

CIRCUMCISION RITES AMONG THE NYANGA (DRC, 1950'S) **DRAFT**

The following documentation is based on Daniel P. Biebuyck's observations and discussions with Nyanga elders (such as Shentsimya, Shoneno, Kanyangara, Kameke) who were directly involved in the circumcision rites, and on the detailed account of his circumcision in the memoirs of Mr. Sherungu on *mukumo*.

Tones are indicated on a Nyanga word the first time it occurs, afterwards the tones are not further indicated on a word already quoted; low tones are never indicated, so a word quoted for the first time may not have any accent marks because it has only low tones.

ORGANIZATION OF THE CIRCUMCISION RITES

For the organization of circumcision rites, Nyangaland is divided into ritual communities of traditionally interdependent village groups. One of these groups claims historical priority of having held the first circumcision rites in that community, all others depend on and are indebted to the sacred patrimony that the first group brought.

For the Ihana (real name: Iryamba) area (the chiefdom of the sacred chief Nkumbirwa), the situation unfolded as follows:

Traditionally the Banabitondo clan (represented by Kima ká Bítondo; they are of Tiri-Komo origin) held the unquestioned privilege/right (*umínga*) to begin the cycle of circumcision rites (some elders told me that the Banabitondo are of Komo origin). The people of Iryamba gave one of their women to Bitondo to be his wife. Her son was Kima, so Kima is considered to be the sororal nephew of the Iryamba region as a whole.

When the Banabitondo have put their candidates in their lodge, the Banamukíti clan of Rimangi village takes their first-to-be-circumcised boy there to the Banabitondo. After he has been circumcised, they return with him to Rimangi and build their own lodge (*mufínda*). Next the people of Rimbungu village take their *first-to-be-circumcised* to Rimangi, where Rimbungu's own *kitumbu* circumcises him. They return with the boy to Rimbungu and build their lodge. Next the people of Kimba village go to Rimbungu (Muhanga) and build their lodge. The people of Misau village go to Kimba; the people of Myanga village go to Misau; those of Muntongo village go to Myanga. In Muntongo the Iryamba cycle finishes for the Iryamba region. To be noted that the circumciser (*kitumbu/bitumbu*) of the Banabitondo goes to Rimangi to circumcise or help there; if there is a *kitumbu* in Rimangi, both go to the next village etc. until all of the circumcisers arrive in Myanga and Muntongo. The villages then secure fees (*mubánga*); it seems that they come mostly from the chiefs (those payments are called *ikóro*). These fees are to be taken to *Kima ka Bitondo*, where they are divided into three parts: one for *kima*, one for the tutors of all the villages, while the third part is sent by *kima* to the *banamukiti* of Rimangi, and so forth.

Other regions in Nyangaland follow a similarly conceived, but distinct, cycle.

Mutongo area: The *mukumo* was introduced before the advent of the “Bakusu”(slave traders) ; it came from the Banabitondo (Batiri-Komo origin); it entered via the Basimba of Myanga the region under chief Nyankuba via his Shebakungu Kibandi (of the Banankuo). In this area it are the Bashoa (subgroup of the Banankuo in Muhanga village) who hold the *ukenye rwa mukumo*, they also have circumcisers. They bring it to Muntongo.together with the circumcisers. it is Kibandi, the Shebakungu (Head-Counsellor) of chief Nyankuba who started it. Only the holders of *ukenye* (complex bundles of numerous ingredients linked with divination) know the exact procedures.

Occasions to Hold the Circumcision Rites

1. Following the enthronization of a new chief, the elders chosen from the four status subdivisions in Nyanga society (the *bakungu*, *barusi*, *bayonga* and *baombe*) hold a council (*kibu*) under the leadership of a most senior Shebakungu (lit. father of the counselors) and decide to ask the new chief to hold a circumcision cycle. They request from him a goat (called *wanga ya mukumo*, *blessing of the circumcision rites*), a blessing (to hold the rites). The goat is kept by the Shebakungu together with a chicken in his guest house (*ecumbe*) until the arrival of the invited circumcisers; they eat the animals and the next morning, they circumcise the first-boy, and then the others.
2. The persistence of famine (*búrio*), following a council, the chief gives a goat to the Shebakungu; this is eaten with a chicken by the local circumciser and other circumcisers; they then circumcise the first-boy and others of their village; then they travel to other villages to circumcise.
3. The dead fathers and grandfathers (*mishári ya kitumbu*) are angry because they were not honored in the *mpero* offerings to them; a circumciser dies; oracles are consulted; Shebakungu takes a goat to his chief to ask authorization to hold the circumcision rites; the chief gives a goat etc. the Shebakungu returns to his village and informs members of his kinship group/clan (*uanda*) that the chief authorized him to hold circumcision rites. The goat is then killed by the *mukúngú* of the group (every local group has tripartite leadership with complementary functions (*mutambo*, *mukungu*, *muhunga*). The circumciser himself is *mutambo* of the group and the distribution of the meat is done according to strict rules, with the circumciser getting the head and a leg, the women of the group sharing the innards. A great *mpero* is to be held for the fathers; numerous people are invited and large amounts of banana paste and beer are prepared for this purpose. The persons required to be invited, who also receive prescribed amounts of beer, paste, etc... are: the *bakúbítí* (beaters, percussionists of the talking sticks (*bananmwami*); the drummers (*basú*); the mirilton (*kabíri*) blower-speaker (*murási*); the handlers of the rhombos (*myabungúbungú*); the singers (*basímbi*) who also handle the calabash rattles (*mashengo*); the circumcisers from other village groups; the *babemi*, people of other villages coming to ask for food and beer from the circumciser

Places Involved

The places involved include: the village and hamlets; the outskirts of the village, and of the lodge. The specific spaces are:

- *Mpuko ya mpero*, where offerings take place; three symbolic obstacles (*kirindikó*) to be crossed by the candidates are constructed between this place and the lodge.
- *Mutámbi*, where the candidates rest for a short time immediately and receive much food right after the operation.

- The *mpuko* **space one**, the place of operation: the lodge (*mufinda*) one, with the house of the *shebatende* (father/master/guardian of the candidates; he is the guardian of the lodge) and the long house for the candidates with individual beds; it is close to a river/brook and a small waterfall, because here the candidates will bathe morning and evening. The candidates may spend four and more weeks here, depending on the healing of their wounds. Only a visiting guardian may also sleep in this house of the guardian; no one else, but the guardian of the lodge may enter; this is where there is the bed and the *nkúróngó* stick (*kirúo*) with which the guardian awakens the candidates. Against the roof, they dry the *kakumbú* hat of the guardian, made of the bark of the *kikaka*, *ukore* or *ngumbu* trees: “may the wounds dry fast like the hat.” One also finds the mirliton (*kabiri*) and the calabash with the water for the circumciser to wash his hands and knife. Next to this house, there are a number of *biruo* (percussion/talking sticks called *banamwãmi* or *ukángá rwá mukumo*), and the tools the boys use to trap etc., sent to the lodge by the fathers of the candidates. Before going to the forest, they are displayed on the *butara* table and placed back there when they return from the forest. In the long house of the candidates, one finds a bed for each of the candidates, covered with *birererere* leaves: because they dry fast, so will the wounds.
- The *mpuko* **space two** with a lodge comprising the long house etc.; the healed candidates may spend a couple of weeks here depending of how quickly some of the men in their promotion have recovered from the operation.
- The river, a place for bathing and for ablutions.
- The forest for various activities, such as collecting leaves, vines etc and trapping of small animals and birds.

At a particular stage in the rituals, the *mpuko* is destroyed and each of the lodges is burnt. The area where the lodge was burnt cannot be used for agricultural purposes until about 8-9 years later when the area has turned into secondary forest (*usokora*).

The *mpuko*: Circumcision space and lodge

Many persons have been informed about the imminent rites. Before all these persons have arrived, two men have been sent in the early morning to prepare the circumcision place; this is done outside the village in the forest near a brook/river:

- They clear the area; two big poles of 1m60 are erected; there, the candidate to be circumcised will lay on his back, legs spread and fixed to the poles so he cannot move them during the operation; below these poles, three pieces of wood for the helper (*ihia*), the person who holds the candidate during the operation and has an important function complementary to that of the guardian (lit. *ihia* is the kitchen stone on which women place hot pots).
- The circumciser will sit in front; of the person to be circumcised underneath the scrotum area of the candidate, they place *karéngé* leaves arranged like a little pot (*karéá ka nyabungubungú*); the blood will drip into it; underneath it, so that no blood can reach the soil (for fear of sorcerers), a mat of bark moss (*ihí*) is placed. They also have a calabash with water, for the circumciser to clean his knife (*kabasi*) and his small adz (*mbasi*) (used to remove blood as it pours from the penis?). They also put dry wood here (black of smoke they say, *nkúni sá mímá*).
- They make a toilet for men (*weya wá kabiri* – here it is made for Kabiri who is thought to be the big authority of the lodge. Near this toilet, they place short sticks called *mbangwé* (to wipe the anus). There is also a toilet for women (*cara*) with *mpúngá* leaves (this is for *nyabungubungu*, the wife of Kabiri, represented by a man).

- They build the hill/mountain of Kabiri (*ou mwá kábiri*); this is like a fence (*muruta*), a row made of small sticks: symbol – the fresh candidate cannot climb. Near this so-called hill, there are two paths: the one on the right is for the circumciser who will pass on this trail coming from the village; the right side is the circumciser's side; the other trail to the circumcision place is for the tutors of the candidates (they bring food to the lodge) and for the candidates that they lead. They also hide the poles (*birúo*) to be beaten by the tutors during the operation.

One of the two men then goes to the village to inform that all is ready, at the time of noon “when the sun burns” (*katíká ká mwishí kángángê*).

Categories of Persons Involved

- *Bakúbítí*: percussionists. Persons who handle the sacred percussion sticks (*banamwami*, mostly seven in number).
- *Barási*: persons who handle the sacred mirlitons Kabiri and Nyakimpiriiti and the Nyabungubungu rhombos. They are individuals with special speaking and singing skills, sometimes also one or other tutor may be involved.
- *Basii*: the drummers, the number of drums varies according to the rites from one to three.
- *Basimbi*: the singers who accompany the drums; they are a few of them specialized in loud and high-pitch singing. Some of them shake calabash rattles (*mashengo*).
- *Beni*: visitors, including other *bitumbu*, fathers, other kin and maternal uncles.
- *Ibi(y)a/Mahi(y)a*: the helper, second to the guardian, Sherungu says: “The tutor who follows (in seniority) the guardian is called Ihiya; the candidates rest against him when the *kitumbu* operates on their penises; if a person wants to move, he (Ihiya) holds him very firmly. Our Ihiya was Bibuka; he also handled Kabiri (represented by a mirliton).” The Ihiya participates with the guardian in many functions, such as taking the boys to wash in the river in the early morning. He is the last in the evening to leave the lodge and to close the enclosure and the first in the early morning to greet the boys.
- *Kikundi/Bikundi*: the tutors; in principle every candidate has a tutor, who may be a close relative (older uterine, consanguine or classificatory brother, not father or maternal uncle). Tutors support the candidates, help them in the lodge, accompany them in the village and the forest, bring their food from the village and take the empty dishes back to the mothers of the candidates. Also, if a tutor dies, another tutor cannot replace him; the other tutors will look after his candidate.
- *Kitumbu/bitumbu*: the circumciser; there are many, but not in every village group. In cyclically linked groups, several *bitumbu* work together, at least for the first candidate in each autonomous village group. The status of circumciser is not inherited. The *kitumbu* plays an important role in the preliminary ceremonies and at the actual operation site, but he does not function in the lodge or at the postliminary ceremonies. He is an “enemy” of the candidates.
- *Mubake/Mwami/ Babake/Bami*: The sacred chief. The Nyanga are politically divided into small chiefdoms headed each one by a sacred chief, a person said to be the son of a ruling chief and a consanguine sister or niece; he has gone through a rigid initiation process and is subject to numerous positive and negative prescriptions and rules. A sacred chief normally does not pass through circumcision (though as further explained) there are special circumstances when such a chief is circumcised. The start of an initiation cycle requires his authorization, but he must not see or come in contact with the candidates or the sacred instruments.

- *Mubanja*: The first boy to be circumcised in a village group. Among them, the first boy of a village that traditionally holds “the root” of *mukumo* (*kibumbo*) precedes all other first boys of villages that depend on the “root village” to hold the circumcision rites. Differently from the others, this boy is circumcised standing in the village itself and from which, early in the morning, all women and uncircumcised men have been chased into the forest. The boy is then placed in the men’s house while all those who were chased return to dance sexually evocative dances (*biringa*); he sleeps there with his guardian, the *Ihia*, his tutor, and the elder who holds the priority right for organizing a circumcision cycle (*uvinga y mukumo*). The next morning, he leaves for the lodge where others will join him later.
- *Mukúrika mpuko*: The very last boy of all the villages groups involved in the same initiation cycle to be circumcised. This boy is chosen in the root village where the cycle started. He is treated with strong medicine so as to promote fast healing, because only when he is healing or healed can the *batende* of all the various lodges return home. One week after he is circumcised the *ukenye* bundle (with the various protective medicines) that was opened at the start of the cycle is now closed. That day, the dried banana leaves (a sign that no one can enter the house) that were hanging at the door of the house where *kitumbu* sleeps and stores his equipment are removed.
- *Munyabatende/banyabatende*: The mother/mothers of the candidates; their main role is to prepare much food for their sons; they must at all cost avoid seeing their sons when travelling through or working in the forest. In order to inform women in general of their presence in the forest, the candidates and their tutors use talking sticks.
- *Mutende/batende*: The candidates; these young men will undergo the circumcision rites; among them is the first-to-be-circumcised (*mubanja*). Following the operation, they spend at least about two month in a first lodge while healing and at least one month in a second lodge when they are healed or almost healed. The number of candidates per lodge differs from a very few to twenty and more. There is no precise age at which they are circumcised; many are of the *myo* age category (young man of about 12 to 17); some are older; some even are married. Although all Nyanga men wish to be circumcised, also because women do not like uncircumcised men, there are some who have not gone through the rites. A Nyanga who tries to evade (often out of fear) or who tries to cheat or is not circumcised is ridiculed. He is not a man, they say, but a woman. He is known by such names as *Mwĩra* (a name given to neighboring populations where there is no circumcision) or *Shébũnu wá burumbu*, or *Shébũnu wá mushúshú*, Master mouth of mouse or Master mouth of shrew.
- *Shebatende*: He is selected for his qualities as an instructor, caretaker and care-giver, versed in medical lore; he is a man of authority known for fairness. A person can serve as a guardian in several consecutive circumcision cycles. There is one guardian per lodge; day and night, he stays in the lodge with the boys; should he ever die during the seclusion period, the most senior tutor would replace him. He is the first to wake up and to awaken the boys; during the healing period, he is the last to go to sleep after conducting a final inspection of the exact position of the boys on their beds.
- *Tita/batita*: The father/fathers of the candidates responsible for providing, at certain times, the necessary game meat and to help in making some of the paraphernalia; in principle they stay away from the lodge.
- *Koyo/bakoyo*: The mother/mothers of the candidates; all those identified as such are in charge of cooking and providing food.
- *Batambo, bakulu*: The elders.

The Number of Candidates

There are no rules on the minimum or maximum number of participants; even if there is only one candidate, he will still go through all the procedures and rituals. In four different cases, I noted the following:

- When, at the turn of the twentieth century, Mr. Shentsimya, an elder and eminent exegete of Nyanga culture, went through the rites, there were only three in his group; he remembers them well because some form of permanent friendship or, at least, arrangements of hospitality persist among co-candidates; one of the co-candidates was a sororal nephew; the other one was “a son” because a blood-brotherhood pact had been concluded between their respective fathers. Their circumcision took place in a village group that held the right to start the initiation procedures (*uinga rwá mukumo*) and from where the rites swept throughout a large section of Nyanga country. The three were circumcised in the men’s house itself and only joined their own lodge thereafter.
- In another case, Mr. Shoneno, an elder and eminent exegete, mentioned twenty-three co-candidates, most of them of the same two villages (Mera and Ntsindo), some of them closely related.
- In his elaborate memoirs Mr. Muriro Sherungu speaks in great detail about his initiation that must have taken place about 1918 in connection with the initial advent of a new sacred chief. Sherungu mentions by name the kinship group and village of about eighty-two co-candidates. They include close and remote kin, some individuals of different villages, and some Hunde (where circumcision does not exist, but numerous individuals join the Nyanga lodges to be circumcised, and are then considered to be Nyanga).
- Mr. Buuni and Mr. Tubi, the two young men who worked with me for a long time in Nyangaland, respectively mention about twenty-five co-candidates, the first in the Myanga village group, and the second in the Muntongo village group. Again some co-candidates were close or remote kinsmen and a couple of the candidates were of Hunde origin. In some instances, one or another Pygmy also joined the rites.

