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Record Cover.

C N. Manning

Department.

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Bawenda.

Subject

References :

HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE BAWENDA

AND

DESCRIPTION OF RITES AND CEREMONIES

OBSERVED BY THE TRIBE ON THE DEATH

AND BURIAL OF A CHIEF.

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DEPARTMENT OF NATIVE AFFAIRS,
TRANSVAAL.

PREFATORY NOTE.

I have set down, without coherent plan, in the simple language of the four old fellows, who bore the wisdom of ages on their shrunken, intelligent faces, a description of the migration of the Bawenda from the Lower Congo Basin to "Dzata" in the Njelele Valley. These four men were unearthed and sent in to me by their Chiefs because of their profound knowledge of Bawenda History.

In order to appreciate the descriptions, as supplied to me, I have thought it better to write the first few pages in the first person.

Despite its literary imperfections, of which I am conscious, it has the merit of being comparatively authentic, for I have been at some pains to obtain corroboration from other reliable sources.

The second part contains a brief description of the Rites and Ceremonies observed by the Bawenda on the death and burial of a Chief.

Louis Trichardt
January 1909.

Ernest Stubbs,
Assistant Magistrate, and
Sub Native Commissioner,
Louis Trichardt.

SHORT HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE BAWENDA.

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Dzata, the Chief's Great Place, is the original home of the Bawenda whence we were led by our Chief Dzembanyeka to the Njelele Valley some two hundred years ago, (Approximately A.D. 1700.) Dzata was not far from the "great waters (the sea) of which the white people only are not afraid". (Asked why they described the Sea thus, they stated that it was the white *man* only who could build ships with which they "walked over the Sea" of which the Natives are so afraid.) We left some of our people at Dzata. We do not know whether they are still dwellers within the Great Place whence the name Dzata is derived. Dzata was not far from the Land of many rivers which all join and in one body rush to the Sea. Our Ancestors have told us that it was a warm climate, warmer than the Njelele, and not far in the East were long pools of silent waters (Lakes), they are unlike the Sea because of their silence.

On the march South with his Impis "Dzembanyeka" encountered on the banks of the Zambesi the Mashamba whom we fought and vanquished with heavy loss on their side. The Mashamba became our captives ultimately agreeing to become the followers of Dzembanyeka and thus considerably augmenting our fighting strength. We continued on our way South and after many long months of marching reached the Njelele Valley where Dzembanyeka established his Great Place which he named "Dzata", after the home of his forefathers in the distant North-Land whence we had come. The Mashamba were absorbed by the Bawenda, but they have preserved some of their characteristics in spite of the fusion.

Dzembanyeka was a hunter of great prowess and met his death a few years after our arrival in the Njelele while out hunting on the Tshaendula Hill in the Njelele, in connection with which the following legend is told:- "Dzembanyeka evinced

a peculiar liking for hunting and tracking Rock Rabbits to their lair, and one day while out hunting, he espied a rabbit which he wounded with his Assegai and tracked to its lair in a Cave, in giving chase he, being fleet of foot, soon out-stripped his fellow huntsmen. While making his way into the Cave a big stone slid from the side and partially entombed him. His fellow huntsmen followed on his trail but after much fruitless search returned to Dzata and reported the Chief missing. The tribe headed by Toho-ea-Ndou went out in search, and Toho-ea-Ndou who had got separated from the others found him still partially entombed in the Cave. Toho-ea-Ndou spoke to Dzembanyeka who instructed him to return as soon as possible with assistance to extricate him. Toho-ea-Ndou in wending his way back for assistance was overcome by an irresistible impulse to let his father die in the Cave and thus become Chief of the Bawenda, to which position he was Heir. He decided not to tell the people of his father's ~~per~~ perilous plight. Several days afterwards, prompted by curiosity, he returned to the Cave and lo, his father had disappeared from beneath the stone. Seized by an overwhelming fear that his father had been assisted by the "Spirits" to extricate himself and had returned to the people to expose his treachery, he took to the Mountains where he spent many long days filled with gloomy forebodings. No one having come in search of him, he regarded this as a happy augury, plucked up courage and boldly returned to Dzata where he was warmly welcomed by the unsuspecting tribe to whom he spun the yarn that he had travelled great distances in search of his father but had failed to find him. Shortly afterwards he was proclaimed Chief amidst great rejoicing. Nothing more was heard of Dzembanyeka who had been spirited away because, said the tribe, of his lust for hunting and consequent neglect of his obligations towards his people."

Toho-ea-Ndou had a remarkable personality and made a great impression on his people while he ruled them, but he had two ambitious Uncles who grudged him his position, and it was

was not long after his succession to the Chieftainship that they began to plot his assassination. These Uncles were influential and had many sympathisers. Toho-ea-Ndou got to learn of the conspiracy and decided to disappear from Dzata. Accordingly he made secret preparations, and one dark night slipped away unobserved accompanied by his faithful Prime Minister Kalimunyane, and four of his wives. Beyond the fact that Kalimunyane was met by some of the people of the tribe who were returning home at a place called "Maseta" (A salt-pan said to be North of Rustenburg) and who endeavoured to persuade him to return to Dzata, nothing since has been heard of Toho-ea-Ndou, his wives, or Kalimunyane. It is supposed that they were making their way back to the original "Dzata." Ravelle, the son of Toho-ea-Ndou, by one of the wives he had left at Dzata, succeeded to the Chieftainship in spite of the chicanery of Toho-ea-Ndou's Uncles. Peace prevailed for many years under Ravelle's rule only to be disturbed by a sudden onslaught by the Bapede tribe led by Chief Sekwate. The Bawenda were unprepared for the attack and, after the capture of nearly all their cattle by the enemy they fled into the Mountains where they were followed by the Bapede whom they subsequently repulsed with heavy loss.

Interneine strife now prevailed among the Bawenda. Sibasa and Matshesebe, Ravelle's younger brothers, actuated by jealousy for their elder brother, and aided by malcontents, fought and killed Ravelle in the Njelele. Mpofo succeeded Ravelle; he being the rightful Heir. Ravelle, before his defeat, had already established his Chief Kraal on the site of Mr Stevens' present residence, half a mile distant from Louis Trichardt.

