

1. Description

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

Lokele, Lokele, Bantu

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

1.3 Alternate names

Kele, Ekele, Kili, Likelo, Yakusu

1.4 Location (latitude/longitude):

“The Lokele tribe lives on the banks of the Congo between the mouths of the Lindi and the Lomami; some villages extend up the Lomami river for a considerable distance.” (Source 1)

1.5 Brief history:

“The Wagenia [a Lokele tribe], numbering some 1,500 adult men, inhabit both banks of the Congo River, above Stanley Falls, and some islands in the Lualaba River, including the island M'Bie. They speak a Bantu dialect and are very distinct from all their neighbors. There are three clans: the Bena-Soko, the Bena-Kulu, and the Bena-Lombe, whose respective totems are the chimpanzee, the turtle, and iguana. The Bena-Soko include almost two-thirds of the total population of the chiefdom. It is not possible to say with certainty the manner and the period during which these populations settled around the river rapids. But what is undeniable is that the Wagenia were not always residents of Stanley Falls. According to their traditions of origin, they migrated from their earlier habitat near the mouth of the Kambaole, a tributary of the Lualaba, in the territory of Pontheierville. Their earliest known ancestor, of the Bena-Soko clan, is said to have led an expedition against the Bayembo whose territory and fishing-grounds they occupied, and from whom they learnt the method of fishing which they now employ. They subsequently subdued the Sanga with whom they lived in amity thereafter and with whom they intermarried. The Wagenia depend mainly on fishing for subsistence, and practise a method of fishing which is peculiar to themselves. They use wicker-work containers of different sizes for catching different types of fish, and these are used by men only; the women use smaller nets.” (Source 4)

1.6 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors:

“The origins of the Lokele's largely successful encounter with Belgian imperialism lie at the end of the nineteenth century. As Rose-Hunt (1999:42) explained, BMS missionaries such as George Grenfell ‘stumbled into a complicated world’ when they established an out-station in Yakusu in 1895. Swahili slavers from eastern Africa, known locally as ‘BaTambatamba’, and Tippu Tip in particular, had emerged as an important political force in ‘Lokeleland’. These slavers often established profitable alliances with Lokele big-men undergirded by marriage. Consequently, a number of Lokele girls were sold and effectively became concubines for the BaTambatamba (Rose-Hunt 1999:39). Moreover, many Lokele, male and female, were required to work as slaves on Swahili-owned plantations on which they grew newly introduced crops, such as maize or rice. Lokele girls also found themselves orphaned when Swahili slavers from Zanzibar and Tanzania ransacked their villages. Those Lokele who lost their parents eventually became what John Peel (2003:238) described as ‘religiously biddable’ and many were ransomed into mission stations across what now constitutes the Orientale Province. Wittingly or not, mission stations sheltered Lokele converts from the violent wasting economies established under the aegis of the Congo Free State (CFS) (1885–1908) and so soon built a substantial African congregation.” (Source 3)

“But, of recent events we may note that Stanley passed through Kele territory in 1877 while on his journey across Africa. He notes the warlike habits of this riverine people and their use of large signal drums. Stanley returned in 1883 to Kele country and found the tribe scattered by Arab slave traders. Twelve years later missionaries of the English Baptist Missionary Society prospected for a site among the Kele people and finally chose a position at

the extreme corner of the Kele territory, near the village of Yakusu. The early Yakusu missionaries reduced the Kele language to writing and began to use this tongue as a medium for evangelistic and educational work.” (Source 8)

“No sub-Saharan African colonial regime took greater pride in relocating African childbearing to clinical settings than the Belgian Congo. When Raymond Buell toured Africa in 1925, he noted that the state-supported efforts of the Church Missionary Society in Uganda (the Lady Croyndon Training School and rural maternity centers founded by Dr. and Mrs. Cook) ‘lead the contingent in this type of work.’ Buell also praised maternity care efforts in Tanganyika and French West Africa and criticized Kenya for its ‘underdevelopment of maternity work.’ The Belgian Congo had only just begun to organize maternity care as Buell traveled. He mentioned the colony’s midwife training schools and that was all. By 1940, however, Belgian colonial authorities were boasting that the Congo possessed a network of *maternités*, orphanages, and ante- and postnatal clinics that surpassed ‘in number and importance’ those of any other African colony. In 1935, it was estimated that about 1 percent of Congolese deliveries were medically supervised. By 1952, official claims had increased that figure to 28 percent, and in 1958, the colonial information agency announced that some 43 percent of Congolese babies had been delivered under biomedical supervision. The Belgian Congo had the most extensive medical infrastructure in post-World War II Africa. The numbers of medically assisted Congolese births soared from 71,813 in 1947 to 110,000 in 1952, to 189,383 in 1956.” (Source 10)

