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Profile

Introduction

The people who speak Lingala as their native language live in an area around the Congo River in west-central Africa. Their region includes parts of at least two countries, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (D.R.C., also called Congo-Kinshasa) and the Republic of the Congo.^{1,2} This report focuses on the cultural aspects of the people who speak Lingala in the D.R.C.



© irene / flickr.com
Kinshasa skyline

As citizens of the D.R.C., they are known as Congolese, but language separates them from other Congolese peoples. Lingala evolved as a regional trade language among several tribal groups living along the Congo and Ubangi Rivers, and its speakers today reflect several subcultures rather than a dominant culture.³

Over the last five centuries, the vast region now known as the D.R.C. has experienced several dire historical episodes, beginning with an indigenous slave trade that accelerated after the introduction of European explorers. More recently, colonial occupation by Belgium, 30 years of dictatorship that bankrupted the country, and twenty years of bloody civil war have been low points. Factional fighting and violent anti-government militias continue to plague some parts of the D.R.C. to the present day. Although conflict has recently flared up in the Lingala-speaking region, political conditions have been more stable than in the eastern D.R.C., where fighting continues unabated. The world's largest UN peacekeeping force remains stationed in this violence-prone part of the D.R.C. Despite the unrest, however, the D.R.C. held democratic elections in 2006, the first to take place since 1970.^{4,5}

¹ Ethnologue, Languages of the World, Sixteenth Edition. "Lingala: A Language of Democratic Republic of the Congo." M. Paul Lewis, Ed. 2009. Dallas, TX: SIL International. http://www.ethnologue.com/show_language.asp?code=lin

² National African Language Resource Center (NALRC). "Who Speaks Lingala? People and History." December 2007. lang.nalrc.wisc.edu/resources/press/brochures/lingala.pdf

³ National African Language Resource Center (NALRC). "Lingala: Culture & Language." December 2007. lang.nalrc.wisc.edu/resources/press/brochures/lingala.pdf

⁴ Infoplease. "Congo, Democratic Republic of the: Political Progress Is Made While Death Toll Mounts." 2000–2009. Boston: Pearson Education. <http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0198161.html?pageno=6>

⁵ Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Congo, Democratic Republic of the: Safety and Security." 2010. http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1104.html

Geography

Area

The Lingala linguistic region occupies approximately one third of the territory of the D.R.C. and covers nearly the entire northern part of the country and much of the west. Its southernmost tip is just below Kinshasa, the country's capital. The Lingala area borders the Central African Republic to the north, Sudan to the northeast, and the Republic of the Congo (also called Congo-Brazzaville) to the west.⁶



© FredR / flickr.com
Flooded streets in Kinshasa

Climate

Located in the equatorial zone, the country experiences humid and hot conditions throughout the year. In the western D.R.C., the Lingala linguistic region, is divided into sections lying north and south of the equator. Within about 4° of the equator, rainfall is plentiful nearly all year, with two distinct wet seasons.⁷ South of the equatorial region, the heaviest rains occur from roughly October to May, with the length of the wet season depending on the distance from the equator. North of the equator, the pattern is opposite, with most of the rain falling between April and November.

Geographic Divisions and Topographic Features

The Lingala-speaking region of the D.R.C. lies almost entirely within the Congo River basin. Thus, most of the land is rainforest, with the exception of the north and northeast, where the vegetation becomes sparser as the elevation increases.



© Corinne Staley
Congo Basin rainforest

Basin

Most of the central and northwestern area of the D.R.C. lies within the large river drainage region known as the Congo Basin, a low-lying plateau that slopes to the west.⁸ Covered with rainforest, the gently rolling terrain of this area has an average elevation of approximately 400 m (1,300 ft) above sea level.^{9,10} This tropical

⁶ Ethnologue, Languages of the World, Sixteenth Edition. "Northern Democratic Republic of the Congo." M. Paul Lewis, Ed. 2010. Dallas, TX: SIL International.

http://www.ethnologue.com/show_map.asp?name=CD&seq=10

⁷ BBC Weather Centre. "Country Guide: Democratic Republic of Congo." No date.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/weather/world/country_guides/results.shtml?tt=TT000770

⁸ Altapedia Online. "Democratic Republic of the Congo: Location & Geography." 1993–2009.

<http://www.atlapedia.com/online/countries/DemRepCongo.htm>

⁹ Encyclopædia Britannica. "Congo: Land: Relief." 2010. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-40789>

rainforest, among the largest in the world, is densely packed with trees, vines, and other vegetation.^{11,12} The region includes a large area of swamp forests. Here, the river is as wide as 15 km (9.3 mi), meandering through a network of small islands formed by the river currents. The swamp forests adjoin wetlands, flooded grasslands, rivers, and dry land forests at a slightly higher elevation.¹³

High Plateaus

North of the Congo basin, a series of plateaus gradually rise, eventually reaching elevations between 915 and 1,220 m (3,000 and 4,000 ft) in the northeastern part of the Lingala linguistic region.¹⁴ These northern highlands are primarily covered with wooded savanna and gallery forests, which grow along rivers in otherwise treeless regions.¹⁵ Mountains lie east of the plateaus, beyond the eastern edge of the Lingala region.

Rivers and Lakes

Congo River

The Congo River is approximately 4,700 km (2,900 mi) in length, making it the second longest river on the African continent. (Only the Nile River is longer.) The source of the Congo, as measured by maximum length, lies in Zambia, where the Chambeshi River rises as a Congo River tributary in highlands near the Tanzanian border. If measured in terms of the volume of water added to the Congo River, the Lualaba River can be considered the tributary marking the source of the Congo River. The Lualaba originates in the highlands of southeastern D.R.C.



© mpondu / flickr.com
Congo river

At Boyoma Falls near Kisangani, where the Lualaba becomes the Congo River, the Congo winds northwest through east-central D.R.C. In the northern part of the country, the Congo River arcs toward the west, then turns southwest, and eventually empties into the Atlantic Ocean at Banana (D.R.C.). Its tributaries are numerous, and together they form the “largest network of navigable waterways” on the African continent. One section of the Congo River’s lower channel cannot be navigated, however, due to the presence of 32 cataracts (areas of waterfalls and rapids). They block the river between Matadi, a

¹⁰ The Africa Guide. “Democratic Rep. Congo (Zaire).” 1996–2010. <http://www.africaguide.com/country/zaire/index.htm>

¹¹ How Stuff Works. “Geography of Congo-Kinshasa: Land.” 1998–2010. <http://geography.howstuffworks.com/africa/geography-of-congo-kinshasa1.htm>

¹² Encyclopædia Britannica. “Congo Basin.” 2010. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9095880>

¹³ Worldwildlife.org. “Western Congolian Swamp Forests.” 2001. http://www.worldwildlife.org/wildworld/profiles/terrestrial/at/at0129_full.html

¹⁴ Encyclopædia Britannica. “Congo: Land: Relief.” 2010. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-40789>

¹⁵ Worldwildlife.org. “Northern Congolian Forest-Savanna Mosaic.” 2001. http://www.worldwildlife.org/wildworld/profiles/terrestrial/at/at0712_full.html

seaport at the eastern end of the Congo's estuary, and Malebo Pool, an expanded section of the river, which lies to the northeast in-between Kinshasa and Brazzaville (the capital of the Republic of the Congo).¹⁶

Europeans became aware of the Congo River at the end of the 15th century, when the Portuguese named it "Zaire" (based on a variation of the local African word for "river"). It became the Congo in the early 18th century, after the Kongo kingdom settled along the river's mouth. For centuries, the steep cataracts along the southern section of the river hindered entry into the navigable upriver stretches of the Congo.

Uele River

A major tributary of the Ubangi River, the Uele River begins in the northeastern D.R.C. and provides drainage for an area of high plateaus. It flows westward, forming the Ubangi River at its confluence with the Bomu River on the D.R.C.'s northern border. The total distance of the Uele River is about 1,170 km (727 mi). Forests (wooded savanna) and grasslands dominate the ecoregion of the Uele.¹⁷



Ubangi River

The Congo River's largest tributary on its right bank (facing the direction of the river's flow), the Ubangi River begins on the D.R.C.'s northern border where the Bomu and Uele Rivers meet. Located entirely within the Lingala linguistic region, the Ubangi flows west, then southwest for a total distance of 560 km (350 mi). The river forms a border for the D.R.C. along its entire course, first with the Central African Republic and then with the Republic of the Congo. The Ubangi River meets the Congo River at the village of Irebu, near the swampy waters of Lake Tumba.¹⁸

Lake Mai-Ndombe

Located in the west-central Lingala region of the D.R.C., Lake Mai-Ndombe covers an area of around 2,300 sq km (890 sq mi). Its length is approximately 130 km (80 mi) and its width as much as 40 km (25 mi). At its southern end, Lake Mai-Ndombe empties into the Fimi River. Mai-Ndombe is a shallow lake, but during the rainy season its size may double or triple. Swamp forests line the lake's shoreline.^{19,20}

¹⁶ Encyclopædia Britannica. "Congo River." 2010. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9108299>

¹⁷ FEOW, Freshwater Ecoregions of the World. "536: Uele." 2010. http://www.feow.org/ecoregion_details.php?eco=536

¹⁸ Encyclopædia Britannica. "Ubangi River." 2010. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9074057>

¹⁹ Encyclopædia Britannica. "Mai-Ndombe, Lake." 2010. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9050148>

²⁰ FEOW, Freshwater Ecoregions of the World. "547: Mai Ndombe." 2010. http://www.feow.org/ecoregion_details.php?eco=547

Major Cities

Kinshasa

Kinshasa is the capital of the D.R.C., with an estimated population of eight million people, making it the African continent's third largest city.²¹ A port on the Congo River's southern bank, Kinshasa is the largest city in the D.R.C. as well as its center of communications, commerce, and administration. Commerce and infrastructure collapsed in Kinshasa during the 1990s due to ongoing national conflict. Still, the city remains a manufacturing center. Its main industries include construction, food processing, tanning, and manufacturing of textiles, cement, and chemicals.^{22, 23}



© Thomas / flickr.com
Kinshasa

Kinshasa is a cultural center for the African continent and the D.R.C. Its predominant languages are Lingala and French, and the city is famous for a unique kind of popular music called *soukous* or *ndombolo*.²⁴ Three well-known districts of Kinshasa are *la cité de l'OUA*, the governmental center; Gombe, a commercial and residential area; and Matonge, a section of the city known for its nightlife.

Mbandaka

A port city that lies alongside the Congo River in the western D.R.C., Mbandaka is the provincial capital and the largest town in Équateur province. It is a center of transportation and business, with the local economy reliant on fishing and tanning industries. Because Mbandaka is so close to the river, it is vulnerable to flooding during times of heavy rainfall, resulting in the displacement of large numbers of people.^{25,26}



© onthebridge / flickr.com
Streets of Mbandaka

The city has been affected recently by a rebel group that emerged in

²¹ Kinshasa-Congo.com. "Kinshasa, Capitale de la Musique: About Kinshasa." 2006. http://www.kinshasa-congo.com/about_kinshasa/

²² Time. Linden, Eugene. "Megacities." 11 January 1993. <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,977445,00.html>

²³ Encyclopedia.com. Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. "Kinshasa." 2008. <http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Kinshasa.aspx>

²⁴ National Geographic. "Soukous Music." 1996–2010. http://worldmusic.nationalgeographic.com/view/page.basic/genre/content.genre/soukous_790

²⁵ IRIN. "DRC: Victims of Mbandaka Floods in Need of Aid." 17 January 2002. <http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?reportid=29806>

²⁶ Encyclopedia.com. Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. "Mbandaka." 2008. <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1E1-Mbandaka.html>

the aftermath of fighting among rival ethnic groups over fishing rights in the region.²⁷ Many people have been killed in the conflict, and thousands are now refugees. Markets and stores in Mbandaka have only recently begun reopening. Government and UN forces have remained in the town to help restore peace.^{28,29}

Bumba

Bumba, a port town on the Congo River, is located on the eastern border of Équateur province in north-central D.R.C..³⁰ Its population is roughly 90,000.³¹ Bumba lies on the broadest part of the Congo River, where the river is approximately 20 km (12.5 mi) in width.³² This section of the river is notable for the presence of hyacinths growing so thickly in the water that they hinder navigation.



Heavy rains can cause the river and its tributaries to rise to dangerous levels in this region. In 2006, flooding from rainfall left close to 3,600 people in Bumba without homes or shelter. The flooding destroyed farms in the area, and many people drowned.^{33,34}

Gbadolite

Situated near the D.R.C.'s northern border with the Central African Republic, Gbadolite is a small, historic town. During the Zaire period of the D.R.C., President Mobutu Sese Seko lived and ruled the country from here for 30 years. He constructed elaborate palaces, an international airport, and wide boulevards in the town, creating a flourishing environment in this outpost surrounded by jungle. Many of the people who lived here were related to Mobutu and were provided large houses with electricity. Often, they held service jobs in his palaces. Since Mobutu died in 1997, however, Gbadolite has gone into

²⁷ iStockAnalyst.com. Xinhua News Agency. "DR Congo Army Kills 12 Enyele Insurgents, Arrests 35 in Mbandaka Fighting." 10 April 2010.

<http://www.istockanalyst.com/article/viewiStockNews/articleid/4018477>

²⁸ BBC News. "Troops Retake Mbandaka Airport in DR Congo." 5 April 2010.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/8603734.stm>

²⁹ Relief Web. "DRC: Equateur Province: MONUC Force Commander in Mbandaka." 6 April 2010.

<http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900SID/SMAR-84A7WS?OpenDocument>

³⁰ Maps of World. "Democratic Republic of Congo Political Map." 1999–2009.

<http://www.mapsofworld.com/democratic-republic-of-congo/democratic-republic-of-congo-political-map.html>

³¹ CityPopulation.net. "Congo (Dem. Rep.)" 2010. <http://citypopulation.net/CongoDemRep.html>

³² Hakuna Matata Tours. "Congo River Cruise: 22 Days Congo River Expedition. Kisangani – Kinshasa: Bumba." 2009. http://www.hakunamatatours.com/River_congo_cruise.html

³³ AllAfrica.com. IRIN. "Congo-Kinshasa: Heavy Rains Render 3,600 Bumba Residents Homeless." 12 December 2006. <http://allafrica.com/stories/200612120222.html>

³⁴ International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. DREF Operation Final Report.

"Central Africa: Floods and Landslide: Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)." 27 February 2008.

http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_appeals.pl?06/MDR62002fr.pdf

decline. That year, Congolese rebels passed through the area and destroyed the palaces, which to many symbolized the dictatorial rule of Mobutu.^{35,36}

History

The history of the Lingala-speaking region is linked to the broader history of the D.R.C. and the history of the African continent. Much of the culture associated with Lingala speakers of the D.R.C. has developed in the Congo River basin. This region is historically important because for many years, the river was the entry into the interior of central Africa, and was linked to the path of European colonization.



© Melvin Baker
Bantu children

Early History

The Congolese people who speak Lingala are linked to the broader family of Bantu language speakers. Between 2,000 and 3,000 years ago, the Bantu peoples migrated to part of the region that is now the D.R.C. Their migration took them south, into the region around the Congo River, and also toward the east. In the Congo region, they lived along the river in small villages and practiced farming.^{37,38}

Lingala as a Unifying Force

Along the Congo River and adjacent stretches of tributaries, Lingala speakers have for centuries used a linguistic predecessor, Bobangi, as a means to communicate with other river cultures.³⁹ Being traders who traveled the river, they had to negotiate with ethnic groups who spoke other languages. Southwest of the Lingala area, Kikongo, also a Bantu language, has filled a similar role as a *lingua franca* (i.e., a language of communication between individuals who do not speak the same first language). Both Lingala and Kikongo evolved significantly as a result of interactions with European colonial powers.^{40,41,42}

³⁵ BBC News. Ross, Will. "Directing Bicycles in Gbadolite." 18 October 2002. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/2337549.stm>

³⁶ BBC News. Borzello, Anna. "Congo's Most Curious Town." 26 July 1999. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/from_our_own_correspondent/402027.stm

³⁷ South Africa Tours and Travel. "Brief History of the Bantu Migration into South Africa." 2008. <http://www.south-africa-tours-and-travel.com/bantu.html>

³⁸ Eduplace.com. "Bantu Migrations, 1000 B.C.–A.D. 1100." 3 May 2006. http://www.eduplace.com/kids/socsci/ca/books/bkf3/imaps/AC_06_206_bantu/AC_06_206_bantu.html

³⁹ Encyclopædia Britannica. "Lingala Language." 2010. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9087564>

⁴⁰ National African Language Resource Center (NALRC). "Lingala: Culture & Language." December 2007. lang.nalrc.wisc.edu/resources/press/brochures/lingala.pdf

⁴¹ National African Language Resource Center (NALRC). "Who Speaks Lingala? People and History." December 2007. lang.nalrc.wisc.edu/resources/press/brochures/lingala.pdf

The Kongo Kingdom and the Portuguese

The Bantu peoples of western Africa established kingdoms between the 10th and 14th centuries, before Europeans penetrated the continent of Africa.⁴³ One of these kingdoms was the Kongo kingdom, traditionally believed to have been founded around 1390. It probably began as a federation of local political entities that formed a coalition. It then developed into a kingdom that eventually incorporated an area surrounding the mouth of the Congo River, extending toward the south.



Courtesy of Wikipedia.org
King of Kongo

The peoples of the Kongo kingdom, known collectively as Bakongo, developed a civilization that was sophisticated in many ways. They cultivated fruits and vegetables, raised livestock, and had a royal court that collected taxes and regulated the value of their currency. Their accomplishments included forging copper and smelting iron, weaving cloth, carving ivory and wood, and carving marble into building structures. The Bakongo people also practiced slavery and categorized their slaves into four groups: criminals, debtors, children given away by their families as part of a dowry, and war prisoners. Many were allowed to earn their way to freedom, while others (particularly criminals) were not.^{44,45,46,47}

The Kongo kingdom is historically important to the region because the Portuguese landed here in 1482, establishing a presence that led to the slave trade with Europe. They were not able to travel upriver very far because of cataracts and waterfalls, but they traveled as far as possible to capture slaves. Initially, most of these slaves were transported to Portugal, but after 1500 many were sent to plantations and mines in Brazil. The Portuguese slave traders often negotiated with indigenous brokers from the interior who served as middlemen in the slave trade. Roman Catholic priests were part of the Portuguese colonizing effort, with some serving as slave traders themselves and as missionaries who promoted Portuguese rule.⁴⁸ Through all of their activities, the Portuguese undermined the Kongo kingdom and its surrounding cultures. Civil wars began occurring in the 16th century as the kingdom declined under Portuguese domination. By the 17th century, the Kongo kingdom had splintered into a number of

⁴² *The Bantu Languages*. Mufwene, Salikoko S. "Contact Languages in the Bantu Area." 2003. New York: Routledge.

⁴³ Encyclopædia Britannica. "Congo: People: Ethnic Groups." 2010. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-40795>

⁴⁴ *The Troubled Heart of Africa: A History of the Congo*. Edgerton, Robert B. "Chapter 1: The Land Beyond Obscurity and Darkness [pp. 13–14]." 2002. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

⁴⁵ Encyclopædia Britannica. "Kongo." 2010. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9046000>

⁴⁶ Encyclopædia Britannica. "Kongo." 2010. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9045999>

⁴⁷ The Africa Guide. "African People & Culture: Bakongo." 1996–2010.

<http://www.africaguide.com/culture/tribes/bakongo.htm>

⁴⁸ *The Troubled Heart of Africa: A History of the Congo*. Edgerton, Robert B. "Chapter 1: The Land Beyond Obscurity and Darkness [pp. 14–17]." 2002. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

small states, most of which would ultimately be incorporated into the Portuguese colony of Angola.^{49,50,51}

Belgian Colonization

In the late 1870s, King Leopold II of Belgium began to create a colonial empire in the Congo River Basin. After the explorer Henry M. Stanley became the first European explorer to travel along the Congo River's course in central Africa, Leopold employed him to establish posts along the river, extending the Belgian king's authority. The European powers in 1884-85 recognized King Leopold's personal claim to the territory, which he called the Congo Free State. The nation of Belgium later annexed the Congo (1908), but not before King Leopold's colonial agents had carried out atrocities against the people of the region. In order to control and profit from the rubber and ivory trade and exploit the rich mineral wealth, they used forced labor. The Congo Free State is infamous for the conditions it wrought upon the native peoples of the region.^{52,53} Leopold today is remembered as someone who turned his privately held colony into a "massive labour camp, made a fortune for himself from the harvest of its wild rubber, and contributed in a large way to the death of perhaps 10 million innocent people."⁵⁴



© Jess & Peter / flickr.com
Statue of King Leopold II

In 1902, Joseph Conrad published *Heart of Darkness*, his famous novella that provides a fictional glimpse into the Belgian slave trade of the Congo of that time. Seen through the eyes of Marlow, a European riverboat captain, the Congo appears as a scene of immense corruption, where "men are allowed to operate outside a social system of checks and balances."⁵⁵ By shining a light on the brutal exploitation of the Congolese peoples, the story provides a stark contrast between the ideal and the reality of European colonial imperialism at a certain time and place in the world.⁵⁶

⁴⁹ Infoplease. "Kongo, Kingdom of." 2000–2009. Boston, MA: Pearson.

<http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/history/A0828072.html>

⁵⁰ The History Files. "African Kingdoms, Central Africa: Kongo Kingdom." 1999–2010.

<http://www.historyfiles.co.uk/KingListsAfrica/AfricaAngola.htm>

⁵¹ Half Tribe.com. "Kingdom of Kongo (c. 1400–1914), West Africa." 2008–2009.

<http://www.halftribe.com/index.php/culture/empires/361-kingdom-of-kongo-west-africa.html>

⁵² Infoplease. Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. "Democratic Republic of the Congo:

History: The Congo Free State [and] The Belgian Congo." 2007. Boston, MA: Pearson.

