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- [Home](#)
[Dr. Tembo's Home Page](#) [Bridgewater College Home Page](#) [Sociology Dept. Home Page](#)
- [Culture of Zambia](#)
[Heaven on Earth](#) [Funerals and Burials in Zambia](#) [Mganda Traditional Dance](#) [Bamba Zonke: Storytelling Poem: Kanakazi Kayaya](#) [Poem: Woman of Dreams](#) [Poem: Three Jewels](#) [The Bridge Novel](#) [Tumbuka Radio Comedy](#)
- [Travel](#)
[Africa: Continent of Contrasts](#) [Potholes: Zambia Adventure Trip June 2005](#)
- [Photography](#)
[Contest Winner 2009](#)
- [Published Books](#)
[Satisfying Zambian Hunger for Culture \(2012\)](#) [The Bridge Novel \(2005\)](#) [Zambian Traditional Names \(2006\)](#) [Legends of Africa \(1996\)](#) [Titbits for the Curious \(\(1989\)](#)
- [Articles](#)
[Kufwasa and Serenity in Life](#) [Where is My Friend?](#) [Beauty, Christianity, and Evil](#) [Witchcraft and African Psychology](#) [The African Traditional Family](#) [What If?: Black History Month](#) [African Women Skin Beauty](#) [Skin Beauty: Tumbuka Abstract](#) [Skin Beauty: Nyanja Abstract](#) [Kukomola: Why They Hate Us](#) [The Emperor Has No Clothes](#)
- [Food and Recipes](#)
[Mbeba \(Mice\) Delicacy](#) [Chinaka Vegetable Bologna](#) [Addcited to Collard Greens or Repu?](#) [Vitumbuwa or Fritas](#)
- [Nshima](#)
[Nshima - Zambian Staple Food](#) [Nshima and Web Page](#)
- [Health & Healing](#)
[The Real Cause of AIDS](#) [HIVAIDS Scientific Controversy](#)

The Traditional African Family

by Mwizenge S. Tembo, Ph. D.

The subject of "traditional family patterns in Africa" is so broad that it cannot be adequately addressed in one chapter. The cultural and physical diversity added with the dramatic social changes of the last three decades on the continent makes the family pattern situation so variegated as to defy any sweeping generalizations. This difficulty in generalization bone of diversity was already apparent to many early scholars of the African traditional family like Mair¹ and Goode².

This chapter will briefly explore traditional African family patterns describing the patrilineal and matrilineal families. The case studies presented will be those of the Baganda of Uganda and Bemba of Northern Zambia. Some of the major issues raised will include polygamy, tribe, clan, the extended family, bride price and the raising of children.

As the African society has not been static, changes in the traditional family patterns will be briefly alluded to. Lastly, this author will argue that the Eurocentric nature of the descriptions and characterization of the traditional African family patterns by earlier scholars has tended to distort and obscure many of the strengths of the African traditional family.

PERVERSY OF POLYGAMY

Scholars of the African traditional family agree that the one widely known aspect that distinguishes the African traditional family, say from the European one, is the perversity of polygamy³. Although polygamy is the act of an individual being married to more than one spouse at the same time, the more commonly practiced in Africa is polygyny "...the legal marriage of one man to two or more women concurrently - is permitted."⁴ This author argues that because of its perversity, the presence and absence of polygyny was a significant determinant and indicator of the nature of virtually every African social group; whether tribe, clan, or extended family, whether matrilineality or patrilineality was practiced, bride price existed, and how children were raised.

