

ZANDE

LANGUAGE & CULTURE

The word azande means “the people who possess much land.” This relates to their history as conquering warriors. In the political terms, this ethnic group of 750,000 people is ruled by a king with succession to the throne passing to his eldest son, while younger ones govern the kingdom’s provinces. The Zande have been ruled by different members of a single royal dynasty, the *Avangara*.

Zande sculptures represent ancestors or animal figures with simplified features and enlarged heads. The Mani association celebrates the importance of woman and uses statuette called *yanda*. These statues are associated with the highest rank of the secret mani society. The figures protect society members from the dangers of illness, hunting, evil spirits, etc. The society’s chief would infuse the yanda with his power by blowing smoke on it and rubbing it with a paste. In some northern Zande areas, large pole-like figures have been erected. These figures may have functioned as grave markers, a widespread pattern for eastern Africa and southern Sudan. The maternity figures are also known, as stylized and refined objects: neck-rests, flyswats, ivory horns, musical instruments such as drums, sanzans, and curved harps decorated with a head and ending with a pair of legs. Masks are rare.

STUDYING ZANDE 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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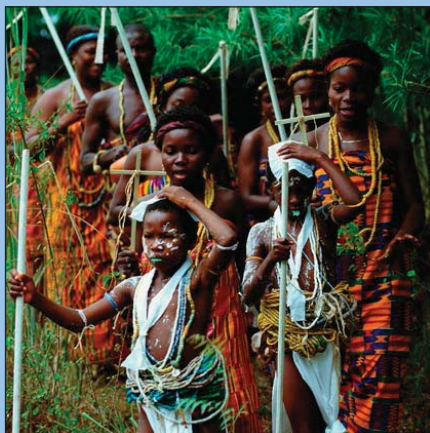
ZANDE WOMAN

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WHO SPEAKS ZANDE

The Zende settled in the Uele River region (in the present day DRC) in the late 18th century, subjugating the natives, whom they reorganized into kingdoms and chiefdoms. Even though the Zende assimilated dozens of different tribes and peoples, they themselves underwent cultural fusion, for they adopted farming and gradually gave up hunting in the 19th century. This mutual assimilation, however, was insufficient to remove the social distinction between conquered and conqueror, the originally foreign ruling aristocracy and the common people.

Another important social distinction existed between freemen and slaves (prisoners of war, refugees who had no kin in the village hosting them, or people originally sentenced to death who had been pardoned). There was probably a reciprocal influence between the Zende and the Mangbetu, though the former live in the savannah and the latter in the forest, where in addition to raising cassava and banana trees, they are hunter-gatherers. The monarchy was not a sacred institution, and many kingdoms were set up by princes in exile who had lost the fight for the succession to the throne.



Azande Tribe

WHY STUDY ZANDE

Zande is the largest of the Zande languages. It is spoken by the Azande, and is primarily in the northeast of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the western South Sudan, but also in the eastern part of Central African Republic. Students interested in international development, government work, sociology, non-governmental organization (NGO), anthropology, linguistics, African art, or African history among other disciplines may be interested in studying Zande.



Pende/Azande Pumbu Mask



Sudanese Azande Woman



Azande People



Azande people with cattle



Azande Sudan Cultural Dance Group