Sibasa remained in the Njelele in charge of those of the tribe who seceded from Ravelle's rule. Later he attempted to decoy Mpofo to a spot near "Masequa's" with the object of slaying him but Mpofo got to hear of the trap laid for him and naturally avoided it. Mpofo was much incensed at Sibasa's treachery and removed with his women and cattle to "Malitseland". After arranging for the safe custody of his womenfolk and

cattle

cattle at that place, he returned to the Great Place (Stevens'), organised his Impis and gave Sibasa battle, killing a good number and forcing the enemy to retreat to the plains beyond the Mountains. Sibasa, nothing daunted, rallied his men and forced Mpofo back to his Hoofd-Stad. Here after a few days desultory fighting luck turned in Mpofo's favour and he chased Sibasa and his Impis back to the Njelele, killing a few stragglers. Mpofo gained much prestige among the neighbouring tribes as a result of his victory over Sibasa, and many waverers joined his ranks and strengthened his fighting forces. Mpofo was poisoned by one of his wives who had two sons - Ramaboya and Ramapulana for whom she was very ambitious. Ramapulana succeeded Mpofo. Ramapulana's rule was a most troublous one.

Ramaboya, whose mother desired his appointment to the Chieftaincy, persistently plotted against Ramapulana with the object of overthrowing his rule.

Ramapulana sought and obtained the assistance of Hendrik Potgieter with his Commando as a result of which Ramaboya was driven off and Ramapulana finally established as Chief. It was not long, after this that Ramapulana had trouble with the Boers who had settled at Schoemansdahl. Never a strong character, and discouraged by the difficulties which surrounded his appointment as Chief, he fled to "Vuba" (Lisbon) where he shortly afterwards died and was succeeded by Magato. Magato had trouble with the Boers and was often driven back into the Mountains with loss, but once in their fastnesses, he could defy them with impunity, and never admitted defeat.

Magato died in 1895, having before his death according to general knowledge, nominated Maimo the son of his favourite wife as his successor. Mpefu, one of Magato's sons at the time he learnt of his father's death was working in Kimberly.

Senthumula, another son, was transport riding in Rhodesia.

Senthumula on his way back to the Hoofd-Stad learned of his father's death from people at the Salt-pan near Mara. At "Ndalam-be" Senthumula, on his arrival, was advised not to go up to the
Hoofd-

Hoofd-Stad as he might be killed by Maimo's followers, suspicion having rested on him for some time past as being an aspirant to the Chieftaincy in the event of Magato's death.

Senthumula decided to remain at Ndalambe and there await Mpefu's return. A few days later Mpefu arrived at Ndalambe and took counsel with Senthumula and certain other members of his father's followers who did not desire Maimo as Chief, when it was decided to march on the Hoofd-Stad or Great Place and give Maimo battle. Mpefu and Senthumula led their little band to the assault and after a mild skirmish, and a little desultory firing, Maimo fled to "Malimore" leaving Mpefu and Senthumula masters of the situation.

On the following morning Mpefu chased Maimo out of Malimore across the Doornrivier into neutral territory. Mpefu pleased with his success and Senthumula's co-operation, allocated to Senthumula a certain area at "Shefefe" over which he might rule subject to his, Mpefu's, paramountcy. It was not very long after this that Senthumula, spurred by his ambition to become Paramount Chief of the Bawenda, began to manifest truculent tendencies towards Mpefu, culminating in open insult to Mpefu, which happened in this wise: On the occasion of his sister's marriage Mpefu sent an invitation to Senthumula to attend the wedding ceremony. Senthumula refused the invitation but sent his mother and sisters to represent him. While the ceremony and feasting were in progress one of Mpefu's men named Shibekila removed from the Hoofd-Stad to Senthumula, Senthumula sent a message to Mpefu that Shibekila had arrived at his kraal, Mpefu replied that Shibekila need not return but that the rifle he had taken with him should be returned. Senthumula sent back a message to say: - "I have got the rifle and won't return it". Information then came to hand that Senthumula had for some time prior to this been making secret preparations to fight Mpefu, for he had removed all his mealies across the Doornrivier to a locality near Mr. J.D. Gill's store. Mpefu sent a messenger to Senthumula's kraal to make investigations, he returned reporting that

that Senthumula had vacated his kraal and was in open revolt, having retreated to "Manabela Kopjes" where he had established his base and had started to loot and plunder the kraals of Mpefu's people situate at the foot of the Mountains. Mpefu marched out with his Impi and, after a little fighting in which Mpefu himself took no conspicuous part, having directed operations from a safe distance at the Doornrivier, succeeded in surrounding Senthumula at Manabela Kopjes.

Senthumula, realising that the game was up, decided to make a dash for freedom but before doing so, it is said, he accounted for most of the killed and wounded on Mpefu's side, he being an excellent marksman and armed with, in those days, a modern weapon. As he descended the kopje accompanied by a little band of ten men including Induna Manabela he shouted: "close in I am coming out", but this challenge met with no enthusiastic response, instead of closing in Mpefu's braves did the other thing—scrambled for cover with indecent haste. Senthumula got through clothed only in a "Tsinde" (Loin-skin) and made his way into the Boer lines a mile distant.

The Boers under Phillip Eybers were encamped on the banks of the Doornrivier whither they had been sent in connection with Rinderpest and were eye-witnesses of the whole scene. Mpefu in answer to taunts of cowardice, gives as his excuse for Senthumula getting through, that his Impi was attacked in the rear by the Boers while surrounding Senthumula, and owing to this he was forced to make a gap through which Senthumula made good his escape.

Members of this Commando deny the accuracy of this statement and aver that not a shot was fired by them on Mpefu. Mpefu's successes caused him to suffer from a "swelled head" and he began to have visions of defeating in combat not only any Native tribe, but the white man, he thus became a menace to the Settlers living on the boundary of his Territory. Representations were made by the white settlers to Commandant-General Joubert who raised a Commando, fought and drove Mpefu and his followers across the border into Mashonaland.

