

1. Description

1.1 Name of society, language, and language family:

- Loma, Loma, Niger-Congo (1)
- Alternate names for the Loma include “Buzi,” “Busy,” “Bouze,” Loghoma, Looma, and Lorma, although “Buzi” is considered an offensive name (1).
- The Loma language has many dialects, including Gizima, Wubomei, Ziema, Bunde, and Buluyiema (1). The Loma writing system is a syllabary consisting of 185 syllables, some of which have multiple versions (3).

1.2 ISO Code: 639-3: lom

1.3 Location:

- The Loma can be found mainly in Lofa county in northwestern Liberia (1), at about 8 degrees latitude and -10 degrees longitude (2).
- The area in which most Loma live is referred to as Wubomai, after Fala Wubo, who is considered to be the founder of the Loma tribe.

1.4 Brief History:

- The Loma tribe is said to have been founded around the 14th century A.D. by a man named Fala Wubo, who was the son of a Mali prince that had migrated after a power struggle. Fala Wubo himself also migrated due to rumors of him being the son of a slave mother, and thus not a true heir to his father’s properties. After discovering what would eventually become Wubomai and finding it already inhabited by a people known as the Wono, Fala Wubo led his men into years of fighting with the Wono that would eventually result in his people’s victory and settlement in that region. For many years, the area was divided into autonomously independent towns and villages, all with their own chief, which frequently fought amongst each other. Eventually, a man named Degein Korvah rose to prominence and spread the idea that townships should not war with one another, which became law, and the area was peaceful. Not long after, the Loma were facing conflicts with the French, and Muslims from Guinea from the north, as well as being approached by the Liberian Republic, a country formed by freed slaves from America, from the south. The Liberian Republic wanted the Loma to agree to be under their government, in exchange for the protection and advancement of their people, as well as the continued ability still somewhat govern their own people. The Loma almost unanimously accepted, and the office of Paramount Chief, a position above the other chiefs, was created. The Loma to this day remain mostly in Liberia, but some can be found in neighboring countries (4).

1.5 Influence of missionaries/governments/powerful neighbors:

- Christian missionaries have introduced Christianity to the Loma, but few practice it (5). They have also, along with the influence of the Liberian Republic, increased the frequency of English speaking (4).
- The government of the Liberian Republic has introduced public schools and taxes, as well as altering the power structure of Loma society (4).

1.6 Ecology:

- The area in which the Loma live is rich in iron ore. Consequently, the Loma have traditionally used irons as a form of currency (6).
- The Loma exploit the rainforest by shifting rice cultivation from one area to the next, usually using slash-and-burn horticulture (6).

1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density:

- Population size is about 165,000 (1).

2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s):

- The main carbohydrate staple is rice (6).

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources:

- Main protein-lipid source was not specified; “Meat or fish is used as a garnish or ingredient in the sauce rather than being the focus of the meal” (6).

2.3 Weapons:

- Not found.

2.4 Food storage:

- Not much. Canned food is considered a luxury and a sign of wealth in the rural areas of Liberia (6).

2.5 Sexual division of production:

- Although the Loma tend to have an ideology of male dominance, the women are typically thought of as being in the “breadwinner/productive” role of society. Men, on the other hand, are thought of as being in a “warrior” role (6).

2.6 Land tenure:

- The right to use land is inherited patrilineally (6).

2.7 Ceramics:

- Not found.

2.8 Specified (prescribed or procured) sharing patterns:

- A male is expected to perform certain tasks for his father’s brother, like farm work, and he is expected to frequently visit. In return, his father’s brother is expected to share any clothes or food that the male may need (7 p113).

2.9 Food Taboos:

- Not found.

2.10 Canoes/Watercraft?

- Not found.

3. Anthropometry

3.1 Mean adult height: (m and f)

- Not found.

3.2 Mean adult weight: (m and f)

- Not found.

4. Life history, mating, marriage

4.1 Age at menarche:

- 11-14 years (4)

4.2 Age at first birth: (m and f)

- Not found, but the Loma are strongly against underage girls having sex (4).

4.3 Completed family size:

- Not found, but the average number of births per woman is 5.02 (8).

4.4 Inter-birth interval:

- Not found.

4.5 Age at first marriage:

- Not found.

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce:

- Few; cash is scarce in Loma society and woman usually can't afford to pay back the bridewealth even if they want a divorce (6).

