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## OUTSIDE DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTIONS: PEOPLE'S DAILY ACTIONS AMONG THE PLATEAU TONGA OF ZAMBIA

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**ABSTRACT** Outside of or without development initiatives, people make a living by using their complex web of relationships. As the matrilineal Tongas of Zambia have experienced external and internal changes since the beginning of the last century, the egalitarian society phrased as “economy of affection” has been transformed. This paper examines whether the Tonga “sharing ideology” still exists by looking at how people help each other in farming tasks such as ploughing, weeding, and harvesting. Throughout different household categories, class, and gender, people are still embedded in the wider social network based on kinship, neighbourhood and other relations, and support each other. Conflicts have also been observed at the interfaces of different people with different interests on such occasions as the sharing of benefits and settling inheritance.

**Key Words:** Rural livelihoods; Sharing ideology; Gender; Plateau Tonga of Zambia.

### INTRODUCTION

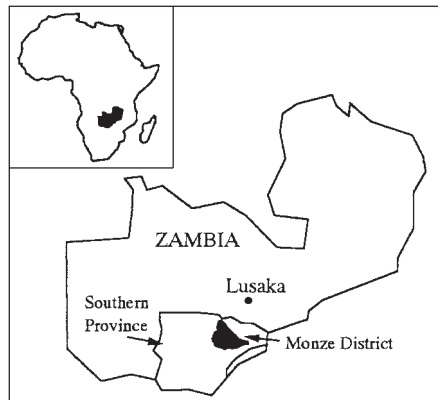
Action on rural poverty is not just a question for the state, or for international organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), important though their activities may be. In fact, the lives of people consist of innumerable daily actions that attempt to alleviate hardship, from trying to secure ways of growing food or earning income to negotiating the distribution of resources within households. These daily struggles may be accompanied by individual and collective actions to subvert or defeat structures which reinforce poverty (Johnson, 1992: 274).

Monze District, where the field research was carried out, is located on the mid-Plateau in the Southern Province of Zambia. The Plateau lies in between two of south central Africa's great rivers, the Zambezi and the Kafue. For many centuries, the Bantu people speaking a variation of the Tonga language (*Chitonga*) have lived on and around the Plateau. Since the beginning of the last century, the Tongas have experienced external and internal changes such as colonial administration, new farming technology, and the construction of the railway line throughout the Tonga Plateau. They were pushed into the direction of modernisation by adopting maize production for cash as well as home consumption.

On the other hand, many development interventions have been introduced into the Southern Province since its independence in 1964. The donor agencies as well as the State became the means through which the rural population gained access to resources. Acknowledging the women's neglected status in the past, present inter-

ventions have equally targeted rural women and men, sometimes even more than men to emphasise the importance of women's participation in development. These programmes and projects regarded development intervention as the active actor with rural society seen as passive. First, development interventions were assumed to take initiatives towards the targeted as passive recipients. Secondly, the people of the rural society was assumed as passive in the sense that they needed to be helped or empowered by outsiders as if they were living passively, i.e., as if their livelihoods are dependent on the state. However, in reality, people are continuously and independently managing their livelihoods, and have their own strategies to cope with ongoing poverty. In other words, while planners plan for the targeted population, the targeted themselves also have their own ways of striving for better life. Thus, there is a strong need to recognise a variety of activities outside of or without development interventions.

In this paper, I aim to shine a spotlight on people's own ways of pursuing their everyday lives. I shall examine how people make a living by using the complex relationships which contain both co-operative and conflictual aspects. The field research for this paper was conducted from October 1993 to September 1994 in Monze District, Zambia (Fig. 1). This was just after the drought of 1992 and the epidemic of corridor disease, which affected Southern Province including Monze.



