Nkanyen, on the bank of the Nkomati. It was there that the magician prepared the medicine, with two young girls as assistants. While he was brewing the mixture and making it froth, the soldiers, formed in a semi-circle, looked on, standing erect, poising their assagais on a level with their heads. Then a *ntjhopfa* was cut down (the shrub of oblivion, often employed by Native doctors and of which we have already noted the use in other ceremonials) and a branch laid across the road. The several battalions were called up, one after the other, and every man had to jump over the branch and take a mouthful of the medicine, which he spat out again, pronouncing the sacramental *tsu* which accompanies the offerings made to the gods : he subsequently went off, running and dancing and getting ready to go forth and kill. When each one had taken his share of the medicine and it was all finished, the doctor said to them : "Now I

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