

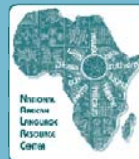
## LANGUAGE & CULTURE

Makonde is a Bantu language in the Niger-Congo classification. In Tanzania, it is also sometimes referred to as Chimakonde, Chinimakonde, and Matambwe. Most common Tanzanian Makonde dialects are Maviha, Maraba, and Matambwe. In Mozambique, the language is sometimes referred to as Shimakonde and Matambwe. Some of the most common Makonde dialects in Mozambique are Vadonde, Vamwalu, Vamwambe, Vamakonde, and Maviha.

The Makonde are world famous for their sculptures and masks. Makonde carvings revolve around three main areas: The Mawingu (clouds) represents the spirit world and its connections to humans. They are usually faceless. Some masks also fall under this realm. Ujamaa encompass their family traditions and their importance. They are often family trees made up of individual figures on one piece. Wanyama (animals) sometimes have negative depictions due to savagery and human suffering they cause. Commonly depicted animals include giraffes, rhinos and elephants. The two most common types of masks Makonde are famous for are the lipico and the matambu. Both masks were traditionally used during the boy's initiation ceremonies.

## STUDYING MAKONDE IN THE UNITED STATES

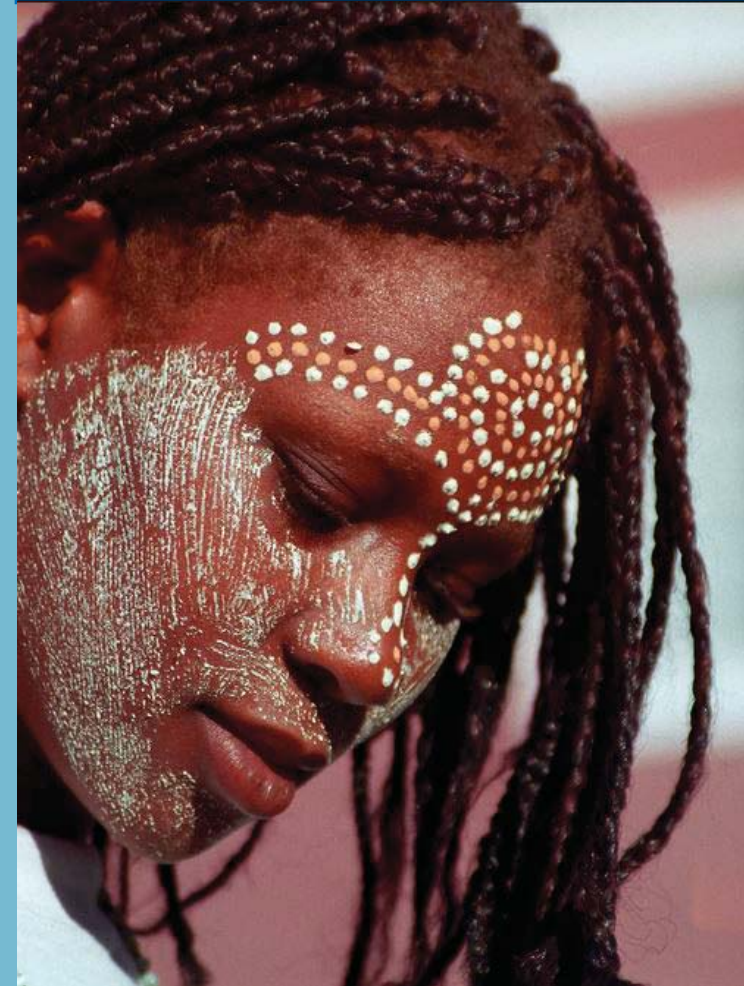
Please contact the National African Language Resource Center, or check the NALRC website at <http://www.nalrc.indiana.edu/>



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# MAKONDE



MAKONDE WOMAN

NATIONAL AFRICAN LANGUAGE  
RESOURCE CENTER (NALRC)

## WHO SPEAKS MAKONDE

The Makonde people are believed to have originated from the Ndonge area of northern Mozambique. A large group then migrated into southern Tanzania during the 1700 and 1800s. The Makonde were said to have migrated to avoid becoming enslaved by the Ngoni tribe fleeing war in Zululand. Although there are varying accounts, the Makonde traditional creation myth generally holds that a man living in the bush carved a human figure from wood and set it down. Overnight, the figure came to life. After two miscarriages, the woman finally gave birth to a boy. This third child survived and was considered to be the first Makonde child.