**Fig. 1.** Map of Zambia and Monze District.

## SHARING IDEOLOGY

### I. Social Changes in the Tonga Society

Vickery (1986) argued that the dominant domestic communities in the pre-colonial plateau were the examples of Hyden's "economy of affection" where "affective ties based on common descent, common residence, etc. prevail, rather than market and/or class relationships" (Vickery, 1986: 29). Colson (1958), on the basis of the intensive anthropological research on the Plateau, observed that within their own community, people supported each other by drawing benefit from those with whom

they have a tie based on kinship, local residence, age, cattle links and so on (Colson, 1958: 46). However, drastic change took place in the Tonga Plateau from the beginning of the colonial administration in 1898, followed by the arrival of missionaries, such as the Roman Catholic Mission, the Seventh-Day Adventists (SDA), and the American Brethren in Christ. All of them arrived around 1905, and established base in the middle-Tonga Plateau, either Monze or Choma. They introduced the ox-plough farming, which led to peasant differentiation. Another significant event was the construction of the railway line in Northern Rhodesia, which passed through the middle of the Tonga Plateau to the mines in the Copperbelt and the Belgian Congo. Vickery (1986) stated that the railway became the symbol of changes which reshaped Tonga life fundamentally. The railway was one of the main factors which stopped the Tonga migration to the South and made them produce maize for cash. These drastic changes taking place in Tonga Plateau affected the social structure fundamentally. Tonga ceased to be egalitarian, as differentiation was created among farmers along with the increasingly active use of the ox-plough and commercial farming (Rotberg, 1965; Vickery, 1986; Chipungu, 1988).

Colson (1958) examined how the Tonga became modernised and how this change affected their life in the mid-century. As well, Dixon-Fyle (1976: 135) argued:

It now (around 1930s and 1940s) appeared as if the egalitarian character of Tonga society was being further undermined as a result of contact with the new economic and social forces that were operating on the Plateau. New social groupings were forming for the introduction of the money economy and western education encouraged the individual to branch out on the road to self-improvement.

There are, however, questions to be raised. First of all, has such a harmonious and egalitarian society ever existed before the encounters with external forces? Secondly, the scenario of harmonious and co-operative people becoming individualistic in the process of modernisation is a matter for discussion. There may sometimes be nostalgia for the past. Furthermore, in reality, as Long (1992) argued, there could be interaction between internal and external factors. In this process, external factors might have become internalised to take on different forms. So far as Southern Zambia is concerned, there remains the question of whether the community which was symbolised by Hyden's "economy of affection" has diminished or been swallowed into capitalism during the intensive change from a subsistence to a market economy.

Chipungu (1988) gave us a clue to this issue. While he described the process of peasant differentiation, he saw and stressed that there was a "sharing ideology", based on intensive lending of new technologies such as ploughs, wagons and scotch carts among rich and poor kinsmen and neighbours. Even the rich peasants benefited from family ties by relying heavily upon community and family labour. This sort of practice of mobilising labour from within the extended family and the village by rich peasants on the plateau appears to have continued well into the 1950s (Chipungu, 1988: 48-49). Rich peasants also often assisted their poorer relatives not only with implements but with draft animals as well. Even headmen were not able to escape this obligation. It seems that co-operation among relatives and neighbours

was the key to access to farming implements. Many used implements of richer relatives without payment (Chipungu, 1988: 65). In short, his argument was that while people were involved in modernisation and peasant differentiation, they were still embedded in the wider social network based on kinship and neighbourhood through intensive lending and borrowing among different classes.

In the following sections, I shall examine whether there is still any sort of “sharing ideology” in present Monze. If there is a mutual help mechanism, how does it work? Is there any differentiation in terms of household categories, class, and gender? For this purpose, three farming tasks of ploughing, weeding, and harvesting were investigated.

## II. Sharing Labour and Oxen

As shown in Table 1, in addition to the family labour, all of the household categories (monogamous male-headed household, polygamous male-headed household or female-headed household) depend on labour from kin or neighbours for additional labour. Except in one case, labour use from kinship is free of charge. Due to the loss of cattle from corridor disease, the prestige of having oxen and cattle has become more important than before. The price of cattle has increased and the competition over the utilisation of oxen during the crop season seems to have increased as well as the price of borrowing it. There are several cases in which neighbours or relatives share the oxen and have them work on each others' fields in rotation, even while they worry about the oxen being overused and shortening their life. Female-headed households tend to borrow labour as well as oxen owing to shortage of labour, while some male-headed households with enough labour only borrow oxen.