While the Anglo-Boer War was in progress many of Mpefu's followers returned to their kraals in the Mountains.

Later Mpefu himself returned and settled at the Hoofd-Stad from which he was eventually shifted, after having given a little trouble, and located in the Njelele Valley near the site of Dzata, the home of his Ancestors. He has lost much of his arrogance, and rules his people with success.

Senthumula and Maimo have been accommodated in a Location on the Mitshaba flats, the latter being subordinate to the former.

The Bawenda tribe is roughly estimated at 100,000 souls.

rites and ceremonies observed by the Bawenda
on the death and burial of a Chief.

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Upon the death of a Bawenda Chief the first thing done is to gather herbs from the veldt, which, when gathered, are tied to the arms and legs of the corpse. The corpse is dressed in the clothes ordinarily worn by the Chief in his life-time; a black bull is slaughtered, and the raw hide placed under the corpse which lies in the "Chief Hut." The placing of the hide under the remains signifies that the Chief has "died a Chief", that he was recognised as such by the tribe, and that he was not regarded as an outcast. Twenty black oxen and one black bull are then sent for and brought to the kraal of the Chief. The bull is not to be killed by rifle or assegai, the young men of the tribe have to charge the bull, which, at this stage, through constant goading with assegais has been worked into a frenzied condition, seize it and one of their number armed with an axe kills the bull by striking it a heavy blow behind the head; the contents of the bull's paunch are taken and strewn on the grave after the burial of the Chief; this is to convey an assurance to the "Spirits" that the deceased Chief shall be succeeded by the rightful heir, under whose rule the tribe hopes to live contentedly.

Three to five days after the bull has been killed the twenty black oxen are killed. If there are rival claimants to the Chieftainship the whole twenty head are killed off on the third day after the killing of the bull, as the young bloods supporting the rival claimants are, at this time, anxious to have their fill of meat to strengthen them in the event of recourse being had to arms in order to settle the disputed Chieftainship. The twenty head are divided among the men of the tribe and the wives of the late Chief, the latter getting the carcasses of ten beasts. The distribution of the meat is the signal for mourning

the

the death of the Chief. Before this no member of the tribe, not even the wives, is allowed to publicly mourn the Chief's death. On the third day the body is removed to the temporary burial ground by the "Magota" (Inner Council) and interred. After the grave has been covered in, the young men of the tribe build a kraal round the Chief's grave, into which twenty black cows and calves and one black bull are driven. These animals are turned out to graze during the day, and at the setting of the sun are kraaled for the night, as the Bawenda have it: "Na kose ya ou fa". For three months the cattle are kraaled in this kraal. The kraaling of the cattle with the Chief is done with the object of satisfying the "Spirits" that the tribes of the late Chief have still cattle in plenty, and peace reigns among them.

At dawn on the first day of the last week of the third month the kraal round the grave is destroyed and one built alongside a hut, which is now erected over the grave. A doorway is made in the hut, which is finished off in the same fashion as the ordinary hut. The black cattle are nightly kraaled at this place until the remains of the Chief are removed to the Ancestral burial ground. Any increase of the cows, if of a colour other than black, is immediately destroyed and the flesh buried or burnt. No definite time is fixed for the exhumation and reinterment of the remains in the Ancestral burial place.

It is only when the tribe begins to have ill luck, in the shape of famine and disease, that the "Spirits" commune with the "Magota" and warn them that the Chief has lain too long, that steps are taken to exhume the body. The "Magota" gives an order for the cultivation of mealies on a sacred piece of ground always reserved for the purpose adjacent to the ancestral graves.

When the mealies are harvested beer is made from the grain and taken by the "Magota" to the temporary grave. Some of the beer is offered to the Spirits to strengthen them in their conflict with the evil Spirits which have brought trouble on the tribe; the residue is kept for the consumption of the reigning Chief, the "Magota" and old men of the tribe during the long and tedious

tedious ceremonies attendant on the exhumation and conveyance of the remains to the ancestral burial place. Incidentally Mpefu mentioned that if he were to die, and his body temporarily buried in the Njelele, it would take fifty days to remove the exhumed remains to the ancestral burial place. The progress is slow and whenever a halt is called, which, it may be imagined, is at short intervals, offerings, accompanied by incantations, are made to the Spirits. The twenty black cows with calves and the black bull are driven along to the ancestral burial ground and there kraaled with the other cattle belonging to the predeceased Chief.

Arrived at the ancestral grave yard, preparations are made for a feast on a large scale. Ten black oxen with white bellies are driven into the kraal and slaughtered by the young men, beer is provided and, at a signal from the reigning Chief, all the men present strip themselves of every vestige of clothing and in their nude state commence to feast, drink and dance with that reckless abandon of which the savage only is capable. While the dancing and hilarity are at their height, and amidst incantations, the Chief's remains are lowered to the grave by the "Magota".

After the grave has been covered with earth the contents of the black bull's paunch are again strewn on the grave.

The feasting and dancing having been continued for some days after the burial, the Chief winds up the ceremony by expressing confidence in his "Magota" exhorting his tribe to be loyal and obedient and warning them against their enemies.

Magato's remains have not yet been exhumed, Mpefu and the "Magota" intended to do so in 1909, but through East Coast restrictions could not get permission to remove the black cattle to the site of the present grave, thence to the ancestral grave yard.

MPEFU AND HIS TRIBE
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After the death of the Chief Magato the tribe was ruled by Mpefu. The tribe at this time occupied the Zoutpansberg Mountains extending from the Salt Pan to approximately the White flag whither they had migrated with the Chief Dzimbanyika some two hundred years ago. The White Flag forming the boundary tribal division between Magato and Sibasa. The majority of the tribe occupied Kraals situate on the main range behind which there are two parallel and smaller ranges. On both the smaller ranges a certain number of the people resided. The main range runs west and east. In consequence of defiant attitude of Mpefu the Republican Government sent a Commando which attacked him in 1898. He was worsted and fled to Rhodesia.

He was found there in 1901 a refugee. He came back during Martial Law, 1901, without permission and was returned. He made appeals to be allowed to return. Eventually this was allowed on the understanding that he would have to reside under conditions and on land to be pointed out by the Milner Administration.

