

## 1. Description: Mbunda/ Mbundu

**1.1 Name(s) of society, language, and language family:** Mbunda/Mbundu, Bantu language, Kimbundu

**1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com):** 639-3

**1.3 Location (latitude/longitude):** 12 degrees 30' South, 18 degrees 30' East

**1.4 Brief history:** The Mbundu people are thought to have arrived in Angola during the middle ages. They brought agriculture, built villages, and traded with the indigenous populations. The society has been predominately matrilineal. After years of war in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, their territory became part of the Portuguese colony, still known today as Angola.

**1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors:** While the territory of the Mbundu had remained the same in early history, some of the social and linguistic boundaries had changed as neighboring groups and coastal tribes that were in turn influenced by the Portuguese had noticeably influence some of the tribe. Over time, dialects changed as well as social lifestyles. The influence of the Portuguese caused an adoption of new customs, education systems, and also marital practices (intermarriage).

**1.6 Ecology (natural environment):** The mbundu live in an environment where droughts occur frequently. They live in parts of northern and central Angola. However, most of the population lives near the Kwanza river. (1)

**1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density:** The Mbundu are the largest ethnic group of people in the modern state of Angola. They account for 1/3 of Angola's population of about 6.5 million people. (1)

## 2. Economy

**2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s):** "The staple foods include cassava (a plant with an edible root), corn, millet (a small-seeded grain), sorghum (a grassy plant that yields a grain used alone or to make syrup), beans, sweet potatoes, rice, wheat, and bananas." (2)

**2.2 Main protein-lipid sources:** fish, chicken, or meat. "Mbundu make use of their abundant fresh and saltwater fish. One dish, *calulu*, combines fresh and dried fish. A favorite dish is *cabidela*, chicken's blood eaten with rice and cassava dough." (2)

**2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?:** Men carry weapons such as spears or machetes when they travel away from their villages.

**2.4 Food storage:**

**2.5 Sexual division of production:** Women are especially important in selling food and firewood, and men predominate in trade in arms, diamonds, and spare parts. Most of the people who work in the transport and building sectors are men. (2)

**2.6 Land tenure:** "Access to land is difficult. There is not a land shortage, but not all arable land is under cultivation. This problem is caused by the fact that war prevents farmers from going to their fields and often forces people to flee before the harvest. In times of relative calm, land mines render traveling to and working on the land dangerous. Both the MPLA and UNITA have restricted the freedom of movement of the population and imposed rules to curb mobility in specific areas or during certain parts of the day." (2)

**2.7 Ceramics:** "The traditional arts have played an important part in cultural rituals marking such passages as birth or death, childhood to adulthood, and the harvest and hunting seasons. In producing masks and other items from bronze, ivory, wood, malachite, or ceramics, each ethnolinguistic group has distinct styles. For example, the ritual masks created by the [Lunda-Chokwe](#) represent such figures from their mythology as Princess Lweji and Prince Tschibinda-Ilunga." (4).

**2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:** N/A

**2.9 Food taboos:** N/A

**2.10 Canoes/watercraft?** N/A

## 3. Anthropometry

**3.1 Mean adult height (m and f):** 5 ft. 7

**3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f):** N/A

## 4. Life History, mating, marriage

**4.1 Age at menarche (f):** N/A

**4.2 Age at first birth (m and f):** N/A

**4.3 Completed family size (m and f):** 8

**4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce:** N/A

**4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously:** N/A

**4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?:** "Arranged marriages still happen, and the bride's parents receive a payment of cattle from the groom's family. Fertility ceremonies are still held in Mbundu villages. Matrilineal relations are highly respected in the villages, but the bonds are much weaker in the urban centers." (6)

**4.9 Inheritance patterns:** Inheritance is matrilineal, with children inheriting from the mother. (2).

**4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:** "Considering the Angola case study, its discussion between parents and offspring is very rare in so far as sex is considered a "taboo" subject. The results of the study carried out in Luanda among teenagers between 14-20 years old show that most of the teenagers do not talk about sex with their parents." (7).

**4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:** "Hetero-sexual play is not in vogue" (7)

**4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):** "Virginity cannot be expected in the bride as girls are allowed to indulge freely up to the age of puberty." (14).

**4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these "other fathers" recognized?** "Within the traditional societies, the beginning of sexual life is very early, but it is regulated and reproduction oriented. In this way, the youth begins their sexual life within a framework of a formal union." (14).

**4.14 What is the belief of the mother's role in procreation exactly? (e.g., "receptacle in which fetus grows"):** N/A

**4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)?** N/A

**4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape:** "It is the custom of the country that about the period when the millet ripens (May) the young

men of each village should club together to obtain a Mombanda. The Mombanda has to be a girl under the age of puberty, a stranger to the village, and she has to prostitute herself with all the young men in turns, but there are days when orgies take place and all the men have intercourse with her” (14)

**4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin) N/A**

**4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?** “Pre-marital relations are considered as an important psychological preparation and acquisition of skills for the exercise of a man's primordial role in society. Society, therefore, recognises these rites as rehearsals and a proof of his ability to be married are considered as an important psychological preparation and acquisition of skills for the exercise of a man's primordial role in society. Society, therefore, recognises these rites as rehearsals and a proof of the ability to be married. In some cases, young women who have been initiated and are no longer virgin feel freer to maintain hidden sexual relations.” (14)

**4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring: N/A**

**4.22 Evidence for couvades: N/A**

**4.24 Kin avoidance and respect? N/A**

**4.24 Joking relationships? N/A**

**4.26 Incest avoidance rules**

**4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony? N/A**

**4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?** Due to the Portuguese Catholic influence, some have Saint names.

