

## 1. Description

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

- Pokomo, Pokomo, Bantu

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

- E71

### 1.3 Location (latitude/longitude):

- -1.40, 39.90

### 1.4 Brief history: The origin of the Pokomo is under dispute.

- “There is evidence that some Upper Pokomo may be descended from serfs of the Witu Swahili on the mainland off Lamu.” (4 p10)
- There is “strong probability that they are partly of Wasanye descent.” (6 p66)
- “When the Galla invaded the lower Juba in the mid-16th century, they encountered first the Digo and later the remaining Kashur at Singwaya, driving them all further south in two migrations. The Digo proceeded down the coast to their main settlement at Kwale, south of Mombasa. The others followed soon thereafter. The Pokomo settled along the Tana River while the Mijikenda and Taita continued to Mwangea...” (7 p241)

### 1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors:

- “The Pokomo have in fact been greatly affected by Galla culture over the centuries; much of their lexicon is clearly derived from Galla, as are their personal names, their clan names, and some of their institutions.” (1 p391)
- “The Galla were for many years the tyrants of the [Pokomo], continually raiding and harassing, when not actually enslaving them...” (10 p459)
- “The Pokomo tribe living along the river and the Orma who inhabit the surrounding scrubland together account for 91 per cent of the population of the district, which has the smallest proportion of others in all the districts of Coast Province. This is because the Orma are Muslim and the Pokomo have come under both Muslim and Christian missionary influence.” (3 p234-5)
- “Furthermore, following the fall of Witu in 1893, the demand for agricultural produce and for labor on the rice fields of the delta expanded rapidly, as the grain export trade to Lamu, Mombasa and the Persian Gulf began to thrive. Many young men flocked to the delta area to find work. Some may have been seeking refuge from heavy Somali raids on the upriver areas. At the coast these upriver people came into contact with Islam. Islam had existed along the coast for centuries, but little attempt had been made at proselytization until just before colonial rule began. Among the Pokomo, Islam seems to have been an important catalytic agent. [...] Returning from the coast, young men began to introduce Islam into their home areas from about the time of World War I and onwards.” (1 p394)
- “The Upper Pokomo are thought of more as Muslim-influenced and less as practicing Muslims due to their culture having been considered unfavorable to Islamization. It is likely that their selective adoption of Islamic ways is due to the recent nature of their Islamization.” (4 p10)

### 1.6 Ecology (natural environment):

- “The Pokomo are a congeries of three Bantu-speaking and one Galla-speaking peoples, living along the banks of the Tana, Kenya’s largest river. The area is semi-desert, with scant and irregular rainfall, especially in the north.” (1 p386)
- “The long-term (cyclic) and short-term (seasonal) flooding of River Tana has profound influence on the ecology of the flood plain as well as the formation and distribution of wetlands in the reserve. Ideally, Tana River floods twice a year in November-December and May-June, depositing a fertile layer of silt on the plain and oxbow lakes. [...] The lower sections of Tana River support unique wetland ecosystems such as riverine forests, oxbow lakes, floodplain grasslands, mangrove forest, sand dunes, and coastal waters.” (2 p4)

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

- “The land actually used and inhabited by [the Pokomo] extends no more than one or two km from either bank, except towards the delta, where cultivable land stretches for long distances from the actual banks.” (1 p386-7)
- “The Pokomo number about 35,000 today, and their population appears to have doubled in size over the past 100 years. At present, they live in densities between 15 and 150 km of river, being more densely settled toward the mouth of the river.” (1 p387)

