

1. Description

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

1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com): N21

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): (-11.20/33.10)

1.4 Brief history: past is hid in the mists of prehistoric times, no one in the tribe is able to go back more than three generations and describe even inaccurately the condition of the people. But they must have been a great tribe once, it is evident from their wide distribution and from the customs common to them. (113 Winning a Primitive People) Last century the Tumbuka tribe was distributed from latitude 14 degrees south to 11 degrees, and between longitudes 32 degrees and 34 degrees. Area of about 20000 square miles. In the South they are now called Chewa, many new settlers came and joined the group thus slightly changing the language. Tumbuka natives escaped successfully from Ngoni natives when they invaded. The first groups of people to interrupt into the area of the Tumbuka were the Mlowoka's. This was a group of people who came from the east coast of the Indian Ocean and were looking for Ivory trade which was abundant in the area. They crossed Lake Malawi on dhows resulting in their nickname 'BaLowoka', meaning those who crossed the lake whilst their leader was named Mlowoka, the one who crossed the lake. This was around the second half of the 18th century. The Mlowoka's established themselves peacefully among the Tumbuka and later their leader intermarried with the local inhabitants. Later, Mlowoka sent out his followers to different areas of the country with the objective of controlling his trade interests in Ivory. The first Mlowoka was 'Kakalala Musawira Gondwe' who later, due to his dominance in the area, assumed political and religious powers. After his death, his son assumed power and today, this group of people has assumed chieftaincy at the expense of the Tumbuka. In around the 1850's, both the Tumbuka and the Mlowoka's were faced with the arrival of the Ngoni from South Africa. They were running away from Shaka Zulu who had become so powerful by the first quarter of the 18th century. The Ngoni did not arrive in a peaceful manner, they heavily devastated the area under the Tumbuka and assumed control over them. These were fierce fighters, today they are represented by their Insignia. The Ngoni established their rule under 'Inkosi ya Makosi'. The Ngoni in the northern region today inhabit Mzimba district. There are relatively few people, majority being the older generation, who can speak 'Chi Ngoni' however the majority of inhabitants speak Chi Timbuka, a language for the Tumbuka. This is because the population of the Ngoni was and still is less than that of the Tumbuka. The Ngoni were not the last intruders to the area. In the last quarter of the 19th century there were also influences from the Scottish Missionaries who brought Christianity to the people of the area. The Sottish Missionaries met with great resistance from the Ngoni who were by then powerful and were ruling. In 1894, these Scottish Missionaries established a church at Khondowe in Rumphi district. The missions work can still be seen today with an early addition of a University in 2000 that was been added for education. The mission has highly influenced the culture of the people, in that it condemned a lot of traditional customs that were prevalent such as polygamy, beer drinking, wife inheritance and the worship of Chiuta (God) through spirits. (Encyclopedia)

1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors: In 1878 The Scottish Presbyterian Livingstonia established their first posts in Northern Malawi and first encountered the Tumbuka tribe. The Chewa people, who form the largest part of the population predominantly Christian/Protestant and the Yao people are mainly Muslim. (Winning a Primitive People)

1.6 Ecology (natural environment): The Tumbuka people say that spirits are like the wind, both can be discerned only through the effects they create. The existence of both wind and spirits is part of the background understanding that constitutes the everyday world. Don't believe in spirits; they don't have to, for spirits are part of their natural environment and so play an important role in everyday life. Vimbuza in an illness or hear them in a dance.(Winning a Primitive People, Fraser)

1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density Pop: 2000000 in 2001, mean village size 20-50 houses. (Encyclopedia)

2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s): The Tumbuka are primarily small farmers who raise crops such as maize, millet, and beans, the main staples of the diet. They also grow cassava, rice, a variety of pumpkins, vegetables, and fruits such as bananas and oranges. Casseva- a thick porridge. stodge is the cornerstone of any malawian meal(Everyculture)

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources: Mice, Chinaka- equivalent to the westerns Bologna, chicken.(Everyculture)

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?: spring traps, nets of bark twine, bows and arrows usual hunting weapons, pronged iron head. Deadly poison applying to head. (134 Winning a Primitive People)

