



Locating the Bemba Kinship in 21st Century Zambia: A Historical and Futuristic Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Published Online: July 14, 2023

This article emanates from findings of a desktop research conducted to describe the historical and futuristic perspectives of the Bemba kingship. The details of the study were extracted from the data gathered from archives, interviews and literature reviewed on kingship. Findings point to a well-archived, once rock-solid Bemba kingship lineage to a degenerated Bemba kingship one today. Findings have revealed that the causes of the degeneration of the Bemba kingship are in print, electronic and oral tradition domains. Lifestyles interrogated point to a complete breakdown of the extended family system as one of the main reasons of the none-adherence to kingship ties. Other reasons established by the study include dynamics in the political, socio-economic, cultural practices and modernization. The study recommends various familial, community, stakeholder and government initiatives to support and restore the Bemba kingship.

KEYWORDS:

Bemba, Kingship, Culture, Community, Tradition, Family

INTRODUCTION

The theme of linguistic anthropology and social cohesion remains relatively underdeveloped in Zambia. Yet social change, in Zambia as is in other parts of the world is very common (Mainde, Mpolomoka & Mwansa, 2022; Mainde, Chola & Mpolomoka, 2021; Hedda, 2005; Huinink, Bruderl, Nauck, Walper, Castiglioni & Fedldhaus, 2011; Mair, 1953). Such influences as the Western culture, money economy and HIV/AIDS, have certainly strained extended family ties to an extent that many people no longer honour the ideals of traditional family loyalty (Schwimmer, 2003; Goody, 1963). Patrilineal and matrilineal systems are the major distinguishing variations of the African traditional extended

family. In fact, it is important to note that such cultural ideals are as common to African societies as those of personal autonomy are in Western societies (Gordon, 2002). However, by 1935 for example, anthropologists like Mair and Richards and no doubt, many others were already noticing change in marriage and family patterns such that those who still honour their family obligations may do so out of a mixed sense of dread and guilt (Mair, 1953; Richards, 1969; Goody, 1963). Still it is believed that most traditional family values like extended family relations can be a force to curb aspects of neglect as well as loneliness and to address many issues affecting people in need of support (Ferguson, 1999).

From anthropological and history perspective there seems to be a lot of research with regard to such cultural themes as social structure or political organization of cultural groups. This can be attested to when it comes to history material offered in schools but not so much has been done to explore themes of function such as patterns of the social relations among members of a speech community that help regulate

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**Cite this Article: Alice Bimba, Daniel L. Mpolomoka, Rex L. Sampa, Obster Gorebrowne Nyirenda, Lufeyo Chitondo, Limbali Muyendekwa, Kennedy Kangwa, Abigail Nachilima Chalwe (2023). Locating the Bemba Kinship in 21st Century Zambia: A Historical and Futuristic Perspective. International Journal of Social Science and Education Research Studies, 3(7), 1313-1326*

behaviour (Carsten, Janet, 2004; Fetterman, 1989, 2019). Although a reasonable collection of study exists from the works of Fox Robin (1977), McConvell, Patrick (2013) and Guest, Kenneh (2013) which explore most aspects of kinship terms in various linguistic groups, the significance of the extension of kinship terminologies in Bemba has relatively been underexplored (Chisanga, 1980).

PHILOSOPHICAL UNDERPINNING

This paper is anchored on the principle of 'Balanced Reciprocity' advanced by the anthropologist Marshall Sahlins in 1965. He observed that these types of reciprocity occurred in all human societies around the globe. There are different forms of reciprocity. Common among them are: generalized reciprocity, balanced reciprocity, and negative reciprocity. Generalized reciprocity has no value calculation, attached to it. It is common among family, friends and close associates. Balanced reciprocity involves value calculation of services or goodwill within a fixed time frame it is provided. Often time, this is what social psychologists speak of as "the Law of Reciprocity", which states that "when a good gesture is made to you, there is a psychological urge to repay the favor". Negative reciprocity involves one party acting in their interest because of profits or other material benefits. Looking at negative reciprocity, one can easily tell that it is the opposite of generalized reciprocity.

Reciprocity is encountered in everyday life and thrives on social exchange, deep rooted in social custom and culture that is constantly used. In this case, among the Bemba people. Suffice to say, one may not necessarily know the principle in a theoretical way, but apply it.

This principle should apply for kin relationships to be sustained (Foley, 1997). The principle applies to individuals who are more distantly related than those of the same household. In this form of reciprocity individuals may not expect anything in return immediately, but not getting anything eventually, would damage the relationship.

Three examples of the linkage of 'Reciprocity' in the Bemba kinship stand out in the findings established through oral literature (interviews held with kinsmen). Their lamentations are not without noble cause. In the first instance, it was established that many families no longer had regular contact with their kinfolk, creating a gap in family networks. It was noted that there were those who insisted on their privacy and those in need, who feared to approach such ones the latter for help lest they were accused of 'social trespass.' This was further necessitated by the ever-increasing number of people in need, a situation that brought kinship relations under severe strain.

In the second instance, the study also observed that there were those who were like parasites - always

wanting to benefit without giving back anything. One would conclude that some members of the extended families were taking advantage of those who were seemingly stable financially because even when the former were able to fend for themselves, they just wanted handouts, taking advantage of the relationship they shared with the latter.

The third instance is that of oral literature which brought out reports of some families being at logger heads, yet elsewhere they formed strong bonds with those they got along either at church or at school without biological or affinity connections. Some households opened their homes and extended support to people with whom they had had ties ranging from just being good neighbours to sharing religious or political affiliation. That being the case, religious organizations and government wings concerned with the social aspects need to work hand-in-hand in the midst of western culture.

