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A Shaba Swahili life history: Text, translation, and comments

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1. Introduction

This paper presents an edited version of a handwritten text in Shaba Swahili and French, accompanied by an English translation. The original text was written in ballpoint by a Shaba Zairean ex-houseboy, and sent to his former employer in Belgium. It provides an account of his life, with special focus on the period after his Belgian employers left Zaire in 1973. It documents the conditions of hardship in the life of a semi-educated Zairean and provides a detailed account of the migrations he has to undertake in order to find means to support himself and his family. The author wrote the 'récit' at the request of the former employer's wife, as a symbolic way to repay the debt he had incurred over the years in which he had received money and other goods from the Belgian lady. The text was sent to me by the former employer, who asked me to translate it into Dutch. The former employer granted me the permission to edit and publish the text in its totality. For reasons of privacy, we decided to alter the names of the people mentioned in the text. Thus, for instance, the employer is named *André Deprins*, his wife (who is the central addressee of the text) *Helena Arens*, and the author of the text is identified as *Julien*.

Shaba Swahili is the name given to the variety of Swahili (or rather, the cluster of varieties) spoken in the Zairean provinces of Shaba and Kasai. It is, in Walter Schicho's opinion, "a creolized variety of Swahili" (1990: 33), with a peculiar history of colonial appropriation, codification and reconstruction documented in great detail in Fabian's *Language and colonial power* (1986). Shaba Swahili was, according to Fabian, primarily an urban medium and closely linked to the climate of wage labor in the mining areas of Katanga. Despite the fact that more or less plausible historical and genetic lineages were constructed for Shaba Swahili (with the so-called 'Msiri hypothesis' as one of the most influential examples), the main formative influence on the spread and diffusion of Shaba Swahili seems to have been of a colonial-political nature. There was no significant substrate of Swahili speakers, and established organic models of language change do not seem to hold in the case of Shaba Swahili (cf. Fabian

1986: 6-8). Shaba Swahili was, in Fabian's opinion, "a creole without having gone through a pidgin state". Julien's text, however, is not homogeneously in Swahili. The final parts of the text are in French, like most of the previous letters he had written to his former employer. For the longer and more intricate writing task requested from him, he preferred Swahili over French because - in the words of his former employer - that would make him more free to express himself.¹ The text arrived in Belgium in April 1995, and was presumably written in various versions between 1993 and early 1995.

The text may arouse the interest of some people for a number of reasons. First, this is a written, largely narrative document, which documents the way in which literacy and literariness have been absorbed by people such as the author of the text. Fabian notes repeatedly that Shaba Swahili has no written standard of its own, and he also points at some orthographic consequences of this lack of a standard: difficulties in segmenting morphemes and words, erratic interpunction, and hypercorrection. The text therefore reflects the process of emergent literacy, in which writers ply their medium and experiment with it until it satisfies their needs. Apart from that, of particular interest is the way in which the author adopts himself to a non-Swahili speaking audience by providing glosses for some words which he deems difficult for non-native speakers of Shaba Swahili. The text, in other words, documents how a Shaba Swahili speaker handles intercultural communication through his preferred language, Shaba Swahili. At a more general level, the text documents a stage in the development of a language, both as a structural entity and as an instrument for constructing narrative accounts. The same issues can be raised with regard to the French used by the author. It will be clear that the author has severe difficulties in using standard French orthography, especially when it comes to providing an orthographic image of French grammatical agreements, gender and singular/plural markings. Finally, the text may also be a precious source of historical information, providing valuable insights into the way in which common people experience their personal problems and the larger political, historical and socio-economic context in which they live. All these points deserve deeper scrutiny than the one I can provide at this point. Providing an edited version of the written text may hopefully be the first step in a longer process of detailed research in language material of this kind.

