These Tribes seem to me to have come from one principal stem. As they came down, they had to conquer others whom they met in their ways and kept fit men as slaves or soldiers while preferring marriage to death with younger beautiful women. We may think when we come to customs, that Babemba had started already mixing up culture. This could be true, from the reasoning point of view, but it was not always the case, because those captives taken as wives were very entirely subjected to the manners and customs of their masters.

When they reached Luapula river, as, too, we can find from some books on Northern Rhodesia, some big chiefs decided to remain along the river’s valley, while others pushed forward for a better settlement. In this way tribes which were coming down as a unit split up so several of them we can find today occupying all the areas of these two provinces: Northern (in the north) and Luapula (in the west).

As those who pushed on northwards reached Tanganyika Lake, they met other tribes who had come there before them and so were not at all able to keep on any further, thus deciding to settle in the area known today as Lubemba with Chitimukulu as their Big Chief.

Tribal wars again brought about slavery and so the Bemba Northern tribes mixed themselves very much with their captives (Bankole), and when the wars were ended it was quite difficult to chase the slaves who had by then become full Bemba citizens. In this way the Northern Bemba had that bad chance of having their language mixed. They were forced, e.g., to thicken a certain syllable in a word which before were normally having spoken lightly. The same influence passed on even to culture, etc.

Babemba in the west (Luapula Province) settled a little earlier and therefore, had not that bad chance of getting their original things mixed and changed very much. And, today, you find where a western Mubemba will say e.g., “Nshishibe”, a northerner will come in to cut that last “le” and change a bit the “i” belonging to “bi” into “e”. Thus changing the word to: “Nshishibe”. The northern Bemba were, in this way, forced to either cut some syllables off their original words or add unnecessary ones from other tribes’ languages.

In any case, what I have been learning about is this mixed way of living which today is regarded as the Babemba way of living. But, do remember that the Chibemba spoken in the north is mixed with Tanganyikan languages and Chimambwe of Bamambwe, while in the west they still keep their original tongue with mixtures from Luba.

I was not discussing history of these tribes in bringing before you those points; that was to give you an idea of what differences and likenesses one ought to meet when working about these people’s culture and music in general, so that when I, for instance say that in the north they have “Mupukumo” as their chief folk songs and in the west they have “Kalela” you may know why.

* Printed as received, Editor.
Now, without going any further into this confusing history of these tribes, I should like to present what I have collected from "Bakote"—old, very old people. My sole reason, you may have a question to put, for taking all this trouble of collecting and studying what the moderners today will call "primitive life" is and has been this: Europeans, Russians, Americans, Indians and Asiatics did not receive a book of manners and hymns, etc., positively from the hands of God, while leaving the Africans to invent for themselves, or else God would be said to be very unfair to the Africans and so would not be the type of God we would need. He being as He always is and ever will be, gave a free will to all human creatures regardless of his cool, hot, cold or mild country, or colour, long, straight hair or woolly one's leaving nearly everything for him to find out of this world which He hath given him.

The white people who went to the north and east were just as the blacks who descended southwards eating roots, having no fire, no proper shelter, always living in terror, were afraid of thunder and had only rags to hide their sexual organs. Only that those who went northwards settled quickly and found some fertile pieces of land and so learned to till the earth. Also, this they did, not because God gave them heavenly hoes or ploughs to use, but because they, through a lot of suffering and difficulty came to invent something at last. Of course God was there to enlighten some of them just as He did to us in Africa.

Why then, if it is the treasure through one's efforts, should not we wake up and look up and learn that "We are also eagles" and can fly in the air just as the white ones are doing? Why not make up treasures in our own land? Why not offer to God the victim which Christ Himself has left us declaring that he never came down to spoil people's beautiful culture, but to approve them and make them perfect and acceptable to His Father who is in Heaven, while, of course, cancelling the dirty mixtures brought in by those thinking they can lead all nations.

A thing, as far as customs are concerned, is bad only when it goes against one of God's commandments. And, remember, what you think offends God in your land may not be offensive in my land. God who directed the forefathers of the white men is He the same one who helped the blacks' ancestors to lead their lives. They did not notice Him but He was there in their midst.

If, again, the white man's life today is just the everyday improvement of what he lived before, why not the blackman's?

