

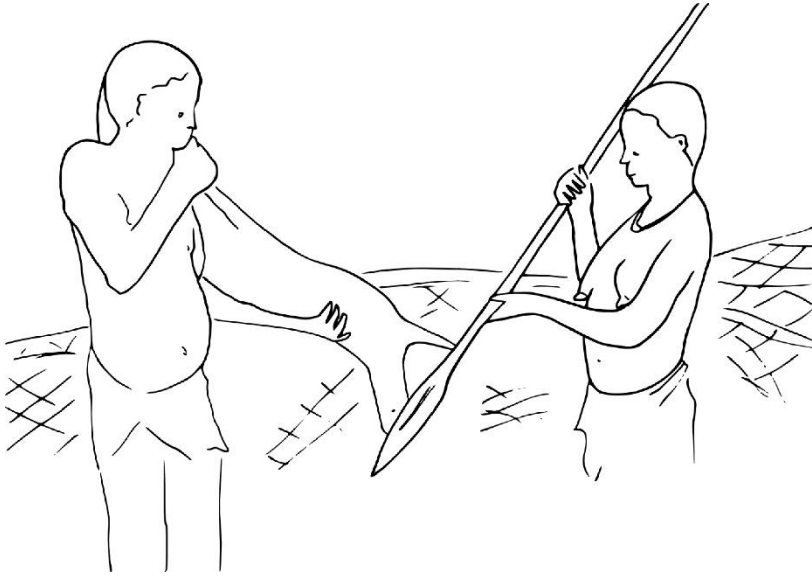


Fig.012 Illustration showing a native woman coming to the assistance of her husband who has just caught a small antelope in the net. As a matter of fact, it is the woman who has taken the hardest task of encircling the animal and scarring him towards the net held by the males. Other tasks that in sedentary societies are male, are female among the natives.

Gender Equality Among the Natives of Higher Africa

Native women take part in the "original method of hunting" which consist in forming "a huge semicircular cordon, which then closed in" yelling and beating "the bushes and trees in order to drive the terrified" game towards the men who awaited with either torches or nets (Schebesta 1933). Certain ceremonies however are the domain of men like the playing of the molimo trumpet which "the men stole it from them and ever since the women have been forbidden to see it". But this is just an "exception" given that a "man is not ashamed to pick mushrooms and nuts" and gladly "wash and clean a baby". Importantly women are "free to take part in the discussions of men" (Turnbull 1961). Usually, it is in fact the woman who loses "her temper completely" and can go as far as to abuse her man and slap him with "a bunch of mangungu leaves". This is astonishing since among blacks a wife who dares to "talk back to her husband" gets "beaten until her bottom" aches and if she strikes him, she wouldn't live "to tell the story" (Hallet 1964). There is no shame in the part of a man in "fondling a child" but it is his task to "weave" the hunting net just as only he may "make arrows and put a new string on a bow". While only women "weave baskets" for gathering food, climbing trees for honey is "a man's work" (Duffy 1984).