On the Quissama Tribe of Angola

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Source: *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. 5 (1876), pp. 198-201

Published by: [Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2841394>

Accessed: 16/06/2014 07:26

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standings, the crew were massacred, but Drury, being young, was saved, and kept in slavery by one of the Sákaláva chiefs. He was in slavery seventeen years, and finally escaped in another vessel. On arriving in England, he published an account of his captivity, drawn from his recollections, and very simply related. We know all about the Sákaláva people, whom he describes. Their language is closely akin to what is usually called Malagasy. They are one of the three chief tribes; they are one of the darker tribes, and have always lived on the coast, in low and feverish districts. I have already spoken of them. M. Grandidier resided at Tolia, near St. Augustin's Bay, and will probably tell us much about it in his forthcoming work.

The Rev. EDGELL WYATT-EDGELL and the PRESIDENT also joined in the discussion.

The following paper was read by the author :

On the QUISSAMA TRIBE of ANGOLA. By J. J. MONTEIRO, Associate of the Royal School of Mines.

I FIRST saw the Quissama tribe in 1859, and I have very often since been on the river Quanza, where for some years steam navigation with Loanda has existed, with the result of a large development of trade on that river and from the interior. The country of Quissama extends for a distance of about 120 miles on the southern bank of the Quanza, from its mouth to Dondo, beyond which place the Falls of Cambambe render it no longer navigable. Of the many tribes of negroes in Angola, that of the Quissamas is, perhaps, the lowest type of any, both physically and mentally. The Portuguese were first on the river about the year 1570, shortly after its discovery by them, and in 1595 they built the Fort at Muxima on the Quissama bank, the ruins of which still exist, and where they have a commandant and half-a-dozen soldiers. There is also here one of the oldest churches in Angola, containing an image of the Virgin Mary, which is greatly venerated, not only by the Quissamas, but by other natives even as far as Loanda. In former times the Portuguese missionaries had also several important stations on the northern bank of the Quanza, at Calumbo, Massangano, Cambambe, &c.; and although the missionaries ceased their labours years ago, the Portuguese have always existed on the river in greater or lesser numbers.

The natives of the northern bank, who speak the Bunda language, as at St. Paul de Loanda, prove to this day the good results of the great work of the former missionaries, being peaceable, and civilised to a considerable degree; mostly all speak Portuguese, and very many even read and write it.

Were not the Quissamas such an intractable race, the result of the former missionary teaching and civilisation would likewise be apparent in them; there can be no reason for supposing they were neglected, or not included in the labours of the missionaries, and it can only have been their great incapacity to receive instruction that has left them the savage and untamed tribe that we still find them, after 300 years of constant intercourse with the white race. When I say savage, I do not mean ferocious or warlike; they are the very reverse, being most cowardly and distrustful, and live in constant fear that the Portuguese or some native tribe will overrun their country and take possession of it. The Portuguese have never cared to occupy the Quissama country, or reduce the natives to subjection, as no object could be gained from it, the country, with the exception of a portion on the bank of the river from Massangano to Dondo, being so excessively arid and bare of water that the natives are obliged to make cisterns of hollow baobab trees, in which to store the water that falls in the rainy season. On the higher part of the river their country produces some palm oil, and the white traders at Dondo go, in the proper season, to the principal king of the Quissamas to settle the price at which it is to be bartered. The Libollos, or natives of the Libollo country adjoining the Quissamas to the east, are a very fine race, and although not so numerous as the Quissamas, have offered to fight the latter, and deliver their country to the Portuguese, if these will supply them with guns and ammunition. I was at Dondo when an embassy arrived from the Bailundo country to make an offer to the Portuguese to reduce the Quissama country if they were allowed to plunder, and carry off prisoners as slaves. This offer was refused, as nothing was to be gained by it. The Quissamas are a miserably poor and wretched tribe—are small, ugly, and excessively dirty in their persons and scanty clothing. The women wear only a kind of short skirt made of the inner bark of the baobab tree, and fastened round the loins (*see fig.*, p. 200). This skirt seldom reaches right round the body, part of the thigh being left exposed. With use, the skirt splits up into a bundle of strings, and gets black with filth, perspiration, and grease. The two dresses exhibited, I had to order to be made, as it was impossible to keep any I could get second-hand. The women in walking or running give a peculiar rotary and up-and-down motion to these skirts, and, not satisfied with Nature's liberality, attempt to improve on her by the addition of several extra layers of fibre on that part of the skirt which falls behind. The larger dress is that of a full-grown woman, the smaller, one of a young woman, girls and children not wearing any clothing at all.