## III. Class and Gender Biases in Access

Sharing ideology in the form of lending and borrowing labour and oxen can be still observed in present day Monze. However, the priority of access to the labour and oxen at the right time affects yields. There are mainly two biases in access: class and gender. Chipungu (1988) argued that some poorer peasants without human or oxen labour often planted crops last since they had to wait for their turn for borrowing or to work in the fields of richer relatives (Chipungu, 1988: 44-45). On the other hand, Larson and Kanyangwa (1990) pointed out gender bias and argued that when oxen were used for ploughing, women had to wait for their relatives or others with oxen to first finish their own ploughing before her fields can be ploughed. This late planting caused poor crop performance, given the short rainy season (Larson & Kanyangwa, 1990: 476).

Present-day Monze also shows both class and gender biases. One male informant who had to borrow oxen commented, “I must work on my neighbour's field for one week, while I can borrow oxen for only one day in return. This is a big loss of labour for my field.” Furthermore, it should be kept in mind that former owners of many oxen turned into borrowers after losing their oxen due to corridor disease. Because of the nature of this disease, the status of haves or have-nots may change over the night.

**Table 1.** Labour Use for Cultivation and Ploughing.

	M. MHH (N = 43)		P. MHH (N = 25)		FHH (N = 21)	
	unpaid	paid	unpaid	paid	unpaid	paid
<b>Household</b>						
Head	40 (1)		19 (1)		16	
Spouse(s)	34 (3)		22		(2)**	
(g)/children	30		20		12	
Others	11		3		2	
<b>Kinship</b>						
Kin	7		5		4	
Kin + oxen*	10		4		6	1
Oxen	3		2			
<b>Neighbourhood</b>						
Neighbours	2			(1)	2	
Neighbours + oxen	1	4		1	1	6
Oxen		1	1			1
<b>Others</b>						
Women's Club						
Church group						
School kids						
Others					2	

Note: Total number is 89 among 90 informants because I excluded one informant who was a full-time teacher.

Key Words: M. MHH = monogamous male-headed household

P. MHH = polygamous male-headed household

FHH = female-headed household

(g)/children = children and/or grandchildren

Others = one was a labourer employed by her son; the other, her ex-husband

( ) sometimes if extra work is needed

\* 2 cases, tractors were used instead of oxen

\*\* autonomous polygamous FHHs

All the female-headed households more or less depend on either kin or neighbours for ploughing. Among 21 female-headed households, however, nine women owned oxen. Therefore, they were in a stronger position than those who did not own or have lost oxen. They asked for labour first, then released their oxen to those who helped ploughing, or rented out the oxen to other households. On the other hand, a woman in the male-headed household mentioned that she was reluctant to join a grass-roots group such as Women's Club because she would not be able to utilise fertiliser even if she gets it. She does not have oxen and has no money to borrow them. Although it is important to consider the disadvantage of female-headed households, it is also necessary to look at some women in male-headed households who struggle in maintaining the households.

#### IV. Gender Division of Labour and Amount of Labour

Vickery (1986) argued that in Southern Zambia there was relatively little gender division of labour in cultivation itself, as opposed to hunting and gathering, craft work, and household tasks including cooking and building. The heavy task of clearing fell to men, while burning, hoeing, planting, weeding, harvesting and carrying were all done by both sexes, often at the same time (Vickery, 1986: 23). On the

other hand, Dixon-Fyle (1976: 17) saw weeding as a women's task as Saito (1994: 9) in other areas in Zambia. In Monze, weeding is recognised more as a woman's task. However, in practice, as Table 2 shows, a certain number of husbands were involved in weeding: 81 percent of men in monogamous male-headed households engaged in weeding as compared with 52 percent of those in polygamous male-headed households. It demonstrates that in the case of labour shortage for this labour-intensive task, men also help out in women's predominant domains.