His father's Territory had never been defined by the late Republic but before the Anglo-Boer war it was arranged for a Commission to do so. Sir Godfrey Lagden, the then Commissioner for Native Affairs, asked for a Commission to do this as an unfulfilled obligation. This was done and a Location indicated. Mpefu was told that his father's old Location was not available and he was not to go there: he did so and built huts. He appealed to the Lieut Governor who at the time was Paramount Chief, and final appeal. Sir A. Lawley told him to obey orders he had received and go to Location pointed out. He did not object but delayed departure which resulted in the destruction of his Kraals in the Hoofd Stad and the eviction of his women to Njelele in 1905. The Njelele Location which is

approximately 30,000 acres , was demarcated in 1904.

In 1907 as a result of representations made by Mr Peachy, the then Acting Native Commissioner, the Government allowed Mpefu to settle a limited number of ~~farms~~ families on Fort Alexander as caretakers of the ancestral graves situate near the Hoofd Stad.

Mpefu is occupying his Location in the Njelele and he has with him 10,000 souls but his total following is about 23,500 souls.

Georges Rubbt

S.M.C.

Louis Trichardt

24 8 1912.

Brief notes on certain Chiefs.

- 1). Matoh & Ranagoch are residents of Groot-Spelonken & occupy these locations. They are Basuto.
- 2). Tuprefu is within the area of S.W.A. Louis Trichardt. He is the son of late Magato a descendant of Ramaphulana and Toho-ea-ndhou (the original founder of Muvenda Tzibie which he brought down from north of his pops. Tuprefu was driven from his hoofstad behind Louis Trichardt before late war. He returned from Rhodesia & was finally settled in Nyilele Valley, present location. He attempted to re-occupy the old hoofstad but was ejected about 1905. He is according to Bawenda ideas the highest in rank.
- 3). Silhasa or Shilhasa has a following of some 33,000 people and with ~~to~~ 10 other chiefs comes under S.W.A. Groot-Spelonken. His personal name is Ramaramisa, he is a reputed son of late hegegisa son of

of Ramaruma, a descendant of Toho-ea-ndhou & is therefore of high birth rank. It is the custom of most Bauenda chiefs to continue the title of preceding ones. Sihasa has been the title of about 4 chiefs since assumed on the heir formally taking the chieftainship into his hands when his predecessor's remains have been transferred to the Burial Ground. That of the Sihasa's can be seen at Pepiti although not perhaps the exact place of burial.

Mpafuri whose personal name is Mahwarela is not of the real line but is a Bauenda of high standing. His father Mpafuri lived in the same Kraal as he occupies not far from the present new offices at Sihasa.

Ramputa is a cousin of chief Sihasa & of the direct line - he occupies a large tract of land south

South of the Limpopo &
north of the Motale
& Tundudya Lake. His
following is on a
par with other Tswana
chiefs such as Komondo,
Madyihandela & Ketsianda
of the Silhasa District.

Near the Lake about
which the natives have
many traditions resided
the famous fine-
workers etc. and at
present the Taba-
sindi priesthood
are still to be found
amongst Headman
Keshipala's people. Their
duties consist chiefly
in being present at
burial rites etc.

 H. Manning

27/8/12

Mziligayi's people
never seriously dis-
turbed the Silhasa
people from the North

Sibasa. August, 1910.

C.A. Wheelwright Esqr. C.M.G.R.M. & N.C.

Zomppansberg.

Dear Mr. Wheelwright,

Some time ago you requested me to collect particulars relating to that large though not well known tribe of Natives, the Bavenda and you mentioned certain points especially .

Owing to various ^ucases at the Sibasa office and my not infrequent absence on District duty this matter has been much interrupted. However I have already obtained statements from several prominent headmen and forwarded them to you with a few photos to illustrate contents a little.

You will notice that although the natives making the statements represent some of the best informed Bavenda they are biased (no doubt unconsciously) in favour of their respective sections and they contradict each other a great deal. The want of any written records is a great drawback when one endeavours to collect definite data.

Unlike Asiatics and such people the Bantu are hardly capable of furnishing with certainty any historical facts dating back more than a generation or two.

Owing to the frequent absence of Revd. Schwellnus on various duties I have been unable to ~~obtain~~ obtain much valuable information from him to augment such personal knowledge as I happen to have but however im-^{what}perfect this latter may be I submit it for/ it is worth .

(1) Numerous genealogical statements were made by different Native "graybeards" but in every instance they differed materially and I therefore attach my own "trees" which

though/

though probably open to a good deal of correction, constitutes a framework to work upon.

- (2) Various authorities are much divided on the question of the Bavenda's place of origin. Some assert the Congo Basin, others the Zambesi Valley etc.

Whether any of these theories be correct in regard to the very remote past which may not be of practical interest it will perhaps never be ascertained but coming to a more recent era, the consensus of opinion is undoubtedly to the effect that the people now known as Bavenda were settled in the land of the Makalanga (in present Rhodesia) and spoke Shikalanga before immigrating into what is now Northern Transvaal. They appear to have belonged to the great Bantu family, as is shown by some of their oldest words.

Before these people emigrated it appears certain that ~~they~~^{they} comprised one of the numerous tribes incorporated under a powerful paramount chief having sway over an immense stretch of country lying chiefly between the Limpopo and the Zambesi Rivers.

He was the "Mambo" (Supreme Chief Emperor ^hParaoch). It is unfortunately impossible to definitely locate several tribes and places mentioned in what are only legends amongst the present Bavenda but much would be cleared up if you could obtain authentic information from officials in Rhodesia as to where the "Mtinima", "Bulozwi", and "Munyaji" areas are. These names are much interwoven in Bavenda legends relating to their origin. During Chief Mpefus residence as a refugee with his tribe in Rhodesia he is said to have been visited by messengers from the Bulozwi chief who sent greetings to "one whose section came from the same stock". Unless I am much mistaken chieftainess

Madjadjis

Madjadjis so - called Basuto originated from the Bulozwi and speak of this. The descendants of the real Bavenda families in several instances have Semitic features and many customs and manners described in the Old Testament are practically repeated in their entirety by these people.