## 2. Economy

### 2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s):

- “Except for those living in the delta area, the Pokomo rely on the periodic floods of the Tana, sowing rice and maize in the moist earth as the floods recede, and harvesting bananas from groves planted on the highest points of the banks. The river floods are highly irregular, both in timing and depth, and the Pokomo farmer has traditionally coped by using a variety of devices, including detailed knowledge of crop placement, timing and spacing, and by maintaining rights of access to a wide variety of plots of land in various places along the river, among which he can choose according to the height of the season’s flood. There has been no attempt at irrigation by the Pokomo anywhere along the river. Bananas, maize, and rice form the major part of the carbohydrate diet...” (1 p387)
- “The sedentary Pokomo people who live on the west bank of Tana River are primarily shift cultivators who grow maize, bananas, mangoes and rice in the flood plains, oxbow lakes and in the river.” (2 p4)
- “Oxbow lakes were source of traditional wild food plants during prolonged dry spells such as the group of water lily plants. Its leaves were used as vegetables while its root tuber like potato, also locally known as ‘Makole’ was source of carbohydrates.” (2 p10)

## 2.2 Main protein-lipid sources:

- Fish (1 p387, 2 p4)
- “Elders who also monitored the availability and sizes of fish controlled the fishing activities in the river and oxbow lakes. They also alternated fishing in the oxbow lakes and in the river through rotation (like crops) based on seasons. This strategy enabled fish stock to regenerate. Some of the fish preferred by the local people included *Mormyrus tenuirostris* and *Clarias gariepinus*. Those fetched high market prices than other species. Other fish exploited comprised of cat fish Clariidae, Trout Salmonidae, and *Tilapia zillii*.” (2p10)

## 2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?:

- “The tools used are simple: a hand hoe and bush knife for cultivation, and a spear, fish traps, and canoe for fishing.” (1 p387)
- “[Pokomo men are] armed with two spears, with small oval blades like Somali spears, one of which has a long shaft of 8 or 9 feet in length, this spear being solely used for spearing crocodiles and other objects in the water; some of the older men carry bows and arrows.” (12 p105)

## 2.4 Food storage:

- Baskets, pots (1 p387)

## 2.5 Sexual division of production:

- Both men and women work in the fields and are agriculturists. (4 p10-11)
- Both men and women are expert boatmen. (12 p105)

## 2.6 Land tenure:

- “Each household contains only one married man, and it harvests and stores its own crops from its own pieces of land. There is no community granary. [...] Each man inherits land only from his father, and only once he is married.” (1 p387)
- “...the Pokomo are composed of four peoples [...] These four are the Lower Pokomo, Upper Pokomo, and Elwana (or Malakote), and the Korokoro (or Munyo). Two of these four tribes contain sub-divisions [...] Each sub-tribe inhabits a particular stretch of the river, averaging about 15 km. At a lower level of division still, there are patrilineal clans, of which each sub-tribe contains between 2 and 9. (the Elwana and Korokoro, who have no sub-tribe divisions, also have a number of such clans.) The clans are the major land-holding units.” (1 p388)
- “Descent rules, then, give one permanent access to at least one plot [of land], and several plots, in the various segments of land held by one’s clan within one’s sub-tribe (though not outside one’s sub-tribe). [...] Land boundaries run back at right angles to the river, and when a man divides his land among his sons, the eldest son is always given the upstream section, and the youngest son the downstream section.” (1 p388-9)
- “Each household of a man, his wives, and his sons and their wives farmed one or more strips of land extending from the river bank, inland as far as the dry bush bordering the flood plain. Thus everyone had access to all three kinds of land, enabling them to vary their diet, maintain continued agricultural production throughout the year, and balanced the risks of any one crop failing.” (2 p11)

## 2.7 Ceramics: none found

## 2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

- “Given the potential variation of resources in local areas from year to year, households occasionally find they are unable to maintain themselves, and will migrate to other areas, joining other communities and borrowing land.” (1 p387)

## 2.9 Food taboos:

- “The Pokomo are among the few peoples [...] who eat crocodile from choice; they have been known to protest against the destruction of crocodiles’ eggs, lest the supply of their meat should run short.” (10 p458)
- Forbidden foods are rats, leopard, wild dog, baboon, and a small monkey called ngoto. (10 p458-459)

