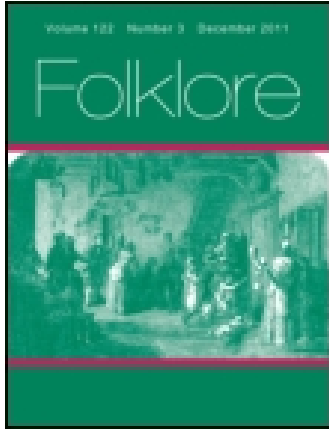


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THE CONGO MEDICINE-MAN AND HIS BLACK AND WHITE MAGIC.

BY JOHN H. WEEKS.

(*Read at Meeting, February 16th, 1910.*)

IN this paper I desire to supplement information already given in *Folk-Lore*¹ concerning the Lower Congo *nganga* or medicine-man by a fairly complete list of the many varieties of *nganga*. After careful enquiry I have arrived at the conclusion that nearly all *ngangas* practise both black and white magic, by the use of the same fetish in different ways.

The term *nganga* covers the meanings sorcerer, exorcist, witch-finder, fetish-priest, healer of diseases, diviner, conjuror, etc.,² but no one *nganga* exercises all these functions. Each is expert in his particular line, rarely working outside it, and it will be seen from the names of the various *ngangas* that their functions are usually well-defined. Men and women on becoming *ngangas* do not take new personal names (except that the *ndembo ngangas* are always called Nkau), and can become *ngangas* in several different ways, viz.:—

1. Initiation.³

2. Payment to a *ngang'* a *mbambi* of 1000 strings of blue

¹ Vol. xx., pp. 182-8.

² The term *nganga* is also applied to initiates of the *ndembo* and *nkimba* secret societies, but such persons rarely act as *ngangas* in the ordinary sense, and a *nganga* need not be a member of either society.

³ Vol. xx., p. 183.

pipe beads and a fowl, after recovery from an infectious disease by means of the *mbambi* fetish. In return for the fee instruction is given in the "medicines" used and method of procedure. (If the patient is clever enough to recognise the herbs etc. given to him, and to imitate the ceremonies, he may set up as a *nganga* without paying any fee.)

3. Being imbued with fetish power in the *ekinu* dance.⁴
4. Passing the ordeal for witches successfully.⁵

The profession was therefore open to any shrewd, artful, and energetic person, either rich or poor, bond or free, and was not confined to one sex. As a rule, the *nganga* was a lithe and active person, for it was often necessary to dance for hours to excite the crowd to the necessary pitch; he had restless, sharp eyes that jumped from face to face of the spectators; he had an acute knowledge of human nature, and knew almost instinctively what would please the surrounding throng; but his face became after a time ugly, repulsive, and the canvas upon which cruelty, chicanery, hate, murder, and all devilish passions were portrayed with repellent accuracy. When performing, blue, red, white, yellow, and any other colours he could obtain were plastered in patches, lines, and circles upon the face and exposed parts of his body; thick circles of white surrounded the eyes, a patch of red crossed the fore-

⁴Vol. xx., pp. 464-5.

⁵Vol. xix., p. 417. In March, 1909, I met a man who had formerly been a *ngang' a ngombo* (witch-finder). He had been accused four times of being a witch, and each time had vomited after drinking the *nkasa* infusion, and so proved his innocence. After the fourth ordeal he informed his friends that he would begin business himself as a *ngang' a ngombo*. He was in much request as a witch-finder, and was never again himself accused. On one occasion he was chased by the person accused, who threatened to shoot him, but his principal professional difficulty was to find unerringly the grave of the person killed by the witch. If death was believed to be due to witchcraft, no trace was left of the grave, and the pointing out of the place of interment was regarded as the crucial test of the occult powers of the *nganga*.

head, broad stripes of yellow were drawn down the cheeks, bands of red or yellow ran down the arms and across the chest, and spots of blue and other colours were put on promiscuously to fill up, according to no rule other than his own crude taste and the colours available. His dress consisted of the softened skins of wild animals, either whole or in strips, feathers of birds, dried fibres and leaves, ornaments of leopard, crocodile, or rat's teeth, small, tinkling bells, rattling seed pods, and anything else that was unusual and wearable. The effect attained was extremely grotesque, but was to the native the sign of the witch-doctor's power. To inspire the natives with awe and fear this get-up was absolutely necessary, for, if a *nganga* arrived at the scene of his operations in the ordinary garb of a native, he would be scouted and turned out of the town.

The *nganga* was the arbiter of life and death, for not only was his selected victim led away to drink the ordeal, but so implicitly did the people believe in him that, when he said that his patient would die, this invariably happened, as the friends began at once to prepare for the burial, and, instead of feeding the patient, they would dig his grave and send to call his relatives to the funeral. The *nganga* had said he would die, so what was the use of wasting time and good food on him?

The *nganga* was consulted about a child before birth, at birth, and throughout its childhood and youth, during illness to drive away the evil spirits causing the sickness, after the death of a first wife to cleanse a widower, after death to discover the witch who caused it, and at burial to ensure that the deceased would not return to trouble the family. Even after death and burial the spirit of the deceased can be controlled by the *nganga*, and destroyed by him if it does not behave itself decently.