On the other hand traces of Mohammedanism are found and many will not eat meat at all. These customs are apart from these of the Bavenda people ^{who} are associated with the Bavenda in Transvaal and observe a great number of rules under their somewhat rigid caste. The Zimbabwe is not all ^{un} known to the Bavenda and they ~~are~~ not infrequently mention these Ruins though they cannot give any satisfactory nor even possible theory in regard thereto but I was once informed by an old man that a light coloured race built the Zimbabwe and used to visit there "accompanied by large dogs having long hair like tassels". I am personally convinced that the originators of the Zimbabwe and other old workings were warlike traders who left faint traces in the native races North of the Limpopo much as the Arabs have done in East Africa, although there is a distinct and well known tribe the Swahili as the result of the fusion of races.

Several of the ports on the East Coast have relics suggesting visits of some civilised people many years before the arrival of the Portuguese via the Cape and it is not unlikely that the former came as far ~~as~~ South ~~Africa~~ as Chinda or Beira and visited the present Rhodesia.

The wearing of antique beads copper and iron ornaments as heirlooms by the Bavenda, traces of peculiar old customs and various other circumstances suggest very strongly that

this/

this tribe formed part of a large conglomerate nation in Makalangaland as far back as it is possible to ascertain. According to Professor Hall, the Zimbabwe was not erected by the Bantu but he mentions that present native residents often have Semitic features as have the Bavenda who are Bantu in my opinion and if so could not have originally come from the Congo.

Accounts as to the exodus of the Bavenda from their place of origin are contradictory but there appears no doubt that the chief Toho-ca-Ndhou (Elephant Head) broke away with his section from the paramount chief of the Makalanga tribes and came South, resting at a few ~~park~~ places en route particularly at Dombo-la-Kuzwane (Stone of God) where traces of their sojourn can still be found such as holes in what were once soft rocks and made for playing the Native game of "draughts".

The stones are now said to have hardened and display also old foot prints of men and animals. The tribe is said to have been fairly powerful and used the Shikalanga language. Only a few women accompanied the tribe, viz

(3) wives of the chief and certain indunas.

(3) After crossing the Limpopo they passed the present Messina Copper Mine which area was then under a small chief, Msina whose people were copper workers (probably of metal obtained from dumps of waste rock thrown on the surface of ancient workings). The tribe settled at Msekwa North of Louis Trichardt and then came on to their principal residence, Tshiendeulu Mountain on the North side of the Njelele River. To this day Tshiendeulu is regarded by the Bavenda in much the same light as Mecca is by the Mohammadans. The people swore by ancestral names such as "Shabumbye" and "Singo" and descendants of the original

line/

line preserve these as tribal distinctions or "Izibongo", although sections unconnected with Toho-ca-Ndhous own line use others. Chief Makwarela Mpafuri, descendant of Toho-ca-Ndhou's Induna Mpafuri (Mpapuli "Cleaver of men") uses the word "Kutame".

The tribe met with little resistance from the few peaceful people found in the neighbourhood of the Njelele Valley. These latter were principally the **Bangona** tribe together with a few people known as the **Kumumala** and **Bagweneni**: practically all were either dispersed or absorbed and the **Bavenda** gradually modified the **Shivenda** language spoken by them by borrowing largely from dialects of their new neighbours. There appears to have been an interesting tribe living in the vicinity of the **Fundudzi Lake**, who were holders of the secret as to fire making which is said to have been unknown to other tribes who were consequently dependent upon them for their supply.

Toho-ca-Ndhou's people finding themselves the dominant tribe assumed the little "**Mvenda**", which is variously stated to mean "high-born", "Aristocrat" etc.

The **Bavenda** never slit the lobes of the ears nor did they draw the front teeth as do the **Zambesi** natives to the present day. On arrival it is said that some women wore their hair (wool) in the form of a low crown whilst the better class shaved and placed threaded pieces of ostrich shell round the skull as at the present day although the privilege is abused now in the same manner as the wearing of anklets and bracelets in quantities or the "sewing on" of headrings indiscriminately by the **Tonga** and **Tshangane** men.

The women wore aprons made of stomachs and intestines of cattle and the man prepared skin: the latter did their

hair/

hair up into fantastic shapes as a rule. Skins and certain barks were used in the place of clothes. The Bavenda made no tribal facial incisions,. After a time Toho-ca-ndhou left Tshaendeulu and moved further up the Njelele Valley and at a spot where ruins can still be seen north of chief Mpefu's present kraal he erected the well known Dzada Buildings which then constituted the "Great Place".

There is evidence to show that these buildings are ~~peculiar~~ peculiar in many respects and quite foreign to anything in the Transvaal. They appear to have been built entirely of flat reddish coloured shale stones relieved by well shaped iron stone pillars erected at intervals for ornamental purposes. In the centre were conical towers from which it is said the assembled people could be addressed on special occasions. Broad well built walls surrounded the main buildings and although at the present day large trees have grown through them in parts and in spite of natural dilapidation one notices the accuracy of the sides and corners as also niches which probably formed seats for guards etc.

It is often asserted that the stones used in these buildings were carried from Makalangaland as tribute by Toho-ca-ndhou's people. Similar stones can be seen near the Sibasa burial ground at ~~Repitik~~ ^{Pepiti} where they are regarded as sacred relics.

Many versions exist as to Toho-ca-ndhou's end. It is commonly said that he ~~disappeared~~ ^{disappeared} mysteriously one night in a manner similar to that of Elijah of old.

Others state that whilst he was hunting rock rabbits in a deep cave the entrance fell in and permanently entombed him, the place thereafter becoming a sort of "

"Intaba-i-konjwa"

"Intaba-i-konjwa". But the most reliable suggestion I think is that he was "done away with" by one of his several sons probably Babusa who were constantly quarrelling amongst themselves in regard to the ~~suggestion~~^{Succession}. The chief is said to have been decoyed into a cave where a large quantity of ivory was alleged to be and then killed.

