

## 1. Description

1.1 Name(s) of society, language, and language family:

Konde society from the Nyakyusa family, also called Ikinyakyusa, Mombe, Ngonde, Ikingonde, Nkonde, Nyakusa, Nyikyusa, Sochile, Sokile, Sokili, Kukwe, Nyekyosa [1]

1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com): NYY

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): Tanzania, North end, Lake Malawi. Also spoken in Malawi. Latitude: -8.95 Longitude: 33.55 [1]

1.4 Brief history: "Tradition recalls that Nyakyusa/Ngonde chiefs and commoners were of different stock. The ancestors of the "commoners" are remembered as hunters and honey gatherers who came from the mountains surrounding the Rift Valley or from the vicinity of Lake Rukwa to the north. The ancestors of the "chiefs" were related to the aristocracy of the Kinga, a neighboring (although otherwise unrelated) people in the mountains east of the lake. The chiefs came "ten generations ago," bringing cattle, cultigens, fire, and iron, and found the commoners eating their food "raw." The chiefs arrived not as conquerors, but as culture bringers with power over rain and fertility. They are remembered as being "pale" and the commoners as "black," but there has been intermarriage for as long as anyone remembers, and no physical difference is discernible in their descendants. This myth of migration and settlement resembles many others from Africa concerning the origins of the complementary relationship between rulers and the ruled.

Whereas the Nyakyusa were relatively isolated because of their geographical situation, the Ngonde were incorporated into an extensive precolonial ivory-centered trade network. English and German missionaries, traders, and explorers arrived in the 1870s. The initial phase of contact was soon followed by elimination of the slave trade and the establishment of European colonial regimes; the Ngonde ended up in the British Protectorate of Nyasaland (called Malawi upon independence), and the Nyakyusa were incorporated in the German colony of Tanganyika. With the defeat of the Germans in World War I, control of Tanganyika passed to the British, who assumed the territory under a League of Nations mandate and administered it until independence." [8]

1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors: "Scots missionaries established themselves in Ngonde territory, and Lutherans and Moravians, followed by Catholics, settled in BuNyakyusa. The missionary presence resulted in challenges to the values of precolonial society (e.g., polygyny), a division of the population along religious lines, and a withdrawal of Christians from participation in traditional communal ceremonials. Wage migration has taken many men out of the country to work for various periods in the mines of the Rhodesian (now Zambian) Copper Belt or in South Africa. The introduction of cash cropping and private land has further enhanced these individualistic tendencies. The overall effect of such changes has been a transition from a society based on kinship to one based on the nuclear family and voluntary association." [8]

1.6 Ecology (natural environment): "The Nyakyusa inhabit the coastal plain at the north end of Lake Malawi and the section of the East African Rift Valley extending northward up the southern flank of Mount Rungwe, an extinct volcano; the Ngonde are found on the northwestern coastal plain immediately across the border in Malawi, separated from Tanzania by the Songwe River. Rainfall is distributed throughout much of the year, with a concentration in March and April; it exceeds 250 centimeters per year on the slopes of Mount Rungwe and is around 100 centimeters per year on the lake plain in Ngonde country. BuNyakyusa (the country of the Nyakyusa) is dissected by rivers, which contributed to its relative isolation and political fragmentation in precolonial times. The lakeside locale of the Ngonde, which was accessible to trade routes, allowed the rise of a centralized chieftaincy in the nineteenth century but also increased their exposure to slave raiding." [9]

1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density: 50,000 Nyakyusa in Tanzania (1992 UBS). 300,000 in Malawi. Population total both countries 1,050,000. [1]

## 2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s): corn, beans, squash, sorghum, millet, yams, bananas, [5]

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources: beef, milk [5]

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?:

2.4 Food storage:

2.5 Sexual division of production: "There is ideally a gender-based division of labor: men and boys hoe and herd; women cook and attend the household. A son was expected to hoe for his father... Now, because of the absence of the many men who are pursuing outside employment, women have increasingly been obliged to hoe and tend the home fires." [5]

2.6 Land tenure: "The age village was the landholding unit, and allotment of land was determined at the coming-out ceremony. The allocation of land within the village was its own concern, and there was much flexibility in practice. Villages of fathers and sons were usually close to one another, and, before the general redistribution, sons would often take over plots tilled by their fathers. With the collapse of the age-village system, land tenure became the affair of the nuclear family; even as early as the 1930s private ownership had been established over valuable plots in old volcanic craters. By the late 1960s, a substantial landless class had emerged." [5]

