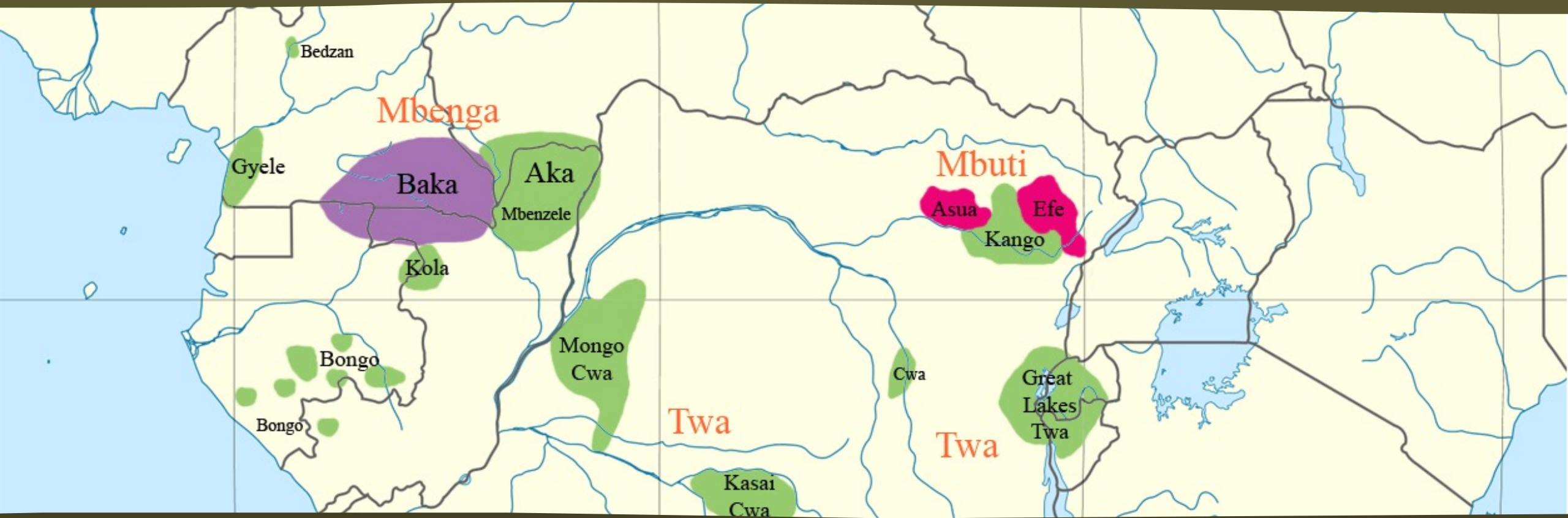




Living with the Mbuti in the
Ituri Rainforest, D. R.
Congo Kinshasa (formally
Zaire)

Location: Congo, Central Africa and Cameroon, West Africa





A group of adults

THE PIGMIES AS COMPARED WITH ENGLISH OFFICERS, SOUDANESE, AND ZANZIBARIS.
(From a Photograph by the Author.)

Logging





The Mbuti

- Described as ‘the forest people’ .
- The Mbuti in bands that move regularly within a given, known territory.
- Rich diet.
- Build small ‘disposable’ huts from forest materials.
- Rely on the medicines that the forest provides when ill.



Key Authors: Anthropologists Turnbull, Mosko and Devin

Turnbull's work



- Revealed how the Mbuti understood the forest to a Euro-American audience in 1961.
- He showed that the forest was economically important, *but* was primarily held as a parent, sibling, friend and creator.



“I am *not* dancing alone,” he said,
“I am dancing with the forest,
dancing with the moon.” Then,
with the utmost unconcern, he
ignored me and continued his
dance of love and life”
(Turnbull, describing a
conversation with Kenge,
1961:272).

Turnbull back in the day and his key texts

1961 The Forest People

1965 The Wayward Servants

1972 The Mountain People

1983 The Human Cycle

1983 The Mbuti Pygmies: Change and
Adaptation





Using Turnbull's ideas, Mosko (1987) analyses Mbuti language to understand how the Mbuti conceive of their world.

- He notes that the forest is the world.
- He outlines how the forest is directly connected to all aspects of Mbuti culture.
- He uses the etymology of words such as forest (ndura) , womb (ndu), hut (endu) to illustrate the pervasion of the environment (aka, the forest) in Mbuti lives.
- The forest is gender fluid.

As the forest is
gender fluid, so
are people.