**4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?):** In the Mbundu ethnic group, a daughter joins her husband in his village, and a son joins his uncle's (mother's brother's) village. (2).

**4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)?** No

**4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who: N/A**

## **Warfare/homicide**

**4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:** High numbers (years of civil warfare)

**4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death:** Predominantly fought outside influences instead of other tribes

**4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing:** The countries' struggle for independence was long and violent, and life in the independent nation has also been marred by intense civil war. Such disorder has obstructed the development of Bantu customs and also destroyed the more Portuguese traditions of the coastal cities. (4)

**4.18 Cannibalism?** None

## **5. Socio-Political organization and interaction**

**5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:** “The Mbundu (village) may be composed of five to five hundred households. On flat sites the villages tend to be circular and palisaded whereas in broken terrain the villages are irregular in outline and plan. Most villages are divided into several compounds, each containing one to three households. In large villages the compounds are grouped inwards” (8)

**5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):** Same

**5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes):** “According to one account, the functioning lineage probably has a genealogical depth of three to four generations: a man, his sister's adult sons, and the latter's younger but married sister's sons. How this unit encompasses the range of statuses characteristic of the matrilineage in Mbundu theory is not altogether clear” (9)

**5.8 Village and house organization:** “The Mbundu (village) may be composed of five to five hundred households. On flat sites the villages tend to be circular and palisaded whereas in broken terrain the villages are irregular in outline and plan. Most villages are divided into several compounds, each containing one to three households. In large villages the compounds are grouped inwards” (8).

**5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses):** “In large villages the compounds are grouped inwards, each of which may have its own dancing floor... and men's club house... located in the center. The compounds contain at least one sleeping hut... granary and chicken coop per family. (8).

**5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere? N/A**

**5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc: N/A**

**5.12 Trade:** “Trade is important in the Mbundu economy as they are ideally situated on several major waterways which serve as trade routes” (6).

**5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?** “The Mbundu matrilineage was in some respects a dispersed unit, but a core group maintained a lineage village to which its members returned, either at a particular stage in their lives or for brief visits. Women went to the villages of their husbands, and their children were raised there. The girls, as their mothers had done, then joined their own husbands. The young men, however, went to the lineage village to join their mothers' brothers. The mothers' brothers and their sisters' sons formed the more or less permanent core of the lineage community, visited from time to time by the women of the lineage who, as they grew old, might come to live the rest of their lives there. After a time, when the senior mother's brother who headed the matrilineage died, some of the younger men would go off to found their own villages. A man then became the senior male in a new lineage, the members of which would be his sisters and his sisters' sons.” (9).

## **6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)**

**6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine):**

**6.2 Stimulants:**

**6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal):** The mukanda ceremony and process is held during the dry season (May-October) and lasts anywhere from three to five months. It is a rite of passage into manhood. There is also an onset for female initiation once puberty is reached. Both rituals are public and the whole village participates. (5).

#### 6.4 Other rituals:

**6.5 Myths (Creation):** Many mythological features such as Princess Lweji and Prince Tschibinda-Ilunga.

**6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):** “Percussion, wind, and string instruments are found throughout Angola. Maracas (*saxi*) are made by drilling a few small holes in dried gourds and placing dried seeds or glass beads inside. The box lute (*chilhumba*) is played during long journeys.” (2)

#### 6.7 Sex differences in RCR:

**6.8 Missionary effect:** “The majority of the Kimbundu have had some exposure to Catholicism, but few have had the opportunity to hear a clear presentation of the gospel in a language and manner they can understand. Catholicism coming from the Portuguese colonists is by far the strongest Christian influence they have received, with its primary influences being felt in the 19th and 20th centuries.” (10).

#### 6.9 RCR revival:

**6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs:** “Traditional Angolan religions believe in a close connection with the spirit of dead ancestors. They believe that ancestors play a part in the lives of the living. Therefore, the spirits of dead ancestors remain prominent members of the community. Ancestral worship is a common thread through many indigenous religions. It is considered that not revering the dead can jeopardize the living. It is thought that people must appease the ancestors so that they do not harm the living. It is believed that ancestors can bring famine, plague, disease, personal loss, and other catastrophes” (11).

**6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?** N/A

**6.12 Is there teknonymy?** No

**6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.):** Large number of Catholics because of Portuguese influence, but also many still stick to traditional culture religion.

### 7. Adornment

**7.1 Body paint:** N/A

**7.2 Piercings:** N/A

**7.3 Haircut:** Short

**7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.):** In the towns and cities, Western-style clothing is common, though some people still wear traditional clothing. The villages remain more traditional, where women wear *panos*, African wraparound batik garments. Dressing up for parties and special occasions in the cities almost certainly means wearing Western-style outfits. Youth prefer casual jeans and T-shirts, except for special occasions. (2)

**7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:** The use of these ceremonial masks is always accompanied with music and storytelling, both of which have developed in important ways. (4).

**7.7 Sex differences in adornment:** None

**7.8 Missionary effect: (Same as 6.8)**

**7.9 Cultural revival in adornment:** None

### 8. Kinship systems

**8.1 Sibling classification system:** N/A

**8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.):** None

### 9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

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