Polygyny was widely practiced in Africa and it often formed the backbone of the traditional African family patterns. According to Mair, "...the polygynous joint family, consisting of a man, his wives, and their children, is the ideal for most Africans."⁵ Studies conducted from the 1930s to 1950s indicate that polygyny was common virtually in all regions of Africa.⁶

In spite of the perversity of polygyny, there was evidence that it was on the decline. The major reason cited is that with increasing modern influences, marrying more than one wife became an economic burden. Even traditionally, ordinary citizens could not achieve marrying more than one wife. Often only Kings, chiefs and men who had wealth could afford it. Polygyny though set the tone and often determined the strength of the society and pattern of social organization of the traditional African family. The Baganda people of Uganda provide the best illustration.⁷

In the late and early 19th century, a detailed study conducted among the Baganda found that, "Polygyny, the type of marriage in which the husband has plural wives, is not only the preferred but the dominant form of marriage for the Baganda."⁸ Commoners had two or three, chiefs had dozens, and the Kings had hundreds of wives. What was the structure of the polygynous family?

Although among the Baganda, the nuclear family of the mother, father, and their children constitutes the smallest unit of the Baganda kinship system, the traditional family consists of "..... several nuclear units held in association by a common father."⁹ Because the Baganda people are patrilineal, the household family also includes other relatives of the father such as younger unmarried or widowed sisters, aged parents, and children of the father's clan sent to be brought up by him. Included in this same bigger household will be servants, female slaves, and their children.¹⁰ The father remains the head of the nuclear family units.

Having so many people in this household should not be confused with other types of large families like, ".....'the joint' family, with its several married brothers and their families living together or the 'extended' family, consisting of a group of married off spring living in one household under a patriarch or matriarch."¹¹ The Baganda are also patrilocal. Therefore, the new families tend to generally live near or with the husband's parents.

KINSHIP AND CLAN

The Baganda use "classificatory" system of kinship terminology which seems common to virtually all the Bantu peoples of Central and Southern Africa. Similar systems of kinship terminology can be found, for example, among the Ndebele of Zimbabwe, the Zulu of South Africa, the Ngoni and Tumbuka of Eastern Zambia.

In this system, all brothers of the father are called "father", all sisters of the mother are called "mother", all their children "brother" and "sister". In male-speaking terms, father's sister's daughters (cross-cousins) are called cousins. But they are terminologically differentiated from parallel cousins and from sisters. A total of 68 linguistic terms of relationships are used by the Baganda.¹²

The Baganda have a very important aspect of the social or family structure; "the consanguinal kin group" or "blood line" which is a line of descent traced through the male members of the family or patri-sib. "By combining the patrilocal rule of residence with consanguinal descent, the Baganda have built a formidable system of clans."¹³

Among the Baganda, the clan has remained the most important kinship entity. The clan is linked by four factors. First, two animal totems from one of which the clan derives its name. Second, an identifying drum beat used at ceremonies. Third, certain distinguishing personal names. Fourth, special observations related to pregnancy, childbirth, naming of the child, and testing the child's legitimacy as clan member.¹⁴

The existence of patriarchy and the patrilineal system among the Baganda might suggest that individual men have the most dominant social status. But quite to the contrary, the clan seems to have a more supreme influence. For example, when a man dies among the Baganda, his power over the property ends. The clan chooses the heir. "The clan assumes control of inheritance; the wishes of the dead person may or may not be honored.The eldest son cannot inherit."¹⁵

The Baganda practice the levirate custom. The man who is the heir to the widow has the additional family responsibility of adopting the widow's family. He "also adopts the deceased person's children, calling them his and making no distinction between them and his own children."¹⁶

CHILDREN

Although children among the Baganda are brought up in an unroutinized and casual way with a few rites of passage to adulthood, they seem to go through three distinct stages during their up bringing. Each stage has its own features, some of which are perhaps peculiar to the Baganda customs and system of socialization in their traditional family pattern.