The men wear a waistcloth of fine native matting, or of cotton cloth obtained in barter from the traders. These cloths are generally dyed a dirty black by being soaked in the juice of a wild indigo plant, mixed with a black ferruginous mud from the river. The women use large, open, conical baskets, with a flat side to fit the back and suspend by a band round the forehead, in which they carry produce, &c. (See fig.) It is the only tribe anywhere in Angola or on the West Coast that I know to use baskets in this fashion. The Quissama women, like those of

This illustration represents Quissama women pounding mandioca roots into meal in a wooden mortar, and sifting it through a kind of bottle-shaped sieve into an open basket. To the left is a woman carrying a basket on her back and a hoe in her hand.*

other tribes, cultivate the ground, and grow mandioca root, beans, and Indian corn; but their principal food is a small fish called "cacusso," which is very abundant in the river and lagoons, and which they catch with cast net and in fish baskets made like our eel traps. The Quissamas have no cattle, and but few sheep, goats, or fowls. They collect wax from hives they keep in the branches of trees, especially the baobab tree. With this, and palm oil, fish, &c., they constantly cross over to sell or barter to the white traders and the more civilised natives on the north bank; but they are such a suspicious and distrustful race that they never delay longer than necessary, and always return before nightfall, although they have never been ill-treated, nor have they any reason for fear of any kind. The Quissamas are not cannibals, nor do the women ascend the palm trees to collect the juice or wine, which everywhere in Angola is man's

* The wood block for this engraving, from Mr. Monteiro's forthcoming work on "Angola and the River Congo," has been kindly lent by the publishers, Messrs. Macmillan & Co.

work. They will not allow whites or blacks to open stores for trade in their country, nor will they deliver up slaves who run away into their country from their masters on the north bank. Formerly thousands of slaves passed through the Quissama country from Massangano to Benguella Velha, where they were shipped by the Spanish and Portuguese slave dealers, and I knew several Portuguese who, in other times, had often accompanied caravans of slaves through the Quissama country, and who described it to me.

To the south of Muxima there is a salt mine that I believe has never been visited by a white man, and the Quissamas cut the rock-salt in small, long, polygonal blocks about the size of a thin scythe-stone, and pointed slightly at the ends. These are closely enveloped in flat cane work, and when I first was on the river in 1859, were much used as money amongst the natives. They are now scarce; but the most singular circumstance connected with them is, that the newspaper correspondents accompanying the Abyssinian expedition described exactly the same kind of salt blocks as passing as money in the interior of that country. A little above Muxima there is a high cliff overhanging the river, called the "Fetish Rock," and from which their criminals, and those condemned to death for witchcraft, are thrown into the river. They are said to be previously stunned by a blow on the head, that they shall not escape being devoured by the alligators that swarm in that beautiful river.

Mr. MOGGRIDGE, by permission of the President, spoke on the destruction of the New Forest. The meeting then separated.

MAY 11TH, 1875.

Colonel A. LANE FOX, *President, in the Chair.*

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

The election was announced of SAMUEL DAVEY, Esq., of Monkswell, Windmore Road, Bromley, Kent.

Thanks were voted for the following list of presents :—

FOR THE LIBRARY.

From the SOCIETY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES, BATAVIA.—*Tijdschrift*, Vol. XXI. Nos. 3 and 4; Vol. XXII. Nos. 1—3. Notulen, Vol. XXII. Nos. 1—3, 1874.

From the CANADIAN INSTITUTE.—*The Canadian Journal*, Vol. XIV. No. 4.