The well-informed reader has already noticed an important degree of similarity between this text and the *Vocabulaire d'Elisabethville* by André Yav, edited and published by Johannes Fabian in *History from below* (Fabian 1990). The *Vocabulaire d'Elisabethville* is also written by a former houseboy in Shaba, and it is also written in Shaba Swahili. The differences between both texts are, first, of a text-typological kind. Yav's text was a printed text, directed towards a large (?) home audience. Julien's text is framed as a private letter to one

particular overseas addressee, with whom he has had professional contacts, and to whom he has frequently appealed for help and financial assistance. The second type of differences are informational and generic. Yav's text displays manifest historiographic ambitions, and therefore moves on a higher level of generality than the text written by Julien. The latter is a personal history, and the horizon of Julien's reflections is therefore largely confined to his own individual experiences. Only at a few points does Julien frame his experiences in a larger historical context, and only the final three chapters, written in French, can be said to be reflexive and general. A third type of differences is linguistic. Yav's text was written in Shaba Swahili throughout, with some lexical interference from French. Julien's text contains two parts, one written in 'pure' Shaba Swahili with hardly any borrowings from French, but with some French glosses added to Swahili terms, and another part written completely in French, without interference from Swahili. It is also likely that both texts reflect different varieties of Shaba Swahili, Yav's being a Lubumbashi variant and Julien's being a more northern variant. Confirmation of this hypothesis would, of course, require more thorough dialectologic research.

Despite the differences between the two texts, it is only fair to acknowledge the influence of Fabian's work on this project, especially his emphasis on the fact that much of *what* a document tells us is inscribed in *how* it is made into a document (cf. Fabian 1990: 164). His emphasis on the graphic and visual characteristics of documents, as exemplified in his edition of Shaba Swahili boy scouts essays (Fabian 1991), has inspired the way in which I have tried to provide a typographic replica of the original in my text edition. I hope, in this way, to contribute to Fabian's ongoing study of Shaba Swahili as an ethnographic and historiographic record, and to enlarge the (hitherto all too small) data base for analyses and text interpretations of Shaba Swahili material.

2. The structure of the text

The text is 2901 words long and comprises 17 handwritten pages. It contains 11 chapters of unequal length. All chapters are given a title, except for chapter 1, the title of which, *Maisha yangu* ('my life'), probably serves as the title for the whole text. The first page also carries the metapragmatic qualification *Récits* ('Accounts', 'narratives') in the left hand top corner. These are the formal characteristics of the chapters:

1. *Maisha yangu* ('my life'), written in Swahili, 27 lines of text, 176 words.
2. *Kazi kwa Madame na Monsieur André Deprins-Arens* ('My work with Mrs. and Mr. André Deprins-Arens'), written in Swahili, 33 lines of text, 208 words.
3. *Kazi kwa Madame na Bwana Verspeelt* ('My work with Mrs. and Mr.

Verspeelt'), written in Swahili, 6 lines of text, 40 words.

4. *Magumu ikaza ndani ya nyumba yangu* ('Difficulties begin in my house'), written in Swahili, 115 lines of text, 631 words. This is the longest chapter of the text.

5. *Safari ya kwenda Mbuji-Mayi* ('The journey to Mbuji-Mayi'), written in Swahili, 25 lines of text, 150 words.

6. *Kazi ao utumwa?* ('labor or slavery?'), written in Swahili, 39 lines of text, 238 words.

7. *Fujo kati ya Katanga na Kasai* ('Trouble between Katanga and Kasai'), written in Swahili, 68 lines of text, 406 words.

8. *Lusaka-Lubumbashi 966km*, written in Swahili, 38 lines of text, 197 words.

9. *Il n'y a pas de sot métiers, il n'y a que de sots gens* ('there are no stupid trades, there are only stupid people'), written in French, 39 lines of text, 355 words.

10. *Selon la Bible la vraie culte c'est de visiter les pauvres* ('According to the Bible, the true cult is to visit the poor'), written in French, 36 lines of text, 316 words.