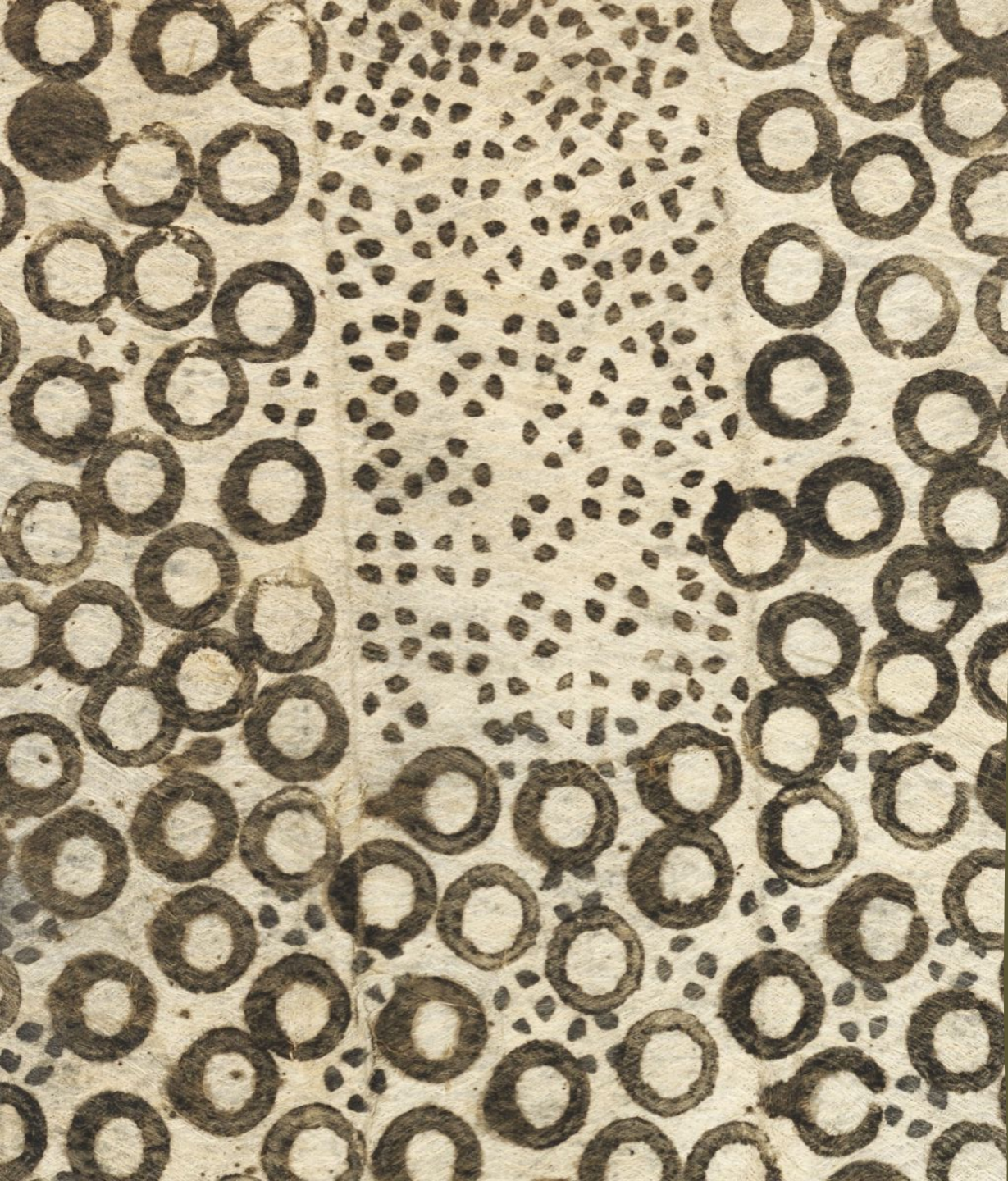


- People are not gendered until puberty; even then different sexes are considered equal.
 - Grandparent = *tata*
 - Sibling = *apua'i*
 - Child = *miki*
- Only exceptions
- Mother = *ema*
- Father = *eba*
- Mother and father are equal, father takes over childcare when solids are eaten

Kinship status is also fluid/interchangable

‘ The moment someone left the camp, even if they were siblings from the same womb, the kinship terms of address and reference were no longer used, but were replaced by personal names. Conversely when a stranger, totally unrelated by kinship, was accepted into the camp and became a member of that economic unit, he or she was accorded kinship status according to age and marital condition’ (Turnbull, 1983: 35)





Balance and being centred

‘Their world is like a "sphere." Within this sphere we as individuals... are normally always in the center [*sic*]. When we move in time or space the sphere moves with us, so we remain in the center. ... However, the Mbuti say, if one’s movement in time or space is too violent, too sudden, one can reach the edge of the sphere before it has time to catchup, and that is when a person becomes wazi-wazi, or disoriented and unpredictable. Or if the violence of the movement, the disregard for the security that comes from remaining in the center of one’s sphere, is too blatant, one may pierce through into the other world. [Turnbull1978b:166;see also Turnbull1978a:97-98;1983a:122-123;1983b:32-33]’ (Mosko, 1987: 899)

Children, smaller people

- The *Bopi*

- At 3 the child goes to children's land where children rule
- Adults are banned
- Children are pure
- Responsibility for group purity lies with the children-politicians
- The children chastise the adults



Hunting practice and the role of children





The meat myth in Turnbull (1983).

- Hunting created death
- It is a crime that pollutes people
- Immortality can be restored if it stopped

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