4.7 Percent males polygynous, percent males married polygynously:

- Polygyny is the norm among the Loma (4), although probably no more than 30% of males are married polygynously at any given time (6).

4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry:

- Bridewealth is paid over several years and traditionally includes a payment of two dollars known as the friend money, another 40 cents to complete the engagement, 40 more cents to ask the maid to go in the home of the groom's parents, where she will soon live for at least a year, another payment of at least 40 cents, seven irons, a good dinner prepared by the groom's family, and finally, the dowry, which is not a fixed amount but whatever the groom's family is able to pay (4 p93-93).

4.9 Inheritance patterns:

- Both men and women inherit the right to use land that belonged to their father's lineage near the town in which he has citizenship (6).

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflicts:

- Sons are likely to establish households near their father's and/or any brothers of his (7 p111).

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:

- Not found.

4.12 Patterns of exogamy:

- It is preferred. Males usually stay in the same community as their brothers/father/father's brothers and marry a female from an outside community, who moves in with them (7 p111).

4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conceptions; is paternity partible? Are the "other fathers" recognized?

- The Loma believe that paternity is not partible. If a child is known to have been conceived by a father other than a woman's husband, it is rarely allowed in the family. It typically becomes property of husband, who may sell the child into slavery unless the real father can pay a ransom (4 p67).

4.14 What is the belief of the mother's role in procreation exactly? (e.g. "receptacle in which fetus grows"):

- The Loma's belief of the mother's biological role in procreation was not found. However, it seems noteworthy that if the mother of a baby dies, it is usually cared for by a different woman, who is then considered the mother (4 p13).

4.15 Is conception thought to be an incremental process?

- No, the Loma clearly believe that conception is an event that happens suddenly and decisively (4 p67).

4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape:

- Not found; however, there is a society called the Sande that all females are expected to join that lists one of its goals as preventing promiscuous men from raping underage girls (4 p92).

4.17 Preferential category for spouse: (e.g. cross-cousin)

- Matrilineal cross-cousin (7 p112)

4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?

- Extramarital sex is heavily looked down upon for genders. Women are expected to remain faithful to husbands, and being unfaithful is looked down upon even more so. However, if a woman is caught being unfaithful, the punishment for her is much less severe than the traditional punishment for the male she was with, which used to be as severe as execution (4).

4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring:

- No; extramarital offspring are generally not recognized as offspring (4).

4.20 If mother dies, who raises children?

- If the mother of a newborn dies, the baby is nursed by another woman, preferably a relative or close acquaintance. This new woman is then considered the baby's mother (4 p13).

4.21 Adult sexual ratio: number of males divided by number of females:

- 1.03 (8)

4.22 Evidence for couvades:

- None.

4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g. lesser/younger vs. major/older):

- Not found.

4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?

- One relationship that is typically of mutual respect is the relationship between a man and his father's older brother, who he refers to as his "father." The same is expected of a man and his progenitor, who he usually addresses by his first name, although this relationship is more affectionate (7 p112-113).

4.24 Joking relationships?

- Not found.

4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g. bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names, associations:

- Most aspects of Loma society are inherited patrilineally, not including names (6).

4.26 Incest avoidance rules:

- Not found.

4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?

- “Marriage is a process rather than an event, with bridewealth payments made over many years and solidified by the birth of children” (6).

4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?

- 3 or 4 days after an individual is born (depending on their gender), they are given 2 names. One is typically taken from an ancestor (there isn’t a preferred category; it could be any ancestor). The other is usually original and carries a meaning (e.g., a certain child born to a joyous mother was named “Kozi,” which means, “I am happy.”) Some Loma are given, or choose to take, middle names. (4 p12, 24, 25).
- Names can be changed rather easily, but this doesn’t happen often; it’s generally done to avoid rare conflicts, such as two relatives having names that are too similar (4 p107).
- Loma can also acquire a new name when joining the Poro or Sandes societies, which are societies that all males and females are expected to join, respectively (4 p91).

4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?)

- Males typically stay in the same community as their brothers/father/father’s brothers, and prefer to marry outside the community (7 p111).

4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g. parents, close kin)?

- No. In the case of unmarried men, if he is interested in a woman and his parents approve, they will go to the parent of the woman and ask for friendship between the families. If the woman’s parents approve of the man, they will refer the proposal to their daughter. She’ll accept if she thinks a relationship with the man would be in her parents’ best interest. The woman’s parents then inform the man’s parents that the two should see each other (4 p93).