## 2.10 Canoes/watercraft?

- Canoes are used (1 p387), and the Pokomo are expert canoeists. (10 p463)
- “The local people used dug out canoes made from locally available trees, including old mango trees. Canoes were manually driven and their use was risky due to presence of large populations of crocodiles and hippopotamuses. Nevertheless, lack of local roads made the river transport very popular among the local people.” (2 p12-13)
- “Nearly every family in every village possesses one or more canoes. These canoes, which are often 30 or 40 feet in length, and seldom more than 2 feet in width, are very skillfully made, being hollowed out of the solid trunk of a tree by means of very primitive tools.” (12 p103)

## 3. Anthropometry

### 3.1 Mean adult height (m and f):

- No specific numbers, but are described as “having a sturdy build, though not as a rule tall.” (11 p458)

### 3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f): none found

## 4. Life History, mating, marriage

### 4.1 Age at menarche (f): not found

### 4.2 Age at first birth (m and f): not found

### 4.3 Completed family size (m and f): not found

### 4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f): not found

### 4.5 Age first marriage (m and f): not found

### 4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce: not found

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously:

- “As a major gauge of status was number of children, so polygyny was highly valued, since it led to more children per husband.” (1 p393)
- “Most men have one wife, occasionally one has two, but three are rare. Probably, as the old jest has it, matrimony is a matter of money, i.e. of inability to raise the bride-price a second time.” (10 p465)

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

- “Firstly, bridewealth had to be paid, and it was a heavy burden that a man carried for many years of his life. Early accounts mention the demand by girls’ fathers for considerable amounts not only of garden produce, meat, and honey beer, but also such imported items as lengths of cloth, red ochre, lead, brass wire. [...] These imported items were luxury goods, and by making them indispensable for marriage and for the transfer of rights to a woman’s children, the older men also made sure that their own position in the economy was a central one, and that the dependence of the younger men upon them was guaranteed.” (1 p392)
- “The effect of the men’s associations and of the marriage rules was clearly to redistribute material goods and authority into the hands of older men, through bridewealth payments and association fees, even though the younger men were the more effective producers. Bridewealth payments took many years to complete, and often a man would have to pay off the uncompleted part of the bridewealth for his mother after his father’s death.” (1 p392)

4.9 Inheritance patterns:

- “Each married man inherits land only from his father, and only once he is married.” (1 p387)
- “Descent rules, then, give one permanent access to at least one plot [of land], and several plots, in the various segments of land held by one’s clan within one’s sub-tribe (though not outside one’s sub-tribe). [...] Land boundaries run back at right angles to the river, and when a man divides his land among his sons, the eldest son is always given the upstream section, and the youngest son the downstream section.” (1 p388-9)
- Prohibit female inheritance (4 p11)

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:

- “It should be added, however, that in this connexion there is a stated rule that a man should not continue to father children once his son’s first children are born. The effect of this rule is twofold: firstly, it minimises land quarrels, as land boundaries would have to be redrawn to accommodate new heirs, with considerable scope for friction.” (1 p389)

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals: none found

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):

- “... no exact figures, but in a sample of over 200 marriages in the southern half of Milalulu sub-tribe in 1972 I found only 4 or 5 cases of sub-tribe exogamy.” (1 p388)
- “Although, among the Upper Pokomo, clans are not exogamous, leviratic marriage is practiced, and local sub-lineage elders are prominent in relevant marriage negotiations. Most marriages, however, do seem to be between people from different clans. Among the Lower Pokomo clans are exogamous.” (1 p388)

4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these “other fathers” recognized? Not found

4.14 What is the belief of the mother’s role in procreation exactly? (e.g., “receptacle in which fetus grows”) not found

4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)? Not found

4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape not found

4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin) not found

4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?

- “If, on reaching years of discretion, the girl finds that she does not like the destined suitor or prefers another, the matter can always be arranged by returning to the former the payments he has already made on account. If there is another young man, he, of course, has to do the paying.” (10 p465)

4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring: not found

4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children? Not found

4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females not found

4.22 Evidence for couvades: none found

4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older) none found

4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?

