

Description

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

LAMBA, KABBA LAKA. The dialects include: MANG, BÉMOUR, MAÏNGAO, GOULA, PAÏ

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

639-2

Location:

Southwest, Logone Oriental Prefecture, Baïbokoum and Goré subprefectures. Mang is in Ngadjibian Canton, north of Bessao, and in parts of the Békan and Timbéri cantons, Goré Subprefecture. Bémour is in Bessao and Pandzangué cantons south of Moundou. Maïngao is along the Ngamadja-Dodang II axis, and along the Bessao-Oudoumian axis. Goula is in Andoum Canton, and in the area around Pan in Pandzangué Canton. Paï is at Oudoumian

1.4 Brief history:

Ecology (natural environment):

The region is mostly flat apart from some low ranges of hills. Some copper mines have been discovered in these regions too. This land is distinctly forestland. The trees are tall but not densely packed and their leaves do not offer much shelter from the summer sun. There are many streams that run through patches of broken forestland. Not only that but it is a land of streams and rivers and wonderfully well watered.

Population size:

Spoken by over 100,000 people in the Ndola district of North-western Rhodesia and the Southern portion of the Katanga district of the Congo Belge. There are also 215,000 people that speak the Lamba language in Zambia and 27,000 people that speak it in the Democratic Republic of Congo. There are also 106,000 that speak the Laka language in Chad, 6,300 in Cameroon, and 2,700 in Central African Republic.

Village Distribution:

There are three different classifications of villages. The first one is called *Umushi wamfumu*, a chief's village; a chief's clan usually runs a village like this. With him three other chiefs help him the group chief, a prominent chief, and a minor chief. The second type is called *Umushi wamuchyete*, a commoner's village, the headman who is a prominent man but a commoner. The third type is *Ichipembwe*, this is a kind of village that is lead by a commoner who has succeeded a member of the chief clan.

Economy

Main food staple(s):

Inshima, porridge made from sorghum meal, maize, sorghum, pumpkins, honey, ground-nuts, fruits, mushrooms, millet, sweet potatoes, melons, cassava, beans,

Main protein-lipid sources:

Caterpillars, Catfish, different members of the mouse family, eland, bush pig, porcupine, ant-bear (but not the heads which are left in the bushes outside the village), goat, monkey and baboon (only eaten by old people and little children), tortoise (old people eat this), hares, squirrels, domestic fowl, birds such as pigeons, sparrows, ducks, geese, egret...

Weapons:

The Lamba people use: spears, axes, bows, arrows, knives, hoes, adzes, dancing axes, and wires.

Sexual division of production:

The sign of men's work are axes and spears and the sign for women's work is the hoe. Men can help the women and the women can help the men but women would not use the spear.

Ceramics:

The Lamba have many different kinds of pots that women usually make. Not all women are capable of making them but there are a few that are very good at them. These pots are usually made of clay and once the shape has been made there are set in firewood for them to be thoroughly baked. The pots are called *inongo*. There are different pots for different purposes one is a large pot with a large mouth used for cooking and washing, a large pot to brew beer, a water-pot, a small pot with wide mouth for relish, and a warm-water finger-bowl.

Specified sharing patterns:

Usually the men all eat together and the women and children all eat together. Sometimes families will all eat together. There is usually one bowl that everybody shares and they use their hands to eat.

Life History, mating, marriage

Age first marriage (m and f):

Females: fourteen. Males: thirteen.

Divorce:

Marriage ties among the Lamba people are looser than cattle-keeping people. This looseness has increased because foreigners have come in with more to offer than their current husbands. The children usually stay under the care of the mother in such cases. There are certain rules about divorce with a definite recognition of the marriage pledge and additional payment or compensation.

Divorce of the women: If the parents-in-laws harass him, if she has committed adultery, if she develops leprosy, syphilis, or yaws, if she becomes a thief, if she is nagging, disrespectful, and quarrelsome, or if she refuses to remain when her husband decides to marry another woman.