METHODOLOGY

The researchers employed the qualitative research paradigm, in particular the descriptive research method. This is because it was meaning-oriented, inductive or contextual, naturalistic, process bound and descriptive (Bryman, 2008; Kothari, 2004; Kothari & Gaurav Garg, 2004, 2019). The aspect of being inductive as opposed to being deductive implies that it is not about proving a hypothesis or theory but to see a phenomenon take shape as data is being collected and examined, hence making it contextual (Gay & Mills, 2010; Creswell, 2014; Mishra, 2015). The aforementioned attributes of qualitative research were put into consideration by the researchers (Banda, Mpolomoka, Mbono & Sampa, 2017; Creswell, 2014; Kothari & Gaurav Garg, 2019) and helped establish the significance of kinship among the Bemba being explored.

This desktop review, adopted and exclusivity and inclusivity approach that was unique. Print and electronic media sources of literature formed the anchor of literature reviewed for the study. Sources such as books, journals and theses were consulted in the study. The data from interviews provided a formidable source of oral literature that solidified and corroborated with the written literature reviewed.

Inclusivity and exclusivity criterion of participants who provided oral literature was based on age, speech tribe (i.e. IchiBemba), familiarity with and knowledge about the subject matter (i.e. kingship), ability to decipher changes in kingship practices in the past and today in communities in Zambia. These participants were sampled by snowballing.

Findings are herein presented in a thematic manner. Literature abound defining and describing thematic data

analysis in varying but unanimous ways (Aronson, 1994; Attride-Stirling, 2001; King, 2004), provide systematic guidance on how to conduct thematic analysis and further contextualize ways of conducting research with an applied focus (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2011); and describe many inductive as well as deductive ways of coding qualitative data thematically (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006).

In examining the social significance of kinship in the Bemba speech community, an analysis of the findings was done from both anthropological and linguistic perspectives as reviewed from, on the one hand, the archival data and, on the other hand, responses from participants. The data from the former have been discussed with regard to family relations, kinship terms as linguistic units, kinship and kingship in the 21st century.

FINDINGS

A brief linguistic profile of the Bemba kingship

The Bemba Clan seems to be the largest ethnic group in the Northern Province of Zambia. Some seventeen or eighteen ethnic groups in this area of Zambia comprise the Bemba-speaking peoples, and they form with the Bemba a closely related culture cluster. All these people have predominantly a matrilineal-matrilocal emphasis (Slaski, 1950). Those who speak the dialect of IciBemba as a first language number approximately 3.7 million, accounting for nearly a third of Zambia's population. Of course the native Bemba speakers are subjects of Paramount Chief Chitimukulu in Northern Province (Gordon, 2002).

Approximately, there are twelve other groups that reside in the Luapula Province and in the rural areas of the Copperbelt Province who speak dialects of IciBemba and who consider themselves as being part of the Bemba culture. These include the Aushi, Bisa, Chishinga, Kunda, Lala, Lamba, Lunda, Ng'umbo, Swaka, Tabwa, or Unga, but the tendency in urban areas is to use the generic term 'Bemba' to refer to these groups (Slaski, 1950). In this context, it seems the Bemba people form the largest ethnic group in the urban areas of the Copperbelt, which includes Kitwe, Ndola, Mufulira, Luanshya, Chingola and Chililabombwe districts and to a lesser extent in Lusaka and Central provinces of Zambia where most households seem to have embraced the Western culture as a way to, among other reasons, escape responsibilities that come with the extended family system (Gordon, 2002).

Expatriates, mostly the British and the South Africans, as well as some white Zambian citizens, live mainly in Lusaka and on the Copperbelt in northern Zambia, where they are either employed in the mines, financial and related activities or retired. Zambia has a small but economically important Asian population, most of whom are Indians and Chinese.

The Western culture, as indicated by Hill (1999), seems to have influenced the Bemba concept of kinship, yet in Bemba society like in other Bantu societies, kin relations are organized differently from those in the English society. For example, mother's sisters' children and father's brothers' children are usually regarded as 'brothers and sisters' and so, fall in the category of first-degree relatives, yet in English mother's sisters' children would be considered as cousins who happen to be third degree relatives thereby creating a social distance (Hill, 1999; Fox, 1967; Richards, 1969, Chisanga, 1980). This is one of the aspects this study endeavoured to pursue as it looked at one dimension of cultural anthropology namely, the social significance of kinship terminology in the Bemba speech community.

It has been observed that the extended family is most likely to emerge in contemporary society when young adults face unemployment or divorce or when older adults become widowed or when their health declines (Hill, 1999; Lee 1999). Modern day extended family networks are important in assisting members to cope with life's challenges (Huinink, et al., 2011; Benson 1990). Strong kinship ties provide relative stability of institutions and communities against processes of change and conflict (Peel, Elizabeth; Riggs, Damien, 2016; Wierzbicka, Anna, 2016; Malinowsk, 1922, 1929).

Genesis and Evolution of Kinship

The study of the extended family has been integrated into multiple disciplines. Chief among them are anthropology, demography, history, sociology, and social work. Understanding of the extended family and extended family ties has been defined as essential to a wide array of policy concerns, including economic development policies, effective health-care delivery (Ferguson, 1999), and assimilation of immigrants (Benson, 1990; Glick, 1997). From a historical perspective, extended family households have been studied extensively for their role in shaping the direction of social, economic, and demographic change. From a sociological anthropological orientation, extended family ties form much of the basis for understanding social networks in both traditional and contemporary societies (Hill, 1999).