The *nganga* put the native under tabu, and removed it; he made the hunting, trading, and war "medicine"

to ensure good luck; he brought the rain when there was a drought, or stopped it when the fields were being inundated with abnormal storms; he made the fetish for the caravan to carry on the road, which would soften the heart of the white trader so that he would give a good price for the produce offered for sale; he made the charms that would protect a whole town, or an individual, or an animal. There was no condition of life which he was unable to affect either for good or evil, and his services must not be despised, or some catastrophe would follow. Such were the pretensions of the Congo *nganga*, and over the natives he wielded tyrannical and empirical power.

There are two phrases that contain the whole theory and practice of the Congo medicine-man's black and white magic.

When a man has been injured by a known or unknown enemy and wishes to inflict on him disease, misfortune, or death, he selects a *nganga* who possesses a fetish that has control over certain diseases, and pays him a fee to *loka e nkisi*, i.e. curse by the aid of a charm or fetish. The fetish is beaten with a stick, informed what it is to do, and then hung up outside the invoker's house, and the spirit of the fetish flies off to obey its orders. This is the simple *modus operandi* followed by all *ngangas*, who invoke their fetishes to use their various powers against the enemies of their clients. Any ordinary man who owns a fetish can curse an enemy with it by performing the same ceremony. If a man has not a fetish of his own powerful enough to satisfy his hatred, and does not want to go to the expense of engaging a *nganga* to *loka e nkisi*, he can, for a smaller sum, borrow for a limited time a strong fetish, and can himself *loka e nkisi*. When this ceremony is performed, it is not necessary to mention a name, but only "the thief who stole my goods," or "my enemy who sent me bad luck," or "the one who

bewitches me with this bad disease," as the case may be. This is the whole science of the Congo medicine-man's "black art."

Now all diseases, bad luck, misfortune, sorrow, and death are caused by witchcraft, *i.e.* by some one *lokanga e nkisi* against a person or a member of his family. For example, if a piece of cloth is stolen, the owner pays a *nganga* to *loka e nkisi* against the unknown thief. If the thief hears of it, and through fear returns the cloth, he will pay compensation and ask the *nganga* to *lembola e nkisi*, *i.e.* to soothe, appease the fetish, and thus remove its curse from working against him. Supposing the thief does not hear that the robbed man has called in the *nganga* to *loka e nkisi*, or feels so secure either in his disbelief in fetishes or in the protective power of his own charm that he retains the cloth, then the spell will work either on him or on one of his family. Hence, when a man is suffering from a disease, no one knows whether that disease is the result of a curse invoked on his own evil doings or on a member of his family who has injured some one so badly that they have paid a *nganga* to *loka e nkisi*. A robbed man will call upon the *ngang' a nkosi* (p. 462 *infra*) to curse the unknown thief with some severe lung trouble, and for this he is paid a fee by his client; by and by a man in the neighbourhood is troubled with a chest complaint, and, all other remedies failing, he asks and pays the *ngang' a nkosi* to use his good offices with his *nkosi* fetish to *lembola* it, to appease it so that the curse may be removed, and he may be cured. It is evident that either the man or one of his family is the thief, or why does the man suffer from such a disease? The same *nganga* practises his black magic to *loka* his fetish to curse a man with a disease, and uses his white magic to *lembola* his fetish to remove the curse, *i.e.* cure a man of a disease. He draws pay from both parties. Hence *loka e nkisi* is to invoke malignant spells

against an enemy, and *lebola e nkisi* is to invoke beneficent power on behalf of a friend by removing the curse by various rites and ceremonies. The same fetish is used for both purposes.

Some of the *ngangas* in the following list are common to the whole of the Lower Congo, others are known only in certain localities, and others are known by one name in one district and another name in another district. It will be observed that some are more beneficent than malignant in their operations, but it may be stated as an axiom that, the more malignant a *nganga* can be for evil, the more beneficent he can also be in removing curses and curing diseases. The powerful fetishes that give malignant diseases are also supposed to be able to cure them when properly appeased by the *nganga's* ceremonies.

1. *Ngang' a wuka*,—(*wuka*, to cure or heal),—is a general practitioner who deals in simples and charms for curing diseases.⁶

2. *Ngang' a moko*,—(*moko*, arms). Whatever this may have meant originally, it has no intelligible meaning now. The *moko* is sometimes a bundle of charms, and sometimes a small box of charms, and the *moko* doctor is more frequently a woman than a man. A red bead is taken to her from the patient, and she puts this bead under her pillow and dreams about the complaint of the patient who has sent it. In the morning she tells the messenger the cause of the illness and the treatment to be followed. This *nganga* only goes to the patient in a very bad case. The fee is 1 fowl and 500 strings of blue pipe beads; should she go to the town of the patient, she receives another fowl before she begins her ceremonies. The special function of this *nganga* is to state whether the patient is bewitched or not. Should the *ngang' a wuka* fail to cure his client, he lays his failure at the door of witchcraft, and

⁶ Vol. xx., pp. 183-4.

the *ngang' a moko* is called in.⁷ Should she say there is no special witchcraft in the matter, another *ngang' a wuka* is called; should she say, however, that witchcraft is at work, some one goes through the village night after night calling on the witch to desist from his evil practices or he will be surely punished. (The *ngang' a moko* is also often required to discover a thief.) Should the patient still not regain his health, another *nganga* is called, viz.:—

