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SEVEN TRIBES OF BRITISH CENTRAL AFRICA

Edited by
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and
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BRITISH CENTRAL AFRICA

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NOTE

KINSHIP symbols have not been standardized save for the articles by Barnes, Colson, Gluckman, and Mitchell. In the main we have followed accepted usage, but have introduced new symbols in one or two places to exclude the necessity for using symbols composed of two letters, as in the common symbol for sister, Si.

M—Mother	B—Brother	P—Parent
F—Father	Z—Sister	H—Husband
S—Son	G—Sibling	W—Wife
D—Daughter	C—Child	E—Spouse

Other symbols are built up on these, as Father's Sister, FZ; Mother's Mother, MM; Mother's Mother's Sister's Daughter's Husband, MMZDH. Seniority is indicated by a plus or minus, thus: older Brother is B+, younger Brother is shown as B-.

THE LOZI OF BAROTSELAND¹ IN NORTH-WESTERN RHODESIA

By MAX GLUCKMAN

I. BAROTSELAND AND THE BAROTSE PEOPLE

Lozi Origins and History

THE Lozi people, who are the dominant tribe in the region of north-western Rhodesia usually called Barotseland, live in a great flood-plain which stretches along the Upper Zambezi for about 120 miles, between 14½ and 16 degrees south latitude. At its widest the Plain is some 25 miles wide. It is enclosed by bushed scarps of various heights up to 200 ft. From this Plain the Lozi conquered outwards until they ruled as far as Wankie, south of the Victoria Falls, to the Zambezi valley below the Victoria Falls where it is inhabited by the We, to Lake Lukanga and Kasempa, as far north as Balovale, and south by the Kwito river across to the Kwando-Mashi-Linyanti-Chobe river. Within their kingdom were the members of some twenty-five tribes, many of diverse origin. In this essay I deal mostly with the Lozi themselves.

The name *Lozi* is of comparatively recent origin. Formerly the people were known as Aluyi or Aluyana. In the middle of the nineteenth century they were temporarily conquered by the Kololo, a horde with a Basuto nucleus, under whom their name seems to have been changed to Barotse. Since the Luyi liberated their country from the Kololo, but retained the Kololo language, *Rotse* has become *Lozi*, in accordance with regular phonetic changes of *r* to *l* and *ts* to *z*. The surface similarity of *Rotse* with Hurutshe, the parent stock of the Tswana (Bechuana), and with Rozwi, the dominant 'Shona' group, has led some ethnologists to relate the Luyi to these peoples in the south. But the Lozi's own legends, and the ecological, linguistic, and ethnological evidence undoubtedly give them a northern origin,

¹ I collected the data for this study while working for the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute. My visits to central Barotseland were: ten months in 1940, ten months in 1942, three months in 1947; and I spent five weeks at Sesheke in 1944. At the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute in Livingstone I mixed constantly with Lozi and was visited by many from Loziland, including King Imwiko, the Princess Chief Mulima, Ishee Kwandu Mtwaleti, Ngambela Wina, and other senior councillors.

and girls above puberty used to go in charge of men to cattle-posts to herd cattle in the flood-season and that there they were hardened and taught morals and tribal law. Also they say that marriage-ages were higher then. Nowadays almost all Lozi boys, and most girls, go to school, for the Barotse Government has endeavoured to make education compulsory.

Girls too grow gradually into family activities, but they have a sharp break at first menstruation. Then a girl is secluded for two or three months, spending the day in a hideout in the bush in charge of older women, and returning in the evening to the village. I have been told by men that the girl enlarges her vagina¹ with a hoe-handle, and enlarges her labia minora. At the end of this period the girl is finely dressed and decorated and sits downcast and tearful surrounded by women. Later in the day, escorted by her male guardian and a substitute for her mother, she emerges under a blanket, which the man removes with a hoe and the woman with an axe. The girl fetches water and is abused, then she chooses a new name. The people present dance. The girl is now ready for marriage.

Other Social Relationships

I mention briefly here a few other social relationships to complete this account of Lozi society. As the Lozi desire goods they do not make themselves, they barter and now also buy goods from many unrelated persons. They frequently have barter partners in the subject tribes with whom they establish *bulikani*, friendship, thus changing the transitory barter relationship into a wider one of mutual help. Often they make blood-brotherhood with their friends, who then become as kinsfolk to them and their own kin. The Lozi used to make these friendships both among themselves and with Kwangwa smiths, Nkoya hunters and honey-collectors, Lunda dugout makers, and other tribal specialists.

In these pacts the Lozi tend to extend the scope and duration of transitory associations to make them multiplex and permanent relationships, akin to the pattern of their kinship and political ties. Thus if a Lozi gives some of his cattle to another to herd, joins with others in herding cattle, employs a servant, ploughs for another, lends another land, joins people in working a fish-dam or net, his relationships with them are more than mere contracts. The pattern of all

¹ Most Lozi men denied knowledge of the hymen, so do not speak of this as deflowering.

social relationships for the Lozi is the multiplex ties which link them in subsistence units in which they and their fellow villagers and kin hold land, live, work, play, rejoice, and mourn together.

This establishing of wider ties extends to relationships in the supernatural realm, or is extended by mystical links to some apparently temporary associations. If a warrior kills an enemy or big game, he has to take ritual precautions to prevent the dead affecting him ill. If a Lozi is treated by a leech, he tends to become bound to that leech.

Leeches and diviners are among the most common important specialists of Lozi society. Many of them are Old Mbunda and Wiko. The longer I lived among the Lozi the more I felt that almost everyone was skilled in treating some disease. Certain of them are well known over wide areas.

Should a Lozi suffer a misfortune, he is likely to resort to a diviner to detect the cause. Some of these causes I have already mentioned: royal spirits, sorcerers, the ancestors. But many diseases are almost personified by the Lozi and are commonly divined: *liyala*, *maimbwe*, *mahamba*, *sisongo*, *muba*, and others. Some of these diseases are more clearly associated with demons; thus *muba* is related to *mwenda-ndjangula* and *mwenda-lutaka*, demons of the bush and the Plain respectively, which have half of human bodies and are fiery red. They are of both sexes. Should one of these spirits desire a man or woman, it will try to kidnap him or her, and can at least strike with severe illness. In all these diseases the treatment aims to produce, by smoking, drumming, and singing, hysteric symptoms: violent jerkings of the body in a state of seeming trance. When a patient is being treated, kin and neighbours come to attend. The drumming wakens the disease in all of them who have been ill of it before and they too will join in the violent dance of the sufferer. The disease links together all sufferers, and anyone who recovers from a severe attack has to become a leech treating it.

Most of these diseases are held by the Lozi to come from the subject tribes. *Liyala* only is Lozi and Kwangwa. *Maimbwe* is Nkoya. *Sisongo* and *mahamba* have been brought by the recent Wiko immigrants and in 1940-2 *sisongo* was sweeping through the land. Some Lozi held that the Wiko had planted it in the paths to get victims from whom they could make money. In 1947 *muba* had replaced it: most drummings were for *muba*. Despite *muba*'s association with the Lozi demons of bush and Plain, it is believed to come from the Totela. We have here the common ascription of mystical powers to subjected peoples.

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