Livingstone characterized this ethnic diversity, which did not correlate with their expectations of how African populations should be organized, in different terms.

He usually grouped the different regional populations under the single term “Manyema” yet simultaneously faulted their lack of cohesion, especially at a broader political level: “The great want of the Manyema is national life. Of this they have none. Each headman is independent of every other” (1870g:{29}, cf. 1870i:XXIII)

This situation, according to Livingstone, resulted in a “permanent halt” in terms of technological development, positioned perpetual war as the only solution even for lesser inter-village disputes, and made local social dynamics particularly susceptible to interference by the newly arrived Arab traders (1870h:XVII, XIX; 1870i:XXIII).

Today, the Bangubangu constitue the principal ethnic group residing at Bambarre (Maes and Boone 1935, Raucq 1952:35-36, Boone 1961, Maho 2009:34; cf. Vansina 1968: Map D: “The Peoples of Kasai and Kantanga Around 1890” and Butcher 2008:143-49).

Authorities, however, suggest that this collective name originated as an Arab or European appellation (Boone 1961:5; cf. Biebuyck 1973:19n.).

The authorities trace the genealogy of this population in two ways, with some foregrounding the links of the Bangubangu with the Lega to the north (Biebuyck 1973:xix, 10, 18), and others counting Bangubangu among the people of Congo’s Kasai-Katanga region (to the south of Legaland) with ties to the Luba originating in the early nineteenth century (Raucq 1952: 42, 44; Vansina 1965:161-73, especially 162; cf. Wisnicki 2013:218-19).

Bambarre’s population thus defies facile ethnic description, in part because of limited critical literature (Boone 1961:11).

In the 1870 Field Diary, Livingstone himself makes only the occasional reference to the “Bambarre people” (1870i:XXXVI, XXXVII, 1870k:LXXIII), whom he distinguishes from the Lega (1870i:XXXVII).

He traces the origin of the Bambarre people to the Luba on the south and southwest, but in a potentially confused way that also links them to the Lega in the rainforests to the north: “All they can say of [the]ir forefathers is that they came from Lualaba up Luamo then to Luelo and   
thence here – The name seems to mean forest people – Manyuema” (Livingstone 1870h:XVII; cf. Cameron 1877,2:66-69, who makes the links with the Luba more explicit).