

LUBA

LANGUAGE & CULTURE

Luba is a Niger-Congo language. The Luba people have many famous artistic traditions. Stools, divination bowls (called mboko), bow stands, memory boards (called lukasa), sculptures and wood carvings are all central to Luba culture. Luba sculptures are famous for their pervasive representation of women, which also signifies the important role of women in society. Lukasa, or memory boards were important mnemonic devices that used colored beads to help remember the complex history and ritual life of the Luba people. Luba traditional religion is based on veneration of ancestors and paying tributes to spirits. Traditional Luba political structure heavily incorporates these religious notions as the *mulopwe* (King) was believed to be an important medium of communication between ancestors and mankind.

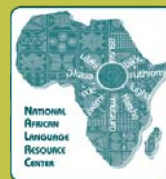
An example of the Luba language:

Bantu bonsu badi baledibwa badikadile ne badi ne makokeshi amwe. Badi ne lungenyi lwa bumuntu ne kondo ka moyo, badi ne bwa kwenzelangana malu mu buwetu:

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood. (Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights)

STUDYING LUBA IN THE UNITED STATES

Please contact the National African Language Resource Center, or check the NALRC web site at <http://www.nalrc.indiana.edu/>



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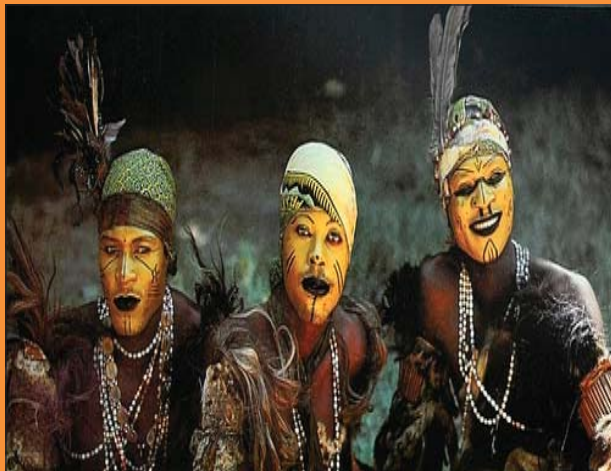
LUBA WOMAN

NATIONAL AFRICAN LANGUAGE
RESOURCE CENTER (NALRC)

WHO SPEAKS LUBA

The origins of the Luba People date back to 1500AD when the thriving Luba Kingdom emerged as a single unified state in the grasslands of the Upemba Depression in the Katanga region of what is known today as Democratic Republic of the Congo. The kingdom thrived in the Indian Ocean trade by producing salt, palm oil, dried fish and later various agricultural implements such as maize and cassava.

The kingdom was comprised of small villages overseen by *Kilolo* (chiefs). The center of cultural life was the *Kitenta*, or royal compound. The *mulopwe* (king) resided in Kitenta and was traditionally selected from balopwe, or a group who acted as intermediaries between the spirit/ancestral world and mankind.



Luba Warriors

WHY STUDY LUBA

Various dialects of Luba (also referred to as Luba-Lulua, Luva and Tishiluba) are spoken by over 10 million people in what is today known as the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Northern Angola, and Northwest Zambia. Luba is an official language in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (along with Lingala, Swahili and Kikongo) as well as a major lingua franca in the region.

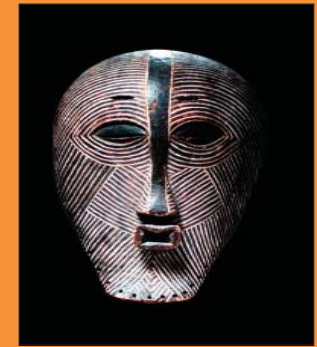
The two principal dialects are:

- Luba-Kasai
- Luba-Katanga

Luba-Kasai is spoken chiefly in the Kasai Occidental and Kasai Oriental provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and is widely used in education as well as churches. There are an estimated 6,300,000 native Luba-Kasai speakers and about 700,000 second-language speakers. Luba-Katanga has approximately 1,505 speakers and is spoken mainly in the South-East portion of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Some other prominent Luba dialects include Hemba, Kanyok, Lwalu and Songe. Students may wish to study Luba to enhance their understanding of the group's rich history, culture, or to facilitate effective communication with those who live in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.



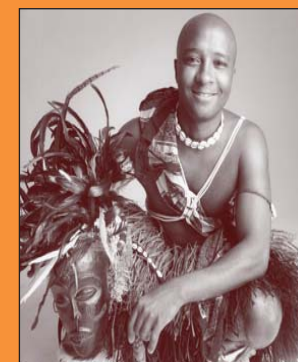
Luba Sculpture



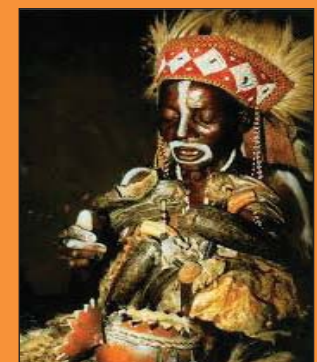
Luba Mask



Luba performing "Thief's Dance"



Luba Man, Júlio T. Leitão



Luba Ruler