The Number of Circumcisers

In 1952-1956, as far as the number of Bitumbu in the Iryamba region is concerned, the situation was as follows: in six village groups (the villages Mera, Kimba, Mwiryá, Cabura, Rungoma, Mpinga), there were no circumcisers alive. Some were alive in three village groups (Karonge, Muhanga, Myanga). All circumcisers were known by name. For example I personally knew two circumcisers in Myanga (Mr. Karenda and Mr. Kameke). In Byarenga, the Pygmy region within Iryamba, circumcision was practiced; it was even said that Mr. Makomo had been the first circumciser in the entire Iryamba region.

Dress and Objects Involved

Some of the dress and objects involved are specific to the circumcision rites (*bikái byá mukumo*) and have great secrecy attached to them; others are used in other ways in commonly known activities.

Most important is the circumciser’s ensemble; fully dressed, he is often referred to as *kirimu*, monster-ogre of the forest. The masker performs dances in the village accompanied by three or four drums, but in the forest he is accompanied by the *banammvami* percussion sticks, the bullroarer, the kazoos, and one drum or all four of them. The masker also leads the boys into the forest. He does not speak or sing but gives orders and other information on a kazoo. The texts in aphoristic form

sung about him or about the rites often refer to animals: turtle, iguana, birds (hornbill; humming birds, hawk. His dress is composed of the following:

- Mask (*iromberombe*): this construction mask is made from *mubale* antelope hide (because it is light, supple, smooth); it is bent like a bag (*kirindo*); inside, there is a wooden frame (*nkasi*); on top, there are four small sticks with feathers of guinea fowl (*iséka*), *nkúróngó* (bird), humming birds (symbols of power, elegance, quickness, aggressiveness), hawk, chicken, and bulikoko. The front has two holes for eyes and one for the mouth and is adorned with white stripes and dots; in the mouth a red fruit (*munterú*) is affixed, which is said to inspire awe: the Nyanga say that when the boys see the red fruit (eaten by chimpanzees and other animals), they think when they think it is a tongue. Above the eyes, there is one or more beaks of a hornbill (*mombo*) with white stripes; the hornbill is of great importance in this ceremony because women are supposed to think that the bird circumcises the young men (scornful, intelligent, aggressive, enemy of females); attached to the mask are hides of wildcat, otter, genet (power), potto (diviner; he is fast-moving but slow in what he does). Normally the mask is kept in the personal shrine (for ancestors and personal spirits) of the *kitumbu*, a place where he regularly sleeps; when it deteriorates, it is secretly discarded. During the circumcision rites, it is kept in a small house outside the village, where the masker dresses and undresses and where he sleeps during the circumcision cycle.
- Multilayered raffia costume (*mimpuri* and *ndorera*) The costume of the mask consists of eight raffia pieces; underneath, on the chest, there is a piece of barkcloth.
- The circumcision instruments are kept in a bag made behind the hood. This bag (*Ukénye rwá mukumo*) made from potto hide belongs to the circumciser and contains his knife, brass knife, adz, amulets, medicine; those who have this bag know the exact ritual procedures.
- His legs and feet are painted and the dancer wears anklet bells. He wears an adz in his right hand and in the left a short stick with chicken feathers.
- Bark, leaves, and raffia costumes cover the candidates. Barkcloth is worn as loincloth; it is specially made, oiled, and rubbed with red color for the final ceremonies.
- *Nkóma yá bukikite*: Smooth and tall wooden pole (about 1,6m high) with geometric designs colored black and white; it belongs to the guardian and the candidates.
- *Ibombe*: a large ring of fibers also used for *butea* money worn around neck.
- *Kakombí*: ring in wood worn around neck by the *batende*.
- *Kanyónya nkíe*: the piece of barkcloth that the *batende* and guardian place before their face the day they enter the village.
- *Karéá ká nyabungúbungú*, leaf fixed to penis after circumcision to avoid blood dripping on ground and promote healing; *karéngé* leaf with moss against bleeding (called *usáú*).
- *Kasangaya*, a belt of vine.
- *Nkóma ya kabíri*, cane/stick/staff of candidates and the guardian; also called: *Nkóma ya bukitikite*.
- *Miobórwá* and various other specified types of leaves: unrolled young banana leaves (*myungá*) fresh banana leaves; *birererere* dry banana leaves; medicinal leaves; leaves worn as dress.
- *Bisháráá* and *kasangaya* vines used as belt.
- *Mumpuri/mimpuru*: raffia costume worn by the *batende* when entering the village.
- *Ndorera (bisumbusumbu)*: raffia bunches worn on arms and legs.

Among the principal foods (provided sometimes in great quantities) are plantains, banana beer, banana mush (*mpaná*), game meat (especially smaller rodents and antelopes), rarely chickens or goat's meat.

Musical Instruments

The special instruments used in circumcision rites are: *kabiri* and his wife *nyakimbiriite*, both kazoos made of reed and bat (*kakutu*) hide, used by a specialist and representing a feared unseen spirit of the initiation; *nyabungubungu*, the bullroarer, is an ovoid piece of *bwayi* wood attached to a raffia string of *bwayi* wood that is handled by a specialist and represents a feared unseen spirit of the initiation; *mukentsere* (*sabukyanga* of Lega) made of *ibesebese* or *karenge* wood); *mumbira* sculpture (used like the Lega moza); the three drums and the *kisindi*, drumstick to beat the talking sticks; *ishengo/mashengo*: calabash rattle; *kirúo/birúo*: talking stick (in great numbers and of various names such as *mikentsere*, *banamwami*), used to call the *kitumbu* in the village, in the lodge and forest by candidates and tutors for various types of communication and to warn women and uncircumcised person of the presence of circumcised candidates.

The drums are generally made of *ntongi* wood and the membrane is of *mukaka* antelope, or *mubale* antelope (rarely of cow's hide). They are referred to as *ngoma*: including the *kandúndú* drum that is beaten with one stick (*munyoro*); *mukintsa* drum beaten with two sticks, both containing *riso ra mutwa*, Pygmy eye in the form of *ngirima*, a small pebble (there is no slit-drum but people lost in the forest sometimes beat on the buttresses of *ukundú* tree to signal their difficulties; where the slit-drum (*lukumbi*) occurs, it was introduced from the Komo ethnic group.

Every *mutambo* has three drums kept in the men's house or *kahombo* or *irameso ra ngoma*.

Four drums are used in the dances of the masked circumcisers (*bitumbu*):

- *iomba (ikiri)*, beaten with both bare hands) to the rhythm *twabingitiko* (we will disappear).
- *kandundu* beaten with stick and elbow (rhythm *ndundu*); it has a membrane on top (*kyusu ca ngoma*) and bottom (*ncembe*).
- two *mukintsa* or *ncisha*, beaten with two sticks one rhythm *kitumbu weya* (circumciser comes); other rhythm *shenkebenkebe* (*nkebe* iron bell; also sayings by women in evening).

The *banamwami* (talking sticks): there are seven of them, all beaten at the same time according to a fixed pattern; sometimes there is an eight one which is beaten according to the tonal pattern of a Hunde aphorism. The *banamwami* play alone or together with the kazoos (*kabiri* and *nyakimpiriiti*) and the bullroarer (*nyabungubungu*). They stand and dance in the following succession from left to right (as seen in some of my available photos): the names given here represent the rhythmic tonal patterns for each stick: *múme*, *kintsóntsóro*, *mbómbóti*, *kibikábikí*, *kandanda*, *shémuntwémuntwé*, *nkorobúkángáni*. The eighth talking stick called after its rhythm, *nkúróngó*, asks questions from the guardian. The talking sticks may be accompanied by one drum called (in this context) *kabóndóóró*. Each one of the seven talking sticks has its distinctive toan patterns, as follows: 7 (is *mume wa mukumo*, male) beats *mungúmwenda coba* rhythm; 6 beats *kentsóntsóro* of *ntsoro bukángané* rhythm, 1 beat *mbómbóti*, 2 beats *kebékébéké*, 3 beats *kandanda*, 4 beats *shémuntwémuntwé*, 5 beats *nyamuntambúú*.

Selecting the Participants

The first-boy to be circumcised (*mubánjá*) may be selected in any of the ritually interrelated groups; there is no privileged group (extended family, lineage). Eventually the chief may designate one of his *baombe* servants or any other man may propose someone to the council (*kibu*) of elders.

Concerning the selection of the guardian, the organizers see whether the one who served in a previous *mufinda* camp did the work well; he may be chosen to serve again. If he is dead or not acceptable, another elder of moral and intellectual distinction will be chosen. The elders give him a blessing (*wanga*), accompanied by some meat or beer.

Then the helper (*ihía*) is chosen; again, he must be a man known for his proven qualities. He supports/holds the candidate during the operation; they sometimes call him the guardian of the village, because every evening he returns to the village. He is the essential helper of the guardian and shares food and drink with him.

The tutors (*bikundi*) are not chosen by the council of elders, but from within the kinship groups of the candidates. They will bring daily food to the *batende*, and conduct other tasks.

Essential Activities Before and During the Rites

1. Decisions to hold the rites and preliminary transactions; divination; offerings; pseudo-circumcision.
2. Selection of the candidates and personnel.
3. Clearing spaces in the forest, building the lodge and making beds, constructing the house for the guardian.
4. Hunting and trapping to provide meat; hunting (after healing); some fishing with traps; banana beer brewing.
5. Gradually-spaced circumcisions: initially, that of the first-boy, followed by the other candidates (if there are many, this intermittent action may take up to two weeks). During the operation, the tutors watch outside the house of *the* guardian.
6. Sanitary care: bathing, washing, sitting near a big camp fire; adopt certain positions while sitting and sleeping; regular inspection of the operated penis, application of real medicine and “associative medicine” (would-be magical), food restrictions but plenty of food at healing.
7. Shaving of hair on head and body; the hair concealed in leaves is carefully hidden in the forest.
8. Music: drumming; percussion on various kinds of logs and poles; singing; use of hidden, secret musical instruments (bullroarer, kazoos, percussion sticks); dancing and learning of many dance steps and songs. In the morning and in the evening, the boys sing. The song starts with *kiruo* beating, and the boys answer. They also dance the *bitiri* dance.
9. Communication on talking sticks by tutors and candidates; learn and use the formulas; the percussion sticks differ in generic terms depending on who beats them and what rhythm is used.
10. Collection of certain kinds of leaves; cutting of wood and roots; making and using masks and raffia costumes; bark hoods; carving of wooden poles with elementary decoration.
11. Learning the value system in aphoristic songs and action patterns, including the elements of secrecy and the preservation of mystery.
12. Learning the discipline and strict routine of the camp; applying respect for authority and rules through hardships, self-control, threats, punishments and rewards.
13. Learning and practicing various activities: certain types of trapping; greeting formulas, songs, tales; cutting bark for cloth; cutting raffia for costumes; making costumes in leaves or raffia; making neck rings in pliable wood; working in the fields of the guardian of the lodge.
14. Distributing payments (*butea* ring money; animals) and fines for the transgression of numerous interdictions; payments of small fees for engaging in a certain activity.

15. Supplying food by the villagers: certain types of food are essential to the proceedings: Banana paste – the mother of the candidates makes the food; it is brought to the lodge by the tutors. Game meat – secured by the fathers or uncles, or replaced by a kind of soup (*supu*) in which they dip their paste. In some cases, meat is absolutely necessary and every candidate must wait until such time as the appropriate meat is secured.
16. For the few married men that may be among the candidates, at the time of complete healing (when the urethra is perforated), a mock copulation with a vagina made of leaves.

Prelude: Procedures in the *Mpuko ya Mpero ya kitumbu*

The action here involves offerings, prayers, symbolic circumcision, and ritual meals. It takes place in a forest clearing away from the village and begins with an invocation:

You fathers who died bless me today, give me strength and strong life, here today I make an offering to follow the patrimony (*ntúngo*) that you left me. I cannot forget (neglect) it. And the chiefs have given me permission to offer my offering (*mpéro*). Fathers and chiefs who died come here, meet me here, eat and drink from the offering that I am making.

These words are spoken loud and clear in the men's house. The participants in the ritual leave a calabash of beer and the cooked goat's head in his men's house. They will make another offering in the evening when they return.

Following the offering, drummers and singers gather outside to drum and sing while the circumciser and some other circumciser(s) that may have arrived go to dress in a house somewhat on the side of the village. The main circumciser wears the following: *mimpuri* bunches of raffia on legs and hips and neck *ndorera* on the arms (called *bisumbúsumbu*) and sections of raffia *mimpiri* (called *osá*) across the body. He also wears the mask (*irombirombi*) before his face, topped by a feather bunch and carries a small adz (*mbasi*) on his shoulder.

The guardian holds a sculptured pole (*nkóma yá bukikite*) and wears on the chest the sacred bundle with medicines, etc. (*ukenye*) made in potto hide. At this time, tutors and villagers sing that the circumciser is on the look-out, that he wants to go circumcise" (*kisoni cábunga*).

The men who have returned from the circumcision place now take a chicken and all go off to the circumcision place, circumciser first, followed by the tutors, singing and dancing. At end of village, the women stay behind.

On the way to the circumcision place, they start to beat the *nkúróngó* and *banamwami* percussion sticks, blow the kazoo and bullroarer, and sing. At the circumcision place, the circumciser takes the right; others take the left; also, the instrumentalists go to the left, but *nyabungubungu* stays away on the side (danger of the swirling rhombos). Here the *nyakimpiriiti* cannot sound and the *kabiri* runs everywhere. The *ihía* is the one who carries the chicken that symbolizes the *mubánjá* (first boy to be circumcised).

Arriving at the circumcision place, the circumciser dances (*ikoba*), then he removes his mask and clothing, for he must not cut himself when "killing" the chicken. He removes objects from his potto bag (jointly called *ukénye rwá mukumo*) – it includes a dull brass knife (*kámwere ká murínga*) and a sharp small *kbasi* knife (called *mbasi*); he also removes from the bag the potsherd of the circumcision

(*uinga rwá mukumo*), symbolizing that which is heated on it will be “pained” by the fire – like the candidates will be during the operation.

The circumciser takes a sharp knife in his right hand and beheads the chicken in the left, while the *ibia* helper holds the chicken firmly; the circumciser cuts the neck in one blow. The circumciser gives the neck to the helper who holds it in his left hand while the dying chicken is in his right; the helper then hides the neck under the moss where bullroarer’s pot also stands. The helper now takes the pot with water in his left hand and pours it on the hand of the circumciser and on the knife. This killing of the chicken is called “to throw the candidate down” (*ikírisha mutende*).

While he cuts the neck the circumciser says: “You fathers and grandfathers help me, give me strength and courage and much long life; bless me, I have received permission of the chiefs to start the *mpa* initiation of *mukumo*. Give me the know-how and the sharpness of sight so that I do not injure the candidate.”

Note: when the circumciser kills the chicken, he wears all the clothing and the tutors and initiands sing: “little toilet bites” (*kamamba kábírè*), meaning you all here, the guardian of the lodge and the tutors, make sure that there is no deceit because when he cuts the prepuce (*kisórí*), the circumciser must give it to the guardian who hides it; if the guardian is distracted and the prepuce falls, he is forced to pay a goat.

The circumciser is in full dress dances after the killing of the chicken. He cuts two young unrolled banana leaves (*myungá*); they symbolize the other candidates to follow the first-boy; the helper then throws these away.

The circumciser (having undressed and placed his outfit where it is always kept) and the others (who now wear *miobórwá* leaves to be thrown away after the dance) return to the village, dancing and singing (but all musical instruments are left in the circumcision place; the circumciser wears his *ukenye* bag and on right shoulder he also wears the adz (*mbasi*). The helper stays, however, to hide the feathers and the neck of the chicken very carefully so nobody can find them; the circumcision place is then destroyed. The helper then brings the chicken to the village and cooks it; the circumciser and kin eat it. Also, a visiting circumciser may eat from it. All people of the village now engage in dance (called *biringa*) for a long time. In the late evening, after withdrawing, the head of the goat is prepared with much banana paste in the circumciser’s house and shared by men and women of the circumciser’s kinship group. Very late in the evening, the circumciser takes to the men’s house a bit of meat, paste, and beer as offering to the “fathers”, asking again for help and strength and protection from sickness, for he is sent for this task by the “Great Ones” of the land. This is the end of the *mpero*. They can now send to neighboring ritually related villages the demand (*murémbé*) that every father who has a son capable of going to the rites must start getting meat ready (*bikwácá*). So the fathers and sons go to the trapping camps (*kitándá*) to secure meat to be eaten in the evening and the morning of the operation.