<http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/world/A0857522.html>

⁵³ *The Troubled Heart of Africa: A History of the Congo*. Edgerton, Robert B. "Chapter 2: Conquering the Congo [pp. 77–113]." 2002. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

⁵⁴ BBC News. Mark Dummett. "King Leopold's Legacy of DR Congo Violence." 24 February 2004.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3516965.stm>

⁵⁵ Spark Notes. Joseph Conrad. *Heart of Darkness*. 2010. <http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/heart/context.html>

⁵⁶ Answers.com. "Heart of Darkness (Themes)." 2010. <http://www.answers.com/topic/heart-of-darkness-novel-3>

The Belgian Congo and Independence

The horrific excesses of King Leopold's regime in the Congo invoked international criticism, which was one reason for the Belgian government's annexation of the Congo Free State in 1908.^{57,58,59} Renamed the Belgian Congo (now the D.R.C.), the region evolved through administrative reforms. Forced labor was declared illegal, and some of the worst practices of the old regime diminished. The Belgian government took over the Congo Free State due to its heavy indebtedness to the Belgian government. Because the Belgian Congo remained a lucrative source for European investment, the Belgian state exploited this advantage. The government constructed railroads and developed a state infrastructure, much of it funded by granting land concessions to private companies that profited from the trade in minerals and rubber.^{60,61}

Under the new government, the local peoples in the Belgian Congo remained excluded from political life and administrative power. The Africans' main function was to provide a labor pool for the mines and plantations that Europeans managed. Africans were also denied education beyond a basic level along with participation in the management of their nation's economy and political life. For these reasons and others, a nationalist, anti-colonial movement gradually began to grow and promote independence for the Congolese. Many of the movement's leaders were *évolués*, relatively well educated men (by Congolese standards) who were partially Westernized but denied any opportunity to assimilate or rise within the colonial structure.⁶²

Two such *évolué* Congolese nationalists were Patrice Lumumba and Joseph Kasa-Vubu. In 1960, after the Belgians left, Lumumba briefly served as prime minister in the newly independent Republic of the Congo, and Kasa-Vubu acted as head of state. The two men were soon embroiled in a political struggle that ended in a coup against the Lumumba government and his murder in January 1961. The backdrop for these events was the so-called Congo Crisis (1960-1965), a period in which army revolts and several secessionist movements, spurred by ethnic divisions, threatened to tear the new country apart only months after its independence.⁶³

⁵⁷ Infoplease. Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. "Democratic Republic of the Congo: History." 2007. Boston, MA: Pearson. <http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/world/A0857522.html>

⁵⁸ BBC News. "Democratic Republic of Congo Country Profile." 10 February 2010. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/country_profiles/1076399.stm

⁵⁹ *The Troubled Heart of Africa: A History of the Congo*. Edgerton, Robert B. "Chapter 5: The Belgian Congo [p. 155]." 2002. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

⁶⁰ World History at KMLA. "The Congo Free State, 1885-1908." 2007. <http://www.zum.de/whkmla/region/centrafrica/congofreestate.html>

⁶¹ World History at KMLA. "Belgian Congo, 1908-1918." 2007. <http://www.zum.de/whkmla/region/centrafrica/belgcongo19081918.html>

⁶² *The Troubled Heart of Africa: A History of the Congo*. Edgerton, Robert B. "Chapter 5: The Belgian Congo [p. 166]." 2002. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

⁶³ *The Troubled Heart of Africa: A History of the Congo*. Edgerton, Robert B. "Chapter 5: The Belgian Congo [p. 166]." 2002. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

The Mobutu Regime

In November 1965, General Joseph Mobutu—who had played an instrumental role in the 1960 coup deposing Lumumba—headed another coup that resulted in his becoming the nation’s president.⁶⁴ Soon thereafter, Leopoldville, the capital of the Republic of the Congo, was given the new African name of Kinshasa. Mobutu, who would rule for over 30 years, also would later rename the nation as the Republic of Zaire and call himself Mobutu Sese Seko. As part of his authenticity program, Mobutu required that citizens of Zaire change their Christian names to ones of African origin.



DCD Image
President Mobutu with the Secretary of Defense

Mobutu consolidated his power by linking his political party, the only legal political party in the country, with labor and student organizations, thus helping to neutralize internal dissent.⁶⁵ In a new constitution approved in 1967, the position of prime minister was eliminated and all executive powers were placed in the office of the president.⁶⁶ By the mid-1970s, with virtually all internal opposition quashed, Mobutu directed a disastrous intervention by Zairean forces in the Angolan civil war.⁶⁷ The Zairean army was routed by the Cuban-supported Angolan rebel faction and forced into a chaotic retreat to Zaire. Two years later, the Angolan rebels, now in power, would support two successive invasions of Zaire by anti-Mobutu guerillas that would nearly topple his government.⁶⁸

Nevertheless, Mobutu’s support of anti-communist factions in the Angolan civil war, one of the Cold War’s longest regional conflicts, helped bring in aid from Western countries, including the U.S., Belgium, and France.⁶⁹ Such assistance increasingly became essential in propping up the failing economy of Zaire, which was largely gutted by corruption so pervasive that the once obscure term “kleptocracy” (literally, “rule by thieves”) became synonymous with the Mobutu regime.⁷⁰

⁶⁴ Encyclopædia Britannica. “Mobutu Sese Seko.” 2010. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9053119>

⁶⁵ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *Zaire: A Country Study*. “Chapter 1: Historical Setting: The Second Republic, 1965–90: The Rebirth of *Bula Matari*: The Expansion of State Authority.” December 1993. [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+zr0043\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+zr0043))

⁶⁶ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *Zaire: A Country Study*. “Chapter 1: Historical Setting: The Second Republic, 1965–90: The Rebirth of *Bula Matari*: The Quest for Legitimacy.” December 1993. [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+zr0042\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+zr0042))

⁶⁷ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *Zaire: A Country Study*. “Chapter 5: National Security: Evolution of the Armed Forces: Involvement in Angola.” December 1993. [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+zr0185\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+zr0185))

⁶⁸ DictatoroftheMonth.com. Latimer, Josh. “Mobutu Sese Seko.” July 2006. <http://www.dictatorofthemonth.com/Mobutu/Jul2006MobutuEN.htm>

⁶⁹ DictatoroftheMonth.com. Latimer, Josh. “Mobutu Sese Seko.” July 2006. <http://www.dictatorofthemonth.com/Mobutu/Jul2006MobutuEN.htm>

⁷⁰ The Word Detective. Morris, Evan. “Rhymes With ‘Palliburton’.” 4 December 2007. <http://www.word-detective.com/current.html>

The end of the Cold War saw Mobutu's aid from international sources dry up. In the face of growing opposition to his regime as the economy of Zaire collapsed, Mobutu was forced to end single-party rule and enter into a coalition government with his rivals in 1990.⁷¹ Mobutu, however, retained control of the nation's security structure and remained Zaire's leading power, even during a brief period of hiding. In 1996, Laurent Kabila, with the support of Rwandan and Ugandan Tutsi forces, invaded Zaire. Mobutu's dictatorial reign ended seven months later, when Mobutu fled into exile and Kabila became the new president of Zaire. Shortly after taking power, Kabila quickly proceeded to rename the country as the Democratic Republic of the Congo.^{72,73}

Recent History

The D.R.C. became a battleground in the late 1990s after President Kabila banned opposition parties, failed to revive the economy, and turned his back on the Tutsi allies who had helped him gain power. Backed by Uganda and Rwanda, ethnic Tutsi Congolese in the eastern D.R.C. rebelled against the Kabila government and began a campaign to overthrow the regime. Kabila was only able to stop the onslaught by eliciting the military support of neighboring Angola, Zimbabwe, and Namibia. By 1999, a military deadlock had left the D.R.C. divided into three segments controlled by the Kabila government, Rwanda, and Uganda, respectively. A large part of the northern and eastern parts of the Lingala-speaking region was within the area controlled by Ugandan-aligned militias.^{74,75,76}



© Eric Draper
Joseph Kabila with former President George Bush

It was not until after Laurent Kabila was assassinated in 2001 and his son Joseph Kabila assumed the presidency that successful peace efforts occurred. Although some militias continued to operate in areas of the eastern D.R.C., the government signed a peace accord with rebel groups in 2003, ending Africa's "world war" that directly or indirectly (through lack of food and medical services) led to the death of millions of people between 1998 and 2003.⁷⁷ The interim government planned democratic elections to be held in 2005. That year, however, militia leaders in the northeast refused to disarm, and

⁷¹ *The Troubled Heart of Africa: A History of the Congo*. Edgerton, Robert B. "Chapter 6: Independence—The Dream and the Nightmare [pp. 217–219]." 2002. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

⁷² Encyclopædia Britannica. "Mobutu Sese Seko." 2010. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9053119>

⁷³ *The Troubled Heart of Africa: A History of the Congo*. Edgerton, Robert B. "Chapter 7: The Congo and Kabila—Father and Son [p. 223]." 2002. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

⁷⁴ U.S. Department of State. "Background Note: Democratic Republic of the Congo." January 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2823.htm>

⁷⁵ BBC News. "Democratic Republic of Congo Country Profile." 10 February 2010. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/country_profiles/1076399.stm

⁷⁶ Infoplease. *The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition*. "Democratic Republic of the Congo: History." 2007. Boston, MA: Pearson. <http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/world/A0857522.html>

⁷⁷ BBC News. "Democratic Republic of Congo Country Profile." 10 February 2010. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/country_profiles/1076399.stm

elections were rescheduled to July 2006. Joseph Kabila won the presidential election fairly, according to international observers, but stability did not return to the D.R.C. Hutu- and Tutsi-dominated militias continued to terrorize regions in the eastern D.R.C., causing thousands of civilians to be driven from their homes.⁷⁸ In addition, the Lord's Resistance Army, a rebel group fighting against the Ugandan government, continued to operate from bases in the northeastern D.R.C., where it pillaged local villages for supplies and forced recruits.

Economy

The D.R.C. is a country rich in mineral wealth, which was the source of both funding and profit for many of the belligerents during the Second Congo Civil War (1998–2003). Its main exports are diamonds, copper, cobalt, crude oil, and timber.⁷⁹ Much of the mining industry, developed under Belgian control at the expense of agricultural development, is centered in Katanga Province (southeastern D.R.C.). The Katangan mines primarily extract silver, copper, zinc, cobalt, tin ore, and coal.⁸⁰ Most of the D.R.C.'s diamonds come from Kasai Occidental and Kasai Oriental Provinces (occupying the region to the northwest of Katanga). Oil is drilled from onshore and offshore wells near the mouth of the Congo River.⁸¹ Within the Lingala linguistic region, the main area of mineral extraction is in the far northeast, where small-scale gold mining takes place.



© Grassroots Reconciliation Group
Child gold miner

Forestry

Forests cover approximately 60% of the D.R.C., much of it in the Lingala-speaking region. There are roughly 600 different tree species in the D.R.C.'s rainforests, including teak, ebony, African cedar, and mahogany, among others.⁸² These forests are a valuable resource, providing the Congolese people with food, energy, shelter, medicine, and income. Unfortunately, however, they are quite vulnerable to overexploitation. Because

⁷⁸ Federation of American Scientists. Congressional Research Service. Dagne, Ted. "The Democratic Republic of the Congo: Background and Current Developments." 15 October 2009. <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R40108.pdf>

⁷⁹ International Trade Centre/World Trade Organization. "Trade Performance HS: Exports of Congo D.R. (2008, in USD thousands)." 2010. http://www.intracen.org/appl1/TradeCom/TP_EP_CI.aspx?RP=180&YR=2008

⁸⁰ U.S. Geological Survey. *2008 Minerals Yearbook*. Yager, Thomas R. "Congo (Kinshasa)." February 2010. <http://minerals.usgs.gov/minerals/pubs/country/2008/myb3-2008-cg.pdf>

⁸¹ Infoplease. "Democratic Republic of the Congo: Economy." 2000–2009. Boston, MA: Pearson. <http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/world/A0857521.html>

⁸² OverlandAfrica.com. "DRC Plants." 2009. <http://www.overlandiafrica.com/drc/plants/>

of slash-and-burn agricultural practices and trees used as fuel, for example, it is estimated that the D.R.C. has lost 0.2% of its forest each year between 2000 and 2005.⁸³

Unregulated logging has also been decimating the forests, and steps are being taken to strengthen forest governance and clamp down on this practice in some regions.

Équateur Province (northwest area, in Lingala region) is one of the areas where a forest governance project is being tested, funded by the European Union (EU). The project supports village committees whose members create development plans, monitor the exploitation of the forests, and open lines of communication between logging companies and villagers. One persistent problem is the lack of alternative income-earning occupations for those involved in illegal logging.⁸⁴



© Peter / flickr.com
Deforestation near Ghana

Industry

The D.R.C.'s primary industrial center is Kinshasa, located in the southwestern tip of the Lingala linguistic region. The main industries are food and beverage processing, tanning, construction, ship repairing, and the manufacture of chemicals, mineral oils, textiles, footwear, and cement.^{85,86}

Agriculture

Only a small amount of the land in the D.R.C. is used for growing either seasonal or permanent crops. Congolese who live off the land often engage in subsistence farming, growing groundnuts, maize (corn), plantains, rice, and cassava. Cash crops, often grown on small plantations, include rubber, coffee, sugarcane, cocoa, and cotton.

Goats, chickens, pigs, sheep, ducks, and geese are tended on farms.⁸⁷ Raising cattle is limited because of bovine susceptibility to sleeping sickness, induced by the bite of tsetse flies. Where the local Congolese have been displaced by fighting or by the threat of rebel militias, livestock theft and the consumption and sale of protected



© CIAT / flickr.com
Congolese bean farmer talking

⁸³ IUCN, International Union for Conservation of Nature. "Strengthening Voices for Better Choices in the Democratic Republic of Congo." 2009. <http://cmsdata.incn.org/downloads/drc.pdf>

⁸⁴ IUCN, International Union for Conservation of Nature. "Strengthening Voices for Better Choices in the Democratic Republic of Congo." 2009. <http://cmsdata.incn.org/downloads/drc.pdf>

⁸⁵ Infoplease. "Democratic Republic of the Congo: Economy." 2000–2009. Boston, MA: Pearson. <http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/world/A0857521.html>

⁸⁶ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Kinshasa." 2010. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9044>

⁸⁷ Democratic Republic of Congo in Pictures. DiPiazza, Francesca Davis. "The Economy [pp. 60–61]." 2008. Minneapolis, MN: Twenty-First Century Books (Lerner Publishing).

forest animals (“bushmeat”) have been problems.^{88,89}

Lack of access to credit sources has been a problem in the farming sector. Both the government and the private sector have failed to adequately invest in agriculture. Farmers often face very limited energy resources and a primitive transportation infrastructure that makes it difficult to transport goods to market.⁹⁰

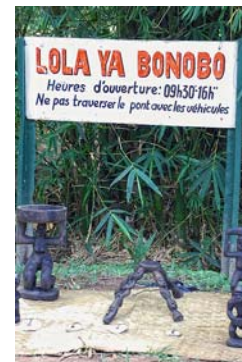
Linguistic Groups

The Congolese people speak a variety of languages. Four regional languages—Lingala, Kikongo, Luba-Kasai (Tshiluba), and Kiswahili (Swahili)—have been designated as national languages owing to their frequent use as *lingua francas*.⁹¹ Many people are bilingual or even trilingual, conversant in their own first language, one of the four *lingua francas*, and French. Belgian colonists in the late 19th century introduced French to the Congo and it serves as the language of the government, media, business, and secondary schools.^{92,93,94}

Lingala

Lingala, the most widely-spoken language of the D.R.C., is considered the country’s primary national language, in part because it is the dominant language of the popular *soukous* music that is heard throughout the country.⁹⁵ It is spoken throughout the northern and northwestern parts of the D.R.C., where it is the language most commonly used across ethnic lines.^{96,97}

Modern Lingala evolved during the colonial era. Belgian traders initially used the Bobangi language to communicate with the people living along the Congo River. Bobangi was a parent trade language



© Irene / flickr.com
Sign written in Lingala

⁸⁸ New Agriculturalist. “Country Profile – Democratic Republic of Congo.” 2009. <http://www.new-ag.info/country/profile.php?a=641>

⁸⁹ Infoplease. “Democratic Republic of the Congo: Economy.” 2000–2009. Boston, MA: Pearson. <http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/world/A0857521.html>

⁹⁰ New Agriculturalist. “Country Profile – Democratic Republic of Congo.” 2009. <http://www.new-ag.info/country/profile.php?a=641>

⁹¹ Omniglot. “Tshiluba.” 1998–2010. <http://www.omniglot.com/writing/tshiluba.php>

⁹² Encyclopedia.com. “Democratic Republic of the Congo.” 2001. <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G2-3401700056.html>

⁹³ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Congo: People: Languages.” 2010. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-40796>

⁹⁴ *Words of the World: The Global Language System*. de Swaan, Abram. “6. Africa: The Persistence of the Colonial Languages [p. 110]. 2001. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press

⁹⁵ National African Language Resource Center (NALRC). “Who Speaks Lingala? People and History.” December 2007. lang.nalrc.wisc.edu/resources/press/brochures/lingala.pdf

⁹⁶ Omniglot. “Lingala.” 1998–2010. <http://www.omniglot.com/writing/lingala.htm>

⁹⁷ Kwintessential. “The Lingala Language.” No date. <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/language/about/lingala.html>

spoken among the tribes living along the Congo River in a region stretching from the Malebo Pool to Lisala (located near the northern-most point of the Congo River).^{98,99} Belgian administrators and missionaries appropriated Bobangi as the common language used in the Congo Free State. In the process of doing so, the Belgians simplified and standardized the language, renaming it Bangala (“river people”) to differentiate it from its root language.¹⁰⁰ Eventually, the language came to be known as Lingala (“language of the river people”).

Several variations or dialects of Lingala exist. Standard Lingala was used by the Catholic Church and its missionaries and is today the primary language of education and the media. Its spoken form, used informally, is somewhat different in structure from Standard Lingala and is the language of both the street and Congolese music. Classified as a Bantu language, Lingala vocabulary borrows words from French and reflects Portuguese influence. The Latin alphabet is used for its written form.^{101,102}

Other Languages of the Lingala Linguistic Region

Traditionally, most Lingala speakers have not learned the language as their primary, or first, language.¹⁰³ Within the Lingala linguistic region, there are numerous primary languages that are spoken. Most of these fall within the Bantu language family (of which Lingala is also a member) or the Adamwa-Ubangi family. Among the most prevalent of the Bantu languages are Mongo-Nkundu, Teke, and Ngando. The latter two are spoken across a large portion of the central Congo Basin, while the first is prevalent in the region east of the Congo River stretching northeastward from the Malebo Pool to the mouth of the Kasai River (a significant left-bank tributary of the Congo). The major Adamwa-Ubangi languages are Ngbaka, Zande, and Ngbandi, which collectively are spoken in a large percentage of the D.R.C.’s border regions lying south of the Central African Republic and Sudan.^{104,105}



© Endre Vestvik
Doctor talking to villagers from Bukavu

⁹⁸ Omniglot. “Lingala.” 1998–2010. <http://www.omniglot.com/writing/lingala.htm>

⁹⁹ *Grammar and Dictionary of the Bobangi Language: As Spoken Over a Part of the Upper Congo, West-Central Africa*. Whitehead, John. “Preface [pp. v-vi].” 1899. London, UK: Baptist Missionary Society.

¹⁰⁰ *The Politics of Cultural Pluralism*. Young, Crawford. “Ethnic Politics in Zaire [p. 172].” 1976. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.

¹⁰¹ Omniglot. “Lingala.” 1998–2010. <http://www.omniglot.com/writing/lingala.htm>

¹⁰² Kwintessential. “The Lingala Language.” No date.

<http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/language/about/lingala.html>

¹⁰³ UCLA Language Materials Project. “Lingala.”

<http://www.lmp.ucla.edu/Profile.aspx?LangID=14&menu=004>

¹⁰⁴ Ethnologue: Languages of the World. “Languages of Democratic Republic of the Congo.” M. Paul Lewis, Ed. 2009. Dallas, TX: SIL International. http://www.ethnologue.com/show_country.asp?name=CD

¹⁰⁵ Ethnologue: Languages of the World. “Languages of Democratic Republic of the Congo [map].” M. Paul Lewis, Ed. 2009. Dallas, TX: SIL International.

Self Study Questions

1. The Congo Basin is home to one of the largest rainforests in the world. True or False?
2. The Congo River is the longest river in Africa. True or False?
3. Kinshasa is the D.R.C.'s capital and largest city. True or False?
4. Lingala has been used as a lingua franca by those living along the Congo River. True or False?
5. The Bakongo did not practice slavery before Europeans entered into the African slave trade. True or False?

Religion

Overview

Christianity is the dominant religious tradition of the D.R.C., with Roman Catholics comprising approximately 50% of the Congolese population and Protestants an additional 20%. Both groups are scattered throughout the D.R.C. Nearly 9% of the Congolese people practice Islam, which is confined mostly to the eastern side of the country. Another 9% are adherents of the locally-developed Kimbanguist religion. The remainder follow either indigenous spiritual beliefs or Christian denominations such as Jehovah's Witnesses, Orthodox sects, or Mormonism.^{106, 107}



© Silvio / flickr.com
Congolese in Kingasani, Kinshasa

Christianity arrived at the region near the mouth of the Congo River with the Portuguese explorers at the close of the 15th century.¹⁰⁸ The local ruler of the Kongo kingdom adopted it, leading the Catholic Church to recognize the kingdom as Christian. European Christian missionaries, both Catholic and Protestant, proselytized intensively in the region. The Catholic Church initially supported colonization and the slave trade, but both churches (Catholic and Protestant) ultimately founded many schools and hospitals.^{109,110,111} Following an agreement made in 1906 between the Belgian government and the Vatican, Belgium gave the Catholic Church jurisdiction over education in the D.R.C. The schools that the Catholics created served as the main educational institutions of the D.R.C. until 1948.¹¹²

Islam was brought to the eastern D.R.C. by traders seeking slaves from central Africa and by Muslims migrating there to live. Into this region, they introduced Islamic practices

¹⁰⁶ U.S. Department of State. International Religious Freedom Report 2009. 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127226.htm>

¹⁰⁷ GeckoGo! "Democratic Republic of the Congo Travel Guide: Democratic Republic of the Congo Religion." 2007–2010. <http://www.geckogo.com/Guide/Democratic-Republic-of-the-Congo/People-Culture/Religion/>

¹⁰⁸ APA News.net. Agence de Presse Africaine, Première Source d'Information sur l'Afrique. "Catholicism Started in 15th Century in D.R.C." 12 April 2009. <http://www.apanews.net/public/spip.php?article95562>

¹⁰⁹ *The Troubled Heart of Africa: A History of the Congo*. Edgerton, Robert B. "Chapter 1: The Land Beyond Obscurity and Darkness [pp. 14–17]." 2002. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

¹¹⁰ GeckoGo! "Democratic Republic of the Congo Travel Guide: Democratic Republic of the Congo Religion: Christianity." 2007–2010. <http://www.geckogo.com/Guide/Democratic-Republic-of-the-Congo/People-Culture/Religion/>

¹¹¹ U.S. Library of Congress. "Zaire: Protestant Churches." 1993. <http://www.country-data.com/cgi-bin/query/r-15049.html>

¹¹² StateUniversity.com. "Democratic Congo – History & Background: Educational History." 2010. <http://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/358/Democratic-Congo-HISTORY-BACKGROUND.html>

from Uganda, Tanzania, and Sudan, where their forebears had served in colonial armies.¹¹³

A small Jewish population emigrated to the D.R.C. in the early 1900s, and most settled in the cities of Kinshasa or Lubumbashi. Their numbers now are greatly reduced. Of the few Jewish people remaining, most now live in Lubumbashi in southeastern D.R.C., outside the Lingala linguistic region.¹¹⁴

The Kimbanguist Religion

Unfamiliar to most Westerners, the Kimbanguist religion originated in the southwestern D.R.C. (Zaire at the time), south of the Lingala-speaking region. A Baptist named Simon Kimbangu founded this church in the early 1900s, inspired by visions that directed him to heal others. Because he gathered a large following, Belgian authorities arrested and imprisoned him for a 30-year sentence after he organized a demonstration in 1921. In 1959, the government recognized the Kimbanguist Church, which in 1970 became the first African church to join the World Council of Churches. Its beliefs include pacifism, the abandonment of animism, and strict adherence to austere religious practices such as avoiding alcohol, tobacco and dancing, abstaining for eating pork and being monogamous.^{115,116,117}



DOD Image
Simon Kimbangu

Many members of the Kimbanguist faith today live in southwestern- most D.R.C., but others are found in cities such as Kinshasa, in the southern Lingala linguistic region.