2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s):

Rice: “Monsieur Tharin...first deals with the region of Stanley Falls...its methods are mostly copied from those introduced by the Arabs during their occupation of these parts...Rice is the most important product; it is eaten in various forms; simply boiled in Indian fashion (*wali*), boiled till it forms a sort of thick soup (*mashende ya mchere*), green rice slightly roasted and squashed (*perpeta za mpunga*), and mainly made into hard cakes, sweetened with honey or cane syrup (*etumbola*). (Source 7)

Bananas: “The Wagenia, not being farmers, sought bananas from the Ya-Sanga, in exchange for their fish.” (Source 4)

“Bananas are eaten fresh, dried and made into flour, and an intoxicating beverage is made of the ripe fruit, which is cut into pieces and then covered with water left to ferment.” (Source 7)

Quanga: “The items for sale are fish and the imported fruits and vegetables above all quanga, the principal source of nourishment on the Congo. As is well known, it is produced from fermented manioc flour and smells a little unpleasant, but after one gets used to it the taste is quite good.” (Source 13)

Bamboo palm: “The *raphia vinifera*, which used to be cultivated for its fibre before the introduction of the cloth trade, is now only used for the production of palm wine, which forms an important part of trade between the Babole of the interior and the Lokele on the river.” (Source 7)

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources:

Fish obtained from the Congo River: “While the etymology of the word ‘Lokele’ remains unclear, early ethnographers, such as Vander Gheynst, took it to mean ‘people of the water’ in reference to the group’s penchant for fishing in the Congo River.” (Source 3)

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?:

“...every man carries with him a spear about two and one-half meters long with a short broad tip. This tip is protected by a wooden sheath wrapped in bast fiber, so that it always stays clean and razor-sharp. In addition

they carry a prettily engraved, pointed dagger in the same wooden sheath. They do not use the bows and poisoned arrows customary among their neighbors, the Bakumu. They also have a few rifles imported by the Arabs, and the latter often sell them captured weapons as well. The blades of the spears and their daggers are likewise not domestically produced but imported from further downriver. The Wagenia are very attached to their weapons and can only very rarely be persuaded to sell them.” (Source 13)

2.4 Sexual division of production:

“To my knowledge, no other tribe in the region engages in fishing in the same way as the Wagenia. They possess three main models of wicker traps, which they use like nets. The most voluminous, commonly called molemba, serves to fish for the kisangula, or captain, whose weight can reach up thirty pounds, the kalimba, the mokosa, the sela, and the mbelu. This basket can measure up to twelve meters in length. The second model called kaseba serves to capture the kisengesenge, or agent, a fish that can weigh up to nine or ten pounds. This trap is between seven and eight meters in length. Finally, the small model whose local name is moleka catches fish that weigh between one half and five pounds. These are the tchekelo, the tchebea, the moseasea, the mofaganla, the kalili, the oswa, the mongili, the kakasa, and the melobe. This small trap is two to five meters in length and its opening does not exceed fifty centimeters in diameter. Fishing with the help of these three kinds of traps is reserved to men. Wagenian women engage in fishing by means of small, nontraditional nets that allow them to catch fish along the banks of the river whose weight does not exceed 500 grams.” (Source 4)

2.5 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

“Each group in the tribe possesses clan fishing grounds at the location of the fastest currents of the river. Families that make up the clan exercise, for one year, the right to fish at the fishing ground of the clan. The next year, the right, at the same location, goes to another family of the same clan, and so on. These fishing grounds, which consist of wooden stakes driven into crevices in the rocks in the river to which the wicker traps are firmly attached, are called *tolimo* by the Wagenia. The Wagenia raise their nets twice a day: just after sunrise (about 7 a.m.) and slightly before dusk (between 4 p.m. and 5 p.m.). Between these two times, the traps are submersed for catching fish. The fish, once he has entered the mouth of the trap, can hardly get out because of the prodigious strength of the current which is constantly pushing toward the basket, where he remains a prisoner until the arrival of the fishermen.” (Source 4)

