

## 1. Description

- 1.1 **Name(s) of society:** YOMBE, KIYOMBE, KIOMBI, BAYOMBE **Language spoken:** Tumbuka **Language Family:** Bantu language, Dialect from the Democratic Republic of Congo
- 1.2 **ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com):** YOM
- 1.3 **Location (latitude/longitude):** -5.00/13.00 and -4.10/12.90
- 1.4 **Brief history:** Diverse in ethnic origins, many Yombe are descendants of refugees that previously settled in the area and took the Wowo to be their rulers. Differences in the clan names and myths presented throughout the Yombe populations show the scattered origins of their heritage. In their beginnings most Yombe lived in small villages/hamlets in the bush to hide from Ngoni warriors of which they had constant fears of war and raiding parties from which were later diminished by British interaction/suppression. British influence also brought other changes to Yombe culture for example the development of their political/government structure. Also brought on by this interaction was the change in function of the base village groups when many Yombe men had to leave to seek employment outside their villages and the Yombe women then had to change their roles to take over responsibilities that previously were the problems dealt with by the men.
- 1.5 **Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors:** Interaction with outside forces showed an introduction to Western influence, which presented new ideas such as Christianity as well as construction skills like carpentry and bricklaying. Missions/schools, staffed by Yombe, were soon to come that focused on these new ideas meant to improve life and progress their industry. The new elite of the Yombe were now educated and in turn educating their following replacements as well. Those attending the schools became leading members of Yombe commercial and political movements. In the early 1900s political influence started to have effect on African populations. Taxes were imposed on the populations with delegated native commissioners appointed the task of collecting said taxes so as not to upset the normal succession of authorities within the communities. These taxes made it of importance for Africans to leave their home base to find other means of earning money, thus the development of labor migration becoming customary. In 1929 the British South Africa Company restricted the authority of tribal chiefs and established a uniform local government. Within this government chiefs were recognized with each having their own staff of clerks, court assessors, and messengers. Small changes to this system were made between 1929 and the 1950s/1960s when political unrest began to become into focus. Schools being burned and the destruction of roads/bridges were some of the disturbances popping up in rural areas. With these acts happening a Native Administration ordinance was enacted in 1960 to bring in appointed representatives, all to be members of the royal clan, to take over when the chiefs of tribes were not fulfilling their duties to expectation. The Yombe chief at the time had failed to meet his duties and when he was replaced by an elected representative for many of his duties there was an increase of support for the ability of the elected to take over these duties. After this happened political development moved forward more quickly with the deputy chief being able to appoint subordinates that could act for him and in turn multiple other committees were created to deal with different problems facing the communities. This in turn allowed for issues to be dealt with more quickly and fixed to a somewhat recognized standard.
- 1.6 **Ecology (natural environment):** Mountainous country between lakes was primary habitat
- 1.7 **Population size, mean village size, home range size, density:** In 1981 there was a population of roughly 15,000 Yombe. This population was scattered over an area of 625 square miles. Throughout the history of the Yombe the home range size has grown, they were originally locally based within a small area doing mainly agricultural cultivation. As time progressed and societies with it many Yombe were forced to seek out employment outside of their main home base by going into more industrial and urban areas. An estimated 25-35% of adult male taxpayers work abroad, which leads to a larger home range and the scattering of the population. Density of 24 persons per square mile.
- ## 2. Economy
- 2.1 **Main carbohydrate staple(s):** Maize, Millet, Beans
- 2.2 **Main protein-lipid sources:** Elephants and Buffalo
- 2.3 **Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?:** There was no information found on weapons used by the Yombe. However; research states that they were not a militarily strong society, building their huts in bushes to hope to be hidden from warfare/raiders. (4p16)
