



The Lunda-Ndembu: Style, Change, and Social Transformation in South Central Africa

James A. Pritchett

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Bridging history and anthropology, this richly documented account of the Lunda-Ndembu people of northwestern Zambia has at its center the paradox of continuity and change. To legitimate and justify innovations to their cultural identity and practice, the Lunda-Ndembu propose that such innovations have conceptual similarities to long-standing traditions.

While framing the discussion around classic anthropological oppositions—the individual versus the group, old versus young, females versus males, rich versus poor, us versus them, people versus the natural environment, the physical world vs. the metaphysical world—James A. Pritchett also offers a work of historical imagination. It is at the shifting boundaries of these relationships, he argues, that change is actually confronted on a daily basis, spoken about, and negotiated into conformity with widespread and enduring traditions.

Juxtaposing Victor Turner's ethnographic data on the Ndembu from the 1950s with his own fieldwork in the 1980s and 1990s, Pritchett demonstrates that, by restudying areas already well known, it is possible to generate richly nuanced answers about social change that more accurately reflect local sensibilities.

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