2.6 Canoes/watercraft

“The main occupations of the Wagenia consist of catching fish and of going on trading missions either downriver or to tribes living on the Lindi. Their lives are thus bound to the canoe, where they feel very much at home. Their canoes are made by the Wamanga tribe on the Lindi river, and along their sides one can still discern clear traces of the countless strokes of their primitive adzes. In contrast with the lightweight boats of the Bangala, their canoes are made extremely tight but remain easily maneuverable; they seldom leak and probably could withstand the shock of a collision with a rocky reef. There are platforms extending at both ends of the canoes. For longer trips in their canoes, they set up roofs of banana leaves with bamboo-palm supports; within or in front of the latter they put fireplaces made of clay, around which the women and children huddle. The canoe ranges from the two-paddle pirogue to giant boats about seventy feet long that are also impressively wide. The paddles are more than man size, with the narrow, pointed blades taking up almost half the total length. The stem is often decorated with iron and copper rings, topped off with an ivory knob, whereas the blade is decorated with carvings.” (Source 13)

3. Physical Description

3.1 Male:

“Most of them are very strong and have massive builds. Especially the upper body area and the arm muscles are powerfully developed, though the legs are in proportion short and weak, so that these people are characterized

by a somewhat slow and unsteady walk. One wonders if this peculiar Body shape may not derive from generations of continuous—almost permanent—residence in canoes.” (Source 13)

3.2 Female:

“As for the women...very soon they put on so much weight that the sight of their fleshly nudity becomes disgusting to a European. To be sure, as they grow old they once again grow thin—even to the point of becoming skeleton-like—but without gaining beauty in consequence.” (Source 13)

4. Life History, mating, marriage

4.1 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):

“I will draw the reader's attention to a peculiarity not very frequent among the Bantu: the Wagenia take wives from their clan as well as neighboring clans, and sometimes from among foreigners.” (Source 4)

4.2 Pregnancy customs

“Dr. Price’s pertinent question...lead me to record the custom of another tribe (Lokele) of primitive forest folk in the Belgian Congo. The cord is never severed until the placenta is delivered. The mother is then handed a native razor, which she strops on her bare thigh. She then cuts the cord herself, about 8 to 10 in long, milks out the contained blood, and spits on the end; no ligature is applied. The strength of conviction against severing the cord while the child, alive or dead, is still joined to its mother is such that I have known a woman brought to hospital after a two-days journey in canoe for removal of retained placenta, to which the dead child was still attached.” (Source 11)

4.3 Evidence of early sexuality:

“One might argue that the boys older than ten years of age progressively less associated themselves with girls, yet sought contact in another way. The first courtship behaviours, of which the boys boasted, occurred at this age. Already at an earlier age the boys were acquainted with the meaning of their sex. They knew unmistakably the purpose of sexual difference and appeared entirely at ease with their future role. Two novices aged five and seven years staged a demonstration of sexual intercourse suggestive of a thorough knowledgeability. Observing the curvaceous contours of our son's toy swan, one three-year-old boy called out: ‘Look, she's pregnant!’” (Source 14)

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

5.1 Village and house organization:

“The Wagenia villages do not make a particularly favorable impression. Their huts are built low and covered with banana leaves; they are also dirty and kept in a semiruinous state. They are set in rows, forming streets, and are divided up into sections by means of fences. Every house has a small porch that is usually filled with clouds of smoke emanating from the door. Here the women and unoccupied men are seated, pounding manioc with wooden (or, more rarely, ivory) pestles, or making fishing utensils, or doing other such tasks. One almost never sees dogs in the villages, and goats and chickens are also rare. Along the shore there is always a good deal of activity; the loaded canoes dock there, and there is a sort of permanent market going on. The noise produced there is horrendous, with the women literally delivering orations accompanied by enraged facial expressions.” (Source 13)

5.2 Trade:

“The Wagenia [a Lokele tribe], not being farmers, sought bananas from the Ya-Sanga in exchange for their fish.” (Source 4)

“The *raphia vinifera*, which used to be cultivated for its fibre before the introduction of the cloth trade, is now only used for the production of palm wine, which forms an important part of trade between the Babole of the interior and the Lokele on the river.” (Source 7)