On the other hand, there is a question of the amount of labour in terms of gender: men also performed weeding, but how much labour did they actually provide? There is no exact time-budget data available on the amount of labour, but responses of interviews showed more labour inputs from women and girls. There are, however, some cases in which everyone worked in the field for the same duration, or the husband was the first to go the field and work. Colson (1958) pointed out that the Tonga man preferred to work in a supervisory capacity whenever possible and leave most of the actual field work in other hands (Colson, 1958: 122). Throughout Zambia, women spend more time in the fields than men do. There is a study on time-use patterns in 3 provinces including Southern Province in Zambia, which showed that women spent 6.6 hours a day in agriculture in contrast of men's 5.6 hours a day. In addition, women spent 4.2 hours on household activities, while men spend only 0.4 hours for such activities (Due, Mudenda & Miller, 1983: 14).

#### V. Other Labour Pools and Overlapping Relationship

As compared with ploughing which requires someone who has oxen and does this job, the role of women and children in weeding (Table 2) and harvesting (Table 3), are increasing. Some draw labour from school children and Women's Clubs or

**Table 2.** Labour Use for Weeding.

	M. MHH (N = 43)		P. MHH (N = 25)		FHH (N = 21)	
	unpaid	paid	unpaid	paid	unpaid	paid
Household						
Head	35 (1)		13 (1)		19	
Spouse(s)	42		23		-	
(g)/children	36		24		16 (1)	
Others	13		2		4	
Kinship	2		1		2	1
Neighbours		2		(1)		2
Others						
Women's Club		(1)				(1)
Church group		1 (1)				
School kids		(2)		2		4 (2)
Others					2	

Note: Total number is 89 among 90 informants because I excluded one informant who was a full-time teacher.

Key Words: M. MHH = monogamous male-headed household

P. MHH = polygamous male-headed household

FHH = female-headed household

(g)/children = children and/or grandchildren

Others = one was a labourer employed by her son; the other, her ex-husband

( ) sometimes if extra work is needed

**Table 3.** Labour Use for Harvesting.

	M. MHH (N = 43)		P. MHH (N = 25)		FHH (N = 21)	
	unpaid	paid	unpaid	paid	unpaid	paid
Household						
Head	39 (1)		20 (1)		20	
Spouse(s)	42		24		(1)	
(g)/children	36		24		17 (1)	
Others	16		3		4	
Kinship	4 (2)		2		1	
Neighbours		(1)		(1)		
Others						
Women's Club		(1)			(1)	
Church group		(1)				
School kids		(2)				1
Others					2	

Note: Total number is 89 among 90 informants because I excluded one informant who was a full-time teacher.

Key Words: M. MHH = monogamous male-headed household

P. MHH = polygamous male-headed household

FHH = female-headed household

(g)/children = children and/or grandchildren

Others = one was a labourer employed by her son; the other, her ex-husband

( ) sometimes if extra work is needed

church groups for the tasks of weeding and harvesting. Female-headed households especially tend to depend on them. In contrast, polygamous households depend less on other labour pools.

Neighbourhood women help each other on several occasions such as *nkolola* (girl's initiation ceremonies), funerals, and at the time of misfortune. However, as compared with studies done in the other African countries, there are no special women's associations such as rotating labour groups and saving societies. On age-groupings, Colson (1958) argued that female age-groups were less important, partly because they left their natal villages where they had age-mates (Colson, 1958: 42). During my research, the chair lady of a Women's Club mentioned that "we decided to form a Women's Club because in this area women's mutual assistance in several occasions such as *nkolola* is weak. Through forming us as Women's Club, we do help each other in need."

Related to the above discussion, it is difficult to categorise those who help under a single label such as friend, neighbour, or member of a church group. People have different and multiple relations to one another. One might be a neighbour, friend, age-mate, and at the same time a colleague in a Women's Club or church group. Thus, it is difficult to specify who helps whom in which relationship. They help each other because they might live together in the same community, are friends, go to the same church, and/or are members of the same Women's Clubs. The web of relationship is complex, even for children, as some are relatives, neighbours and/or school students. Therefore, in Tables 1, 2 and 3, only when the person intentionally approached Women's Clubs, church groups, or school students through institutions, I put them under those categories.