4.31 Evidence for conflicts of interest over who marries who:

- Not found.

Warfare/Homicide

4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:

- Not found, but the Loma have always been a society with very common warfare, and being a brave, strong warrior has traditionally been one of the most important traits that make a ruler.

4.15 Out-group vs. in-group cause of violent death:

- Out-group violence is usually due to territorial disputes, while in-group violence is usually punishment/retribution for an offense (4).

4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing:

- Out-group killing has been usually been linked to territorial disputes, like when the first Loma defeated the old residents of Wubomai for their land. Another example of this is the fighting with France in order to defend their territory from French invasion (4).
- In-group killing has been more prevalent throughout Loma history. Causes of in-group killing have included revenge for humiliation and for the killing of loved ones, as well as punishment for offenses ranging from murder to sleeping with another man's wife. Another reported cause of in-group killing was fighting over who the rightful owner of a recently deceased chief's possessions was (4 p41).

4.17 Number, diversity, and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations):

- Within Liberia, the Loma share a border the Kissi and Gbandi tribes. The Loma also border the country of Guinea.
- The Loma have a long history of cooperation with the neighboring Mandingo tribe (4).

4.18 Cannibalism?

- No mention of cannibalism found.

5. Socio-political organization and interaction

5.1 Mean local resident (village) group size:

- Not found.

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality)

- The Loma have permanent homes and no seasonal mobility pattern.

5.3 Political system (chiefs, clans, etc., wealth or status, classes):

- Within Loma society, each town is headed by an elected chief. Slightly above these officials are a few other elected officials known as clan chiefs. At the head of Loma society is a single elected office called the Paramount Chief (4 p68).

5.4 Post marital residence:

- Brides usually move in with their husband and his extended family (6).

5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense)

- To some extent , yes; the Loma have territory that is defined, and they have had to actively defend their territory to prevent it from being captured by outsiders, but they don't necessarily actively keep out outsiders unless they feel they have reason to (4 p51).

5.6 Social interaction divisions (age and sex)?

- Males tend to associate more with males and females with females; age is less of a factor (4).

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:

- Not found.

5.8 Village and house organization:

- "Aggregates of households related through patrilineal descent are spatially cluster in a sector ... of a town" (7 p111).

5.9 Specialized village structures (men's houses):

- Rural communities have an open-sided structure with a roof that is used by the public for meetings, court hearing, etc., called a “palaver hut” (6).
- Traditionally, wives of prominent men such as chiefs have had their own houses (4 p24).

5.10 Sleep in hammocks, or on ground or elsewhere?

- Not found.

5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc.:

- The Loma divide themselves into clans based on ancestry (5).
- The Loma are somewhat organized into ranked lineages of “slaves,” “commoners,” and “land owners” (6).

5.12 Trade:

- The main export of the Loma is iron ore (6).
- Locally grown vegetables, like pumpkins and eggplants, are sold in outdoor markets (6).

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies:

- Traditionally, the sons of chiefs have been more likely to become chiefs themselves (4).
- In Liberia, there is a major difference in prestige between “primitive” people and “civilized” people, the latter being associated with Christianity, English proficiency, a certain degree of literacy, and a separation from the subsistence sector (6).

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6. Time allocation to RCR:

- The most prominent ritual in Loma society is that of marriage, which is a several day process following an engagement that generally lasts about a year. (4 p93-97).
- A typical Loma can spend quite a bit of time praying, including during their daily activities (4 p98).

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine):

- There have traditionally been people known as diviners that are consulted when a strange event needs explaining or when advice is needed for a problem or big decision. They typically prescribe rituals and other supernatural fixes, and it is fairly common for their solution to involve human sacrifice in dire circumstances, like when a tribe is struggling during a time of war (4 p12, 20, 21-22, 53).
- In the past, priests have been believed to be able to perform some feats of magic, such as turning sand into driver ants to drive enemies out of hiding, in one case (4 p21).

6.2 Stimulants:

- Not found

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

- Although there really a birth ritual, it is customary to wait 3 or 4 days after a baby is born before taking them outside and christening them.
- After one’s death, it is generally believed that if a funeral feast is not held for them around the time of their burial, they will likely not be able to become an accepted citizen of the spirit world (4 p57).

6.4 Other rituals:

- In one old ritual, all participants mix a small amount of their blood with ink and write some sort of agreement that they all submit to (4 p22).