“Barter takes place in periodic markets held once or twice weekly. They are situated on the banks of the Za'ire River and its tributaries, where the habitats of the Wagenia fishermen and inland Songola farmers overlap. Apart from these barter markets, cash sale markets exist in villages and towns. These two kinds of markets are generally held on different days of the week. Wagenia fishermen paddle their dugouts loaded with raw and smoked fish to the barter markets, whereas the women from villages or slash-and-burn cultivation in the forest carry their produce on their backs. Fishermen place their fish on the women's piles of farm produce. They barter fish for sweet and bitter cassava, plantains, polished rice and other farm produce. Barter markets are governed by the traditional chiefs of the owner village. The daily supervision of the market is left to the deputies of the chiefs, who deal with such troubles as quarrelling, theft, and failure to settle a debt. A violation of the rules is subject to a severe fine after a judgement in the traditional court presided over by a council of village chiefs. A market supervisor signals the opening of the market, and prohibits drinking palm wine until transactions are over. Distilled spirits and marijuana are strictly prohibited and do not usually arrive at the markets. He restricts the use of cash in the barter markets: participants are not allowed to use their cash until most of the day's barter is over. Thus, the locality, periodicity, and the administration of the Songola barter markets are set up so as to segregate cash use from barter transactions. A two week observation on the diet in a Songola -Enya fishing village revealed that more than 60 percent of its total calorific intake was derived from barter, gifts given, and purchases made at a barter market. Social and economic ties based on the barter of different kinds of food are made up between the fishing and farming subgroups of the Songola. Barter rates do not fluctuate according to the supply-and-demand market principle. The rates were kept virtually stable during the observations made after an interval of one year. Imbalances of supply and demand are settled with a combination of gift-giving, one week lending, or deferred barter, of excess foods for other kinds, and finally by the use of cash. Fish in the Songola barter market is the only item that can be bartered for any other item than itself, and is the only item that can be used to settle a debt. Furthermore, Wagenia fishermen foster the fiction that any unit of fish is identical in the barter market regardless of its species, flavor, or state of preservation.” (Source 12)

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine):

“With regard to their treatment of sick people, the little bags of fur with all sorts of appendages that various men wear around their necks suggest that they must be connected with ‘medicine.’ A favorite method of treatment seems to be the enema. Using a long-necked gourd in which a hole has been made, water from the Congo is poured into the patient's body.” (Source 13)

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

“An account of *likbéli* which is a rite of the Lokele...peoples and which we call *lilwá*: *Lilwá* is a [initiation] rite performed by males. It begins in the forest. It is by nature full of many dangers. When men begin to go into *likbéli* in the forest, the one who is to undergo the ceremonies holds on to the waist-belt of a man who has already been initiated while the latter says: ‘The spirits await us there on the sides of the road; if you let go of my belt they will kill you! (You don't realise that they are only men of the village.)’ Then in the road you see men who carry sticks for fighting. Some carry arms – knives and scimitars – while their faces are daubed with white. Then the one who has taken you along gives you a stick for yourself and you fight with them with all your might. If anyone gets wounded they say that the spirits wished to kill him. Then, when you arrive inside the sacred grove *lobe* you see many men of the village who speak in words which sound nonsense and who claim that they are spirits when actually they are men. They make you lie down on the ground where they have put

packets of pounded peppers and they pour these into your eyes. Then you run around with smarting pain for a whole hour while they shout at you in the *likbéli* language...Then, after an hour, they pound up sugar cane to put into the eyes of the initiates. Straightway the smarting pain caused by the peppers ceases. You open your eyes which are bloodshot because of the peppers. Then you sit down quietly on the ground and they give you teaching about the things of the world and tell you the laws of *likbéli* which are: 1.) do not quarrel; 2.) do not fight; 3.) do not grumble at the size of food offered to you; 4.) do not refuse to give a man food when you are eating; 5.) when you go into the village do not laugh; 6.) when you go into the village do not look beneath the legs of a woman; 7.) do not speak the ordinary language of the village but only the *likbéli* language; 8.) do not put your food pot on a fire in the village but only in the forest; 9.) do not make indecent movements when dancing and do not cry..." (Source 2)