CIRCUMCISION PROCEDURES

The First Boy to Be Circumcised

They leave in the early morning so as not to be seen by the women and other men, for fear there might be a sorcerer who might affect the lodge. They clear the area and then start work on the lodge and circumcision place. When the house of the guardian and the circumcision place are ready, the men return to the village, but the helper and the guardian stay in the lodge to guard it.

Before putting on the mask, the circumciser eats plantain banana paste made by the mother of the first-boy; the first-boy eats with his tutor other paste with meat (this meal is called *usúmbúro*, morning meal); the first-boy does not eat with the circumciser because the circumciser is his enemy.

The circumciser now starts dressing, helped by kinsmen:

He places *mimpuri* on his hips and chest (called *useré*). Underneath, he places other *mimpuri* (called *usánjá*). He then puts *mimpuri* around his neck and two *ndorera* on each arm. He then puts the *ukénye* bundle on his chest and two bells on his ankles. Before that, he had painted white dots (*binkínga*) on his legs (all things that scare, that impress). He then dons the *iromberombe* mask and then takes the small adz (*mbasi*) and his stick (*nkóma yá bukiríiti*) in the left hand. This stick is very important; he cannot be without it for it is part of his patrimony/privilege (*ntungo*); should he burn it like firewood, he would get yaws (Sw. *upele*); on top of it, they fix the neck feathers of the chicken that was killed during the *mpero*. The singers and drummers call the circumciser to come out to dance: “turtle comes out of its carapace” (*nkúru yatúka mubukuko*). The circumciser now dances and so all can see him now.

When he starts dancing, after having rubbed white clay on his body, the singers point to it and sing: “they donned embellishments, the varan-people” (*biténdá banampamba*). As he dances more and more, they sing: “the *mondo* tree (chief’s tree); raffia is the liana of *nkanga* tree (this tree’s bark is used for cloth; it also has a large number of branches): “may the children return safe and well-fed” (*mondo ngí murí wá nkangá*). Another song: “Nectarin, Mr. Who-has-not-been-circumcised, we know he is smart: he thinks he is smart but his peers will know all about it” (*kamponda shemutóoro twasibángá mbu mwenge*).

At this point, the first-boy and his tutor are still at home. Another song follows: “take honey, bird *nembo* (this bird removes the honey from the hole in which it is found, *nkúma búki nembo*). Hearing this, the circumciser places his *bukiríiti* stick in front of the singers and drummers and starts acting: the stick is like the tree and he acts like someone cutting with his adz; the *ndorera* bunch on his left arm is like the bunch of smoking leaves he uses to keep the bees away. To tell the circumciser that singing and dancing is now finished, the following song is sung: “flee the astounding rain” (*béká mbúra munga*); it is time to go with the first-boy to the operation.

At this song, the first-boy comes out and dances with the circumciser; the circumciser teases him so he becomes afraid, but men in the village tell him to be strong. In the meantime, the mother of the first-boy prepares a liquid paste (*mpana*) that the boy will take with him to the operation. The paste, wood, and the mother’s ax without a handle are placed near the drums – to make women believe that the wounds will be cauterized with these things. At this time, women of the same age grade (*ubíso*) of the first-boy’s mother ask if she had sex with others; if yes, she must pay.

They are now off; the mother goes to sit down; she brings some flour and her patrimonium (*ntungo*) at the end of the village; if the boy is a noble (*murusi*) or the son of a circumciser, the mother then holds a *muna* in hand – so he may not get yaws or have his body swell (a *murusi* is a close relative of the chief and the chief does not go to circumcision), and a chicken and a calabash of beer (beer is always linked with the chief); the chicken is like a payment (*mukéntsó*). A tutor also takes an *ishóriá* trap on a stick, telling the women that the first-boy would trap *kabiri* with it, for women are made to believe that the candidates will have to fight *kabiri*, and that they must not be floored by *kabiri*.

There is now a final dance (called *kisoni*), as the circumciser, who leads, and the candidate, held by the arm by his tutor, followed by the villagers, leave to where the guardian and the helper are singing: “a mass of people pass, you will not sleep there anymore” (*kisoni cábunga utúoncírí tumo*). The song lets the first-boy know that he will not return to his village very soon. At the end of the village, the first-boy’s mother is waiting and throws the flour on her son (meaning: I give you away now, *nakusíbúrá*; I will not see you again soon); all persons answer with “óóóó!” The women return to the village and the men who have already been circumcised go to the circumcision place; the tutor carries with him the wood, the paste, and the ax (mentioned earlier); they go very fast. They then arrive at the first obstacle (*kirindikó*), pass it and get to the second, where the first-boy and the tutor stay, while the circumciser, singers, drummers, and handlers of the sacred instruments, who are dancing, singing, and handling the instruments, arrive at the circumcision place where the guardian and the helper wait (the circumcision place is constructed as the one earlier mentioned for the *mpero* offering of the circumciser).

When he arrives, the circumciser removes most of his fiber costume, keeping his chest and hip cover and the *ndorera* bunches on each arm. Where they stand waiting, the tutor helps remove the clothing of the first-boy; then, they cut his belt of vine and plait a belt of raffia (*mungí*) on the spot (the father has brought the *mondo/mpurwa*, raffia). This belt has a long extension that falls in front of his penis; this extension (called *kasangaya*) is used to fix the leaf (*usáú*) tied to the penis to keep the blood from spreading; they cut a piece of cloth from the first-boy’s loincloth (called *mpani*) and place it on the penis where the circumciser will do the operation.

The guardian now calls for the candidate to come; his tutor leads him by the arm; when they arrive at the circumcision place, there is loud noise from the many talking sticks, the gathering of which is called *ukángá*), and the rhombos and *kabiri* (hidden); the boy is seated on the circumcision place; the helper sits behind the candidate who leans against him; each leg is firmly secured between two sticks (*mabía*); the helper shuts the eyes of the candidate for he must not see what happens (he was led to the circumcision place on a small “trail of the ignorant” (*barimi*); the circumciser continues to sing, now to scare the boy: “little rodent (*bweba*) bites/hurts” (*kamwamba kábúré*). At this time, the guardian is wearing a hat in bark (*kakumbú ká shebakungu*). The circumciser squats, the guardian sits on his left, and the tutor on his right, but he goes to sit behind the helper as the candidate is now ready. As the circumciser starts to cut, he asks those present, indicating with his nail: “Is this the right place?” They like to cut near the mouth of the penis (*bunu wá muá*) as the bystanders have answered (*éba*). The cutting is called “hawk removes/steals” (*nkori yabáká*). The circumciser gives the skin to the guardian who puts it in a piece of barkcloth. The circumciser then cuts a still lower piece of skin (called *ishokora* – to take the goods of a dead one or of one vanquished in war). They place the leaf (*usáú*) on the wound while blood drips in the pot of *nyabungubungu* in which moss had been placed. The tutor helps the circumcised first-boy stand up and guides him to the lodge; he walks (*itáátaa*),

legs wide apart, buttocks low. At the lodge, the tutor helps him sit down on a piece of wood (*mutándá*); in front of him is a little pit in which the the pot of *nyabungubungu* is placed. In the meantime, the guardian helps the circumciser wash his hands and the knife; the circumciser dons his full costume, including the mask.

Returning, while dancing *biringa* dances, all wear, on each leg, roots of the *matungútungú* – this to inform that the *mpala* has begun. On the head, they wear a cord with leaves (a vine, *numbu*). All instruments are hidden at the circumcision place. The circumciser leads, followed by singers and drummers, singing: “*Kabiri* was floored; we will dance *mendekure*” (dances with coit-like movements (*isberana*) (*kabiri wákukíndwa twaminá mendekúre*).

Entering the village, they meet the women of the village and children wearing sliced banana leaves (*bisántsá*); all men and women are dancing the coital dance. The drummers put the drums in place and sing the *biringa* song: “*Kabiri* lost the ax; the circumciser remains with it” (*Kabiri warimínyá mwandá kítumbu wasiá naó*), meaning that the circumciser has the adz and *Kabiri* remains with the ablated skin (it is lost). Another *biringa* song follows: “My kinsman (our child) sleeps where (in my place?), on the back legs open (*mwanitú wasámíré mwanýé mangari mangarika*). Another *biringa* song: “Pottery clay is a burden, *mukumo* is a burden, slowly on (*ibúmba murío mukumo murío, kándekeke*)”: allusion to the candidate carrying the little pot (for blood) of *nyabungubungu*; it is like a burden; go slowly, slowly.

When the men see that one of the candidates loses much blood, it may be interpreted that his mother has committed adultery. She must then pay a chicken to be eaten by the circumciser. The drums are now placed aside and the circumciser undresses, since the *biringa* songs are finished. In the circumcision place where the guardian and the tutor remained, they hide the piece of skin. The guardian makes pit in *mukentseere* and buries the skin in it (the main purpose being that insects do not eat it, for this might generate great pain in the wound of the candidates. They also carefully remove all traces of blood between the circumcision place and the lodge, to avoid the work of sorcerers.

In the lodge, the guardian stays with the circumcised first-boy, and the tutor goes to ask his mother for banana paste and meat; arriving with the food, the tutor pours water on the hands of the circumcised first-boy who eats the first food after circumcision (called *kasongóríko*).

That day, the candidate still eats from the plate brought from the village because “he still smells the smell of the village; he has not yet slept on *birérééré* leaves. The tutor then takes the pots back to his mother, after cleaning them in the river. That day, the tutor does not return to the lodge because he has closed the “obstacle” (*irindika kisbo*). In the evening, the guardian and tutor take the candidate to the guardian’s house, where there are two beds (*ntangi*); the boy lays on his back on *birererere* leaves; it is a low bed (later, when he is healed, he gets a high bed). In the very early morning, the helper leaves the lodge for the village; he will return and, so to speak, becomes “a guardian of the village.”

The tutor and the helper cannot sleep with their wives until the candidate returns to the village; the guardian cannot leave until he is healed; in the very early morning, the tutor returns to lodge to take boy to the river; the boy steps into the water and the tutor cleans his penis; then, he puts *usau* leaves back on it (these leaves from the liana *munkuri* have healing power). The tutor brings food (*báréré*, lit. those who are sleeping; term derived from a song the women sing in the morning, equivalent to

sleepers awake) and also wakes up to prepare food for the boys so they do not die of cold (*ubombo*), but get warmth (*keisarúko*) from food made by the boy's mother: two plates, one for the guardian and one for the boy. Food may not fall on the ground or the candidate cannot eat it, no one else can eat it, for it is food with a "curse" on it (*bitica*). The tutor takes the dishes back after cleaning them in the river.

Three days after the operation, on the morning of the fourth day, they go to build a long house close to that of the guardian; the first bed is for the first-boy and the remaining beds follow the sequence in which the candidates will be operated. The first-boy is instructed to prepare packages of soil wrapped in *makangí* leaves, one for each candidate to be operated; he will give each one a package as a sort of *nceo*.

The Circumcision of All the Other Young Men

Several tutors who were at work on building the lodge now inform the elders (*batambo*) of the village that the lodge is ready; the mothers of the candidates must prepare food. Each mother prepares two plates of paste and two of meat, one of them is for the circumciser. In the meantime, the drums beat and the singers sing: "there the legs will get warmth, there, there the legs will boil (the boys will suffer) (*kwabúé bero kúno kwabembá bero kúno*). The circumciser and tutors eat the food in the place where the circumciser dresses; the candidates of the kin group share their plates of food. The same story is repeated as before about flooring Kabiri "because of the help he got from the tutor." The tutors threaten the candidates with a kind of trap saying, "if you do not share food, we will trap you with these *ishoria*." The women believe that where the candidates go, there is "something strong/difficult." As soon as he will hear the drums, the first-boy is also instructed to cover his entire body with *birererere* leaves (but it seems he is dressed somewhat like the circumciser), to hide along the path they will travel from the circumcision place to lodge, to hold two *birererere* in his hand, and to have the packages with soil ready. When the fully dressed circumciser starts dancing, they sing: "turtle emerges from the carapace;" "*nkori* passes and passes in the sky" (*nkóri yatámbá mwakangancu*; the candidates are like chicks taken by hawk/eagle). Several other songs with similar content as the preceding one are sung. Then, finally, the candidates come out together from the house where they had been eating together and follow the circumciser.

The procedure followed is the same as for the first-boy. Note that when the mothers throw flour on their departing sons, it is a sort of blessing (or permission) they give: they give their child to the circumciser and whatever will happen to him, there in the bush; there is no payment for it (nothing that can straighten things out); it is a form of death. The naked candidates stand in a group and, one after the other, they are called to the circumcision place for the operation; then, they are taken to the lodge. Anyone who cries during the operation is said to be floored by Kabiri; i.e. the others will sing mockingly about him during the *biringa* dances. Note for the operation: the son of the circumciser or the son of a noble holds something in his hand: the son of the circumciser has sugar cane in his mouth and holds a rooster in his right hand; if the boy is a son of a *mubake* (*murúsi ntángá*), he also holds a piece of wild pig meat (wild pig because a chief's *ukenye* is kept in pig skin) in addition to the sugar cane and the rooster. For a noble boy, beer is spit onto his wound (chiefs are closely linked with beer). The candidates sit on a log (*mutándá*) and now they see the first-boy and the tutors who sing: "circumcised child of my paternal aunt joins me; he has the buttocks high" (*mutende sínkári wantsangá, ntina turámá*); the first-boy gives each candidate a *nceo* and throws the *birererere* he wore onto the roof of the lodge. The circumciser gets to eat the meat and the roosters. The circumciser and the

men leave for the village. Having buried the skins, the guardian and helper join the candidates in the lodge and inspect their wounds; they change the *usau*. The tutors bring food, which the candidates eat while sitting on the log; the tutors return the cleaned pots.

More food is brought from each of the mothers, for the candidates and the guardian; the tutors inspect the wounds. Men arrive beating the *biruo* sticks and carrying packages with soil to fool the candidates, and they sing: “circumcised child of my paternal aunt, may the circumcised-one experience the condition of healing” (*mutende wa sinkari mutende wákorwé nyangú*). Having given the packages to each candidate, each tutor greets each one with the word: “healing/recovery here!” (*nyangúya*). When evening falls, each candidate is led by his tutor to the house to sit on a log and warm himself. When all the tutors are gone, the guardian and helper put the candidates in their bed.

In the very early morning, the guardian beats the talking stick (*kiruo*) to wake up the candidates and he sings: “The last one to leave remains with the dirt of his peers/colleagues” (*musindú kutúka wasiá na ntsinde sá biné*). Guardian and tutors take the candidates to the river; they beat the talking sticks (*biruo*) and sing: “little candidate howls” (*kámítende karaka*). Note: the action of taking them for the first time to the river for cleaning the penis is called: “to stir the hole in which flying squirrel nestles” (*ishoosha mpake*). If one refuses to step into the water, he is beaten with a stick (*imbo*; verb *ubásá*). While in the water, and referring to the drops of water falling on them, the candidates sing: “little rain is beating; rain falls” (*muncóncóruba mbúra mararia*); they put on a new *usau* using the *itúmbítúmbí* leaf; they return to the lodge and stay outside (not inside) around a big fire (*mutúra*); during this time, the tutors completely shave the head of each candidate (*nkumbúré*); food is brought in and placed on a big table (*butánda*), and the tutors feed the boys, who cannot touch the pots (danger of *sajira* for parents), for they are completely bare (no clothing). Near the fire, is the hill of Kabiri; if one of the candidates steps over/on it, he must pay a fine (of *butea* ring money).

After four or five days, the candidates, accompanied by their tutors, go to trap. They now wear slit banana leaves or *birererere* (this clothing is called *bisántsá*); each boy carries a *mukentseere* stick (1.5 meters long) and a short drumstick (*keisíndí* – term referring to a small rodent who climbs in trees, perhaps *Dendrohyrax*). This term is used to fool non-candidates who must not know that the sticks are being beaten (since they are supposed to speak by themselves). They beat the sticks in order to inform passersby of their whereabouts in the forest. People, particularly women, must avoid approaching or seeing them. The boys use at least ten different types of animal traps and two for fishing. Some take crabs and grill banana or plantain. They go, alone or in a group of relatives, to set large traps on the land of their father’s group; for small traps, this rule does not apply; they trap freely. In the evening, after they return from trapping, they go to the river; each one receives a piece of bark from a banana tree (*kesé cá mpoko*) and lets water drip from it on his wound. The candidates stand in the water up to their waist; their tutor stands with a whip behind each of them, should they try to escape from the water. On their return, the candidates sit on a log near a fire, which is made with *ubute* leaves; the tutor says: “Mr. Ashes” (*shébundia*); the candidates repeat: “I cannot become like ashes” (*ntákorwé shébundia*), while the tutor stretches his arms over the head of the candidates. Food is then brought to the lodge (tutors bringing the food warn the guardian that they are coming; he answers on the talking stick (*kiruo*); the dishes are placed on the table (*butanda*); the tutors choose the best plates for the guardian who will eat with visitors who come to see the candidates. The latter do not get any sauces or meat; the tutor in charge gives a chunk of paste to each one in the order they were circumcised. After eating, they engage in various activities such as making fish or hunting

traps; others sit and recount what they saw in the forest, where they trapped, etc. Later on, they can tell tales (*ngano*), proverbs, or riddles.