Nevertheless, when researchers discuss the demise or evolution of the extended family, several factors are commonly cited. These include industrialization and the proliferation of Western political and education models over the last century. By removing kinship from the economic arena, industrialization is said to have made the viability of nuclear family households possible. Likewise, Western education and politics are said to have produced value changes in direct opposition to extended family life since they emphasize individualism over collectivity (Hill, 1999;

Pearson, Hunter, Ensminger & Kellam, 1990; Peel, Elizabeth & Riggs, Damien, 2016).

Extended family networks and households are still important in many countries of the world, for example Taiwan (Stokes, Leclere and Yeu, 1987), Japan (Morgan and Hirosima, 1983), India (Ram and Wong, 1994), and China (Tsui, 1989). In Africa, researchers have portrayed the persistence of extended family networks as cultural bridges in modernization rather than impediments (Silverstein, 1984). Despite these factors, numerous examples of the resiliency of extended family networks remain.

The scientific study of kinship began with the publication of Lewis Henry Morgan's *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family*, published in 1871 (Fox Robin, 1977). This provides evidence that life in stable social groups is a human feature. As a result, early kinship theorists saw an apparent need to explain not only the details of how human social groups are constructed, their patterns, meanings and obligations, but also why they are constructed at all. The reasons presented the fact of life in social groups as being largely a result of human ideas and values (Murdock, 1949).

Morgan had amassed a huge amount of data on kinship terminology, and using this he worked out a classification of kinship systems (Fox, 1977). He made two major criteria distinctions between kinds of kinship terms: classificatory terms, which subsume a relatively large number of kin types, like the Bemba system and descriptive terms, as in the English system which subsumes relatively small numbers of biological types preferably having unique referents (Wierzbicka, Anna, 2016). However, all kinship systems have both classificatory and descriptive terms and those that subsume a large number of kin types. There is a way of dealing with the mass of kin terms from different groups (Schwimmer, 2001; Kroeber, 1929, 1929, 1939, 1948b). The major patterns of kinship systems that are known, which Lewis Henry Morgan identified through kinship terminology in his 1871 work: *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family* are:

- Iroquois kinship (also known as “bifurcate merging”)
- Crow kinship (an expansion of bifurcate merging)
- Omaha kinship (also an expansion of bifurcate merging)
- Eskimo kinship (also referred to as “lineal kinship”)
- Hawaiian kinship (also referred to as the “generational system”)
- Sudanese kinship (also referred to as the “descriptive system”)

These systems of kin naming appear over and over from one culture to the next (Fox, 1969).

In anthropology, kinship is the web of social relationships that form an important part of the lives of most humans in most societies. Anthropologist Robin Fox states that “*the study of kinship is the study of what man does with these basic facts of life mating, gestation, parenthood, socialization, sibling ship and related factors.*” Anthropology has developed a number of related concepts and terms in the study of kinship, such as descent, descent group, lineage, affinity/affine, consanguinity/cognate and fictive kinship (Foley, 1997; Fox, 1977).

The study of kinship as an aspect of social structure began with lawyers and students of comparative jurisprudence (Fox, 1977). That is why the study of kinship today is replete with legal terminology and concepts: rights, claims, and obligations (Hill, 1999). In every society provisions are made to take care of the welfare of kinsmen in case of either death or other unforeseen occurrences. It is for this reason that the concept of kinship compels members of a kin group to fulfill their responsibilities to one another.

Broadly, kinship patterns may be considered to include people related by both descents that is, social relations during development, and by marriage. Human kinship relations through marriage are commonly called “affinity” in contrast to consanguine relationships that is, blood relations or presumed biological ties arising in one's group of origin, which may be called one's descent group. In some cultures, kinship relationships may be considered to extend out to people an individual has economic or political relationships with, or other forms of social connections (Schwimmer, 2003). Thus, kinship relations exist among humans even without biological or affinity connections.

Kinship terminologies

Kinship terminologies exist in all languages and, almost universally, people have terms of address for relatives that differ from terms of reference. Among the principles used in separating kinds of kin are: generation, affinity, collateral and sex of relative, bifurcation, polarity, and relative age (Fox, 1977; Keesing, 1975; Wierzbicka, Anna, 2016; Peel, Elizabeth & Riggs, Damien, 2016; McConvell, Patrick, 2013; Kingman, 2001). For example, in English and American kinship terminology, father and son differ only on the dimension of generation. Father and father-in-law differ in that father-in-law is an affine, that is, a relative by marriage. Father and uncle are distinguished collaterally.

The criterion of ‘collaterality’ rests on the distinction between siblings and lineal relatives. Grouping lineal and collateral relatives under the same term is technically called ‘merging’, and in kinship systems in general the relatives most frequently merged are a parent and sibling of the same sex, a sibling and parallel cousin, or a son or daughter and nephew and niece. Bifurcation means ‘forking’, and recognizes that

relatives may be traced through either a male or female connecting relative. For example, a grandparent is a parent of either of our parents (Gordon, 2002; Schusky, 1965). Polarity recognizes that a relationship consists of two parties, and thus two terms aunt and niece. Everywhere people have modelled their relations on biological connections and their terminology shows that they make a distinction between relatives of descent and relatives of marriage. Kin terminologies can be either descriptive or classificatory. Thus, kin groups are recruited on the basis of consanguine or affine ties (Kingman, 2001; Wierzbicka, Anna, 2016).

