

LEGA



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TYPES OF ART

The Bwami society is the context for the production of most Lega art work, which includes ivory and wooden statuettes and masks. Ivory objects are reserved for the highest level, Kindi, while wooden objects are used by Kindi and Yonanio, the second level.

HISTORY

In the 16th century the Lega began their long migration from modern day Uganda into their present location. They were a warlike people whose fierceness inspired those, with whom they came into contact, to adopt many Lega customs. In the 17th century they attacked the Rwandan outpost of Rutshurer on their way to Maniema, just west of Lake Tanganyika, dividing and conquering the people who lived in the region. Many cultural traits have been assimilated into the surrounding cultures, and the Lega still dominate the region today.

ECONOMY

Although traditionally the Lega were mostly farmers, raising manioc, bananas, and rice, they have recently been panning for gold in alluvial river deposits. There are also iron ore

mines in the region which employ local labor. The Bwami society, which is a political organization, requires large payments from those who wish to advance. As a result, even in very rural areas, there is a large amount of currency in circulation.

POLITICAL SYSTEMS

The Lega are not organized under one centralized authority. Instead, individual communities are stratified in accordance with lineage hierarchies. The leader of the lineage inherits his position along patrilineal lines. This system is balanced by the Bwami society, which is theoretically open to all Lega, and involves movement through numerous hierarchical stages. One's power in the community is often determined by one's power in Bwami. The demand for high payment that is made for movement through Bwami often acts to challenge the lineage power structure.

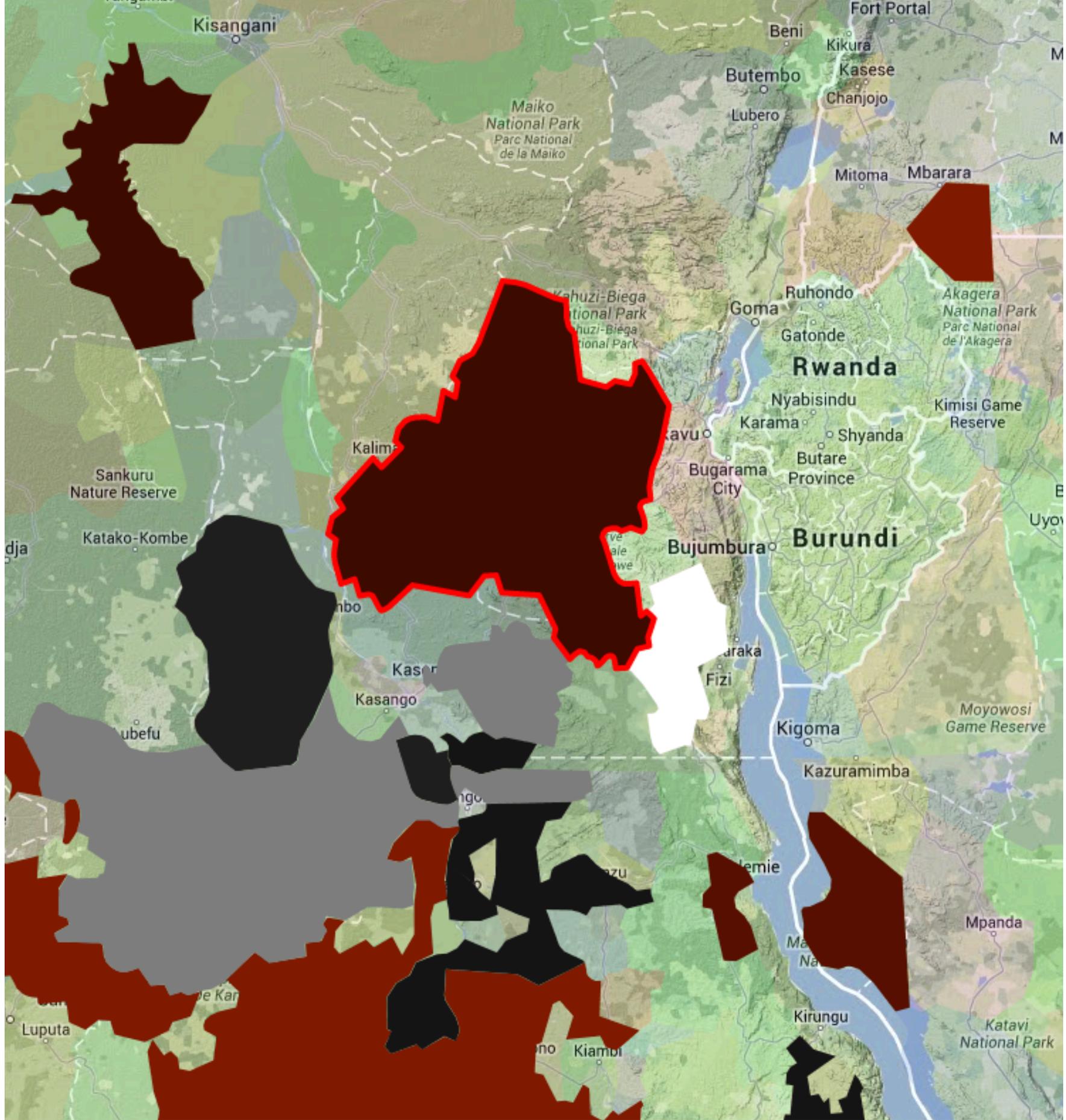
RELIGION

The main gods are Kalaga, the promiser; Kenkunga, the reassembler; and Ombe, the hidden. Kaginga is recognized as the incarnation of evil and assists sorcerers. By joining Bwami one can develop an immunity to the evil doings of most witches. **The highest rank of Bwami is Kindi and is directly associated with the skulls of the ancestors, which are placed in a hut at the center of the village.** Objects which contain powerful supernatural medicines are **not exposed to public eye** but are instead placed with the Kindi.

FACTS ABOUT LEGA

LOCATION

Explore a map of Lega peoples and their neighbors in southeastern Democratic Republic of the Congo



COUNTRIES

Democratic Republic of the Congo

LANGUAGES

KiLega (central Bantu)

POPULATION

250,000

NEIGHBORING PEOPLES

Bembe, Binja, Zimba, Songola, Komo, Shi, Nyanga



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