Animism and Sorcery

Indigenous tribal religious practices include animism, a belief system in which nature and objects of nature possess spiritual powers that can affect humans. Usually, these beliefs intermingle with any organized religion



© Tomas / flickr.com
A sign of beliefs

¹¹³ GeckoGo! “Democratic Republic of the Congo Travel Guide: Democratic Republic of the Congo Religion: Islam.” 2007–2010. <http://www.geckogo.com/Guide/Democratic-Republic-of-the-Congo/People-Culture/Religion/>

¹¹⁴ *Congo: Democratic Republic – Republic*. Rorison, Sean. “Chapter 1: Background Information: Religion: Judaism [14].” 2008.

http://books.google.com/books?id=cXJyOKBqJZwC&pg=PA14&lpg=PA14&dq=mosques+in+Kinshasa&source=bl&ots=4CLSmT1dsC&sig=FDYorQGUXynzc4XQqo8Tp2C04i4&hl=en&ei=G9nRS_T7L4GEswPC69CGCg&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=9&ved=0CBoQ6AEwCDgK#v=onepage&q=mosques%20in%20Kinshasa&f=false

¹¹⁵ GeckoGo! “Democratic Republic of the Congo Travel Guide: Democratic Republic of the Congo Religion: Kimbanguism.” 2007–2010. <http://www.geckogo.com/Guide/Democratic-Republic-of-the-Congo/People-Culture/Religion/>

¹¹⁶ Prominent People. “Kimbangu, Simon.” 2009. <http://www.prominentpeople.co.za/kimbangu-simon.aspx>

¹¹⁷ U.S. Library of Congress. “Zaire: The Kimbanguist Church.” 1993. <http://www.country-data.com/cgi-bin/query/r-15050.html>

(such as Christianity or Islam) that people practice. In general, animism is also connected to reverence for ancestors and an appreciation of their power. Animism also incorporates a belief in malevolent spirits who can cause harm to the living unless they are appeased. The practice of sorcery also exists in some tribal areas. It holds that certain people, including witches, have the ability to cast spells or harm others through indirect, spiritual means. People use a range of strategies, including special methods of healing, worship ceremonies, and gift offerings to placate these potentially destructive forces.^{118,119}

The Role of Religion in the Government

The government of the D.R.C. does not recognize an official religion or follow the tenets of any religious doctrine. Neither the dominant Roman Catholic nor the Protestant Church influences the nation's political affairs. According to the U.S. Department of State, "The Constitution [of the D.R.C.] provides for freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, and other laws and policies contributed to the generally free practice of religion. The law at all levels protects this right in full against abuse, either by governmental or private actors."¹²⁰



© Silvio / flickr.com
Parishioners in Kinshasa

The government retains broad authority over religious organizations and exercises it with moderation. It determines whether a religious group can be approved or suspended from operation and also exempts them from taxation. Although the government mandates registration of religious groups, many such groups operate without observing this requirement, and the state does not interfere. Religious groups are also free to train their clergy and hold worship services wherever they choose to do so.

Religion in People's Daily Lives

The Congolese people practice their various religions without fear of consequence.

Although religious discrimination occasionally occurs, the government opposes any such acts and works to promote religious equality and tolerance. It consults with representatives of different religions to resolve issues or discuss concerns.



© Tomas / flickr.com
Church sign

¹¹⁸ GeckoGo! "Democratic Republic of the Congo Travel Guide: Democratic Republic of the Congo Religion: Animism, Sorcery and Witchcraft." 2007–2010. <http://www.geckogo.com/Guide/Democratic-Republic-of-the-Congo/People-Culture/Religion/>

¹¹⁹ Encyclopædia Britannica. "Congo: People: Religion." 2010. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-40797>

¹²⁰ U.S. Department of State. International Religious Freedom Report 2009. 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127226.htm>

Citizens in the D.R.C. attend their churches and religious services voluntarily, without coercion. Many attend church regularly.¹²¹

Exchange 1: When do you attend services?

Visitor:	When do you attend services?	Ohsahmbehlakah ntahngo neenee
Local:	We attend worship on Sundays, unless we know we will miss it. Then we attend on Saturday evening.	Tohsahmbehlakah mohkohlo yah ehyengah, sohkee tohyehbee ehteh tohkohzahngah nday tohsahmbehlee mohkohlo yah mpohsoh nah mpohkwah

There is a very strong emphasis on community (sharing among a broad group of individual community members) in African churches. This expression has been grafted onto many of the more formal Christian practices brought by missionaries who, at least initially, communicated in the ways they had in their European homelands. Christian churches have found it necessary to adapt to African customs in order to more fully integrate into the local communities.^{122, 123}

Although the majority of Congolese identify as Christian, they also follow syncretic religious practices, that is, a mixture of Christianity with animism and local traditions of several origins. Rather than communicating with the supreme being through prayer, for instance, they often commune with God through ancestor worship. Dialogue with ancestors is part of daily life for most Congolese people, who, in many villages, offer gifts to their ancestors in ceremonies and pray to them for good harvests. People seeking religious solace or help with a problem might offer prayers to the Christian God, asking

¹²¹ U.S. Department of State. International Religious Freedom Report 2009. 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127226.htm>

¹²² *The Oxford History of Christian Worship*. Egbulem, Nwaka Chris. “Chapter 26: Mission and Inculturation: Africa [pp. 678–680].” 2006. http://books.google.com/books?id=Si8axR7yC7wC&pg=PA688&lpg=PA688&dq=Christian+celebrations+in+Democratic+Republic+of+Congo&source=bl&ots=5M8iif0zxx&sig=QDHerWHowayH8L85ILF0bhLWE6g&hl=en&ei=h8bQS4jxDJLqsQOszM3DCQ&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=8&ved=0CBcQ6AEwBzgK#v=onepage&q&f=false

¹²³ *The Oxford History of Christian Worship*. Egbulem, Nwaka Chris. “Chapter 26: Mission and Inculturation[sic]: Africa [p. 687].” 2006. http://books.google.com/books?id=Si8axR7yC7wC&pg=PA688&lpg=PA688&dq=Christian+celebrations+in+Democratic+Republic+of+Congo&source=bl&ots=5M8iif0zxx&sig=QDHerWHowayH8L85ILF0bhLWE6g&hl=en&ei=h8bQS4jxDJLqsQOszM3DCQ&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=8&ved=0CBcQ6AEwBzgK#v=onepage&q&f=false

for help to cure a family member considered to be afflicted by witchcraft.¹²⁴ Spirit healers are often consulted for herbal remedies that can help people with problems or health issues they are having. Daily religious practice permeates the culture of African societies. This is true whether people are practicing more localized, folk forms of spirituality or are affiliated with Catholic or Protestant churches.^{125,126,127} Many people gather in small neighborhood groups on weekdays as well as Sundays, to study the Bible or discuss common problems or personal issues.¹²⁸

Evolution of Kimbanguist Religious Practice

When the Congolese people followed the messianic Kimbanguism in the early 20th century, it was in response to the dislocation of their tribal culture. Villages had been abandoned, and people were relocating to large cities, where life was more impersonal and less anchored by village life. The local people blended their faith-healing beliefs with animism, Christianity, and new forms of spiritual practice. Many Congolese used the Kimbanguist religious movement as a form of political expression in developing nationalism and opposition to government policies. Kimbanguism became firmly established among the people, although the nationalist, political aspects of the religion eventually lessened.¹²⁹ Many follow the Kimbanguist religion today, especially those living in large cities such as Kinshasa.



Kimbanguist church members

Religious Events and Holidays

Throughout the Democratic Republic of the Congo, people celebrate their religion frequently. Their activities include local ancestral celebrations or ceremonies as well as participation in formal Christian religious events. Even in church-sponsored activities,

¹²⁴ *Congo: Democratic Republic – Republic*. Rorison, Sean. “Chapter 1: Background Information: Religion [17].” 2008.

http://books.google.com/books?id=cXJyOKBqJZwC&pg=PA14&lpg=PA14&dq=mosques+in+Kinshasa&source=bl&ots=4CLSmT1dsC&sig=FDYorQGUXynzc4XQqo8Tp2C04i4&hl=en&ei=G9nRS_T7L4GEswPC69CGCg&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=9&ved=0CBoQ6AEwCDgK#v=onepage&q=mosques%20in%20Kinshasa&f=false

¹²⁵ Everyculture.com. “Democratic Republic of the Congo: Religion.” No date.

<http://www.everyculture.com/Bo-Co/Democratic-Republic-of-the-Congo.html>

¹²⁶ African Studies Center, Exploring Africa. “Unit Three: Studying Africa through the Humanities: Introduction to Religion in Africa.” No date.

<http://exploringafrica.matrix.msu.edu/students/curriculum/m14/intro.php>

¹²⁷ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. “Cultural Diversity in the Church: Information about Congo: Prayer Life and Spirituality.” No date. <http://www.usccb.org/pcmrt/congo.shtml>

¹²⁸ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. “Cultural Diversity in the Church: Information about Congo: The Vitality of Christianity’s Growth in the Congo.” No date.

<http://www.usccb.org/pcmrt/congo.shtml>

¹²⁹ *The Troubled Heart of Africa: A History of the Congo*. Edgerton, Robert B. “Chapter 5: The Belgian Congo [pp. 173–175].” 2002. New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press.

Congolese religious ceremonies do not strictly follow any one religious ideology but instead a syncretic blend of many spiritual beliefs.

Christmas day, the Christian holiday that celebrates the birth of Christ, is a national holiday in the D.R.C. that falls on 25 December.^{130, 131} Some villages still adhere to the tradition of dramatizing the Christmas story, typically with a large local audience in attendance. The nativity play is presented by actors who improvise and dramatize the story. It is often interspersed with singing, with the entire presentation lasting for several hours.^{132, 133}



© Woody Collins
Traditional Christmas dinner

Exchange 2: Will you be celebrating Christmas?

Visitor:	Will you be celebrating Christmas?	Bohfehtahkah mohkohloh yah nohehl
Local:	Yes!	eh

In accordance with their Christian beliefs, many people in the D.R.C. celebrate Easter, which commemorates the resurrection of Christ.¹³⁴ It is common for Congolese people to choose Easter as a day to conduct a family baptism, one of the Christian sacraments.¹³⁵

Buildings of Worship

Several churches are located in Kinshasa, the largest and most populous city in the Lingala linguistic region (and in the nation). They represent Catholic, Protestant, Islamic,

¹³⁰ World Travel Guide. “Congo, Democratic Republic of: Public Holidays.” 2010. http://www.worldtravelguide.net/country/62/public_holidays/Africa/Democratic-Republic-Of-Congo.html

¹³¹ U.S. Department of State. “Congo, Democratic Republic of the: Section 1. Religious Demography.” 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127226.htm>

¹³² *Democratic Republic of the Congo*. Heale, Jay, and Yong Jui Lin. “Chapter 12: Festivals [p. 120].” 2009. http://books.google.com/books?id=9nxFwxF7nCsC&pg=PA117&lpg=PA117&dq=religious+holidays+in+Democratic+Republic+of+the+Congo&source=bl&ots=rumpIuXKa&sig=E_uEOLPIIBORWnBM2ywcGknLJQ&hl=en&ei=M3XQS92CMIzCsQQIMTeDw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=4&ved=0CBUQ6AEwAw#v=onepage&q&f=false

¹³³ WhyChristmas.com. “Christmas in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.” 2010. <http://www.whychristmas.com/cultures/congo.shtml>

¹³⁴ Forum of Bible Agencies. “Easter: War-Torn African Nation Still Celebrates.” 2006–2010. http://www.forum-intl.org/bible_cause/default.aspx?id=542

¹³⁵ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. “Cultural Diversity in the Church: Information about Congo: The Vitality of Christianity’s Growth in the Congo.” No date. <http://www.usccb.org/pcnrt/congo.shtml>

Anglican, Evangelical, and Kimbanguist denominations.^{136,137} More Catholic churches are present in the country than churches of any other religious faith.¹³⁸ Currently, there are approximately 47 Catholic dioceses in the D.R.C.¹³⁹ In 2006, the Catholic members of the Kinshasa Diocese numbered around half of the city's population.¹⁴⁰

Most of the churches in the D.R.C. are found in the cities. The Church of Christ Evangelical community reports that out of its 87 country-wide congregations, 30 are located in Kinshasa. It also has a large and active presence in rural areas.^{141, 142} The Church of Christ in the Congo, Presbyterian Community, has a total of 186 congregations throughout the D.R.C.¹⁴³ Mission churches of various other denominations are also sprinkled throughout the countryside. One that is representative of Catholic churches in the D.R.C. is the Church of Lukolela. Located in Equateur province (western Lingala region), it was constructed of stone in the 1930s.¹⁴⁴



© Julien Hameis
Kindu church at dusk

Islam is a minority religion in the D.R.C., with most of its practitioners located in the eastern part of the country (outside the Lingala region).¹⁴⁵ Still, there are some mosques

¹³⁶ eDiplomat. "Congo – Kinshasa: Religious Activities." 2010.

http://www.ediplomat.com/np/post_reports/pr_cd.htm

¹³⁷ World Council of Churches. "Church of Christ in Congo – Evangelical Community of Congo." 2010.

<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/member-churches/regions/africa/democratic-republic-of-congo/church-of-christ-in-congo-evangelical-community-of-congo.html>

¹³⁸ Everyculture.com. "Democratic Republic of the Congo: Religion." 2010.

<http://www.everyculture.com/Bo-Co/Democratic-Republic-of-the-Congo.html>

¹³⁹ Catholic-Hierarchy. "Congo, The Democratic Republic of: Current Dioceses." 1996–2010.

<http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/country/dcd2.html>

¹⁴⁰ Catholic-Hierarchy. "Archdiocese of Kinshasa." 1996–2009. <http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/diocese/dkins.html#stats>

¹⁴¹ U.S. Department of State. "Congo, Democratic Republic of the: Section 1. Religious Demography." 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127226.htm>

¹⁴² World Council of Churches. "Church of Christ in Congo – Evangelical Community of Congo." 2010.

<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/member-churches/regions/africa/democratic-republic-of-congo/church-of-christ-in-congo-evangelical-community-of-congo.html>

¹⁴³ World Council of Churches. "Church of Christ in Congo – Presbyterian Community of Kinshasa." 2010.

<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/member-churches/regions/africa/democratic-republic-of-congo/church-of-christ-in-congo-presbyterian-community-of-kinshasa.html>

¹⁴⁴ Wikimedia Commons. "File: Catholic Church of Lukolela (D.R.C.).JPG." 2009.

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Catholic_church_of_Lukolela_%28D.R.C.%29.JPG

¹⁴⁵ Congo: Democratic Republic – Republic. Rorison, Sean. "Chapter 1: Background Information: Religion: Islam [16]." 2008.

http://books.google.com/books?id=cXJyOKBqJZwC&pg=PA14&lpg=PA14&dq=mosques+in+Kinshasa&source=bl&ots=4CLSmT1dsC&sig=FDYorQGUXynzc4XQqo8Tp2C04i4&hl=en&ei=G9nRS_T7L4GEswPC69CGCg&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=9&ved=0CBoQ6AEwCDgK#v=onepage&q=mosques%20in%20Kinshasa&f=false

or Islamic schools in the west. In Kinshasa, the Al-Hidaya mosque and Islamic center provides a spiritual gathering place for the local Muslim population.¹⁴⁶

Behavior in Places of Worship

Statues, frescoes, and images of Christ and other Christian figures are sacred to Christian people in the D.R.C. and should be approached quietly and with a respectful attitude. The churches represent a deep affiliation with the Congolese people’s cultural identification.

Exchange 3: May I enter the church?

Visitor:	May I enter the church?	Nahkohkee kohkohtah ndahko yah nzahnbay
Local:	Yes, but be prepared to stand up and be welcomed.	Eh, kahsee ohmeebohngesah mpoh ohtehlehmah mpay ohyahmbannah

Visitors to churches and mosques in the D.R.C. should dress modestly and avoid wearing skimpy, revealing, or dirty clothing. Shorts and mini-skirts are not appropriate. An approved dress code includes clean shirts and long pants for men and skirts or pants along with blouses or sweaters for women. Visitors should remove hats before entering, and once inside the church, refrain from touching paintings or statues. Although men and women can both enter churches and worship together, women are not allowed to walk into the altar space of a Catholic church beyond the wall that holds religious icons and paintings. It is customary in a mosque for a woman to cover her head with a scarf before entering and also for both men and women to remove their shoes before entering. Whether in a church or mosque, visitors should keep their voices low and refrain from laughing loudly or making remarks that could intrude on the meditation or concentration of others. If a service is taking place when the guests enter, they should stand silently and observe and not walk around.



© Silvio / flickr.com
Parishioners in Kinshasa

In general, visitors to any church or building of worship should follow protocols that are posted in writing or that they are personally instructed to follow. They should not bring food or drink into a church or mosque, and they should not take photographs inside or outside the building unless they have permission.

¹⁴⁶ Islamic Finder. “Congo Democratic Republic Prayer Times.” 2010.
http://www.islamicfinder.org/cityPrayer.php?country=congo_democratic_republic

Self Study Questions

1. Christianity is the official religion of the D.R.C.
2. Islam was introduced into the area now known as the D.R.C. by slave traders.
3. Kimbanguism was brought to the Congo by American missionaries.
4. Animism is a belief system in which the natural world is imbued with spirits that can sometimes affect mortals.
5. In the D.R.C., animistic beliefs and practices are rarely blended with those of organized religion.

Traditions

Honor and Values

A strong sense of honor among the Congolese people promotes protection of the family and maintenance of community ties, often in the face of social conflict. Group consensus guides decisions that affect families and communities. Yet, while these connections are central to people's lives, strong divisions and distrust exist between different ethnic groups or political factions in the D.R.C. As a result of traditional and historical experience and in response to the competition for resources, bonds of trust tend to be limited to one's own group.^{147, 148}



© Ricardo Cabrera Letelier
Family in Lubumbashi

Both egalitarianism and hierarchy are highly valued in the culture of the D.R.C. The first, expressed through communal decision-making and consensus-building, is central to the social order. At the same time, hierarchy prevails with communal ties being highly structured and ranked. For example the social norm that requires younger family members to show deference to their elders, and the stratification of group membership by gender, ethnic background, and other criteria are manifestations of ranked hierarchy. Each individual has a role associated with the particular rank he or she occupies in the group, which remains more important than any single person in it.^{149,150,151}

The Congolese honor and value their national independence. The colonial past was marked by slavery, forced labor, and second-class citizenship for the native inhabitants of the D.R.C. The people united to oppose colonialism and, after a protracted and arduous struggle, achieved their freedom from colonial rule in 1960. They are mindful of the long fight for independence and its toll on their lives, land, and environment.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁷ Spirasi. Cultural.profiles. "Congo – Democratic Republic of Congo: Country Profile: Background." No date. <http://cultural.profiles.spirasi.ie/countries/congo%20drc.shtml>

¹⁴⁸ *The Global Etiquette Guide to Africa and the Middle East: Everything You Need to Know for Business and Travel Success*. Foster, Dean Allen. "Chapter 9: The Center: Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Gabon, and Congo [p. 182]." 2002.

¹⁴⁹ Cultural.profiles. "Congo – Democratic Republic of Congo: Country Profile: Background." No date. <http://cultural.profiles.spirasi.ie/countries/congo%20drc.shtml>

¹⁵⁰ *The Global Etiquette Guide to Africa and the Middle East: Everything You Need to Know for Business and Travel Success*. Foster, Dean Allen. "Chapter 9: The Center: Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Gabon, and Congo [pp. 182–184]." 2002.

¹⁵¹ *The Global Etiquette Guide to Africa and the Middle East: Everything You Need to Know for Business and Travel Success*. Foster, Dean Allen. "Chapter 9: The Center: Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Gabon, and Congo [p. 182]." 2002.

¹⁵² Encyclopedia.com. Countries and their Cultures. Ziemke, Jennifer J. "Democratic Republic of the Congo." 2001. <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G2-3401700056.html>

Politeness

Rules governing codes of politeness vary among cultures as a consequence of differences in physical environment, social conditioning, and historical circumstances. Indeed, cultural customs of a given society are so engrained that they seem natural or normal to those who practice them. For these reasons, it can be useful to suspend judgment of people from another cultural background when they do not react in socially anticipated ways.

Greetings and Introductions

Showing courtesy upon meeting or interacting with people in the D.R.C. is a sign of respect.

Exchange 4: Good morning.

Visitor:	Good morning.	Mbohtay
Local:	Good morning.	Mbohtay

Because of a long history of colonization and its associated cruelties, Congolese society does not have normalized relations with Western nations. Longstanding competition among European superpowers for control of the Congo's resources contributed to poor relations between the D.R.C. and outsiders with economic agendas. The situation is improving, however, as international companies establish a presence and do more business in the D.R.C.^{153,154,155} Still, an unpredictable business climate exists, fueled by the nation's internal conflicts, which have until recently torn it apart (and are still doing so in the eastern D.R.C. and other areas).^{156,157}

¹⁵³ *Congo: Democratic Republic – Republic*. Rorison, Sean. “Chapter 2: Background Information: Safety: Corruption [p. 34].” 2008.

¹⁵⁴ Spirasi. CulturalProfiles. “Congo – Democratic Republic of Congo: Country Profile.” No date. <http://cultural.profiles.spirasi.ie/countries/congo%20drc.shtml>

¹⁵⁵ *The Global Etiquette Guide to Africa and the Middle East: Everything You Need to Know for Business and Travel Success*. Foster, Dean Allen. “Chapter 9: The Center: Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Gabon, and Congo [pp. 178–179 , 182–185].” 2002.

¹⁵⁶ *Democratic Republic of the Congo*. Heale, Jay, and Yong Jui Lin. “Chapter 7: Lifestyle [p. 78].” 2009.

¹⁵⁷ How Stuff Works. Keener, Candace. “How the Congo River Works: Modern Congo.” 1998–2010. <http://history.howstuffworks.com/african-history/congo-river4.htm>

The general atmosphere reflects the corruption and bribery in business, politics, and social negotiations.¹⁵⁸ This, too, is a result of the Congo’s unique history, which led to economic and social chaos for the Congolese people. Because government regulation of commerce is weak, individuals must negotiate independently, outside formal channels, to acquire what they need. Through this process, patron-client bonds are forged that subvert official procedures. Instead, they lead individuals to rely on the immediate assistance of a person with whom a bond of mutual assistance has been created. Visiting foreigners are often singled out, seen as potential sources of money, influence, or objects that the local people or those in authority may need or want. It is thus necessary to protect oneself by keeping a low profile, if possible, or at least refrain from putting oneself in a position to be exploited. At the same time, visitors should realize that a civil attitude and good manners are the most effective means of securing cooperation.^{159,160,161}



© DFID - UK Department for International Development
Children in the Mugunga camp

The best way to invite respect is by projecting it to others through the way one acts and speaks.