## VI. Mother-child Link in Matrilineal Society

As Tables 1, 2 and 3 show, the role of children in farming is quite significant. Children work on the field during school holidays as well as after school. Some children studying at boarding schools also return home during the holidays and help their parents. Not only family children, but nieces and nephews as dependants are also counted as labour. This is one of the reasons why the rural population increases during the farming season. In addition, school children are hired as cheap labour especially for weeding and harvesting.

Reynolds (1990), based on the intensive research on child labour among Gwembe Tonga in the Zambezi valley, argued that children worked extremely hard. She pointed out the importance of child labour not only from the perspective of its crucial contribution to the family farm systems, but also from women's perspectives. Since women have a huge burden in maintaining households, farming, and so on, children's labour is vital in reducing their workload. In particular, a girl aged twelve or more is no longer in control of her own time in rural areas. Because of this labour shortage and need, Saito (1994) pointed out that women wanted to have as many children as possible.

The intensive use of the labour of children should not be considered only from the aspect of African rural economy, but also from that of social relations. In the case of Tongas, the mother-child bond is fundamentally strong because of its matrilineal institutions, which is reflected in Ekejiuba (1995)'s hearth-hold model emphasising the mother-child bond. Vickery (1986), for instance, pointed out that some widowed and divorced women established their households by using the labour of sons or sons-in-law (Vickery, 1986: 20). Wright's study (1983) in Southern Zambia related that SDA youths were told by the missionaries to withdraw from their obligations to render weeks of service in the fields of their mothers-in-law (Wright, 1983: 75). This, however, does not seem to have been achieved. The labour of sons and sons-in-law is still valued in farming, transport, trading and so on in present-day Monze.

## VII. Sister-brother Bond

O'Laughlin (1995) pointed out that Colson was one of the first to suggest that male labour migration did not necessarily represent increasing misery for rural women left behind. She pointed out that since "African women were active agriculturists, the absence of men often meant increasing independence and autonomy for women in the management of their households" (O'Laughlin, 1995: 72). Vickery (1986), on the other hand, suggested that male labour migration did not bear too hard on women because of their close links with their brothers. He argued that the most suitable replacements for missing men were the wives' brothers: in matrilineal Tonga society brothers have very close and protective relations with their sisters, whose children are the brothers' direct descendants (Vickery, 1986: 65-67).

In present-day Monze, this sister-brother bond is still significant, especially for the female-headed households. For example, in farming (Tables 1, 2 and 3), a distinct characteristic of the female-headed households is their ties with the natal kin rather than marital kin. All of the female-headed households asked help from natal

kin, mostly brothers or uncles. On the other hand, the male-headed households mainly relied on relatives of the husband, except one household, which asked for labour and oxen from the wife's brother. The reason why female-headed households depend more on natal kin is mainly because widows and divorced women usually return to their natal village or move away with their sons at the time of divorce or the husband's death. In one female-headed household, however, the woman depended on her natal kin's assistance although she continued to live in her marital village. She explained, "when my husband was alive, his relatives used to support us in lending oxen and land. But, now, nothing. So, I must depend on my uncle's help." Such bonds between the woman and her brothers or uncles can be found in many occasions.

## CONFLICTS AMONG DIFFERENT MEMBERS

People are supported in their wider network, such as neighbourhood and kinship. However, conflicts can be also observed at the interfaces between different people with different interests in a wider social context. For instance, at the time of sharing the harvest or settling the inheritance, there are mainly two kinds of conflict. One is between husband and wife, and the other is more complex, between, on the one hand, husband and his matrilineal kin, and, on the other hand, wife, her children and their matrilineal kin. The conflicts between husband and wife is also understood as a part of the latter.

### I. Conflict between Husband and Wife

First of all, I shall look at conflictive aspects between husband and wife. After the introduction of new farming technologies, men's access to resources and their rights to the produce increased, and gender disparity became apparent. Bryceson (1995: 8) made this point as follows:

Gender and age, rather than class, predominate in the delineation of social standing and work allocation in hoe societies. While both women and men are generally considered capable of hoeing, women tend to be more strongly identified with this work activity in their role as food provisioners. Control over the labour of others is the key to male power and authority in the society. But hoes have an individualising effect on work organisation since they are designed to be handled by only one person. Thus, there is a tension between the technical possibility of women acting as direct producers and their social designation as men's means of production.