I, of course, do not forget that we ought to owe a thing or two from others who have made our lives meaningful, but we cannot entirely live on debts. Have we not even a single penny to lend others?

We have to remember that we are a people, and have had our own customs, etc. and have to rebuild them and come up again as true intimate men of God.

As religion is the most important of all elements of our life, and I have seen that people in our area do not approach God with enough inward feeling which always can burst out for men to notice that one is really praying, because of the very unappealing manners of worship brought about by western people, I have decided first to start to develop our culture at the service of the Church under the directions of our Bishops who, again, I hope will, as they have done for the last two years, allow me with a fair freedom on these things.

Here are some of the many I have collected:

I. MUSIC

(A) Divisions:
Babemba music is divided into various sections depending on the types of festivals or occasions in the life or/and time circle of these people. I do not say that I have gone very far in these things, I am just beginning, when I present some such as:
1. (i) **Births.** Those of a single child. Here they sing very appealing songs to receive and welcome the newly born Babe. Just as in the Bible we read: “A woman, when she comes to her hour of being delivered suffers great pains indeed, . . . but just after her confinement she rejoices together with others present because a new man has joined the world.” These songs can be very good, for example, for the Nativity of Our Lord, if modified accordingly, since they contain the Nativity background.

(ii) **Births.** Those of twins. On such occasions, women, especially, perform a lot of dances and singing. Twins are put in an open wide basket (remember Moses and remember Christ in the manger) and those who wish to see them should wash in a certain medicine and should have something to give to each of the twins. Here, I think, we could draw very beautiful hymns for, let us say, Epiphany, administering Baptism to many, etc.

2. **Coming of the first teeth.** When a child had its first tooth appear on the lower jaw, there was a feast for the parents and relatives, because their child was now known to be a true, sane human being, as he would be drowned in a pool had the first tooth appeared on the upper jaw. They sang and danced joyfully for that. Here again can be drawn very joyous hymns for the Presentation of Our Lady, Circumcision of Jesus, taking Him to the Temple and presenting Him to God, etc.

3. **The age of Puberty.** It was a great custom long ago that this time a girl be initiated and shown all activities that a grown up woman should have to do. Dancing, singing, instructions and very many things take place. The girl is given a small pot made in clay which she would keep up to the wedding day. Wonderful hymns can be formed of these songs for administering the Sacrament of Confirmation, etc.

4. **Wedding Eve.** When the days of waiting for the wedding day get less, they start to prepare millet for making beer, and all sorts of foods they would require that day. Here, again, many actions are done, like exchanging firewood while they sing, etc. We may make some hymns of Eve days of principal Feasts from these songs such as Evening of Pentacost, Christmas, Easter, etc.

5. **Wedding Day.** At night the bride is taken separately from the groom to learn the ways of performing the marriage. They do not teach them verbally, all is done through actions, dances and especially songs. That pot, which was given the girl on the day of puberty is here brought and all the teaching about it should now be finished. Statues made of clay to figure up each action are a very visual aid. These statues are called “Imbusa” or Emblems. Very wonderful hymns for ordaining priests and Bishops can be composed from these songs. Some of these practices even can be adopted.

6. **Woman is Conceived.** After the wedding joy is over, all villagers now are on a look out to see if the newly married woman will be conceived or not. And, this, of course, is a heavy burden the man has to feel on him as he mixes with others outside. If his wife will not be conceived, the man will be regarded as a useless partner, or if he explains to the elders that the trouble is really with his woman, she will be looked upon as a good-for-nothing wife. So, the ancestors prepared it in such a way that when any newly married girl was conceived, a feast be kept, for then they knew she was a proper woman and that they did not give that man a fruitless damsel. Beer drinking, dances and singing, which generally were just for the members of those two families involved took place. This is where we could draw hymns for the feast of Mary’s Immaculate Conception.