2.4 Food storage: a_nkhokwe is the food storage

2.5 Sexual division of production: Women engage in agricultural activities such as hoeing, planting, weeding, harvesting, and preparing food for storage and eating. Men help prepare the maize and millet fields; build and repair houses, granaries, kitchens, and bathhouses; take care of the livestock; and hunt and fish. (Encyclopedia)

2.6 Land tenure: Land tenure varies in different regions. Historically, in its simplest and most general form, the chief and his royal agnates were the "owners of the land." This right was delegated to village headmen, who would allocate it to the heads of resident domestic units. The household head assigned land to his married sons, who then would assign fields to their wives. The picture becomes more complex depending on whether the headman was a commoner or a senior member of the royal clan. Ultimately, rights to the land were invested in the chieftainship. The Yombe and sections of the Kamanga provide examples of this pattern. More complicated patterns of land tenure developed among Tumbuka who adopted Ngoni customs and practices.(Encyclopedia)

2.7 Ceramics: They made bark cloth, pottery, reed baskets and mats, leatherwork, and iron tools.

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns: Before British rule the Tumbuka engaged in local and long-distance trading of ivory, skins, guns, steel knives and spears, and cloth. The trade extended to and beyond Lake Malawi to the coast and involved Arab and Swahili traders. During colonial rule they were part of the trade in used clothes. Traders would buy candy and other items, exchange them for maize and millet, and transport those crops to the Congo, where they would be traded for bales of used clothes. The clothes would be brought back and sold in the local markets. Since independence, crops have been traded in local markets and cash crops (tobacco, hybrid maize, millet, coffee, and cotton) have been sold to marketing boards and local and international traders. (encyclopedia)

2.9 Food taboos: Information not found

2.10 Canoes/watercraft? Canoes

3. Anthropometry

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f): Male 5'7, Female 5'3

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f): Information not found, but judging by pictures my guess would be Male 140-160, Female 115-140.

4. Life History, mating, marriage

4.1 Age at menarche (f): 11-13

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f): 15-17

4.3 Completed family size (m and f): 4 including mom and dad

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f): 2-3 years

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f): after girl has come into womanhood

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce: Marriage in Malawi is quasi-universal but divorce rates are high, with some variation across the three research sites: in the south, over 50 percent of first marriages dissolve within 15 years and in the two other districts, this figure is between 30 and 40 percent. Part of this discrepancy is related to the matrilineal system of filiation that predominates in most southern ethnic groups wherein marriage dissolution is traditionally higher (Reniers 2003). If the male is dissatisfied with his wife he could repudiate her... divorce did not take place in private(encyclopedia)

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously: Tumbuka custom allows for polygyny. Divorce traditionally was primarily an option for the husband, but in the 1990s it was a right claimed by women and often accorded to them by local courts. Since the major Christian denominations, such as the Presbyterian Free Church of Scotland and the Catholic Church, forbid polygyny and as a result of Western education, polygyny has become less prevalent. Western education and diminishing economic resources have also affected the prevalence of taking multiple wives. Sororal polygyny and widow inheritance persist as widely practiced customs. (encyclopedia)

4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?: Male must ask for permission from females parents. The girl was asked whether she loved the young man and was willing to be his wife. When parents were happy, she usually accepts.(Winning a Primitive People)

4.9 Inheritance patterns: Inheritance and succession are patrilineal. Lineage property such as cattle is inherited in the male line through a generation of brothers in order of seniority. Once the males of the generation have died, lineage property goes to the senior member of the next generation. There is, however, much leeway for contestation since many factors unrelated to age and sometimes to order of birth in polygynous families may contribute to the establishment of seniority. Succession to social positions may not always follow the pattern of inheritance. When a man dies, his wife is entitled to select his successor from his generational agnates, who include his brothers (real and classificatory) as well as his grandsons. Many Christian women select their oldest son and thus come under his authority, abrogating the rights of the husband's brothers. (Encyclopedia)

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict: Children seek wisdom from the elderly. Children are cared for by their parents, siblings, and grandparents. In the past, at the age of about five to seven years, boys and girls took up residence with their peers and older youths in boys' houses and girls' houses. In the 1990s those houses consisted of only a small number of friends living together. Their size has been affected by the fact that many young boys and girls attend boarding schools. Children and youths circulate freely between households, extended kin units, schools, and religious organizations, all of which contribute to their socialization. Encyclopedia)

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals: there is homosexuality in the Tumbukan culture. Attitudes really only arise when HIV/AIDS comes up. They tend to blame homosexuals more.