This is also the case of the Tongas after the missionaries introduced ploughing. Colson (1958) argued that "the introduction of ploughing has reinforced the husband's rights over the fields and crops. Because the plough and oxen used in the fields are commonly his, he claims that he is entitled to all the proceeds over and above what is needed for food" (Colson, 1958: 112). Women in my research areas still work on their family fields which belong to men and on her own plot for

groundnuts and vegetables. Women have more discretion on the income from groundnuts, sweet potatoes and vegetables than that from produce from the family plot. However, in most cases, money earned by women is used to maintain households. One of the reasons why women become members of Women's Club is to earn cash. It seems that cash a woman gained from selling her own handicrafts gives her more discretion as to how to use it, while income from maize production is first spent on men for their plot and labour.

## II. Conflicts Caused by Matrilineal Inheritance

Conflicts can also be observed at the interfaces of different people's interests in wider social institutions. As discussed, women are supported in matrilineal institutions, but these institutions also cause conflicts. Colson (1958) pointed out conflictual aspects because of the contradictions in matrilineality among the Tongas. Poewe's study (1978) in Luapula Province, Zambia similarly focused on the conflicts and strains prevalent in matrilineal societies. She argued that matrilineal inheritance limits co-operation among nuclear and bilateral extended-family members, because, in matrilineal society, a man cannot transmit his position to his sons, who are not members of his descent group. Thus, this discourages investment in family or larger co-operative enterprises because the inputs accrue to the lineage only (Poewe, 1978: 303).

Colson (1958) attributed conflict in the Tonga household to the fact that members of the household who work together belong to different inheritance groups. This factor results in conflict among more people, for instance at the time of sharing the harvested crop from the fields where everyone of the household has contributed. Colson (1958: 117) first described the perspective from the point of view of the husbands' relatives as follows:

Members of the husband's matrilineal group see the wealth produced as potential part of his estate over which they have rights of inheritance to the exclusion of the wife and her children. They therefore resent it if the man uses his wealth to raise the standard of living of his household since this means that the wife and children are "eating" the wealth.

On the other hand, the wife and children see the wealth as largely the product of their labour.

Its conversion into capital goods or savings—though this for the moment may give them greater security or a better living—means that eventually their work goes to endow the husband's relatives who meantime have been making their lives difficult.... She therefore tries, while she can, to divert as much of her husband's wealth into the hands of her children as possible, or she encourages them to break away from their father so that their labour does not go into his estate (Colson, 1958: 118).

Today in Monze, the same conflict can still be observed. There are, however, some households which adopt patrilineal inheritance, so that their children who in

practice have worked on the field and contributed to the wealth accumulation could gain from their own efforts.

### III. Property-Grabbing

Conflictual aspects of the matrilineal society can be observed clearly in property-grabbing practices. Among 12 widows whom I studied, nine did not inherit anything at the time of death of their husbands. Among the nine cases, only one widow still maintained good relations with her marital family although she did not get anything at the time of her husband's death. She mentioned that "I still visit my ex-marital family once or twice a month and chat with them. They give me money, chicken or soap." The remaining three widows either obtained something or were not subjects to any property-grabbing. One obtained the house and land, and one got a cow and a bed. The other woman had moved to her natal village before her husband died, because her blind father needed the couple's help. Thus, they depended on her father's property at the time of the husband's death.

In Zambia, several organisations such as YWCA, Zambian Association of Research and Development (ZARD) and Women and Law in Southern Africa (WILSA) have made efforts to promote awareness of women's rights. Munachonga (1989) also argued that, in most cases, the rural women do not know the new law protecting them from property-grabbing, and stressed the importance of knowledge. However, the matter is more complex since many people with different interests are involved. Some women answered, "you may lose, but you may also gain in future," while others were afraid of being avenged or bewitched if they took cases to the court. One woman who had all the property grabbed at the death of her husband said:

When my husband died, everything was grabbed by his relatives except cattle kept at my parent's home. However, my sons took the initiative and took this case to the court in Monze town. It took time to settle the case, but we obtained several things afterwards.... In most cases, widows do not take their cases to the court because they are afraid of being bewitched. Even our case, we were threatened with being bewitched.

