

## **1. Description**

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

The name of the society is Southern Mbundu People. They now refer to themselves as Ovimbundu. The language they speak is Umbundu. The language family they belong to is Niger-Congo. Alternate names include: M'bundo, Mbali, Mbari, Mbundu Benguella, Nano, Ovimbundu, South Mbundu, and Umbundo.

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

The language code is umb (the number code is 639-3).

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

Because Umbundu is spoken around much of Angola, included are the latitude and longitude location of the entire country: 12 degrees 30' South, and 18 degrees 30' East. The country of Angola is 482, 625 square kilometers, and is situated south of the equator in western Africa. However, they are more concentrated in the area of the Bie Plateau in central Angola and the coastal strip to the west.

### **1.4 Brief history:**

The origins of the Umbundu language has formed from different groups of people who slowly moved from the North and formed the local/ regional groups there today, and have formed political units. They have developed a sophisticated agriculture, which includes the breeding of small animals and cows. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century they took advantage of the Portuguese communities being established and formed trading routes/ agreements. With each of the routes (caravans), each group became even more independent than they had been. They appointed professional leaders and diviners. The trade thrived on slavery. When slavery decreased around 1904, so did the trade, and finally ended in 1910. This also had somewhat to do with the way trade was conducted. Since the major railway was also built in 1904, the caravans began to die out which meant that the leaders and diviners were not needed anymore. Over the next few years the Ovimbundu changed to a cash crop economy, with corn as their major product. Unfortunately, the Ovimbundu slowly became a paid labor force on European plantations, because the Europeans slowly took the land. The Ovimbundu were, and still are, part of UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola), which was an anti-colonial movement against the Portuguese, and currently is an opposition political party. During the Civil War of Angola several large cities in the Umbundu/Ovimbundu territory were destroyed by UNITA, and were, for long periods, under UNITA control. Beginning in 2002, many of the Ovimbundu people have returned to Umbundu lands, however most are still scattered around Angola, living where they can.

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

Because of the war throughout Angola (including land the Ovimbundu people live in) many children are not able to attend school. In fact, there are few schools, and those that do exist are poorly equipped. There is also a lack of qualified teachers. However, literacy rates continue to climb. The Ovimbundu have a choice of two universities to send their children to should they wish it. The older of the universities is situated in Luanda, with branches in Huambo and Lubango, but the Huambo branch is repeatedly open and closed because of the war. It is also poorly equipped and overcrowded. The second university is a Catholic university that was opened in Luanda in 1999. Despite Umbundu being one of the major recognized languages of Angola, there is still much outside influence. The present-day country/language family has been highly influenced by European politicians at the Conference of Berlin in 1885. Because there has been so much war in this area, in fact there has almost never been a time of peace, there is not an incredibly stable government. Over half the population is unemployed, and the approximation is that that about 70% of the people live below the poverty line. Because of the differences in the natural environment (see below), there are many different ways people live. Coastal people mainly survive on seafood, the herders of the area live on meat and dairy products, farmers eat maize, sorghum, cassava, and other such agricultural crops. In all areas salt is valued highly.

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

Angola is made up of many climates. Variations include rain forests, dry coastal areas, fertile central highlands, and desert areas. Angola borders the Republic of Congo to the north, Namibia to the south, Zambia to the east, and the Atlantic Ocean to the west.

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

Because of civil war much of Ovimbundu/Umbundu peoples have been scattered across Angola, making it hard to determine a population size, much less anything else. However, as of 1995 there were 4 million speakers of Umbundu.

## **2. Economy**

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

Because the country of Angola is in such bad shape, it is hard to distinguish the local food habits. However, it is known that the people living as farmers have a diet comprised mainly of maize, cassava, and other agricultural crops. Water is highly valued, and salt is also very highly coveted.

#### 2.2 Main protein-lipid sources:

Again, it is hard to distinguish local food habits, but of the Ovimbundu, those living on the coast have a diet of seafood, herders diet's include dairy products and meat. Also here, water is important and salt is precious.

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

Any type of gun is a popular weapon. Because of the war, guns have become the major weapon.

#### 2.4 Food storage:

Because hunger is an issue, whenever there is food, it is not around long. The people make it last as long as they can, however, they must be fed.

#### 2.5 Sexual division of production:

The war takes many men away from their families. Rarely do women go and fight. Because many young men have died, and continue to die in the war, the heading of households has become the woman's job. Here, polygamy has not decreased (because of this), like is has in other areas of Africa. Women are also the main force in the fields. Land mines are also more popular in agricultural fields than anywhere else; 80% of land mine victims are woman and children. Men are more likely to be the ones collecting and selling firewood, and be herders.