Some of the visitors may come with bad intentions and the guardian protects them.

Late at night, the guardian inspects the beds to see that all the candidates sleep properly: on their back, legs wide open. Later in the evening, the helper is the last one to leave the lodge area: he closes the “fence” (*kirindo*) and opens it in the morning. When he arrives in the morning, he greets the boys as follows: “penises wake up/get up” (*bamua músimuké*). After his arrival, the boys go to the river with the guardian and the helper; following the bath, their penis is inspected and if it is reddish, appropriate medicine is applied: e.g., the leaf of a *kabákámá* vine, which is first held over smoke; after four days, he will put a *kabobe* leaf of a dried-up banana tree for five days. If after these five days, only a small wound remains, a *kabobe* leaf is no longer placed on the penis; the tutors say: “he opens/destroys the bundles” (*washambúrá*); from now on, the candidates can eat and drink things forbidden up to then: salt, water, “aged meat” (*nyama yabo* – not fresh), animal fat, soup of *kokoriko* (*sabere*), freshly caught catfish, fresh meat, *butongo* beans, bananas that have rested after being peeled. But they cannot yet serve themselves; each tutor will hand the food to the one concerned, the latter can dip it in a sauce. These rules are to promote fast and correct healing (*ishibuka*). Note that as they start healing, the candidates place ashes of the *iyúma* liana or sap of the *shébákárá* vine (from which rubber is extracted) on their penis, so that the mark of the wound becomes black and not “white;” they can now peel and scrape bananas with a knife; they can only bathe their face, legs, and arms.

At this time, the fathers start looking for meat in order “to cut *bitíká*”. The guardian instructs the candidates to plait with *tusio* fibers a large *butea*-like ring (*tombi*); each may make up to ten that he wears around his neck (to get fat and strong); the mothers of the candidates (*banyabatende*) prepare much food: three plates of paste and meat, one for the guardian, one for the tutor, one for the candidate. He will eat with the tutor, but after him.

Those who will “cut *bitíka*” are then shaved, each one by his tutor. Men who have already been circumcised now arrive, but before that, the tutor has made four lines with ashes *mikara*(*ra*) on the head of the candidates; he takes some of their hair and nail parings (the hair is packed in banana leaves); they go to the river to bathe their entire body; now the tutor takes a “needle” (*nandi*) and forces it into urethrum so that the blood/suppuration (*usaba*) that went into it comes out; the needle is a soft pliable stem of *ndeá* leaves. This seems to be done two times. Now they get new barkcloth and barkcloth hats (*tukumbú*) and return to the lodge after their hair was thrown into the river. Back in the lodge, they sit around a big fire. The tutors throw a stick into fire, with which they beat the *mukumo*. This stick is called *ngubi yá kabiri*; they tell the first-boy to remove the stick from the fire with his teeth. He tries, but is unable to do so; he must pay fifteen *butea* rings (*hongo yá kabiri*); each candidate must try, fail, and pay; this is to show them that *mukumo* is something tough. Next, the first-boy is asked to dry tobacco of *kabiri*, this so-called tobacco is a leaf of *ikangí*; he must hold it above the fire until it is dry; all must do this; those who fail, pay five *butea*. Next, the tutors lay on the ground a stick with thorns (*kikúntsí*). Each candidate must pass on this “bridge” of *kabiri* (*riko rá kabiri*); those who fail pay five *butea*. Next, the candidates must carry (like a bag) a piece of banana trunk around which a thorny vine is wrapped. Those who fail, pay five *butea*. These payments are called *bisonga*; they are for the guardian, who buys meat for himself and the tutors or sends it to his wife. The guardian now partly destroys the hill of *kabiri*; there is food distribution; they tell the

candidates to throw away the new barkcloth and to wear their usual one “because they are like persons in mourning”; they are shaved. Each candidate must now provide a small animal (*mukei*) for the guardian; they now go to eat with the guardian; they are like tutors now. If one of the candidates does not have a small animal, he pays a fine of six *butea* (*kirátú*); the candidates must also provide a small animal for the helper (*kisindi*); if one cannot do so, he must pay a fine of thirty *butea*; he must also provide another *kisindi kya ubásá* (*Jimbo*) to the guardian, so that he will no longer be beaten if he makes a misstep. All this seems to be part of “cutting *bitika*”.

Next, all go to the forest with a big piece of wood with which they beat the bottom a large tree; it sounds as if they are cutting wood; the mothers will hear that this is a sign that their children have “cut *bitika*,” that they are healed. Those who do not go, wear the bark hats when the others return. Now they are going to engage in sex (*iruma*); they arrive at the circumcision place and each one must beat the partly destroyed circumcision place. This represents sex with *nyabungubungu*.

NOTE: all the abovementioned applies to those who are healed; those who are not yet healed must not know what the ones who have recovered from the operation do.

Those who engaged in sex now eat with the guardian; they are like tutors. In the evening, they get much food from the mothers who rejoice because their child is healed and they can now sleep with their husband. The tutors have nothing more to say to them: no fines, no beatings; the candidates do what they want to do; they can even hide meat/animals and inform their father where he can find it (before this, all animals they had trapped had to be brought back to the lodge).

The healed boys still stay for three days. They can even help to build the second lodge. Normally, they stay two months in the first lodge while they heal and another month in the second lodge in a forest clearing.

All goods paid as fines in the lodge are for the guardian, helper, and tutors. These goods to start and end *mukumo* are gathered before the *mukumo* starts and belong to the *mubake* and the circumciser.

The daily routine:

- Be awakened by the *kiruo* of the guardian in the very early morning;
- Be greeted by the helper arriving from village;
- Be taken to river by the guardian;
- Eat after returning from river;
- Go to the forest to trap all kinds of traps, accompanied by tutors who have the talking sticks (*nkeurongo*) with them.
- Perform dances and songs

Every candidate has *mukentseere*¹, which he beats when he is alone in the forest (not when he is with the tutor who has the talking stick; it must be noted that when they are healed, the candidates beat the talking stick: e.g., when rain is coming and they start to flee so that their bark hat is not wetted by rain (*kakumbú ka mutende kátárokwi na mbúra*); or, they inform women in the forest to hide so that

¹ There is a difference in the handling of the *mukentseere* and *nkeurongo*: the first is not held under the armpit, but just in the hand; the other one is held under the armpit.

they do not to see the candidates. The rhythm is: *uwé, uwé uwé mbábiee* (woman here, woman there, this is *mbabi*=*mukumo*). When women hear the talking stick because they are close to the lodge or they are collecting wood nearby, they sing: “You the candidate know the name, know the name, know the name here, the name of the mother of the candidates (*Ongo mutende tásíbá carína erérére, tásíbá carína éo, tasiba carina, carina ca nyabatende*); the tutor answers on the *nkurongo*: “What do you say mother of the candidate?” (*ubúrá búni nyabatende?*) She answers: “I say show me the name, the name of the mother of the candidate (*nabúrá mbu ntánkana cárína, carina cá nyabatende*).

Hearing this, the candidates may beat on their *kiruo*: “You are the mother of candidate, so and so”. The women laugh hearing this *wantsíbána kóyo*, “he knows me as much as (as well) as mother.” Those women who are skillful in singing may continue the exchange with the tutor (or with one of the advanced candidates): e.g., a song in which she laments how anxious she was since her son left, asking if he will be safe, if he will die; she stays thinking at home, does not go to the forest; she always asks the tutor for news about her son; she does not get an answer; he says: “Does this woman wants me to reveal the secrets of *mukumo*? So then prepare food for your son and have it ready.”

The day they leave the first lodge, the boys take all their belongings with them; in the evening the guardian and the helper set fire to the houses and the *banammvami* sticks that are damaged. They return to second lodge. The candidates rub their body with oil against yaws and other skin problems (sap of *muntsěru* fruit and of *kokondí* fruit). After the houses are burnt, they plant tobacco and *kokoliko* (eleusine?) on the sites of the former houses (*bibantsa*); if they grow well, it is a sign that first lodge was good. None of the candidates may go back to the burnt lodge: this is one of their interdictions (*ndahiro*).

Six or seven days later, the candidates go cut *mondo* (*íkera mpúrwá*); they also cut bark for cloth and seem to make the cloth. This may last up to two weeks; tutors and fathers accompany them. The cloth is then sent to the village to be oiled by the mothers: oil (*á muntso*), from *mbalíka* (some said *tondo*, which is a snail shell); *yá mbéa* from fruits/nuts of that name, from *makwěti* fruits/nuts from *mukweti* tree; they also rub *ngora* and *ukaru* red color. Then they must plait the raffia like the *mimpuri* of the circumciser. They also cut bark for the hats with which they will be seen later. The hats have a back part that is like a bag. To ward off sorcerers, they also place *běsho* in the village; they trap, do agricultural work for the guardian, and take care of their bodies now they have no pain and are not hassled by anyone. They keep the skin of the small animals they, such as squirrel, monkey, *kisindi* and fix them on their hats (proof to the villagers that they ate much meat). The day, they come to village they are watched over by the helper; he looks for pieces of raffia, etc. that they may drop, so that sorcerers cannot pick them up; they also make the *kanyényankié*, to cover their face when they enter the village, so the mothers cannot immediately recognize them; they also wear slit banana leaves.

Following are examples of greetings addressed to the candidates and used by them:

- *Nyangũya*: “my healing”; answer: “my healing” (*nyangu yanĩ*)
- *Itohyáca*: “fatness/corpulence/stoutness here”; answer: “my fatness” (*kitohya cáni*)
- *Kasanguhyăka*: “fast, quick”; answer: “my quickness” (*kăni*)
- *kisúbăca*, is an *utěso* (upsetting) term; “depart from company”; “die”; “may many children die there” (rather: “may the wound suppurate again”).

- *Iremōra iremora*: “barkcloth producing tree there”; answer: “my tree used to make barkcloth(*iremō rwanî*)”. There are numerous other greetings.

EVENTS, HAPPENINGS, DANGERS, LAWS, AND SECRECY IN THE LODGE

The lodge is a “closed space.” Numerous events are kept secret; there are special rules of prescribed actions and behavior patterns. If, for example, someone dies inside or outside the lodge, the reaction is as follows:

- If the guardian dies in the lodge, they act as if a candidate had died because he is also like a candidate. When a guardian dies, another guardian cannot replace him; the tutor who followed him (in seniority) will look after the candidates; he also returns to the village at night and comes back to the lodge in the very early morning. The tutor who follows the guardian in seniority is called *ihíya*; the candidates rest against him when the circumciser operates on their penises; if a candidate wants to move, the *ihíya* holds him very firmly. Tubi said our *Ihiya* was the elder Bibuka; he also handled Kabiri (represented by a mirliton).
- If a tutor dies, the candidates make his *iboreso* on the trail and the *mikentsere* sticks speak and the candidates respond “*hóya!*” Or if another person dies, they do the same as for a tutor; however, the candidates cannot move out of their lodge for people residing in the big village . When a tutor dies, another tutor cannot replace him; the other tutors will look after his candidate.
- If the father or m//other of a candidate dies, they inform him as follows: “Your mother died” or “Your father died”; people then make his/her *iboreso*; however, that candidate may not “eat *bitendé*”; he will only “eat *bitendé*” when he comes out of the lodge because the lodge is like the world of the spirits and the dead.

The candidate is given news from the village, but news from the lodge is not given to the village. Even if a candidate is very sick, they cannot inform the village that so and so is very sick. And that is the reason why all the men gathered in the lodge on the day we left to go definitely to the village; they said to us: “You who go to the village do not dispatch any news about how you were treated here. If your mother asks, saying: “Child, did you see this or that thing that I sent you, you must say yes, I saw it; even if you did not see that thing or the meat, you will just say yes.” This is done because the tutors (often) do the following: when they receive paste and meat, they may eat it on the road and return the plates to the mother even if her child has not eaten that food. Sometimes the food arrives in the lodge and they show the meat to a person, saying: “Look! paste and meat came from your home!” (but) they (only) give the candidate the paste without the meat; the tutors eat that meat, or guardian eats this paste and meat, and the candidate eats other paste.

Sometimes a person's father brings him paste; as he arrives on the road, the tutors tell him: “Let us eat this paste”; the father will not be able to object; if he refuses he will break the laws of the circumcision rites. That is the reason why they say: “*Cumbu* (circumcision rites), the unknown-one, burns the child, burns the mother”; that is, the circumcision (secrets) are never fully known; even if you have passed through them, they can still fool you, as a person's father can be fooled even though he had experienced the circumcision rites long ago. The tutors also say: “And you candidate, if you tell your mother: “I have not seen that thing, then you reveal the secrets of the circumcision rites and they will make you pay what they want.” They also instruct: “If you say that they were used to beating you there, that is also bad; or if you reveal what you were doing there, it is also a

misdeed.” The tutors also say: “Even if you are crazy (possessed by spirits) or even if they tie you up, you must not dare reveal the secrets of the circumcision rites. Even if a man is annoyed in every possible way, he does not reveal the secrets of the circumcision rites. The one who will reveal the secrets of the circumcision rites will die of *burúmbúrumbú* (madness); that is, he will swell up and die because he divulged secrets of the *mpara* (initiation).” When they would finish saying this, they beat all their sticks on the ground, like swearing an oath by the *mpara*.

A candidate may not be seen by a woman or by the chief or by an uncircumcised person; those people cannot come, not one day, at or near the lodge. [What is done if a woman or a chief or an uncircumcised one sees a candidate?]

Not many people dwell in the lodge, only the guardian and the candidates stay because if someone sleeps there, he also becomes a candidate; on the day that the candidates will return to the village, he will also leave and that is the reason why no one can sleep in the lodge, even if his child is sick.

One day the wife of Shekahanda saw the guardian of Muirya and four candidates and one tutor (named) Kisentsera; they were going to visit our guardian. As the guardian arrived at the Butóbóro River with the candidates, they met Shekahanda's wife and her husband. This woman was saying “*huvé!*” Her husband told her to flee far away, and lo! In the place where she fled, she saw the candidates and the guardian. After they had passed, that woman informed her husband that she had seen them. Her husband arrived; he gave the news that his wife had seen the guardian Bupesi and four candidates who were going to greet guardian Mukoresa. When the men heard this, they made this woman pay and went to “circumcise her.” After she died, Kabiri was still sounding in her belly because there is no mitigation for Kabiri; if a woman sees him/her, even if they try to make arrangements, it is certain that she will die.

Also if an uncircumcised man looks on the candidates and sees that they are beating *mukumo* in the plaza, it is certain that he will be circumcised right then and there; even if no candidates are being circumcised that day, he must pay goods to go to the circumcision rites. And if a person who is not circumcised sees this but hides the news, he will fall sick with wounds over his entire body.

Teketeke, a Munabuhini, went with us to the circumcision rites; his body became filled with *binyobó* wounds; lo! He had seen the Banamwami and Nyabungubungu and Kabiri in the village plaza; he had acted (as follows): after we had locked ourselves up in the houses, he peeked through the holes of the door. Afterwards we told him: “You must not look through the holes in the door when the men beat *mukumo*”; he said: “Lo! the men fool us; they are just beating sticks and twirling around a plank saying it is Nyabungubungu.” Afterwards he got *binyobo* wounds; when we left the lodge, he had healed of the wounds.

In order to peel plantains the candidates do not use a knife but, snail shells (*minkínkí*); a knife is forbidden/an enemy (*ntsirwá*).

The candidates do not use a plaited bag of raffia (raffia used for their circumcision belt); there are also *mikentseere* sticks beaten by the candidates when they are out in the forest.

A chief may never see Kabiri or the Banamwami or Nyabungubungu; if he hears them sounding, he must go and hide in his house because a chief in our land does not undergo the circumcision rites.

In our lodge, those from Muntongo rushed over there when a European wanted to have his burdens carried; however, none of these candidates slept in Muntongo. When the night had come, they would leave there and return to the lodge; they would eat pastes in the place where we had remained, but they did not pass that table and come to the side where we were sitting. If one crossed the table and came to our place, they said that he crossed the hill of Kabiri and that he had to pay one chicken because he wanted to bring sorcery; however, a candidate's tutor must pass to the side of the candidates.