11. *Le nom a de grande signification dans la vie. Helena signifie Lumière* ('A name has great importance in life. Helena means 'Light)'), written in French, 23 lines of text, 209 words.

3. The edited version of the text

The edited version of the text is an attempt to stick as close as possible to the original, handwritten version, more or less in the way in which conversation analysts attempt to provide a graphic image of spoken language. As a consequence, the graphic representation of the text tries to capture as many of the features of the original as possible. Page format, page numbering and line or sentence breaks have all been retained, as well as orthographic errors, self-corrections (marked by [xxx]), super- or subscribed words (put in super- or subscript), unwarranted use or absence of capitals (a notable feature of the text), omissions of hypens at the end of a line, underlined or doubly underlined words, positions of titles and page numbers, and so forth.

The ultimate product should allow the reader to get an approximate picture of what the handwritten document actually looks like in terms of orthography, spelling, structure, graphic organization, and so on. It is, in my view, important to retain a maximum of the integrity of the handwritten document. Printed documents, it can be assumed, have gone through a mediating procedure, in which some of the 'automatic', individual and idiosyncratic features of writing have been eliminated and replaced by a more standardized, homogenizing visual realization of the text. In order to get a

clearer view on the dynamics of writing and text production and hence of the possible role and function of literacy for people such as Julien, the handwriting style may already offer a series of important clues.

4. The text

Récits

MaisHA YANgu 1

NilizALiKiwa MaNONO tarehe 10-12-1946
KATIKA jamaa ya baba na mama wa Kristu
Katika dini ya KatoLiKA.
Lakini wa baba na mama walikuwa naZoezi
ya Kwachance na mama Sababu ya ugonjwa
ao ya Matata NYUMBANI, ile njoo iliniletea
MaiSHA mubaya na KuKOSA kumaliza Masomo.
Nikamali ZA somo la primeri (primaire) na
SeKONDARI (secondi^{ai}re) sikwiimaliza lakini
NiKAFUNDA mupaka 5^e, juu ya mateso na Njaa
NiKACHA masomo pasipo kupata cheti (diploma).
KuFIKA mu mwaka wa 1965 Ni wakati ule
babangu akwa m[u]^ugonjwa HaKuKuwa muntu
waku^{NI}chunga Vema, NiKAJA LUBUMBASHI wa
KATI ule ulikuwa unaitwa ElisabethVille,
jina la malkia (Reine) wa ubeleji (Belgique).
NiKApangia Kwa mjoMBA, alikuwa akitumika
KAZI ya MpiSHI (Boy) na kila mara nilikuwa
naenda ku msaidia ku kazi yake, na njoo
pale namimi nikajuwa kazi ya mpiSHI.
Mu mwaka wa 1966 NiKaaza KutumiKA Kwa
Bwana Leon Devolder na mu mwaka wa 1967
nikaowa bibi yangu jina lake jacqueline.
Bwana Devolder akarudia Kwao ubeleji,
tukakaa na bibi miaKA MBili, na bibi pasipo
KAZI, njoo ile jamaa ya bibi jacqueline ika
ninyanganya bibi sababu ya njaa na mateso.

KAZI Kwa Madame na Monsieur
ANDRE Deprins ARENS

Katika tarehe 27-9-1969 NiKApata KAZI
kwa Madame na Bwana Deprins, maisha yangu
iKAZA kuwa mazuri, ila pakurudisha
bibu yangu, mimi na bibu tulipendana
lakini wa ZAZI yake walikuwa wanai
sha ku muolesha kwa Bwana mwingine,
NiKatumiKA mpaka mwezi wa juni
pasipo bibu.
waKATI Madame na Bwana Deprins walita
KA Kurudia Katika inchi ya UBeleji
mumapumziko (Vacance) Njoo namimi
NiKAENDA KINSHASA, NIKAOWa Bibu
Kwa jina ya Julienne. Ni^{LI}KAA na bibu
muzuri Kwa sababu ya mushahara (salaire)
ilikuwa Zuri niliweza kuishi na bibu
Kula na kuvaa pasipo tabu, HASa Kila
Siku ya ^{posho} nilikuwa na pewa KiLO moja
ya NYAMA. Mwezi wa juni 1971 nikawa na
mutoto wa Kwanza, tena mwezi wa AogistiNO
1972 (Août) ↑ niKawa^[xxxx] na mutoto wa pili.
Obe wangu ilikuwa ni muSHA Ngao Kwangu
KuFiKa mwezi wa juni 1973 Madama HE
HELENA D. ARENS akanita na aKASEMA
SASA TUNAENDA Katika mapumziKo