According to Chisanga (1980) some kin terms have a linguistic significance in terms of the relationships they bear. The following are some examples: the morpheme -fyala- in *umufyala* (cousin) appears to be the form for cousins, -abafyala- (cousins) (Gordon, 2002; Chisanga, 1980; Van Sambeek, 1955).

The morpheme -fyala- is derived from the form for 'giving birth to' 'ukufyala' which is also extended to the abstract notion of parenthood 'ubufyashi.' It is for this reason that (the) Bemba people would refer to their cousins as brothers and sisters owing to the understanding that they are born from the same household 'abamung'anda imo.' Thus, one would boast of genuine brotherhood by using such linguistic terms as 'fuma mfume' literally 'as in child birth when twins come one after the other', for example, 'from the same womb'. However, in this context it refers to not only biological siblings but to all the children born from parents of the same lineage. The expression 'fuma mfume' is an object nominalization derived from the verb 'to follow one another at child birth' (Chisanga, 1980). Such expressions are meant to emphasize the close bonds that exist among kinsmen and incite one to act in a way a biological brother or sister would respond to his or her own siblings in times of need.

The morpheme -fyala- in 'mayofyala,' (mother-in-law or daughter-in-law) and 'tatafyala,' (father or son-in-law) is used to express an abstract notion of 'a parent' but literally it designates mutual respect that exists between son or daughter in-law and mother- or father-in-law, a possessive form of relationship that serves the interests of the people involved (Gordon, 2002; Chisanga, 1980; Van Sambeek, 1955).

The other linguistic form is -ma. This is essentially a feminine form. It is no wonder that the term 'yama' (uncle) has the equivalent of + female parent features. Originally the term has + male form as it occurs in such kin terms as nalume (his/her uncle) nokolume (your uncle) (Ibid). The form -ma- has a universal + female parent quality, which makes the Bemba people and other ethnic groups who follow similar linguistic forms to behave in a motherly way to people who address them as 'yama'. In Bemba an uncle is one related to you only through maternal, either a brother or male cousin of

one's mother hence, female connections. It is for this reason that it is categorized with female forms. Carrying the + male parent feature as the equivalent of 'ma' is 'tata' the form for father but this one is restricted in use and is a reduplication form. In *iciBemba* it occurs only as a direct form of father 'tata' referring to a father, his brothers and male cousins and as a secondary + male parent 'tatafyala' which refers to a 'father-in-law' or 'son-in-law' (Chisanga, 1980).

The significance of *Uluwpa* in *iciBemba* is seen in affinity relations, that is, relationships resulting from marriage alliances. Hill (1999) and Fox (1977) made the observations that kinship and marriage are about the basic facts of life. They are about birth, life and death in that birth produces children and the lasting mother-child bond, the most fundamental and basic of all social bonds whereas death produces a gap in the social grouping and demands a replacement. Birth and parenthood provides an heir. The observation by Hill and Fox stresses the point that marriage designates an individual's rights and responsibilities in society as a whole or within the kinship structure. Marriage establishes the legal father of a woman's children and the legal mother of the man's children. It establishes a socially significant 'relationship of affinity' between spouses and their relatives (Kingman, 1992).

The concept of kinship

In some cultures, a person's mother and the mother's sisters including female cousins are referred to by the same term (Schwimmer, 2001; Chisanga, 1980). This also applies to the person's father's brothers and male cousins. Relatives who are called by the same label tend to be identified with similar roles, responsibilities, and privileges with regard to ego. Similarly, relatives who are distinguished from each other terminologically also tend to play distinctive roles with respect to ego (Siegel, 1996; Murdock, 1949). The concept of kinship can be used as a form of alliance to bind extended families together.

Kin terms, in most African traditional families, as the case is among the Bemba, carry with them all the heavy social obligations demanded of those referred to by such terms and ultimately act to reinforce cultural expectations about how kin will behave toward one another. This is what provided strength and resilience of the African traditional family (Siegel, 1996; Goody, 1963). With this background, extended family system should be regarded as a social phenomenon that is workable in its own African social circumstances such that even in the midst of socio-economic pressures something ought to be done to sustain this type of family.

When a descriptive terminology is used, it refers to only one specific type of relationship, while a classificatory terminology groups many different types of relationships under one term (Kingman, 2001; Richards, 1950). For

example, the word *brother* in English-speaking societies indicates a son of one's same parent; thus, English-speaking societies use the word *brother* as a descriptive term referring to this relationship only. In many other classificatory kinship terminologies, in contrast, a person's male first cousin (whether mother's brother's son, mother's sister's son, father's brother's son, father's sister's son) may also be referred to as brother (Godorn, 2002). This is similar to the Bemba culture though mother's brother's son is referred to as cousin.

The Bemba people usually are classified as matrilineal and matrilocal society. Currently, there seems to be a weakening of the matrilineal/matrilocal system; residence departs substantially from 'matrilocal' now and might best be described as 'bilocal'. Membership in a clan (*umukowa*, plural *imikowa*) and positional successions are still matrilineal. However, it is common for a child to adopt the father's name, and this is suggestive of a strengthening of patrilineal elements. Despite this matrilineal orientation, the Bemba kinship system in some ways is bilateral in nature. The kin group to which a person constantly refers in everyday affairs is *ulupwa*, a bilateral group of near relatives on both sides of his family (Chisanga, 1980). In fact all kinship is said to be bilateral in the sense that, whatever the principle of descent, an individual has kinship ties to and through both parents. That said, kinship terminology can be used as a form of social integration to bind people together even in times of need (Huinink, et al., 2011; Slaski, 1950).