The naming ceremony is very important early in the child's life. Before this ceremony, the child is not considered a complete member of the clan or society. ".....it is not until this ceremony is completed that the child's legitimacy is once and forever established."¹⁷

People gather at the clan chief's house. The mothers bring children of both sexes with the umbilical cords carefully kept after birth. The paternal grandmothers drop the cords into a can, which contains beer, milk, and water. "If they float, the clan chief accepts the children as legitimate; but if the cord sinks, the child to whom it belongs is considered born in adultery and disowned."¹⁸

After this part of the ceremony, a feast is held. The following day, the naming ceremony takes place. The paternal grandfather recites many names of the clan's dead ancestors. If the child laughs, then the last mentioned name is given to him or her, "....and the soul of the ancestors is considered to have entered its body."¹⁹

The significant feature of the second stage in Baganda childhood is that after they are weaned, Baganda children do not live with their biological parents. Boys will live with the brothers of their father and until marriage, girls live in the home of a married elder brother or with the brother of the father. "Living with new parents means no particular change in status; the biological parents do not forget their off spring and are always present for any ceremonies involving their children."²⁰

The third stage in Baganda childhood is the socialization of the child in readiness for adulthood. This is sexual differentiation in socialization in which girls will become acceptable mothers and wives and boys husbands and fathers. Children are expected to help in minor household tasks. Boys herd goats, cows, and livestock. They also perform light duties for relatives. Girls at an early age are taught a wide range of household and agricultural duties including cooking, cultivation and tending children. "Girls, in distinction to boys, seldom have time to play games."²¹

MATRILINEAL TRADITIONAL AFRICAN FAMILY

Among the Bemba people of Northern Zambia, marriage is matrilineal. "That is to say a man goes to live in his wife's village, at any rate for the first years of his married life."²² This is also true of marriage among other Zambian tribes like the Bisa, Lala, Lamba, Chewa, Kaonde, and many others. Among the Chewa of Eastern Zambia, the custom of man living with his wife's parents temporarily or permanently was known as Ukamwini.²³

During the period earlier than 1940s, marriages remained completely matrilineal during the couple's entire life. But however, after a few years of contact with white civilization and subsequent social change, the custom has gradually changed. The husband could take his wife home if the marriage was thought stable especially after the couple has had two or more children.

The basic family unit among the Bemba was not the nuclear family. But rather the matrilineal extended family comprised of a man and his wife, their married daughters, son-in-laws, and their children. "The basic kinship unit of Bemba society is not the individual family, but a matrilineal extended family composed of a man and his wife, their married daughters, and the latter's husbands and children."²⁴

A young Bemba couple live in the same hut with a child of pre-weaning age whom they may have. But this is not an independent nuclear family unit. The man or bridegroom ".....builds himself a house at his wife's village and becomes a member of her extended family group."²⁵ The wife cooks at her mother's house with other female relatives who are mainly unmarried and married sisters. Meanwhile, the husband works under his father-in-law's orders with other young son-in-laws.²⁶ "A matrilineal family of this kind forms the nucleus of a village community (umushi) which other relatives of the head of the family afterwards join."²⁷

Polygamy or polygyny, which is a distinguishing feature in many traditional African families especially in patrilineal and patriarchal societies, is uncommon among the matrilineal Bemba. Where as chiefs have a number of wives, it is very rare to find ordinary men who have more than one wife. Because of this, extended families among the Bemba are not really as large as those found, especially among patriarchal polygynous traditional families in other tribes be it in Southern, Eastern, or West Africa.²⁸ "Polygamy is relatively speaking uncommon in this area and the institution is not an essential part of the Bemba family and economic life as it is among so many Bantu peoples."²⁹

KINSHIP AND CLAN

The Bemba's kinship is based on descent in the matrilineal line. This again is true among other Zambian tribes like the Bisa, Lamba, Lala, Chewa, Kaonde, Luba, and others. A man's legal entitlements and rights of inheritance are on his mother's side. He has no rights on his paternal clan. "A Bemba belongs to his mother's clan (umukoa), a group of relatives more or less distantly connected, who reckon descent from real or fictitious common ancestries, use a common totem name, and a series of praise titles, recite a common legend of origin and accept certain joint obligations."³⁰

The lineage is the effective kinship unit among the Bemba around which ".....marriage and the organization of family life...." revolves.³¹ The matrilineal household and descent determine or influence two major social activities. First, in succession and inheritance the man inherits his dead grandfather, maternal uncle, or brother. A woman inherits her maternal grandmother or sisters. Headmanships of villages, court offices, ritual titles, and chieftainships are passed on in this way.