- 2.4 **Food storage:** Granaries were used to store harvested crops. Water was collected from the Bemba, Shiri, and Vumbo rivers in clay and metal pots or debes (4 gallon kerosene tins) (4p7)
- 2.5 **Sexual division of production:** As society progressed and Yombe had to seek employment away from home the men were the ones to travel for the jobs and the women for the most part have stayed close to their home working as agriculturalist.
- 2.6 **Land tenure:** Plentiful land, not subject to rent, sale, and inheritance, easy to get rights to use it
- 2.7 **Ceramics:** Clay pots for domestic use (4p7)
- 2.8 **Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:** Among the Yombe exchange relationships are a very relative part to the structure of their communities. They tend to believe in sharing without any regard to the fairness towards one side or the other as long as it is supportive in nature. The Yombe also look down upon Western societies as being "self-seeking" and unsupportive in regard to their fellow people. Meal sharing is considered one of the major staples of Yombe community, usually done amongst close friends. (6p57-58)
- 2.9 **Food taboos:** Although no direct relation of food taboo was found, they had a connection with the giraffe (referenced to as "camel" by the people) because they were familiar with it from the Bible. It could be assumed that it was taboo to eat giraffe for this reason.(8p38)
- 2.10 **Canoes/watercraft?** The Yombe lived near multiple rivers and watercraft were used for means of trade and transportation.(4p7-11)
- ## 3. Anthropometry
- 3.1 **Mean adult height (m and f):** No specifics on height, but in relation to structure they are said to have a very pronounced jaw. (8p33)
- 3.2 **Mean adult weight (m and f):** No specific statistics on average weight for male or female Yombe, only that they were thick-set. (8p33)
- ## 4. Life History, mating, marriage
- 4.1 **Age at menarche (f):** no information found in the research
- 4.2 **Age at first birth (m and f):** no information found in the research
- 4.3 **Completed family size (m and f):** no information found in the research
- 4.4 **Inter-birth-interval (f):** no information found in the research
- 4.5 **Age first marriage (m and f):** Age at first marriage of a Yombe male circa 1900 is as soon as a man was of working age. There is no absolute of a female at first marriage, only that women were often 'pawned' to men in their youth and later became their wives. (5p179)
- 4.6 **Proportion of marriages ending in divorce:** There was no divorce in the Yombe population; they have "indissoluble marital alliances" (5p176)
- 4.7 **Percent marriages polygamous, percent males married polygamously:** There is no information on the percentage of polygamous marriages. We do however know that the Yombe people were polygamous, at least the chiefs were. Research states that chiefs took on multiple wives, and then sets rules to protect aggression towards them.(5p176)
- 4.8 **Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?:** A man and woman enter into a "concubinage" on the recommendation of responsible elders "nkazi" this type of trial marriage can be bought with presents such as food and drink. Other true marriages are more formal unions and require special "taboos and charms", these marriages are called longo (taboo oath) and require the exchange of copper and iron objects. Cattle are also used as a form of dowry in determining bride wealth.(linage structure, 180; 4p5)
- 4.9 **Inheritance patterns:** Brothers of deceased men are subject to inherit the deceased's spouse and children by her choosing
- 4.10 **Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:** Men can buy girl's in their youth from their responsible elders (nkazi), and she would later become his wife; she is called a pawn. If a husband did not buy her as a pawn her "nkazi" could reclaim her as a slave, and any children born could be bought for one pig each. Its not a guarantee that once children are born that they will always stay with their parents because of this type of relationship. (5p180)
- 4.11 **Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:**
- 4.12 **Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):** Exogamy is the process used when house groups come together to form clan sections, showing that "free" men of the population "cannot be a father or son to another "free" member of another house in his own section."(5p175)
- 4.13 **What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these "other fathers" recognized?**
- 4.14 **What is the belief of the mother's role in procreation exactly? (e.g., "receptacle in which fetus grows"):** The Yombe believed that the "reproductive capacity of women can be transferred". Women were used to 'incubate' babies, but as far as the Yombe were concerned one womb is as good as the next. (5p179)
- 4.15 **Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)?**