Different societies classify kinship relations differently and, therefore, use different systems of kinship terminology (Kingman, 2001). For example, some languages distinguish between affinity and consanguine uncles, whereas others, like the Bembas, have only one word to refer to both a father and his brothers including his male cousins. Likewise, the term mother refers to both mother and her sisters including her cousins. Kinship terminologies include the terms of address used in different languages or communities for different relatives and the terms of reference used to identify the relationship of these relatives to ego or to each other (Kronenfeld, 2012; Schwimmer, 2003).

The extension of the terminologies father to include father's biological brothers along with male cousins and mother's sisters along with female cousins respectively are said to bind people who are (as 'father' with those who address them. This is also applicable to terminologies of 'mother,' 'grandparent,' 'uncle,' 'brother,' and 'sister' such that in the absence of one's parents or guardians, siblings or children, another person would assume the role of: father or mother, brother or sister including children (Godorn, 2002; Chisanga, 1980).

As pointed out by Kroeber (1929, 1939, 1948b), kinship systems that subsume a large number of kin types have a way

of dealing with the mass of kin terms from different groups. For instance, *ulupwa* (family) in the Bemba community is much broader than the English one. Although they are large extended families, the Bemba people are expected to fulfill their obligation to one another to keep relations strong. This is evidenced from the way terms such as 'mother,' 'brother,' 'sister,' 'uncle,' 'aunt,' are extended to express relations beyond biological connections. From childhood the Bemba people learn their roles in society including the norms governing social life in the broad family context (Godorn, 2002; Chisanga, 1980). A person is expected to appreciate and identify his/her role in an extended family set up. Thus, in the case of death of a parent or guardian, kinsmen are obligated to take responsibility for the surviving family members. Likewise, dependents of the deceased are within their rights to claim their relatives' attention when need arises (Bouquet, 1996). Usually they would move into their relatives' households. Failure on the part of kinsmen to accommodate orphans and others who may be in need of support has the potential to attract condemnation from society (Chisanga, 1980).

Kin relations go beyond biological ties and so, assure one of support in the case of death or other problems to disintegrate one's family, another family would provide needed assistance. In Zambia, cultures share systems of kinship and are similar in residence patterns, descent rules, and family organization (Barber & Delfabbro, 2003; Bimba, et al., 2023). These similarities in important features of social structure are thought to account for shared kin terminology systems. A shared system of kin terminology reflects and reinforces these similar role assignments (Schwimmer, 2003). For instance, even if the Bemba are matrilineal, they share systems of terminology with tribes that are patrilineal and so, they have similar patterns of descent, residence, and family organization are similarly likely to allocate roles, rights, and responsibilities.

Malinowsk described a more flexible view of kinship by indicating that it provides relative stability of institutions and communities against processes of change and conflict (Huinink, et al., 2011; Malinowsk, 1922). It is for this reason that among the Bemba the mention of getting orphans and the infirm in institutions of care was something to be ashamed of as *ulupwa* because it meant that there was instability in a family and that you were running away from your responsibilities (Gordon, 2002; Chisanga, 1980).

Social-economic challenges seem to have compelled some families in Zambia to get those who could have been in their care into institutions of care (Ferguson, 1999). It should however, be noted that countries where such institutions began, have decided to do away with such arrangements in favor of the idea of re-integrating orphans into foster homes or extended family system. This is to maintain continuity in

the child's life (Pecora, Whittaker, Barth, Borja & Vesneski, 2018).

In the early 1970s, social-welfare agencies began to emphasize that if possible, mothers and children should be kept together. In the U.S., this was clearly illustrated by the shift in policy of the New York Foundling Home, an adoption-institution that is among the country's oldest and one that had pioneered sealed records (March, 1995). It established three new principles including "to prevent placements of children..." reflecting the belief that children would be better served by staying with their biological families, a striking shift in policy that remains in force today (Barber & Delfabbro, 2003; ; Bimba, et al., 2023). This is evidenced by reports that most children in orphanages express strong desire to be reunited with family. The works of March (1995) give four reasons for desiring reunion: 1) they wish for a more complete genealogy, 2) they are curious about events leading to their conception, birth, and relinquishment, 3) they hope to pass on information to their children, and 4) they have a need for a detailed biological background, including medical information (March,1995). Perhaps Zambia should take a leaf from countries that have opted to do away with orphanages.

The Deinstitutionalization of orphanages and children's homes program began in the 1950s, after a series of scandals involving the coercion of birth parents and abuse of orphans notably, at Georgia Tann's Tennessee Children's Home Society (Pecora, et al., 2018). Many countries accepted the need to de-institutionalize the care of the children in need that is, close down orphanages in favor of foster care and accelerated adoption. Major charities are increasingly focusing their efforts on the re-integration of orphans in order to keep them with their parents or extended family and communities.

Orphanages are no longer common in the European community. It is important to understand the reasons for child abandonment, and then set up targeted alternative services to support families at risk of separation. There is an increasing body of evidence that orphanages, especially large ones, are the worst possible care option for children (Pecora, et al., 2018). In large institutions all children, but particularly babies may not receive enough eye contact, physical contact, and stimulation to promote proper physical, social or cognitive development. In the worst cases, orphanages can be dangerous and unregulated places where children are subject to abuse and neglect (Hill, 1999; March, 1995).

Placement in the home of a relative maintains and usually improves the child's connection to family members. Despite the well-meaning intentions, the mushrooming of orphanages has the potential to encourage institutions that are in business at the expense of orphans.