"Every Lokele lad is constrained to enter the secret society called *likbeli*, the initiation ceremony occupying some two months. On his return he is qualified to use the word LILWA, a word forbidden to the women and all who are not members of the society. Non-members are supposed to render immediate obedience to any command which is accompanied by the use of LILWA. Anyone unqualified heard to pronounce the word is heavily fined." (Source 5)

"If these residents along the Congo River are deeply attached to ancestral customs, there is one on which they hold particularly dear: circumcision. If circumcision is a surgical operation called upon to transform the sex of the man, for the Wagenia, it does not derive its importance from this perspective alone. It is primarily for the Wagenia a practice imposed by the ancestors of the chiefdom on any male representative called to play an active role in the society of the clan. In addition, and if this may seem incidental, it is nonetheless currently a major argument, circumcised children have the right and duty to participate in mock fights and single combats during organized festivities in the villages. Success in these confers high status and honor on the victorious youth. Those who are not subjected to this imperious cultural rule are excluded from active participation in these celebrations in which the *kabubu*, or local struggle, is king. Initially, the practice of circumcision was limited to male children who had reached an age where they could think rationally for themselves and who did not exceed eleven or twelve years. Currently, this limitation is less rigid and it is not uncommon to see circumcised children of six or even five years of age. It is quite natural that the age of circumcision among the Wagenia be an occasion for great festivities and public rejoicing. Thus, at the beginning of the year, the chiefs, invested community leaders, and other important Wagenians meet by the river and decide when the time of circumcision will occur. Each village chief then lists all the male children that may be circumcised, and takes the opportunity to collect donations for the gatherings that precede the big day. Most parents, several months before the date fixed, start buying fabrics and trimmings that will decorate the child during the procession which leads the crowd to the edge of the river. It is interesting to note that the physical operations are mandatorily conducted on the waterfront. Once the morning of circumcision has arrived, a procession of all the able-bodied people in the village strolls through the paths of the locality, absorbing all the children that will be initiated. Amid drums and shouts, the procession arrives at the edge of the river. The children, carried on the backs of the men, are put down on the bank of the river and supported by their maternal uncle. So begins the operation itself, which is undertaken by an experienced Wagenian, a specialist (*monganga*) whose job is specialized and limited to circumcision. This duty is hereditary and is passed from father to son. The knife used is Lokele-made and is employed only for this one use. It is coated with vegetable fat to prevent the harmful effects of rust. The moment that precedes the beginning of the operation is solemn. Voices are hushed, and everyone seems to share the pain of the child whose whole being is tensed for the immobilizing moment. In many cases, the pain does not show on his face. At the time the physician operates, a great noise of drums and human voices is heard, a call intended to cover the inevitable cries coming from the throat of the child. With a quick movement, the *monganga* makes the cut. The piece of foreskin is thrown into the river and the general public is jubilant. The father of the child and the rest of his family is overjoyed if their progeny has stoically resisted the urge to cry and lived up to the custom of the ancestors. Once the excision of the foreskin has ended, a local drug called *matungulu* is applied to the wound, and the sex is bandaged by the *mangongo* until healing is complete, which takes place, in general, a week later. Once all the children have been circumcised, they are secluded in a traditional enclosure, where, for six to eight months, they will receive a very thorough cultural education. Every day, the old leadership will instruct them on the rights, and especially the duties, prescribed by Wagenian

traditions. Questions will be asked tests are undertaken that determine the subsequent occupation and social status of each child... This traditional education is imparted in an environment where outside influences are reduced to a minimum. Only the chief of initiation charged with maintaining order and discipline inside the enclosure, the elders that give the initiates a new lesson every day, and male relatives that distribute food to the newly circumcised can enter, and no child can escape the enclosure. It is not uncommon, at the end of initiation, to see that these children have gained five to ten kilograms. They hardly move except for training in kabubu.” (Source 4)

“H. Sutton Smith referred to a powerful, local, Lokele female ‘secret society’ of 1908...and a Miss A. Wilkinson noted that they lost schoolgirls to a ritual of fattening and dancing after libeli ended in the mid-1920s...Likiliilo, although it involved body marking (scarification), did not entail any genital cutting. Nor did libeli. The absence of clitoridectomy is not what kept missionaries relatively disinterested in likiilo, but rather, the fact that it was linked to forms of political assertiveness and authority, and consequently, less threatening and disruptive.” (Source 10)

