

# Introduction to Magani, the language of Kalimbula and Jungu Josh



Magani is the main language of Kalimbula, the secret valley in East Africa where the Jungu Josh books are set. It is spoken by the Magani tribe (who are the largest tribe in Kalimbula), but it is also the lingua franca of the other tribes of Kalimbula, including the Uchubis and the Shungos.

During the development of the language for the books, Constant van Graan sought information from Swahili about the handling of grammar and used it as a guideline throughout. Regarding the vocabulary and phonetics of Magani, Kinyarwanda (which is spoken in Rwanda) played an important role, especially in developing nouns, whereas Zulu and Southern Sotho influenced the articles, adjectives and everyday verbs. The Uchubi parts that can be found in the books are based on the Namibian languages of Herero (Otjiherero) and Ovambo (Oshiwambo). These languages remind Constant of his home country and have a rich history – therefore Uchubi also has an ancient feel to it.

## Examples of everyday Magani phrases:

### English

Hello there!  
Welcome..

### Magani

Seku Ngwenyo!  
Waijona.Waijona.

### English

Thank you.

### Magani

Abende.

### English

How are you?

### Magani

Ke yubo ye tembe?

### English

I am well!

### Magani

Ke incha yaye  
wanje!

### English

Why are you late?

### Magani

Kunu were e  
nyake?

### English

I played \*duki

### Magani

Ineze nagugenje  
duki.

### English

What is your  
totem animal?

### Magani

Newa were Nyam-  
ba wa Rombo?

### English

The Zebra.

### Magani

eMbedza

**English**

That's interesting!  
Mine is the Giraffe.

**Magani**

He kuburima!  
I eNyansa.

**English**

I am hungry. Should  
we eat something?

**Magani**

I njonye. Were  
nejiza ketu benjwa.

**English**

Oh, yes, please!

**Magani**

O yeko muneka!

**English**

I am making  
\*Mabandi bean stew  
for us.

**Magani**

I faje ka tuya  
Mabandibizemboro.

**English**

Oh, nice!

**Magani**

O bweja!

**English**

I bid you farewell  
till next time.

**Magani**

Neku ngwenyana  
kuje.

**English**

All the best!

**Magani**

Komeje neya!

<sup>1</sup>Duki is the traditional sport of the tribes of Kalimbula and is especially popular with the Magani tribe. It is almost like hockey mixed with sprinting and a bit of darts as well, except no goals are scored and players do not form teams. The targets are the children themselves and the "darts" are holupi seeds – black pips with spikes. It is played in an oval clearing close to the village. Players pick their own seeds in the forest. A reed and a stick are used to smack a ball made from tree bark, roughly the size of two fists. There are no rules about how many people can play, but normally it is about a dozen. The main objective is to hit the ball through another player's legs. When this happens, this person becomes the target and must scurry away as fast as possible. When one of the other players reach the ball, they shout "Kucha!" which means "stop". The target then freezes, which gives the attacker the opportunity to eliminate them from the game by taking the reed, placing a seed in it, and "shooting" the target by blowing the pip through the reed, usually from long range. The target is only allowed to cover their face and neck. If the target is hit, the seed pierces the skin and gives a burning sensation which lasts for about five minutes. If the attacker misses, the game will start over again, but if the target is hit, they must leave the game. If the target is hit higher than the chest area, the attacker is disqualified. The winner of each stage has the advantage of being immune for the next round, except in the final. The game goes on until there is only one player left, who will be named champion and who is then excused from any chores for the rest of the day.

<sup>2</sup>Mabandi beans are a popular dish of the Magani tribe. The beans can only be found on the ominous Mabandi Mountains in the northwest of the valley, and it takes a lot of effort to get hold of them. A handful of these wild beans is enough to give a person the energy and stamina to go for days without eating.

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