Every person who arrives in the lodge must greet the candidates and give them blessings – these matters were discussed long ago (in another context). And if a person arrives and does not greet the candidates, the guardian says: “You were not circumcised; that is the reason why you forgot to greet the candidates.” Afterwards they tell him: “We would have given you paste and meat; now we shall not give them to you; we shall give you paste and vegetables; this is instead of payment because a person comes to the lodge to greet the candidates, but you came here only to search for food and this now is your food.”

The lodge saves travelers from hunger even if they are strangers; it is sufficient that they have been circumcised. And if a tutor refuses and says that the traveler must not come to the lodge, then that tutor breaks the rules of the circumcision rites; he pays a chicken. This is the reason why they used to say: “The circumcision rites are the reason why I eat paste that mother did not make.”

All of us were afraid of one man (called) Butandu (of the) Bahumusa because whenever he arrived in the lodge, he made all of us stand up and then he would start saying words of blessing so that we would heal quickly. He would say each single word ten times; a long period of time would elapse while he was still speaking, and we became tired from shaking (clapping) our hands in response to that man. And we would leave there exhausted.

If a tutor insults the candidates by saying: “Penises (*bamua*) stand up,” the guardian says to that tutor: “Do not try to insult the candidates again.” If a person insults us and crosses Kabiri's hill and comes to our side to beat us, then we beat him as much as we want; we will not be required to pay anything and that man also will not pay.

A person from far away (a stranger) is beaten because they think that he has medicines.

The candidates give the guardian everything they had with them when they were circumcised, such as their shirts or shorts. A person may hide something in the lodge, but when he wants it, he gives guardian a quarter in Congolese money as if he were buying it. When they return to the village, the candidates must pay a quarter to keep the knives they had with us in the forest.

And we slept on beds; each of us had his own bed; we slept on our backs with our legs spread out because the guardian walks through all the houses after we have gone to sleep and if he encounters a candidate who sleeps with his legs close together, he beats him with an *ubásá* stick; he says that he must sleep with his legs open because if he closes his legs, his wound will drip and thus he will not heal quickly.

A candidate does not eat meat if it falls on the ground in the house where they sleep or outside where they sit to enjoy the fire; if he eats it, it is said he will get *ankylostomiasis* because these pieces are the scabs that fall from their penises.

When they light a fire, they first beat a bundle of leaves in the fire; when the dust of ashes flies around, all the candidates stand up and beat and beat their chests, saying: “I cannot be a Lazy-One (a Shémundia);” that is to say, I may not sit in one place all the time like ashes that always lie in one place.

A Nyabatende (mother of a candidate) does not throw away ashes until her child comes out of the lodge; then, she will throw away the ashes. If she throws away the ashes before this, they will “save the rain”; that is, the rain will evaporate before reaching the ground and thus the body of her child will languish in the lodge; he will not grow fat and strong. She is also not shaved during that time.

When a tutor has finished saying: “This is Kabiri's meat,” then a candidate can no longer eat it. The candidates may say: “We have also been circumcised (so) we can eat from this meat.” However, the tutor says: “A person cannot eat his father and Kabiri is still your father since you have not healed completely. When you are back in the village, you will be able to eat the meat that belongs to Kabiri; then there will be no further problems because you will also have finished.” Even if it is your meat, as soon as they have referred to Kabiri, then you can no longer eat it; it will now be for the guardian and the tutors.

When we were in the lodge and heard Kabiri speaking, we answered: “My quick recovery”; however, we do not say “Our quick recovery” because each one looks for his own quick recovery. And when they tested us to shave us with Kabiri's razor, each one provided a quarter to see that razor of Kabiri.

When a candidate has been circumcised, he cannot yet scratch himself with his nails when the wound is still new because if he does he will get much scurvy since the pus that comes out of the wound gets under his nails; when he scratches himself the dirt will get into his body, and thus it will bring a person scurvy. That is the reason why a candidate scratches himself with a little stick until he is healed. When he is healed, he can scratch himself with his nails.

Irokó of Kabiri is a piece of snail shell. The tutors tell the candidates: “This is your *iroko* knife for scraping bananas after you have grilled them because a candidate grills bananas and eats them; however, a candidate cannot eat *visamunya* bananas when he has seen a *mukaka* (antelope).”

The candidates do not eat these (the following) foods in the lodge: beans, rice, corn, peanuts, ripe bananas, soup, pumpkin, *isusa* leaves, *mususa* leaves, or mushrooms; however, he may eat *musobyó* vegetables if they thoroughly squeeze them and *nyamira* vegetables. But when a person is healed, he can eat all this food. And the tutors may not spread the news in the village that the candidates do not eat this or that food. If they spread the news, they reveal the secrets of the circumcision rites; that is why women send all (kinds of) foods to the lodge because they believe that their child will eat those foods.

If one smokes tobacco in the lodge, he must pay one franc before smoking; then they give him permission to smoke tobacco. The father or brother of a candidate may bring him tobacco.

SHERUNGU'S CIRCUMCISION IN HIS OWN WORDS

In his extensive autobiography, written down in the Nyanga language (mixed sometimes with Hunde, Swahili/Kingwana, and even some Rwanda expressions) by Biebuyck, Buuni and Tubi, Sherungu Muriro provides a very accurate description of what happens and what is done inside and outside the circumcision lodges. Since he was a famed drummer from youth on, he was a latecomer in the circumcision rites; as a *musao* (a person ritually attached to the sacred chief Nkuru Nkumbirwa), he had certain duties and privileges; as a great hunter, he was rapidly involved in hunting while still in the camp.

Afterwards I informed him (a kinsman) that I wanted to go home, and he said to me: "You want to go, but wait for me; we shall go together because we are leaving here the day after tomorrow to go to Ndurumo." It so happened that I had left Muntongo after they had talked about the question of enthroning (Chief) Miteso; mother Nyankumbirwa had already given three goats to enthrone Miteso; so we shall go together. When I heard this, I agreed; Shendoore and I returned to Ndurumo.

Arriving in Ndurumo, I informed Masokora (my brother, that we would return home with chief Nkuru Nkumbirwa, alias Ngulu, because Ngulu had left Muntongo as they were (dealing with) the question of enthroning (future chief) Miteso, that Nyankumbirwa (the ritual *mumbo* wife of chief Buhini, the father of Ngulu; she is the mother of Ngulu) had already given three goats and a girl; Kabekatyo gave them to Miteso, saying that he would be the first to be enthroned because he is the firstborn and the one to follow him is (Chief) Nkonye of Myanga, and (Chief) Ngulu will be enthroned afterwards because he is their junior. We sat down; the next day we rested. Finishing this day, we woke up and went to hunt

Arriving in the forest, we killed a female pig; we arrived with it there in the village. I said: "I shall not give this pig away. Ngulu will receive it here because he will pass by tomorrow as he goes to sleep in nearby Ndurumo." Next day Ngulu arrived in the place where we were; he said: "Sherungu, let us go." I told him that I would meet him in Ndurumo; that first I would go to say good-bye to (chief) Ngendo. Ngulu went on with that pig of his; I and Bwangu, a *musao*, went to Ngendo's to take leave of him. Arriving there, I said to Ngendo: "Today I am going with Ngulu; I will meet him in Ndurumo." When Ngendo heard this, he entered the house of his brother; this brother gave him one hundred francs and he (Ngendo) gave me these francs, saying: "Muriro (Sherungu), this is your present." After he had given me these francs, we went; we met Ngulu in Ndurumo, I and Masokora. Arriving there, we found an amazing quantity of beer that they were reserving for Nkumbirwa. We drank as much beer as we wanted; no way! We did not know which way to pass the beer around because there was so much of it. We slept there for one day. The next day we woke up and left; we climbed the slope of Shébuáli; we went and descended the other slope of Bitúí. That day we arrived in Muntongo (residence of chief Ngulu). We arrived at Nyankumbirwa's to greet her, and she gave us the news about Miteso. When mother Nyabasi saw us, Masokora and me, she was elated.

The next morning all the very big counselors, like Shenyongo, Ruhunga (of the) Bacira, and others went to Muirya (village) to inform (Chief) Miteso that he must now prepare everything, that he would be enthroned. When two days had passed, the counselors went to enthrone Miteso at the Rucahi River. When five days had passed, Miteso left the initiation area; we went with Ngulu to see

him. Ngulu brought him one goat as a greeting. Arriving there, we drank as much beer as we wanted; the counselors gave it to us. After we had drunk beer and greeted Miteso, Ngulu said: "Let us return home to Muntongo." Arriving in Muntongo, we sat down; I gave mother those valuables we had gotten during the trip.

After we had spent four days, we went to hunt in Bihiya. We went: Shemintsoni, Rubaba, Shebahi, Kaparare, father Buberi, Munyanga, and Mutakiri. Arriving in the forest, we hunted pigs; we killed a pig; Shebahi made the first hit and Shemintsoni made the second hit; the pig died; we returned to Muntongo with it. Arriving in Muntongo, I gave Nyankumbirwa one leg, and she prepared a huge amount of banana paste with meat; I called those who had been hunting with us; we ate that paste. After eating, all the hunters thanked Nyankumbirwa. Afterwards I gave mother the neck and the chest of the pig, saying: "And you mother, this is your portion, and the innards also are in there" Mother said that she rejoiced very much.

After we had killed this pig, the men said: "All of you young men know that you will go to the circumcision rites because each time a chief is enthroned, children must be put in the circumcision enclosure. So then, you young men, you will go to the circumcision rites, you must not eat any more beans and you must not eat the sides of the banana paste; if you eat a banana, you must cut off the top and the end part of the banana; and let us not eat salt or peanuts or taro or (drink) any kind of beer or (eat) undried *tumbale*-fish; let us not sleep with a woman." They forbade all these things because dirt might accumulate on our penises. After they had denied us all these things, they said that those who would go to the circumcision rites must start looking for much meat. Our colleagues went to trap; others went to fetch meat at their maternal uncles.

When I heard this, I went to Mutabi with my dogs. The hunters met me there; we went to hunt; we killed one pig; I said that I had gotten my meat. We returned to the village with the meat; mother smoke-dried all the meat. I did not give one chunk away; only the portions (reserved) for the hunters were taken from this pig; all the other meat was dried.

The men counted the boys who would go there (to the circumcision rites):

1. Kahombo (of the) Bacira group; he was *mubánjá* (first to be circumcised)
2. Kanembo (of the) Bahíca group
3. Cahí
4. Burenda Mirikitano
5. Teketeke
6. Me (Muriro)
7. Masokora (of the) Banabuhini, junior brother of Sherungu
8. Kíríki
9. Kíríki's brother Kasiro Katore
10. Wáraka Batende /
11. Kanyarire
12. Kahoera
13. Mukwanda
14. Shenyondo
15. Shekisu
16. Karóko

17. Karóko's brother Munubo (of the) Banabuhini
18. Muhindo (of the) Bahúmúsá
19. Shentanga
20. Mubambi
21. Kasongo
22. Kasongo's brother Muke (of the) Bacira
23. Kicebunga
24. Kasina
25. Birúru
26. Kiobe
27. Katirisi; however, he was a man (i.e., not a young man)
28. Hangi (of the) Baabira
29. Muhahi (of the) Baabira
30. Mishiki (of the) Banabuhini
31. Mbirimbíri
32. Shébáréré
33. Nyáta
34. Shindano
35. Ngabo
36. Mutakiri
37. Muongo
38. Mbúrúkú
39. Kibande
40. Shekukwirwa
41. Twawire, a Pygmy
42. Kiparanga of Rukweti (village)
43. Buhunga, a Pygmy
44. Mihiyo, a Pygmy
45. Shemuranda
46. Busanga, a Munabuhini
47. and Munyanga, a Munabuhini
48. Marisere
49. Mumbo
50. Mubawa (of the) Banakase
51. Mishiki (of the) Barontsa
52. Kapera
53. and Ndambira (of the) Banashentembe
54. Kibantsa
55. Shemasomo
56. Maínga
57. Beni Kishake
58. Katundi (of the) Baero
59. Nyenge
60. Rupia (of the) Bacira
61. Kabáre (of the) Bacira

62. Kányangé
63. Nyamánca (of the) Bashábondó
64. Káse (of the) Bacira
65. Shémitíma
66. Mbusí, who was a full-fledged man
67. Mubího, a Pygmy who was also a man
68. Shéburondó, also a full-fledged man
69. Mungera (of the) Banabuhini
70. and his brother Matúmo
71. Katwa (of the) Bahosa
72. Mungirima (of the) Bahosa
73. Shéhimirísa (of the) Bahosa
74. Cáhi (of the) Bahosa
75. Wataire (of the) Banabuhini
76. Kabari Shemwindo (of the) Banakáse
77. Mushibi
- 78-79. and two young men of Mwima who threw themselves there into the circumcision lodge
- 80-85. and another six men of Bufuna.

When a week had passed, they said they were going to fetch the Bitumbu. They went to take a chicken to the Bitumbu. The one to go there was the guardian of the lodge and of the candidates by the name of Mukoresa. They went to Muhanga (village) of the Banankúo (group) to fetch Kacunga and his kinsman Muriro. These Bitumbu who came from Muhanga first circumcised two candidates; they arrived in Muntongo after meeting all the Bitumbu. From Misau (village) came the *kitumbu makanga*. Those three arrived in Muntongo; all of them – those whom I enumerated – danced at the drums, and I beat the drum (one of the three drums). They were now singing: “Let the little candidate (i.e., Sherungu himself) beat the drum.” When they had finished dancing, the Bitumbu were given a house in which they would sleep in Bukungu (village).

The next morning (chiefs) Ngulu and Miteso took two chickens; they gave them to those Bitumbu, saying: “We agree with the circumcision of the boys; let no injury come from there.” After the chiefs had given these chickens, they cleared out. The Bitumbu remained; they killed those chickens.

Our hearts were very, very high; we were afraid of the Bitumbu. The men said: “Who is the first-to-be-circumcised?” They answered: “The first-to-be-circumcised comes from a counselors' group;” they mentioned Kahombo (of the) Bacira and said that he would be our *first-to-be-circumcised*. Afterwards the men said: “Let every person who will be circumcised provide a chunk of meat.” Each one of those who have been enumerated provided the (game) meat he had gotten; some provided a chicken if they had no meat, and others provided a hedgehog. They brought all this meat to the circumcisers; they said this would be the meat they would eat when they were going to be circumcised. However, I did not give this meat because I was beating the drum for them. Afterwards, the candidates went to eat the pastes and the meat in their houses, each kin group eating together. All the nobles and clients ate together, but I did not eat these pastes because they said that I would be circumcised only after all the others because I was beating the drum for them. They also refused to circumcise Burenda because he was still a child.

Our colleagues finished eating breakfast; when they had finished eating, the drums went outside; I began to beat the drum; the *bitumbi* came out dancing. Those who were going to be circumcised followed the *bitumbi*, and they were also dancing.

All the nobles (*barusi*), each one of them, had a sugarcane (stalk) and a chicken and a little calabash of beer. When they had finished dancing, each mother of a candidate threw (banana) flour at her son's head. When they had finished throwing the flour at them, they went into their houses. The *bitumbu* and the *bikundi* (tutors) and the candidates went to the circumcision place. They arrived there; they started to circumcise them.

When they were tired, the circumcisers and the tutors returned to the village; they sang about one who had cried (during the operation), saying that “he was beaten to the ground by Kabiri.²” I beat the drum for them; however, I was not yet circumcised. All the women danced and sang those songs³. Some women wore banana leaves, and they wore also a little piece of (bark) cloth in the back. Thereupon the mothers of those candidates who were already circumcised prepared very large amounts of banana pastes and meat. The tutors took these pastes (to the lodge) because each candidate has his own tutor; however, one tutor might also have two or three candidates. These pastes that they ate after being circumcised are called *kasongoriko*.

When the sky had darkened, Kabiri passed in the village plaza; he was speaking. When we heard his voice, we, Burenda and me, the junior brother of chief Nkumbirwa, went to hide in the house of Nyankumbirwa. While we were inside, Kabiri came to call me, saying: “Sherungu, come here; beat the drum again, your penis and you, Burenda, eat your penis!” He insulted us exceedingly in the village plaza. It is then that we became thoroughly overcome by shame because mother Nyankumbirwa⁴ was there in the house. Then I pondered in my heart, saying that I also was going to be circumcised with those newly circumcised, that tomorrow I could no longer stay (in the village) to beat the drum for them so that they would not come to insult me again.

In the morning I told our colleague Burenda about it and he agreed. One man, (called) Seremani, a servant of Nyankumbirwa, said to us: “When you see them going with children to the circumcision place, you must go after them and thus you will see what they do, and if you see everything, then they cannot send you back again to the village and they will circumcise you on the spot.” We slept.