- “Descent, then, is one of the idioms in which neighbors think of themselves as being linked. So much is this the case that a frequent tactic in disputes between neighbors over land boundaries is the denial of kinship.” (1 p389)

4.24 Joking relationships? None found

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

- “The Upper Pokomo [...] do not in general display much interest in tracing descent connections beyond four generations back, which is perhaps to be expected in view of the frequent short- and long-term borrowing of land that has always gone on.” (1 p388)
- “The Pokomo have in fact been greatly affected by Galla culture over the centuries; much of their lexicon is clearly derived from Galla, as are their personal names, their clan names, and some of their institutions.” (1 p391)

4.26 Incest avoidance rules

- “For there is a prohibition on marrying any person who is of one’s parents’, or of one’s children’s generation.” (1 p391)
- “He must not, however, marry relations who belong to other clans, such as the daughter of his father’s sister, or of any of his mother’s brothers or sisters.” (10 p460)

4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony? Not found

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

- “All first born sons are named for their father’s father, second-born sons for their father’s father’s brother, and so on. The effect is to identify alternate generations, and to obviate any confusion about what generation a person belongs to.” (1 p391)

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

- “... lineages are not segmentary, and that there are no organizing principles of complementary opposition, of fission or fusion.” (1 p388)
- “Most marriages, however, do seem to be between different people from different clans.” (1 p388)
- “Another controlling device was the establishment of negative marriage rules—clan exogamy among the Lower Pokomo, and prohibitions on marriage with the daughter of a co-eval among the other tribes.” (1 p392)
- “They [do] not infrequently marry into another tribe; but no marriages take place, (or, at any rate, none did till recently), between the Wantu wa dzuu and the Wantu na nsini, and the distinction, not to say antagonism, is still kept up in other ways.” (10 p458)

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

- “Furthermore, young men could not themselves engage in marriage negotiations with their prospective father-in-law. All such negotiations had (and still have) to be between representatives of the parents involved, for only elders could transfer rights over women and their children, and bridewealth goods.” (1 p392-3)
- “A final source of control was the power of fathers to betroth their children, even sometimes before these children were born.” (1 p393)

4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:

- “It is also important to note that the authority of the elders grew not only from their control over marriages, but also from the fact that each generation depends for its existence on resources advanced to them by those who have gone before.” (1 p393)

## **Warfare/homicide**

4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare: none found

4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death: none found

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

- No killing found, but Pokomo women and children are oftentimes in danger of being taken as slaves: “The Somali-raiding is a far more serious trouble, of which it is not easy to see a solution. These raiding bands sweep down through the dry steppes which bound the Tana valley, and appear unexpectedly in the Pokomo villages and plantations, seize all the women and children they can lay hands on, and disappear once more.” (12 p99-100)

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

- “Lineages do not form units of production; the main function of lineage membership is to give access to land, which is inherited patrilineally by men. Descent, then, is one of the idioms in which neighbors think of themselves as being linked.” (1 p389)
- “The [age] sets may also have served a military purpose in the 19th century, in the days when villages were stockaded against Somali attacks.” (1 p392)
- “In fact, contacts were essential for each side, for the Pokomo provided the Orma with access to water, with refuge in times of famine and war, and with agricultural produce, pottery, medical services, tobacco, and honey. In return, the Orma provided the Pokomo with milk, meat, livestock, metal knives and fish-hooks, metal fishing-spear points, and jewelry. The relationship was a symbiotic one, even if asymmetrical.” (8 p103)
- “[The Pokomo] are, (unless we count the few outlying Swahili to be found along the coast beyond Lamu), the furthest outpost of the Bantu race in this direction. Beyond them, on the north-east, are the Somali, and, on the north, various Galla tribes, or tribes allied to them, such as the Rendile. The Galla are also interspersed here and there among the Pokomo on the western bank of the Tana, and the Wasanye and Waboni (probably allied to, if not identical with the hunter tribes called Dorobo by the Masai) range over parts of the district. [...] The [Pokomo] are divided into thirteen tribes, each of which occupies a fairly well-defined area, though parts of some have migrated and settled in the territory belonging to others.” (10 p456)