2.7 Ceramics: "Pottery making was in the hands of a non-Nyakyusa specialist group residing on the northeastern lakeshore." [5]

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

2.9 Food taboos:

2.10 Canoes/watercraft?

## 3. Anthropometry

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f):

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f):

## 4. Life History, mating, marriage

4.1 Age at menarche (f): 14.93 years old [12]

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f):

- 4.3 Completed family size (m and f): “The basic unit is the nuclear family. In polygynous households each wife has her own house, or in former times a separate room in a long house; each household is allotted its own land, which the husband helps cultivate.” [3]
- 4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f):
- 4.5 Age first marriage (m and f): “Marriage ages once differed markedly for men and women, the former marrying at an average age of 25, and the latter near puberty, having been betrothed by their fathers even earlier.” [3]
- 4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce:
- 4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously: “In the 1930s as many as 70 percent of married women lived in polygynous households, but as many as 70 percent of adult men were either unmarried or monogamous.... Even so, in the interval between the 1930s and the present, women began marrying at a later age, and polygyny underwent a relative decline, particularly among Christians. Tanzanian national family law has promoted the autonomy of women with respect to marriage and property rights.”[3]
- 4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?: “a son-in-law was expected to hoe for his father-in-law; in the absence of cattle for bride-wealth, this service was the only way a poor man could acquire a wife.” [5]
- 4.9 Inheritance patterns: “A brother traditionally inherited the farms and wives of a deceased sibling and raised children in the latter's name. Failing this, an elder son was the legitimate heir. Presently, father-to-son inheritance is the norm, another function of the privatization of economic life and the breakup of wider kinship units. Widows, rather than being inherited, now are likely to live in the household of a son unless they remarry.” [3]
- 4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict: Sons work for their fathers. [5]
- 4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:
- 4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):
- 4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these “other fathers” recognized?
- 4.14 What is the belief of the mother's role in procreation exactly? (e.g., “receptacle in which fetus grows”)
- 4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)?
- 4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape
- 4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin)
- 4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?
- 4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring
- 4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?
- 4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females: “There is a preponderance of women over men, largely brought about by wage migration.” [9]
- 4.22 Evidence for couvades: No
- 4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older)
- 4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?
- 4.24 Joking relationships?
- 4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations
- 4.26 Incest avoidance rules: “Marriage between descendants of a common great-grandfather was frowned upon, but marriage between descendants of a common grandfather was considered "impossible." Unlike many peoples of the region, cross-cousin marriage was not considered permissible, although in other respects cross cousins behaved familiarly and had mutual obligations in the ritual of kinship.” [2]
- 4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?
- 4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?
- 4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?)
- 4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)?
- 4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who: “Tarawali and Konde cannot intermarry” [11]

### **Warfare/homicide**

- 4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:
- 4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death:
- 4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing: “Small-scale warfare and cattle raiding were once endemic between adjoining chiefdoms; occasionally a chiefdom would be subsumed by another because of defeat in war. The most violent period in local history occurred in the late nineteenth century, when a coastal slaver set himself up in Ngonde country—an activity brought to an end by British intervention in 1895.” [4]
- 4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations):
- 4.18 Cannibalism?

### **5. Socio-Political organization and interaction**

- 5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:
- 5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality): Young men leave the village after a certain age to live in surrounding areas. [7]
- 5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes): Chiefdom
- 5.4 Post marital residence: husband's
- 5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense):
- 5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex): “The Nyakyusa have preferred to live in nucleated settlements and are best known for their system of "age villages," whereby new generations of young men set themselves up in residential communities separate from

those of their fathers. This separation is not strictly an "age set" system composed of named grades (as among many East African herding societies), but rather an outgrowth of the idea that the sexual activities of the generations should be kept separate and that contemporaries make the best neighbors—that they provide "good company" for one another. There was a powerful avoidance between fathers-in-law and daughters-in-law. The germ of a new village would form as boys reaching adolescence set up huts on the edge of a parent village; this new village recruited for perhaps five years, and then closed its membership. The fundamental principle of residential affiliation was therefore not kinship but age (kin often lived in the same village, however, or at least in the same "side" of the chiefdom)." [7]

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:

5.8 Village and house organization:

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses):

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?