Exchange 5: Hi, Mr. Kabatantshi.

Visitor:	Hi, Mr. Kabatantshi.	Lohsahkoh, tata Kabatantshi
Local:	Hello!	Losako
Visitor:	Are you doing well?	Ohzahlee mahlahmoo
Local:	Yes.	eh

¹⁵⁸ U.S. Library of Congress. A Country Study: Zaire (Former). “Chapter 2: The Society and Its Environment: Strategies for Survival: Theft and Bribery.” 1993. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/zrtoc.html>

¹⁵⁹ *The Global Etiquette Guide to Africa and the Middle East: Everything You Need to Know for Business and Travel Success*. Foster, Dean Allen. “Chapter 9: The Center: Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Gabon, and Congo [pp. 178–179 , 182–185].” 2002.

¹⁶⁰ *Democratic Republic of the Congo*. Heale, Jay, and Yong Jui Lin. “Chapter 7: Lifestyle [p. 78].” 2009.

¹⁶¹ U.S. Library of Congress. A Country Study: Zaire (Former). “Chapter 2: The Society and Its Environment: Strategies for Survival: Coping and Hustling [and] Theft and Bribery [and] Patron-Client Relations.” 1993. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/zrtoc.html>

When you are meeting a Congolese person for the first time, wait for an introduction to be made, if possible. If no one introduces you, it is acceptable to make your own introduction. Between men, a handshake generally will follow. It is not appropriate to shake hands with a woman until after she first extends her hand. Visitors should note that the customary handshake in the Congo region is soft, rather than firm and energetic as would be expected in a Western-style handshake. Not all cultures adopt the Western mantra that a firm handshake indicates sincerity. Handshake styles vary widely among cultures, and many people appreciate a light handshake as a gesture of consideration and cultural understanding. In rural areas of the D.R.C., local people may greet a newcomer with a slight bow and soft clapping of the hands.¹⁶²



When greeting or taking leave of another person, visitors should use courteous expressions similar to those in U.S. culture.

Exchange 6: Good night!

Visitor:	Good night!	Bootoo ehlahmoo
Local:	Good night!	Bootoo ehlahmoo

Family is extremely important in Congolese culture. When talking with someone socially in the D.R.C., it is essential to inquire about the well-being of his or her family. This kind of inquiry helps form the basis for a relationship or, at least, a degree of cooperation. Beyond this, it is considered rude in the D.R.C. to meet someone and fail to take the time to inquire about their health and acknowledge their family and friends. Locals expect lengthy introductions that communicate interest in each other’s well-being and that of family members.



¹⁶² *The Global Etiquette Guide to Africa and the Middle East: Everything You Need to Know for Business and Travel Success.* Foster, Dean Allen. “ Chapter 9: The Center: Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Gabon, and Congo [pp. 185–186].” 2002.

Exchange 7: How is your family?

Visitor:	How is your family?	Leebohtah nah yoh bahzahlee mahlahmoo
Local:	Everything is going well.	Neehohnsoh ehzahlee mahlahmoo

Forms of Address

When meeting Congolese people for the first time, visitors should use ordinary titles, such as Mr. or Mrs., or professional titles, such as Professor or Doctor. If the last name is known, the greeter can add it to the title. These conventions hold true throughout much of central Africa. If you do not know the name of the person you are greeting, it may be adequate to use his or her profession as a way of greeting. In other words, it would be appropriate to say Mr. Engineer or Miss Teacher to convey respect. People sometimes introduce themselves by using a nickname preceded by an honorific (Mr., Mrs., Miss).¹⁶³



© United Nations Photo
Charlize Theron greet by DRC doctor

Eye Contact

The degree and intensity of eye contact varies among cultures. In U.S. culture, direct eye contact is considered a sign of trustworthiness or character. Although this convention does not necessarily hold true in other cultures, direct eye contact is generally acceptable when meeting Congolese people. When strangers look directly at each other, even in passing, they are expected to acknowledge each other.¹⁶⁴ On the other hand, children avoid making eye contact with adults out of the obligation to show respect and submission to their elders.¹⁶⁵

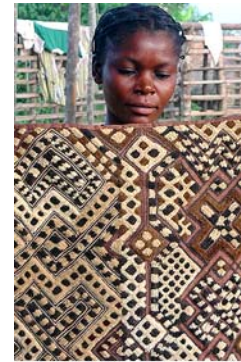
¹⁶³ *The Global Etiquette Guide to Africa and the Middle East: Everything You Need to Know for Business and Travel Success*. Foster, Dean Allen. "Chapter 9: The Center: Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Gabon, and Congo [pp. 184–185]." 2002.

¹⁶⁴ *The Global Etiquette Guide to Africa and the Middle East: Everything You Need to Know for Business and Travel Success*. Foster, Dean Allen. "Chapter 9: The Center: Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Gabon, and Congo [p. 185]." 2002.

¹⁶⁵ Spirasi. CulturalProfiles. "Congo – Democratic Republic of Congo: Country Profile." No date. <http://cultural.profiles.spirasi.ie/countries/congo%20drc.shtml>

Hospitality and Gift-Giving

Being invited into a Congolese person’s home is an honor, and guests should acknowledge this by observing basic protocol. First, they should try to arrive on time. Even though punctuality is not strictly followed in Congolese culture, it is still valued. At the same time, if a host appears late to greet a guest, this should not be seen as an affront, but rather taken in good humor. Next, dress appropriately, and remove your shoes before entering the household. To make a good impression, visitors to a private home should wear clean, conservative apparel. In general, to show respect for the hosts and the other guests, it is important to take some time in advance to learn about proper etiquette for the particular region, because customs vary.



© Woody Collins
Congolese girl giving
a gift of a kuba cloth

Politely acknowledge your host’s hospitality by expressing your appreciation for the invitation.

Exchange 8: Thank you for your hospitality.

Visitor:	Thank you for your hospitality.	Mehlehsee mpoh nah bohyahmbee nah yoh
Local:	Thanks for coming.	Mehlehsee mpo nah bohyehee

¹⁶⁶ *The Global Etiquette Guide to Africa and the Middle East: Everything You Need to Know for Business and Travel Success.* Foster, Dean Allen. “Chapter 9: The Center: Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Gabon, and Congo[pp. 190–192].” 2002.

When first invited into a local person’s home as his guest, it is usually not necessary to take a gift. Exchanging gifts typically takes place only after a relationship has been established. If this occurs and the guest receives signals that a closer association is forming, he or she can take a gift to the host when invited to dinner. Depending on the closeness of the relationship, the gift could be something that the giver knows the host will personally appreciate. To express gratitude for dinner, the gift could also be something less personal such as coffee or a food item and, perhaps, a book or toy for a child. It would also be appropriate to bring a gift such as fruit or nuts for the host’s mother. Regardless of the item being given, the guest should always offer it with both hands.

Exchange 9: This gift is for your mother.

Visitor:	This gift is for your mother.	Leebonzah ohyoh ehzahlee mpoh nah mahmah nah yoh.
Local:	Thank you.	Mehlehsee

According to custom, a man gives a gift to another man, not to a woman. If he does present a gift to a woman, he should say that it is from his wife or a female relative. Otherwise, the gesture will be seen as overly personal.¹⁶⁷

When the host offers coffee or tea, it is a general custom to graciously accept, but often after refusing the first offer. The host always pours the drink, never the guest. If invited to dine at someone’s home in a rural area, it is good to keep in mind that offers of food or drink may be at the expense of the host, or persons in the family, having enough for themselves. Conditions of dire poverty exist throughout the Congo region.¹⁶⁸



© Neil Palmer (CIAT)
Young boys from
North Kivu Province

Because people are willing to share their food with a guest, it is all the more important to thank them and comment on the quality of the food.

¹⁶⁷ *The Global Etiquette Guide to Africa and the Middle East: Everything You Need to Know for Business and Travel Success.* Foster, Dean Allen. “Chapter 9: The Center: Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Gabon, and Congo [p. 194-195].” 2002.

¹⁶⁸ *The Global Etiquette Guide to Africa and the Middle East: Everything You Need to Know for Business and Travel Success.* Foster, Dean Allen. “Chapter 9: The Center: Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Gabon, and Congo [pp. 191–194].” 2002.

Exchange 10: This food is good.

Visitor:	This food is good.	Beelehee yahngo ehzahlee ehlengee
Local:	Thank you, I'm glad you like it.	Mehlehsee, nahsaypaylee lohkohlah ohlingee yahngo

Congolese food varies according to ethnic group and region. Typically, the diet consists of vegetables such as yams and cassava, as well as rice. Along the rivers, fish is available and served in a variety of ways.



© Woody Collins
Grubs made special for guests

Expressing interest in the food being served can lead to an interesting conversation over dinner.

Exchange 11: What is the name of this dish?

Visitor:	What is the name of this dish?	Nkomboh yah beelehee ohyoh neenee
Local:	This is moossaka.	Ehzahlee mohsahkah

Such an inquiry can be followed up by asking about the origin of the dish or whether it is commonly served in other regions of the country as well.

Eating Customs and Habits

Tasting everything that a host offers implies willingness to share and respect Congolese culture. If curious about something you are drinking or eating, simply ask what ingredients are used to make it.

Exchange 12: What ingredients are used to make moossaka?

Visitor:	What ingredients are used to make moossaka?	Beelohkoh neenee bohteyay mpoh nah kohlahmbah mohsahkah
Local:	Salt, onions, meat like fish or chicken, peanuts, and it's cooked in palm oil.	Mongwah, mahtoongooloo, neehahmah lohkohlah mbeesee toh sohsoh, ngoobah, mpay ehlahmbahmee nah mahfootah yah mbeelah

The Congolese people in the Lingala region (as throughout most of the country) follow certain routines for eating. They usually eat breakfast between 6 and 9 a.m. and lunch between 12 and 2 p.m. Dinner, if it takes place at all, is served rather late, between 8 and 10 p.m. Many Congolese people eat only two meals daily. They also follow a prescribed order of eating: usually men eat first and have the first choice of what is available. Women and children eat separately (from the men and from each other), and women are second in order of eating. Children generally eat last.¹⁶⁹



© Neil Palmer (CIAT)
Bean market in
North Kivu Province

Dress Codes

Visitors to the Lingala region should wear loose-fitting apparel that is appropriate to the warm climate and avoid clothing that is revealing or tight. Both male and female visitors should refrain from wearing expensive or ostentatious jewelry, since it could be an unpleasant reminder to locals of European colonial exploitation. It is not appropriate for a Western guest to wear traditional Congolese clothing either.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁹ *The Global Etiquette Guide to Africa and the Middle East: Everything You Need to Know for Business and Travel Success.* Foster, Dean Allen. “Chapter 9: The Center: Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Gabon, and Congo[p. 192].” 2002.

¹⁷⁰ *The Global Etiquette Guide to Africa and the Middle East: Everything You Need to Know for Business and Travel Success.* Foster, Dean Allen. “Chapter 9: The Center: Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Gabon, and Congo[pp. 190–192].” 2002.

Exchange 13: Is this acceptable to wear?

Visitor:	Is this acceptable to wear?	Yahngo ehzahlee mahlahmoo mpoh nah kohlahtah
Local:	Yes.	Eh

The Congolese people usually wear loose-fitting, colorful, traditional clothing. Women often wear a head wrap and long skirts or dresses that cover their entire bodies, and men wear pants. Visitors, however, should not copy this local style of dress. If uncertain as to what to wear, asking a local is the best way to find out.



© Woody Collins
Congolese women dressed for church

Exchange 14: How should I dress?

Visitor:	How should I dress?	Nahsengaylee kohlahtah neenee
Local:	Wear anything nice.	Lahtah ehlohkoh keetohkoh

Non-Religious Holidays

Several public holidays are celebrated in the D.R.C. New Year’s Day on the 1st of January is a secular holiday throughout much of the world, and it is also a public holiday in the D.R.C. Many people attend parties to celebrate the beginning of a new year.



© Woody Collins
New Year’s party

Most of the non-religious holidays celebrate the D.R.C.’s independence from colonial rule. Independence Day on 30 June honors the nation’s separation from Belgium in 1960. During Mobutu’s reign, it was an occasion for military displays.¹⁷¹ Now, it is marked by different events, and the flag is raised in honor of the nation’s independence. Two patriotic events are held in January: Commemoration of the Martyrs of Independence on 4 January, and National Heroes’ Day on 17 January.

¹⁷¹ *Democratic Republic of the Congo*. Heale, Jay, and Yong Jui Lin. “Chapter 12: Festivals [p. 117].” 2009.

A few other events are national holidays. Labor Day is celebrated in the D.R.C. on 1 May. As in many countries, the day is observed to honor the physical labor and achievements of workers around the world. Other holidays include Parents' Day on 1 August, Youth Day on 14 October, and Army Day on 17 November.

Celebrations that are not national holidays include a theater festival for young people held in Kinshasa in May. It runs for a 6-day period and is widely attended. A book fair takes place in Kinshasa in November to promote new books made available by local publishers. This event also gives publishers and authors a chance to congregate and interact with one another.^{172, 173}

Do's and Don'ts

Do be aware of all official regulations and follow them.

Do be knowledgeable about the unique history of the Congo and the D.R.C.

Do remove your shoes before you enter a private home or a mosque.

Do be respectful to individuals and equally so to their family members.

Do indicate direction by using a head movement, leading with the nose or chin (instead of pointing with the index finger).

Do use your entire *right* hand only to summon a person. Keep your palm down and wave downward.

Do not expose the soles of your feet or sit with your feet elevated on a stool or desk.

Do not criticize or show disrespect to Congolese officials or citizens.

Do not touch a Congolese person on the head.

Do not engage in public displays of affection.

Do not enter into discussions about political, ethnic, or religious differences or other controversial subjects.

Do not take pictures around borders or military areas.

¹⁷² World Travel Guide. "Congo, Democratic Republic of: Public Holidays." 2010. http://www.worldtravelguide.net/country/62/public_holidays/Africa/Democratic-Republic-Of-Congo.html

¹⁷³ World Guides. "Democratic Republic of the Congo Events, Things to Do and Democratic Republic of the Congo Festivals 2010 / 2011." 2000–2010. http://www.democratic-republic-of-the-congo.world-guides.com/democratic_congo_events.html

Do not use the left hand when passing objects; use the right hand instead.

Do not point to anybody with a finger. Use the entire *right* hand instead.

Do not snap your fingers at someone to get their attention.

Do not use a thumbs-up gesture as it may be considered vulgar.

Do not point upward with the middle finger. It is obscene in the U.S. and equally so in the D.R.C.

Do not use obscene or indecent language within earshot of Congolese citizens. Many are familiar with American slang.

Self Study Questions

1. The Congolese cherish consensus within their communities.
2. The Congolese identify strongly with their national independence.
3. It is typically acceptable for men to give women gifts.
4. Men and women are not permitted to shake hands under any circumstances.
5. A Congolese handshake is typically less firm than a Western handshake.

Urban Life

Urbanization¹⁷⁴

Before the 1990s, most people in the D.R.C. (then Zaire) lived in rural areas. Cities did not begin to grow significantly until after the 1940s, when people began migrating out of the countryside. Most went to Kinshasa (known as Léopoldville until 1966) in the southwestern corner of the Lingala region of the D.R.C.¹⁷⁵



© Foxtrot74 / flickr.com
Streets of Kinshasa

Several reasons lie behind the general urban migration throughout the D.R.C. A primary one was the mining industry (mainly diamonds and copper) in the east, which surpassed agriculture and became an economic mainstay by the late 1920s. The mining companies built towns around their operations, leading rural people to move there in search of jobs.¹⁷⁶ Other causes of urban migration stemmed from government activity. The state invested a higher level of resources in the cities, which attracted migrants. At the same time, certain government policies created difficult conditions in the countryside, pressuring people to move out. For instance, the state established fixed prices on the value of crops (which led to lower urban food prices), maintained the colonial system of heavily taxing certain cash crops, and set production quotas for agricultural goods. Adding to this burden on the rural population, state officials who lived in rural areas often increased their low government salaries through extortion of villagers. Thousands of rural residents fled the countryside to escape these difficult living conditions and seek new opportunities in the cities. They also fled the post-colonial civil war throughout the D.R.C. countryside (1960-65), seeking refuge in the cities. Most maintained contacts with family members or friends who remained in the villages, and in the city, they formed enclaves based on their ethnic backgrounds.

The growth of Kinshasa, one of the most urbanized places in the African continent, took place fairly recently. The city was established in 1898 on the Congo River to provide a center for development of the upriver region. Kinshasa became capital of the Belgian Congo in 1923. As of 1940, only 50,000 people lived in Kinshasa; this number increased to 400,000 by the time of national independence in 1960.¹⁷⁷ Much of Kinshasa's growth

¹⁷⁴ U.S. Library of Congress. "A Country Study: Zaire (Former): Chapter 2: The Society and Its Environment: Urbanization: Causes and Characteristics." 1993. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/zrtoc.html>

¹⁷⁵ U.S. Library of Congress. "A Country Study: Zaire (Former): Chapter 2: The Society and Its Environment: Population Distribution." 1993. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/zrtoc.html>

¹⁷⁶ Encyclopedia.com. The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. "Democratic Republic of the Congo: History: The Belgian Congo." 2008.

http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Democratic_Republic_of_the_Congo.aspx

¹⁷⁷ *The Urban Challenge in Africa: Growth and Management of Its Large Cities*. Piermay, Jean-Luc.

"Chapter 7: Kinshasa: A Reprieved Mega-City?: Recent and Spectacular Population Growth." 1997. New York, NY: United Nations University Press.

<http://www.unu.edu/unupress/unupbooks/uu26ue/uu26ue0k.htm#7%20kinshasa:%20a%20reprieved%20mega%20city>

was propelled by migrant workers leaving the countryside to find work in town.¹⁷⁸ Government policy also accounted for the rapid growth. Until the end of the colonial period, the state required Africans to acquire a work permit in order to live in Kinshasa and other cities, and also made it illegal for them to own property. Following the civil war and the breakdown of colonial law, Africans took advantage of the legal vacuum and occupied vast tracts of land, including in Kinshasa.¹⁷⁹

With a population of over 7 million today, Kinshasa is the largest city in the entire nation and the only city in the Lingala region with a population approximating 300,000.¹⁸⁰ Kinshasa is on its way to becoming a megacity (defined as having a population of 10 million or higher).¹⁸¹ Because of their teeming populations, megacities face a range of problems including sanitation, food and water supply, governance, health care, transportation, and environmental issues. Kinshasa's projected population for the year 2025 is close to 17 million people.¹⁸²

Urban Labor Issues

The city of Kinshasa is one of the nation's two main industrial areas (the other is Lubumbashi in southeastern D.R.C.).¹⁸³ Most urban jobs in the D.R.C. are located in Kinshasa, whose manufacturing industries provide the majority of formal-sector jobs (monitored and taxed by government and offering standard hours and wages). Industries in Kinshasa include tanning, food processing, construction, and the manufacture of textiles, chemicals, and cement.¹⁸⁴

The informal sector of Kinshasa's economy—along with that of the national economy—has grown more rapidly than the formal sector, especially in the last 35



© Foxtro74 / flickr.com
Building construction in Kinshasa

¹⁷⁸ *Democratic Republic of the Congo*. Heale, Jay, and Yong Jui Lin. "Chapter 7: Lifestyle: City Life [p. 82]." 2009. Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish.

¹⁷⁹ Countries and Their Cultures. "Democratic Republic of the Congo: Urbanism, Architecture, and the Use of Space." 2010. <http://www.everyculture.com/Bo-Co/Democratic-Republic-of-the-Congo.html>

¹⁸⁰ No census has been taken in the Democratic Republic of the Congo since 1984. The given population figures come from an estimate produced by the United Nations Organization Mission DR Congo (MONUC) – Department of Peacekeeping Operations GIS Unit. Reference: ReliefWeb.org. "Urban Population Map." 22 September 2004.

[http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/fullMaps_Af.nsf/luFullMap/870AEB3188D5D25485257046006B924F/\\$File/monuc_POP_cod090505.pdf?OpenElement](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/fullMaps_Af.nsf/luFullMap/870AEB3188D5D25485257046006B924F/$File/monuc_POP_cod090505.pdf?OpenElement)

¹⁸¹ World Health Organization. "Megacities and Urban Health: Summary [p. 3]." December 2009. http://www.who.or.jp/2009/reports/Megacities_Report_DEC09.pdf

¹⁸² World Health Organization. "Megacities and Urban Health: Table 1, Megacities 2007 and 2025 (Projected) [p. 14]." December 2009. http://www.who.or.jp/2009/reports/Megacities_Report_DEC09.pdf

¹⁸³ Infoplease. "Democratic Republic of the Congo: Economy." 2000–2009. <http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/world/A0857521.html>

¹⁸⁴ Encyclopedia.com. The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. "What Major Industries Are Located in Kinshasa, West Congo?" 2010. <http://answers.encyclopedia.com/question/major-industries-located-kinshasa-west-congo-157329.html>

years.^{185,186} In 1955, there was a formal sector job for every 3.3 residents in Kinshasa, but by 1975, the number of formal sector jobs had dropped to one for every 6 residents.¹⁸⁷ Between 1977 and 1983, formal employment in Kinshasa declined by 48%.¹⁸⁸ Since then, the population has continued to increase exponentially and unemployment has been rampant. A major reason for the disruption was the economic foundation instituted during the years of the Mobutu regime (1965–1997), when government corruption led to economic chaos and high inflation. Many parts of the economy collapsed, along with government jobs and infrastructure.

Even though the majority of jobs that people hold in Kinshasa and other cities in the Lingala-speaking area have increasingly become casual and unregulated, they do provide a means of survival.^{189,190} Additionally, the unregulated sector of the economy is deeply interconnected with the regulated formal economy. The unofficial economic activities of the informal sector benefit both the poor and the wealthy.

Unemployment and Working Conditions

The unemployment rate for 2004 was near 24%, although this statistic does not account for informal-sector unemployment figures, which are unknown. For young adults who had recently graduated from secondary school, the unemployment rate was much higher, over 40%.¹⁹¹



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Brick business

¹⁸⁵ The informal sector refers to jobs that are neither taxed nor included in the nation's Gross National Product (GNP). Further, neither the government nor outside agencies monitor these jobs in relation to labor laws or working conditions.

¹⁸⁶ Shapiro, David, Roger Bertrand Pongi Nyuba, and Mark D. Gough. "Gender, Education, and the Labor Market in Kinshasa: Introduction." May 2009.

<http://www.econ.psu.edu/papers/IUSSP2009LaborMarketPaper-May09.pdf>

¹⁸⁷ *The Urban Challenge in Africa: Growth and Management of Its Large Cities*. Piermay, Jean-Luc.

"Chapter 7: Kinshasa: A Reprieved Mega-City?: The Mega-City, Daughter of the State and Social Patronage." 1997. New York, NY: United Nations University Press.

<http://www.unu.edu/unupress/unupbooks/uu26ue/uu26ue0k.htm#7%20kinshasa:%20a%20reprieved%20mega%20city>

¹⁸⁸ Lyenda, Guillaume. "Street Food and Income Generation for Poor Households in Kinshasa: The Situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo [p. 234]." 2001.