Second, social support is usually sought from the matrilineal line or descent group. For example, in debt and marriage obligations. The male head has control over children produced by the children of the group. When a girl is getting married her mother's brother must be consulted. In many matrilineal societies, the maternal uncle in the go-between or undertakes all the arrangements and responsibilities for his nephew's marriage.³² In case of divorce, the women's people were legal guardians of the children.

CHILDREN

Children among the matrilineal peoples are brought up in a similar traditional extended family village social environment. There is socialization to raise boys and girls to become responsible and acceptable adults of the village, community, and ultimately society. The children learn the customs, beliefs, and culture pertaining to the social roles of being a woman, mother, and wife for girls; and a man, father, and husband for boys. Matrilineality is the major influence in what children learn and come to accept about their society.

Power and authority in matrilineal societies ultimately lies in the woman and her brother. As such children at an early age learn that their father has little authority or responsibility for them. The father knows that his children are not his ultimate responsibility but his sister's children. Meanwhile the man and her married sister do not live in one locality, as they must maintain their marriages. Some scholars have suggested that this arrangement might be fraught with potential social problems and conflict.³³ More so than a patrilineal household where all the people charged with authority over the children potentially live in one household.

Summary:

Overall, there are two forms of social groups that form the basis of Bemba marriage and traditional family. First, there is the local unit of matrilineal marriage "..... consisting of a man, his wife, his married daughters and their husbands and children,..."³⁴ Second, the matrilineal descent group which consists of maternal relatives and ancestors traced back to several generations. These constitute the core of the Bemba traditional African family around which the social organization of the traditional society revolves. "Both form the basis of the political structure of the tribe since the matrilineal extended family is the nucleus of the Bemba village although

many other elements may be added to it, and succession to all political offices is fixed by the rule of matrilineal descent."³⁵

EUROCENTRICITY AND THE TRADITIONAL AFRICAN FAMILY

Patrilineality, matrilineality, and the practice of polygyny are three of the major distinguishing variations of the African traditional extended family. The literature on the subject is truly as vast and reflects traditional patterns that are as diverse as the variations of the physical looks of the people found on the continent. What is significant about the various descriptions of the traditional African family is that they are from back in the period before the 1940s and in case of the Baganda from the late 1800s. Social change in Africa as everywhere else is ubiquitous. Such influences as end of intra and inter-tribal warfare with the coming of European colonialism, the Western money economy, industrialization, migration, and urbanization have certainly transformed the traditional African family from what it was 50 to 100 years ago. By 1935, for example, anthropologists like Mair and Richards and no doubt many others were already noticing change in marriage and family patterns.³⁶

The written descriptions and therefore perceptions of the traditional African family were also a victim of the European colonial cultural bias and Christian values. In a more obvious way, this Eurocentrism³⁶ did not treat polygamy, the African marriages and the extended family and any others of its "eccentricities" (regarded as such because they were different from European customs) as social phenomena that was legitimate and workable in its own African social circumstances and environment. But rather as curiosities that were to succumb to the superior European monogamous marriage values legitimated by Christianity.

Some of the issues that were the products of the Eurocentrically biased judgements include the following two. First, the strengths, durability, and resilience of the African traditional family were never dwelt on explicitly and at length. For example, in the polygynous African family, like among the Baganda, and many others, your father's wives and brothers were not just mothers and fathers just as mere kinship terms. These carried with them all the heavy social obligations demanded of a mother or father, daughter or son. There was never a distinction between the biological and non-biological kin as far as primary parental obligations were concerned. Other significant strengths are that the traditional African family increased group cohesion in an otherwise harsh physical and social environment.

Second, the continued Eurocentric descriptions and characterization of the African traditional family as somewhat depraved lead to the use of such terms as bride price, avoidance social taboos, segregated relationships, lack of "love" and "tenderness" in African marriages and families.