The next morning, mother cooked paste and meat for me. We ate it, Burenda and me; however, there was not a man who suspected that we would take ourselves to the circumcision rites that very day. When we had finished eating, they put the drum outside; we began to dance and to beat the drum. Those who were going to be circumcised were also dancing with the circumcisers and other men. When they were on the point of taking them to the circumcision place, their mothers threw banana flour at them and hooted at them (in derision). They went; I remained and pondered, saying: “Lo! When they will return here tonight, they will insult me again!”

² One of the powerful, but imaginary, beings represented by a kazoo, blown by a specialized elder.

³ This dance is called *biringa*.

⁴ The ritual wife of chief Buhini who is like a social mother for Sherungu because of certain functions he and his Basao group exercise in the life cycle of sacred chiefs.

When a short time had passed, I went off secretly; arriving at the outskirts of the village, I met Burenda; right then, the two of us went after them (the boys leaving to be circumcised); we went to join them. When we arrived close to the area where they were circumcising, we now saw men who were taking those percussion sticks (*mikentsere*) out of hiding. When they saw us, they were very much astonished. They said: “You Sherungu, why do you come here today, whereas we have been saying that you would be the last to be circumcised because you are still beating the *biringa* dance drum for us.” And I said: “Kabiri insulted me very much yesterday while I was in the house together with mother Nyankumbirwa; I thus became greatly ashamed.” All the men complained, saying that they would not find another one like me to beat the drum for them. Thereafter, they said: “You Burenda, we left you out because you are still a child; now you bring yourself here; it is befitting that you will also first experience the pains of this place. You cannot return to the village because you have seen the entire *mukumo* circumcision complex. It is right.”

Nyabungubungu (represented on a bull-roarer) and Kabiri (represented on a kazoo) were also speaking there. When they saw this, Seremani took us to the place where our colleagues stood together; we passed the first and second symbolic obstacle (*kirindiko*). When we had joined our colleagues, they sent a person to Nyankumbirwa to tell her to send two chickens and two sugarcane (stalks) and two little calabashes of beer. These things arrived there; now they circumcised us.

When the candidates were dancing in the village, the tutors were collecting *bisharía* vines in order to trap Kabiri's foot, so that their candidate would throw Kabiri on the ground. Afterwards, they told the candidates' mothers to prepare *mpaná* gruel, saying that they would be burned with it; each candidate's mother made the gruel because it would be used to cauterize the wound. Afterwards they told the mothers of the candidates to bring very well dried wood; they brought it. The tutors brought everything when the candidates went to be circumcised (*kisoni cabunda*).

They (tutors and candidates) arrived at the third obstacle (*kirindiko*); they made them sit there, all of them. The tutors and the candidates placed all the things to the side; they removed all our clothes. They dressed me around the hips with a vine called *kasangaya* (belt) – when we were still in the village, we had shaved our pubic hair. The moment I had put on that *kasangaya* belt, I went to sit in the place where they circumcise (*mpuko*); I held a chicken in my hand; it was a cock. After I had been cut, I left that chicken there; now they poured beer over my wound that had just been made. The beer poured on the penis caused much pain. After that, they peeled a little piece of membrane from my penis; they gave me (some membrane); I ate a little bit of it because it was as if we were drinking beer. After this they fixed a leaf of the *karéngé* tree over the wound; they put moss inside it; they said that this would keep blood from falling on the ground. After they had bandaged me like that, I met our colleagues where they had settled and I also stayed there. – That leaf that is fixed (as a bandage) on the penis is called *karéá ka nyabungubungu*, but after two days it is called *usau*.

After me, Burenda was also circumcised; he also did not cry. But one of us, Kanembo, did cry, and they sang about him in the village; they sang that Kabiri had thrown him down.

As they were circumcising, the tutors would sing: “*Kamuamba kabiréé*”; that is to say, *mukumo* (the circumcision complex) hurts. This is sung when the circumciser takes the penis of the candidate and cuts it with a knife. After all of us had been circumcised, they brought pastes and meat; all of us ate in the *mutámbí* (place where they go after the circumcision). When we had finished eating, they said

that everyone had to give one franc in order to be shaved with Kabiri's razor. We gave that one franc. After we had given it, they brought leaves of the *kikaka* tree; they then tied these leaves to our hair and said that this was Kabiri's razor. After this, they shaved us with a real razor; they removed all our hair. This hair was tied into banana leaves; each candidate had his own leaf; then these leaves were to be hidden in a very dense place so that sorcerers might not find them because they might bewitch the candidates. The tutors did all this shaving; each tutor shaved his candidate; all of us nobles had diverse tutors, called: Bihango, a Munabuhini; Nyamwendendi (of the) Bahica; Shemungo Kinyambo, a client of the Banabuhini; Kirási, the lover of Nyamishiki; Musewá, the lover of Nyacahi; Rubaba, a client of the Banabuhini; Shebahi Marie, a client of the Banabuhini.

I left out one aspect. When we were in the *mutambi* area – we had not yet eaten *kasongóriko* – those candidates who had been circumcised the day before brought us packages of soil, saying that this was our hospitality gift; they piled up these packages in front of us; each of them wore *birererere* leaves over their entire body, not a single spot of their body was visible. These packages represent the food they offer to people who died long ago in the circumcision camp, so that they might not pursue the candidates but remain lost over there (in the spirit world).--

When the tutors had finished shaving us, they made a big fire there in the *mupindá* lodge (the camp of the candidates); however, it was made outside where we sat warming ourselves. As we were there, the tutors and the guardian passed; they examined our entire penis to see if much blood was still coming out – this blood is called *bukété*. When they saw that Masokora (sic) and me were still bleeding, they said that our *ntungo* (patrimony of the close kinship group) caused the blood to continue to drip. They took the root of *kibekembeke* and made a representation of two dog bells with it; they placed pieces of *itungutungu* wood inside; Masokora and I then wore them around our necks; they also fixed a vine around our heads and said that it was a dog's leash. They called father's spirit to help us to recover quickly from the *bukete* blood. Thereafter they said that we must offer a guenon hide; they dressed me with a green banana leaf, saying that this was the guenon's hide. Afterwards, they made a bow and arrow for me, saying that this was my *ntungo* patrimony, but that the patrimony of the circumcision camp does not come from the village. After Masokora and I received this *ntungo* patrimony, the bleeding stopped.

Some of us got dizzy when they gave us the gruel that they had brought with from the village; others had *isusa* (stinging leaves) passed over their faces, and others had mud placed on their foreheads so that their eyes would no longer turn.

When the circumcisers were on the verge of returning to the village, they placed all the axes (that they carry on their shoulders) in the fire and afterwards they thrust them into a *bukaki* tree; and they had tied a vine on each ax to hold it. The circumcisers then returned to the village with their axes; they were dancing, drumming and singing: “Kanembo was thrown down; we shall dance the *biringa* dances.”

In the evening, they brought us more pastes and meat (as supper). We ate the pastes and the sauce as we liked; when we were finished, the tutors returned with the dishes. The next morning the circumcisers arrived with more pastes and meat (called *báréré*); we ate these pastes and the sauce and the meat. The tutors also brought us our billhooks; each one had a billhook or machete that came

from his house. –When we had left the village, each one of us had provided ten francs, saying these are *nkoko ya mukéntsó*; each one also gave fifteen francs, saying these were *nkoko yéndaó*.

After we had eaten, we went to the forest with our tutors; when we arrived there, our tutors cut sticks for us, saying these were *mikentsere*. They taught us how to beat them. The first beat was *ukentserenga*, that is to say, “you must move away from me. I am naked” – because we wore (only) *birererere*. After they had taught us this, we set traps to kill rodents. In the evening we returned to the circumcision camp. Each of us threw the leaves he was wearing on his bed; we then ate pastes there; they forbade us to eat sauce. From then on we started eating plain paste.

After we had eaten, the tutors instructed us, saying: “You candidates, if one of you kills an animal in the forest, he must not pierce it alone; if he pierces it, he must pay a chicken; if he kills an animal, the tutor will pierce it because if a candidate does, that wound on his penis will become nothing but holes and the wound will thus not heal quickly.” Afterwards they forbade us to eat meat that was not smoke-dried because if a person eats meat that is still bloody, his penis will bleed and that wound will not heal quickly. The candidates also eat paste without sauce so that they may heal quickly; that is to say, so that the wound heals in the same manner as the paste dries out. They forbade me to eat ripe bananas, saying that if I ate them, the wound on my penis would not dry quickly.

The guardian told us nobles that we must not attempt to eat rodents. If no (other) meat is available, we must eat paste without entremets, although the others can eat rodents. That the guardian acted as follows: when he received paste and meat, he cleaned the meat with water to remove the salt; then we nobles ate that meat; the others ate paste without entremets (since) the tutors ate their meat. The guardian was a *mukoresa*; that is the reason why he had mercy upon us.

The second day, in the evening, they said that the candidates would go to the river very, very early tomorrow morning; thereupon the tutors made *mbásá* sticks. We slept; the next morning they woke us up very early; the tutors led us to the river; we arrived at the river; they removed the leaves protecting the penis (*usau*); we sat in the water. Then they began to use sticks to beat any one who refused to sit in the water.

When we returned from the river, none of us could go inside the house to enjoy the fire; we stayed outside dancing and singing without drums. When we finished dancing, we ate that paste that came from the village. After that, we went to trap; I went with Masokora; I trapped for him.

After we had stayed there for four days, the guardian called all the nobles; we went with him behind the circumcision house; he instructed us, saying: “You hear, whenever you urinate, you must not open the *usau* bandage; you must urinate and keep the *usau* closed so that the urine will collect in the *usau* and thus burn the wound. Each time you must act like this so that you will heal quickly.” We followed that advice.

Every time they did the following: when the first rooster crowed in the morning, the guardian came out with his percussion stick; he beat it, saying “*kámútende káráka*”; all of us got up and went outside singing: “The last one to come out remains with the evil of others.” We went to the river with the tutors because we woke up very early to leave the village. When we had finished bathing, we arrived back in the village. Thereupon one tutor began to dance; after singing one song, the tutor said:

“Candidates, *nyangu*,” and the candidates agreed; he mentioned all the important affairs –but these were indicated earlier. Each time the candidates finished a song, a tutor would speak these words and after that the tutor would take his penis from under his cloth and say: “my scar, my scar.” After the tutor has done this, the candidates make a fire outside; thereupon they warm themselves; they sit on sticks. Afterwards food arrives and the candidates eat; they eat outside because they had made a long table and that is where they must eat; when a person removes all the paste from his plate and puts it on the table, he removes a small pinch of paste and throws it away, saying “*nyangu*”; “*nyangu*” is the way the candidates respond. The tutor acts like that because we candidates do not eat from plates because we are like spirits.

Every day, they acted like this. We killed animals there; the first animal I killed in the circumcision lodge was an *isú*; afterwards I killed an *itewa*. And the candidates placed all the kinds of animals they had killed on the eating table. When all have returned, the tutors showed the animals to the guardian, saying: “Candidate X has killed this animal.” When a candidate kills two animals, he gives the guardian one and the tutor pierces that other one to remove the innards; then it is dried. Every time we acted like this.

When one week had passed, “we trapped a *mukaka* antelope”; that is, the wounds were discharging pus. When the tutors and the guardian saw this, they said that each candidate had to pay a hedgehog; each provided a hedgehog. If one did not have a hedgehog, he provided three francs, which they wrapped in an *itumbitumbi* leaf. When the “secretion of pus” was over, they said: “the candidates killed a *mukaka*.”

When the tutors arrive in the village in the evening, they give the news that the candidates killed many *mikaka* antelopes –the men are burning goatskins in the men's house. When the women smell the hides, they say: “Truly, lo! When our children will come back from there, they will be fat. Look! The men begin to eat these *mikaka*,” because the men steal the hides from the houses without the women's knowledge. Then the women ask the tutors: “Is it true that my son killed that animal?” They agree, saying yes.

After we had “killed *mukaka*,” we “trapped *nkaki*”, that is, the discharge of pus had ended; now each one gave a *kisindi* (animal) to the guardian. While “we were with *nkaki*,” we went to Burora: Me, Masokora, and Mishiki, and Munyanga, and Kahoera. When we arrived there, we saw a *mukúsa* snake; we killed it. After we had killed it, Kahoera said: “Let us eat this *mukusa* snake.” We refused; we continued our journey; he remained behind and went close to Burora; he beat his *mukentsere* stick, (saying) *kentserenga!* and a man (called) Karimande met him there; that Kahoera asked him to give him some fire so that he could roast bananas. That man gave Kahoera some fire; that Kahoera went to grill that *mukusa* snake; he ate that snake. After we had set up *miuri* traps, we returned to the camp; we kept silent. The next morning we went to bathe; arriving at the river, the tutors saw that Kahoera's wound had returned. The tutors said nothing; in the evening, we went to bathe again. When the tutors saw that the entire wound had come back again, they went to inform the guardian; they said: “Kahoera's entire wound has come back again; we do not know what is doing this to him.” When the guardian heard this, he called us when we were with him in the forest next day. We arrived at the guardian's because we had begun to heal. I informed the guardian that the day before we were setting *miuri* traps and also that we had clubbed a *mukusa* snake, that this Kahoera had stayed behind to roast it, and that he ate that meat there. When the guardian heard this, he said:

“You Kahoera get out of here; go to the village.” Kahoera went with Shemungo; they arrived close to the village. Kahoera remained there; Shemungo went to the place of Katumwa, Kahoera's father; he said: “Your son has broken the rules, this one who is here.” Katumwa provided a chicken; Kahoera took it to the circumcision camp; he gave it to the guardian. Now Kabiri gave blessings to that candidate.

On another day –we had not yet recovered completely– I went with my colleagues to Burora. Arriving there, we beat the *mukentsere*; a man from Burora arrived; we told him that we were asking for food. They made paste for us; they brought it to us with meat. As we were eating paste, other candidates met us; they were Mutakiri and Rupia (of the) Bacira; they also came from their village. They said: “Lo! it is here that you are eating your pastes! We shall inform the guardian.” We finished eating; Shekwabo Muisa sent the plates back to their place; we went; we arrived at the circumcision camp. Mutakiri told the guardian: “Lo! the Shirungu fool you by saying that they are going to trap; but lo! they go sit idly in their village Burora eating pastes and meat.” When the guardian heard this, he said: “Sherungu, I accuse you of going to eat pastes and meat in your village *irentsé*; now Sherungu, you are in legal trouble. All of you candidates break the rules; all of you must go to the village.” All of us went, each one with his percussion stick. We arrived close to the village; we began to beat the percussion sticks “*twakwire kuno! twakwire kuno!*” (“we are dying here”). When Nkumbirwa heard this, he shot his rifle into the air. When we heard the sound of the rifle, we fled, each one beating his percussion stick.

When the men heard this, they went to Ngulu and told him that he had broken the rules of the circumcision rites. Ngulu provided one goat; the men arrived there; we were hiding; they gave us that goat. This goat was killed there in the circumcision camp, but none of us ate the meat. (Big) men like Shenyongo and Shemuhahi and others ate this goat.

On another day I went to cut bananas in our grove; I brought these bananas to the circumcision camp; I put them there; we went to sleep. After the bananas were there, the next day I went to the forest; when I returned, I met Mubambi, a *musao*; he had eaten my bananas. I asked: “Who ate my bananas?” They said it was Mubambi; thereupon I fought with Mubambi. Then and there, the guardian appeared; he said: “You Sherungu have acted badly by slapping Mubambi because a candidate is forbidden to slap his colleague. You and Mubambi must go to the village.” Thereupon Kabiri said: “Sherungu, you are breaking the rules.”

We – Me, Burenda, Masokora, and Mubambi – went the village. Arriving there, close to Nyankumbirwa's, we beat the percussion sticks, saying: “We are dead here!” Shemungo Kinyambo arrived there; we informed him that we had broken the rules... that Mubambi and I had fought. Shemungo went to tell Nyankumbirwa to give two chickens. Nyankumbirwa provided these chickens; we said to Shemungo Kinyambo to take the chickens on the (regular) trail, and we went back through the forest to the place from where we had come; we arrived in the circumcision camp; we gave the guardian those chickens. Kabiri now gave us blessings so that we might recover quickly, quickly.

And at about this time, the tops of our penises were healed. We lived there; we bathed twice every day. –When the top of a person's penis heals, they say: “*wamarebero*” (he has arrived there; he has

covered the hunting grounds). Also, when the wound has become “red,” that is, close to healing, they say “*wamatíngé mbarí*” (he held the pipe). This is before (the preceding) *irembera*.