Katika inchi ya ubeleji na, HATUTARudia
ila USiwe na sikitiko tutaKwacha Kwa
Ma RAFiki wetu Verspeelts. Wakati wa
Kurudia kwao, KUKAwa Karamu, mimi
na bibi yangu, Kalume na bibi yake na
baba LuKuNi pamoja na Madamen[x]a Bwana
Deprins A. TUKALA na KuNY[X]WA pamoja
ilikuwa ni Furaha yakulakana ila siki
tiko juu ya KAZI ilisha NiKAUZIKA SANA.

KAZI Kwa Madame na Bwana Verspeelt

Paka vile Madame HELENA-ARENS alinie
lezeaka asema Madame Verspeelts weko
sawa sisi kwa mfano (caractere) na njoo vile
niliwakuta, Lakini kazi nikatumika
kwao miezi kenda (9) wao wakarudi
Kwao pasipo kurudia tena inchi ZAIRE.

Magumu ikaza NDANI ya NYUMBA

yangu

Sasa nikabakia masiku mingi pasipo
KAZI, NIKApata akili ya kuchoma makala
nakisha Kwiichoma na Kwiungisha, Kazi
ile ikendelea kidogo.
TENa NIKAwa na uwezo ya KuKata kuni

Nakwiuzisha katika ma Kupuni (Sociétés) na ma Boulangeries) Kazi ikandelea muzuri Kisha mwaka moNja ma Kapuni ikakataa Kuniuza kuni. Kwa sababu wao walipewa Ru husa ya kukata kuni wao wenye, na pale nikawa na deni ya FRANKA kwa THÈO-KALONDA nilikuwa nalipa kwake 50% kila mwezi juu ya deni yake. Kwachwa kwakuza Kuni KUKANIletea magumu na mateso mengi na kuwayawaya juu ya deni ya kulipa kwa KALONDA.

Sawa vile nilikuwa naandikia Madame HELENA ARÈNS ma Barua (Lettres) Nikwawa na wazo la kumwandia, sababu kila mwaka alikuwa amenitumia mavazi (Habits) na FRANKA Ku anwani (adresse) ya Madame na Bwana Bertin; Na Hapo ni Tangu 1973 mupaka nakufika 1979 mwaka mateso ilinipita bwingi. Madame HELENA-ARENS akanijibu diyo TAKusaidia, lakini KALONDA matata ikapita njoo pale nilimkimbilia KABINDA mu province ya KASAI. NIKAmwandikia Madame Helena ARÈNS pale KabINDA akanitumia FRANKA, NIKA mutumia KALONDA FRANKA yake pale LubuMBASHI wakati nililipa FRANKA ilikuwa mwezi wa julai (juillet) 1980. Mimi nikabakia na [X]FRANKA Kidogo pakupata NAMNA ya kuishi