**4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape:** In the period of 1963-1964 there was religious animosity between the Lampa church and the Yombe. The government protected the Lampa and threatened to arrest anyone who molested the Lampa. Which could be suggestion of rape outside of the clan. There was no information found of sexual coercion or rape inside the clan. (4p156)

**4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin):** Patrilineal cross cousin marriage is preferred but less common than matrilineal cross cousin marriage, the Yombe thought it to be the most equal of exchanges. (5p183)

**4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?**

**4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring:** No evidence shown for gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring. However when a dead brothers wife is inherited the new husband is expected to care for the new wife and children as his own. Also regarding other family gift giving the biggest percentage is given to the matrilineal side of ones family, the mother leading with the highest, followed by the father, siblings, matrilineal relatives, then lastly patrilineal relatives.

**4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?**

**4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females:** There was no specific statistic reported on adult sex ratio for the Yombe. It can be inferred that there were more men than women if the clan practices polygamy. (5p176)

**4.22 Evidence for couvades**

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

**4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?** Younger unmarried Yombe men do not share meals with their closest adult relatives. Yombe do not consider their elders to be friends and thus do not treat them as such. They act separately, respecting their elders. (6p59)

**4.24 Joking relationships?** No evidence found in research to support that the Yombe were a joking society.

**4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations:** Agnatic or patrilineal seniority descent groups, each village is under the authority of a headman. Individuals born in the village share corporate rights and land. (6p57)

**4.26 Incest avoidance rules:** There is very little information about incest in Yombe society. However, the Yombe had the “nkazi” which were responsible elders of the women (brides) to ensure proper marital pairings. (5,180)

**4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?** Formal marriages require special “taboos and charms”, these marriages are called longo (taboo oath) and require the exchange of copper and iron objects. (5p180)

**4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?** Males obtain new names from being chosen as new husbands to previously deceased brothers widows.

**4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?)** Marriage outside the community is preferred to create “patrilineal bonds” creating a kinship system in acquiring allies. (5p175)

**4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)?** The responsible elders (nkazi), usually parents of the female or her fathers head, are responsible for the arrangement of marriages, some of these arrangements can be made more favorable by the giving of gifts to the bride to be’s nkazi. All of these marriages have to be approved by the nkazi, whether they be casual or true marriages. (5p180)

**4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:** conflict of interest was not directly shown for marriage, but “nkazi” were mostly responsible for the arrangement of marriages so it could be assumed that they would choose in the best interest of the group by choosing marriages that would strengthen bonds. (5p180)

**Warfare/homicide**

**4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:**

**4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death:** Violent deaths that the Yombe population feared came from several different sources. Lion attacks were a main cause of concern causing the Yombe to take drastic measures, including moving their villages if situations called for it. Chiefs of the villages were also taxed with the job of killing clan members who are disobedient. Although the Yombe people had a very nutritious diet, there were a few cases of malnutrition, smallpox, chickenpox, and pneumonia. (4p10-32)

**4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing:** One cause of in group death would be when a chief is chosen, then clan would ask him to kill his nephew.

This would prove an authority (from the god’s) for the throne. In 1855 the Ngoni settled in the area and forced Tumbuka speaking people to assimilate and pay tribute, while the Yombe were not conquered they remained in fear of the Ngoni dominance. (2P30; 4p15)

**4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations):** The Yombe have 4 neighboring clans. A matrilineal people to the south called the Senga, and patrilineal peoples called the Fungwe, Tumbuka, and Nyika to the northwest and southeast. The Yombe are more closely allied with the Tumbuka who speak the same language as them. They also share social and political structures as well. (4p5)

**4.18 Cannibalism?** There is no evidence of Cannibalism in the Yombe population. After death the Yombe would bury their dead on the compound. Chiefs would be buried with their personal property, along with 2-3 of their subjects (usually slaves). Other “informants” say that for internal powers used in witchcraft, the powers were acquired by eating humans. There is no definitive evidence found whether or not cannibalism was practiced among the Yombe. (4p43-44)

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

**5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:** No definite numerical data found, but the ideal living situation is a three generation patrilineal hierarchy; the head, children, grandchildren which can become permanent arrangements of descendant groups.

**5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):** Aside of movement of the males seeking outside income the Yombe were sedentary in their movement patterns, “patrilineal or matrilineal responsibilities were limited by the distance one could walk or bicycle in a few hours.” Within such limits it allowed the Yombe to remain at the same “address”, or “social zone”.

**5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes):** The main ruler of the Yombe is the chief, followed by his headman/headmen, then followed by domestic heads. The capital of the Yombe society has their chief as the headman, chiefship has no fixed rule of succession, new chiefs could come into rule by giving the present chief or chiefs of surrounding groups “prestigious goods” in order to either take the present chiefs position or gain the support of the surrounding groups in taking over the chief position. (6p57 & 5p176)

**5.4 Post marital residence:** In 1964 there was an examination of housing done that reported women as household heads. Women become the heads of their household when their husbands die. While some women choose to take up residency with men from their husbands families. (4p49-51)

**5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense):** The Yombe live in a small corner of the Isoka District in the Western Providence of Zambia. They made up 14% of the population in that district in 1963. They live in the mountainous area between the two lakes, Tanganyika and Malawi. As a manner of defense, early Yombe built their “hamlets” scattered and hidden in shrubbery to avoid raids and keep from drawing attention from lions. (4p5-16)