<http://www.bvsde.paho.org/bvsacd/cd26/enurb/v13n2/233.pdf>

¹⁸⁹ Shapiro, David, Roger Bertrand Pongi Nyuba, and Mark D. Gough. "Gender, Education, and the Labor Market in Kinshasa: Employment and Education in Kinshasa Changes Over Time [pp. 2–3]." May 2009.

<http://www.econ.psu.edu/papers/IUSSP2009LaborMarketPaper-May09.pdf>

¹⁹⁰ The figure for women employed in the informal sector is substantially higher than for men. Source: Shapiro, David, Roger Bertrand Pongi Nyuba, and Mark D. Gough. "Gender, Education, and the Labor Market in Kinshasa: Education, Labor Force Participation, and Labor Force Status: A Descriptive Overview [p. 14]." May 2009. <http://www.econ.psu.edu/papers/IUSSP2009LaborMarketPaper-May09.pdf>

¹⁹¹ Shapiro, David, Roger Bertrand Pongi Nyuba, and Mark D. Gough. "Gender, Education, and the Labor Market in Kinshasa: Overview: Labor Force Participation and Labor Force Status, by Age and Gender [p. 10]." May 2009. <http://www.econ.psu.edu/papers/IUSSP2009LaborMarketPaper-May09.pdf>

In Kinshasa's commerce, where the majority of people were employed in 2004, 95% of all jobs were in the informal sector. Here, working conditions are poor. Job tenure is unstable, employment unpredictable, and working conditions substandard.¹⁹² The informal sector lacks labor laws or agencies to monitor hours, safety conditions, discrimination, and workplace violations. Migrant workers typically end up in this sector, selling produce or food from street carts, hauling garbage, and working on construction or other day labor projects.

For those who work in the formal sector, working conditions are not much better. Laws are in place to penalize acts of corruption, but administrators do not enforce them. Throughout government, corruption is "endemic," and those who hold civil service or police jobs often don't get paid. If they do, their salaries don't follow a schedule, which motivates the underpaid employees to resort to acts of corruption such as looting and extortion.¹⁹³ Often, police and military forces have acted as rogue agents who, in the pursuit of money and goods, end up committing much of the crime in the city.¹⁹⁴

In 1993, judges employed in Kinshasa organized a countrywide strike on the basis of needed reform. They demanded that the judiciary be made independent from other branches of government so that the legislative and executive offices could not continue to exert undue influence. In addition, magistrates demanded better working conditions and salary increases. Their salaries at the time (two months in arrears) were USD 10–20 per month, and they reported that the chambers in which they worked were "dirty and dilapidated."¹⁹⁵

Daily Urban Life

Because the colonial authority collapsed with nothing to replace it, the expansion of the cities, particularly Kinshasa, happened without an infrastructure or supervisory state presence.¹⁹⁶ Many people moved into the large shantytowns that circle the city. Homes there are typically built from corrugated iron, which absorbs tremendous heat during summer. People here live from day to day, trying to survive on their very small and unpredictable incomes. They trade, negotiate in the thriving black market, and often

¹⁹² Shapiro, David, Roger Bertrand Pongi Nyuba, and Mark D. Gough. "Gender, Education, and the Labor Market in Kinshasa: Employment and Education in Kinshasa Changes Over Time [pp. 2–3]." May 2009. <http://www.econ.psu.edu/papers/IUSSP2009LaborMarketPaper-May09.pdf>

¹⁹³ U.S. Department of State. "2009 Human Rights Report: Democratic Republic of the Congo: Section 4: Official Corruption and Government Transparency." 11 March 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/af/135947.htm>

¹⁹⁴ e-Diplomat. "Congo – Kinshasa: Security." 11 May 2004. http://www.ediplomat.com/np/post_reports/pr_cd.htm

¹⁹⁵ IRIN. "DRC: Judges Strike for Better Pay, Working Conditions, Independence." 30 October 2003. <http://www.irinnews.org/PrintReport.aspx?ReportId=46993>

¹⁹⁶ *The Urban Challenge in Africa: Growth and Management of Its Large Cities*. Piermay, Jean-Luc. "Chapter 7: Kinshasa: A Reprieved Mega-City?: Spasmodic Occupation of Space." 1997. New York, NY: United Nations University Press. <http://www.unu.edu/unupress/unupbooks/uu26ue/uu26ue0k.htm#7%20kinshasa:%20a%20reprieved%20mega%20city>

come up short with little means to procure their daily necessities. For many reasons, the quality of life can be higher in the countryside than in the urban shanties, depending on local rural conditions.^{197, 198}

In contrast, the nation's wealthiest people reside mainly in Kinshasa. Employed as officials of the government, diplomats, and businessmen from other countries, their standard of living is much higher than that of the majority. They are able to travel and live in relative comfort, residing in comfortable high-rise apartments or homes.^{199, 200, 201} They live in the affluent Gombe district of town, where the Golf Club, Presidential Palace, and embassies are located. This district adjoins the even more upscale neighborhood known as Ngaliema, the site of former President Mobutu's presidential estate. A museum of ethnography and several fine hotels are also found in this neighborhood.²⁰²



© UNICEF Sverige
A hopeful fashion designer

Alongside casual socializing, the majority of people who live in Kinshasa have few urban pastimes available. They are too busy working and trying to survive from day to day to have time for social events. Besides, most people lack any extra money beyond what they can earn to pay for necessities. Those with the means can attend sports events at the stadium in the city, where football (soccer) games are very popular. There are also musical performances at La Cité, the section of town where locals and visitors alike celebrate the lively music scene.²⁰³

Health Care

Hospitals in Kinshasa are better than those in other cities or in rural areas of the D.R.C. because better equipment and sanitation procedures are available to them. Still, even in hospitals in Kinshasa, the care is unreliable due to a lack of adherence to international regulations. It is not, for instance, advisable to get a blood transfusion



© UMNS photo by Mike DuBose
Public health center in Lubumbashi

¹⁹⁷ Countries and Their Cultures. "Democratic Republic of the Congo: Urbanism, Architecture, and the Use of Space." 2010. <http://www.everyculture.com/Bo-Co/Democratic-Republic-of-the-Congo.html>

¹⁹⁸ Countries and Their Cultures. "Democratic Republic of the Congo: Food and Economy: Commercial Activities." 2010. <http://www.everyculture.com/Bo-Co/Democratic-Republic-of-the-Congo.html>

¹⁹⁹ Countries and Their Cultures. "Democratic Republic of the Congo: Social Stratification: Classes and Castes." 2010. <http://www.everyculture.com/Bo-Co/Democratic-Republic-of-the-Congo.html>

²⁰⁰ Countries and Their Cultures. "Democratic Republic of the Congo: Urbanism, Architecture, and the Use of Space." 2010. <http://www.everyculture.com/Bo-Co/Democratic-Republic-of-the-Congo.html>

²⁰¹ e-Diplomat. "Congo – Kinshasa: Post City." 16 December 2003.

http://www.ediplomat.com/np/post_reports/pr_cd.htm

²⁰² *Congo: Democratic Republic - Republic*. Rorison, Sean. "Chapter 5: Kinshasa: Orientation [p. 91]." 2008. Guilford, CT: Globe Pequot Press, Inc.

²⁰³ *Congo: Democratic Republic - Republic*. Rorison, Sean. "Chapter 5: Kinshasa: Orientation [p. 91]." 2008. Guilford, CT: Globe Pequot Press, Inc.

from any hospital in the country, including in Kinshasa, because of the danger of HIV transmission through infected blood.²⁰⁴ In the wake of unstable colonial occupation and the destruction of war following independence, the D.R.C.'s health care delivery system is weak for lack of an infrastructure and trained medical personnel.²⁰⁵

Exchange 15: Is there a hospital nearby?

Visitor:	Is there a hospital nearby?	Lohpeetahloh ehzahlee pehnehpehneh ahwah
Local:	Yes, in the center of town.	Eh, nah kahtee yah engoonbah.

Reliable drugs for treating illness are usually difficult to acquire.²⁰⁶ A danger exists for acquiring unregulated counterfeit drugs throughout most of sub-Saharan Africa. Such drugs may be sold either in pharmacies or more affordable roadside stalls.²⁰⁷ Another problem that frequently occurs is drug shortages. In Équateur province (northwestern Lingala region), many people were injured in recent fighting that took place between the insurgents and the army. The supply of drugs, including antibiotics, has been insufficient to treat the injuries.²⁰⁸

Exchange 16: My arm is broken, can you help me?

Visitor:	My arm is broken, can you help me?	Lohbohkoh nah ngah ehbookahnee, ohkohkee kohsahleesah ngah
Local:	Yes, I can help you.	Eh, nahkohkee kohsahleesah yoh.

²⁰⁴ *Congo: Democratic Republic - Republic*. Rorison, Sean. "Chapter 2: Practical Information: Hospitals [p. 34]." 2008. Guilford, CT: Globe Pequot Press, Inc.

²⁰⁵ PSI. Population Services International. "Democratic Republic of Congo." 2010. <http://www.psi.org/democratic-republic-congo>

²⁰⁶ Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Congo, Democratic Republic of the: Medical Facilities and Health Information." 10 March 2010. http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1104.html

²⁰⁷ IRIN. "Africa: Making the Case Against Counterfeit Drugs." 5 February 2010. <http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?ReportId=88003>

²⁰⁸ World Countries. "DRC: Doctors Fear Drug Shortages after Clashes." 8 April 2010. <http://world-countries.net/archives/21371>

When seeking health care from a clinic or hospital in Kinshasa, patients need to be aware that they must make the full payment in cash.²⁰⁹ A comprehensive health insurance policy that covers medical evacuation is necessary, in case the diagnosed condition is better treated outside the country. (Any surgery would qualify for this exception because it could involve a blood transfusion.) In addition, visitors should be aware that some insurance policies may preclude coverage for areas of the Congo or the D.R.C. in particular. Acts of war, which take place unpredictably in the area, constitute a further reason for insurance companies to invalidate their coverage.²¹⁰



© Hugo Rami / IRIN
Patient in the public hospital in Kisangani

Whether in the city or countryside, many Congolese people have long followed traditional healing methods such as, herbal remedies or spiritual healing techniques. This is true particularly when the cause of an illness cannot be easily identified. Sometimes Congolese people believe witchcraft is the cause of illness, and they respond by finding a way to placate what is seen as an evil force. They may rely on rituals, prayer, or advice from authority figures in the church. Because these beliefs are widespread, professional health care providers are generally aware of the need to thoroughly explain why an illness occurs so that its cause will not be misinterpreted.²¹¹

Cell Phone Usage and Its Impact on Family Planning

In urban areas of the D.R.C., cell phones are a means for men and women to acquire information concerning health issues. Even very poor people use mobile phones to summon medical assistance or find ways to seek help. Around 90% of the people in the D.R.C. who subscribe to phone service use cell phones in lieu of landline phones. This practice is due to the lack of a standard landline infrastructure in the D.R.C.²¹²



© FredR / flickr.com
Phone shop in Kinshasa

²⁰⁹ World Travel Guide. "Congo (Democratic Republic of) Health: Health Care." 2010.

<http://www.worldtravelguide.net/country/62/health/Africa/Democratic-Republic-Of-Congo.html>

²¹⁰ *Congo: Democratic Republic - Republic*. Rorison, Sean. "Chapter 2: Practical Information: Insurance [p. 34]." 2008. Guilford, CT: Globe Pequot Press, Inc.

²¹¹ Spirasi. CulturalProfiles. "Congo – Democratic Republic of Congo: Country Profile." No date. <http://cultural.profiles.spirasi.ie/countries/congo%20drc.shtml>

²¹² US AID. "Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC): Cell Phone Hotline Spreads Family Planning Information in DR Congo." 2008.

http://www.flexfund.org/resources/technical_updates/psi_drc_case_study.pdf

Exchange 17: What is your telephone number?

Visitor:	What is your telephone number?	Leemohloh yah taylayfohneh nah yoh neenee
Local:	My phone number is 99643011.	Leemohloh yah nga ehzahlee 99643011

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), pharmacies, and clinics have been taking advantage of cell phone technology to organize projects that will increase knowledge of family planning. They are using health educators and providers to spread contraceptive information to the general population with the intention of improving the health of families in the D.R.C.²¹³

Education

Until the Congolese people gained their independence in 1960, religious organizations and missionaries were the main providers of education in the D.R.C. They established a system of primary—and limited secondary—school education. Beyond that, almost no higher education existed outside of a few urban areas. The purpose of this educational structure was to enable a segment of the population to hold jobs as clerks and minor administrators.²¹⁴



© Chad Kellogg
Classroom in Lubumbashi

After independence, the state began to develop schools and expand access to education in the D.R.C. Even so, higher education today is limited to schools (such as the University of Kinshasa) in the Lingala region and other large cities outside the area.²¹⁵ The University of Kinshasa includes a School of Law, a museum of archaeology, and a center for research on tropical medicine.²¹⁶

²¹³ US AID. Institute for Reproductive Health, Georgetown University. “Democratic Republic of Congo.” 2009. http://www.irh.org/?q=content/fam_drc

²¹⁴ U.S. Department of State. “Background Note: Democratic Republic of the Congo: People.” 27 January 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2823.htm>

²¹⁵ U.S. Department of State. “Background Note: Democratic Republic of the Congo: People.” 27 January 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2823.htm>

²¹⁶ Encyclopedia.com. “What Institutes of Higher Learning Are Located in Modern Kinshasa?” 2010. <http://answers.encyclopedia.com/question/institutes-higher-learning-located-modern-kinshasa-157330.html>

Statistics concerning education in the D.R.C. indicate that education is still not available to most children in the country. According to 2007 estimates, slightly less than half of the population had received a primary education, and 30% had attended secondary school. Around 21% of the nation's people had received no formal education at all, and only 3% had attended classes at a university.²¹⁷ Part of the reason for low school attendance in the past has been tied to poverty and its link to people's attitudes toward education. In short, many Congolese people have not lived in a society that sees education as an important means to get ahead. For the most part, people consider education irrelevant to the lives of their families, particularly when urgent financial need requires children to work at home.²¹⁸

In contrast to this perception, however, more families in recent years have pursued higher education for their children. This is true mainly in urban areas, where people are more likely to have the means to invest in education. Many parents see education as a way for their children to avoid the harsh economic realities of life in the D.R.C.²¹⁹ It is becoming more common for members of the upper class to send their children to schools and colleges in Western Europe.²²⁰

Transportation and Traffic^{221,222}

Even though it is customary to drive on the right side of the road and use international road signals in the D.R.C., driving is risky. In Kinshasa and throughout the country, roads are unimproved. In addition, driving habits are erratic, streets are overcrowded, and pedestrians clog the roadways.²²³



© Irene / flickr.com
Busy street in Kinshasa

A public transportation infrastructure has not been developed in the D.R.C. For this reason, it is not advisable for visitors to use public transport. Services (including conventional bus service and trucks used as buses) are

²¹⁷ U.S. Department of State. "Background Note: Democratic Republic of the Congo: People." 27 January 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2823.htm>

²¹⁸ *The Global Etiquette Guide to Africa and the Middle East: Everything You Need to Know for Business and Travel Success*. Foster, Dean Allen. "Chapter 9: The Center: Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Gabon, and Congo [p. 180]." 2002.

²¹⁹ Shapiro, David, Roger Bertrand Pongi Nyuba, and Mark D. Gough. "Gender, Education, and the Labor Market in Kinshasa: Employment and Education in Kinshasa Changes Over Time [p. 2]." May 2009. <http://www.econ.psu.edu/papers/IUSSP2009LaborMarketPaper-May09.pdf>

²²⁰ U.S. Department of State. "Background Note: Democratic Republic of the Congo: People." 27 January 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2823.htm>

²²¹ *Democratic Republic of the Congo*. Heale, Jay, and Yong Jui Lin. "Chapter. 7: Lifestyle: Getting Around. [pp. 80–81]." 2009. Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish.

²²² *The Global Etiquette Guide to Africa and the Middle East: Everything You Need to Know for Business and Travel Success*. Foster, Dean Allen. "Chapter 9: The Center: Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Gabon, and Congo [p. 190]." 2002. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

²²³ eDiplomat. "Congo – Kinshasa: Transportation." 16 December 2003. http://www.ediplomat.com/np/post_reports/pr_cd.htm

unreliable, overcrowded, and generally unsafe to use. Still, taking a bus may be the only way to get through the city at a particular time.^{224,225}

Exchange 18: Will the bus be here soon?

Visitor:	Will the bus be here soon?	Ohtohbeesee ehkohmahkah ahwah nohkee
Local:	Yes.	Eh

In Kinshasa, it is possible to locate taxis to get around, but the service is unreliable. The vehicles are usually old and in disrepair. In addition, passengers may have to share their space with other riders.²²⁶



© Tomas / flickr.com
Taxi in Kinshasa

Exchange 19: Where can I get a cab?

Visitor:	Where can I get a cab?	Ayseekah neenee nahkohkee kohzwah tahkeesee
Local:	Over there.	Koonah

If one is not in a hurry, one can travel between Kinshasa to Kisangani (north-central D.R.C., slightly outside the Lingala region) by way of river barge. Scheduling is erratic, however, for this trip on the Congo River. Also, the transport can be uncomfortable and slow, taking around two weeks.²²⁷ The riverboats (or barges) offer different classes of travel, from first class to third class. During the trip, people living near the river send wooden boats out to the large boat to trade goods, food products, and animals. This

²²⁴ World Travel Guide. “Congo (Democratic Republic of) Transport.” 2010.
http://www.worldtravelguide.net/country/62/internal_travel/Africa/Democratic-Republic-Of-Congo.html

²²⁵ eDiplomat. “Congo – Kinshasa: Local Transportation.” 16 December 2003.
http://www.ediplomat.com/np/post_reports/pr_cd.htm

²²⁶ iExplore. “Congo, Democratic Republic of (Zaire) Travel Tips.” 1999–2010.
[http://www.iexplore.com/dmap/Congo,+Democratic+Republic+of+%28Zaire%29/Do%27s+and+Don%27t+s;\\$sessionid\\$NFGVEIIAACQSP2MN5XCFEQ](http://www.iexplore.com/dmap/Congo,+Democratic+Republic+of+%28Zaire%29/Do%27s+and+Don%27t+s;$sessionid$NFGVEIIAACQSP2MN5XCFEQ)

²²⁷ *Congo: Democratic Republic - Republic*. Rorison, Sean. “Chapter 2: Practical Information: Getting Around. [pp. 43–44].” 2008. Guilford, CT: Globe Pequot Press, Inc.

exchange process between traders and travelers on the riverboat continues all day and throughout the night.²²⁸ Another mode of river transport is available as well. Motorboats carry passengers from Kinshasa to Brazzaville across Pool Malebo, an expanded area of the Congo River similar to a lake. Both cities are on the shores of Pool Malebo.^{229,230}

Exchange 20: Can you take me there?

Visitor:	Can you take me there?	Ohkohkee kohmehmah ngah koonah
Local:	Yes, I can.	Eh, nahkohkee

Railway service is not available in the city. Formerly, trains operated by the Belgian colonial government provided a link between cities. However, the infrastructure deteriorated, and the trains no longer run reliably or safely.

Exchange 21: Is there a train station nearby?

Visitor:	Is there a train station nearby?	Gahr yah tren ehzahlee pehnehpehneh ahwah
Local:	No. We don't have railway facility here.	Tay. Tohzahlee nah gahr yah tren ahwah tay

²²⁸ *Democratic Republic of the Congo*. Heale, Jay, and Yong Jui Lin. "Chapter 7: Lifestyle: Getting Around. [pp. 80–81]." 2009. Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish.

²²⁹ Encyclopedia.com. "What Transportation Services Are Available in Kinshasa, West Congo?" 2010. <http://answers.encyclopedia.com/question/transportation-services-available-kinshasa-west-congo-157326.html>

²³⁰ Answers.com. Columbia Encyclopedia. "Stanley Pool: Pool Malebo." 2010. <http://www.answers.com/topic/pool-malebo>

Restaurants and Marketplace

Restaurants

Many kinds of restaurants are found in Kinshasa although the ones that cater to tourists are expensive. Some of the cuisines they specialize in include French, Chinese, and Belgian. Of course, it is also easy to find restaurants that serve national dishes, such as yams, fish, chicken cooked with spinach and rice, or cassava prepared in various ways.^{231,232} Foods to avoid include raw vegetables or fresh fruits; it is better to eat them cooked to avoid contracting an illness.²³³



If curious about any of the ingredients in an item on the menu or a meal you have ordered, just ask the waiter.

Exchange 22: What type of fish is this?

Visitor:	What type of fish is this?	Ohyohmbeesee neenee
Local:	Mackerel.	tomson

Almost all restaurants offer tea and coffee.

Exchange 23: I would like coffee or tea.

Visitor:	I would like coffee or tea.	Nahkohlingah kahfay toh tee.
Local:	Sure.	nahndeemee

²³¹ iExplore. "Congo, Democratic Republic of (Zaire) Food & Dining." 1999–2010. <http://www.iexplore.com/dmap/Congo,+Democratic+Republic+of+%28Zaire%29/Dining>

²³² Travel.MapsofWorld.com. "Cuisine of Democratic Republic of Congo." No date. <http://travel.mapsofworld.com/democratic-republic-of-congo/cuisine-in-democratic-republic-of-congo.html>

²³³ *The Global Etiquette Guide to Africa and the Middle East: Everything You Need to Know for Business and Travel Success*. Foster, Dean Allen. "Chapter 9: The Center: Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Gabon, and Congo [p. 192]." 2002. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Alcoholic drinks are available at the numerous dance clubs throughout Kinshasa and in many restaurants. Popular mixed drinks are often made with rum and fruit such as pineapple or coconuts.²³⁴

It is best to avoid drinking tap water, as it is likely to cause illness. A bottle of mineral water is a good alternative.

Exchange 24: May I have a bottle of mineral water?

Visitor:	May I have a bottle of mineral water?	Nahkohkee kohzwah mohlahngee yah oh meenayrahl
Local:	Yes, right away.	Eh, seekah seekahwah

Guests who attend nightclubs to take advantage of Kinshasa’s famed music scene can usually expect to pay high prices. The clubs often have floor shows and dramatic visual effects. They stay open late, but customers often leave early (around 9 p.m.) to avoid being robbed.²³⁵



© Marcus Landstrom
SKOL brand beer

Diners who are part of a group at a restaurant may wish to pay their bill separately or put it all on one tab. Generally, the host who invited guests is the appropriate person to pay. It is also customary for the host to arrange for transportation for his guests, to make sure they get home or to their next destination safely.²³⁶

²³⁴ iExplore. “Congo, Democratic Republic of (Zaire) Food & Dining.” 1999–2010. <http://www.iexplore.com/dmap/Congo,+Democratic+Republic+of+%28Zaire%29/Dining>

²³⁵ *Democratic Republic of the Congo*. Heale, Jay, and Yong Jui Lin. “Chapter 11: Leisure: Nightlife [pp. 114–115].” 2009. Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish.