7. **Conceived woman gets heavy.** Now, because the woman is conceived, the husband begins to be very careful in his behaviour. He is, for instance, not allowed to mix with women and so forth, as he may put himself into miserable business, and so cause difficulty to the birth of his child. During all the time the woman is in pregnancy, the husband and his relatives are in a worrying season. They become rather sad as the woman may fail to bring forth a child and die like that. This would cause the husband to be in
hard troubles of paying heavy fines because he caused the death of his wife. Sometimes such cases may bring about a lot of misfortune and deaths. That is why the man’s parent are very busy all this time seeing that their son does not go about with girls. This is the time of preparation, too. They are all prepared for a new baby whom they will receive with great happiness and joy. They do not dance all the time the woman is conceived, and all the singing is of sad tunes. These songs have proved very suitable for Advent Season. (For births see No. 1).

8. Deaths. Deaths are classified and special homage is paid to each type. There is very much to be said which I would not dare try in this very simple short sketch, however, on any death occasion, women when weeping do a lot of sad singing in honour of the deceased. We have drawn very beautiful hymns for the dead from these songs. Also some for Lent and especially for the Good Friday services. These tunes sound very sad and sorrowful indeed. N.B. Songs for the dead have very free and slow rhythm.

9. After Burial. Here, people return home and are given food by the relatives of the dead. Tunes of the funeral songs are very slightly different, because they are specially meant for the relatives to turn away their minds from the one who has left them. A bit of joy is noticed. This is where I have taken melody to fit those hymns we sing when we celebrate the Rising of Our Lord on Holy Saturday night.

10. Renewal of Village Fire. After burying, all return to the village and clean their houses or smear them, then take out everything and the fires are extinguished. The Headman of that village orders that no marriage activities be done that night. With his village crafts, he makes a new fire and all go to take from that new fire. Here I have taken the melody to fit those hymns we sing when the new fire, Paschal Candle Fire is blessed the same night of Holy Saturday.

11. Defeating a battle or killing a lion. All men, women, boys and girls, old and young form a procession and dance with spears and bows and throw dust in the sky for joy. Very beautiful triumphant hymns have been composed along the basis of these songs for the Resurrection of Our Lord who has defeated and conquered death. Guns are fired during the Mass and the Gloria is started and ended with applause. In the part of the Creed which mentions resurrection, “And he rose from the dead on the third day”, clapping and applauding and guns are the harmony. Alleluia verses are sung with special respect of joy. (Iyande).

12. Activities Songs. Hunting, fishing, pulling a canoe down to a lake, building a house, starting a new village, grinding millet or maize, music while at work, etc. are also applied and adopted accordingly, e.g., for Saints who pray for us to God that we may have a good hunt, etc., for consecrating a Cathedral or churches. Remember that we do not only stop on drawing tunes from songs, acts and deeds are also adopted. Example: On the Feast of St. Joseph, the workman, all kinds of man’s instruments like hammers, saws, pots, knives, hoes, machine’s plates, etc., are brought to the Church and put together. Priest will then bless them as we sing special hymns for them. And immediately after this blessing, some of the guns brought are taken before the Church gate and fired in honour of the Creator. I remember last May, soon after the Mass on the 1st of the same month, all those who went hunting brought home at least 7 duikers each. Believe it or not, my eyes are my witnesses, 3 of those duikers were presented to me as gifts for conducting such procession.

13. Village folk songs. (Evenings). There are very many and in classes, e.g., those sung to newly married couples, those of the new moon, those sung for a clear sunshine during winter cloudy days, those sung because children have eaten enough or less that day, evening dances with mixed sex (some of these have very dirty meanings and background), etc. In the evenings, also, children may use wedding songs and dances just for the mere sake of imitating old women (Fimbusa). From these songs I pick up clean ones pt their tunes to those hymns which have no special seasons.

14. Beer Songs. Here they can sing any one song providing it suits the dance. They
also sing others wherein they may talk about good or bad characters of someone. But the special beer songs are known as “Mfunkutu”. Here I take some tunes to fit various feasts of the church year.

15. **Story songs** *(like in opera of Western music)*. People arrange themselves into teams as required and act something just in singing. Types of these are: *Tola naka*; *Kalenga Mushalile*; *Inkunko*; *Iciyenga*; and very many others. This is where I am preparing something for priests to sing as they act. Example: When they dip the Paschal candle into water, they could sing about what they are doing instead of only reciting it. Or this style could be used to tell the Gospel stories.

16. **For Crowning Chiefs**. Very much takes place on such occasions that I cannot possibly know which is which at present. Nevertheless, I have made very magnificent hymns out of the tunes of the songs sung there, for the Kingship of Our Lord. This is where you will notice more culture adopted into Church, e.g., clapping (*Makuku*) just as we do to the Chief.

