

BEMBA

LANGUAGE & CULTURE ...continued

Some examples of common Bemba words and phrases are:

How are you?	Mwashibukeni?
I am fine.	Eyamukwayi.
Yes.	Eya ye.
No.	Awe.
Thank you.	Twa to te la.
Stop!	Iminina!
Let's go!	Natuleya!
the market	ekobashita fyakulya
How much?	Shinga?
It is too much!	Fingi!
drinking water	amenshi ayakuwa
some food	ichakulya

Some of the historical and linguistic information used in this text is from the research of Professors A.R.M. Kasonde, M.E. Kashoki, and Debra Spitulnik and was taken from the website of the Department of Anthropology of Emory University. It can be accessed at:

<http://www.anthropology.emory.edu/FACULTY/ANTDS/Bemba/profile.html>

<http://www.medguide.org.zm/translation/vocabtbl.htm>

STUDYING BEMBA IN THE U.S.

Below is a partial list of some of the universities in the United States that currently offer Bemba. For more information, please contact the National African Language Resource Center or visit the NALRC website at: <http://www.nalrc.indiana.edu>.

Cameron University,
Emory University
Michigan State University,
Tennessee Foreign Language Institute



NATIONAL AFRICAN
LANGUAGE RESOURCE
CENTER (NALRC)

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Website: <http://www.nalrc.indiana.edu>



A BEMBA WOMAN

NATIONAL AFRICAN LANGUAGE
RESOURCE CENTER (NALRC)

WHY STUDY BEMBA?

Bemba, also known as iciBemba, ciBemba, chiBemba, and ichiBemba, is spoken primarily in the Northern, Copperbelt, and Luapula provinces of Zambia, as well as in the southern parts of both the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Tanzania. Since the Bembas are the dominant ethnic group in Zambia, Bemba is the most common indigenous language used in the country. Almost four million people speak it as a first language, and another two million use it as a second language. Newspapers and magazines are published in Bemba and there are also radio broadcasts and a few television programs in the language.

A knowledge of Bemba is essential to anyone in linguistics, anthropology, history, and folklore who wants to study in the countries where Bemba is spoken. Individuals working for international organizations will also find that they can accomplish their day-to-day tasks more easily if they can speak Bemba. Tourists, too, will soon discover that a knowledge of Bemba will allow them to enjoy their holidays more if they can communicate with the Bemba-speaking people of the DRC, Tanzania, and Zambia.

WHO SPEAKS BEMBA?

PEOPLE AND HISTORY

The Bemba-speaking people in Zambia originated from the Kola region of what is now the Democratic Republic of Congo. They are a branch of the ancient Luba Empire and settled in the high plateau area of northeastern Zambia, from Lake Bangweulu to the Malawi border, sometime during the middle of the 17th century. By the end of the 18th century, the Bembas had established a powerful kingdom under the central authority of Chitimukulu, the paramount chief. Bemba rule continued to expand widely throughout northeastern Zambia until the end of the 19th century, when the first European missionaries and fortune-seekers began to vie for power in the area. By 1890, Cecil Rhodes' British South African Company had taken control of all of the Bemba territory, and in 1924, the British colony of Northern Rhodesia was established across the entire region of what is present-day Zambia. Zambia gained its independence from Great Britain in 1964.

LANGUAGE & CULTURE

Bemba is classified as a Central Bantu language. The Bantu language is the member of the Benue-Congo family, a branch of the Niger-Congo family, which is a branch of the Niger-Kordofanian family. The most closely related languages to Bemba are Kaonde (Zambia and the DRC), Luba (DRC), Nsenga (Zambia), Tonga (Zambia), and Nyanja/Chewa (Zambia and Malawi). In the early 1800s, Portuguese and Arab traders were quite active in the Bemba-speaking regions and as a result, Bemba has a number of loan words from both Portuguese and Arabic. Many Swahili words have also entered Bemba through direct contact with the Swahili-speaking people of the region. When English-speaking missionaries arrived in the late 1880s, words from their language also entered the Bemba vocabulary. In recent years, Bemba has incorporated numerous loan words from Afrikaans and Zulu, via mine workers' pidgins, such as Fanagala, Kabanga, and Fanakalo.

Today, Bemba has a number of dialects which are distinguished by their association with distinct ethnic groups and cultures. Each dialect exhibits minor differences in pronunciation, phonology, morphology, and vocabulary. Because Bemba is a widely used lingua franca, especially in urban areas of Zambia, the city dialects have an unusually large number of lexical borrowings from English, the national language. Among the Bemba orthographic rules now officially approved by the government are: a) the use of Roman letters, b) the symbolization of long vowels with doubled vowel grapheme's, c) the orthographic standardization of certain affricates, fricatives, and nasals, d) the non-symbolization of tone, despite its semantic functions, and e) the adoption of a conjunctive mode of spelling nouns, verbs, adjectives and other grammatical forms which represents them with their bound affixes.



Bemba lady preparing food



Two Bemba preachers



Bemba traditional dancers