Divorce of the husband: if he fails to cloth his wife, if he fails to prepare a garden, if he continually beats his wife, if the man proves to be impotent, if a woman ceases to care for her husband, or if the man develops leprosy, syphilis, or yaws.

Polygyny:

Polygyny is very few in the Lamba people. It used to be more common and there used to be a few with three wives, the most with five but the men lead very difficult lives which makes marrying polygynously an inconvenient and stressful thing. Women don't usually want their husbands to marry to have extra hands for garden work and more help around the house.

Inheritance patterns:

The Lamba people are strictly matrilineal.

Pattern of exogamy:

There is only one main rule that the man cannot marry within his clan or his father's clan.

Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape:

Rape is the most serious anti-social crime a man can make. The penalty for such is death and the enslavement of his sister because he has deflowered a girl or woman and therefore taken her glory.

Sexual freedom for females:

Lamba women do not have a lot of sexual freedom. If her husband finds her sleeping with another man he is justified to kill them both. If he has been away for a while and is pregnant of another he will beat her unless she tells him the name so that he can go kill him. Some men get divorces but it is said that after such a thing a man's heart never settles down.

4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring

Raising of the children:

There seems to be no definite law concerning the place of residence of the children. Many times they live with their grandparents but the decisions rests with the parents.

Naming the Child:

The child is usually named after an ancestor because they believe in reincarnation. If the birth is normal the grandmother gets to name the child. If the child falls sick a few days later it is said to have refused the name and then the child proceeds to be renamed.

Illegitimate Children:

These children suffer no disability for they are not at fault. They are treated like orphans who have no father and they are still accepted into the mother's clan, to which they naturally belong.

Incest avoidance rules:

Incest is another very serious anti-social rule. It is considered breaking a strong exogamic taboo. If a man sleeps with his sister than the man is driven away by the woman's brother and he is never to return. If a man sleeps with his mother than it is considered witchcraft and both of them would be burnt (in the old days). If a man sleeps with his daughter then they would both be burnt, if the girl were very young then they might take her and cleanse her.

A man may not marry a woman of his or his father's clan. Many people overlook this rule nowadays and are just ridiculed for their actions. If it were found that the two fathers were from the same clan and knew each other a divorce would be insisted upon. If it is a mother of one party and the father of another it is overlooked because those are the conditions for cross-cousin marriages.

Formal marriage ceremony:

Usually the parents, usually the mother, of the young man choose a bride when it is considered that it is time for him to marry. When the mother decides she then goes to the girl's family and asks if she is unmarried, if she is then the mother of the man will ask if her son wants to marry her daughter. The mother of the daughter then goes and asks the daughter what she thinks, if she says yes then the young man has to bring the *ichyupo*, the bride pledge. He then sets out to build a house and when he is done she will visit him as his wife.

When a grown man is seeking a wife he goes about it in a similar process. When he finds a woman he thinks is suitable he asks somebody in the village that he knows if she is married. If she is not he will ask what clan she is from because he is not allowed to marry with somebody from his or his father's clan. If she is not from the same clan he then asks the person he knows to go talk to her and go about the same process as a young man. The women have the liberty of denying the man formally or go up to him and be very blunt about it.

There is no ceremony beyond that of passing the necessary *ichyupo*, a four-yard piece of bark cloth sewn to make it double the width and half the length. After that is done it is usual for the sister of the man's father to go and get the bride in the afternoon before sunset. The bride is brought to the man's house and food is set before her.

For girls that have just been initiated into womanhood there is a special ceremony. The man who wishes to marry has to put aside certain beads, which he puts aside. He then goes and builds his house and when he is ready he goes to the woman that initiated the girl and gives her the beads and asks her permission to marry her. If she agrees she will bring the girl to him that night. Meanwhile though she instructs the girl that if he fails to deflower her by morning he is not worth it. When the couple to be are together the man brings two strings of beads and attaches one to the foot of the bed and one to the head of the bed. He will then attempt to deflower her. In the morning the old woman comes and asks for them to come out of the house. If nobody answers it means the man ran away. This immediately annuls the marriage. Most men can't face the humiliation afterwards and the ridicule that they end up committing suicide. If they do consummate then the man would answer that it is his place in the house and the old woman walks in and takes the beads and gives the couple meal and water. Many people gather around and in the afternoon the couple goes out and spend the time in the woods 'chasing anything that flies'.