NA kupata chakula nikuaza, kuuza na kuzi
 SHA MBUZI, nilikuwa naenda kuuza MBuzi
 Ku KILOMETRI 200 nakutembea ku miguu
 pasipo atakiNga. Nakufika mwezi wa octoba
 (octobre) 1981 NiKApata Kazi ya Kuuzisha
 Katika duga (magasin) pale KABINDA.
 Pale bibi yangu alibakia LUBUMBASHI
 na mateso mengi pamoja na watoto mu
 paka mwaka wa 1984 wakati alinifwata
 KabiNDA. Napale mwenye duga akacha
 Kuleta viashara (marchandise) lakini
 nikabakia mwenye kukaa katika nyumba
 yake, lakini kukosa kwa FEZA (argents) Mateso
 ikaza mimi na bibi na watoto tano (5) Sawa
 vile niliuzaka Kinga nikaaza kuuza
mihidi na miHogo na Kalanga (mais, manioc et
 arachides) katika Vidjidji (Villages) NaKuzi
 Sha KABINDA kufika paka mu mwaka 1986.
 Ni mwaka tulisikilizana na bibi ya kama
 turudie kwetu Malemba-Nkulu pr. Katanga
 tukulime mashamba.
 Bibi yangu akabakia KABINDA mimi
 nikaenda Malemba-NKulu Nikasikilizana
 na Sultani (Chef Coutumier) nikauza
 FASI munene ya poli. NiKALima SHAMBA
 niKapanda mingazi, MIHONGO na mihidi
 (palmiers, Manioc et Maïs) nikafanya mwaka
 muzima Malemba-Nkulu juu ya kulima

NAKuchunga SHAMBA, watu wa mugini
KATONDO, walikujaka kunisadia kulima
wa bibi na wa Bwana na watoto yao Chuki
na wivu (haine et jalousie) ikakamata
wale watu wengine walikuwaka wana-
limisha mashamba lakini pakulipa watu
walio walimia wanaza kukataa kwibali
pa muzuri; mie sawa vile nilikuwa ni
Ko nawalipa pasipo Ku^{che}lewa, tena Malipo
muzuri njoo vile watu wote walikuja
mwengi kulima SHAMBA yangu.

Pakuona vile wa adui wangu (mes ennemis)
wakanitega ULOZI unaoitwa kwa jina
la Musengo (poudre nocif) walitaka
ni kufe juu ya chuki yao sababu watu
wengi walikuja kunilimia na Kwacha
kulima na SHAMBA yao. NIKawa mgojwa
toka mwaka 1987 mu paka 1988. Nilikuwa
naenda kwa manabii (les profetes) kuniombe
-a Mungu, sawa vile Niko mu Christu.
NiKapona Kwa ugojwa ule nikaenda
KabiNDA Kule kulikuwa bibi yangu.
MwaKA wa 1989 nikarudia kwangalia
mashamba yangu, akili yangu iliku-
wa ya kama mihogo ikomee njoo nirudi
e nikabebe bibi na watoto wangu
tukuje tukae katika FÈRME, Lakini
nikakutia wezi wakaiba mihogo mingi
na Nguruwe ya pori ikakula mihogo ingin
NE.

Lakini katika SHAMBA mukabakia miHogo kidogo, pahali pakarudia ni kabebe bibi na watoto, nikaongopa kukwabeba Sababu hakukuwa tena namna yakuja kula mihog_o yote wezi waliiba.

NiKalima nakulimisha SHAMBA ingi ne lakini watu wakaja kidogo sababu sikuwa na FRANKA nyingi ya kuiwa lipa na SHAMBA ikawa kidogo, basi shamba ikaisha kulima, mu mwezi wa aprili (avril) ¹⁹⁹⁰ Nikapokea barua

ya bibi yangu akisema wako katika mateso juu ya kukosa chakula na eko na deni ya FRANKA na mwenye FRANKA EKO anamfanya Matata. wakati ule Hata mie sikuwa na FRanka nikauzika sana, na kwaza safari kwa njia ya KiNga yangu NiKafika kanyama (Village) NiKacha KiNga pale KANYAMA na kinga hiyo ku le ilibakia ikapotea paka kule niliacha ka.