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy): usually doesn't happen too often, but when done the male has to deliver gifts to females parents.

4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these "other fathers" recognized? Paternity is not partible. There is marriage and it is only between each couple.

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

Information not found

4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)? No information found

4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape Reports have been found when the female turns down the male when asked to marry.

4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin) Different Kin, same community

4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms? Personally I don't know, but they are strong in their belief in marriage. The females are usually completely loyal to their husbands. There is preparation for marriage on the females side.

4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring Gifts of cattle from the male are given to the females parents.

4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children? There is little hope for the infant if mother dies, child would be buried along with mom.

4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females 50/50

4.22 Evidence for couvades no information found

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

4.24 Kin avoidance and respect? There is a great deal of Jealousy in the Tumbukan culture. A man is jealous of the cattle his brother will inherit. In there eyes Africans don't want other Africans to have what they do not. (Dancing Prophets)

4.24 Joking relationships? Information not found

4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations Most Tumbuka are organized into dispersed exogamous patrilineal descent groups (agnatic lineages) whose members trace descent from a common ancestor from a specific locality. Lineages are parts of clans that have the same clan name. Although lineages are exogamous, that is not always the case with clans (Encyclopedia)

4.26 Incest avoidance rules people of the same clan name were not supposed to marry, but cousins who were children of a brother and sister might.

4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony? Male is called to sit next to his future wife in front of their house and the villagers gathered round to dance before them. Great quantities of beer are prepared.. Presents, mainly beads.

4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name? Information not found

4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?) within the community and not in same kin.

4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)? Females parents arranges, after the male presents himself to them.

4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who: Female is asked if she wants to marry the male.

Warfare/homicide

4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare: Tumbukan culture have leaned toward the more peaceful side.
Information not found

4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death: jealousy

4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing: Information not found

4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations): Bordering neighbors are the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Tanzania, Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Namibia, and Angola.

4.18 Cannibalism? No information found

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size: 100-200

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality): For nearly thirty years it was the regime's policy to exclude northerners, especially Chi-Tumbuka-speaking people, from social and political achievement. In 1968 it made Chi-Chewa an official language of instruction, a compulsory subject of study in school, and medium for radio and the press. Speakers of Chi-Tumbuka, among others, lost means to enjoy and promote their language and culture. Over the years, the regime took other steps to frustrate the social mobility of northerners, especially through access to secondary and tertiary level schooling. In 1987 for example, it imposed a quota system governing university admissions so that Chi-Chewa-speakers, hitherto under-represented, would be guaranteed more places. Northerners in government positions were periodically purged in the 1980s. These measures, some of which were never fully applied, seem not to have decisively changed Chewa social standing; but they did serve further to polarize political life and to discredit the Banda regime. With the advent of the new government in 1994, a number of discriminatory measures were rescinded. National radio resumed broadcasting Chi-Tumbuka programmes after a hiatus of twenty-six years. In the 1994 elections, the northern-based Alliance for Democracy (AFORD) party, with a Tumbuka leadership, won all constituencies in the Northern Region.
(<http://www.minorityrights.org/?lid=4754&tmpl=printpage>)

5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes): most politically significant ethnic minority in Malawi, who before independence held many of the mid level administrative positions in the colonial government, an educated elite in result of the Livingstonia Mission (Dancing prophets Friedson)

5.4 Post marital residence: No Information found

5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense): Malawi

5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex): Children seek wisdom from the elderly

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships: Most Zambians have joking relations with other tribes; the relationships go back many years. For example, a Bemba may throw verbal abuses to a Nyanja, but this is done in jest for the most part. This is an important distinction from other countries, where greater animosity exists. Zambians may consider their tribe superior to another, but there is an overall sense of unity across all groups. (everyculture)