After Toho-ca-ndhou's death or his disappearance ~~and~~ the sons and grandsons went to Tswime Mt. for a time and finally split up from there and commenced more aggressive measures against their neighbours occupying the country generally along the Zoutpansberg Range especially between ^{Leombo} (Pafuri) and Limpopo ^{Rivers}. Vele-whose[?] earned him the name "Shibasa midi" (burner of kraals) which ~~has~~ has been the tribal title of his line since first settled at Mapate near source of the Mutshinduti River and "eat up" weaker people such as the Bangona living in the neighbourhood : he then moved to the present Pepiti area where Pepiti grandfather of present headwoman still is, Vele's son Mukese Shibasa (alias Ramarumo "of Assegais") was born at pepiti but after several brushes with the Tshanganes he went to the present Shibasa kraal viz. Mkumbene, where Ligegise and Ramaramisa were born.

Mpofu and his son Ramabulana are said to have gone to Shiruluni just outside present Louis Trichardt. Mpofu died at Ramabulane then took up his position on the mountain top further back for defensive purposes owing to the hostility of natives on the flats. His son Makadu remained in the same stronghold and was no doubt the most powerful of all Bavenda chiefs being called the Lion of the North etc. On his death Mpofu assumed the Chieftainship after certain opposition from his brothers but was finally

overthrown/

overthrown in the Mpefu war, fled to Rhodesia and returned during 1904 to his present location in the Njelele Valley. Legally he may be regarded ^{ed} as the paramount chief of the Bavenda although such chiefs as Shibasa ^{and} Ramputa pay no allegiance to him. Ramputa's line is an offshoot of the Shibasa chiefs. As will be seen from attached "Tree" the Mpafuri (Mpapuli) section is not of the real "Chiefs" line but is from an important Induna of Toho-ca-ndhou. There are several petty chiefs to-day in similar positions such as Netsianda, Mgibi, Mafzebandela and Nelomondo. Numerous minor branches of the principal line have died out or are represented by ordinary headmen in the Klein Spelonken and Sibasa wards.

- (4) Circumcision "schools" were not known by the original tribe which accompanied Toho-ca-ndhou but some of his ~~ance~~ descendants especially Makadu (Magato) adopted them to a certain extent from the Basuto and Tonga tribes.

Very few real Bavenda circumcise and most of the "schools" of this nature are supervised by doctors of foreign origin. Youths and men's "schools" of the usual sort are the "Mrundu" for the teaching of tribal affairs and social matters and the "Tondu" at which the chiefs' guards are given a military training. The girls have a school corresponding in some measure to the "Mrundu" and it is known as the "Domba" at which a great deal of dancing and beating of drums occurs for months. The secrets of maternity and so forth are taught by matrons. No operation takes place as is superstitiously supposed though certain examination is made with a view to ascertaining a pupil's chastity or otherwise. It may here be stated that when a girl menstruates for the first time she is taken by other girls/

girls to a pool of water in which she is made to sit for several hours each day for about a week. After having passed through her "school" course she generally adorns her person with native cotton cords and threaded ostrich shell round the waist and on the small of the back wears a curiously shaped red coloured jar or pot circular and open at the top tapering to a point underneath this being one of the indications of eligibility for marriage.

(5) The only affinity between the Bavenda and the Basuto and Bechuana tribes is in my opinion that arising from their all being members of the great Bantu family and that after so many years residence (quite a century) South of the Limpopo they (the Bavenda) have naturally adopted many Sesuto and gechuana words, otherwise they are quite distinct and certainly assert that they are.

(6). Apart from the much involved legal procedure after marriage connected with children, return of lobola and barren women the taking of younger sisters to replace the latter, Mortgages on unborn children in respect of loans given for dowry etc., the proceedings relating to engagement and marriage itself are not very different from those of other native tribes. The usual methods as to payment of lobola generally commencing when the girl is quite a child-are observed.

There is not much intermarriage with other tribes. What does occur is usually on the part of chiefs for the purpose of making alliances with others: eg., the late chief Sibasa married a TSHANGANE Induna's (Mabambi) daughter and chief Mhinga (a Tshangane) married a sister of chief Mpafuri. There is some intermarriage amongst the Bavenda and Balemba people but the former being the dominant race on the other hand the latter being bound by many rules

under/

under their proud caste, difficulties frequently arise.

(7) As noticed before most of the "~~xxx~~ aristocratic" Bavenda have noticeable features -generally Semitic and often resembling those of Egyptian figures. I have also noticed others with traces of genuine Arabian features and ~~xx~~ appearance, although they have declared they are pure Bavenda.

(8) There is little or no torture practised and although ~~in~~ the olden days certain barbarities were indulged in especially during wars-the Bavenda appear to have always been inclined to mild habits especially hating the sight of blood ; the Balemba are similarly disposed but insist on cutting the throats of all animals killed for consumption and carrying out certain other rites on living animals immediately before killing . It is noteworthy that they imitate the kosher system of butchery in many respects, will not eat meat except of animals slaughtered by their own tribe etc.

(9) In reference to these Balemba it may be said that they are far superior in a great many ways to their nominal masters, the Bavenda who are more numerous and were perhaps more warlike. The Balemba originated from Makalangaland (perhaps Bilingwe) and followed after the Bavenda with a petty chief Mtovu and settled principally at Dzingahi, Lubimbi etc., in the Sibasa ward. They are associates with the Baduma and Bandau sections of the "BUNYAYI" area it is said and swear by some great mountain there. They speak Shivenda but revert to a sort of Shikalanga dialect during their tribal festivities and rites. It is variously stated that the word Balemba is meant to signify workers of iron, manufacturers, those who cut the throats of animals etc.

They/

They are certainly the leaders of industry, makers of earthenware pots manufacturers of baskets and iron implements, general traders in every way besides observing laws of caste very strictly and showing great independence in certain matters e.g., they have always positively refused to work in the fields of chiefs but have quite willingly paid in lieu of what they consider degrading service. They periodically shave their heads and are guided in this by phases of the moon viz., when the latter is expected to be overhead at midday the Balemba place bowls of water under the shade of a tree and gaze therein and as soon as the moon is reflected on the water shaving is proceeded with. They are also said to have been manufacturers of native clothing seldom are really poor do not wed a deceased brother's wife etc. In view of their extraordinary genius for business and trade as compared to most Bantu tribes it might reasonably be suggested that they have a large infusion of Phoenician blood inherited from the ancient navigators and traders who visited most coasts in pursuance of their commercial instincts.