SAFARI YA Kwenda MBUJI-MAYI

Nikapata akili ya kwenda MBUji-MAYI kwa sabu pakutuma ma barua kwa Madame Helena D. ARENS Katika NCHI

ya UBeleji. NiKatoka KanYAMA kwa njia
ya Motokari nikafika MBUji-MAYi, NiKafi
kia ku Hotel na kula katika Restaurant.
Nikamwandikia Madame HELENA D. ARÈNS
Barua juu ya mateso inanipita bibi pamoja
na watoto, lakini sikuwa na namna ya ku
BaKia MBUji-mayi sababu ya kilipa
Hôtel na restaurant. Sikuwa na dugu, tena
wa Rafiki hakuna hata ^{moja} aliweza kunichu
nga ku nyumba yake na kunilisha
maisha ilikuwa nguvu paka leo hivi kwa
watu wengi. Basi siku ya Mungu (
dimanche) NiKaenda katika kanisa (eglise)
kisha kwa bundu Mungu nikamuo-
MBA [xxx] Mwalimu (pasteur) kama anaju
a watu wanaendaka ku chimbua
kazi ya Diama (Diamant) nikachimbu
wa nao. Akaitika na akanitafutia
watu Tukatoka MBUji-MAYI le 15-5-90
nakuelekea katika muji wa BAKWA-
MULUMBA NAKuchimbua diama katika
muto (rivière) MBUji-MAYI.

KAZI ao UTU[X]MWA (esclavage) ?

Tarehe 18-5-90 tukaza kazi ya utumwa
UTUMwa kwasababu wa Luba-KASAI
akili yao ni yakunea mwenzao (DoMine)
walipenda kunitumikisha sawa vile

vile wanavyo z^ooea kutumikisha watu
na kuwatukana, kwiwazarau, yakama kwenu
hakuna Diama ninyi washazi (imbecile).
wao wenye wanajiita asema wako wa DEMULU-
Vantard (Baluba Vantard) wanapenda kukongwe
sha ao kuKopesha watu FEZA, ya kuuza pomBE
na chakula ao kukupa bibi, sababu ubakie
miaka mingi kuwatumikia, walikuwa
wakishangaa mie nilikuwa nakataa akili
yao, maisha yangu ilikuwa ya kwenda ku
kanisa kila mara. Kisha wakatambuwa
asema niko Muluba wa MALEMBA-NKulu
wakasema njoo sababu ako anasema na Kiburi
(Duret ) sababu gani ana acha kukaa
kwao kula chakula mingi ya bei kido
go anakuja kutumika kazi ya nguvu?
Bahati yangu ni wewe Madame HElena D AR ns
Kazi yote nilitumika ku Bakwa-Mulumba
FEZA yote ilikuwa ni yakuuza chakula
ile niliweza kwenda kulipa ndeni ya bibi
yangu Julienne pale Kabinda, nikabakia na
FEZA ingine ya kuuza viakula^a ni MSaada
(DON, ou aide) yako, Kama ulipenda kunia
cha pasipo kunisadia kama paka na leo hii
nilitaka kuwa ku baKwa-Mulumba.
NiliKAmata FEZA ingine ile ulinitumia
nikalipa deni yangu pale BaKwa-Mulumba
Njoo nikapata safari ya kwenda KabiNDA

Nilifika Bakwa-Muluba le 15/5-1990 mupaka mupaka mwezi wa yanuari 1991, njoo kusema miezi munane (8) ya mateso, ila msaada wako UKanikomboa mu mateso. NiKafika Kabinda nikalipa ndeni ya bibi yangu Julienne, na niwakati wa FUjo ZAIRE MZIMA sababu ya DeMOcratia.

FUjO (trouble) kati ya Katanga na KASAI

NiKafika mwezi wa yanuari Kabinda laki ni Sikuwa na Feza ya kulipa Motokari na kwenda Malemba-NKULU. Watu wa Katanga wengi alikimbia KabiNDA na kurudia ku Katanga, ila tulibakia wawili na David Sababu yeye alikuwa mwenye kuowa bibi wa ku Kabinda, njoo bahati yake, lakini mie na vile nilikataa kwa waolesha wa binti wangu M[x]Bili (Faire marier mes deux Filles) wakuwa na chuki. Njoo pale mara ingine nikamwandikia Madame Helena D.A. ya Kama niko katika hatari ya ku wawa, Sina FEZA ya kulipa na kwenda kwetu.