3. *Ngang' a bitodi*. This *nganga* calls on the spirits, and, having the trick of throwing his voice in different directions, answers himself in assumed tones, and will keep up a conversation with the evil spirits, exhorting them to leave the sick man alone. Sometimes he will chase the said spirits out of the town, and, getting them near the bush, will fire his gun repeatedly at them to drive them away. (Cf. No. 9 below.) The following is another method of this *nganga*:—In 1909 a man named Kiala of Wombe was ill with a cough and bad chest, and on the complaint growing worse the *ngang' a bitodi* was called to discover what retarded the patient's recovery. On arrival in the town the *nganga* took his fetish and locked himself in a house. He told the people that they would see the house shake as they heard the voices of the spirits (*nkwiya*) talking to him. The fetish *bitodi* spoke and the spirits answered, and the voices of young men, old men, young women, and old women were heard in conversation. After a long consultation between the *bitodi* and the spirits, the *nganga* came out and said,—“When the brother of the sick man married, he did not give any palm wine to his wife's family, and consequently this sickness has come as a punishment for breaking a country custom.” The *nkwiya* also said through the *nganga*,—“One or two of the three sisters of the sick man had an evil spirit (*ndoki*), and they all three must bless the patient so as to remove the evil influence.” The three sisters one by one took their sick

⁷ Vol. xx., p. 185.

brother's right hand, and, having pretended to spit on it, said,—“*Ovw' e nsambu yo malawu*” (May you have blessings and good fortune). This particular blessing is called *taulwila*, from *taula*, to spit. The *nganga* in this case, to prove his power, heated a matchet red hot three times and licked it each time. He received as a fee for his services an amount equal to 24s.

The next *nganga* in importance is the one called in on the death of a person, and is named—

4. *Ngang' a ngombo*,—(*ngombo*, guessing). The special work of this *nganga* is to guess at or point out the witch (*ndoki*) who has caused the death of the deceased.⁸ This *nganga* is sometimes, but rarely, engaged to discover the witch who is troubling a sick man, especially if the said sick man is influential and wealthy,—a chief of importance. Usually, however, he is not sent for until the person is dead. This *nganga* must not belong to the same family or clan as the deceased.

5. *Ngang' a nzaji*. Thunder is supposed to be made by the *nzaji* fetish, which also has the lightning under its control, and both lightning and a thunderbolt are called *mbw' a nzaji* (the dog of *nzaji*). *Nzaji* is represented by a wooden image, and is believed to possess tremendous power. When a person has been robbed and cannot discover the thief, he sends for *ngang' a nzaji*, who brings his wooden image, and asks the suspected persons if they have stolen the article. If they all deny the theft, the *nganga* goes outside the house, taps with his knife several times on the stomach of the image, and raises and lowers it three times. *Nzaji* is thus incited to strike the thief with lightning.⁹ The man who has a skin disease called *tiya twa nzambi* (fire of God), in which the skin puckers up and blisters as though burnt, is thought to be under the ban of *nzaji*, and when he dies he is buried at or near a cross road. The fear of *nzaji* is so great that a thief will return

⁸ Vol. xx., p. 186-7.

⁹ Vol. xx., p. 475.

the stolen article, secretly if possible, or openly rather than risk a terrible punishment. The *nzaji* curse is nullified in the following way:—The person or family under the ban tells the *ngang' a nzaji* to bring his image, and he pours some palm wine into the hole in the stomach of his image, stirs the wine well, and gives it to the person or persons to drink. This is called *nua mbozo* (to drink the mixture), and the mixture renders the participants immune from the above disease, and from death by lightning. If several members of a family die by *nzaji*, the family goes through the ceremony of marrying the *nzaji* fetish into their family, or one of the members of the family becomes a *ngang' a nzaji*, and this is called *tuntuka nzaji* (to come under the benign influence of *nzaji*). It is believed that, if *nzaji* belongs to the family, it will have pity on it. It must be remembered that, when the *nzaji* curse is put on a thief, the thief's family is included in the curse; and, if the family has a strong suspicion that one of its members is the thief, they try to protect themselves in the above manner, and undoubtedly the thief often protects himself by taking advantage of the antidote.

6. *Ngang' a mbambi*. This *nganga* by his fetish image gives syphilitic sores and deep-seated ulcers. A man living in a town near San Salvador had some syphilitic sores called *mbadi* which the *ngangas* could not heal, although many were engaged for that purpose. At last they said the sores were caused by the *mbambi* fetish, and to cure the man it was necessary to make the *mbambi* fetish a member of the sick man's family, when it would take pity on him. The *ngang' a mbambi* was sent for, and on arriving he put his drum in the centre of the crowd that had collected in the middle of the town. A boy and girl were selected to represent the clan. The girl was put on the ground with her back supported by the drum, and the *nganga* beat away on his drum until the girl swayed to and fro with the rhythm of the beating;

then, of a sudden, she jumped up and ran to a house opposite, climbed over it, and, as she went, pulled out, in her frenzy, handfuls of grass. Her actions showed that she was under the spell of the fetish, which had taken possession of her. The same operation was repeated on the boy, but, being too young to know what was expected of him, he sat stolidly still, and at last was replaced by an older boy, who very quickly re-enacted the girl's performances. The *mbambi* fetish was then regarded as a member of the clan, and was expected to withdraw his displeasure from his "relative." The patient, however, was never cured of his disease, and died a short time after the above ceremony.