Most orphanages have been closed in Europe and North America (Hazan and Shaver, 1994). There remain a large number of state funded orphanages in the former Soviet Bloc but many of them are slowly being phased out in favor of direct support to the affected families and the development of foster care and adoption services where this is not possible (Ibid). The vast majority of children who would otherwise need foster care are in kinship care, that is, in the care of grandparents or other relatives (Barber & Delfabbro, 2003; Bimba, et al., 2023).

In the U.S., formal kinship care is becoming increasingly common (March, 1995). In 2012, a quarter of all children in formal foster care were placed with relatives. Family-based foster care is generally preferred to other forms of out of home care (Ibid). Foster care is intended to be a short term solution until a permanent placement can be made. Generally, the first choice of adoptive parents is a relative such as an aunt, uncle or grandparent, known as kinship care. If no related family member is willing or able to adopt, the next preference is for the child to be adopted by the foster parents or by someone else involved in the child's life (such as a teacher or coach). If neither above option is available, the child may be adopted by someone who is a stranger to the child (Barber & Delfabbro, 2003).

The Bemba Kingship: Narratives from the elderly (Oral Literature) and Literature Review

Here, excerpts from oral literature are shared. They detail viewpoints of typical Bemba kinsmen echoing how kingship ties were built and maintained by their ancestors. These scenarios bring out the important of kingship and how kingship ties were handed down from generation to generation in times past. Reading through the narratives one can trace points of departure from the Bemba kingship as practiced in modern Zambia today.

A social worker, a Bemba by tribe said that extended family households have often proved remarkably adaptable to changing social conditions. He cited situations that demanded the support of family – even extended relatives when, for instance, a young mother had children or when a working mother was looking after the elderly parents. He went on to mention that the extended family would most likely emerge in contemporary society even when adults became widowed or when their health declined. In his concluding remarks, he said that kinship helped to keep and guide the new generation through the ways of the tribe. For that reason, kinship was important for social cohesion and as

a means of passing on values to the next generation.

The woman, who was looked after by a neighbour when her father retired, further revealed how significant kinship is among the Bemba people. She said that the family, she was left with, were not even Zambians, but they appreciated the manner in which they had lived with her parents. So, they assumed the role of parents of this woman. She added that she had learnt something from the way her parents interacted with the family that kept her. Even if she was not living with any one of the members of that family, she had been able to provide support in whatever possible way especially to the 'mother' who was now widowed. She further indicated that if people who kept her were only connected to her by mere friendship with her parents, then she was more than obligated to assist members of her family and others who might be found in a similar situation.

"Ine ndi mukowa wabena Mwansa pantu bamayo bena Mwansa. Bawishi ba bamayo bena Ng'oma. Abena Ng'oma ebafyele ba mayo, ni bashikulu. Mukufyalwa umwina Mwansa uulionse lupwa: kuti aba ndumeyandi, nkashi nandi, mayo nangu yama nangu umwana pantu tukonka umukowa waba mayo. Wenu afyele wilowa pantu bonse balasakamana." [Female, aged 70 in IchBemba]

I am from the clan of the Mwansas and my mother's father's clan is the Ng'omas. Whoever belongs to a clan is their mothers', do not despise your siblings'. This means that whoever is a Mwansa is family: It could be a sibling including cousins or a mother or maternal uncle or a child because we are matrilineal. Siblings' or cousins' children should be embraced because they are their children too and are there to look after them. I have cared for many and I have been supported and cared for. [English]

"Extended family system keeps families intact even after the death of the head of a household. We were born from a polygamous marriage but our family is closely knit even if our father died many years ago. This is so because of the shared experiences. We have had to include close relations beyond biological connections." [Female, aged 53]

"There is a steady shift in the recent past from the socially accepted cohesion of traditional families to that of a nuclear family system. There are changes in marriage and family arrangement. You find that some people who still value kinship fulfil their obligation under compulsion." [Female, aged 49]

"When I got married I was compelled to accept changes with regard to how we handled extended families including my parents. My husband insisted that visitors to our home needed to inform us in advance but this was not a culture in my family and so, there were problems but later my family understood just to save my marriage. Western culture has had an impact on extended family values in that many people feel that nuclear family was much easier to manage than extended family arrangement." [Female, aged 47]

Kinship in the 21st century

The cultural, familial, political, social, economic upheavals and religious afflictions have changed the Bemba kingship. Here, we detail scenarios in the 21st century that point to this degradation of the Bemba kingship.

Changes in marriage and family patterns prevalent in the past centuries (Gordon, 2002, Hill, 1999; Mair, 1953; Richards, 1969) are worsening nowadays. These are clearly seen to be on fringes and environ with instances of those who still honour their family obligations doing so out of a mixed sense of trepidation and blameworthiness. For example, oral literature points to this unanimous position:

There is a steady shift in the recent past from the socially accepted cohesion to that of a nuclear family system due to economic situations and unexpected deaths of family providers largely due to HIV/AIDS. We have witnessed some families being abandoned when death struck the family head and in many

instances relatives are only interested in wealth left behind by the deceased.

What came out of the reviewed literature was that in some cultures, just as it was established from the findings about the Bemba culture, a person's mother and the mother's sisters including female cousins were referred to by the same term. This applied to the person's father's brothers and male cousins. Key questions the researchers posed were: *Does this practice still take place nowadays? What could have contributed to the practice not being continued? Could intermarriage engagements have contributed to this diminishing practice? Could the invasion of foreign cultures be blamed for this cultural infiltration?* The researchers leave these questions to the readers to engage their Bemba kinsmen and elders to establish what really could have led to this cultural degradation.