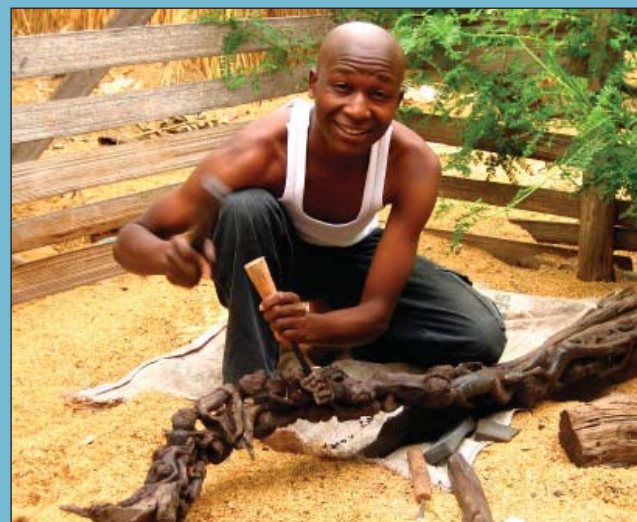
The fact that a wooden carving is integral to the Makonde creation myth helps to explain prevalence of this art form in their culture. The Makonde are world famous for their woodworks such as masks and sculptures. Traditionally, the Makonde lived in a matrilineal society and organized into clans called *litawa*. Each *litawa* had a leader *mwenyekaya*. They also had groups called *chirambo* based on the geographical proximity of different clans. The leader of the *chirambo* was called the *mkulungwa*, and was usually an elder who was the first migrant to the area. Makonde were traditionally farmers. Their main crops were cashews, sisal, maize, millet and sorghum.



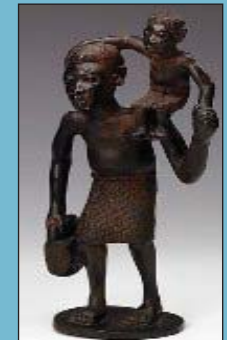
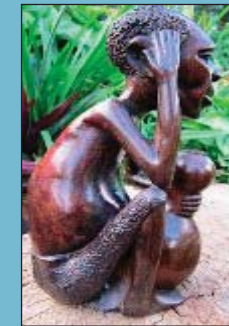
*Makonde Dancers*

## WHY STUDY MAKONDE

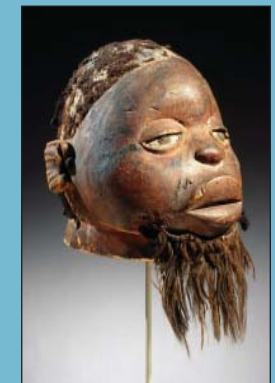
Makonde is a language spoken in Tanzania and Mozambique by approximately 1.4 million people. There is also a very small Makonde population in Kenya. In Tanzania, it is most commonly heard in the Mtwara, Tandahomba, and Newala. In Mozambique, it is most commonly heard in the northeast part of the country. The language can be heard on many radio programs in the areas it is spoken. Those interested in African languages and literature, sociology, anthropology, linguistics, peace and conflict studies, international development, non-governmental organization (NGO) work, government work, African art, or African history will find Makonde very worthwhile to study.



*Makonde Tribesman carving*



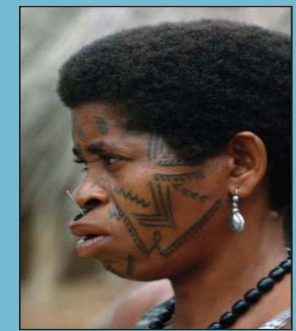
*Makonde Sculptures*



*Makonde Masks*



*Makonde Woman Dancer*



*Makonde traditional woman*