7. *Ngang' a mpungu*,—(*mpungu*, mighty, all-powerful). This *nganga* owns a luck-giving bag of charms.¹⁰ This *nganga* is supposed to have the power of making his clients favoured by women, slaves, and trade, and also by his family and friends. Those who by us are regarded as being the special favourites of fortune are regarded on the Lower Congo as being in possession of the *mpungu* charm, or *sole* image. The price of this charm is one slave, and, as only the rich can give that price, the idea is consequently fostered that such a fetish really gives good luck to its happy owner. The *nganga* can not only impart good luck to his clients, but, if paid, also remove good luck from any one and overwhelm them with misfortune. He has only to tap the *sole* image and hold it up and down three times and hang it outside his house, and away its spirit will fly to ruin the person against whom it has been incited.

8. *Ngang' a zumbi*. Should a town desire to have good luck in health, in trading, in breeding animals, and in its rivalry with other towns in hunting, farming, etc., the inhabitants contribute towards feeing a *ngang' a zumbi*

¹⁰ Vol. xx., pp. 43-4. The bundle of *mpungu* may also contain some albino's hair.

to make for them a *nkind' a evata* (town charm). The *nganga* arrives in due time with his bag of charms. A plain post of *lembanzau* wood is procured, and a hole is cut in the top. Into this hole some of the strong *sumbi* charm is put, and a piece of palm gossamer is tied over the top. A hole is then dug in the ground just outside the town by the side of the road along which the women pass when fetching water from the stream. A goat is killed, and the head is put in the hole, and the fetish stick placed on it. (This is supposed to keep the white ants away from the stick.) The blood is poured over the hole in the stick, bathing thus the charms in blood. The town charm is now complete and ready to work, but there is one prohibition that must be scrupulously observed,—nothing tied in a bundle may enter the town, or the charm will become non-effective. Women returning with firewood must untie the bundle before reaching the “town charm”; men with bundles of grass for thatching must untie them; carriers with loads must loosen all the cords, or make a wide detour; and people must remove their girdles and belts. No sacrifice is offered regularly to this charm, but, should something very bad happen to the town or people, they refresh, or renew the energies of, the charm by pouring some more blood over it. Sometimes the fetish post is placed in the centre of the town.

Sometimes a man will invest in a *sumbi* charm for his own exclusive use. The fee is so extravagantly large that only rich men can pay it, and hence the idea of its power to bring riches to its owner is fostered.

This *sumbi* charm is at times put into a fowl, a goat, or a pig, and such a fowl or animal is never sold or killed, and it is never stolen, as no one would dare to steal the fetish belonging to another. Male animals only are invested with the *sumbi* power, and, when the animal grows old, the power is transferred to another. There used to be found in the towns what were called *nsusu a sumbi*

(*zumbi* fowls). The possessor of a *zumbi* charm selected a fine healthy cock, and gave it a small portion of the *zumbi* charm to swallow. That fowl then became his fetish, and he treated the fowl like a fetish. No one was allowed to beat or offend it, and it was respected like a chief. The *zumbi* fowl told its owner of coming events, such as danger to the town or to himself, and by its crow it also foretold the future, and in that way brought luck to its owner, as only he understood the information given by its crow and could take advantage of it. When the fowl became old, the *zumbi* charm was given to another, and the first one was killed, but eaten only by its owner. Drums were used in driving the *zumbi* power into a person, but the fowl simply swallowed a piece of the charm.

The *zumbi* is a bundle of charms, or an image that has had some of the charms put into it, or a fowl, or an animal as indicated above. The power of the *zumbi* is derived from the great *mpungu* charm. *Nsusu* (fowl) a *zumbi*, *nsusu a sole*, and *nsusu a mpungu* are all the same in their operations, getting their power, however, originally from the last,—*mpungu*.

9. *Ngang' a nkwiya*. This *nganga* pretends to control, punish, and even destroy the *nkwiya*, evil spirits that cause all diseases and death, for the *nkwiya* is the evil spirit by which the *ndoki* (witch) is possessed. If the *ngang' a bitodi* (No. 3) is unsuccessful in persuading the spirits to let the sick man alone, the *ngang' a nkwiya* is called, and, when he has ascertained what spirit it is that is troubling the man or family, he tries to drive it away by cursing, threatening, and firing his guns at it, and, as a last resort, he digs up the body of the person whose evil spirit is accused of being the cause of the illness or epidemic and burns it. By burning the body it is believed that the spirit is effectually destroyed, but this is done only when the evil spirit of the person is

persistent in its attacks on the health and comfort of the individual or family.¹¹