Literature further reveals that relatives who were called by the same label tended to be identified with similar roles, responsibilities, and privileges with regard to those related to them (Siegel, 1996; Murdock, 1949). It appears that a person's genealogical awareness and his or her expectation of what kinfolks could do compelled one to have attachment to other family members apart from the biological ones. Even when a relationship sprouted from a distance, through one's clan it could still reinforce closeness provided members were aware of their connections to *ulupwa* to identify one another as relatives. The researchers pose the following questions: *What is the trend nowadays? Family relations, distant and or somewhat close do not seem to enjoy the same family fabric.* Oral literature clearly shows how family visitations and visitations by the elderly largely led to a strengthened family fabric, both nuclear and extended family systems are maintained in this manner.

Schwimmer's observation on kinship based on other forms of social connections may enhance the Bemba's understanding of *ulupwa* (family) in that findings revealed that there were some participants (in the researchers' reconstruction of oral literature on the Bemba people) who were being supported not by relatives but by neighbors, church members, teachers and other well-wishers because their kinsmen could not support them. There seem to be a trend toward such connections as more and more people are forming attachment to those they socialize with in the neighborhood, at school or church levels. It is imperative that this understanding of kinship is brought to the attention of the government so that a deliberate policy to support and regulate such connections is put in place. Understanding of the extended family and extended family ties has been defined as essential to a wide array of policy concerns, including economic development policies, effective health-care delivery (Wierzbicka, Anna, 2016; Huinink, et al., 2011; Barber & Delfabbro, 2003).

The literature further indicated that social-economic challenges seemed to compel some families to relinquish their responsibility to kin and, in some instances, opted to get the children, who could have been under their care, into institutions of care. The findings showed that some people in dire need of help, including the elderly, were not actually without relatives but had been neglected due to economic hardships, current trends in traditional family values, moral breakdown and other factors, which were disintegrating kinship.

An evaluative lens of the future of kingship

There are many influences weakening kinship ties, ranging from western culture and lack of reciprocity to socio-economic hurdles. Literature points to the proliferation of Western political and education models as well as industrialization to be among the factors weakening kinship (Bimba, Mpolomoka, Sampa, Nyirenda, Chitodno, Muyendekwa, Kangwa & Chalwa, 2023). Comparatively, western education usually emphasizes individual aspirations and not so much on others (Gordon, 2002; Ferguson, 1999; Richards, 1969; Goody, 1963).

Today, in countries where institutions of care began, have decided to do away with such arrangements in favour of providing social security and re-integrating orphans into foster homes or the extended family system. This maintains continuity in people's lives especially children (Hazan and Shaver, 1994; Mpolomoka, Chulu, Mwandila, Muvombo, Simwinda, Kabungo & Sampa, 2023). Oral literature posits that placement of children in the home of a relative maintained and usually improved the child's connection to the family members. The vast majority of children in America, who would otherwise need foster care, "are in kinship care, that is, in the care of grandparents or other relatives" (Barber and Delfabbro, 2003).

This study revealed that the extended family has been integrated into multiple disciplines, among them: anthropology, demography, and social work. The literature reviewed indicates that understanding the extended family and extended family ties is essential to the formulation of useful policies, including those bordering on the economy, health and education (Huinink, et al., 2011; Hill, 1999). It was further also indicated learned that kinship plays an important role in shaping the direction of social, economic, and demographic change. Evidently, extended family ties form much of the basis for understanding social networks in both traditional and contemporary societies. Instances from oral literature shared below exemplify:

"My mother is in Lusaka but I was sent here to live with my grandmother so that I could be helping her with house chores because her health is failing. I go to school and my mother and other

mothers provide for my education and for 3 (three) others, who are staying with grandmother. Living with relatives from related families is a good idea. You share experiences on how to live. When I am settled, I intend to look after other people as well.” [Female, aged 18]

“I am keeping my elderly mother who was raised by her elder brother and so, she asked me to look after one of his great grandchildren in honour of her brother. My mother says the child should be educated to reciprocate her brother’s kindness. I am happy to bear this responsibility because my mother appreciates the support she received from her brother and feels that such kindness should be reciprocated.” [Female, aged 38]

“Where one’s financial muscle is not sound but there are those referred to as ‘children,’ these are expected to support the family’s directive when called upon to support *ulupwa* in need. When I lost employment my nephew, who happens to be my cousin’s son, came to my aid by setting me up.” [Male, aged 48]

“It is not the benefits I look up to but the self-esteem I realize from helping people with whom I share family experiences.” [Male, aged 42]

“Abana nakusha bafyelwe mulibamayo mukalamba. Emukutula beshikulu kulibamayo. Inonshita ni nkota. Lelo abeshikulu nabafyashi babo baliba abakusakamana sana nokunshika abakanshika” [Female, aged 62 in *iciBemba*]

The children I brought up were my mother’s female cousin’s grandchildren. Now that I am old, my grandchildren and their parents have been supportive. I know that, even if when I die, they will bury me. [English]

education models over the last century (Ferguson, 1999; Hill, 1999). The Western politics and education seemed to have produced value changes in opposition to the extended family arrangement. The concept of individualism as opposed to collectivism seemed to be appealing to many as it seemingly assured them of independence from collective family obligations brought about by the extended family system.