Arranged marriages:

Arranged marriages are often done by the parents of a boy around the age of 13 and the family of his wife's family starting as early as 5 years old.

Marrying cross-cousin:

Cross-cousin marriages are accepted in the Lamba culture, there are advantages would be that if the wife died the dues the man would have to pay would be small because it would be to his own family and the same holds for the husband. The disadvantage would be that the man fears to quarrel with his wife because if anything happens the family will know. Women usually welcome that possibility because they have the freedom to be outspoken and enjoy freedom of speech that they might not get otherwise.

Warfare/homicide

War:

The Lamba are usually very peaceful people. On the occasion that they do go to war then they ask surrounding chiefs for aid. They do not use army's but rather the strongest and bravest men will go and settle the dispute. Usually those men are volunteers and the person responsible for their death would not be the person inflicting the wounds but rather the person who insisted on going to fight.

Socio-Political organization and interaction

Mobility pattern:

When the land has been worked out because of over cultivation, when the environs of the village have become insanitary, then the village headman will call an advisor and let him know the situation. The chief chooses the direction and four scouts will go ahead and choose a good spot. Once they have found a spot they do a ritual to cleanse the land for bad omens and demons. Then they start building huts and shelter and start planting crops for the next season.

Political system:

The Lamba people belong to one of thirty-two exogamic clans. The Lamba people have a paramount chief that serves as the main leader. Then in each village there is a chief that is in charge of his village. If the chief dies it is his younger brother that inherits chieftainship and if not him the chief's sister's son. The village chief or headman can resolve small disputes involving fines but never death sentences. The paramount and four group chiefs have the right at passing a death sentence after judging the case. The Lamba use mainly three ways of punishment: death, slavery, and fining.

Clan system:

There are thirty-two different exogamic clans. The clan system is passed down through the mother side. The clans used to be totemistic but they have moved away since. Here are the names of the clans and their totem name: *Awenamishishi*-the clan of the hair of the head, *Awenambushi*-the goat clan, *Awenatambo*-the wasp clan, *Awenansumbi*-the clan of the fowl, *Awenambewa*-the mouse clan, *Awenansofu*-the elephant clan, *Awenanyendwa*-the needle clan, *Awenanandu*-the crocodile clan, *Awenakawundi*-the galago clan, *Awenansoka*-the snake clan, *Awenansanje*-the blue monkey clan, *Awenambwa*-the dog clan, *Awenankulimba*-the pigeon clan, *Awenanguni*-the honey-guide clan, *Awenanguluwe*-the river-dog clan, *Awenamaila*-the sorghum clan, *Awenachyowa*-the mushroom clan, *Awenakani*-the grass clan, *Awenachyulu*-the anthill clan, *Awenanswi*-the fish clan, *Awenaluwo*-the wind clan, *Awenamulilo*-the fire clan, *Awenankalamu*-the rain clan, *Awenankalamu*-the lion clan, *Awenampumpi*-the wild dog clan, *Awenakalowa*-the earth clan, *Awenakalungu*-the bead clan, *Awenamumba*-the clay clan, *Awenawesa*-the plain clan, *Awenachyela*-the metal clan, *Awenakashimu*-the bee clan, *Awashishi*-the bark rope clan.

Post-marital residence:

The Lamba people are a matrilineal tribe. Most men have no trouble living in the village of the wife. But if the husband does not behave himself things can get dangerous and complicated for him and he will have to end up leaving the village.

