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Notes on Indigenous Trees and Shrubs of S. Rhodesia

Trichilia emetica Vhal
(Meliaceae)

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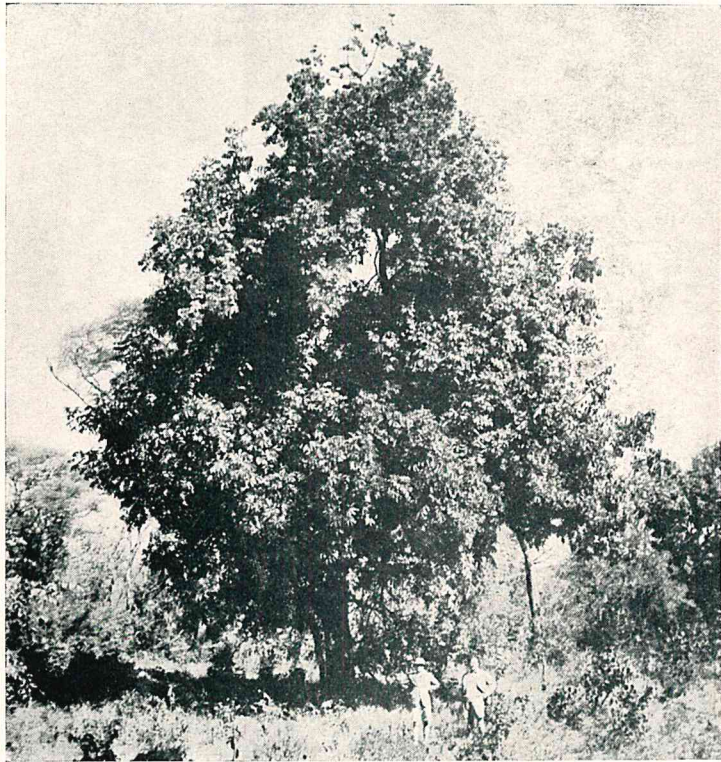
Trichilia emetica Vhal
(Meliaceae)

Common Name.—Natal Mahogany. **Native Names.**—Muchenya, muchichiri, mukuhlu, musikili, musikivi, mutshitshivi, mutsikiri (Chis.).

General Description.—It is understood that the recognised botanical name of this tree may become *Trichilia roka* (Forsk.) Chiov. It is a tree of the mahogany family which is usually evergreen and which, under favourable moisture conditions, attains to a height of 70 feet or even more. Under less favourable conditions and when growing in the open it has a more rounded and wide-spreading crown and is commonly only some 30 feet in height. Leaves are exstipulate, alternate and imparipinnate, i.e. having an odd terminal leaflet. In the case of the larger leaves, which are up to 12 inches in length, petioles, or leaf-stalks, are up to 3 inches long. Each leaf has up to five pairs of opposite or sub-opposite leaflets along with the odd end leaflet. Leaflets have short petiolules. End leaflets are largest. Leaflets are of an ovate-lanceolate shape and are dark green and shiny above and paler below. They are of somewhat leathery texture. Margins of leaflets are often wavy. Midribs are prominent on the lower surfaces. The flowers which are to be seen about the end of the dry season and the beginning of the rainy season are fairly small, of a yellowish-white colour and scented. The fruits of a greyish-green to brownish colour are round and up to about 1 inch in diameter. Each fruit is a three-lobed capsule with up to six long-shaped, scarlet and black-skinned seeds per fruit. Seeds are very conspicuous. Each seed is about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch long by about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch wide, part of it being fairly flat and the remainder rounded, somewhat resembling an eye in general appearance. The bark of the tree is greyish brown to brownish black and fairly smooth.

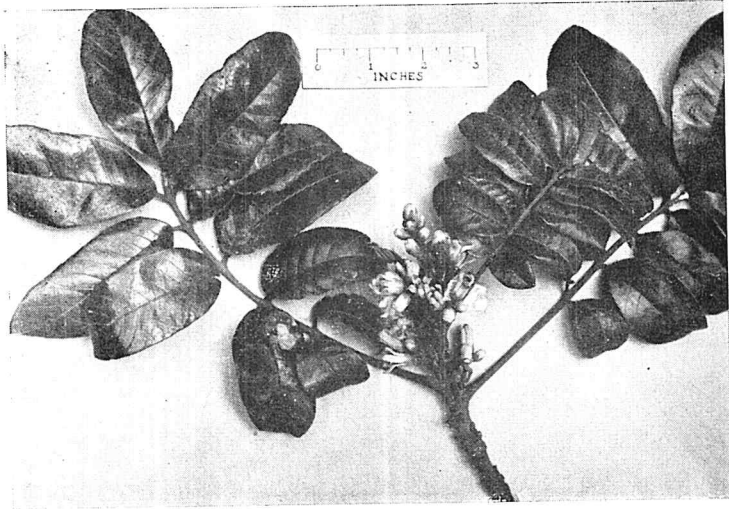
Distribution.—This tree is found in the vicinity of rivers in the lowveld, e.g. in the Zambesi River and lower Sabi River areas. It also occurs in adjoining territories and is found as far north as the Sudan.

Uses.—The timber is fairly light, of a pinkish-brown colour, straight-grained and easy to work. Unless treated, it is subject to borer attack. The heartwood and sapwood are not readily distinguishable. Air dry it weighs from 28-41 lb. per cubic foot. It polishes well and makes quite attractive furniture and can also be used for shelving, drawers and moulding. The use of linseed oil darkens the wood to a fairly dark teak colour. The plant has been stated to be poisonous. The seeds yield an oil suitable for soap-making and is used by natives for lighting. Seeds used to be exported from Portuguese East Africa under the name of Mafura or Mafurreira nuts. Various parts of the tree are used medicinally by natives. The tree, which can be easily raised from seed, makes an excellent shade tree for a garden.



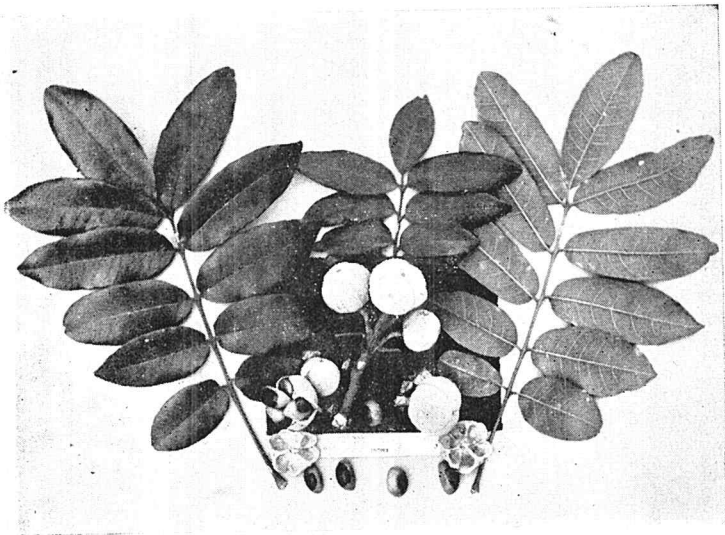
Trichilia emetica.
Habit photo.

[Photo by R. M. Davies



Trichilia emetica.
Leaves and flowers.

[Photo by A. A. Pardy]



Trichilia emetica.
Leaves fruits and seeds.

[Photo by A. A. Pardy]