10. *Ngang' a munkanda*, (i.e. trap). This *nganga* works with a bundle of charms and some small traps. The bundle contains powdered chalk, palm nut, and small garden eggs, and the bag is called *nkutu a maswa*; on the outside are six traps. The leaves etc. are *nlakaji*, *lumbuzu*, *munjila-njila*, *mundondo*, *dintata*, and *tendi kia ndungu*. If a person spits blood, or has a bad chest complaint, the *nganga* takes *makaiya* (leaves) *ma lumbuzu*, some *dintata*, and some of the chalk powder, crushes them together, and adds a little palm wine, and gives the mess to his patient to drink. Then the *nganga* puts several of the *nkanda* (traps) about the doors of the sick one's house or room, having first put a little fowl's blood or some sweet herbs in them to attract insects, spiders, cockroaches, etc. In the morning he looks to see if anything has entered them, and, if he finds a cockroach is right at the end of the trap, he knows the witch belongs to a distant branch of the family, and without more ado he crushes the cockroach, believing that the sickness will now pass from his patient to the *ndoki* represented by the cockroach. His patient will now get better. If, however, the cockroach is only half-way up the trap, he knows the *ndoki* is of very near kinship to the patient, and, as he does not want to pass the sickness on to a near relative, he warns the cockroach, and lets it go. Should a cockroach be found in the trap the next morning, he believes it is the same one (or, if it is a spider, that it has only changed its form); he will either warn it and threaten it more strongly and let it go, or he will keep it shut up a few days without food, and will watch to see if a near relative of the patient becomes thin, and, if no one becomes thin, he will vehemently threaten the *ndoki* in the insect and let it go. Should he find an insect in the trap on

¹¹ Vol. xx., p. 60.

the third morning, he kills it at once, as it is evident that the *ndoki* is very persistent and should be punished. It does not matter if the insect is found in a different trap each time. When he squeezes the insect in the trap some one else gets the illness of the patient, and, as this is the only way to catch this particular complaint, it is evident that the first patient got it by trying to bewitch some one else. This is supposed to be the only way in which this lung trouble is imparted and cured. Some women when confined send for this *nganga* to keep all *ndoki* from entering their babies. It is interesting to note that these *ndoki* can travel about disguised as insects, and the folk they represent suffer in proportion to their own suffering. In this *nganga* we have the black and white art operating at one and the same time, in curing and in giving a complaint.

11. *Ngang' a masaku.* A person suffering from dropsy in the stomach sends for this *nganga*, who on arrival calls together the relatives of his patient, and to some of them he gives light branches, to others rattles, and to one of them the fetish image *masaku*. The *nganga* puts the drum by the side of the sick man, and, while the *nganga* is playing it, the relative who has the fetish image beats it and calls on it to use its power to cure the patient, and punish those who are causing the disease; those with the rattles shake them vigorously, and those with the branches beat the body of the sick man with them. After keeping up this performance for some time, the *nganga* leads them outside the town, and the branches are all heaped together and left. The *nganga* then procures some sweet-smelling herbs, and boils them in a large saucepan, which is put under the patient; a large blanket is put over the man and the saucepan, and thus he takes a vapour bath and perspires most freely. This is repeated many times. Here again in the same ceremony are exercised both the black art and the white art.

12. *Ngang' a nkamba*. This is a female *nganga* who exercises her functions in cases of pregnancy to ensure a good and easy delivery and a healthy child.¹²

13. *Ngang' a nkisi*,—(*nkisi*, fetish, charm, amulet). When a child is born under unusual circumstances, *i.e.* by presentation of the legs, or the mother has dreamed of the *ximbi* (water spirits), a ceremony already described is observed.¹³

14. *Ngang' a mbanzangola* has a fetish which is the most powerful and most feared of all the fetishes in the catalogue. It is a wooden image, and is retained in the possession of its *nganga*. A private person can buy a *sole* fetish, or any one of the others, but no private individual may own a *mbanzangola* fetish. If a person desires to cause pain, disease, or death to another, he goes to a *nganga* of this fetish, and, having paid a fee, drives in a nail or a knife where he wants his enemy to feel the pain. A knife stabbed in a vital part means a painful death to the man's enemy. A nail in the shoulder, elbow, or knee would mean excruciating agony in one of those joints, and indicates that the man does not want to kill his enemy, but only wishes him to have rheumatism, abscesses, or some other minor ailment. The *mbanzangola* images are often found stuck over with nails, knives, and other sharp instruments. This is probably the only fetish image in connection with which there is no white art practised. It is neither a preventive fetish nor a curative one, but is always used to inflict pain.

15. *Ngang' a lembe*,—(*lembe*, to tame, soothe, make gentle). This *nganga* is called upon to ratify unconditional peace between towns or chiefs that have been making war on each other.¹⁴ If a man has killed another by accident, he has to pay a small sum of money to deceased's family. The homicide is then taken to this *nganga*, who procures

¹² Vol. xix., p. 419.

¹³ Vol. xx., pp. 477-8.

¹⁴ Vol. xx., p. 37.

a saucepan of palm wine and presses into it the juice of *nsangalawwa* stems and *elemba-lemba* leaves. He then dips his hands into the mixture, and puts the palms of his wet hands to the forehead and back of the homicide's head, then to the temples, and then over all the joints of the body. This makes him *olembamene* (gentle, docile, careful). Should a hunter kill his dog, he must call this *nganga* and go through this ceremony, or next time he will kill a man. No one would hunt with him unless he observed this rite. In the same way the *ngang' a lembe* operates upon the insane to render them docile, and to cure them of their madness.