The continued, persistent and wide use of the term "bride price" to describe the valuables that were often given to the bride's parents before marriage was legitimated is one excellent example of evaluating and perceiving a custom from a biased Eurocentric perspective. Indeed, such authors as Chondoka have recently found little accuracy or justification in calling this custom "purchasing" or "buying" of a wife. In fact Chondoka finds the use of the terms "dowry", "bride price" to refer to particularly traditional Zambian marriages to be serious misnomers introduced by European missionaries and colonialists in Africa. "There is no bride price in our society. Traditionally no parent fixes a price for his daughter (a bride). If he did, it would be like selling her. We

do not sell brides in our society. However, as a prospective husband, you are told to pay for the marriage and not the bride. Marriage involves much more than just the bride."³⁷

This author would further argue that among the African people that are conductors, participants, and are actors in these marriages, the concept "buy", "purchase" a wife or bride does not exist. For example, among the Tumbuka³⁸ of Eastern Zambia the verb kugula (to buy) is used to refer to purchasing of material objects or commodities and domestic animals. The verb kulobola is very specific meaning the valuables that are given partially or in full to the girl's people to legitimate or seal the marriage. Lobola is widely used among the Bantu peoples of Central and Southern Africa.³⁹

"Avoidance", "segregated relationships", lack of "love" and "tenderness" in traditional African marriages and the family has been a common theme among European scholars. These views were expressed before 1930s and as late as 1960s. LeVine⁴⁰ described some of the customs and patterns that surround interaction in the traditional African family as "institutionalized restrictions", "segregated patterns", and "avoidance patterns". These relationships which are described in this way are rituals of respect between a son-in-law and his mother-in-law, a daughter-in-law and her father-in-law. Similar customs or "rules of restrictions" in interaction apply between many other kin in a traditional African family. These Anglo-Saxon or Eurocentric descriptions do not help in the fair and accurate perception of the traditional African family. "The descriptions implicitly portray (to the African and Westerner) African relationships as being negative, rigid and miserable. Anything described in these terms must inherently be bad, primitive and, therefore, undesirable."⁴¹

Typical of this Eurocentric characterization of the traditional African family is often not only the contention that there cannot be genuine love in a polygamous marriages but that even monogamous ones lack "genuine" love. Some have even gone as far as saying that for the African husband nothing else matters so long as he impregnates his wife every few years.⁴² In the study of the Baganda traditional family cited earlier, the author describes how children are raised among the Baganda. The author describes the interaction between the Baganda mother and her baby as unfavorable and lacking any affection or love. "The mother may hug or caress the child and comfort it when hurt or in distress. However, children are never kissed - kissing is not known to the Baganda - and the close intimacy of the mother-child relationship as found in America, for example, is not present. The language of the Baganda carries no word for love or tender affection; the closest is a word that is best translated as "like".⁴³

The issue to emphasize, is not so much that there are no weaknesses or shortcomings in the traditional African family, but that the Eurocentric Anglo-Saxon descriptions (that are believed to be objective and describe social phenomena as accurately as possible) eliminate, and over shadow the strengths and positive aspects that might have existed and may still exist in the African traditional family patterns.

The common descriptions of the African traditional family in the literature is Eurocentric and biased. Caution should be applied when sweeping generalizations are made which make the traditional African family is made to appear static, rigid, and lacking in vitality.

CONCLUSION

The traditional African family is a very broad concept which has challenging variations across the continent. These variations are caused by differences in tribal customs or culture according geography, history, religion, external influence of colonialism, inter migration, political and economic structures and influences. Because of this wide spectrum, it is not possible to explore all aspects of the traditional African family.

This chapter only focussed on the matrilineal and polygynous patrilineal African traditional family patterns because they seem representative of the broad patterns that exists on the continent. It must be emphasized, however, that these were traditional patterns as far back as late 1800s up to as late as 1960s. The dramatic social changes in Africa during the last three decades of political independence from European colonialism have obviously affected the traditional family. Explaining these changes would require a different chapter.