**5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex):** The Yombe are very competitive “entrepreneurs”, preferring competition between clan members as well as competing with themselves striving to be better. They are always jealous of others rights and place in the society; distributing justice evenly throughout the clan. (2p31)

**5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:** Yombe friendship is expressed through sharing of meals. People do not eat meals with those they have disputes/arguments with. The sharing of meals is a very intimate affair for the Yombe. Non-kin friends are most likely to share meals together. (6p58)

**5.8 Village and house organization:** Both men and women own houses, if a married person leaves the house they give the key to a relative not their spouse. It is not “their” house it’s “his/her” house. (5p174)

**5.9 Specialized village structures (mens’ houses):** The Yombe had a shelter that was built in a circle shape, located in the middle of the village, it was called the Mphara. Married men would meet and discuss business everyday, while eating their main meal of the day. The Yombe also had boys houses (also called Mphara) and girls houses (Ntanganini). (4p31)

**5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?**

**5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc:** The Yombe lineage has three levels of segmentation (mvila, dikanda, (m)vumu). The basic structure of Yombe society begins with men and their wives that tend a tract of land. Two or more lineages combine to make a “house”, this house is responsible for owning land and dispersing how the land is divided amongst its members. There are those that are considered to be “free” and others considered to be “slave”, their status coming from their line of descent. “Free” lineages are recognized as “fathers” to slave lineages, this can however be changed as lineages within houses struggle with each other for control of the common estate and in winning this control they can redefine themselves as “free”. Groups of houses come together to form clans. A large factor in doing