6.5 Myths (creation):

- It is said the Wono, who the Loma defeated for to gain their current homeland, were no less than 8-9 feet tall, with arms as big as a man's thighs today (4 p15).

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):

- The Loma have traditionally played a seed-checker name called "Sakoi" (4 p63).

6.7 Sex differences in RCR:

- All males are expected to join a society known as the Poro, and all females are expected to join a society known as the Sande. The Poro society teaches boys "honesty, loyalty, and duties their parent and to the tribal authorities" as well how to run, swim, and perform the duties that are expected of them. They are told stories of heroes and wise men and are taught to fight and endure pain. In the Sande society, girls are taught to scorn promiscuity, as well as the duties of being a wife. The Sande society was originally started to teach girls to be moral, and to reduce their chances of prostitution, premature marriage, and rape (4 p91-92).

6.8 Missionary effect:

- The effect of missionaries has been minute; less than 5% of Loma practice Christianity, and more than 90% practice traditional religion (5).

6.9 RCR revival:

- The vast majority of Loma have always practiced the traditional religion, so no RCR revival has taken place (4, 5).

6.10 Death and afterlife:

- Loma believe that when they die, they will be with their God in a spirit society, and that their spirits will inhabit the living Universe, in mountains, trees, rivers, etc. (4).

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?

- No, Loma are generally always named after an ancestor, and sometimes that ancestor may be dead. (4 p12, 107)

6.12 Is there teknonymy?

- No (4).

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems, etc.):

- The Loma religion is classified as animism; however they believe in the singularity of a God. They do not believe that objects are gods or have souls. They believe that their God has great many servants (angels) whose spirits can take up residence in wood and stone, as well as animals and other things. Evil spirits can take up residence in these same things. Sometimes spirits demand sacrifices, and the Loma must appease them. An important distinction, though, is that they don't make sacrifices to their god. They believe that God is totally self-sufficient and has no need or interest in anything they can offer. They also believe that evil spirits can befriend a person and cause them to become insane or unlucky. One more aspect to point out about Loma religion is that instead of believing in a heaven that is separate from the world of the living. They believe that the creator of the Universe is one with all aspects of the Universe, and when they die, they become one with the Universe as well (4 p98).
- A few Loma worship body parts of ancestors, but only of very notable ones. In one case, people are still worshipping the skull of a great warrior that died in battle centuries ago (4 p20). In another case, a famous leader who migrated and became a

Loma. After his death, his hands were cut off and preserved and are to this day being held and used to tell tales of his life (4 p36).

7. Adornment

7.1 Body Paint:

- Not found.

7.2 Piercings:

- Not found.

7.3 Haircut:

- Not found.

7.4 Scarification:

- Not found.

7.5 Adornment:

- Not found.

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:

- During marriage rituals, the bride wears an iron on her wrist, her mother is presented with clothes called the mother lappa, and her father is presented with clothes called the father gown (4 p94-95).

7.7 Sex differences in adornment:

- Women typically wear outfits known as lappas (6).

7.8 Missionary effect:

- Missionaries have brought Western dress to Liberia, and this way of dressing has become one of the things that distinguishes “civilized” people from “native” people (6).

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment:

- Not found.

8. Kinship systems

8.1 Sibling classification system:

- Children of father and father’s brothers are considered siblings; children with same mother but different fathers are unlikely to be considered siblings. Children of mother’s brother are not considered siblings; in fact, a mother’s brother’s daughter is the ideal marriage partner for a Loma man (7).

8.2 Sororate, levirate:

- Neither sororate nor levirate marriage appear to be customary for the Loma (4, 6, 7).

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

- Similar to the Omaha system insofar as it is patrilineal and the father's brothers are often referred to as father. However, Loma don't use the same term for their mother and her sisters (7).

9. Other interesting cultural features:

- The Loma and some surrounding people believe in something called "zei," which is basically the right to fight someone, whether it is to attack, or to defend one's self. They firmly believe that if a gift or act of kindness is given to a person, tribe, or nation, they do not have the right to harm the one who giver of the gift or act of kindness. There have also been instances where a group believes they lost their "zei" from being cursed (4 p16, 37-38).
- The Loma have stories behind the names of many areas and geographical features in the Wubomai region and surrounding areas (4 p34).
- The Loma tend to associate lightning as an ominous sign (4 p59-60, 65).

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