Behavior:

The Lamba people are very recognized by their way of polite behavior, which they call *umuchinshi*. Breaking these social rules has serious consequences such as being cuffed or beaten, and reprimanded or ostracized. Here are a few conduct rules: (1) When receiving a gift one must take it with both hands as a sign of gratitude, (2) When eating with one's elders never get up to go until the elders have finished, (3) When a child is in the presence of an elder who is sitting down the child must sit cross legged and clap his hands when answering a greeting, (4) when sleeping the woman sleeps behind the husband against the hut wall while the husband lies facing the floor, (5) It is the husband's duty to open the door in the morning and to shut it at night.

Slaves:

The Lamba people practice domestic slavery. Usually the slaves are convicts of some sort and have been made slaves because of punishment or to repay a debt. The slaves in Lambaland enjoy freedom and are at liberty to search for other types of employment. There is also self-enslavement. For men they sometimes do it when he cannot get along with his relatives or when he cannot take care of his own garden and sustain himself. Unlike the other slaves this one cannot be traded because he voluntarily chooses this fate. Women can also be self-enslaved, many times they do it because of debt settling if the father dies and leaves it behind.

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

Puberty rituals:

Boys do not have any sort of big ritual in coming of age and circumcision is not practiced, the fathers simply instruct the boys on social and sexual relations. The girls on the other hand have the *Cisungu* ceremony. The belief is that when an 'old woman' believes that a girl is of age then she tells the girl to menstruate. The girl goes and takes place beneath an Enge tree, where she waits until her companions find her. Those who find her take her to the house and the following morning takes her to dance. Once the women have stopped dancing the men begin to dance. After that she is hidden for a long time until summer, during that time she is instructed in

manners, concerning cooking, and how to please her husband when married. When she is allowed to come back out she has to wear a headdress of beads woven into her hair.

Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal):

Spirit worship:

The Lamba people believe and worship the spirit of deceased relatives. When troubles come to a community the people seek out the *Wamukamwami*, spirit-mediums who act as prophets and oracles. The people venerate these prophets and pay for them to dance. In times of distress the prophet will that that a great chief is angry, then the whole village will gather gifts for him and the prophet will dance to propitiate the spirits.

Taboos:

The Lamba people have two different types of taboos. The first is *ukutonda*, which is indicative of social prohibition, and behaviors that would bring risk, trouble, personal harm, and other such harm. The other is *umuchinshi*, the breaking of one of these rules though would make you a social outcast, and the chief or people but rather the demon of the offended brings the punishment. The breaking of one of these rules represents an evil omen.

Religion:

The Lambas are theists. They believe in a "high god" who is called many names the most common is Lesa and Nyambi. They believe he is the creator of all things, the higher powers that live in the realm working on the moon and stars, the people guarding the animal and the dead, and the humans living on earth. He also created demons and goblins. They believe that Lesa will come from the east one day and take them away to the heavens.

Death and afterlife beliefs:

The Lamba believe that after death the person themselves is freed from their body and unlinked from the spirit and goes away to the west, the place where the dead go. They believe that the west is a large country maybe underground ruled over by a king who is not and never has been a human being. Lesa was the one who assigned him to this job. Only human beings can go to this place, no animals are found there. There are no distinctions between sexes or social status; here the spirits come to live in harmony.

Adornment

Tattooing:

The Lamba people tattoo for three reasons: the initiation of a hunter, for curative medical purposes, and that for personal adornment. A professional cutter who is paid with quantities of beads carries out the process. In tattooing the skin is cut and much blood is let out and then ground charcoal is rubbed into the incisions, it is considered a very painful process. The next day the places are washed and castor oil is rubbed on them.

Teeth:

The Lamba practice the custom of filing or chipping the teeth. A man will be made fun of if he has his whole teeth. Usually it is done as a child and one the first day the top ones are done the following day the lower teeth would be done.

Haircut:

The Lamba people usually keep their hair cut short. Men have more eccentric ways of cutting their hair, and women sometimes let it grow long and put plaits in them.

Adornment:

The Lamba people use a lot of feathered headdresses for women and bead headdresses for girls.

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