THE IMPACT OF ANGOLAN IMMIGRANTS ON LOZI SOCIETY IN WESTERN ZAMBIA

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Angola's long civil war has generated a great number of immigrants who have fled to Zambia. Instead of remaining in refugee camps, many immigrants have chosen to live in Western Zambia's rural areas, inhabited by the Lozi people. The continuing influx of immigrants from Angola has had a profound effect on the Lozi's rural society. The purpose of this study was to examine how Lozi society has been influenced by Angolan immigrants.

The Lozi people have long practiced agriculture, raised cattle, and fished on the Zambezi river floodplain, a region of approximately 8,000 square km. By taking advantage of this unique environment, they had built a strong kingdom. Although their kingdom was officially abolished when the Republic of Zambia declared independence in 1964, the former kingdom's customary law as well as indigenous landholding system continue today.

In ethnic terms, most Angolan immigrants are Mbunda people, with a culture differing greatly from that of the Lozi. The Mbunda people are woodland dwellers, and are therefore knowledgeable about utilizing woodlands. Upon their arrival in Lozi territory, according to Lozi customary law, they were given lands for houses and cultivation in woodlands around the floodplain, areas the Lozi people had not yet utilized. Immigrants started slash and burn agriculture in the woodlands to grow cassava and bulurush millet, unknown crops for the Lozi.

Under these circumstances, the Lozi people came to adopt the woodland cultivation of these new crops. In addition, Lozi people started to trust their cattle to the immigrants. Several cultural exchanges took place between the groups. By focusing on these processes, this study is an attempt to understand some of the transformations of Lozi society.

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