The study has shown that kinship patterns may be considered to include people related by both descents that is, social relations during development, and by marriage. Human kinship relations through marriage are commonly called "affinity" in contrast to consanguine relationships that is, blood relations or presumed biological ties arising in one's group of origin, which may be called one's descent group. In some cultures, kinship relationships may be considered to extend out to people an individual has economic or political relationships with, or other forms of social connections (Schwimmer, 2003; Stone, Linda, 2001; Hill, 1999).

According to this study, it seems that every society has a way of taking care of the welfare of kinsmen in case of death or unforeseen occurrences. Though there are traces of kinsmen linkages in Zambian communities as regards the Bemba people, there seems to be similar ones with other speech tribes, cultures and traditions. This came to light as the researchers found not only the Bemba but other speech tribes, who are inter-married (with the Bemba, among others). It is therefore, imperative for the government to work out a plan that is favorable to Zambian cultures.

Findings further indicate that the concept of kinship provides a means of classifying relationships. Those with an awareness of genealogical connections seem to have had no problems in handling complex relations. When different kinds of relations are merged into one category, as in ‘Bifurcate merging,’ ego’s father’s brother’s children and mother’s sister’s children are merged to become part of ego’s siblings (Chisanga, 1980). This explains the reason why kin terms in Bemba apply even to people who are distantly related and because of this those interviewed feel duty bound to assist even those who could be distantly related to them.

Way Forward

The researchers herein propose that curriculum should embrace the typical Bemba culture and significant traditional facets from early childhood to university. What is more is that narratives and writing competitions should carry such cultural inclinations as kinship and familial lineage histories.

The Bemba people should progressively advocate for documentation of kinship. Various stakeholders should be encouraged to play instrumental roles in advancing this noble cause. The church can play a big role seeing that most households are adherents of various religious values. For

Furthermore, literature cited common factors affecting the pattern of relationships among kin groups to include industrialization and the proliferation of Western political and

instance, neglecting a member whether from the nuclear, extended is often associated with condemnation from the church and eventually failure to inherit God's kingdom.

Adherents of the Bemba lineage vehemently pin posterity to kinship education. Thus, the researchers agree with them that there is an urgent need for the concept of kingship to be taught in schools in Zambia to inculcate in children and the youths its significance in society. This shall help reconstruct the seemingly broken down extended family system in Zambia. Even dependents shall learn to conduct themselves in a respectful manner and have reverence for persons looking after them.

This entails that the Bemba and its stakeholders (educationists and affiliates) should embark on mass education to sensitize the citizenry on the importance of preserving familial ties. Oral literature posits that such mass education should be conducted through popular print and electronic media that youths access. For example, social media platforms, internet and television programs could provide formidable platforms for such mass education since many youths and, generally people, delight in getting information from such media. This corroborates with what (Bimba, et al., (2023) established:

To restore the culture of kinship there was need for government ministries to work hand in hand with traditional leadership and the church discuss how best they could strengthen the slowly-degenerating kinship ties which are often confused with western education. We tend to be copying everything we are watching on social media as if we do not have our own cultural values worth of nurturing. There are people who think that Western culture is devoid of kinship ties. This is not often true as every community has its own cultural values and kinship is respected in their own way.

There exist other ways of advocating for kingship. Provision of guidance and counselling services to the general public is one of them. This can be achieved in collaboration with various stakeholders, the government, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs), individuals and community-based organisations. In particular, the Ministry of Community Development, the Department of Social Welfare and the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) provide rich information to schools and communities. There is urgent need for the Ministry of Local government to facilitate mass education campaigns and or community sensitization activities on the concept of kinship in Zambia.

Another way of promoting kingship is by strengthening kinship ties starting from elders in communities. These should hold deliberate sessions, activities and programs with the young and other fellow elderly to explain the importance of this culture. It can be advisable that wider families should be open about current socio-economic trends affecting most households in Zambia thereby failing to fulfil their responsibilities to extended families. This, could prompt the government to consider increasing empowerment to families in dire need of resources by offering long term projects, unlike handouts, to generate income to enable them accommodate and support relatives in need.

Conclusion

The literature reviewed showed that the concept of kinship exists in every culture although there are cultural variations in handling the concept. Zambia's situation may not be similar to the European set up. However, the existence of kinship terms is a common feature in every culture. The chapter shows that relatives are traced from both mother and father's sides and so, relations are formed through either male or female connections. Similarly, the significance of kinship seem to be universal in that it is essential to a wide range of policy concerns, including economic development policies, effective health-care delivery (Huinink, et al., 2011). This is because it has been integrated into various social disciplines. The chapter has also revealed that kinship concept in contemporary society appears to extend out to people an individual could have economic relationship with or other forms of social connections. Statistics in the United States of America show that, children left in institutions of care usually become homeless without a permanent family to turn to in times of need. Moreover, reports of abuse by responsible adults abound (Mpolomoka, et al., 2023; Ferguson, 1999). One can infer that this could account for the reason why orphanages in developed nations are phasing out in preference to kinship care. From the literature it can be deduced that the study of kinship as an aspect of social structure originates in the legal system to protect those in kinship care from abuse.

All stakeholders, such as the NGOs, Faith Based Organization and the state who are concerned about humanity, should promote the concept of kinship and champion the rights of those in kinship care.

Biographies

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Alice Bimba holds a Secondary School Teacher's Diploma from Nkrumah Teacher's College, Bachelors Degree in Education at University of Zambia and a Master of Education Degree in Literacy and Development from the Zambian Open University. She rose to the position of Head of the Languages and Social Sciences Department, before taking up a school administrative role as Deputy Head Teacher.

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1086/687360>