Kwa Hurumu yake pamoja na Bwana yake wakanitumia FEZA, wakati FEZA ili po FIKA, Fujo ilipita watoto wangu kupi giwa njiani na watu wakubwa, mie walita ka kuniuwa katika munji wa KASEND U, ni mgini wanachimbuaka DiaMA.

waliwaza niko na FEZA waniuwe wabebe
e FEZA, bahati yangu ni watu ya Kanisa
lakini wakanifichika kwa Sultani wa mugi
ni yeye pia alikuwa mu Kristu (Chef du Village)
NiKapata FEZA msaada ya Madame HELENA
mwezi wa octoba 1992, na kwa bahati zuri
kulikuwa safari ya motokari ilikuwa ina
enda kubeba mihindi mu province ya
Katanga mu mugini MwAMBAYI kadiri ya
Kilometri 22 na Missio KYONDO na iliku
wa safari ya mwisho ya Motokari kwingia
katika province ya Katanga yenye kutokea
KASAI.

Bakufika MwAMBAYI mie bibi, na watoto
wanane (8) [xx] na wa Kristu wegene
tulimushuru Mungu na kuwaomba
Madama HELENA, Bwana, na Mtoto Mungu
awaba^{ri}kie sababu msaada wao ulitu
okoa. Tukapumzika siku mbili tena
tukaza safari yakwenda mgini Lusaka.
Lusaka - MALEMBA - Nkulu ni safari
ya kilometa mia tatu (300KM) sikuta
ka kuweza kutembea na watoto ka
tika safari ya miguu. Mie nilikuwa
kwa mara tatu naenda Malemba-Nkulu
kwa miguu, nikakuta SHAMBA ile
nilima mu mwaka wa 1990 wezi
wakaiba miHogo yote sababu wa
le walikuwa wa Kichunga SHAMBA

walikimbia. Lusaka watu watupokea muzu
ri kwa sababu mgini mzima wote ni wa
Kristu wakatupa nyumba na chakula.
Mwezi wa juni 1993 bibi yangu akapata wazo
ya kunifwata Malemba-Nkulu wazo lake
ilikuwa lakama pale minakawia ^{Malemba} kule ku-
ko bibi yangu mwingine, akenda na
watoto ine akacha wengine ine (4)
Lusaka. WakaN^{1e}ze nikamfwata nika
mukuta alisha FANYA kilo^{Me}tri mia moja
(100KM) mu mgini KaKulu nika mwa
cha kwa Mwalimu (pasteur). ikawa
Mateso yakupita ku gambo yangu
ilinipasa kufanya safari kwenda
Lusaka kwangalia watoto kisha ku
rudisha Kakulu na Kwenda Malemba
pasipo KiNga. Nikawaza kwenda
Lubumbashi na kinga nipate ku
mwandikia Madame HELENA na
Bwana yake.

LUSAKA - LUBUMBASHI 966 KM

NiKatoka Lusaka (Village) mwezi wa
NOVemba 1993 nakwelekea Lubumbashi
nikatembea Safari ya siku kumi na
13 pakufika Lubumbashi.

Kwa malipo, mwenye kinga aliniomba
nimuzie VYOMBO ya KiNga (pieces Velo).

Lubumbashi nikamwandikia Madame
Helena apate kunisaⁱdia Feza ya
kulipa Motokari, mimi, bibi na watoto
tufike Malemba-Nkulu na nilipe
marafiki walio nisaidia kulima shamb
a yangu ndani ya Fermo. Akaitika
na akanitumia Feza hiyo.