5.8 Village and house organization: Men are hunters, females hunters and gatherers.

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses) A general pattern was for people to live in villages or dispersed domestic units. The villages consisted of clusters of rectangular thatched houses of agnatically related households. Each household had its own circular thatched granaries, kitchen, and bathhouse. There were also boys' houses (*Mpara*) and girls' houses (*Ntanganini*). (Encyclopedia)

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere? In hard mud houses, beds and hammocks

5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc: Historically, most Tumbuka peoples were organized into small agnatic descent groups. Those descent groups had their own structure of kinship and ritual authority based on the seniority of older men. Women were subordinate members in their own descent groups and those into which they married. The arrival of Mlowoka and his band of traders did not disrupt those basic units but incorporated them into chiefdoms based on a centralized authority. The territorial framework consisted of the chief and his advisers and councils, subchiefs, and village headmen. The Ngoni incursions disrupted this pattern of authority, especially among the Kamanga. The rulers fled, and the Ngoni absorbed young men into their military regiments. (Encyclopedia)

With British rule there was a resurgence of Tumbuka ethnic identity, a movement led by the emerging elite educated in Christian missions. The territorial system was restored. However, the newly educated elite entered the occupational structures created under colonial rule, becoming skilled artisans and craftsmen, school teachers, clerks, minor civil servants, religious leaders, and politicians. They founded schools and new religious organizations such as the Jordan and National churches. They went as labor migrants throughout eastern, central, and southern Africa and established themselves as leaders in ethnic, regional, and occupational associations. They became a force in Central African history, participating in the founding of the Malawi Congress Party in Malawi and the United National Independence Party in Zambia. (Encyclopedia)

5.12 Trade: Before British rule the Tumbuka engaged in local and long-distance trading of ivory, skins, guns, steel knives and spears, and cloth. The trade extended to and beyond Lake Malawi to the coast and involved Arab and Swahili traders. During colonial rule they were part of the trade in used clothes. Traders would buy candy and other items, exchange them for maize and millet, and transport those crops to the Congo, where they would be traded for bales of used clothes. The clothes would be brought back and sold in the local markets. Since independence, crops have been traded in local markets and cash crops (tobacco, hybrid maize, millet, coffee, and cotton) have been sold to marketing boards and local and international traders (Encyclopedia)

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies? Was in the 19th century, recently information not found.

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6.0 Time allocation to RCR: Usually as soon as possible, especially in deaths.

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine): immense pharmacy of herbal medicines known to the natives. Family medicine secrets, not doctors. Songs dances, incomprehensible incantations, and strange dress, clever tricks of sleight of hand which have nothing to do with the disease, are all used to inspire the patient with confidence in his physician. Witchcraft is feared among the people. (Winning a Primitive People Fraser) The Tumbuka rely on a number of sources for medicine and treatment. There are the traditional medical and ritual healers. The healers include herbalists, diviners, and prophets who know about the medicinal properties of a large number of medicinal plants. They may treat different diseases and afflictions, ranging from the common cold to spirit

possession (*vimbuz*). Although most Tumbuka seek the services of these healers, they also rely on Western medicines and practices, and frequent dispensaries and hospitals. (Encyclopedia)

6.2 Stimulants: Information not found

6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal): birth, one cry of joy is given by women when boy is born, two cries when the babe is a girl. Should he live til marriage he is but as a pot that breaks, for he must leave the village of his parents, and build in the village of his wife. Girl will remain. If twins come the mother and father were sent out of the village. Boy reaches puberty, parents sent an old man to give him advice about the conduct which a good citizen should maintain, herd cattle. Girl at puberty was subjected to a prolonged ritual, with numerous fixed rules of ceremony. For a week she was shut up in a house with not contact. Then painted and instructed by the older women. (Winning a Primitive People)

6.4 Other rituals: Ceremonies. There is no single ceremony shared by all Tumbuka that defines them as a people. Agnatic groups and chiefdoms may have their own individual ceremonies. An example is Vinkakanimba Day, an annual ceremony to recognize the founding of the Uyombe chiefdom in Zambia. Other Tumbuka chiefdoms have similar ceremonies commemorating their founding. The founder is believed to have been a member of Mlowoka's party of traders who crossed Lake Malawi. Most ceremonial occasions occur at critical points in the life cycle of individuals, domestic units, and agnatic groups. The most common ceremonial occasions are related to the birth of children, marriages, and deaths. (Encyclopedia)

