Lele (Bashilele) Tribe

< http://www.joshuaproject.net/people-profile.php?peo3=19385&rog3=CG>

1. Description
1.1 Name(s) of society, language, and language family:
- o Name: Lele
- o Alternate Names: Bashilele, Usilele (1)
- o Language: Comprehension of Wongo (1)
- o Language Family: Bantu

1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com):
- o ISO 639-3:lel

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude):
- o Latitude/longitude:

- o Country: Southern Democratic Republic of Congo
- o Region: Kasaï Occidental Province west edge, Ilebo and Tshikapa territories; extreme east Bandundu Province, Idiofa and Gungu territories. (1)

1.4 Brief history:
- o Throughout Congo's prehistory, most ethnic groups were isolated from one another by the thick forests that engulf the country. Throughout the sixteenth century, the worldwide demand for slaves increased, triggering violence between ethnic groups as European slave traders kidnapped people and encouraged African men to capture members of other ethnic groups for money. (3)
- o In the 1885 scramble for Africa, King Leopold II of Belgium declared himself the dictator and sole proprietor of the new Congo Free State. Leopold garnered public support at home by publicly announcing his intent to Christianize and modernize the Congolese population, all the while planning the forced labor of men, women, and children for the lucrative ivory and rubber business. When people did not meet the king's quotas, his army killed them or cut off their hands. The overall population of the country greatly diminished during the early twentieth century due to such cruelty and to the susceptibility of many Congolese to new European diseases. (3)
- o Mounting international criticism forced Leopold to sell his colony to Belgium in 1908. (3)
- o During the 1930s and 1940s, the Belgian colonial government tried to enforce mass cultivation standards, but without proper transportation mechanisms in place, large amounts of food lay wasted and unsold. The demand for copper grew during the World War II era, creating peripheral markets for household goods such as soap and sugar. Though economic growth increased and education improved during this time, the Belgians remained staunchly authoritarian. Local chiefs were used as pawns of the government; often they were removed from power if rumored to be anticolonialist. (3)
- o The Belgians abruptly left the Congo and independence was declared on 30 June 1960. Since then the Congo has been characterized with coups, mercenary-led rebellions, the arrival of United Nations (UN) peacekeeping forces, secessionist movements, civil war, and ethic cleansing (3)

1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors:
- o Most have converted to Christianity specifically Roman Catholicism and Evangelical Christianity (2)
- o As an institution, the Roman Catholic Church has been a major player in the Congo throughout modern history, often condemning state-sponsored human rights violations (3)

1.6 Ecology (natural environment):
- o The terrain is a variation of coastal plains, mountainous regions, plateaus and fertile valleys. About 70 percent of the country's area is covered by rain forest. The major rivers are the Congo River and the Kouilou-Niari River (3)

1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density
- o Population: 26,000 (1)

2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s):
- o The primary staple, pasty white *fufu* (manioc tubers, pounded into the texture of oatmeal), is eaten out of a communal bowl (3)
- o Sweet potatoes, perch, bananas, and plantains (3)

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources:
- o Fish or antelope (3)

2.3 Weapons:
- o Bow and arrows (2)

2.4 Food storage:
- o For many rural people, meat is a delicacy reserved for special days or when the family can afford the luxury (3)
- o When food is available, it usually does not contain the vitamins and minerals required to help ward off disease and maintain proper health (3)

2.5 Sexual division of production:
- o Everyone, regardless of talent, ability, or age, is involved in work for the family's survival (3)

2.6 Land tenure:

- In the past, the chief or village headman had authority over village land and ownership, but the European notion of individual land ownership led to a law in 1966 stating that the government owned all land, creating two simultaneous legal systems. Both laws exist side by side, and the unclear status of land ownership is usually "solved" by postponing land dispute investigations with bribes. Some people want to officially own the land they and their ancestors have been tending for centuries so that they can use the property as collateral for a loan. This legal issue caused by the parallel legal systems, however, prevents many from obtaining such a loan, making it difficult for would-be entrepreneurs to finance a new business. In addition, women cannot own land without their husband's consent (3)

2.7 Ceramics:

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

2.9 Food taboos:
- Only the right hand is used in eating because it is an insult to conduct any transaction with the left hand, which is used only for bathroom purposes (3)

2.10 Canoes/watercraft
- Riverboats used on Congo River (3)

3. Anthropometry

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f):

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f):

4. Life History, mating, marriage

4.1 Age at menarche (f):

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f):
- Women generally about 15 years old (5)

4.3 Completed family size (m and f):

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f):

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f):
- For men marriage was usually later in life because they had to pay fees to be married (4)
- Average age for women was fifteen and for men it was thirty-five (5)

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce:

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously:

4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?:
- Entry to cults was by fee and restricted to married men. As the age of marriage was late, this automatically reserved positions of esteem to older men and lined their pockets with the fees of new entrants. Polygyny created a scarcity of marriageable girls; marriage fees were also high. So for the first step on the social ladder, marriage, a man had to go to his wealthy seniors and solicit their aid (4).