4.18 Cannibalism? None found

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

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:

- “The land owned by members of one clan is not all in one place, but is in many segments, interspersed with the land of other clans. On average, in any two km stretch of the river, segments of land belonging to all the clans in the local sub-tribe will be found. Each segment of clan corresponds to what I shall call a sub-lineage—a group of ten and twenty people, descended from a common ancestor about four generations ago.” (1 p388)

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):

- “Suitable plots of well-flooded land may be quite small, but there is often considerable geographical mobility as people search for better farming conditions elsewhere along the river.” (1 p387)

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

- “...the Pokomo are composed of four peoples [...] These four are the Lower Pokomo, Upper Pokomo, and Elwana (or Malakote), and the Korokoro (or Munyo). Two of these four tribes contain sub-divisions [...] Each sub-tribe inhabits a particular stretch of the river, averaging about 15 km. At a lower level of division still, there are patrilineal clans, of which each sub-tribe contains between 2 and 9. (the Elwana and Korokoro, who have no sub-tribe divisions, also have a number of such clans.)

The clans are the major land-holding units. There are no such positions as clan-head, or clan-chief, or even lineage-head.” (1 p388)

- “...it was noted that decision making among the Pokomo people was through discussion and consultation. However, the elders’ decisions and opinions were highly respected. Spear (1995) referred the Pokomo people as riverine agriculturist who had strong clan alliances and lineage. This socio-political set-up had a direct control over the use of resources. Other five clan alliances were distributed along the river. They controlled the occupation of land along the Tana River. Thus, the Tana River is an important ancestral reference point for social set-up of the Pokomo people and it was highly valued and protected.” (2 p11)

5.4 Post marital residence: none found

5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense):

- “[The Pokomo] belong to the Bantu race, and are closely allied to the tribes which inhabit the east coast immediately behind the coast-line from Lamu down to the river Rufiji, and of which the Wanyika, Wagiriama, Wadigo, and Wazaramu are collateral branches.” (12 p103)

5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex):

- “The second age-connected institution is the system of age-sets. [...] Age sets are based on residence within a sub-tribe and thus cut across descent groups linking both kin and affines. In several senses age sets and descent groups are opposed categories. The Pokomo say: ‘Your age will come to an end, but your clan never ends.’ Relationships among age mates are egalitarian and harmonious; among clansmen they are hierarchical and discordant. Among age mates, the ties are horizontal; within clans they are vertical.” (1 p391)
- “Upper Pokomo, like northern Swahili, share certain features of both waungwana/Wakatwa and African/watumwa mixed cultures - a unitary syncretism of the island/mainland opposition. They may be seen, in contrast to their Swahili neighbors, as having evolved as a unitary (economically based) society rather than as a society with a gender-based dual culture.” (4 p8)
- “Upper Pokomo are sedentary agriculturalists with a language closely related to the Mijikenda dialects and to Swahili. They are a fish-eating people who practice male circumcision, perform dances in connection with their circumcision ceremonies, and seclude women.” (4 p8)
- “They emphasize African origin, social stratification by means of age-grades, and prohibit female inheritance.” (4p11)

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships: none found

5.8 Village and house organization:

- “The Pokomo grass hut is more accurately described by the term beehive-shaped than many to which that term has been applied. It is round, with no separation of roof and wall,-but not hemispherical like the Zulu,-and slightly pointed at the top. The breadth at the bottom is about equal to the height in the centre. The thatch is cut off, near the top, in three or more concentric ridges, which gives a peculiar cachet to the general effect. The doorway is a narrow opening just wide and high enough to admit one person in a stooping position. There is no door, but one or more dried fronds of the wild date-palm are used to close the entrance, and lean against the house beside it when not in use. The principal interior features are the central fireplace and two bedsteads, made of palm-leaf ribs lashed together over a rough wooden framework.” (10 p465)

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens’ houses):

- “Initiation [for puberty rights] was carried out over one or two days in each sub-tribe, all boys in each village being initiated together. All men initiated together in each sub-tribe were regarded as members of an age set, and each set was given a name. A new luva was formed every ten or twelve years [...]. After initiation, boys entered the young men’s house (gane) where they stayed for a number of years, leaving as they got married.” (1 p390)

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?