17. **The newly crowned Chief is taken round his village**. A lot of dancing is done and people beat drums and shout for joy. Very good customs and hymns have been derived from these for the Feast of Corpus Christi.

18. **Ngulu (Bad Spirits)**. Some people even today are believed to possess some spirits from their ancestors. When these spirits come into them, these people talk lots of things and do plenty of dancing with many gestures. Drums are very special in these dances. Thousands of things can be said about such dances, but I am not giving the whole picture into details. Many hymns for the Saints are composed out of these songs. Some also for the everyday hymns for the dead.

19. **Tribal dances**. In each of the Bemba tribes of Northern and Luapula Provinces you will find one kind of dance which all will do, and that is their tribal one. For example, all Mubemba of Northern Province will sing *Mupukumo*. And all western Mubemba will sing and dance *Kalela*. From such traditional dances I take tunes to fit Gloria, Creed, Sanctus, Agnus Dei and all long hymns.

20. **Life Musicians, Ng’omba**. Those who used to sing to chiefs. Some of them earned their living like that. In this kind of music I have found very special rhythm produced from drums, very complicated for ordinary use.

   (a) It is in this section we find Bemba poetry practised very much.

   (b) Special short phrases to express ideas, feelings or needs. Example: begging, praising, etc.

   (c) Drums have a very extraordinary way of beating. At least 4 or 5 other instruments add harmony, e.g., *Misebe*, *nsombo*, etc.

   (d) In this kind of Bemba music, you will notice some strange tunes very similar to western. Possible reason: Some old people say the first European missions influenced them half way.

   (e) In this music, the performer will express all he feels, he will sometimes even insult the chief in his singing. It may be because the chief is so cruel. Those who are to be chiefs must be trained to hearing and understanding such music.

   (f) And this is where we find some music where the tune was composed before the words. As a matter of fact, the words lose or change their meaning, thus making it very difficult for common people to understand. Only the chiefs and his councillors can understand this language.

   (g) Another characteristic you will notice in this part of Bemba music is that some other words or phrases, which, sometimes come from very ancient Luba-Bemba or which the musician has brought from other languages are employed. It is so difficult to understand straight away what the actor may mean. This, as a result, has now been kept only by chiefs as one of their traditions.
N.B.—Those are only very few of the many hundreds of classes of Bemba music and I am still on the road.

II. COMPOSING

My general purpose of approaching Bemba music is to adopt it in the service of the Church.

1. I do not make a melody as it is and just fit it in Biblical terms. Because the Babemba understand very well a song both from tune as well as from words, it would be recalling the background of that particular song as done outside to the minds of people and so disturb the spirit of worship if it were presented raw like that. When I say so, I do not mean to say that we have to make it European. To the contrary it must remain always a mixture of African. We have to make it religious but that does not mean making it European.

2. It cannot be very religious in Babemba areas to take a piece as it stands in its original form and just fit in words from the Bible. Reasons I have collected from old people are:

(a) Bemba songs are so connected with deeds that people would reflect their thoughts from the words you might have inserted in, to the actual outside activities.

(b) People will find your hymn very difficult to learn as you may be likely to force words into tunes.

Taking the tune first. Because of the danger that people may turn their spirit of worship towards the actual event from which the song comes instead of to God, I am very afraid of applying the direct method. I mean fitting in words; what I do is to follow strictly the accents of words I am given while keeping in mind the same tune I want to work on. This will enable the accents of the words to modify the tune. I must take care of seeing that the words do not change the tune completely, because then the effect of the song on people would be very little, as Bemba people not only get meaning from the words alone in singing, but from a tune also. One would recognise just from the tune that such a song is for funeral before he can actually understand the words to tell him so.

The system of singing remains the same as in the outside song: The Cantor or the conductor sings stanzas at the end of which all join singing the chorus.

If I still feel that the rhythm is too much for the church singing, what I do is to have the ending of some syllables of phrases lengthened accordingly. This gives me a slight change in movement. Or, if the song is already in a quick movement, I control the rhythm by slowing it down.