16. *Ngang' a sungu*,—(*sungu*, violent death,—the war fetish). On the proclamation of war between the towns, a strong charm is made by this *nganga*.¹⁵

17. *Ngang' elemba*,—(*lemba*, to remove all evil spells),—provides means used to accomplish much the same object as No. 16.¹⁶ No. 16 provides a charm to cause a violent death to the enemy, and No. 17 a protective charm from violent death by the enemy.

18. *Ngang' a nkosi*,—(*nkosi*, lion). This *nganga's* fetish has the power of giving and curing chest complaints such as pneumonia, pleurisy, etc., and a person suffering from a disease of this kind goes to or sends for the *ngang' a nkosi*, who cuts a long, thin, exposed rootlet of a tree, and binds it tightly round the patient's chest. The *nganga* then searches for a bunch of palm nuts on a palm-tree that has never been cut before for palm nuts, and, having found the first fruits of the palm-tree, he takes some of the nuts and tears the oily fibre off with his teeth,—(a knife must not be used),—meanwhile walking round the palm-tree. Two of the nuts freed of their oily fibre are hung from the rootlet round the man's chest,—one near each breast,—and then the oil from the fibre is pressed out and mixed with palm wine and rubbed well into the patient's chest.

¹⁵ Vol. xx., p. 35.

¹⁶ Vol. xx., p. 36.

19. *Ngang' a lufwalakazi*, (probably *lufwa lua (n)kazi*, from *lufwa(fwa)* death, *lua* of, *nkazi* wife and husband).¹⁷ The ceremony performed on a widower who has lost his first wife is as follows:—The bereaved husband sends for this *nganga*, who gives him a raw egg to swallow. The widower then enters his house, and for six days comes out at night only. He may only sleep on a palm basket, *i.e.* a basket made by plaiting two palm fronds together. At dawn on the seventh day the male relatives of the deceased woman arrive to escort him to a running stream, carrying his basket bed. On arrival at the stream one of the relatives takes the bed and throws it into the water, scrapes his tongue, shaves him, pares his nails, makes three small cuts on his arm, and finally immerses him three times in the river to wash away the death. The widower then returns to the town, and a cock and hen are killed and cooked, and are eaten by the relatives of the deceased,—the males eating the cock, and the females the hen. The greatest care must be taken not to break a single bone of either fowl. Palm wine is then drunk, and the bereaved is rubbed with oil and camwood powder. At sundown the bones of the fowls are collected and tied in a palm leaflet, and buried at the base of a young palm-tree. From those who are present the *nganga* selects the men and women who have never been bereaved of husband or wife, and these have to tread in the earth over the buried bones. Those who thus tread in the bones have a tabu put upon them that they are not to eat palm nuts or anything made from them until a child is born to each of them. To disregard this prohibition is to court a like bereavement. A pumpkin seed is added to the charm worn by the widower, and three fibre cloths dyed black are put about his waist, and thus all the evil spells are broken. The man need not wait a year or two as a widow does, but can marry as soon as the wife is buried and the above rites

¹⁷ Vol. xix., pp. 431-2.

performed. He is obliged to observe them, as otherwise no woman would dare to marry him. When the man returns to the town, his deceased wife's sister steps over his legs. The *nganga* receives as his fee a demijohn of palm wine and from 50 to 100 strings of blue pipe beads.

20. *Ngang' a nkisi a Kiniambe*, (*i.e.* divine fetish).¹⁸

21. *Ngang' a bau*,—(*bau*, divination by ordeal or testing).¹⁹

22. *Ngang' a manimba*, (*i.e.* sleeping sickness). The patient suffering from this complaint who goes to a *nganga* is treated in the following manner:—The *nganga* gives him a purge, and then something hot to drink with pepper mixed in it. He occasionally drops pepper juice in the patient's eyes to keep him awake, and lets blood every four days. He also scarifies the back and legs, and rubs in a mixture of lime juice and gunpowder, and stands the patient for a short time in the sun. Very often a low state of health exhibits some of the symptoms of sleeping sickness, and such cases are helped by any course of medicine in which they have faith; these so-called cures foster the belief of the people in the power of the *nganga* to relieve real cases of sleeping sickness.

23. *Ngang' a mbuji*, (*i.e.* madness).²⁰

24. *Ngang' a manga*. A married couple, who have by death lost several children, will send for this *nganga*. When he arrives, the woman holds a "hand" of plantain on her head with her right hand. Her left hand being tied with a rope, she is led by a man who cries out,—“I have a person for sale.” The *nganga* says,—“Bring the woman here, and I will buy her that she may bear children.” The seller demands 3000 strings of beads, and the *nganga* pays 3 single beads and takes the woman, whereupon he throws away the plantain, saying,—“Remove these plantains, for they are the reason why she does not bear healthy children, because she is carrying them on her head.” He cuts the rope, and a fetish feast

¹⁸ Vol. xx., p. 57.

¹⁹ Vol. xx., pp. 187-8.

²⁰ Vol. xx., p. 40.

is made called *elambu*. The *nganga* puts a tabu on her, and the ceremony is finished. The *ngang' a manga* also does around Wathen what the *ngang' a moko* practises around San Salvador.