4.9 Inheritance patterns:

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):
- Intermarriages between villages (5)

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")

4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)?

4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape

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

4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?

4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring

4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?

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

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:
- o A woman had to learn to aboid her brothers, not to stay in the same hut with them, not to speak to them face to face, to place their food respectfully on the ground near them, not to touch them. She avoided her sons and her sons-in-law and, to a less extent, her own father (5)

4.24 Joking relationships?

4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations
- o Although they practice matrilineal succession, women are regarded as lower than males on the scale of social hierarchy (3)

4.26 Incest avoidance rules
- o "He could not marry his own daughter, of course, now could he marry his daughter to any member of his own clan. The rule prohibiting any marriage with the father's clan underlined further the importance of the father. But he had the final say in the marriage of hid daughter, and the right to take her daughters in marriage" (5)

4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?

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

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

4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)?
- o Girls are usually betrothed in infancy, but the father of the girl has final decision in marriage (5)

4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:

Warfare/homicide

4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:

4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death:

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

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

4.18 Cannibalism?

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):

5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes):
- o Chiefs come to rule based on their popularity within the village, their personal charisma, and their overall prestige. Whatever elders command is adhered to unconditionally, out of respect. Respect for elders, chiefs, and ancestors is an extremely important facet of daily life in the Congo (3)

5.4 Post-marital residence:
- o Wife goes to live with husband (4)

5.5 Territoriality? (Defined boundaries, active defense):

5.6 Social interaction divisions? (age and sex):
- o Women and men are separate (5)

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:
- o Women create very strong bonds with mothers, sisters, daughters (5)

5.8 Village and house organization:
   In rural areas, several round or rectangular mud huts enclosed in an area comprise a family's homestead. The frame is built by tying vines around sticks and palm frond stems. A mixture of sand, water, and often cement is then used to fill in the structure and a grass roof completes the home. Families often move their homestead to be near their new fields, or if termites have destroyed their roof. At times, new homes are built on top of the old field, so that after several years, the newly fertilized land can be used again (3).

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses):
- o Each hut serves a different purpose: some are for cooking, others are for storage, and there are guest huts and separate rooms for the male and female children (3)

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?
- o Usually sleep on hand-woven raffia mats placed upon the ground (3)

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

5.12 Trade:
- o One of the most severe hindrances to trade and marketing in the Congo is the lack of adequate internal transportation (3)

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6.0 Time allocation to RCR:

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine):
- o Spiritual healers, often called *ngangas* (3).
- o Belief in sorcery (5)

6.2 Stimulants:

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

6.4 Other rituals:

6.5 Myths (Creation):

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):

6.7 Sex differences in RCR:

6.8 Missionary effect:
- o Most have converted to Christianity (5)

6.9 RCR revival:

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs:
- o Believe that the spirits of people who have died remain with the family in very obvious ways. Ancestors are very much alive and remain active in the life of the family for generations. People communicate with their ancestors, who act as intermediaries between humans and God. People often ask their ancestors for rain, health, good crops, or the solution to a difficult problem. White cloth is tied around trees to welcome these ancestral spirits. When someone dies, small gifts are placed around the corpse so the person will have these items when he or she enters the spirit world. The body is then buried in a shroud (3)

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?

6.12 Is there teknonymy?

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.)
- o Mix their indigenous practices with the Christian faith, depending on circumstances and desired outcomes (3)

7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint:

7.2 Piercings:

7.3 Haircut:

7.4 Scarification:

7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.):
- o Rural women often wear scarves on their heads, carry their babies on their backs, and wear light, brightly colored clothes (3)
- o Casual clothes are permitted, but unwritten rule is that the nicer one looks, the more respect one will receive. Most local Congolese dress in clean, crisp clothes and colorful outfits. Women wear long skirts, never pants (3)

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:

7.7 Sex differences in adornment:

7.8 Missionary effect:

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment:

8. Kinship systems

8.1 Sibling classification system:

8.2 Sororate, levirate:

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

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

- o   Twins were considered taboo. It is normal to have just one baby at a time, therefore, when a second, or third, baby shows up, then it is thought that the spirit world is up to mischief. There is no way to tell which child is the authentic twin, and which one is really an evil spirit masquerading as a human twin. The solution then is to kill both babies, thus ensuring that the evil spirit can do the tribe no harm. This is done by shoving hot peppers up the babies' nostrils and burying them alive in an anthill. This is not to hurt the children, but to torment the evil spirit. The suffering baby is collateral damage. (6)

Numbered references

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