FOOTNOTES

1 Lucy P. Mair, "African Marriage and Social Change," in Survey of African Marriage and Family Life, Edited by Arthur Phillips, (London: Oxford University Press, 1953) pp.1 – 177.

2 William J. Good, "Changing Family Patterns: Sub-Saharan Africa," in World Revolution and Family Patterns. (New York: The Free Press, 1963.) pp.164-202.

3 Lucy P. Mair, "African Marriage and Social Change," in Survey of African Marriage and Family Life, edited by Arthur Phillips, (London: Oxford University Press, 1953) p.1

4 Ibid., p.1

5 Ibid., p.1

6 Ibid., p.10 Note also that special attention should be paid to the distinction between polygyny being practiced widely among people of Africa and it being the dominant form of traditional family pattern. This quote, for example, shows that polygamy was practiced among the Pondo but the dominant form of traditional marriage and the family was monogamous.

7 Stuart Queen, Robert W. Habenstein, and John B. Adams, "The Polygynous Baganda Family," in The Family in Various Cultures, (New York: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1961) Ch. IV, pp.66-87.

8 Ibid., P.67

9 J.A. Barnes, "Marriage in a Changing Society: a Study in Structural Change among the Fort Jameson Ngoni," The Rhodes-Livingstone Papers, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1951, 1970). Lucy P. Mair, "African Marriage and Social Change," in Survey of African Marriage and Family Life. Edited by Arthur Phillips, (London: Oxford University Press, 1953) p.1

10 Stuart Queen, Robert W. Habenstein, and John B. Adams, "The Polygynous Baganda Family," in The Family in Various Cultures. (New York: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1961) p.68

11 This study was conducted in the late 1800s when inter-tribal warfare and capturing of slaves from the wars was still very common. This explains why the family household included servants, female slaves, and their children. This is certainly no longer the case in the contemporary African traditional family.

12 Stuart Queen, Robert W. Havenstein, and John B. Adams, "The Polygynous Baganda Family," in The Family in Various Cultures. (New York: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1961) p.68

13 Ibid., p.70

14 Ibid.,p. 70

15 Ibid., p.72

16 Ibid., p.72

17 Ibid., p.72

18 Ibid., p.76

19 Ibid., p.77

20 Ibid., p.77

21 Ibid., p.78

22 Ibid., p.78

23 Lucy P. Mair, "African Marriage and Social Change," in Survey of African Marriage and Family Life. Edited by Arthur Phillips, (London: Oxford University Press, 1953)

24 Audrey I. Richards, "Bemba Marriage and Present Economic Conditions," The Rhodes-Livingstone Papers, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1969). pp. 28-39. Information on traditional marriage customs among both patrilineal and matrilineal peoples of Zambia is available in Yizenge A. Chondoka, Traditional Marriages in Zambia: A Study in Cultural History, (Ndola: Mission Press, 1988)

25 This book is written in Chewa indigenous Central African language. The book describes and explains Chewa traditions and customs including Ukamwini. Mbiri Ya Achewa, 195?

26 Audrey I. Richards, "Bemba Marriage and Present Economic Conditions," The Rhodes-Livingstone Papers. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1969) p.30

27 Ibid., (p.30)

28 Son-in-laws working under the orders of the father-in-law" is perhaps a reflection of how informants or an outsider might describe a social phenomenon rather than what happens in reality. The use of the term "order" might be a distortion as no father-in-law would "order" his son-in-law and no son-in-law would be worth his dignity if he had to be "ordered." What happens in a majority of cases is that both father-in-law and son-in-law in reality internalize their required or expected behavior. A good son-in-law hoes the garden, chops trees, and generally help his wife's family as proof of his love for his wife, dedication, and being a well cultured individual.