“In the Wagenia culture, there was a rule that the relatives of a deceased person should bathe in the river after the funeral to get rid of the odor of the deceased, just like the novices washing away the odor of camp after the Wagenia rituals of initiation...In funerals, the tool used for digging the grave is likewise washed in the river. In former times persons in mourning used to refrain from washing themselves for several months after the funeral. At the end of this period the widow or widower was washed in the river, dressed in new clothes and painted red. This was done by other widows or widowers, respectively. Another example is when the relatives of a deceased person were washed in the river and their heads shaved after the funeral. Likewise, the head of a deceased person was shaved when the body was washed. It was noteworthy that an important transition such as marriage was not accompanied with a river bath or shaving of the head. Menstrual blood and blood after birth were disposed of in the river as well as the umbilical cord after it fell off (preventing the sorcerer’s action), along with the peels of bananas eaten un-mashed by the mother during her lying-in. In the latter example, the desire for more births and good fish catches was expressed. Miscarried fetuses were likewise cast into the river. The issue of menstrual blood contrasts here with the pygmies’ rules, whereby menstrual women are not allowed to bathe in the river or carry drinking water (Turnbull 1976). In Wagenia culture, the baby’s first river bath half a year after its birth was a sign that the infant had survived the first months of its life and had not fallen victim to the high infant mortality. After this bath the child was allowed outdoors and outside the village. A child born after the premature death of one or more children of the same mother was placed in a canoe, which was allowed to float freely on the water without human intervention for a few moments the first day of the child’s life. After its boat-ride through no-man’s-land, it was pulled ashore again with the exclamation “we have found a baby”. Such a child was named Bvoloiyaba, i.e. “dead fish (floating on the water) of the river”. The exclamation was accompanied with the wish ‘catch us fish, Bvoloiyaba.’” (Source 9)

“As for the ikúngúsele, the final link in the chain of customary reintegration of the novice into the village system, no fixed time was set and every boy was free to choose his own time. The strict sense of the word ikúngúsele referred to the novice’s obligation to have intercourse once after his return with a girl or woman he would not marry. The increasing age differences between novices have stimulated the fulfillment of ikungusele in different ways. Young boys might acquit themselves of this task by simply touching a girl or even throwing a stone at her. Or they might go fishing and throw the first fish they catch back into the water. Whatever they did, the novices had to utter the word ikúngúsele salo salo, salo meaning luck or fortune.” (Source 9)

6.3 Other rituals:

“...the drum used for sending messages is believed to be a part of tribal life whose origin is bound up with the beginnings of the tribe itself. The writer has been unable to discover any legends relating to the coming of the drum into Native life.” (Source 1)

“The Lokele call the Congo River bolanga, meaning a cultivation field. As such, it sustains their needs of everyday life and requires their care in return. There is an obvious symbiosis maintained between human and

river, which can explain their existential sharing. The river provides food and fish, is calm and does not chasten as it receives fellowship. When carrying out the project of water resources development such as the construction of a bridge, barrage or water supply facilities, custom demands a subsequent offering of goods given to the river for acquiring success or sustainability for the project. Usually these offerings are in the form of salt, oil or soaps which the chief representative casts into the river. In the Wagenia tribe there is a belief that fishing is the only subsistence activity which God provided for them. During my survey in Kisangani, a Wagenia elder, Mr. Botowa, mentioned that ‘it is like a curse for us that we cannot grow crops; we are afraid of the forest as the forest people are afraid of the water.’” (Source 9)

6.4 Myths:

“This concept of color is also met in the Wagenia tradition, as it is related to Wagenia beliefs on the origin of their fisheries which would have been provided by their ancestors living underwater. One example of this is a white marginal figure that occurs in the myth about the Wagenia’s departure from their former place of residence (Droogers 1980). The canoe they wanted to travel in was lying on the bottom of the river and was inhabited by the spirit of an ancestor. The man who eventually raised the canoe to the surface, Lesali, went to ask this ancestor spirit for help and according to the story, everything subsequently turned white from the water and he was promised assistance from the spirit. But before the procession, Lesali colored red both himself and the liana, with which he was going to pull the canoe out of the water. Upon departure, Lesali told those who remained behind that if they saw the river turn red, this would be a sign that he had died. Traditionally, people used to be colored red at regattas, which is a type of boat race originally held on the occasion of the launching of a new canoe. Anyone catching a crocodile in former times would subsequently color his arms red, and when a snake was caught all the villagers used to color themselves red. White was hence the color of marginality or liminality, and red was more specifically that of the integration period or incorporation into the Wagenia culture (Droogers 1980).” (Source 9)