²³⁶ *The Global Etiquette Guide to Africa and the Middle East: Everything You Need to Know for Business and Travel Success*. Foster, Dean Allen. “Chapter 9: The Center: Cameron, the Central African Republic, Gabon, and Congo [p. 194].” 2002. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Exchange 25: I would like to pay the bill now.

Visitor:	I would like to pay the bill now.	Nahkohlingah nahfootah lonkahsah lah bohfootee ohyoh seekahwah
Local:	Okay, I'll bring the bill.	Nahndeemee, nahkohyaylah yoh yahngo

Whether dining alone or in a group, patrons should find out in advance what kind of payment method is accepted and have it available when they ask for the bill. Acceptance of credit cards for payment is limited to major hotels in Kinshasa; vendors in other regions of the Congo do not accept them. The best policy to follow is: keep cash on hand. In Kinshasa and other cities, many restaurants will accept U.S. currency.²³⁷ Otherwise, it is necessary to pay in Congolese francs.²³⁸



Exchange 26: Do you accept US dollars?

Visitor:	Do you accept US dollars?	Ondeemee dehveez yah dohlar ahmayreeken
Local:	No, we only accept francongolais.	Tay, tondeemee kahkah Frahn congohlay

At hotels and upscale restaurants, the establishment often adds service charges into the final bill. Therefore, tipping individually may not be necessary, depending on the type of establishment.²³⁹ At the same time, giving a sum of money to get something done is an often expected social gesture throughout the Congo region. Taken to extremes, it appears

²³⁷ Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Congo, Democratic Republic of the: Special Circumstances: Currency." 10 March 2010. http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1104.html

²³⁸ *Congo: Democratic Republic – Republic*. Rorison, Sean. "Chapter 2: Practical Information: Money, Currency and Banking [pp. 41–42]." 2008. Guilford, CT: Globe Pequot Press, Inc.

²³⁹ iExplore. "Congo, Democratic Republic of (Zaire) Food & Dining." 1999–2010. <http://www.iexplore.com/dmap/Congo,+Democratic+Republic+of+%28Zaire%29/Dining>

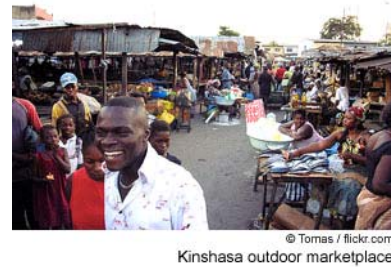
in the form of graft and corruption in the Congo. In moderation, however, it is simply a way to acknowledge service that someone has provided. In average restaurants, it is customary to tip as it is unlikely that the service cost has already been figured into the bill.²⁴⁰

Exchange 27: Thank you for the service.

Visitor:	Thank you for the service. This is for you.	Mehlehsee mpoh mohsahlah. Ohyoh ehzahlee mpoh nah yoh
Local:	Thank you.	mehlehsee

Marketplace

Bargaining over prices is a customary way of transacting business in the markets of Kinshasa and other cities in the D.R.C.²⁴¹ In any environment (such as this) where haggling is the norm, buyers should examine items closely to be sure that the quality matches the price they are willing to pay. In particular, caution is necessary in the D.R.C. when purchasing precious metals or gems, such as diamonds or gold, especially when sale prices are offered. The sale price may be valid and the items may be of adequate quality, but then again, they may not be. Members of gangs sometimes operate in the markets, using ruses to swindle or rob buyers.²⁴²



A wide range of crafts and artifacts are available for sale in the marketplace. They include national themes, such as carvings in African designs made of ebony. Different kinds of jewelry and woven baskets are popular items for sale. Visitors can also purchase vegetables or fruits, cameras, and various souvenirs.

²⁴⁰ *The Global Etiquette Guide to Africa and the Middle East: Everything You Need to Know for Business and Travel Success*. Foster, Dean Allen. "Chapter 9: The Center: Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Gabon, and Congo [p. 190]." 2002. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

²⁴¹ Travel.MapsofWorld.com. "Shopping in Democratic Republic of Congo." No date.
<http://travel.mapsofworld.com/democratic-republic-of-congo/democratic-republic-of-congo-tours/shopping-in-democratic-republic-of-congo.html>

²⁴² World Travel Guide. "Congo (Democratic Republic Of) Travel Advice." 2010.
http://www.worldtravelguide.net/country/62/travel_advice/Africa/Democratic-Republic-Of-Congo.html

Exchange 28: Do you sell copper art?

Visitor:	Do you sell copper art?	Otaykahkah beekhehkoh yah kwivre
Local:	Yes.	eh

There is no obligation to buy goods, even after browsing and asking about prices. People often shop around and return to a certain store later, after comparing prices and getting a better idea of what items are worth. Then, they are in a more knowledgeable position to make an offer for a particular item.



© Julien Harneis
Barge loading up

After a period of good-natured bargaining, the seller may lower his price in order to make the sale. If he or she feels the offer is too low, further negotiation may be necessary.

Exchange 29: Can I buy the sculpture with this much money?

Visitor:	Can I buy the sculpture with this much money?	Nahkohkee kohsombah ehkehkoh nah aybaylay yah mbongo ohyoh
Local:	No.	Tay.

Food is sold at numerous street stalls along the roads of Kinshasa and other cities in the Lingala region. Operating street stalls and selling food has been a major source of employment for people in Kinshasa. Often women hold these jobs as a way to earn income while they look after their children. It might be their only source of income, or it might provide a means for families to supplement their earnings.²⁴³

Visitors should exercise caution concerning the food they buy from street vendors and limit their purchase to what is hot and well cooked. Items to avoid include ice cream, raw

²⁴³ Lyenda, Guillaume. “Street Food and Income Generation for Poor Households in Kinshasa [p. 237].” 2001. <http://www.bvsde.paho.org/bvsacd/cd26/enurb/v13n2/233.pdf>

fruits or vegetables, and tap water or anything with ice in it. Bacteria in these products can result in salmonella poisoning and a host of other illnesses.²⁴⁴

Exchange 30: I'd like some hot soup.

Visitor:	I'd like some hot soup.	Nahkohlingah soopoo yah mohto'
Local:	Sure.	nahdeemee

Before purchasing something, it is better to establish in advance the kind of currency a seller will accept. The basic unit of currency is the Congolese franc, but many sellers prefer U.S. dollars (but only those in good condition). To exchange currency, visit a bank or an official currency exchange office, avoiding those found on the streets. The most efficient and reliable way to receive a cash advance may be through a Western Union office.^{245,246}



A buyer may have a currency denomination too large for the cost of the item being purchased. Ask in advance of showing the currency whether the seller can give change. It's not a good idea to carry or show large sums of money in public because of the risk of robbery.

Exchange 31: Can you give me change for this?

Visitor:	Can you give me change for this?	Ohhohkee kohpehsah ngah ayshahnzhe mpoh nah ohyoh
Local:	No.	Tay.

²⁴⁴ *Congo: Democratic Republic - Republic*. Rorison, Sean. "Chapter 2: Practical Information: Common Medical Problems [pp. 26–27]." 2008. Guilford, CT: Globe Pequot Press, Inc.

²⁴⁵ Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Congo, Democratic Republic of the: Special Circumstances: Currency." 10 March 2010. http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1104.html

²⁴⁶ *Congo: Democratic Republic - Republic*. Rorison, Sean. "Chapter 2: Practical Information: Money, Currency and Banking [pp. 41–42]." 2008. Guilford, CT: Globe Pequot Press, Inc.

Street Crime and Solicitation

Because of deteriorating economic conditions, street crime is common in Kinshasa. It is relatively safe to travel through some parts of the city during the daytime, but not at night. The U.S. embassy advises people to roll up their windows before driving and keep their doors locked. Members of street gangs may pose as police officers in order to rob people. In general, to avoid becoming a victim of crime—from petty burglary or pick-pocketing to armed robbery—travelers should be alert to their surroundings.^{247,248}



© Irene / flickr.com
Streets of Kinshasa

Begging is prevalent in Kinshasa, where poverty is extreme. Local people, often desperate to obtain money for food, see foreigners as possible sources of income.²⁴⁹ In spite of the dire conditions, it is risky to give money to someone begging. If others see a person distributing money, they may quickly gather around, begging for more.

Exchange 32: Give me money.

Local:	Give me money.	Paysah ngah mbongoh
Visitor:	I don't have any.	Nahzahlee nah yahngo tay

Self Study Questions

1. The lack of available jobs in rural areas was a major reason for migration into the cities.
2. Most of Kinshasa's population growth took place in the 19th century.
3. Kinshasa is the D.R.C.'s largest city.
4. Formal-sector employment in Kinshasa has increased steadily since the 1970s.
5. Hospitals in the large cities of the D.R.C. are considered safe and reliable.

²⁴⁷ Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Congo, Democratic Republic of the: Crime." 10 March 2010. http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1104.html

²⁴⁸ World Travel Guide. "Congo (Democratic Republic Of) Travel Advice. 2010. http://www.worldtravelguide.net/country/62/travel_advice/Africa/Democratic-Republic-Of-Congo.html

²⁴⁹ *Congo: Democratic Republic - Republic*. Rorison, Sean. "Chapter 2: Practical Information: Safety. [p. 34]." 2008. Guilford, CT: Globe Pequot Press, Inc.

Rural Life

Rural Livelihood

Subsistence farming is the primary way that those in the rural areas of the Lingala region (northwestern D.R.C.) support themselves. Rainforest and swamp forests cover much of the land, so only approximately 3% of the land in the entire country is arable.²⁵⁰ Farmers grow what they need to eat, principally cassava (a major source of food), maize, and root crops.²⁵¹

Exchange 33: Where do you work, sir?

Visitor:	Where do you work, sir?	Ohsahlakah wahpee, Tahtah
Local:	I am a farmer, sir.	Nahzahlee mohsahlee beelahngah, Tahtah.

Several issues have caused the rural farming sector to stagnate since independence in 1960. Until then, the D.R.C. exported agricultural products, but commercial activity has since declined. Government support of the sector declined, and both government and public investment in transportation and energy infrastructure have evaporated. The lack of rural roads for transporting produce to market has hurt farmers, who cannot attain access to credit. In addition, many farmers have left their farms and the region to seek employment in mines, located primarily in southeastern D.R.C.²⁵²



© vredezeilanden / flickr.com
Congo farmers

Many small-scale farmers once raised livestock or practiced aquaculture (the cultivation of fish or shellfish). The number of livestock has declined since the civil war due to the theft and disappearance of animals. In rural areas, people often sell the meat of wild animals (known as “bushmeat”) to earn income. During the civil war, the aquaculture industry was also disrupted when farmers abandoned their properties. This situation could

²⁵⁰ infoplease. “Democratic Republic of the Congo: Economy.” 2000–2009. Boston: Pearson Education. <http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/world/A0857521.html>

²⁵¹ New Agriculturalist. “Country Profile – Democratic Republic of Congo: Overview.” January 2009. <http://www.new-ag.info/country/profile.php?a=641>

²⁵² New Agriculturalist. “Country Profile – Democratic Republic of Congo: Overview.” January 2009. <http://www.new-ag.info/country/profile.php?a=641>

be turned around, however. The development of fisheries still holds economic potential for those who live in the countryside.²⁵³

Rural Land Distribution

Property distribution in the D.R.C. was based on ancestral rights to occupy the land, but this changed radically during the Mobutu regime. In 1973, the Mobutu government passed the Bakajika land law, thus overturning people’s traditional rights to their ancestral lands. Although the Belgian colonial government that preceded Mobutu could appropriate and sell vacant land, it lacked authority to take over land that was already occupied. This practice changed during Mobutu’s post-colonial regime. According to the new law, “whether vacant or occupied, all land now belonged to the state and could be appropriated by the authorities for the purpose of a private sale.” The law was softened somewhat by allowing farmers a two-year grace period before being forced to vacate their ancestral land. Still, it ultimately stripped all citizens of access to the land they had previously used according to longstanding tradition.²⁵⁴



These and other property issues prevail in the rainforests of the D.R.C. (which fall mainly in the Lingala region). Here, the locals’ has been precarious throughout much of history. They depend on the rainforest for medicines, food, and materials for shelter and other buildings. Currently, they are forced to compete with large international logging and industrial companies for the use of the land. Generally, economic decisions have been made regarding the use of the forest without considering the indigenous people who live there. It is a common practice for unregulated logging companies to simply take the land they want and strip it of trees.^{255,256}

Exchange 34: Do you own this land?

Visitor:	Do you own this land?	Ohsombahkee mahbaylay ohyoh
Local:	Yes.	Eh.

²⁵³ New Agriculturalist. “Country Profile – Democratic Republic of Congo: Overview.” January 2009. <http://www.new-ag.info/country/profile.php?a=641>

²⁵⁴ FAO International. Pottier, Johan. “Emergency in Ituri, DRC: Political Complexity, Land and Other Challenges in Restoring Food Security [p. 4].” September 2003. <ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/meeting/009/ae515e.pdf>

²⁵⁵ Mongabay.com. Hance, Jeremy. “Indigenous Peoples of Congo Map Their Forests with GPS in an Effort to Save Them.” 13 April 2008. http://news.mongabay.com/2008/0414-hance_congo.html

²⁵⁶ IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature). “Strengthening Voices for Better Choices in the Democratic Republic of Congo.” January 2009. <http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/drc.pdf>

The Effects of Land Distribution in Northeastern D.R.C.

In northeastern D.R.C., at the outer boundary of the Lingala region and affecting some areas inside, war has further complicated land rights issues. Since the late 1990s, ongoing fighting between different factions has fluctuated with the political conditions and control over land. D.R.C. government forces joined with those of Zimbabwe, Angola, and Namibia in opposing rebel groups from Rwanda and Uganda, each of which was trying to dominate the territory. In 2003, warring parties signed a peace agreement, but fighting resumed afterwards. (Rwandan troops officially withdrew from the D.R.C. in 2002 and Ugandan troops in 2003, but they have been covertly involved in new outbursts of fighting.) A key issue is control of the mineral wealth of the eastern D.R.C.^{257,258,259}



© United Nations Photo
UN peacekeepers in Ituri province

Ituri Province (bordering the eastern edge of the Lingala region) has been one of the core areas of factional fighting. It is not only a prominent site for the mining of gold, diamonds, and coltan (used in cell phone and electronics manufacture), but also an area of timber production and oil exploration.^{260,261} The onset of fighting in Ituri Province in 1999 was between local agriculturalists, who were being evicted from their ancestral lands, and newer tenants, who claimed they owned the land under the new (Bakajika) land law. The dispute developed into warfare when foreign governments entered the fight over the economic interests that were at stake. In addition, local warlords were able to take advantage of the chaos that resulted from the Bakajika law and acquired land in these areas to form their base of operations for obtaining wealth there. In the struggle for domination, both militia forces and D.R.C. government troops have taken over entire towns and rural areas, and local residents have continued to lose their land through evictions.^{262,263}

²⁵⁷ IRIN. “DRC: Ituri Peace Accord Postponed as UPC Accuses MONUC of Partiality.” 18 February 2003. <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=41654>

²⁵⁸ FAO International. Pottier, Johan. “Emergency in Ituri, DRC: Political Complexity, Land and Other Challenges in Restoring Food Security [pp. 1–2].” September 2003. <ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/meeting/009/ae515e.pdf>

²⁵⁹ BBC News. “Democratic Republic of Congo Country Profile.” 10 February 2010. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/country_profiles/1076399.stm

²⁶⁰ FAO International. Pottier, Johan. “Emergency in Ituri, DRC: Political Complexity, Land and Other Challenges in Restoring Food Security [pp. 2–3].” September 2003. <ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/meeting/009/ae515e.pdf>

²⁶¹ Oneworld. Raphael, Alison. “Cell Phone Boycott Protests War in Congo.” 22 October 2008. <http://us.oneworld.net/article/358139-cell-phone-boycott-protests-war-congo>

²⁶² FAO International. Pottier, Johan. “Emergency in Ituri, DRC: Political Complexity, Land and Other Challenges in Restoring Food Security [pp. 4–7].” September 2003. <ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/meeting/009/ae515e.pdf>

To summarize, the Bakajika land law instituted by the Mobutu regime has had a devastating impact on the people of the entire D.R.C. In abolishing the hereditary rights of rural communities and clans to occupy and manage their lands, the law created a system in which those with the most wealth and power have been able to assume control of valuable lands. Both domestic and international companies, militias, and warlords have stripped the D.R.C.'s rural population of its security and livelihood. The result has been "institutionalized vulnerability" and warfare.²⁶⁴ Although most of the fighting has been in the far eastern D.R.C., largely outside of the Lingala region, it has affected people throughout the country. Because of ongoing human rights violations and a high death toll primarily in the east, the world's largest UN peacekeeping force has been stationed to restore order and protect civilians.²⁶⁵

Rural Transportation

Throughout the entire D.R.C., roads are poorly maintained and driving is difficult, even in the best of times. During heavy or extended rains (usually between September and May), rural roads are likely to be impassable.^{266,267} According to a 2004 estimate, the total mileage of unpaved roads in the country is 150,703 km (93,642 mi), compared to only 2,794 km (1,736 mi) of paved road.²⁶⁸



© Ricardo Cabrera Ietelier
Transportation to Matadi

Public transportation such as bus or taxi service mostly serve urban areas. All public transportation, both urban and rural, is considered unreliable and unsafe. This includes airline and rail transportation.²⁶⁹

Some travel arrangements can be made for riverboats or barges. Many of the waterways linked to the Congo River are navigable, and this is a favored means of transportation,

²⁶³ Shared Humanity.org. Anderson, Kjell Follingstad. "Democratic Republic of Congo, Gross Human Rights Violations in." 2007.

<http://www.sharedhumanity.org/LibraryArticle.php?heading=Democratic%20Republic%20of%20Congo,%20Gross%20Human%20Rights%20Violations%20in>

²⁶⁴ FAO International. Pottier, Johan. "Emergency in Ituri, DRC: Political Complexity, Land and Other Challenges in Restoring Food Security [pp. 10-11]." September 2003.

<ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/meeting/009/ae515e.pdf>

²⁶⁵ U.S. Department of State. "Congo, Democratic Republic of the: Safety and Security." 2010.

http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1104.html

²⁶⁶ Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Congo, Democratic Republic of the: Traffic, Safety and Road Conditions." 10 March 2010. http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1104.html

²⁶⁷ Foreign & Commonwealth Office: Travel & Living Abroad, United Kingdom. "Sub Saharan Africa: Congo (Democratic Republic): Road Travel." 10 May 2010. <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/travel-advice-by-country/sub-saharan-africa/congo-democratic-republic>

²⁶⁸ CIA World Factbook. "Congo, Democratic Republic of the: Transportation." 27 April 2010.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cg.html>

²⁶⁹ Foreign & Commonwealth Office: Travel & Living Abroad, United Kingdom. "Sub Saharan Africa: Congo (Democratic Republic): Road Travel." 10 May 2010. <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/travel-advice-by-country/sub-saharan-africa/congo-democratic-republic>

especially in rural areas.²⁷⁰ However, risks are associated with this method of travel as well. Riverboats or ferries are not well constructed and are usually overloaded with people and goods. In case of an accident, lifesaving equipment is not likely to be available.²⁷¹

Rural Health

Medical services are scarce throughout the D.R.C., including the Lingala region. There are fewer hospitals, clinics, preventive services, physicians, nurses, and supplies in the countryside than in the more populated urban areas. Clinics or hospitals may not be sanitary. Often, health conditions may require evacuation to another country in order to check into a hospital and receive reliable care.^{272, 273}



© Julien Hamels
Health center reception in Kisangani

The scarcity of rural health care in the D.R.C. is a problem, since many health conditions there require immediate treatment by a doctor. Travelers in rural areas are at risk of acquiring malaria, which is difficult to diagnose. Its symptoms progress rapidly, and if untreated, malaria can be fatal. Symptoms of heatstroke, a “serious concern” along the Congo River lowlands, also proceed rapidly, and the condition can be fatal. For this reason, it’s necessary to have relatively quick access to a clinic or a doctor.²⁷⁴ As a precaution, travelers should take a supply of personal medicines and medical supplies with them when journeying through remote areas.

Doctors require cash payments when they treat patients, as do hospitals.²⁷⁵ Locals who live in the countryside are unlikely to have the money to afford any kind of healthcare. This fact is reflected in the statistics of infant mortality in the D.R.C., where approximately one fifth of the nation’s children die before they reach the age of five. Many die from malaria and other diseases carried by mosquitoes. Another major problem

²⁷⁰ *Congo : Democratic Republic - Republic*. Rorison, Sean. “Chapter 2: Practical Information: Getting Around. [p. 43].” 2008. Guilford, CT: Globe Pequot Press, Inc.

²⁷¹ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australian Government. “Democratic Republic of the Congo: Local Travel.” 11 May 2010. http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/Advice/Democratic_Republic_of_the_Congo

²⁷² *Congo: Democratic Republic – Republic*. Rorison, Sean. “Chapter. 2: Practical Information: Health: Hospitals. [p. 34].” 2008. Guilford, CT: Globe Pequot Press, Inc.

²⁷³ World Travel Guide. “Congo (Democratic Republic Of) Health.” 2010. <http://www.worldtravelguide.net/country/62/health/Africa/Democratic-Republic-Of-Congo.html>

²⁷⁴ *Congo: Democratic Republic – Republic*. Rorison, Sean. “Chapter 2: Practical Information: Health. [pp. 22–23].” 2008. Guilford, CT: Globe Pequot Press, Inc.

²⁷⁵ World Travel Guide. “Congo (Democratic Republic Of) Health.” 2010. <http://www.worldtravelguide.net/country/62/health/Africa/Democratic-Republic-Of-Congo.html>

that affects children is the lack of clean drinking water. It is estimated that only 20% of the people in the country have access to uncontaminated, safe drinking water.²⁷⁶

Rural Education

Due to a shortage of schools and teachers in the D.R.C., children often grow up without an education. The problem is particularly severe in isolated rural areas, where few schools are located.

Exchange 35: school nearby?

Visitor:	Is there a school nearby?	Aytayehloh ehzahlee pehnehpehneh ahwah
Local:	Yes.	Eh.

Besides a scarcity of schools, parents are expected to pay fees that cover the cost of paper, writing supplies, and notebooks. This problem has caused “hundreds of thousands” of children to drop out of school because their families cannot afford the cost.²⁷⁷ It is estimated that more than 4.5 million children (over half of them girls) do not attend school in the D.R.C.²⁷⁸ In 2004, the illiteracy rate was over 33% for the general population and over 43% for women.²⁷⁹

Exchange 36: Do your children go to school?

Visitor:	Do your children go to school?	Bannah nah yoh bahkayee aytayehloh
Local:	Yes.	Eh.

²⁷⁶ *Democratic Republic of the Congo*. Heale, Jay, and Yong Jui Lin. “Chapter 7: Lifestyle [p. 85.]” 2009. Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish.