Relationship. Babemba people understand very well a song if they know the story behind it. So, I take very great care of choosing a text from the Bible which will correspond to the act found in that song I am working on. It is very difficult sometimes to find a fitting traditional song but I always make it a point to find one somewhat similar. Thus, if I want to compose a hymn for Christmas Morning Mass, for example, I take a song the old women sing after the birth of a child and polish it in a fitting manner not allowing a lot of changes, especially when the song and its occasion have nothing wrong or pagan in their background.

3. Four ways in which I compose. In each section of Bemba music, I have found different ways of composing in relation to the particular style of music. Take, for instance, in Ng'omba, you have to use very short but meaningful phrases in deep Bemba for your texts. So, I am, here in this brief summary giving some of my chief lines of composing.

(i) Words first. I have found this is the best way in Babemba as their songs are all based on the tonal accents.

(ii) Imagination. This indeed is the true composing of songs where the composer will have to invent an entirely new tune with his own words. I do not think
this is an easy way as most of us think and count ourselves as real composers. Very, very few have this gift from God, and remember it is only those gifted people who can follow this way. Those are the real musicians, the Ng’omba. What I do here: I think of a tune, but it must not be my worry to force it to come to mind. Nature brings it, and after I have had it, I must make sure that it does not conquer the accents of my words or else I will have to force it to follow words.

(iii) Mixing two different Bemba tunes. Because of the danger that people would recall the actual outside dance and use it in the church, and if I do not like the above ways, what I do is to take two Bemba songs of different tunes and exchange some agreeable notes to get the melody modified. I must take care that such tunes do not lose their personality.

(iv) Mixing a Bemba tune with some very close western tunes. If I see that method (iii) would fail, then I take one western tune, e.g., from Gregorian, which is very close to the Bemba tune I am working on and mix that with the latter to get a tune which may balance in some way. In this method I ought to take a great care that I do not make the tune too European. Unless I were so sure of the European song I am working on, I would not be so free in mixing.

4. How I take a new hymn into church.

   (i) Trying it outside. I first of all sing it alone many times with my staff notation which is just a reminder to me, and then take it to young girls as these bring voices clearer than the old, then a group of those girls sing it to the old people for criticism. If necessary, we can work over it again with those elders. People may change accents and I follow them.

   (ii) Bishop’s approval. I am not allowed to present it as a hymn in church yet, until I send a recording of it to the Bishop, who probably will play it before the African clergy and elders to see if there is anything immoral both in tune and words. He will generally approve it and encourage more adoption not only in songs but also in culture. For example: Applauding and clapping when the priest turns bread and wine into the body of Christ—Consecration.

5. Drums and other Babemba musical instruments. Babemba drums and instruments are the fundamental basis of rhythm. What I have up to now found is that if a real Bemba hymn in Bemba style is not accompanied by some kind of Bemba instrument, it will lose its rhythm either by being very quickly sung or by slowness. Drums and other Bemba musical instruments, too, cannot enter the church sounding as they do outside, respective modifications should be done, of course to suit the hymn. As Bemba people do not dance while worshipping, drums must be beaten so that they do not arouse full dancing while keeping movement and rhythm, of course. I am not overlooking the great work and trouble one would have to face in working out the correct church drum sounds while I say that there should be a difference between the church drum sounds and the outside drum sounds.

6. Reaction of the congregation.

   (i) Bishops. I must now and then thank our Bishops who have allowed experimentation in adapting African music in church services while I do not say that they will accept all that I compose or develop, but at least their idea is just the same as mine—to apply African culture at the service of the Church.

   (ii) Priests. When I talk about the feelings of various classes of people on African culture adopted at the service of the Church, I feel I must classify the priests I have met. European priests are in two groups:

      (a) Those who appreciate the idea and work done. To these, I am afraid and sorry to say that they should only encourage Africans to keep on rather than making it a task for themselves to find out and arrange for Africans’ good and bad customs—the work
which they would have difficulty in doing because of their cultural background. They have unchained us from the bondage of their imposed-on-people culture, and therefore should let us be free as much as possible. We Africans are the BEST fitted to study our own music and culture.