25. *Ngang' a ezau*,—(*zaula*, to scoop away). This *nganga* destroys the power of the evil eye.²¹ The possessor of the charm can call away the soul of his enemy, and the soulless one will soon die.

26. *Ngang' a kimbaji-mbaji*, (*i.e.* to-morrow). Any one who desires to do harm to a person under the protection of this charm always puts off committing the evil until to-morrow, and thus the person is never hurt, as to-morrow never comes. This *nganga* is employed to use his charm especially to counteract the evil designs of *ezau*. The charm itself is composed of various herbs rammed into a univalve shell.²²

27. *Ngang' a mbumba*, (*i.e.* secret, mystery).²³

28. *Ngang' a mpongo*. This *nganga* owns a fetish by which he prepares in saucepans protective charms which work by making an enemy forget his evil intentions. If a person wants to rob another under his very eyes, he uses a charm prepared by this *nganga*, and under its guard he goes to the person's house, and either he or an accomplice engages him in an interesting conversation so that he forgets all else, and while in that state of forgetfulness is robbed.

29. *Ngang' a ngani*.²⁴

30. *Ngang' a mbambudi*,—(*bambula*, to deflect, to transfer in a mysterious way). The owner of this fetish is supposed to have the power of causing farm produce to leave an enemy's farm and go to that belonging to the owner of this charm, or client of this *nganga*. Fruit is also mysteriously stripped from the enemy's tree, and made to hang from the trees of others. Trade goods can also be spirited

²¹ Vol. xx., p. 473.

²² Vol. xx., pp. 40-1.

²³ Vol. xx., p. 473.

²⁴ Vol. xix., p. 436.

from one house to another. Any one possessing this fetish on him is not allowed to stay or sleep in a strange town, as the people fear its power. This fetish and the *ezau* are much the same, and can be counteracted by using the same charm.

31. *Ngang' a nkonzo*, (*i.e.* nervous energy). Any person lacking energy through ill-health, etc., sends for this *nganga*, who rubs two pieces of iron down the legs and arms three times; he then takes some green grass, and rubs it into shreds, and puts some fire in the middle and some sweet herbs on the live ember. He blows on it until there is a good smoke, and then passes the smoking herbs three times round the legs of the patient as he (or she) stands astride. When a woman is in birth pangs and has not strength to deliver her baby, they seat her on two stones and perform the above ceremony. This fetish comes from the forge, and consequently no one will steal from a forge, or he would lose his nervous energy.

32. *Ngang' a malunga*,—(*lunga*, a smithy, forge). The same as No. 31.

33. *Ngang' a mayuku*,—(*yukula*, to transfer, deflect),—has much the same power as Nos. 25 and 30.

34. *Ngang' a ebaku* is at the head of the *nkimba* secret society, *i.e.* there is a *nganga* of this cult in every *vela* (lodge) of the society. He superintends the twirling of every novice until the latter becomes giddy and unconscious, and in that condition is carried into the lodge. *Ebaku* means an old man, an elder, and in every *nkimba* lodge there was an *ebaku* who looked after the initiated and taught them the arts of the guild and also the secret language.

35. *Ngang' a nkau* was the name given to the *ngangas* who were at the head of the *ndembo*, or *nkita*, or *nsi a fwa* secret society. To what I have already written on the *ndembo* cult,²⁵ I should like to add the following note:—*Nkita* is a fetish that is responsible for all crooked and

²⁵ Vol. xx., pp. 189-98.

deformed things. Any abnormal event, such as a child being born by presenting its feet first, is put to the credit of *nkita*. *Nkita* is the power in *ndembo* that can remove deformities, if the deformed person will enter the *ndembo* lodge, and, as infecundity is regarded as abnormal, a sterile person,—man or woman,—has only to enter *ndembo* to have the disgrace removed. This is done by giving the initiated a new body.

36. *Ngang' a ngol' a nkasa* is the one who administers the ordeal (*nkasa*) to a witch.²⁶

37. *Ngang' a nkongo*, (i.e. hunting skill).²⁷

38. *Ngang' a mwilu*. The functions of this fetish man are the same as those of *nzaji* (No. 5).

39. *Ngang' a maninga* owns the fetish that causes a man to become extremely thin and weak, and also cures the complaint.

40. *Ngang' a ngundu* is the one who attempts to cure hernia with fomentations of hot leaves, purgatives, and palm wine mixed with certain juices.

41. *Ngang' a ngobila* possesses an image that is used for discovering thieves, and recovering stolen property. This fetish gives thieves any and every kind of bad lung trouble, from which they cannot be cured until they have made restitution for the robbery.

42. *Ngang' a ebunze*. When this *nganga* is called to attend a person with fits, apoplexy, or the ague shivers of fever, he makes a leaf funnel and squeezes the juices of certain leaves into it, and drops the mixture into the eyes of the patient.

43. *Ngang' a eseka*, (probably from *seka*, to sharpen).

44. *Ngang' a lubwiku*.

45. *Ngang' a elongo*.

46. *Ngang' a kumbi*.

These four *ngangas* perform the rites of circumcision.²⁸

²⁶ Vol. xix., p. 417.

²⁷ Vol. xix., pp. 434-5.

²⁸ Vol. xx., pp. 304-7.