A father-in-law knows what to expect from a good son-in-law. So the relationship is often based on mutual expectations and is more beneficial for both parties than confrontational and fraught with "issuing of orders". In fact cases where the father-in-law has to issue orders are perhaps such a minority that it is ironical that they are used to characterize the whole social interaction. Would you say in the Western marriage ritual of the priest leading on the saying of vows, that the priest "orders" the groom to "now kiss the bride", or "put the ring on the bride's finger", or "ordered" to be married for that matter?

- 29 Audrey I. Richards, "Bemba Marriage and Present Economic Conditions," The Rhodes-Livingstone Papers, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1969) p.30
- 30 Ibid., p.30
- 31 Ibid., p.30
- 32 Ibid., p.30
- 33 Ibid., p.32
- 34 Ibid., p.33
- 35 3Audrey I. Richards, "Bemba Marriage and Present Economic Conditions." The Rhodes-Livingstone Papers. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1969) p.33 Lucy P. Mair, "African Marriage and Social Change," in Survey of African Marriage and Family Life, Edited by Arthur Phillips, (London: Oxford University Press, 1953). J. Clyde Mitchell, The Yao Village: a Study in the Social Structure of a Malawian Tribe. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1956, 1966, 1971). Elizabeth Colson, Marriage and the Family among the Plateau Tonga of Northern Rhodesia. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1958, 1967, 1975).
- 36 Lucy P. Mair "African Marriage and Social Change," in Survey of African Marriage and Family Life. Edited by Arthur Phillips, (London: Oxford University Press, 1953) p.14
- 37 Lucy P. Mair, "African Marriage and Social Change," in Survey of African Marriage and Family Life, Edited by Arthur Phillips, (London: Oxford University Press, 1953) p.51 Naboth M. J. Ngulube, Some Aspects of Growing Up in Zambia. (Lusaka: Nalinga Consultancy/Sol-Consult A/S Limited, 1989)
- 38 Lucy P. Mair, "African Marriage and Social Change," in Survey of African Marriage and Family Life, Edited by Arthur Phillips, (London: Oxford University Press, 1953) p. 126
- 39 Ibid., p.131
- 40 Ibid., p.131
- 41 Molefi Kete Asante, Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change. (Buffalo: Amulefi Publishing Company, 1980).
- 42 Yizenge A. Chondoka, Traditional Marriages in Zambia: A Study in Cultural History. (Ndola: Mission Press, 1988)
- 43 Ibid., p.15
- 44 Thomas Price, A Short English-Nyanja Vocablary, (Lusaka: National Educational Company of Zambia, and Kenneth Kaunda Foundation, 1970). p.19
- 45 Naboth M. J. Ngulube, Some Aspects of Growing Up in Zambia. (Lusaka: Nalinga Consultancy/Sol-Consult A/ S Limited, 1989) p.97

46 R.A. LeVine. "Patterns of Personality in Africa," in Responses to Change: Society, Culture and Personality. Edited by G.A. DeVos, (New York: D. Van Nostrand Co., 1976)

47 Mwizenge S. Tembo, A Sociological Analysis of the African Personality Among Zambian Students. (East Lansing, Michigan State University, 1980) p.11 Unpublished M.A. Thesis.

48 R. A. LeVine, "Patterns of Personality in Africa," in Responses to Change: Society, Culture and Personality. Edited by G.A. DeVos, (New York: D. Van Nostrand Co., 1976)

49 Stuart Queen, Robert W. Habenstein, and John B. Adams, "The Polygynous Baganda Family," in The Family in Various Cultures. (New York: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1961)p.76

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The author obtained his B.A in Sociology and Psychology at University of Zambia in 1976, M.A , Ph. D. at Michigan State University in Sociology in 1987. He was a Lecturer and Research Fellow at the Institute of African Studies of the University of Zambia from 1977 to 1990. During this period he conducted extensive research and field work in rural Zambia particularly in the Eastern and Southern Provinces of the country. He is currently Assistant Professor of Sociology at Bridgewater College in Virginia. This manuscript was written for a book, which was never published, which was to be edited by Dr. Elizabeth Brooks who was a lecturer at the University of Zambia. It was written in 1988.

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