- this is by allying with other houses the “free” members can work together to keep the “slave” lineages in check. Coupled with the fact that “slaves” are not permitted to form alliances this can keep “free” lineages in higher standing for long periods of time. (5p175)
- 5.12 **Trade:** 4 main rivers that cross the Yombe territory, the Luhoka, the Vumbo, the Bemba and the Shiri are used for transportation and trade. Many villages are situated alongside or close to one of the rivers for easy access for trade. The main source of income is crops. One time a year the Kasama Marketing co-operative goes to the Yombe to purchase beans and maize. The Yombe would often trade a debe of maize or millet for a yard of cloth, or a debe of beans for two yards; most often trading with the Malawi traders. Later store owners would have started their businesses by trading their crops or used clothes for cash in Malawi. The main trader of the Yombe society is usually the chief because of his wealth which comes from the tributes paid him by the tribe of “agricultural produce, ivory, and valued skins”, the chief even takes part in long distance trading for things such as “guns, salt, cloth, and iron”. By being the main trader for the group the chief regulates the flow of things in and out of the community. (4p7-11)
- 5.13 **Indications of social hierarchies?** As the Yombe society grew so did the division between the more and less educated members of the clan. The division was secondarily attributed to wealth. (4p159)
- 6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)**
- 6.0 **Time allocation to RCR:** Yombe spent much of their time in the pursuit of magic, practicing witchcraft and were part of prophetic movements
- 6.1 **Specialization (shamans and medicine):** The chiefdom priest is responsible for offering prayer to the God (Leza). This is done however at the graves of deceased ancestors for the belief that the ancestors are responsible for the living and that Leza is distant and unconcerned with matters of the living. Yombe were very conscious of their culture, always looking out to keep order and structure. They had a “common system of ideas” that were very meaningful in their simplicity. There were 3 important roles; chief (mfumu), magician (ngana), and prophet (ngunza). There were however individuals that served dual purposes, and carried multiple titles.
- Chief – has special powers to allow him to see the evil in people, he carries charms to cure diseases
  - Magician – healer who did so through means of witchcraft, charms, and herbs
  - Prophet – found more in lower Congo, has more Christian affiliation. Their dress is a white cap, white shirt, white shorts. This Individual is chosen by god and there will not be a new prophet until a new distribution of power on earth (2p27-30)
- 6.2 **Stimulants:**
- 6.3 **Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal):** Semi seclusion for death, wife is inherited by dead husband's brother. Must perform Vipupalo ceremony to release dead from their corporeal ties and move them to status of ancestor
- 6.4 **Other rituals:** “Na Vunda” candidate – chiefship, would go to a special cave to pay adoration to the dead from the clan, if they liked him he would walk out healthy and be considered, if they didn't he would fall ill that day and could never be considered as chief and the clan would also know that he must come from incest or slave blood. Sometimes the candidate is taken by the dead clan members and never returns. (5p176)
- 6.5 **Myths (Creation):** There was no information that could be found on the Yombe's myths of the creation of the world, but they have a myth of the 6 branches of royal clans of Uyombe chiefdom. Their founding ancestor crossed Lake Malawi with a group of hunters and traders. The Uyombe then inhabited the area and either killed, absorbed, or drove out its previous inhabitants (the Bisa). (4p14)
- 6.6 **Cultural material (art, music, games):**
- 6.7 **Sex differences in RCR:** There was no definitive statement that I could find on sex gender roles in rituals and ceremonies or other religious avocations. However, when referring to chiefs and magicians they allude to the fact that they were male. (2p28)
- 6.8 **Missionary effect:** In 1875 the Yombe were exposed to Western influences. Captain Young and Dr. Robert Laws; Presbyterian missionaries of the Free Church of Scotland. Their mission was to educate Africans in “practical skills” such as bricklaying, masonry, carpentry, and basic western medicine; while teaching them to become good Christians. Laws formed a missionary called Livingstonia, where he took in Tumbuka peoples; with the idea that they would return to their village with their newly acquired knowledge. However a large majority of the graduates ended up getting government jobs and never returning to their villages. (4p17)
- 6.9 **RCR revival:**
- 6.10 **Death and afterlife beliefs:** Dead clan members judge candidates for new chiefship. Simen Kimbangu was a famous ngunza, capable of miracles such as raising the dead. Prophets were graced with the “power of life”, capable of crossing the intersection between life and death. This “power” was of course reserved for the most omnipotent of prophets. During funeral ceremonies there were no emotions shown, people were not supposed to show bereavement. (2p30-44)
- 6.11 **Taboo of naming dead people?** No taboos on naming dead people were found, although Yombe are concerned with the “wandering spirits of the dead and their manifestations as animal familiars”. (7p620)
- 6.12 **Is there teknonymy?** There is no teknonymy in the Yombe population. There is a headman of a village and he is known by the village's name. His successor passes the name on. People are known by the names of their elders. (4p32)
- 6.13 **Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.):** Many Yombe believe in “nkisi si” described as localized territorial clan spirits of earth or domain. Also “nkosi” which refers to a magical statue or power figure, that at night hunts down witches, thieves, adulterers, and other wrongdoers.
- 7. Adornment**
- 7.1 **Body paint:** no information found in the research
- 7.2 **Piercings:** no information found in the research
- 7.3 **Haircut:** Little information was found on Yombe hair; only stating that they had woolly hair. (8p33)
- 7.4 **Scarification:** no information found in the research
- 7.5 **Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.):** no information found in the research
- 7.6 **Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:** At death ceremonies medicine is rubbed onto spouse of dead
- 7.7 **Sex differences in adornment:**
- 7.8 **Missionary effect:** Prophets who came about from Christian or religious ties, wore white shorts, a white shirt, and a white cap. (2p28)
- 7.9 **Cultural revival in adornment:** no information found in the research
- 8. Kinship systems**
- 8.1 **Sibling classification system:** The elder of siblings hold higher rankings than their younger brothers/sisters, when an inheritance marriage has happened the offspring of the wife of the eldest brother hold highest ranking, even if she has chosen her dead spouse's younger brother as a new husband and he already has offspring with another wife.
- 8.2 **Sororate, levirate:** Levirate
- 8.3 **Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.):** The Yombe considered separate households of free choice when it came to cooperation. The Yombe if asked would deny having obligations to neighboring kinsmen. Although almost all Yombe participated in a “all for one” mentality where everyone does their part and helps out, it was an option. (6p58)
- 9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):**
- Chiefs would set up rules to prohibit symbolic aggression towards their wives, such as stepping on their shadows people would have to pay fines (5p176)
  - Some clans of the Yombe worked through the problem of a matrilineal puzzle where the mother's brother has the ability to sell them into slavery and is also in charge of debts, taxes, and lands. (5p177)
  - The source of a chief's power didn't come from the wealth that he had, it came from his followers. Once a chief's women/followers die off his source of power and respect is taken away or no longer exists. (5p177)
  - Some clans had another role aside from chief, magician, and prophet; that of the witch (ndoki) who killed for profit. (2p30)
  - Prophets had the power of life and were able to raise the dead, when their powers failed it was proof to the clan that they had “sold out” and were not working toward public interest any longer and would soon be relieved of their duties. (2p30)

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