- “The husband's bedstead is high,-three feet six or so-but the wife's only one foot or under, in case of the babies rolling off, for the smallest children share it with their mother.” (10 p465)

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

- “Ties of common ethnic identity, as well as ties of kinship, marriage and friendship are used as a basis for sharing access to land.” (1 p387)
- “After 1870, Pokomo society underwent a transition from a clan/lineage scattered form of village settlement pattern to capital town settlements, in reaction to Somali invasions. This urbanization was perhaps also instrumental in their acceptance of Islamic (waungwana, Swahili) ways.” (4 p11)

5.12 Trade:

- “...the system of international trade that was established by Arabs along the East African coast, though not nearly as involved as, e.g. the Kamba. Though linked to an outside market system, the elders limited the potentially disrupting effects of commercial exchange by (a) preventing access by Arab and Swahili merchants to the upriver areas, and (b) raising their demands for bridewealth as these imported goods became more common.” (1 p393)
- “In fact, contacts were essential for each side, for the Pokomo provided the Orma with access to water, with refuge in times of famine and war, and with agricultural produce, pottery, medical services, tobacco, and honey. In return, the Orma provided the Pokomo with milk, meat, livestock, metal knives and fish- hooks, metal fishing-spear points, and jewelry. The relation- ship was a symbiotic one, even if asymmetrical.” (8 p103)

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?

- “There are no such positions as clan-head, or clan-chief, or even lineage-head.” (1 p388)
- “It is also important to note that the authority of the elders grew not only from their control over marriages, but also from the fact that each generation depends for its existence on resources advanced to them by those who have gone before. The elders are in fact the only ones who owe nothing to any other living people.” (1 p393)

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

### 6.0 Time allocation to RCR:

#### 6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine):

- “In addition, most medicine men (wagangana) were older men, and they had their own herbal and ritual knowledge.” (1 p393)

#### 6.2 Stimulants:

- Both men and women partake in beer and wine. (4 p10-11)

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

##### Puberty:

- “Among all Pokomo men initiation at puberty was until very recently the basis for the formation of groups based on age.”
- “Special rituals performed included circumcision ceremonies and appeasing of spirits to avert a calamity that would strike their land. During circumcision, initiates were passed through water, especial in the morning to cleanse them and reduce pain.” (2 p10)

##### Death:

- “By Pokomo customs, in such cases, all friends and relatives of the patient come and seat themselves in, or in front of, his hut. Conversation goes on and no special emotion is shown; even when it is known for certain that death is approaching, no one sheds a tear. As soon, however, as the last breath is drawn, everyone, as if at a word of command, begins to shriek and wail in the most dreadful fashion. This is a universal Pokomo custom.” (6 p66)
- “One man bought a cloth, in which the corpse was to be wrapped, others began to dig the grave, and others made ready two boards, from a worn-out canoe, one being laid in the bottom of the grave, which is made so narrow as only just to admit the corpse. Above the level of the corpse, the sides of the grave are cut away, so as to leave a ledge on which the second and broader plank is to rest, so that the corpse is quite covered and the earth does not touch it. This practice, however, is of recent origin and has been adopted from the Christians. Another man sharpens a knife, with which the dead man's whole body is shaved, the hair being put into a quite new earthen bowl, half filled with water. The bowl containing the hair and water was placed at the head of the grave; the corpse was then wrapped in the new cloth and two Wagangana (sorcerers) came into the hut with a drum (Ngoma), which they beat, but in a fashion different from that followed on other occasions.” (6 p66-67)
- Next, “the corpse is anointed with oil, and, in the case of a muikijo or a mugangana, marked on the forehead and breast in white, black, and red, the pigments employed being ashes, soot, and zazi (red ochre).” (6 p67-68)
- The body is sent out onto the river. There is a funeral feast after the burial, which consists of the nyambura (a drum) being beaten, and many people dancing for two days. While they do this, they drink mochi, which makes them very drunk for three days. Once the nyambura has ended, everyone returns home. (6 p67)
- “At seven a.m. on the day after the funeral all the dead man's friends and relatives had their heads shaved. Large quantities of honey wine are always consumed on this occasion.” (6 p67)