²⁷⁷ Education International. “No Schools, No Teachers for Millions of Children in D.R.C.” 19 October 2007. <http://www.ei-ie.org/en/news/show.php?id=647&theme=educationforall&country=drc>

²⁷⁸ UNICEF. “Girls’ Education in the Democratic Republic of Congo: Kits for Kids.” 11 April 2005. http://www.unicef.org/supply/index_25944.html

²⁷⁹ Survey of ICT and Education in Africa: DR Congo Country Report. Fall, Babacar. “ICT in Education in the Democratic Republic of Congo (D.R.C.) [p. 3].” June 2007. <http://www.infodev.org/en/Document.395.pdf>

Mandatory educational requirements exist in the D.R.C. but are not upheld. Pre-primary school occurs during the first three years, but children seldom attend except in some areas of the cities. Six years of primary school are mandatory for children beginning at age six, but enrollments are low here, as well. Secondary education follows, after which students are eligible to take a national exam and receive a State Diploma. They can then enroll in higher education, focusing on technical subjects, teacher training, or general studies at a university.²⁸⁰

History of Western Education in the D.R.C.

Western-style education began in the early 1900s through the Roman Catholic Church, which had been present in the D.R.C. since the Portuguese arrived centuries earlier. The Belgian government initiated the Western-style education by offering land grants to the Church in exchange for its agreement to establish schools. In accordance with a 1906 agreement between the Belgian government and the Vatican, the Catholic Church became responsible for the nation's educational system, an arrangement that stayed in place until 1948.²⁸¹



© Julien Hamels
Congolese school children

The agreement was advantageous to both the Church and the Belgian government. During schooling, the church converted students to the faith, thus bolstering its own ranks. The government benefited by receiving a labor pool prepared to serve the state through a utilitarian training program that was limited to basic subjects. Most students completed only the primary level of education, which focused on math, writing, reading, and French, which was enough to enable them to hold government jobs. A small number of students, mainly of European descent, entered secondary schools and studied at universities, where the curriculum focused more on independent thinking and problem solving. The higher level of teaching that was offered primarily to Europeans contrasted with the more utilitarian, basic education available to the African population.²⁸²

The church and government collaborated in creating two Catholic colleges in 1954, designed to “prepare a well-educated African elite who would eventually assume power in a peaceful transfer of authority.” However, the national push for autonomy interrupted this process, and the D.R.C. gained independence in 1960, following a period of rebellion. Thus, when the new nation was formed, it lacked a highly educated core of people who

²⁸⁰ Survey of ICT and Education in Africa: DR Congo Country Report. Fall, Babacar. “ICT in Education in the Democratic Republic of Congo (D.R.C.) [p. 3].” June 2007. <http://www.infodev.org/en/Document.395.pdf>

²⁸¹ StateUniversity.com Education Encyclopedia. “Democratic Congo – History & Background: Educational History.” 2010. <http://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/358/Democratic-Congo-HISTORY-BACKGROUND.html>

²⁸² StateUniversity.com Education Encyclopedia. “Democratic Congo – History & Background: Educational History.” 2010. <http://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/358/Democratic-Congo-HISTORY-BACKGROUND.html>

were trained in creating and managing modern institutions of government. As educational institutions expanded, a shortage of teachers developed.²⁸³ Enrollment in colleges continued to increase, but the nation’s educational progress was further cut short due to severe economic issues, internal fighting, and failure to resolve critical problems.

Rural Lifestyle

Survival in the rural D.R.C. and the rainforest area (the Lingala region) is difficult for a number of reasons. An infrastructure is almost entirely lacking, so people have no access to transportation, public services, or even basic housing. They typically live in extremely crowded conditions.

Exchange 37: How many people live in this house?

Visitor:	How many people live in this house?	Nah ndahkoh ohyoh bahtoh bahfahndahkah bohnee
Local:	Eight.	Mwahmbeh

Many people who live in the forest may be evicted from their lands or be subject to the illegal logging of their forests, which they depend upon for resources. They end up with no way to obtain food, medicine, or shelter. In general, workers must devote long hours to farming and agricultural jobs simply to survive. They receive little in return beyond basic sustenance.



© Gill Poole
Rural home in eastern Congo

Thousands of young rural residents have left their villages to find jobs in the city, leaving behind communities consisting of the very old and the very young. If the migrants are laid off, which often happens, they may return to their rural homes, where family members may still live. Here, they face absolute destitution, with no prospects for building a future. Rural children have almost no opportunities for education because there are few schools or teachers in the countryside. Child labor is common across the nation, and in the eastern part of the D.R.C., militias often force young children to serve among their military forces.²⁸⁴

²⁸³ StateUniversity.com Education Encyclopedia. “Democratic Congo – History & Background: Educational History.” 2010. <http://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/358/Democratic-Congo-HISTORY-BACKGROUND.html>

²⁸⁴ Education International. “No Schools, No Teachers for Millions of Children in D.R.C.” 19 October 2007. <http://www.ei-ie.org/en/news/show.php?id=647&theme=educationforall&country=drc>

Members of some ethnic groups living in the rainforest, such as Pygmies, experience discrimination. They do not, for example, vote or have political representation in the provincial assemblies or positions of higher office. Other ethnic groups do, however, participate. Theoretically, they have the right to meet, plan, and take political actions that can change their government, as long as the change is peaceful.²⁸⁵

Political Leadership

Each province has an elected provincial assembly, in which the members elect candidates to serve in the national assembly. Provincial representatives are typically in charge of political and administrative functions for their region. At the same time, elections often involve bribery and pressure from organizations (such as militia or police) outside the officially elected government. They may exert force when necessary to control, influence, or subvert the political process. It is also not unusual for police, security forces, or warlords to seek retribution for political activities.²⁸⁶



© Tiggy Ridley / IRIN
Congolese waiting to vote

If police or military authorities are present in a rural area, it is wise to defer to their instructions or advice. They hold very broad authority over the civilian population.

Aside from these state-sanctioned positions of authority, local communities closely organize their activities around a hierarchy. Different people are responsible for specific functions according to the rank they hold, as designated by the community. A tribal chief usually occupies the position of ultimate authority for a particular group.

Exchange 38: Can you take me to the chief?

Visitor:	Can you take me to the chief of Dembe?	Ohkohkee kohmehmah ngah aypahyee yah chm-zohn
Local:	Yes.	Eh

²⁸⁵ U.S. Department of State. “2009 Human Rights Report: Democratic Republic of the Congo: Section 3: Respect for Political Rights: The Right of Citizens to Change Their government: Elections and Political Participation.” 11 March 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/af/135947.htm>

²⁸⁶ U.S. Department of State. “2009 Human Rights Report: Democratic Republic of the Congo: Section 3: Respect for Political Rights: The Right of Citizens to Change Their government: Elections and Political Participation.” 11 March 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/af/135947.htm>

Visitors to rural regions need to seek information and permission from individuals who hold the highest rank within the community.

Exchange 39: Respected Chief, we need to ask your advice.

Visitor:	Respected Chief, we need to ask your advice.	Hohnohrahbl coh-m-zohn tohsengaylee kohtoonah leekahneese nah yoh
Local:	Yes.	Eh

Checkpoints

Civil unrest is common in the D.R.C., and it is possible that visitors could come upon unexpected checkpoints, whether in the city or the countryside. The police often set up roadblocks after dark and search vehicles. They may be looking for weapons, but equally, they may be seeking valuables to rob from travelers. Bribery is a very common practice among the nation's security forces.²⁸⁷



© Grassroots Reconciliation Group
Border checkpoint

If stopped, drivers or pedestrians going through a checkpoint should comply with authorities and follow instructions closely. It is better to stay inside the car unless ordered to step outside it.

Exchange 40: Please get out of the car.

Local:	Please get out of the car.	Pahlahdoh, beemah nah mohtookah.
Visitor:	OK.	Nahndeemee.

Violence between police and militias is frequent in some parts of the country, often occurring with little or no warning. Both rebel forces and displaced civilians may be seeking shelter or a way to escape. Thus, the checkpoints can appear at various locations,

²⁸⁷ Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Congo, Democratic Republic of the: Safety and Security." 10 March 2010. http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1104.html

not only in border regions of the eastern D.R.C., where violence has been endemic,²⁸⁸ but also in Équateur Province (northwestern Lingala region).²⁸⁹

Exchange 41: Where is the nearest border crossing?

Visitor:	Where is the nearest border crossing?	Ndayloh mpoh nah kohkahteesah penbaynee ehzahlee wahpee
Local:	It's about 2 kilometers from here.	Ehzahlee seemah keelohmehtehleh meebahleh bahndah ahwah.

If local police ask for information or official papers, drivers need to immediately and politely produce any requested documents. Drivers should stay inside the vehicle and keep the windows closed, showing the papers through the closed windows.²⁹⁰



© Kaysha / flickr.com
Police officer

Exchange 42: May I see your ID?

Local:	May I see your ID?	Nahkohkee kohtahlah meekahndah nah yoh yah Lehtah
Visitor:	Yes.	Eh

²⁸⁸ Foreign & Commonwealth Office, United Kingdom. “Congo (Democratic Republic).” 20 April 2010. <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/travel-advice-by-country/sub-saharan-africa/congo-democratic-republic>

²⁸⁹ Foreign & Commonwealth Office, United Kingdom. “Sub Saharan Africa (Congo).” 30 April 2010. <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/travel-advice-by-country/sub-saharan-africa/congo>

²⁹⁰ Foreign & Commonwealth Office, United Kingdom “Congo (Democratic Republic): Road Travel.” 20 April 2010. <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/travel-advice-by-country/sub-saharan-africa/congo-democratic-republic>

At a checkpoint, it is possible that military or civil security personnel could ask for a passport, visa, or car registration. It is important to have these documents on hand. Failure to do so could lead to detention of the occupants.²⁹¹

Exchange 43: Show us the car registration.

Local:	Show us the car registration.	Lahkeesah beesoh meekahndah yah mohtookah.
Visitor:	OK.	Nahndeemee.

Landmines

As the result of several years of civil war, injury and death caused by landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) have been common in the D.R.C. Because fighting in the country is ongoing, no agency has conducted a national survey detailing the impact of landmines in the D.R.C. Another reason for the lack of explosives assessment is the difficulty of traveling within the country, with its inaccessible geography and weak transportation systems. It is known, however, that stockpiles of landmines and unexploded ordnance are present in areas that have experienced conflict, especially in the east.^{292,293} Between the D.R.C. and Angola, large minefields “litter the border” where they were placed in past disputes, and often only locals know where they are located.^{294,295}



© United Nations Photo
Victim of a landmine accident

²⁹¹ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australian Government. “Democratic Republic of the Congo.” 12 May 2010. http://www.smarttraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/Advice/Democratic_Republic_of_the_Congo

²⁹² AfDevInfo. “Mine Action Country Portfolio Team – Congo (DRC).” 28 January 2008. http://www.afdevinfo.com/htmlreports/org/org_46676.html

²⁹³ UN News Centre. “Ban Urges Ongoing Efforts Against Use of Landmines.” 4 April 2010. <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=34275&Cr=mine>

²⁹⁴ IRIN. “Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) Humanitarian Country Profile.” February 2007. <http://www.irinnews.org/country.aspx?CountryCode=CD&RegionCode=GL>

²⁹⁵ *Congo : Democratic Republic - Republic*. Rorison, Sean. “Chapter 2: Practical Information: Safety: Landmines. [pp. 38–39].” 2008. Guilford, CT: Globe Pequot Press, Inc.

Exchange 44: Do you know this area very well?

Visitor:	Do you know this area very well?	Ohyehbee ehtookah ohyoh mahlahmoo mpenzah
Local:	Yes.	Eh.

Landmines and unexploded ordnance have been used in parts of Équateur Province in the Lingala region. This area has a “history of violent conflicts,” and many people here have fallen victim to the weapons used.²⁹⁶ Much of the fighting in this region of the country has been caused by competition between clans over issues such as fishing rights or forest resources.^{297,298}

Exchange 45: Are there landmines in this area?

Visitor:	Are there landmines in this area?	Bah meen yah nseh yah mahbaylay ehzahlee nah ehtookah ohyoh
Local:	Yes.	Eh

In 2002, officials from the D.R.C. government signed the anti-personnel mine-ban treaty. Efforts to implement it, however, have been interrupted or stalled because of the country’s political instability. In particular, warfare initiated by a number of sources has continued in the eastern part of the D.R.C., primarily in Ituri and Kivu Provinces.²⁹⁹ In these areas, mines were placed along roads and footpaths, and around hospitals and markets as recently as 2003–2004.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁶ AfDevInfo. “Mine Risk Education in the Tshuapa District of Equateur [sic] Province.” 11 January 2008. http://www.afdevinfo.com/htmlreports/org_46685.html

²⁹⁷ IRIN. “D.R.C. – Congo: Of Fish Wars and Displacement.” 2 February 2010. <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=87961>

²⁹⁸ Relief Web. “Republic of Congo: More D.R.C. Civilians Flee from Equateur Province.” 15 December 2009. <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900sid/JBRN-7YRHJK?OpenDocument>

²⁹⁹ AfDevInfo. “Mine Action Country Portfolio Team – Congo (D.R.C.).” 28 January 2008. http://www.afdevinfo.com/htmlreports/org/org_46676.html

³⁰⁰ *Congo : Democratic Republic - Republic*. Rorison, Sean. “Chapter 2: Practical Information: Safety: Landmines. [pp. 38–39].” 2008. Guilford, CT: Globe Pequot Press, Inc.

Self Study Questions

1. In rural areas of the D.R.C., the most common way to earn a living is by subsistence farming.
2. Insufficient investment has contributed to the decline of the agricultural industry.
3. The Bakajika land law instituted by Mobutu called for equal land distribution.
4. Travelers to rural areas of the D.R.C. are at risk of acquiring malaria.
5. The low rate of school attendance in rural areas is mostly due to a lack of facilities.

Family Life

Typical Household and Family Structure

Life in rural D.R.C. is organized around kinship groups headed by males at the center of the extended family. Within kinship groups, family bonds are strong and power is broken down according to rank, based on gender, age, relationship, and other criteria. Each person functions according to his or her role in the family.³⁰¹

Exchange 46: Are you the only person who has a job?

Visitor:	Are you the only person in your family who has a job?	Kahkah yoh mo'ko' ohzahlee nah mohsahlah nah leebohtah nah yoh
Local:	No, everyone works.	Tay, bahnsah bahsahlahkah

Since men hold the highest rank, they are eligible to serve as village chieftains, the leaders in rural communities. Based on popularity or personal prestige among the villagers, a male attains this position in the community. Village chieftains are likely to serve as intermediaries between the community and outside groups. Representatives of state agencies or NGOs sometimes contact the tribal chiefs to notify villagers about a new government policy or warn them about a dangerous situation that could affect the village. The local leaders then disseminate any necessary information from the outside to the members of their kinship group or community.³⁰²



© David Blumkrantz
Congolese family in Zaire

Parents, grandparents, children, and other family members may live under the same roof if the house is large enough. Families include a range of relatives that can include aunts, uncles, and cousins. Parents often bring their nieces and nephews to live with them, if they need a place to live.³⁰³

³⁰¹ *The Global Etiquette Guide to Africa and the Middle East: Everything You Need to Know for Business and Travel Success.* Foster, Dean Allen. "Chapter 9: The Center: Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Gabon, and Congo [p. 182]." 2002. New York, NY: John Wiley.

³⁰² Countries and Their Cultures. "Democratic Republic of the Congo: Marriage, Family, and Kinship." 2010. <http://www.everyculture.com/Bo-Co/Democratic-Republic-of-the-Congo.html>

³⁰³ Frederick H. Tuttle Middle School. "Democratic Republic of Congo: Family." 17 March 2009. http://ell.sbsd.tuttle.schoolfusion.us/modules/groups/group_pages.phtml?gid=874275&nid=66375&sessionid=

Exchange 47: Does your family live here?

Visitor:	Does your family live here?	Leebohtah nah yoh ehfahndee ahwah
Local:	Yes.	Eh.

Status of Women, Elders, and Children

Women

Men are heads of households when they are present, but with or without men, women do most of the daily work that guarantees the family’s survival. In rural D.R.C., this includes hauling water in buckets, cutting firewood, cooking, and cleaning. Women also do much of the necessary work in the fields such as planting, harvesting, and collecting fruits and vegetables. Women are, of course, responsible for raising children, preparing and serving meals, and caring for the welfare of family members. The role that men hold is important but narrower. It consists mainly of hunting and also clearing the forest so that the family can farm and cultivate crops.^{304,305, 306} Above all, men serve as family decision-makers, a role not available to a woman unless her husband has died or can no longer support his family.



© André Thiel
Congolese woman from Kivu

According to the Family Codes section of law in the D.R.C., women have rights equal to those of men, but the reality belies equal status.^{307,308} In practice, a wife “must obey her husband” and is effectively reduced to “a minor under the guardianship of her husband.”³⁰⁹ Without the permission of her husband, a married

³⁰⁴ Countries and Their Cultures. “Democratic Republic of the Congo: Marriage, Family, and Kinship.” 2010. <http://www.everyculture.com/Bo-Co/Democratic-Republic-of-the-Congo.html>

³⁰⁵ Frederick H. Tuttle Middle School. “Democratic Republic of Congo: Gender.” 17 March 2009. http://ell.sbsd.tuttle.schoolfusion.us/modules/groups/group_pages.phtml?gid=874275&nid=66375&sessionid=

³⁰⁶ *Democratic Republic of the Congo*. Heale, Jay, and Yong Jui Lin. “Chapter 7: Lifestyle [pp. 85–87].” 2009. Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish.

³⁰⁷ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State. “2009 Human Rights Report: Democratic Republic of the Congo: Section 3: Respect for Political Rights: The Right of Citizens to Change Their Government: Elections and Political Participation.” 11 March 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/af/135947.htm>

³⁰⁸ *Democratic Republic of the Congo*. Heale, Jay, and Yong Jui Lin. “Chapter 7: Lifestyle [pp. 85–87].” 2009. Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish.

³⁰⁹ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State. “2009 Human Rights Report: Democratic Republic of the Congo: Section 3: Respect for Political Rights: The Right of Citizens

woman “cannot open a bank account, obtain a passport or rent or sell property.”³¹⁰ She also cannot accept employment unless her husband approves.³¹¹

Exchange 48: Does your wife have a job?

Visitor:	Does your wife have a job?	Mwahsee nah yoh ahsahlahkah
Local:	Yes, she works at the bank.	Eh, ahsahlahkah nah bahnkee

The Family Code law (which came into effect in 1987 during the Mobutu regime) limits a woman’s authority by allowing a husband to own the property that belongs to his wife. This is true even if the husband is absent from the home. The Code legitimizes polygamy and exempts husbands from the responsibility of providing support for their wives and children.³¹²



© UMNS photo by Mike DuBose
Home in Bongonga community of Lubumbashi

Exchange 49: Are these people part of your family?

Visitor:	Are these people part of your family?	Bahtoh ohyoh bahzahlee kahtee yah leebohtah nah yoh
Local:	Yes.	Eh.

On a professional level, few women hold positions of authority in the government of the D.R.C., and the imbalance between women and men has been increasing. In 2005, women held 12% of the seats in Parliament, but by 2008, they held only 8%. Of the 690

to Change Their Government: Elections and Political Participation.” 11 March 2010.

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/af/135947.htm>

³¹⁰ Frederick H. Tuttle Middle School. “Democratic Republic of Congo: Gender.” 17 March 2009.

http://ell.sbsd.tuttle.schoolfusion.us/modules/groups/group_pages.phtml?gid=874275&nid=66375&sessionid=

³¹¹ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State. “2009 Human Rights Report: Democratic Republic of the Congo: Section 6: Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons: Women.” 11 March 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/af/135947.htm>

³¹² *Democratic Republic of the Congo*. Heale, Jay, and Yong Jui Lin. “Chapter 7: Lifestyle [p. 87].” 2009. Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish.

provincial assembly seats (which represent rural leadership positions), women held only 47.³¹³ At the same time, women are economically vital in the countryside, where they “run the markets, which are the prime economic activity of the village.”³¹⁴

In the D.R.C., women experience discrimination through the lack of legal protection afforded them in cases of spousal abuse or rape. Although assault is considered a crime, police seldom intervene in cases of domestic violence. Similarly, rape—commonplace in areas affected by warfare—is against the law, but the crime is seldom prosecuted. Victims of rape are often pressured by family members not to report the crime because of the social stigma attached to it. The reputation of both the victim and her family would suffer if it were known that a rape had occurred.³¹⁵

Elders

Respect for elders is fundamental to traditional kinship group relations because, by virtue of their age, elders are seen as people of wisdom and authority. They involve themselves actively in the lives of their children and grandchildren, often sharing the same household and taking part in family decisions.

Exchange 50: Is this your entire family?

Visitor:	Is this your entire family?	Ohyoh ehzahlee leebohtah nah yoh mohbinbah
Local:	Yes.	Eh.

Sometimes when conflict occurs within a family, younger members will consult elder relatives whose judgment they respect and ask them to mediate the dispute.³¹⁶ Tradition holds that elders are worthy of the same degree of respect that ancestors or village leaders deserve. Working alongside a village chief or acting in his absence, village elders are

³¹³ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State. “2009 Human Rights Report: Democratic Republic of the Congo: Section 3: Respect for Political Rights: The Right of Citizens to Change Their Government: Elections and Political Participation.” 11 March 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/af/135947.htm>

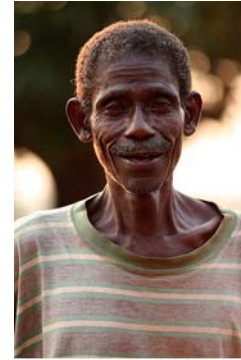
³¹⁴ *Democratic Republic of the Congo*. Heale, Jay, and Yong Jui Lin. “Chapter 7: Lifestyle [p. 87].” 2009. Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish.

³¹⁵ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State. “2009 Human Rights Report: Democratic Republic of the Congo: Section 6: Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons: Women.” 11 March 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/af/135947.htm>

³¹⁶ Frederick H. Tuttle Middle School. “Democratic Republic of Congo: Family.” 17 March 2009. http://ell.sbsd.tuttle.schoolfusion.us/modules/groups/group_pages.phtml?gid=874275&nid=66375&sessionid=

sometimes asked to step into the role of mediators between outside agencies and the entire village. This occurred after the 1995 discovery of the deadly Ebola virus. Representatives of health organizations called on influential village elders to convey to the general population critical information about how to stop the virus from spreading. In this way, prevention knowledge, which helped to reduce the disease, was disseminated throughout the community.³¹⁷

In the eastern D.R.C. and other parts of the country, much of the traditional village hierarchy has been disrupted by war and conflict. The violent rupture of social connections and family networks diminishes the status of elders in the community and threatens their ability to survive. Many older civilians from the D.R.C. have been killed, injured, or displaced as a result of war.^{318,319} In addition, the large number of D.R.C. refugees includes elders who fled from the war zones into other regions of the D.R.C., Sudan, or other countries. Some have returned to their homes after an absence of many years, hoping to reunite with their families.³²⁰ Often, they are not able to return to their communities, and they end up living in camps or with families who are able to take refugees into their homes.³²¹ Throughout the D.R.C., warfare has led to a breakdown of social tradition, not only among elders, but all segments of the population.



© Endre Vestvik
Elderly man

In rural areas, where the majority of people in the D.R.C. live, elderly people do not receive disability or pensions. Instead, it is the family's responsibility to take care of parents and grandparents as they age. Elders live with their extended families whenever possible so that their children, grandchildren, and nieces or nephews can help to care for them.