#### 2.6 Land tenure:

There is no shortage of land, however access to land is difficult. Because of the war and UNITA and MPLA (Movement for the Liberation of Angola), who have restricted access to land at certain times, it is hard for the farmers to get out to their lands to cultivate, and plant crops.

#### 2.7 Ceramics:

There is no mention of ceramics in Umbundu/Ovimbundu societies.

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

There is no mention of sharing patterns; the emphasis is on the war.

#### 2.9 Food taboos:

Because food is so scarce, there is no mention of food taboos.

#### 2.10 Canoes/watercraft?

Those who live on the coast or near a river are known to travel by small boat or canoe, but there is mostly land travel.

### **3. Anthropometry**

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

Despite the fact that speakers of Umbundu make up a major portion of the population there are no figures for mean adult height for either male or female speakers.

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

Despite the fact that speakers of Umbundu make up a major portion of the population there are no figures for mean adult weight for either male or female speakers.

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

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

There was no official age, but the general consensus seemed to be around the ages of 13 to 15.

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

There are no official statistics for this either, however Ovimbundu seem to marry young, and have children not long after.

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

There were no specific numbers, but the extended families seem large overall, with uncles and aunts and cousins, etc. having an input in everyone's life.

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

Was not able to find information on this.

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

There is no exact age, or gender given, but increasingly often and especially in rural areas the age gap between husband and wife is growing.

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

No given statistic, but only mentioned that in some areas the rate of divorce is exceedingly high not only because of the war, but corresponds to traditional marriage patterns and separations.

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

Again, no given statistic but the percentage of polygamous marriages is increasing because there are more women than men, especially because of the war.

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

Because many of the areas Ovimbundu/Umbundu people are living in today, in addition to the war, traditional values have been forsaken. Among these are the bride purchase and dowry.

4.9 Inheritance patterns:

Property is traditionally passes to the children of the deceased wife's brother. This system has become even more important under the influence of colonialism and war.

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:

Little was given on this topic, other than youths are required to be respectful.

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:

There was no information on this.

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):

Ovimbundu/Umbundu marry within their own group.

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

There is only one father recognized. There is no partible paternity, only one man – the recognized father – is expected to raise his children.

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

The woman is involved just as much a part of procreation as the man . While the Ovimbundu may not be 100% up to date on their technology, they do know the biological way in which a child is made.

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

No, it is not. See above.

4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape

There are no certain statistics, but because of the war rape and other acts of violence against women continue to be a large part of the social problem.

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

The Ovimbundu people do not marry into their own family, however they do marry in their own language group.

4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?

When females mature, there is an initiation ceremony of sorts, when the female is at a certain age, to teach them (or the male) about sex. The main point of this ceremony besides teaching them about sex in general is how to be successful in marriage and how to please her husband, not only with sex but what her duties are in the bounds of producing children. Because sex is a taboo subject, especially between children and parents, it is usually an uncle (for the female; and in the case of a male, and aunt) to take them aside and teach them everything they need to know. Because of this females (and males) are more likely to take secret lovers and enjoy these freedoms.

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

No evidence of this.

4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?

This is not specified. However, it is most likely the father.

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

Because there are more females than males, there is usually only one man per multiple female marriages, with most females giving birth.

4.22 Evidence for couvades:

There is no evidence for couvades.

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

There are no obvious distinctions.

4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?

There is little kin avoidance. The entire family, including the extended family, is very important. The children of the uncles and aunts may be addressed with the same term used for brothers and sisters. However, there is a huge distinction between elder and younger brothers and sisters. Uncles and aunts are also differentiated between paternal and maternal lines. Because of the war, many of these familial patterns have disappeared over the years.

4.24 Joking relationships?

There is no information given on this subject.

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

Names are usually patrilineal, however for property/other inheritance descent is matrilineal through the brother's wife.

4.26 Incest avoidance rules:

Incest (except in the initiation ceremony) is taboo.

4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?

Because the Ovimbundu people are so thinly spread across Angola, it is difficult to determine the traditional marriage ceremony. Today, many are wed by church or state, and oftentimes there is not even a formal ceremony.

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

There is no information on this.

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

Marriage is preferred inside the community.

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

There is not much information on this subject, however the information given seemed to say either is acceptable today.

4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:

Extended family is brought into the subject of marriage.