In rural Monze, instead of confronting the legal system, women seem to take some actions while their husbands are alive. One example is "eating the wealth" while the husband is alive as Colson (1958) pointed out. Secondly, according to Keller, Phiri, and Milimo (1990), in Southern Province, some married women do own cattle, which they could use to plough, but often do not keep them at hand for fear that they and the tools, such as the ploughs, will be seized by in-laws in the event of the husband's death (Keller *et al.*, 1990: 260). Similar cases were found in Monze. Thirdly, they engage in their own activities such as sales of second-hand clothes, vegetables and groundnuts to earn income and save some. Fourthly, an extension officer mentioned the following point as one of the reasons why women needed to join Women's Clubs; "they need gradual preparation for the time of their husbands' death, followed by property-grabbing."

As discussed, matrilineal society results in tensions which affect a number of dif-

ferent relationships such as a husband and his wife, a father and his children, a man and his matrilineal heirs, and a wife and children and her matrilineal kin.

## CONCLUSION

Since the beginning of the last century, the Tongas have experienced external and internal changes such as the interface with colonial administration, new farming technology, and the construction of the railway line, followed by maize production for cash. As they have been pushed in the direction of modernisation, the egalitarian society phrased by “economy of affection” has been transformed.

I have examined whether the “sharing ideology” (Chipungu, 1988) still exists in present-day Monze by looking at how people use labour in farming tasks such as ploughing, weeding, and harvesting. The primary labour is provided by household members. In some cases, some households share labour and oxen to each other specifically in response to the loss of oxen due to corridor disease. Monogamous male-headed households and female-headed households require more labour from outside households than do polygamous male-headed households. All the female-headed households I studied more or less depend on either kin or neighbours for ploughing. In matrilineal Tonga society, brothers have very close and protective relations with their sisters. Therefore, in farming, for example, the female-headed households have distinct ties with the natal kin rather than marital kin. Basically, labour use from kin is free of charge, while labour from a neighbour especially of oxen is to be paid for. However, priority of access to labour and oxen at the optimum time differs according to wealth and gender.

So far as farming is concerned, gender division of labour is relatively flexible. If there is labour shortage, men are also involved in the work in which women predominate such as weeding. However, inequalities are evident with respect to the amount of labour. Women spend more time in the fields than men do. Child labour, associated with close mother-child links, plays a significant role.

On the other hand, conflicts have been also observed in matrilineal Tonga society on such occasions as the sharing of harvest and settling the inheritance. This conflict is clearly observed in property-grabbing practices. Widows in my research seldom obtained any property on the death of their husbands. At the national level, NGOs have made efforts to promote awareness of women’s rights, specifically to protect them from the property-grabbing. In most cases, people are afraid of being bewitched, and do not take cases to the court. Instead, some women adopt the strategy of making the most of their wealth while the husband is alive, or set aside cattle to be kept at the homes of their natal kin.

From those findings, there are two policy implications to be suggested. First of all, the above-discussed complex web of co-operation and conflict call into question the Women in Development (WID)/Gender and Development (GAD) discourse, in which gender relations have been considered primarily from the perspective of husband-wife ties. As Peters (1995: 99-100) emphasised, “it is important to stress, too that gendered patterns refer not only to relations between men and women as husbands wives” but “they include, too, relations between sisters and brothers, between

co-wives, between mothers and daughters, and others all of which are mediated in part by gender." This paper has attempted to embed this aspect of gender relations in the context of wider relations, and to point out the need for the policy makers to look at these aspects.

Secondly, there is a need to see the larger picture of rural livelihoods outside or without development interventions. It is, therefore, important to recognise dual or multiple approaches which comprise development interventions and people's own strategies for coping with on-going social and environmental changes. By combining various kinds of approaches, people attempt to gain access to the resources, to reduce the risk of livelihood failure and to alleviate hardship.

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