6.5 Cultural material (art, music, games):

“*The drum used:* The Lokele talking drum (*bougyu* or *bogguygu*) is a wooden slit-drum made from the red heartwood of the *wele* tree. This wood is used exclusively in present-day drum manufacture although probably another wood, namely the *bolondo* was formerly used because the name of the talking drum in the drum language is *bekeke wa alando*, i.e, a log of the *bolondo* tree...Most of the drums in use in Lokele villages today have been made by a group of men forming one section (Yakomi) of the village of Yafele. Drum-making has been practiced by this family group for as long as memory can recall. Villages or individuals wishing to acquire a drum have in some cases provided the section of *wele* trunk and have then called in a Yafele man to fashion the drum from the wood provided. There are no special rites connected with present-day drum-making. A log is ready for use when it has lain on the forest floor for a sufficiently long time to allow the rotten yellowish sapwood to be removed from the hard red heartwood. The drum-maker first chisels out a narrow longitudinal slit in the length of the cylindrical log. This slit is deepened until it penetrates about half-way into the log. The interior of the drum is then hollowed on both sides of the primary slit. The work is done by an adze, *fali*, sometimes associated by a curved axe-blade, *fondo*. The wooden chips produced are removed via the primary slit unless an accident to the end-wall of the drum leads to this becoming perforated and thus allowing the removal of chips through the hole so formed. In such cases the hole at the end is closed later by a circular bung. The hollowing on the two sides of the primary slit is differential, one side becoming thinner-walled and hollower than the other. The hollower side when struck near the slit gives out a lower note than the other side. These two notes are distinguished as *liniki lia otolome* (voice of the male) and *liniki lia otomali* (voice of the female) for the high and low notes respectively.” (Source 1)

“As for recreational activities, I have observed only dancing and games. The dancing practiced by this tribe of fishermen is original and unique, for it is carried out exclusively on the open river—in a canoe. Thirty to forty partly painted men, wearing their feather caps and carrying swords, clamber into one of the big canoes and paddle out into the middle of the most violent rapids. At the back part of the boat, two men beat the long wooden boat drums that, along with the long-drawn-out singing of the dancers, form the accompaniment to the rhythm of

the paddle strokes. The dance consists only of a much exaggerated version of the paddling movement. The principal dancers stand on the platforms, where they execute daring leaps without in the least losing track of how the boat is being steered through the dangerous waters. In a game I have observed, a number of young people gather together and hunch down in a circle. They then spin black fruit seeds like tops on the ground. As far as rules are concerned, I know only that this game usually ends in quarreling and poking other people in the ribs.” (Source 13)

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

“The central feature of the rites, however, turned around beliefs in the powers of ancestral spirits; the rites opened, for example, with the impersonation of these spirits by tribesmen dressed for the part who invaded the villages to the terror of women and children and ceremonially summoned the selected candidates.” (Source 6)

7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint:

“Both sexes often paint themselves with a red paint that they make by rubbing colored wood on a damp stone plate.” (Source 13)

7.2 Piercings:

“Both sexes wear animal teeth as jewelry in their perforated upper lips; they also wear strings of little glass beads in their earlobes. Sometimes they also perforate their nostrils.” (Source 13)

7.3 Haircut:

“The Wagenia are not acquainted with the daring hairstyles that are customary further downriver; they simply shave their hair and beads off completely.” (Source 13)

7.4 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.):

“On their arms and legs they wear very tight, even constricting, rings made of woven bast fiber, copper, iron, or (imported) brass. They decorate their necks with bands of tin or iron pearls; the latter are also used to cover their loins, but they are gradually being replaced by European glass beads. Cowries are almost never used. The men often wear caps made of monkey fur and a colorful bunch of feathers.”

7.5 Clothing

The attire of the men consists of a loin cloth made of a fiber that is produced by beating a fibrous plant material with a wooden (or, more rarely, with an ivory) mallet. The resulting cloth is reddish-brown in color and has not yet been replaced by European cloth. The women are even more scantily dressed.” (Source 13)

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