6.5 Myths (Creation): they believe in God, God is to them an absentee deity, called Chiwuta. By Him the world was made, and everything that has life. "The only characteristic of God that the raw native is sure of is this, "He is cruel, for it is he who takes away the children," (Winning a Primitive People)

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games): music, use of drums is apparent.. Tom-Toms, Tumbuka artistic expression is found in head ties, hair styles, necklaces, and bracelets. It also is represented in the decoration of houses, the making of baskets, and the design of pottery. The Tumbuka recognize the art and aesthetics of storytelling, preaching, and other forms of verbal communication. (Dancing Prophets)

6.7 Sex differences in RCR: Women and men have different ceremonies for marriages. Elder women put the young woman through many tests.

6.8 Missionary effect: Protestant 55%, Roman Catholic 20%, Muslim 20%, traditional indigenous beliefs

6.9 RCR revival: Information not found

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs: Death requires an explanation. It may be due to natural causes, witchcraft, or an angry ancestor spirit. When a person dies, the corpse is buried in a grave about 4 feet (1.2 meters) deep. The grave is considered to be a house with a special room for the deceased. The face of the corpse is carefully directed toward the locality from which his or her clan is believed to have originated. The period of mourning begins immediately after the burial and requires the confinement of the deceased's relatives. The day after the burial senior agnates return to inspect the grave for signs of witchcraft. Once the period of mourning is over, rites of purification are undertaken. Senior agnates may return to the grave and take the spirit of the deceased back to the house. Other rituals may be performed that transform the spirit into an ancestor. Ancestor spirits are believed to be close to their agnates and to affect their affairs. Many Christian Tumbuka follow these burial practices and accept the beliefs associated with them. They also believe in the Christian concepts of an afterlife involving heaven and hell and the day of judgment and resurrection.(Encyclopedia)

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people? no

6.12 Is there teknonymy? yes

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.) they believe in God, God is to them an absentee deity, called Chiwuta. By Him the world was made, and everything that has life. “The only characteristic of God that the raw native is sure of is this, “He is cruel, for it is he who takes away the children,”.... Protestant 55%, Roman Catholic 20%, Muslim 20%, traditional indigenous beliefs(Winning a Primitive People)

7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint: dance rituals and healing rituals use of body paint is used.

7.2 Piercings: ear piercings are common among all

7.3 Haircut: Men untrimmed beards seem to not bathe often

7.4 Scarification: women have three big cicatrices on their foreheads

7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.): girls, hang strings of bright beads on their shapely bodies

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment: yes, beads bright colors.

7.7 Sex differences in adornment: men wear greasy beads, strung round their necks, hairs of elephants tail used as necklace or bracelets

7.8 Missionary effect: Protestant 55%, Roman Catholic 20%, Muslim 20%, traditional indigenous beliefs

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment: bright colors, beads

8. Kinship systems

8.1 Sibling classification system: Most Tumbuka are organized into dispersed exogamous patrilineal descent groups (agnatic lineages) whose members trace descent from a common ancestor from a specific locality. Lineages are parts of clans that have the same clan name. Although lineages are exogamous, that is not always the case with clans.(Encyclopedia)

8.2 Sororate, levirate: yes both is common among the Tumbuka peoples.

8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.): The kin terms of the Tumbuka have elements of the Omaha type of terminology in that the unity and solidarity of the lineage are recognized. The unity of generations is demonstrated by the fact that the men of the father's generation are called father and the men of the father's father's generation are classified as grandfathers or elder siblings, exemplifying the principle of the unity of alternate generations. The father's brother's children are classified as either brother or sister, and the father's sister's children as cousins. The mother's brother's children are called cousins, and the mother's sister's children are called brother or sister. (Encyclopedia)

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

Highest form of entertainment is dance!

Numbered references

1. Friedson, Steven M. *Dancing Prophets: Musical Experience in Tumbuka Healing*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, 1996. Print

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