5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc.: "The social organization of contemporary Nyakyusa and Ngonde society is oriented around the family, individual agricultural production, national politics, and the churches. In former times the age village was the center of social life; the wider community came into play via war, the power of chieftaincies, and the enactment of collective ritual." [4]

5.12 Trade: "In precolonial times there was regional traffic in iron, cloth, pottery, and salt and, among the Ngonde, participation in the ivory trade to the coast, an activity that enhanced the power of the Ngonde chief through the extraction of tribute. The giving and receiving of salt and iron (in the form of hoes) were important markers of social relationships. Salt came in from the Tanganyika plateau to the north. Rice from the lowlands near the lake is currently exchanged for highland produce such as groundnuts." [5]

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?: "Although there were no named age sets, each generation had a corporate identity in that it went through a collective transition ritual called a "coming out." Seniors were supposed to "move aside" in a comprehensive redistribution of land within the chiefdom. At this time new chiefs were also brought out, as were commoner headmen, the headmen of the villages newly elevated to senior status. Ideally, the chiefdom would also split, dividing between the two senior sons of the old chief. The system can be seen as an institutional way of handling a natural process of growth and fission, but the way in which it actually worked remains somewhat obscure. In any event these arrangements were dependent on an ample supply of vacant land; with the onset of colonial rule and an increasing population, it began to fall apart. The last recorded "coming out" in Ngonde occurring in 1913, the last in BuNyakyusa in 1953. By 1969, the establishment of age villages had also ceased, and the system itself was scarcely remembered." [7]

## **6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)**

6.0 Time allocation to RCR:

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine): "Descendants of the "divine kings" (the Lwembe of Nyakyusa, the Kyungu of Ngonde) performed important rituals for the well-being of the country at large, such as ceremonies of national purification. There were also commoner priests and diviners, who worked together with the chiefs to avert misfortune, officiate at communal ceremonies, and preside over the grave sites of dead chiefs." [6] "Medicines" were used to enhance the powers of chiefs and village headmen; they were administered to nourish the "python in the belly," the source of mystical power. The actual content of the medicines is uncertain, although some were composed of ground stone and others of vegetable substances, the latter type being of particular importance in strengthening a pubescent girl." [6]

6.2 Stimulants:

6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal): "The "coming out" was the most impressive and important of the collective ceremonies. Sacrifices at the burial groves of chiefs were important in times of misfortune. Kinship rituals, particularly the elaborate burial service, were the most common type of ceremony; there were also rituals accompanying puberty and marriage, and normal and abnormal birth (e.g., the birth of twins)." [6]

6.4 Other rituals: Konde practice circumcision after the age of 6. [10]

6.5 Myths (Creation):

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games): Music and dance is important to the culture, main art form was through the dramatization of ritual myths [13]

6.7 Sex differences in RCR:

6.8 Missionary effect: "The precolonial Nyakyusa/Ngonde cosmology was nontheistic. It focused on the powers of the founding heroes and their chiefly descendants, on the powers of commoner headmen to combat witches, and on the ability of deceased relatives to affect the fortunes of the living. Since then Christianity has made very substantial progress, although not equally in all areas. In 1955 Moravians, Lutherans, and Catholics comprised some 14 percent of the total population, with significant numbers in other sects such as the Pentecostal Holiness, Assemblies of God, Watch Tower (Jehovah's Witnesses), Seventh Day Adventists, and a number of indigenous sectarian groups." [6]

6.9 RCR revival:

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs: "The shades of the dead were of great importance. Neglect of the proper form in funeral services could lead to illness. The main function of funeral ceremonial was to produce a certain distance between the living and the dead. The shades of past kings and agnatic ancestors were frequently consulted when interpreting or attempting to avert misfortune." [6]

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?:

6.12 Is there teknonymy? :

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.): modern Christianity with hints of their ancient beliefs

## 7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint:

7.2 Piercings:

7.3 Haircut: "Men and women had their hair cut in a variety of patterns" [13]

7.4 Scarification: "Cicatrization, patterns cut on the belly and thighs of adolescent girls were thought pleasing both to the eye and touch" [13]

7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.):

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:

7.7 Sex differences in adornment: Women as a sign of femininity wore bark-cloth, made from bark off ficus saplings, which was hammered into shape and suspended off belts. [13]

7.8 Missionary effect:

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment:

## 8. Kinship systems

8.1 Sibling classification system:

8.2 Sororate, levirate:

8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.):

"A person was both a member of an agnatic kin group and an age village. With the exception of the chiefly lines, lineage groups were unnamed, genealogically shallow, and residentially dispersed because of the age-village system. The corporate political significance of lineages was therefore limited. Their main relevance emerged in judicial proceedings, inheritance, and ritual; kin had greater legal responsibility for one another's behavior than did age mates." [2]

## 9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

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