Children

Children represent prosperity to their families, and they join the work of the household when they are very young. Girls are taught to cook, prepare ingredients (such as pounding cassava root for cooking), and care for their younger siblings. Boys, too, learn to manage the household and take on adult responsibilities at a young age, but unlike girls, their work is outside of the house. They learn to hunt, clear land, and complete other

³¹⁷ Countries and Their Cultures. "Democratic Republic of the Congo: Marriage, Family, and Kinship." 2010. <http://www.everyculture.com/Bo-Co/Democratic-Republic-of-the-Congo.html>

³¹⁸ Human Rights Watch. "Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)." 2010. <http://www.hrw.org/en/node/87600>

³¹⁹ UNICEF. "Jessica Lange in NY to Discuss Her Experiences in War-Torn DRC." 8 September 2003. http://www.unicef.org/media/media_14096.html

³²⁰ UNHCR. "Determined to Go Back Home: Elderly Congolese Return from South Sudan." 9 May 2006. <http://www.unhcr.org/4460c68c2.html>

³²¹ ACT International. "DRC: 'Invisible' Displaced and Host Families at Risk, Warns ACT." 10 November 2008. <http://www.act-intl.org/news.php?uid=640>

tasks. Both boys and girls are cared for by the entire community, with adults of all ages providing discipline and guidance.^{322,323}

Exchange 51: Do you have any brothers?

Visitor:	Do you have any brothers?	Ohzahlee nah bah ndehkoh yah meebahlee
Local:	Yes, I have four brothers.	Eh, nahzahlee nah bah ndehkoh yah meebahlee meenayee

Children are generally expected to attend primary school, but circumstances, including war and a lack of infrastructure, often intervene and cause many children to stay home. In rural D.R.C., the shortage of schools and teachers has had a depressing effect on childhood education. Many children drop out of school or never attend, beginning agricultural work in the fields at a very young age to help their families survive. If children live in conflict zones, the parents often keep them home out of fear that militia members will kidnap them and force the children to serve in their armies. It is estimated that a large number of children in the country have been forced to serve in the militias, either carrying supplies or taking up arms. This has been an extensive problem, especially in the eastern D.R.C., which has been the site of intense fighting for many years. Because of the danger, schools in those areas are often either run-down or closed.^{324, 325,326} Children have problems completing their



© Guy Fawkes
Little girls

³²² Countries and Their Cultures. “Democratic Republic of the Congo: Socialization.” 2010. <http://www.everyculture.com/Bo-Co/Democratic-Republic-of-the-Congo.html>

³²³ Frederick H. Tuttle Middle School. “Democratic Republic of Congo: Children.” 17 March 2009. http://ell.sbsd.tuttle.schoolfusion.us/modules/groups/group_pages.phtml?gid=874275&nid=66375&sessionid=

³²⁴ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State. “2009 Human Rights Report: Democratic Republic of the Congo: Section 6: Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons: Children.” 11 March 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/af/135947.htm>

³²⁵ Frederick H. Tuttle Middle School. “Democratic Republic of Congo: Children.” 17 March 2009. http://ell.sbsd.tuttle.schoolfusion.us/modules/groups/group_pages.phtml?gid=874275&nid=66375&sessionid=

³²⁶ BBC News. “Congoese Children Forced to Fight.” 12 November 2008. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7724088.stm>

education in the cities as well, with many young people dropping out of urban schools. In general, children in the D.R.C. have a high risk of experiencing kidnapping, malnutrition, injury, or death from war or disease.^{327,328,329}

Orphans in the D.R.C.

The number of orphans in the D.R.C. is high due to war, refugee status, or abandonment. Parents may force children out of the home not only because they can no longer care for them, but also because they often believe a child is possessed by witchcraft. One source suggests that this belief may be partly associated with the image of the many child soldiers—armed with machine guns—who were part of the armies that deposed Mobutu and participated in violent conflicts.³³⁰ UNICEF also reports that children who have physical or cognitive disabilities are often abandoned because of the superstition associating disability with witchcraft. Of the total number of orphans in the D.R.C., it is believed that over 90% receive no material support from any sources. An even larger percentage lack health services, with only 3% of the orphans receiving any kind of medical assistance.^{331, 332}



© Endre Vestvik
Children at an orphanage in Goma

Exchange 52: Did you grow up here?

Visitor:	Did you grow up here?	Ohkohlee ahwah
Local:	Yes.	Eh.

³²⁷ ACT International. “DRC: ‘Invisible’ Displaced and Host Families at Risk, Warns ACT.” 10 November 2008. <http://www.act-intl.org/news.php?uid=640>

³²⁸ Guardian. “War in Congo Kills 45,000 People Each Month.” 23 January 2008. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/jan/23/congo.international>

³²⁹ *Sudan Tribune*. Uma, Julius N. “New Report Unearths Tale of Tragic LRA Atrocities in DRC, Sudan.” 29 March 2010. http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?page=imprimable&id_article=34577

³³⁰ BBC News. “Congo’s Child Victims of Superstition.” 30 July 2005. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/from_our_own_correspondent/4727745.stm

³³¹ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State. “2009 Human Rights Report: Democratic Republic of the Congo: Section 6: Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons: Children.” 11 March 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/af/135947.htm>

³³² BBC News. Crawford, Angus. “Congo’s Child Victims of Superstition.” 30 July 2005. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/from_our_own_correspondent/4727745.stm

Even though it occurs frequently, “parental abandonment of children for alleged sorcery” is illegal in the D.R.C., according to the 2009 Child Protection Law.³³³ Parents who commit this offense or accuse a child of sorcery may be sentenced to prison. Adults who are not parents of a child they accuse of witchcraft may also be imprisoned.

Marriage, Divorce, and Birth

Marriage

Marriage in the D.R.C. is seen as more than simply a union between two individuals. It joins families and kinship groups together and forms the social glue that holds communities together. Many traditions surround marriage that act to formalize and strengthen it as an institution. For example, in the past, parents or family members often helped to arrange a marriage, adding the weight and stability of family involvement to the union.



© Mulungwishi mission station, D.R. Congo
Couple from Katanga

Arranged marriage has decreased, especially in the cities. Another custom is the obligation of the groom or his parents to pay a “bride-price” to the parents of the bride, thus sealing the plans for marriage. In the past, the transfer of value could consist of goods such as food, slaves, or household items. The marriage ceremony that follows negotiations is an occasion for celebration because it represents the development of a community.³³⁴

Young people view marriage seriously and typically work hard to build their family and make the marriage work.^{335,336}

Exchange 53: Are you married?

Visitor:	Are you married?	Ohbahlee
Local:	Yes.	Eh

³³³ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State. “2009 Human Rights Report: Democratic Republic of the Congo: Section 6: Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons: Children.” 11 March 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/af/135947.htm>

³³⁴ Frederick H. Tuttle Middle School. “Democratic Republic of Congo: Family.” 17 March 2009. http://ell.sbsd.tuttle.schoolfusion.us/modules/groups/group_pages.phtml?gid=874275&nid=66375&sessionid=

³³⁵ *The Washington Post*. Timberg, Craig. “In Congo, Love Born in Wartime Grows in Peace.” 25 February 2005. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A51526-2005Feb24.html>

³³⁶ Countries and Their Cultures. “Democratic Republic of the Congo: Marriage, Family, and Kinship.” 2010. <http://www.everyculture.com/Bo-Co/Democratic-Republic-of-the-Congo.html>

Girls younger than 14 and boys under 18 cannot legally marry. However, the practice of providing dowry money or gifts encourages underage marriage, with many girls marrying when they are not yet 14. The law is often overlooked, particularly in rural areas of the D.R.C. Severe penalties exist for the crime of forcing children to marry, but the U.S. State Department found no reports of prosecution for such acts in 2008.³³⁷

Exchange 54: Is this your wife?

Visitor:	Is this your wife?	Ohyoh mwahsee nah yoh
Local:	Yes.	Eh.

Wives in the D.R.C. have few rights. For instance, they cannot inherit property, and a husband can take or keep any property that his wife owns. In general, a married woman must defer to her husband’s authority in all matters. Finally, although it is acceptable for men to have more than one wife (especially in rural areas), a woman is vulnerable to censure and punishment if she is unfaithful to her husband.³³⁸



© Mulungwishi mission station, D.R. Congo
Young couple from Katanga

Divorce

If a marriage ends in divorce, the bride’s family must return the bride-price that they received from the groom’s family when their daughter married. This, of course, is one of the reasons that divorce is discouraged, since wealth is very hard to come by, and returning such valuables would be difficult for most families. Divorce is also discouraged because it tends to destroy important community ties that a marriage creates. Families typically choose to mediate marital discord in order to avoid such disruption.³³⁹

If women in the D.R.C. divorce, they have no rights to child or spousal support.³⁴⁰ This state of affairs puts a woman with children to support at a severe disadvantage since she

³³⁷ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State. “2009 Human Rights Report: Democratic Republic of the Congo: Section 6: Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons: Children.” 11 March 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/af/135947.htm>

³³⁸ *Democratic Republic of the Congo*. Heale, Jay, and Yong Jui Lin. “Chapter 7: Lifestyle [p. 87].” 2009. Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish.

³³⁹ Frederick H. Tuttle Middle School. “Democratic Republic of Congo: Family.” 17 March 2009. http://ell.sbsd.tuttle.schoolfusion.us/modules/groups/group_pages.phtml?gid=874275&nid=66375&sessionid=

³⁴⁰ *Democratic Republic of the Congo*. Heale, Jay, and Yong Jui Lin. “Chapter 7: Lifestyle [p. 87].” 2009. Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish.

cannot hope to earn wages equal to a man’s. Even if she has no children, it is difficult for a single woman to support herself in the D.R.C.

Birth

Parents in the D.R.C. commonly give birth to several children because malnutrition, childhood illness, and war contribute to a low survival rate. It is estimated that 20% of children die before they are five years of age.³⁴¹ Parents are also likely to have several children because they need the labor of as many people as possible to survive as a family.

Exchange 55: Are these your children?

Visitor:	Are these your children?	Ohyoh bannah nah yoh
Local:	Yes.	Eh

Birth rituals vary according to tribal customs, but most Congolese follow the tradition of celebrating in a community gathering. Music, singing, feasting, exchanging gifts, and dancing accompany the joyous event.³⁴² Young mothers with many children to care for typically carry their babies on their backs as they work around the house or in the fields.



© Woody Collins
Mother and child

In most cases, the birth of a child is not immediately registered by the government. UNICEF reports that in 2007, the births of only 31% of all children in the D.R.C. were documented by the government. Registration of newly born children has since increased in Kinshasa, the nation’s largest city.³⁴³

Family Social Events

Weddings

Wedding traditions vary in the D.R.C., depending on location, regional customs, and group influence. Some couples have more than one wedding ceremony. They may

³⁴¹ Guardian. “War in Congo Kills 45,000 People Each Month.” 23 January 2008. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/jan/23/congo.international>

³⁴² The Wilderness Called Congo. “People & Practice – II: Birth and Death Rituals.” 21 May 2009. <http://incongo.blogspot.com/2009/05/people-practice-ii.html>

³⁴³ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State. “2009 Human Rights Report: Democratic Republic of the Congo: Section 6: Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons: Children.” 11 March 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/af/135947.htm>

formalize their marriage at a church service as well as in an official civil service ceremony.³⁴⁴

Exchange 56: Congratulations on your wedding!

Visitor:	Congratulations on your wedding!	Longohneeah mpoh nah leebahlah nah yoh
Local:	We are honored you could attend.	Tohkoomeesahmee ndengeh bohyay

Well-attended family celebrations and gift exchanges are also customary. In cities, weddings may be lavish affairs for those who can afford the expense. The groom or his family may hire a professional photographer to take photos and rent a hall or book a restaurant for a large number of people.³⁴⁵ In rural areas, wedding ceremonies are often accompanied by singing and dancing that can continue for several days.³⁴⁶



If a visitor is fortunate enough to be invited to a wedding in the D.R.C., it is an opportune time to congratulate the bride and groom.

Exchange 57: I wish you both happiness.

Visitor:	I wish you both happiness.	Tohkohleekeehah beenoh meebahleh bohmengo
Local:	Thank you so much.	Mehlehsee mingee mpenzah

³⁴⁴ Frederick H. Tuttle Middle School. “Democratic Republic of Congo: Family.” 17 March 2009. http://ell.sbsd.tuttle.schoolfusion.us/modules/groups/group_pages.phtml?gid=874275&nid=66375&sessionid=

³⁴⁵ The Wilderness Called Congo. “People & Practice – III: Marriage.” 22 May 2009. <http://incongo.blogspot.com/2009/05/people-practice-iii.html>

³⁴⁶ Frederick H. Tuttle Middle School. “Democratic Republic of Congo: Family.” 17 March 2009. http://ell.sbsd.tuttle.schoolfusion.us/modules/groups/group_pages.phtml?gid=874275&nid=66375&sessionid=

Death Rituals

According to customs of some Congolese tribes, family members place gifts around the body of the person who has died. This practice enables the spirit of the person who has died to take remembrances with him or her into the spirit world beyond death. The family then covers the body with a shroud before burial. In accordance with tradition, women may mourn by marking their faces with white paint.³⁴⁷



© Marc Lambrechts
Funeral ritual

Whether in rural or urban areas, funerals are social events. Guests dress formally and carry bouquets of flowers in the burial procession and the graveside service. The family of the deceased often arranges a communal meal afterward. In this way, family members and guests can celebrate the life of the deceased and share stories as they mourn the loss together. Rituals associated with the death of a loved one may continue over a few days.³⁴⁸

Exchange 58: I'm sorry, I share your sadness.

Visitor:	I'm sorry, I share your sadness.	Nahzahlee nah Mahwah. Nahkahbohlee Mahwah nah yoh
Local:	Thank you.	mehlehsee

Ancestor worship is a common, deeply held practice in the D.R.C. as well as many African nations. Congolese people believe that family members who have died will remain spiritually associated with those left behind for an unlimited time. Following tradition, survivors communicate with their ancestors, asking for their intercession with the supreme being on important life events. People pray to their ancestors for good health, solutions to problems, or rain to irrigate the crops. They remember those who have died by welcoming the spirits of the deceased into the everyday activities of the living.³⁴⁹ It is

³⁴⁷ Countries and Their Cultures. "Democratic Republic of the Congo: Religion: Death and the Afterlife." 2010. <http://www.everyculture.com/Bo-Co/Democratic-Republic-of-the-Congo.html>

³⁴⁸ The Wilderness Called Congo. "People & Practice – II: Birth and Death Rituals." 21 May 2009. <http://incongo.blogspot.com/2009/05/people-practice-ii.html>

³⁴⁹ Countries and Their Cultures. "Democratic Republic of the Congo: Religion: Death and the Afterlife." 2010. <http://www.everyculture.com/Bo-Co/Democratic-Republic-of-the-Congo.html>

widely believed that the spirits of angry ancestors around a village can be destructive, and it is therefore necessary to placate them with gifts or sacrifices.³⁵⁰

Naming Conventions

Naming a child after a birth is an important event in the D.R.C., because it symbolizes the child's entry into the life of the family. The form a name takes is also significant, often for political reasons. During the Mobutu era, the government ordered people to avoid selecting names that were foreign or Christian. Instead, people had to choose ethnic or regional names that reflected the culture of the D.R.C. This restriction applied broadly to names of places as well as persons.³⁵¹



© Woody Collins
Congolese family

In the modern era, a child may receive a name that combines the family's Christian heritage with local tradition. Often the first name is Christian, followed by two additional names reflecting the local culture of the D.R.C. The parents may choose the local names based upon family tradition, in remembrance of a relative, or in accordance with a story connected to the child's birth.³⁵²

Self Study Questions

1. Life in rural parts of the D.R.C. is organized around the nuclear family.
2. Rural leaders are drawn from the ranks of men, based on their popularity and prestige among fellow villagers.
3. In addition to cooking, cleaning, and caring for children, women in rural parts of the D.R.C. also haul water, chop firewood, and work in the fields planting and harvesting crops.
4. The role of family decision-maker is one that a woman can assume only if she has received permission from her husband.
5. In the D.R.C., the state provides financial support to elders who were displaced as refugees during the war.

³⁵⁰ Countries and Their Cultures. "Democratic Republic of the Congo: Religion: Religious Beliefs." 2010. <http://www.everyculture.com/Bo-Co/Democratic-Republic-of-the-Congo.html>

³⁵¹ Spirasi. CulturalProfiles. "Congo – Democratic Republic of Congo: Country Profile: Naming." No date. <http://cultural.profiles.spirasi.ie/countries/congo%20drc.shtml>

³⁵² Spirasi. CulturalProfiles. "Congo – Democratic Republic of Congo: Country Profile: Naming." No date. <http://cultural.profiles.spirasi.ie/countries/congo%20drc.shtml>

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Appendix A: Answers to Self Study Questions

Profile

1. The Congo Basin is home to one of the largest rainforests in the world. **True.**

Congo Basin, a low-lying plateau, densely packed with trees, vines, and other vegetation, is among the largest tropical rainforests in the world.

2. The Congo River is the longest river in Africa. **False.**

The Congo River is approximately 4,700 km (2,900 mi) in length, making it the second longest river on the African continent, surpassed only by the Nile.

3. Kinshasa is the D.R.C.'s capital and largest city. **True.**

With an estimated 8 million people, the capital of the D.R.C., Kinshasa, is Africa's third largest city, and a center of communications, commerce, and administration.

4. Lingala has been used as a lingua franca by those living along the Congo River. **True.**

For centuries, Lingala-speaking people along the Congo have used their language as a lingua franca to negotiate with ethnic groups who speak other languages.

5. The Bakongo did not practice slavery before Europeans entered into the African slave trade. **False.**

The Bakongo practiced slavery before the arrival of Europeans, categorizing their captives into four groups: criminals, debtors, children given away by their families as part of a dowry, and war prisoners.

Religion

1. Christianity is the official religion of the D.R.C. **False.**

Though Christianity is the dominant religion (with Roman Catholics and Protestants together making up 70% of the population), the D.R.C. has no official religion.

2. Islam was introduced into the area now known as the D.R.C. by slave traders. **True.**

Islam was brought to the eastern DRC by slave traders who were trying to acquire slaves from central Africa.

3. Kimbanguism was brought to the Congo by American missionaries. **False.**

Kimbanguism developed as a personality cult around its founder, a Baptist named Simon Kimbangu, in southwestern D.R.C. It was recognized as an official religious organization in 1959.

4. Animism is a belief system in which the natural world is imbued with spirits that can sometimes affect mortals. **True.**

Common among many indigenous cultures, animism is a belief that natural objects or phenomena (such as rocks, trees, and rivers) are endowed with spiritual power.

5. In the D.R.C., animistic beliefs and practices are rarely blended with those of organized religion. **False.**

Although the majority of Congolese identify as Christian, they typically follow syncretic religious practices, that is, a mixture of Christianity with animism and local traditions of several origins.

Traditions

1. The Congolese cherish consensus within their communities. **True.**

Both egalitarianism and hierarchy are highly valued. Communal decision-making, i.e., consensus among and between individuals within the community, is very important.

2. The Congolese identify strongly with their national independence. **True.**

The colonial past of the D.R.C. was marked by slavery, forced labor, and second-class citizenship. People are mindful of the fight for and cost of independence.

3. It is typically acceptable for men to give women gifts. **False.**

A man may give a gift to another man, but not to a woman. If he does, he should say it is from his wife or a female relative. Otherwise, the gesture will be seen as overly personal.

4. Men and women are not permitted to shake hands under any circumstances. **False.**

When a woman has extended her hand first, it is acceptable for a man to shake it.

5. A Congolese handshake is typically less firm than a Western handshake. **True.**

The customary handshake in the Congo region is soft, rather than firm and energetic as would be expected in a Western-style handshake.

Urban Life

1. The lack of available jobs in rural areas was a major reason for migration into the cities. **True.**

Rural migrants were attracted to urban areas starting in the late 1920s when the mining industry built towns around their operations and the state began to invest a higher level of resources in the cities.

2. Most of Kinshasa's population growth took place in the 19th century. **False.**

Though established in 1898, most of Kinshasa's growth took place fairly recently. Its population grew from 50,000 in 1940 to 400,000 in 1960.

3. Kinshasa is the D.R.C.'s largest city. **True.**

Kinshasa is the largest city in the entire nation. Today, it has over 7 million inhabitants, and is on its way to becoming a megacity (a population of 10 million or higher).

4. Formal-sector employment in Kinshasa has increased steadily since the 1970s. **False.**

Between 1977 and 1983, formal employment in Kinshasa declined by 48%. Since then, the population has continued to increase exponentially and unemployment has been rampant.

5. Hospitals in the large cities of the D.R.C. are considered safe and reliable. **False.**

Though hospitals in Kinshasa are better than those in other cities or in rural areas, even this care is considered unreliable due to lack of adherence to international regulations.

Rural Life

1. In rural areas of the D.R.C., the most common way to earn a living is by subsistence farming. **True.**

Subsistence farming is the primary means of earning a living in rural areas of the Lingala region, where most people live. Farmers primarily grow cassava, maize, and root crops.

2. Insufficient investment has contributed to the decline of the agricultural industry. **True.**

Inadequate government support to farmers, lack of investment in transportation and energy infrastructures, and a general lack of access to credit have all contributed to the decline of the agricultural industry.

3. The Bakajika land law instituted by Mobutu called for equal land distribution. **False.**

The Bakajika land law overturned ancestral property rights such that all lands—vacant or occupied—could be appropriated by the state and sold to private parties at the will of the authorities.

4. Travelers to rural areas of the D.R.C. are at risk of acquiring malaria. **True.**

In rural areas, travelers are at risk of contracting malaria. The disease is difficult to diagnose, symptoms progress rapidly, and, if untreated, it can be fatal.

5. The low rate of school attendance in rural areas is mostly due to a lack of facilities. **False.**

In addition to the shortage of educational facilities, parents are expected to pay for paper, writing supplies, and notebooks. This financial burden on families has driven many children to drop out of school.

Family Life

1. Life in rural parts of the D.R.C. is organized around the nuclear family. **False.**

Rural life is organized around male-dominated kinship groups living in extended-family households.

2. Rural leaders are drawn from the ranks of men, based on their popularity and prestige among fellow villagers. **True.**

Since men hold the highest rank in rural communities, they are eligible to serve as village chieftains, who serve as representatives of their communities and intermediaries with outside groups.

3. In addition to cooking, cleaning, and caring for children, women in rural parts of the D.R.C. also haul water, chop firewood, and work in the fields planting and harvesting crops. **True.**

Whether the male head of household is present or not, women do most of the daily work that ensures the survival of their families.

4. The role of family decision-maker is one that a woman can assume only if she has received permission from her husband. **False.**

The role of family decision-maker is not available to a woman unless her husband has died or can no longer support his family.

5. In the D.R.C., the state provides financial support to elders who were displaced as refugees during the war. **False.**

The state provides no such assistance to elders who have been separated from their families. Often, displaced elders end up living in camps or with families not related to them, but who are able to take refugees into their homes.