47. *Ngang' a lukandu* is the one who has the rain-stopping charm. The *lukandu* is a small bundle of "medicines," and when the *nganga* wants to stop the rain he puts this bundle on the ground and surrounds it with several small heaps of gunpowder. He shakes his rattle, explodes the powder, and blows his whistle three times, and then the rain will neither be so frequent nor so abundant. (The rainbow is one of the signs of the effective power of this *nganga*. When the people see it they believe the charm has worked, and the rain will not again fall for a time.) If this, however, does not succeed, *salt is put on the fire*; but this last charm may stop the rains entirely, so it is used with great care and only when other means fail. The *nganga*, on the day that he is going to invoke the *lukandu*, must neither drink water nor wash himself. To make the rain come after a long drought, the *nganga* takes some *lulemba-limba* leaves, and puts them into a stream and dives under the water, and when he returns to the surface the rain will soon fall.

48. *Ngang' a ekumfu* owns an image that squats on its haunches with its arms upraised, holding something on its head. My informant's mother was a *nganga* of this kind, but, as she died while he was a young lad, all he remembers of the fetish is its shape, and that it was regarded as powerful, but its special functions he has forgotten.

49. *Ngang' a maladi*. When a person recovers from certain serious sicknesses, such as sleeping sickness, dropsy, etc., this *nganga* brings his fetish, which originally came from the Baladi country (in French Congo), and removes the tabu of "not crossing a road," which was imposed on the patient while ill, in the following manner:—He takes his patient to a cross road, draws a chalk mark on the road, digs a trench, puts water into it, and then he takes the patient, by interlocking the little fingers of the right hands, and helps him over the water three times. The tabu is removed, and the sickness is not able to follow the

man. Should a woman give birth to weakly children that soon die, this *nganga* is called, and on arrival he digs a trench and puts water in it. He helps the woman over it by the interlocking of the little fingers of the right hands, and the sickness from which she was suffering, and which caused the death of her children, will not follow her across the running water.

It will be observed in the above list that there is a *nganga* for every known disease, and one for every possible emergency in native life. The native was afraid to take a single important step in any direction from birth to death without first invoking the aid of the witch-doctor and his fetishes. When a native was not helped by one *nganga*, he, as a rule, did not blame him, but thought the diagnosis was wrong, and that the disease or misfortune was not under the control of his particular fetish. His faith in *ngangas* was not affected, but he simply changed one medicine-man for another, hoping that the new *nganga* would have a fetish to meet his case.

It is not to be thought for a moment that all these *ngangas* sprang simultaneously into existence, or that they are the product of only one tribe; they are undoubtedly the evolution of many generations, and a free appropriation from neighbouring tribes of fetish ceremonies, etc., that appealed to them through being made widely known by some famous *nganga* of the time. The Congo native was always ready to try a new fetish, hoping thereby to gain some advantage to his fortune or his health.

The following is probably the history of the rise of many of the *nganga* cults now in vogue:—A quick-witted, observant man noticed that a certain herb, or a certain mode of procedure, such as massage or inducing perspiration by steaming, was beneficial to a patient suffering from a certain disease. If he had given the herb in a simple way without any hanky-panky, or did a little medical rubbing without accompanying it with ceremonies, or had

given a vapour bath without rites and the ostentatious display of fetish power, the natives would not have regarded him as a *nganga*, and he would have procured very little business. In order to protect his discovery, and to draw patients, he surrounded it with the hocus-pocus of fetish rites and ceremonies, and thus started a new cult that had its day. It is most probable that *ngangas* and their fetishes have risen in power, have had wide fame and much popular support, have then fallen into disrepute, and have been abandoned in favour of new ones, and, if the truth were known, as many, if not more, *nganga* cults have been forgotten as are now remembered.

In the early years of the Baptist Mission on the Congo, the natives had little or no faith in our medicines, because we administered them in a simple and straightforward way. If we had had recourse to trickery we might have made large sums for our Mission, but, although our medical knowledge has been very limited, yet our remedies have so gained in favour that at one station alone, (Wathen), a sum of from £25 to £30 is taken annually for medicines, and natives come long distances to be treated in our hospital.

The *ngangas* have largely maintained the continuity of native customs, for, when baffled in curing a person, they have frequently put their failure at the door of a broken or slighted country custom; they are largely responsible for crushing any inventive genius the people have shown by putting public calamities,—such as an epidemic of sickness,—to the account of any inventor who might be known at the time; and they have retarded all progress by charging with witchcraft any one who was more skillful in work, or more energetic and shrewd in trading, than his neighbours. The fear of being accused of witchcraft has been so great and continuous that it has hampered and destroyed every attempt at advancement, and nullified every progressive step, and there was little hope of the

native attaining advancement in civilisation or any betterment of his conditions of life, until he lost faith in his *ngangas*.

It will be observed that in the ceremonies of some *ngangas* white magic is more evident than black, and in others black magic is more prominent than white, and that nearly every *nganga* practised both the black and the white art by the invocation of the same fetish in a slightly different way; by dealing with his fetish in one way he invoked it to curse a person with disease and misfortune, and by following another mode of procedure he tried to soothe and appease his fetish, so that in a good humour it would give his client good health and good luck.

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