#### 6.4 Other rituals:

- “When fish became scarce, a special ceremony that involved pouring foodstuff into the river to bring back fish was performed.” (2 p10)
- A widow is not allowed to leave her house for six months after the death of her partner. (6 p68)
- “If a pregnant woman sees this bird [a mpungu], it is supposed that her child, when born, will be seized and devoured by some animal, unless she works the counter-charm by plucking a piece of green grass, -any kind of grass will do, -tying a knot in it, and sticking it into her hair.” (10 p467)
- “Vugo wedding and circumcision songs are composed by women who compete with each other to come up with witty and clever lyrics. Vugo today is usually associated primarily with weddings and there are also dances performed by adult women that serve a sex instruction function for young girls.” (4 p10)

#### 6.5 Myths (Creation):

- “An account of added interest, collected on the lower Tana in 1891, concerns Liongo Fumo, the legendary Swahili of Kipini and supposed contemporary of Vere. It tells of Liongo's journey south into Wanyika country, where he carried off a man and woman and established them on the Tana. From this couple, the legend goes, sprang the Pokomo people. Early Pokomo traditions, therefore, contain strong mythical elements that are not easily reconciled.” (5 p635)

#### 6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):

- A friction drum is used during certain rituals by elders. (6 p67, 10 p461)
- One of the “great sports” of the Pokomo is “crocodile and hippo hunting.” (12 p103)

#### 6.7 Sex differences in RCR:

- The friction drum used in rituals cannot be played by women. (10 p461)
- “Upper Pokomo are sedentary agriculturalists with a language closely related to the Mijikenda dialects and to Swahili. They are a fish-eating people who practice male circumcision, perform dances in connection with their circumcision ceremonies, and seclude women.” (4 p8)
- “Upper Pokomo women are not secluded but are forbidden to take part in [Muslim] rituals except prayer (rswalla) in their homes and a deritualized survival of the traditional mavugio ritual. This mavugio women's ritual of the Pokomo may be seen in relation to what thrives today among Swahili women's groups as vugo. Vugo wedding and circumcision songs are composed by women who compete with each other to come up with witty and clever lyrics. Vugo today is usually associated primarily with weddings and there are also dances performed by adult women that serve a sex instruction function for young girls.” (4 p9-10)

#### 6.8 Missionary effect:

- “The Lamu merchants [who converted the Pokomo] probably came from an urban stratum with little tolerance for pepo spirit possession dances, which in the Swahili area are generally found only among 'rustics' with little religious knowledge.” (4 p9)
- Christian influence has affected the ritual of burial. Before Christian influence, the grave was much shallower, and there was no plank that was laid over the body. They heated sand in an earthen pot and poured it over the grave. If this was not done, it was believed that the deceased would cause others to dream. (6 p67)

#### 6.9 RCR revival:

- “Yet, the Upper Pokomo women who were Islamized with their men, now as Muslim women, were relatively unaffected by the religion in their day-to-day lives. Unlike waungwana women, the Upper Pokomo continued to work in the fields and were not sequestered in groups. At work in the fields they would continue to reinforce their prior cultural values and revere the pepo and spirit-related dances so important in crop success.” (4 p9)

#### 6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs:

- “Today, husbands enter to retrieve the corpses [of their stillbirth children] and bury them themselves, though at first some were charged with breach of custom.” (1 p394)
- Before Christian influences, heated sand used to be poured over the grave from preventing the deceased in the afterlife from making others in the community dream. (6 p67)