One gruesome and peculiar custom is reported to have been observed by the Balemba - the cutting of the throats of very sick people when thought ^{to} be "in extremis" it is not clear whether this was to put at an end their suffering or merely to carry out the racial leaning towards cutting the throat before death intervened.

I am aware of one instance in which an European shot a buck before its last convulsive quivers were over one of the Balemba servants commenced cutting its throat immediately and kept on shouting that the buck was not dead; this was no doubt a ruse to permit of his eating the meat.

(10) The following comparison between local Sesuto and the present Shivenda shows some contrast - Sesuto for chief Koshi or Norena and Shivenda - "Kosi" or "Tobela" ~~MMsair~~ and "Kgomo" for "Maadzi" and "Kolomo" respectively. Ne is purely a personal prefix in Shivenda and is applied as a rule to men of standing in charge of or owners of pieces of country e.g. Ne-Tengwe of Tengwe Nem is not a prefix.

(11). The minuter details connected with burial of chiefs of importance are naturally kept as secret as possible from outsiders and even most tribesmen. I have a ^{fair} knowledge of the ceremonies and have been so far trusted as to be shown by three hereditary Indunas in charge of the Shibasa burial ground the exact spots where departed Shibasa chiefs are laid. There is no outward sign to indicate these spots and I was informed that such would be fatal in view of spells and medicines which enemies might use against the dead chiefs spirits. It is maintained that when a chief of the real Muvenda line is on the point of death ~~xxxxx~~ he always knows it by inspiration. He thereupon calls together his intimate councillors and also one of the ancient line of ~~xxxxx~~ priests viz., the Tabasindi family who live near the sacred Fundudzi (Rider-Haggards or "Allan Quartermains") and of whom Induna Nelshiaba is the hereditary head. The chief hands over his heirlooms and personal ornaments and charms gives final directions especially as to his successor and also sends messages to neighbours.

After his death he is wrapped up in an ox hide and buried in his own hut. The fact is kept secret for a time but finally at some big meeting and feast attended by ~~chiefs~~ chiefs or representatives the heir is presented to

the/

the assembled people robed as a chief and wearing the family heirlooms. This constitutes the public announcement as to his appointment and the death of the chief. The late chief's body is left where it is until the signs are auspicious enough to admit of its removal to the family Burial ground, wherever it is : e.g. Mpafuri's is at Miluwane, Shibasa's at Pepiti .

It is asserted that owing to a disregard of Bavenda sacred laws and customs some tribes have waited in vain for necessary signs. The Mpafuri section claim to be peculiarly fortunate in this respect and attribute it to their strict observance of ancient rites and to the fact that they have preserved throughout all their early wars and struggles the original tribal drums, antelope horns bows battle-axes and so forth not to mention carvings on wood and other such hieroglyphics. The signs being favourable the late chief's body is taken up at night (generally some years after first burial) in the presence of trusty councillors and the Tabasindi priest (whose particular duty is then to count and certify every bone and joint being complete) and it is then conveyed to the burial ground for final inhumation . His spirit and those of his ancestors are offered beer and sacrifices periodical with a view to propitiation.

The Bavenda number considerably over 100,000 souls and in many parts, especially the Sibasa ward observe the majority of their ancient customs. Their history has been little disturbed since their first arrival South of the Limpopo.

Amongst some of most interesting customs may be mentioned the fact that although women are often placed in charge of important areas they generally have to show
extreme/

extreme deference to the men: a chief's kraal they all creep about on their hands and knees, place their hands together and touch the ground with their foreheads when presenting beer or food they do not look at a passing chief but are supposed to respectfully kneel and face an opposite direction : should a chief pass a kraal the women salute by a sort of shrill chorus difficult to imagine unless one has heard it: the ordinary salute to a man is made by the bending of one knee but women in passing a kraal or stationary party generally call out "I am passing" and wait for an acknowledgment before proceeding further. The men have a somewhat modified form of greeting . Old people in the Sibasa generally point to the west when receiving strangers but whether this is to indicate the setting of the sun as an allegory of departing life or merely to impress upon everyone the fact that the Bavenda regard Tshiendeulu Mount (West of Sibasa) as their Mecca and place of the present tribes origin I am unable to say although it may be stated that during a solemn hour after sunset in some of the really large kraals a sudden hush occurs when even children's voices are suppressed a war drum is gently sounded and horns are occasionally heard and then in the stillness a woman's voice can suddenly be heard calling "Oh Tshiendeulu the Source of All, give me harvests give me healthy children " etc., - a man's voice may then be heard "Tshiendeulu, listen to my complaint I have faithfully served my chief but am poor and he has given me no wife and no presents" and so forth. The chief of the kraal can thus get very candid opinions and plainspoken requests. At dawn it is not unusual to hear a man shouting from a house or rather hut top to all inhabitants to rise and perform their various duties, the women to stamp the corn , light fires etc. The Bavenda dances resemble

those /

those of the local Basuto and generally consist of women and girls beating various drums in the centre of a circle of men dancing round who at the same time play reed whistles. Their musical instruments vary a good deal but the ~~XX~~ "Kaffir-piano" which comprises a long row of wooden "Scales" tied together and placed over calabashes in which have been cut holes to correspond with the pieces of wood above them all of these have been regulated as to tone. Two performers holding four "drum-sticks" each manage to obtain a certain wild though somewhat monotonous music therefrom. There is a smaller piano made of native metal notes fixed to a small board which is played in a calabash besides varieties of one stringed violins and so forth. The Bavenda weapons are generally battle axes bows and barbed (sometimes poisoned) arrows and assegais. These people are hardly a warlike race. They are a most polite and ~~xxxxxxxx~~ courteous tribe although certain characteristics leave a good deal to be desired. In their natural state their hospitality is well known by even distant tribes. Visitors are, if circumstances at all admit, given sheep and cattle to eat and beer to drink - these being modestly spoken of as "fowls" and "water" respectively. Most chiefs keep professional & "praisers" and Court "fools" for their amusement. Witchcraft is practised and believed in: bones or "dollas" being chiefly used by ~~the~~ ^{the} doctors but one very old and interesting "divining bowl" came to notice and consisted of various carvings on the edges to indicate different Bantu tribes: the bowl had to be filled with water and certain seeds being thrown therein would it was alleged immediately float in the direction of the symbols denoting the tribe of a guilty man.