When two weeks had passed since we were circumcised, the guardian's wife gave birth in the village. I ate the *miruo* of the child (ceremonial foods at the birth of a child) with the guardian because the two of us together eat the *miruo* when a chief's wife gives birth; I ate paste (without sauce), and I ate meat after he had first cleaned it with water. I ate with the guardian for one week and during that week I grew much fatter. After this (event) the tutors arrived very early one morning; they told the guardian that Bakóbó (ethnic unit) in the village said that they would come here (to the camp) to beat up the candidates. Afterwards, we went to bathe. After we returned from the river, Kanyangara also arrived; he informed the guardian about this (matter). When the guardian heard this, he said: “Let us sing two songs only and afterwards let us go to hide in front of the circumcision camp (but) very close by.” After we had sung two songs, all of us went to sit in the forest near the hunting camp. Others went to inspect their *misiru* fish traps in the Nkware River.

After we had left there (the camp), those Bakobo arrived; they asked the guardian: “Where are the candidates?” The guardian said that they had gone to inspect their traps “because we here do (as follows): when the candidates have come back from the river and have danced, they go to inspect their traps; when they return from there, they will eat and then go wherever they want in the forest.” Those Bakobo complained very much because they had intended to beat us up and lo! We were gone long ago. The guardian gave them two pastes and meat; they ate these pastes. When they finished them, they left. After they were gone, the tutors beat the percussion sticks, saying: “Little candidate return quickly, quickly (for) a little banana paste and some animal fat sauce.” When we heard this, all of us left the place where we were hiding; we said lo! They are gone. We arrived in the circumcision camp; we ate pastes, but each time the tutors gave us the paste in our hands. After we had eaten, we went to the forest to inspect our traps and to sit at the base of the trees with our percussion sticks. In the evening we went back.

When we were almost completely healed, the tutors said: “Let us go to dig up *ngubi ya kabiri* (represented by the *iyóma* vine); then the candidates will know that the circumcision rites are tough.” As they went with us into the forest, they found the root of the *iyoma* vine. They said that we must start digging it up with our hands. Thereupon all of us began to dig with our hands; it was impossible because the vines had many thorns that pierced our hands. Thereupon, all of us were defeated. When they saw that we were unable to pull out that root, they said that each one must provide a quarter. Each one of us provided a quarter.

Thereafter, they said that each one must dry Kabiri's tobacco; it is the *ikangi* leaf. A person places that leaf in the palms of his hands and then holds his hands above the flames so that the leaf can dry. No one could hold his hands above the flames for a long time because of the burning. When the tutors saw that no one could dry that leaf, they said that each one must pay a franc. We paid these francs; they were for the guardian.

After that they brought us the paste of Kabiri, saying that we must eat this paste. All of us refused to eat it when we saw how rotten it was because that paste had been standing (too long) and had been thrown on the garbage heap. When we refused to eat this paste, they said that everyone must bring two francs; we agreed to provide these two francs; each one gave them to the guardian.

They compelled us again, saying we must look for Kabiri's dog. We left the camp and we pulled out the leaves that were on a trail leading from the circumcision camp to the people's (common) trail. We were singing: "We rout the leaves like a chicken routs leaves." When we arrived at the big trail, they made each one of us pay one franc saying that we missed Kabiri's dog. –We searched for Kabiri's dog very early in the morning before going to bathe. Kabiri's dog is a small insect that crawls around on the ground.

By our good luck, our tutors taught us that if we see a guenon high up in a tree, we must not mention it, saying: "That guenon there!" If one says this, the guardian will say: "You candidates go try to fetch that guenon until (you succeed) and bring it here." So then all candidates go to the place where the guenon had passed, even if it is raining very hard; then when they do not bring this monkey, each one of them pays a quarter and gives them to the guardian. Or if one sees a bird flying and says: "My kinsman, see that bird," then the guardian will say go get it; for this also, we must pay fifty centimes. We did not receive an interdiction about this act because we already knew it.

- When one's mother eats meat and fails to send some of it to her son, then when they clean her son, they will see blood on his wound and they will say: "Your mother ate meat and she refused (to give) you some of it." That mother will pay a chicken; it will arrive in the circumcision camp at the guardian's.
- When a candidate's mother menstruates, she must send a leaf from those she wears to absorb the blood; they show that little leaf to her son, saying: "Your mother is menstruating"; then they throw away that little leaf. Sometimes they cannot show him that little leaf; it suffices that the tutors see this little leaf and then inform the child that his mother is menstruating. However, if his mother hides the news that she is menstruating, the tutors will surmise it when they cleanse the candidates and see blood on the wound again; they will say: "Your mother is menstruating." His mother must then pay one chicken; they take it to the guardian because it is as if she wanted to kill the candidate.
- If a father brews beer and fails to bring a little to the circumcision camp, and if the tutors see blood on the wound, then that father must bring a chicken and a little beer to the guardian. One day my maternal uncle brewed beer in Burora; the news reached us there in the circumcision camp that my maternal uncle had brewed beer. So then the guardian kept silent. When it was evening and he had not seen any of that beer, the guardian chased us, Masokora and me, saying that we must go to take some of that beer that my maternal uncle had brewed. We arrived in Burora late at night; we beat the percussion sticks, saying: "We are dead here!" When Muisa heard this, he arrived there; we said to him: "the guardian chases us because you did not bring him beer." They gave us a calabash of beer; Masokora carried it; we returned to the circumcision camp late that same night because a candidate cannot sleep in the village or he will break the rules. We arrived there at the guardian's; we gave him that calabash of beer. After we had arrived, we went right to sleep because we had arrived when our colleagues were already sleeping. Next morning we went to inspect our traps.
- A candidate's father must not sleep with a woman, and if he sleeps with a woman or with his wife, they will see sperm on the wound of his child. If they surmise this, the candidate's father must pay two chickens and a calabash of beer; the men drink this beer and (eat) the two chickens. Also, if a tutor sleeps with a woman, he must pay two chickens and a calabash of beer because it is as if he wanted to kill the candidate. That is why Nkumbirwa beat Shemungo

Kinyambo; he had sex with Nyamatara and he was Burenda's tutor. Afterwards, Shemungo Kinyambo paid two chickens and a calabash of beer.

- The tutor and the candidate's parents cannot be shaved until their candidate has returned; that is, until he has completely left the circumcision camp.

After four weeks had passed, we were healed. The first to heal was Burenda and his kinsman Mumbo followed him, then my brother Masokora and Kahoera, and I followed them in healing. After we were healed, we ate at the guardian's there; we were eating as much sauce and meat as we wanted because now we ate from a dish; as long as we had not been healed, they had given us plain paste in our hands because crusts, that is, “dirt of the penis wound,” had not yet formed; and if we ate from a plate these crusts would get on the plate and when one's mother would eat from this plate she would get *ankylostomiasis* because she had eaten the dirt from her child's penis.

After we were healed, the guardian told me that I was now the tutor of those two candidates from Mwima who had just come to the circumcision area from Mpinga (village). Before, when I was not yet healed, those two youths had been the candidates of the guardian because he was like their tutor. –It is always like that: when a person just comes to the circumcision area and he has no tutor, then the guardian becomes his tutor.– So then I took these two candidates to the river, and I took good care of them.

I also now went to trap in our forest of Burora. One day I killed a hedgehog. After I had killed this hedgehog, I hid it in a package; I arrived in our banana grove; mother was there; I beat my percussion stick, saying: “move away.” Mother moved away; I put that hedgehog in the place where she usually peeled the plantains. After I had placed it there, I left; I went to our circumcision camp with another hedgehog. After I had healed, I trapped four animals for mother there in our grove.

When I was healed, I wore a bark cloth, and I cut up animals, but I informed the guardian (each time) that I had killed an animal; I myself removed the innards, but I placed the meat on top of the eating table; however, I was permitted to cut animals because the guardian was our kinsman; if another person had done this, he would have had to pay. However, when a person is healed, then he is like a tutor.

One day, we went to Burora: Me, Masokora, Rupia, and Mutakiri (of the) Bacira; all of us were candidates, but we had already healed. We arrived in Burora; we hid in the forest; I beat the percussion stick to call Shekwabo Muisa. Muisa arrived there; I said to him that we had come to go hunting. We were also with Karoko, a Munabuhini. When Muisa had heard this, he went to fetch the dogs in the village; he came with them and with my kinsman Meka. All of us went to hunt there in Myumba of the Bacira. Arriving there, we hunted pigs; we killed two young pigs; I gave one shoulder each to Rupia, Mutakiri, Karoko, and Masokora; and I took one leg, saying I would take it to the guardian. I told Shekwabo that they should dry the rest of the meat because we were close to the “cutting of *bitikā*” (ceremony). After we had divided these pigs, we returned to the lodge. Our colleagues also hid their meats; their tutors took them to the village to preserve them. We arrived in the lodge; I gave the guardian that one leg I carried and told him that we went to hunt that day and had killed one piglet and that we had divided it as we had gone to hunt. The guardian said that it was very good: “If you had hidden this news from me, I would have chased you from here today.”

I had brought my mother my first hedgehog after we had left the first lodge in the place where the Mutananda River merges into the Nkware River; we were then in the second lodge downstream from Kitahita, where Kanyangara now resides. When they saw that the first candidates were healed, we went to the second lodge –we might say that it is the “lodge of salvation” because the candidates leave this lodge to return definitely to the village. We resided there completely healed; however, we were still waiting for (some of) our colleagues to heal; we used to walk (for a visit) to the lodge of the Pygmies in Byarenga. We also killed more animals here and dried them in order to “cut *bitika*.”

After we had been settled in this second lodge for two weeks, they said that now we could “cut *bitika*.” They said that each candidate had to provide ten francs and a hedgehog. Each candidate provided ten francs and a hedgehog; they gave everything to the guardian, saying that this was his present. If one did not have a hedgehog, he provided five francs instead. After we had provided all these things, the tutors went to the village to tell the mother of each candidate who was going “to cut *bitika*” to cook three banana pastes and a dish of meat because the custom was as follows: each group (of candidates) “cuts” on one (particular day), and another group (cuts) the next day. We were the first “to cut *bitika*.” Mother prepared three pastes and one dish of meat because Masokora was “behind me”; we were like one person – he also did not pay the ten francs and the hedgehog – only I paid the ten francs and one hedgehog because the two of us are like one person. The tutors brought these pastes and their axes to the lodge. After they had brought these pastes, the tutors showed them to the guardian, saying: “These are the pastes of candidate so and so, and this is his meat.” We ate the pastes with the tutors. The pastes were divided: each candidate gave the tutors one paste and meat; they gave one paste and meat to the guardian; and the candidate himself took one paste and meat because three plates of paste had been brought to each candidate. Each “kinship” ate their pastes together. When we had finished eating, our hair was shaved completely.

The next day, in the morning, we woke up very early and went on the big road; we began to cut many pieces of wood and pile them up on the side of the road. As we were doing this, they ruled that no women could go that day into the forest because the candidates were “cutting *bitika*,” and they placed a guardian on the road in case female travelers or uncircumcised persons might appear. After we had piled up the pieces of wood, we returned to the lodge. Others also were brought their pastes “to cut *bitika*,” and they would cut next day until all were finished. As we were cutting these pieces of wood, Nyabungúbungú (represented by a bullroarer) was speaking in the place where we were cutting those pieces of wood, and (we) the candidates saw her because after people are healed, they make Nyabungubungu; they receive permission (to do so) and pay a quarter to make it and to swirl it.

The *bitika* (ceremony) informs the mothers of the candidates that their children are healed and that they have become fat. When the women see that heap of wood, they say: “Our children are healed.” When we had “cut the *bitika*,” they said: “You candidates now begin to search for bark cloth and raffia fibers with which you will be seen in the village.” Thereupon we looked for bark (to make cloth) and (began) making it for ourselves; we went to search for raffia fibers. We spent time in the “village” making raffia (dresses and ornaments); we anointed ourselves with castor and peanut oil so that we might appear well fed. The father and kinsmen of the candidates helped us to make raffia and barkcloth because each candidate had to make a bark cloth for his mother and for his father and for himself. Muisa and Meka helped me with the raffia and the bark cloth because I also made the objects for Masokora because he was still a youth.

After we had prepared everything, we cut all the sticks; each candidate had his stick and his hat. The guardian said: "Tomorrow you will go to be seen by your mothers." Very early in the morning we bathed; afterwards we rubbed ourselves with oil; we dressed in barkcloth and also wore *mimpuri* (raffia collaret) and that bark hat (called) *kakumbú ka mítende*. The guardian also wore *mimpuri* and a hat, but they attached living birds and hides of *bisindi* and squirrels to his head to make the women understand that their children had been killing many animals in the lodge.

After the guardian had dressed, he took his stick; he preceded and we followed him; the first boy circumcised immediately followed the guardian and we then followed the first boy; we traveled on the road. We walked slowly; (our) tutors walked on each side of us and all of us were in the middle; each tutor was close to his candidate to see that the raffia (costume) fell smoothly over his candidate; if it was not smooth, he straightened it out; if a piece of raffia fell (on the ground), he picked it up because if a sorcerer picks up that little piece of raffia and goes to perform his witchcraft over it, then that candidate dies! We covered the entire road in silence. The tutors spoke once in a while, saying "*Mutende kwironga*," and all of us shook our raffia costumes.

We went; we arrived at the village. the guardian halted; he beat his stick on the ground, and all of us beat our sticks on the ground; we halted. We placed our chins on top of our sticks, each one on top of his stick (and) standing; we directed our eyes to the ground without looking sideways. The tutors continued to say: "*Mutende kwironga*," and we shook our hands. Thereupon they told our mothers that each one must recognize her child. Each one searched for her child; some did not recognize their children. They acted as follows: a mother who does not recognize her child is told to pay a quarter; when she has paid the quarter, they show her her child, saying: "This one here is your child." When she sees her child, she gives him beads or *kitare*; a person wears all these things. Everyone who knows the candidate comes to look at him and to give him beads.

After all those who knew us had seen us, we returned to the lodge still dressed in that raffia costume. Some could not recognize their children because we were wearing raffia over our faces. Smart women looked at their children's toes. Our mothers had seen us and we had seen them, but we did not talk because at this stage we were not yet permitted to talk with people of the village, especially with women.

When we arrived in the lodge, we took off the raffia costumes. They said: "Now your food can no longer be brought to you; you must go to ask for food, but you may not speak with any women or children." So in the evening we would go to the village; arriving there, we would eat food. If you wanted to ask something, you used hand signals. After eating, we returned again to the lodge.

After we had spent four days there, we burned the lodge, the entire lodge, and the *mikentsere* talking sticks. Thereupon, the guardian taught us: "You here who are going to the village, when you arrive there you cannot beat a child with a *bunkóndó* (piece of wood) because if a new candidate beats a child with *bunkondo*, or if you slap him, this child will get *ankylostomiasis*.

- If a new candidate sleeps with a young woman of (other) people, he will kill her because she will get *ankylostomiasis*. The candidate's father will then have to provide another young woman to give to the father of that girl who got *ankylostomiasis* because of you. However, after one month has

passed since you have left here, you may sleep with your girlfriends; then there is no longer any danger.

- A candidate dresses well and sits so that no one can see his nakedness because if a woman sees a candidate naked, this candidate will get much scurvy.
- After our mothers had seen us for the first time, when we arrived in the lodge they (the tutors) took us to the river; they inserted needles into us: they inserted the tops of *ndea* leaves inside the penis (*urethra*) to remove the scabs (*mabóru*) inside. Each of us paid a quarter for this because if this needle is not inserted, when a person urinates the urine does not come out easily and it hurts because there is much dirt inside. The tutors inserted these needles into us; afterwards they told us: “You must insert the needle whenever you bathe, but you must not bathe with uncircumcised persons.”

After they had inserted those needles into us, they searched for the stems of *bibekebeke* to perforate fruits to resemble a woman's vagina; now those candidates who were married had to have sex with those fruits and ejaculate sperm into them. Those tutors said: “This is the first woman with whom you have had sex; now you will be able to sleep with your wife; there is no further danger.” This was done because some of those in our lodge were married.

After we had resided for four days in the (second) lodge, we moved to the village. We left the lodge late at night with our tutors; we went to the village; with the guardian, we traveled the entire road in silence and without tramping our feet. We arrived in the village; all the people were now in their houses. We arrived in the men's house of (Chief) Nkumbirwa; we sat down in the men's house, silently, with the guardian, all of us (members) of the noble kinship group; (those of the) *bakungú* (counselors) kinship group slept in their men's house.

When the sky was on the verge of dawning, we woke up; all of us went to the Nkwere River. As we arrived there, the tutors said that all of us must enter the water. All of us entered the water; thereupon they beat us repeatedly; if one was afraid to enter the water, they told him: “Bathe! Today you will not eat from the pastes that your mothers prepare. Did you not recover from the circumcision rites and are you not men now?” We finished bathing; we dressed in bark cloth; we anointed ourselves with oil; some were trembling.

We arrived at the *musébére* tree; each one (of us) beat on that tree and said: “I am speaking to this tree.” When all had finished speaking like that, all of us derided that tree, saying “ooo!” We left there; we went to the village; the people were not yet awake.