#### 6.11 Taboo of naming dead people? None found

#### 6.12 Is there teknonymy? None found

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

- “The control exercised by the elders were sustained by mystical notions. Only the wakijo could approach God and the ancestors; only the makijo were supposed to know the ngaji. Fathers also wielded considerable power in their ability to curse their offspring. The lifting of curses, and the removal of kinship barriers to marriage, were similar kinds of ritual in that both involved the spraying of honey beer, and the invocation of the ancestors, and that both needed elders for their performance.” (1 p393)
- “As a group, [the Pokomo] were receptive to Islamic influence, adopting a form close to the normative pattern of urban Islam on the coast. [...] Already sedentary, fish-eating, and disenfranchised from tribal religion, the Upper Pokomo saw in Islam the promise of greater control over their wives, who were often seduced by leaders of the medicine men as part of the initiation of women into the spirit cult. That is, Upper Pokomo men saw Islam as a way of winning their women back from spirit possession (pepo).” (4 p8-9)

## 7. Adornment

#### 7.1 Body paint: none found

#### 7.2 Piercings: none found

#### 7.3 Haircut:

- “The hair is laboriously twisted up into innumerable little tufts with oil and ngeo-ngeo being red oxide of iron powdered.” (12 p105)

#### 7.4 Scarification: none found

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

- Coastal dress, or cap, turban, long white shirt, sandals, walking stick (4 p11)
- Sanded shells that are thought to have come into the Tana River from the ocean are worn by the elders. (8 p289)
- “The bead ornaments are many, and often involve a great deal of work; they include a girdle (silipi) usually an inch and a half broad, a fillet worn round the head, a straight necklet (kit-side) about half an inch wide, a more elaborate necklace {tsambaa} with oblong pendant in front, fringed with beads and small cowries and sometimes having a further fringe of small iron chains reaching to the waist, etc., etc.” (10 p466)

#### 7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:

- Rose water and frankincense rituals (4 p11)
- “These shells are used by the Pokomo, as the badge of the highest order of elders (Ngadzi). The shell is a round disk called Mpale, it is worn on the forehead on ceremonial occasions-at other times round the neck.” (8 p289)

#### 7.7 Sex differences in adornment:

- “The girdle is supposed to be worn by married women only. Sometimes they wear a belt of palm-leaf or leather, or, if within reach of civilization, a strap and buckle.” (10 p466)
- The women “also wear anklets, and belts embroidered with beads, and numerous bead necklaces.” (12 p105)
- “This mixture of raddle and oil is also smeared over the neck and shoulders; this process is only adopted by the young men who desire to attract admiration.” (12 p105)

#### 7.8 Missionary effect:

- “Evidence of Muslim influence borrowed during early superficial contact prior to the late nineteenth century including personal names, coastal dress (cap, turban, long white shirt and sandals), use of the walking stick (bakora), and of rose water and frankincense in rituals, may be an indication these cultural features came to the Upper Pokomo from Somalia rather than through usually assumed waungwana contact.” (4 p11)

#### 7.9 Cultural revival in adornment: none found

## 8. Kinship systems

#### 8.1 Sibling classification system:

- “Kinship relations do not dominate Pokomo social organization; instead, social organization is based largely on the concepts of secret societies, age sets, and generations.” (1 p389)

#### 8.2 Sororate, levirate:

- “Although, among the Upper Pokomo, clans are not exogamous, leviratic marriage is practised, and local sub-lineage elders are prominent in relevant marriage negotiations.” (1 p388)

#### 8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.): none found

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

- “Elephantiasis also is not uncommon...” (10 p462)
- The Pokomo have a strong oral tradition. (4 p10)
- Farming of bees is practiced. (12 p104)
- “They usually extract the two middle incisors of the lower jaw, though this is by no means universal; some have a small gap between the two middle upper teeth, which looks as if it were made rather by inserting some instrument between them, and gradually working them apart...” (10 p466)

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