

**A GRAMMAR OF THE  
BEMBA LANGUAGE  
AS SPOKEN IN  
NORTH-EAST RHODESIA**

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A Grammar of the Bemba Language as Spoken in North-east Rhodesia by Father Schoeffer & J. H. West Sheane

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**BEMBA LANGUAGE**

AS SPOKEN IN  
NORTH-EAST RHODESIA

BY  
REV. FATHER SCHOEFFER  
OF THE MISSION COMMUNITY OF THE WHITE FATHERS

EDITED BY  
J. H. WEST SHEANE, B.A. (Camb.)  
NATIVE COMMISSIONER, B.S.A. COMPANY, N.E.R.

ARRANGED, WITH PREFACE, BY  
A. C. MADAN, M.A.  
STUDENT OF CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD

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## PREFACE

To the Rev. Father Schoeffer of the White Fathers Mission Community belongs the entire credit for the careful collection and systematic study of the facts contained in the following pages. The French original was translated by J. H. West Sheane, Esq., B.A. Camb., District Commissioner in the Bemba Country, but as its form did not appear in some respects the most suitable for general use by English students, the author generously consented to the whole being recast by myself under the general editorship of Mr West Sheane, whose special philological training and personal knowledge of the Bemba language are ample guarantee that the process had been carefully carried out. Hitherto a useful *Introductory Handbook to the Language of the Bemba people*, by W. G. R. (London Missionary Society), has been the only work on the subject. Father Schoeffer's independent and fuller study of the Grammar will stimulate and reward further investigation of a language, itself of great interest and importance (especially as regards its Tense-system), and spoken by a tribe whose position and qualities give them a dominant and increasing influence among their neighbours in North-East Rhodesia.

It should be remembered that the name Bemba is in some districts heard as Wemba, and often so written.

A. C. MADAN.

FORT JAMESON, NORTH-EAST RHODESIA, 1906.

The paragraphs have been numbered consecutively throughout for convenience of reference. Only a few of the commoner abbreviations are employed.