Amongst/

Amongst Bavenda superstitions the worst still believed in if not actually practised to-day is the killing of twins. The mothers universally believe that children require "stuffing" and with this in view push fine porridge into the mouths and throats of children until the stomachs are distended to an alarming degree. Probably owing to the excessive heat and dampness of the Country occupied by the Bavenda and the presence of malarial fever everywhere the people are not constitutionally strong and generally suffer from latent organic diseases, however the women are always decidedly stronger and more energetic than the men. Most diseases are attributed to some "snake" having entered the affected parts, even the arms and legs. Practically all the men even those who live partly in caves and seldom if ever see Europeans, desire clothes. A young generation is now growing up with more enlightened ideas and with increasing wants which tend to encourage longer and more regular periods of work being undertaken annually.

For the sake of tradition the Bavenda make many personal sacrifices and will often suffer privation and want rather than remove from old family sites and the "spirits" of ancestors. It is remarkable that chief Nelomondo's people preserve a herd of baboons and even permit them to take food from their kraals simply because in one of the earlier wars when a night attack was being made on Lomondo Kop these animals being disturbed gave timely warning with the result that the surprise party was repulsed. Amongst the most ~~cherished~~ cherished ornaments handed down from father to son in certain families are beads of great age and which I am informed cannot be obtained anywhere now. The owners of the genuine article are quite

averse/

averse to selling and regard the beads as amulets which have preserved them since they left their place of origin North of the Limpopo.

In submitting this necessarily brief sketch of the Bavenda I would say that although I am conscious of its very crude and hurried state I hope it will be of some service in the compilation of the history of a most interesting native people.

With kind regards,

I am yours sincerely

(sgd) C.N.Manning

Sub-Native Commissioner

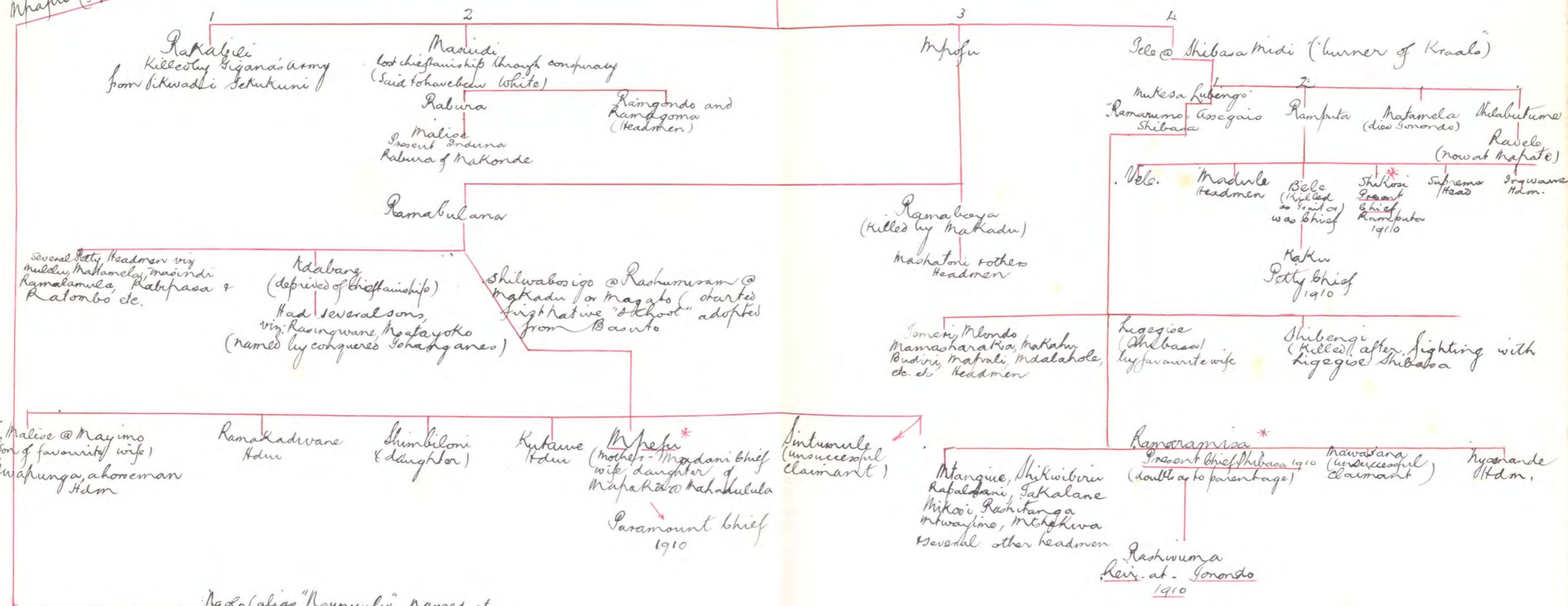
Sibasa

North Eastern Transvaal.

Genealogical Tree of Bawenda Tribe as considered approximately correct

Mhafusi (fighting general in charge of chief's herd etc.)

Joho-ea-Ndhow 1st Paramount chief. (Elephant Head) = From Makalanga about a century ago. Son or off. shoot of supreme chief of Makalanga tribes who was known as the Mambos principally chief of the Balozuni Section. The usual family Sileongo being "Singo" and the title "Mwenda" being adopted after the tribes arrival in Present Transvaal. Various versions as to Joho-ea-Ndhow's end. all mysterious.



- N.B. Independent Petty Chief include**
- (1) Lomondo
 - (2) Letwanda
 - (3) Madzibandela
 - (4) Mqilbi
- But are not of "Royal Line"