

# **Bantu Questionnaire**

## **Songo**

### **1. Description**

#### **1.1 Name(s) of society, language, and language family:**

The Songo people are also known as the Nsong or the Ntsuo. They should not be confused with the Songo people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. They speak Songo, which is a language similar to North Mbundu. It is sometimes considered to be a dialect of North Mbundu.

#### **1.2 ISO code:**

NSX

#### **1.3 Location (latitude/longitude):**

Northern Angola. -9.31899, 14.842529.

#### **1.4 Brief history:**

The Songo people are thought to be descended from the Mbundu people who lived in Angola over 2000 years ago.

They are the result of a population merger that occurred when the Bantu began expanding into Mbundu territory.

Until the late 1700's the entire region was controlled by the Lunda Empire. The Lunda exerted their authority over the Songo and their neighbors until they were overthrown by the Chokwe. The Chokwe then attempted to occupy the vacant seat of power left by the Mbundu, but were quickly ousted by European colonialism (2).

#### **1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors:**

See above.

#### **1.6 Ecology (natural environment):**

Northern Angola consists mostly of sprawling plains covered in a large system of rivers and tributaries.

#### **1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density**

The Songo have a population of approximately 128,000 (3).

### **2. Economy**

#### **2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s):**

The Songo are avid farmers of manioc, cassava, peanuts, and yams. Yams are the primary supply of carbohydrates.

#### **2.2 Main protein-lipid sources:**

The Songo's main source of protein and meat comes from fish, which they catch themselves in nearby rivers.

#### **2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?:**

The Songo use a fishing rod to fish. They primarily use traditional weapons such as wooden spears, but occasionally are able to trade for guns. The first firearms were obtained through trades with Portuguese explorers.

#### **2.4 Food storage:**

#### **2.5 Sexual division of production:**

Women are almost completely in charge of all the farming. The men are responsible for hunting and other chores.

#### **2.6 Land tenure:**

Songo farmers tend to the land very carefully. They utilize a combination of slash and burn techniques as well as crop rotation to ensure the land's continuing fertility.

#### **2.7 Ceramics:**

The Songo create many ceramic pieces which are considered to be of high quality. The ceramics that they produce are very similar in style to those of the neighboring Chokwe tribe, with which they are often confused. They make many portrait-sculptures of the royal family, both living and deceased.

#### **2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:**

The Songo have well-established trading systems amongst themselves and their neighboring tribes.

#### **2.9 Food taboos:**

#### **2.10 Canoes/watercraft?**

### **3. Anthropometry**

**3.1 Mean adult height (m and f):**

**3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f):**

### **4. Life History, mating, marriage**

**4.1 Age at menarche (f):**

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

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

**4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f):**

**4.5 Age first marriage (m and f):**

**4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce:**

**4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously:**

**4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?:**

**4.9 Inheritance patterns:**

**4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:**

**4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:**

**4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):**

**4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these “other fathers” recognized?**

**4.14 What is the belief of the mother’s role in procreation exactly? (e.g., “receptacle in which fetus grows”)**

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

**4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape**

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

**4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?**

**4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring**

**4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?**

**4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females**

**4.22 Evidence for couvades**

**4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older)**

**4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?**

**4.24 Joking relationships?**

**4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations**

**4.26 Incest avoidance rules**

**4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?**

**4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?**

**4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?)**

**4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)?**

**4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:**

### **Warfare/homicide**

**4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:**

**4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death:**

**4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing:**

**4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations):**

The Songo are surrounded by a number of aggressive neighbors, with whom they have recurring violent incursions.

**4.18 Cannibalism?**

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

**5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:**

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

The Songo live in the same region year-round.

**5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes):**

The tribe is led by a chief. The position of chief is passed down from father to son, one generation after another.

**5.4 Post marital residence:**

Married couples live together.

**5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense):**

**5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex):**

**5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:**

**5.8 Village and house organization:**

**5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses):**

**5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?**

**5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc:**

Young boys usually move in with their mother's brother when they reach the age of 5. They are then raised by their uncle as his own son (2).

**5.12 Trade:**

Trade is an important aspect of life amongst the Songo. They trade amongst themselves and their neighbors regularly. Trades commonly involve exchanging ivory and other niceties for food or hides and other practical items. Beginning in the 15<sup>th</sup> century they would also trade with Portuguese travelers for firearms.

**5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?**

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

**6.0 Time allocation to RCR:**

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

**6.2 Stimulants:**

**6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal):**

**6.4 Other rituals:**

**6.5 Myths (Creation):**

**6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):**

**6.7 Sex differences in RCR:**

**6.8 Missionary effect:**

The Joshua Project describes the Songo as 80% Christian (3).

**6.9 RCR revival:**

**6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs:**

**6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?**

**6.12 Is there teknonymy?**

**6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.)**

The religious beliefs of the Songo are consistent with many other African tribes. They have a very strong belief in spirituality. Most of their religious activities revolve around ancestral spirits. There is also a strong Christian presence in the society, brought about by missionaries.

**7. Adornment**

**7.1 Body paint:**

**7.2 Piercings:**

**7.3 Haircut:**

**7.4 Scarification:**

**7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.):**

**7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:**

**7.7 Sex differences in adornment:**

**7.8 Missionary effect:**

**7.9 Cultural revival in adornment:**

## **8. Kinship systems**

**8.1 Sibling classification system:**

**8.2 Sororate, levirate:**

**8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.):**

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

### **Numbered references**

1. Maho, Jouni Filip  
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<http://goto.glocalnet.net/mahopapers/bntbibliosupp.pdf>
2. <http://www.uiowa.edu/~africart/toc/people/Songo.html>
3. <http://www.joshuaproject.net/people-profile.php?peo3=19052&rog3=AO>