### **Warfare/homicide**

4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:

There is no information as to the percent of deaths due to warfare, however beginning in September of 1992 until sometime in 1994, in the town of Huambo alone there were 300,000 deaths.

4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death:

Because the war is nation-wide there are no small out-group/ in-group wars. They are fighting against the government.

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

Again, there are no in-groups and out-groups in the traditional sense. The tribes, including the Umbundu language family, are warring against the government.

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

Because of the war, Ovimbundu/Umbundu society is so spread out that they can't help but interact with other societies – which they do so with relative peace, considering the war.

#### 4.18 Cannibalism?

There are no reports of cannibalism in Umbundu society.

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

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

Because of the war, it is rare to find a village of Umbundu speaking people. They are scattered across Angola.

#### 5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):

There is little mobility pattern as the speakers of Umbundu are scattered across Angola due to the war.

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

Since the Portuguese have established bases in Angola, much of the traditional systems of the Ovimbundu have been broken down. The hierarchy instituted had the Portuguese in the ruling positions with the Africans, or assimilated people in the middle, and the indigenous people on the bottom, the Ovimbundu being one of these.

#### 5.4 Post marital residence:

The couple will either find a home of their own or live with their husband's parents.

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

There are no defined boundaries because of the war.

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

Adult men and women have clear differences. Men have a higher literacy rate than women. Women are also paid less than men, and there are very few women in top political, economic, or military positions.

#### 5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:

No information was given about this.

#### 5.8 Village and house organization:

Because of the war, there are no set villages as people have to keep moving around.

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

No information.

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

Because of the war, many have sought for shelter in the urbanized areas Angola. However, those living in the country live in rectangular houses with corrugated iron roofs and zinc.

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

The social organization has been well destroyed because of the war.

#### 5.12 Trade:

Local retail trade is very important for the Ovimbundu communities. Women sell food and firewood, whereas men dominate in selling arms, diamonds, and spare parts. The current currency, the kwanza, is subject to high inflation rates. Because of the war, there are many industries that Ovimbundu people could work in, but are not able to. These include: petroleum, iron, phosphates, copper, gold, bauxite, and uranium. They are able however to export oil and diamonds. 70% of these exports are to the United States. They are trade is agricultural products such as sisal, coffee, and cotton.

#### 5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?

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

#### 6.0 Time allocation to RCR:

Because of the war many traditional rituals and ceremonies have died off. However, Christianity dates back to the late 15<sup>th</sup> century.

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

Barely any because traditional beliefs have died off with the ongoing war. They have also been disregarded/not recognized by the government.

#### 6.2 Stimulants:

No information.

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

There are important puberty rituals (see above, in relation to marriage).

#### 6.4 Other rituals:

See above.

#### 6.5 Myths (Creation):

See religion.

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):

Wood carving and pottery are popular among Umbundu (a major museum is the Museum of Anthropology). Traditional music is still practiced. Many Umbundu love attending soccer (football) and basketball games.

6.7 Sex differences in RCR:

No mention.

6.8 Missionary effect:

Christianity was introduced in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century and is flourishing.

6.9 RCR revival:

No information.

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs:

Funerals are very important; they believe that if the dead are not put to rest properly then their spirits will become angry and hurt the living. Unfortunately because of the war, it has been difficult to always carry out funeral practices.

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?

Not mentioned.

6.12 Is there teknonymy?

There is no mention of this in their society.

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

Because of the war, and Portuguese influence, traditional beliefs have died out, being replaced with Christianity.

**7. Adornment**

None of these are mentioned, or no information on these. Again, because of the war almost all traditional values have died out and been replaced.

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:

Siblings are raised with close ties to each other.

8.2 Sororate, levirate:

No mention of this was found.

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

Cousins are usually referred to with the same name as brothers and sisters.

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

**Numbered references**

1. <http://www.everyculture.com/A-Bo/Angola.html>
2. <http://www.everyculture.com/wc/Afghanistan-to-Bosnia-Herzegovina/Angolans.html>
3. [http://www.ethnologue.com/show\\_language.asp?code=umb](http://www.ethnologue.com/show_language.asp?code=umb)
4. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South\\_Mbundu\\_language](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Mbundu_language)
5. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ovimbundu>
6. [http://www2.rz.hu-berlin.de/sexology/GESUND/ARCHIV/GUS/AFRICAOLD.HTM#\\_Angola\\_\(Babunda,\\_Luimi\\_](http://www2.rz.hu-berlin.de/sexology/GESUND/ARCHIV/GUS/AFRICAOLD.HTM#_Angola_(Babunda,_Luimi_)