(b) *Those European priests who do not want it* and are regarding it as being pagan. To these, I would better say, they learn more of what to be a man is. You can't love eggs while keeping no hens. This means, if they do not like our things let them preach to other tribes who might be more able to follow their customs. They cannot say they know the best ways of the Church. I hope Bishops will now take a good look into African ways of worship. And, after all, many priests say all is pagan, but they have not even for a day tried to see something about our customs. Hearing from their cooks, they have collected plenty of lies and exaggerations.

(c) *African priests.* These are very much the responsible men for the research of African culture. They, too, should never make unnecessary intimidation as to the danger of the church falling into paganism. I praise them very much for their idea of working out these things slowly but surely. Let us take our time and look, first of all into all kinds of traditional things and music and culture. Then, gradually coming to things worked out carefully to suit the church. But, here, also, some very Latin African Fathers, think that *Mupukumo* and *Itumba* drum are not nearly as suitable as their harmoniums. They should remember that for a thing to be dedicated to God, there is no Europeanisation needed.

(d) *Educated Africans.* I know very well why such people are very opposed to this. And, I should not be shy to mention, that when someone denies his own culture, it is the greatest sign that he is still a savage. He is still in the days when some black people wanted to buy the white colour as if it could be found in stores. Doctors, like Dr. Banda, Dr. M'timukulu, Dr. Kaunda and all those graduates, to mention but a few, feel it is their job to encourage our culture. And, even in Rome those Bishops who had thought it wise to allow national culture in churches are not Form II's or Form IV's but real Doctors and Educationalists. I know a boy who after completing his Form IV came with the aim of defeating all I am doing. When I asked him reasons for his objections, he said that he was afraid of being taken back to the old. He forgot that all he was learning in school was European culture only developed. He was very blindly interested in learning History of Europe while burying that of his own land. I am glad that nearly all students in high schools have awakened to see that we cannot be a people unless we have our own culture preserved.

(e) *Ordinary people.* I cannot wonder if I find some opposers in this group. Many of them never understand even where tea comes from, thinking it is a kind of rain which God especially pours to Europeans. But surprisingly enough, these are the people who really appreciate Africanisation and support it greatly. Missionaries have been preaching against African customs and persuading the people to stop them. People just agreed superficially but they realised that missionaries were just trying to fight their natural way. And the result has been that people have continued these practices in spite of the missionaries. This is one of the proofs that we could not approach God devotedly unless we approach Him in our own way. N.B. Really our people do not mean to be opposed, they only find it difficult to stop suddenly the foreign ways. Just as one would find it difficult to return to Bwali after having stayed in England for 50 years. But he would not say that Bwali is bad.

(f) *My own feelings.* I feel that it is not a good thing to speed up in things like culture, etc. We have to be steady and not very quick. It is not a job to be finished in a year but, on the other hand, we should each year go a step ahead in these things. If we meet opposers it makes us do our work more carefully. If, really we mean to preserve our culture, let us first search out the old people before they die, as they are the best ones who can tell us about African customs. That is why I am afraid that those composers
or developers living in towns will think they are composing African tunes. They are only mixing up a number of jazzy tunes. Do you want to have a bar of copper? Go in the soil and dig stones. Bring them up and refine them into pure copper. The same if you want African Culture and music. Go out in the bush where the white man’s influence has not so much reached; there, you will bring out something which you may develop. The best places for testing African songs or hymns are rural areas. White experts should not very much disturb us with their complicated musical techniques, a push behind us is the best we hope of them. I do not at all agree with those who because they have no true proofs as to whether adopting African culture at the service of the Church is good or bad, say that African tunes will be very monotonous as most songs sound exactly the same. They say this because they have no chance yet of studying European scales. If they had they should find that all these millions and millions of Western tunes are only restricted to two scales only—Major and Minor, and it is not monotonous. I do not say that the methods of composing I follow are the best and that one should use them, composing methods vary from one tribe to another. Tell us about your own ways and let us learn of them also. Let us do all to the benefit of our souls and of our friends.

III. CULTURE

We must also develop our culture, not always accepting all that comes from white people because they themselves do it. Can’t we do something about, for instance:

1. Greetings.
2. Home life.
4. Dressing.
5. Walking with a lady.
6. Dances.
7. Addressing persons.
8. Addressing meetings.
9. Receiving people.
10. Rest houses or Nsaka.
11. Drinking parties.
15. Playing.
   Etc., etc.