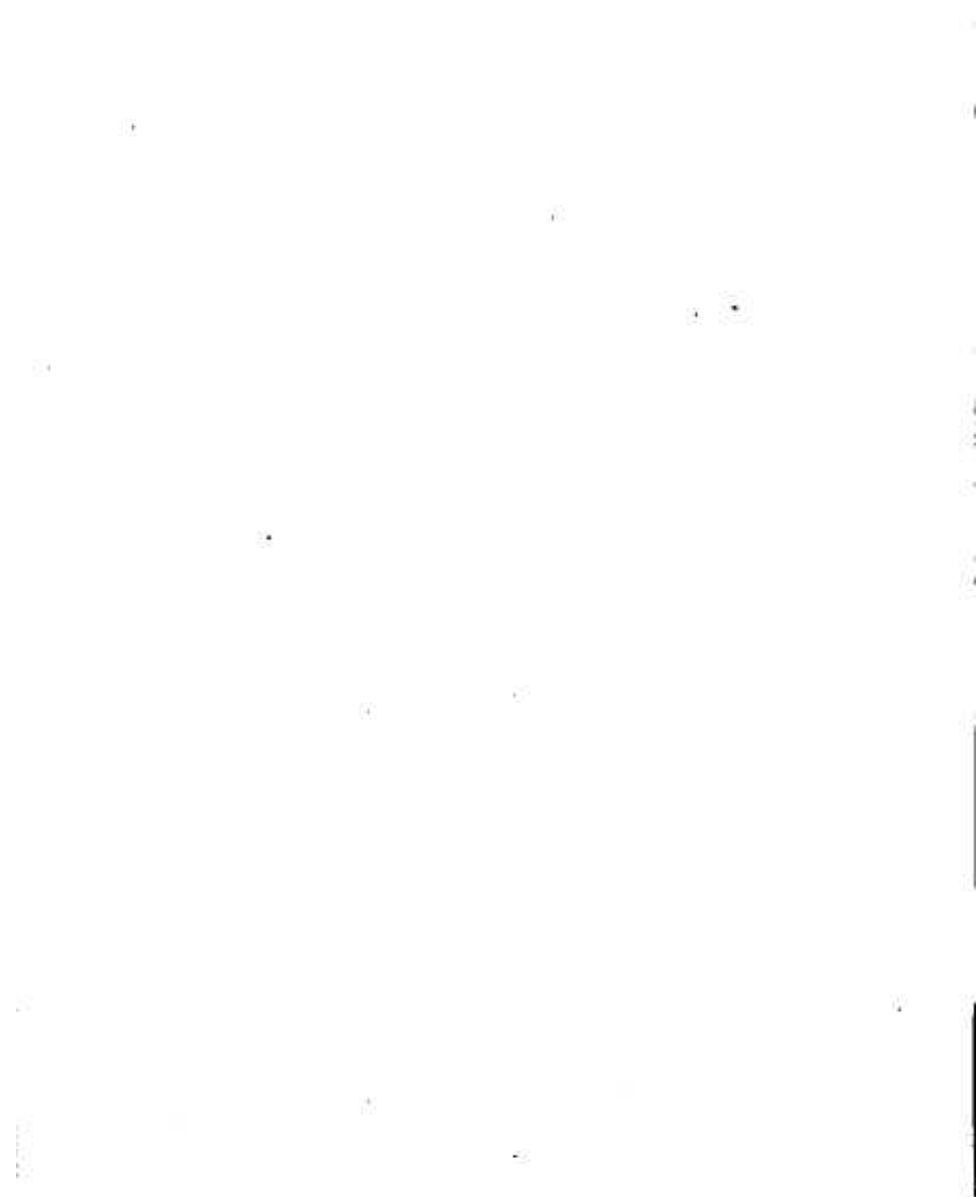


Figure 1. The relationship between the number of species (S) and the number of individuals (N) for different species richness measures. The x-axis is the number of individuals (N) on a logarithmic scale, and the y-axis is the number of species (S). (a) Species richness (S). (b) Species richness (S) with a shaded area. (c) Species richness (S) with a shaded area and a dashed line. (d) Species richness (S) with a shaded area and a dashed line. (e) Species richness (S) with a shaded area and a dashed line.



## EDITOR'S PREFACE

THE Bemba people are, roughly speaking, settled throughout the vast stretch of country bounded on the north and south by Lakes Tanganyika and Bangweolo, on the east by the Cham- beshi, and on the west by the Luapula and Lake Mweru. But the language itself has a wider and increasing scope, mainly eastward and westward. Indeed, it is not too much to say that it is commonly understood from the Lualaba in the Congo Free State without a break to Karonga on Lake Nyasa.

I have compared the present treatise, as drawn up by Mr. Madan, with my translation from the original French, and consider that it contains in a succinct form the results of Father Schoeffer's labours. A few orthographical changes have been made throughout in order to adapt the spelling of the original MS. to that adopted in the main by Bishop Steere in his *Swahili Handbook*, and approved by the Royal Geographical Society.

It might be urged that for a minute exposition of the laws of phonetic change in Bemba a more scientific system, such as that of Lepsius, should be adopted. But on the other hand the use of a set of symbols would be out of place in a book which has been recast as clearly and simply as possible for the use of students in the country. Indeed, such phonetic problems as the question of the nasal prefixes (which involves the whole theory of nasalization), discussed in Toner's *Comparative Grammar*, §§ 292-4, and the *Handbook of Bemba*, by W. G. R., §§ 44-6, and p. 88, have been only briefly touched upon, as such inquiries are better relegated to larger and more exhaustive

works. The same remark applies to the question of the original, or archaic, initial sound of nouns, and of the combination of final and initial sounds of words in quickly spoken sentences, which has been briefly mentioned in § 16.

In conclusion, I would apologize in advance for any errors in the text: which may have escaped my notice, as, owing to illness and consequent arrears of official work, I have been unable to devote as much time to editorial duties as I should otherwise have wished.

J. H. WEST SHEANE.

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