We arrived on the road; we halted; the people woke up; each one (of us) went to greet his mother. When the sun had come out, the mothers of the candidates prepared food. Some cooked a chicken, and those who did not have a chicken cooked meat. We and our tutors put all those pastes together in a pile in the men's house. We called our candidated colleagues, and they also called us for their pastes. We were masters this day; not a single tutor teased us. As we were going to be seen in the village, our tutors (first) pulled out our eyelashes and shaved our armpits and our body hair. Each of us gave them a quarter. Two days after we had finished “cutting *bitika*,” we hunted *ngéré* (an imaginary animal). As we went to hunt *ngere*, the tutors said that each candidate must give a quarter to see Kabiri (represented by a kazoo) because while we were in the lodge not a single candidate had been allowed to see Kabiri. After each of us had provided that quarter, we left the lodge; we were

running; we went down (to the river); on the side of the Nkware River, Nyabungubungu (represented by a bull-roarer) was sounding together with Kabiri. Those who had sharp eyes could see Kabiri; others did not see him. The *mikentsere* sticks also resounded. We arrived as far as Muirya (village); we went back; we passed through the plaza of Muntongo (village) beating our *mikentsere* sticks and Nyabungubungu was sounding; the women were locking themselves up in their houses. We ran past that place. When they arrived in Kanyasi, Katoré, a son of Shentanga (of the Banamutahwa, fell on the ground. They said that *ngere* was dead, that Katoré had made the first hit. All of us arrived there; we and all the men scorched that place, pulling out all the plants. After we left there, not a plant was left standing. They said that *ngere* had died there and that Katoré had caught it. Thereupon we returned to the lodge.

While we were running and chasing, we removed (pulled out) sugarcane, corn, and tobacco, and we damaged peanut fields. It is bad luck if we pass through one's field because whenever we encountered a field with any kind of crop, we damaged it, and we damaged many fields in the place where we killed *ngere*. They did not beat Katoré; however, they told us that the one who catches *ngere* would not live for long; after a month this youth died.

We took all those things that we had removed from the fields to the lodge. We ate as we wanted; no distinction was made between a tutor and a candidate; all of us ate. As we were running to hunt *ngere*, we were singing: "We are hunting *ngere*; we are searching for *ngere*."

As we left the lodge, some had not yet healed; they were told not to eat with other people yet because if one eats with a person who has a wife and if that person sleeps with his wife, then the wound will not go away quickly –If a person returns without being healed, it is called *ukíri nékiku*. This person cannot eat in his (mother's) house; when his mother has prepared paste, she takes it to his sleeping quarters and her son eats it there; he eats without entremets, without dipping his paste in sauce. He will also put medicine (soot from the cooking pots) on his wound and cover it with dried banana leaves. Afterwards, they tell the mother of this child that she cannot yet sleep with her husband because her child has not yet been shaved "because other problems occurred in the lodge"; thereupon, the mother of this candidate will understand that her child "is still with *mukumo*" (general name for the circumcision complex); but when he comes from the forest after having been shaved, then he can act like the others.

After we had spent two days in the village, we went to hunt; we killed a piglet and a monkey; we returned to the village with them. Reaching the village, I took one leg to the wife of the guardian Mukoresa because while we were in the lodge I had eaten from his *miruo* (ritual meal) when she had given birth.

When one week had passed, they said that each candidate must bring two *mikandiri* bananas to make *ndokwa* beer. All of us, as we were in the circumcision rites, brought two *mikandiri* each; all the bananas were locked into two shacks. Tutors and candidates put them in the shacks; at that moment Nyabungubungu and Kabiri sounded; we were also beating *mukumo* (sticks); we saw Kabiri clearly, but we no longer had to pay for it. After three days, all of us went to squeeze the bananas; Nyabungubungu, Kabiri, and *mukumo* were speaking there. We finished squeezing; we returned to the village.

Next day we went to remove the beer; they told the women to close the doors (of their houses). We brought the beer to the village, and *mukumo* was speaking again with Nyabungubungu and Kabiri. The beer was placed in the village plaza; all the people who were circumcised (past and present) drank this beer. As we were drinking the beer, Misingi, a Muhumusa, trampled on Kabiri. However, in reality he did not tread on Kabiri but fought with his brother. Thereupon they told him to provide a goat because he broke the rules by fighting while they were drinking the *ndokwa* beer. When he heard this, his kinsman Shemuhahi gave that goat; they said that it must be pierced outside, that all will eat a little piece of it. That goat was killed outside there; all of us ate this goat.

The men saw Bungwa coming outside with his wife; he closed her eyes to take her to the women's toilet. When the men saw him, they said that Bungwa (of the) Baero (group) infringed upon the rules of the circumcision rites because he had opened up (the house) to take his wife to the toilet even though he knew that people were drinking *ndokwa* beer and that the *banammwami* (sacred instruments) were playing in the village plaza: "You will pay a goat." He provided a goat that was also pierced in the village plaza. We ate it. Afterwards they told Cecire to pay two chickens because on the day his son was circumcised he had brought him paste and taro leaves as entremets, saying it was "*kasongoriko*"; he also had broken the rules of the circumcision (rites). We ate those two chickens there.

Afterwards, they told Shentsesi, Cecire's kinsman, that he was a sorcerer because he arrived when we were in the lodge and when he was going to leave he put a corncob between his toes to bewitch us, but they saw him. The guardian told him to drop that corncob and to leave and not dare come back to the lodge another day; if he comes back, they will beat him up most seriously "because you are a sorcerer." Thereupon he did not come back to the lodge. They told him that he was a sorcerer on the day of *ndokwa* drinking, but they did not make him pay a fine because his kinship was Baero. And it is true that on the day this man arrived in the lodge, all of us had headaches. Thereafter, Shekahindo, the son of Shenyongo also paid a goat (because) he had stepped on and broken Kabiri; they now went to inform the men that Shekahindo had broken Kabiri. When the men heard this, they asked Shakahindo, saying: "Where is Kabiri?" He said: "I broke it": they said: "So bring a goat." He also gave a goat; we ate it that very day.

After we had eaten this goat, they said: "Let us go to Muirya." We went beating the *mukumo* (sticks); we arrived in Muirya. They informed us that Shengoma had broken the circumcision rules because when he saw us beating the *mukumo* (sticks), he said in a loud voice: "You are killing us by beating and beating these sticks in this village." Shenyongo, his kinsman, said that he would pay a goat and a jar of beer because he had revealed the circumcision (secrets) to the women. Shengoma gave that goat and the jar of beer; we drank that beer; we pierced that goat in the plaza; that day all of us ate this sizeable goat.

We left Muirya; we went to the village of the counselors; we were dancing and (beating) the *mukumo* (sticks). We left there in the evening; we stopped beating *mukumo*; we sat down in our houses; all problems were now finished on that day.

When four days had passed since we had left the lodge, Mirikitano had sex with the child of certain people; her name was Muhoto (of the) Baero. Afterwards that young woman got *ankylostomiasis*. When she was near death, she revealed that she had had sex with Mirikitano, who was coming out of the circumcision rites. Mirikitano finally paid nothing; that woman died.

I also paid two chickens while I was in the lodge because one day I went on the side of the Rucahi River with our colleagues. Arriving there, we saw Murisi, the chief of Kishari, who was going to Buisi with his people. When they heard the *mikentsere* sticks sounding, they went; they fled because they are Bahunde and they do not know the *mukumo* rites; and we continued to chase them.

When they arrived in Muntongo, they were completely out of breath. We went to the lodge. When Murisi arrived in Muntongo, he informed Ngulu, saying: "Candidates chased me over this entire road; we came here; we are in no condition to continue because of fleeing." When Ngulu heard this, he sent Kanyangara to our lodge to tell the guardian this news and to ask who had been on the side of the Rucahi River. Kanyangara arrived in the lodge; he gave this news to the guardian; the guardian in turn asked us: "Who went to the Rucahi?" I answered, saying: "I, with Kaburuta, a young man from Mwima." When the guardian heard this, he said: "You Sherungu are safe because you are my kinsman; otherwise you would pay one goat; however, under the circumstances you will pay two chickens." He told us this when we about to dance before going to bathe. I went close to the village; I beat (my) *mukentsere* (stick), (saying): "I am dying here." When they heard this, Shemungo arrived in the place where I was waiting. I informed him that Kabiri made me pay two chickens. Shemungo arrived in mother's place; he gave her this news; mother provided one chicken and father Bukore provided one chicken. Shemungo brought me these two chickens; we went, me and that young man of Mwima; we went; the rain soaked us; we arrived in the lodge; we gave the guardian these two chickens.

The next morning we went to Burora; when we were on the side of the trail, we heard Nyankumbirwa saying "huwél!"; she was coming back from her field. Right then we could not find a place to flee or a way to cross the trail; so as we fled from her, we ran into an area with many *isusa* (leaves); we lay flat on these *isusa* until she and the other women had passed. After they had passed, we stood up; the *isusa* began to burn our entire bodies; we went on scratching ourselves; we found a place to cross, so now we passed over to the other side of the trail; we went and arrived in the lodge; we sat down. We were with Burenda and Masokora and Karoko.

On another day we chased Musore, a Mucira. When we saw him coming out of his banana grove, we said: "Let us chase him; why did a big man like him refuse to go to the circumcision rites?" We asked because some of his children, like Kabare, were in our lodge and were circumcised with us. So we went on chasing him and he fled because we were beating the *mikentsere* sticks, saying: "The one who will see me naked is dead; let the *kitumbu* cut him."

As we were about to reach the main road, we returned; we went and descended to the lodge; arriving in the lodge, we kept silent. When Musore arrived in the village, he informed the men that (some) candidates had made him flee, that he had thought that they would make him pay. When the men heard this, they said that the candidates were not at fault: "Why were you, a full-fledged man, afraid to go to the initiation rites?" The next morning the men arrived at the lodge; they gave the news that some candidates had chased Musore. When his children heard this, they said: "It is no one else who chased our father but Sherungu because that is the area where he usually traps." We came close to fighting. They asked why I had chased their father, and my colleagues and I answered them, saying: "Why did your father not go to the circumcision rites? And look! Men of his status are here; for example, Mubambi, who is here, is like him." the guardian said that this posed no problems for

Muriro: “If they want, they could tell their father to be circumcised; then he would not be chased again by the candidates.” When they heard this, they kept silent. We were: Me, Masokora, Burenda, Karoko, and Munubo.

One day they encountered my maternal uncle Meshe, who was cutting bananas (to brew beer); they chased him beating their mikentsere sticks because my maternal uncle was also uncircumcised. My maternal uncle brewed his beer; he took one calabash to (Chief) Ngulu. Arriving there, he informed Ngulu that (some) candidates had chased him while he was cutting bananas. When Ngulu heard this, he sent a man to the guardian to ask who had chased my maternal uncle while he was cutting bananas because Ngulu had decreed that the candidate who would chase my maternal uncle Meshe would pay exceedingly (for it). That man arrived in the lodge of the guardian; he informed him that Ngulu had sent him there to tell the guardian to find the candidates who had chased Meshe from his banana grove. We said that Musore's children had chased my maternal uncle because they had passed in that area and they were also out for vengeance, saying that we had chased their father. When he heard this, the guardian asked them: “Did you not hear Ngulu instruct that no single candidate must chase Meshe, that he who does so will pay because it would be like breaking the rules of the circumcision rites?” Those children of Musore went to get two chickens; they arrived with them in the lodge; they gave them to the guardian. Then and there we ridiculed them: “Bahunde from Muosi came to scorn the circumcision rites here in Iramba!” From then on, whenever they surmised that my maternal uncle was in the field cutting bananas, they went on the side without startling my maternal uncle with their mikentsere sticks.

When we were (still) in the lodge, one day we saw the circumciser (called) Kacunga coming from Byarenga –we had gone to that area to inspect our *mpota* traps. As we saw him, we chased him in the hope that we would catch him and beat him up, but he surpassed us in speed because he was also very frightened. And this is also the rule of the circumcision rites: when the candidates encounter a circumciser and they are not yet healed, they must beat him as much as they want because he brought them the pains of their wounds. And this is the reason why a circumciser does not come to the lodge until the candidates are healed; if he comes there, it is certain that they will beat him randomly. However, after the candidates have “cut *bitika*,” the circumciser arrives at the lodge; at that time he exchanges greetings with the candidates because now they are his friends since they no longer suffer; he says to the candidates: “Now you see good things; Kabiri will not scorn you anymore because you also have now become men”; and they say: “He is right.” However, if the circumciser comes to the lodge and the candidates still have wounds, right there they beat him haphazardly, saying: “He leaves people suffering badly!”

When we were (still) in the lodge, one candidate, Kirangwa (of the) Barundu of Rukweti, became sick. When he was near death, the guardian said: “You, all the candidates, and I, the guardian, let us get out of here.” All of us went. Arriving there, we cut leaves; each person placed his leaves there; others piled up the leaves and beat the *mikentsere* sticks; and we responded “hóya!” – That pile of leaves is called *iboreso*; this was the *iboreso* of Kirangwa. – As we were piling up these leaves, we saw Kirangwa; he joined us in the place where we were. When the guardian saw him, he said: “Lo! this person is still alive! Let us return to our lodge.” We went back to our lodge. We settled in; we said that this man would not yet die.

After we were settled in the lodge for three days, the illness seriously seized Kirangwa. They said that his death was a fait accompli. The guardian told the tutors to search for a place to build another lodge because this candidate will surely die in our present lodge. The tutors went to look for another place to build a lodge; they found a place downstream of Kitaheta. Next day the tutors built that lodge; all of us moved, together with the guardian; we left that sick person there. As we arrived on the road, we made another *iboreso* of Kirangwa; the *mikentsere* sticks were speaking and we responded “*hóya!*”

We arrived in the second lodge; we settled in; we said: “Lo! Our colleague is just dead.” As we were there, we saw Kirangwa arrive in that second lodge. The guardian said: “Lo! Kirangwa will not die; a person who had two *maboreso* made for him and who still comes after the people will not die; usually when the first *iboreso* is made for a candidate, it means that he was waiting for death (to come). So then we stayed with him there. Shekahanda (of the) Baero went to bathe him in the river and to give him many enemas of water because that Kirangwa had a woman from the Baero. By his good fortune, Kirangwa recovered. It is from this second lodge that we left to go back definitely to the village.

If that Kirangwa had died there in the lodge, the tutors would have made the house (lodge) collapse on him without putting him in a grave, and they would have set up thorn (bushes) there to prohibit sorcerers from removing parts from his corpse to bewitch other candidates. Thereupon the candidates would have left there singing: “We leave him there.” When they would arrive on the big road, they would pile up leaves there for the *iboreso* of that deceased candidate. —*Iboreso* is a sign to inform those who pass on the trail because when they see the heap of leaves, they will say that a candidate died or is near death in the lodge.

They inform the mother of the dead candidate in the following manner. When she sends food to the lodge for her child, the tutors do not clean the plates before returning them. The tutor who brings these plates to the house of the bereaved mother places them upside down on the ground and they lays another plate on top of them. So it is! When the mother of the dead candidate sees this, she will not know anything and will continue to send food to the lodge for her son; when it arrives there, (other) persons eat this food; afterwards they return the plates without cleaning them and place the bottom of the plates up. It is so every time! Even if her husband knows that their child is dead, he cannot inform his wife; he will give her the news that her child is alive (and well) because if he tells his wife: “our child is dead,” then he breaks the rules of the circumcision rites; that is, he reveals the secrets of the circumcision rites, and he must pay a goat because the guardian will see that she no longer sends food and he will say that lo! Her husband has already informed her that her child is dead, that she must not send any more food. First the guardian asks the tutors: “Who spread the news that a person died here?” If no tutor spread the news, it means that her husband gave her the information because even if they ask the tutor who brings the plates, he will just say that the boy is alive. The guardian will then send a big man the news that so and so had divulged the secrets of the circumcision rites.

On the day that the candidates will be seen again, the mother will know that her son is dead because when she becomes exhausted from unsuccessfully looking for him among the crowd of candidates, her husband will tell her: “Our child died in the lodge. Did you not see that they placed our plates upside down? He died only the day before yesterday, and it is then that they placed the plates upside

down. He had been sick (for some time).” Even if that child died long before, the father is afraid of causing trouble with his wife because if he tells her that the child died long ago, she will quarrel and ask why he did not inform her before so that she would not have prepared pastes for him thinking they were for her child, but lo! He had died long ago! Thereupon this person's mother will start crying, saying “Lo! My child remained in the lodge.”

They made the house collapse on the candidate's corpse after the candidates had left that village (the lodge). We made the second *iboreso* for Kirangwa in the very early morning.