Nikafanya miezi sita (6) Lubumbashi
sababu nilifululiza mwendo yangu
paka NDOLA katika inchi ya ZAMBIA
^{kwa} Sababu ya kumwandikia Madame
Helena. Nikarudi Malemba-NKulu
mwezi wa [xxxxx]^{MEI} nikakuta watoto ine
(4) walibaki Lusaka Ndugu, mutoto wa
mjomba (oncle) aliendaka kwibabeba
mwezi wa Merch (Mars) bibi yangu naye
akatoka KaKuLu katika miguu akaja
Malemba-NKulu wazo yao, walizania
yakama sawa vile niliendaka miaka
mingi njoo vile naenda tena LubuMba
shi kwa miaka mingi.

FEZA ile nilifika nayo Malemba-NKulu mwezi wa Mei, kufika mwezi wa Ogistino ikatemuka nguvu (devaluation) kazi ya mashamba shikwiitumika apana vile viilivyo waza kwiitumika (programme) Niliombaka Madame Helena na Bwana yake De grave wanisaidie miaka tano, njoo sababu nilifika Hapa LubuMBASHI kwa Kupokea msaada na masaidio yao ni pate namna ya kuishi na juu ya maendeo ya kazi ya FERMO.

Il N y a pas de SOT metier, il y a que le
SOT gens

Les noirs riches et intellectuels preferent avoir des domestiques, mais ils les considere^{NT} comme des gens inferieurs, qu'ils ne peuvent pas parler longuement avec eux, ni s'asseoir ensemble autour d'une table, ni boire dans UN Bar ou restaurant, même pour les payement de salaire il y en a qui disent à leurs à leur BOYS, tu mange ici et tu n'a pas de respect pour reclamer ton salaire. Les BOYS repliquent parfois que NOS[xxx] FAMilles ne viennent ^{pas} manger ici, ça aboutir souvent au dispute ou les BOYS quittent les services. Depuis la colonization et aujourd'Hui, pendant les crises politique et econOMique les boys gagnent toujours bien leur vie par rapport, aux Directeur comis, professeur, Mecaniciens, Menuisier, à moins que ces derniers trouvez à leurs services les

Moyens de Voler, qu'ils appeler ici que c'est profite. les maisons des domestiques sont propre et bien meublé; leurs Femmes et leurs enfants bien Habiller. Ils gagnent assez d'argent et les avantages qu'ils reçoivent à leurs patrons, mais s'il y a de dispute entre pere, Femme, ou enfants on se monquer d'eux que ce que tu veux dire pauvre boy.

Les boys qui ne sont pas souldard ni gourmant, mais sages leurs enfants ont étudiée, on les trouvent parmi des ambassadeur et des Ministres, leurs vie est bonne par rapport à ceux qui se monquent d'eux, je parle souvent aux gens ce qui a ete mon metier auprès de vous, sinon à quelques uns pour ne pas être mal reçu par eux quand il s agit d'aller chercher l'aide envoyer par vous dans leurs adresses. Mais il y a des noirs qui sont aimable envers leurs BOYS.

A partir de 1969 à 1973 lors de votre Retour definitif en Belgique vous m'avez connu comme un pauvre boy et jusqu'a maintenant je suis aide uniquement que pour ça. Voilà je n'ai pas la Honte de le dire à ceux qui voient Votre aide m'arrive. Réellement il n y a pas de SOT metiers, mais il y a que le SOT gens.

Selon la bible la vraie Culte c'est visité les pauvres

Si le monde entière devrait croire à l'enseignement de jesus christ, il n y aurais pas les crises politiques ou economiques, on aller vivre tous comme de FRères en Christ l'appelation des pays du tiers monde n'aller pas voir le jour, le monde pratique que la tromperie

et ne pratique pas la Verite qui devrait les amenez à une Bonne partage, Source de bonheur. Les dirigeants de l'Afrique recevant des aides, mais ils les utilisent mal, les pasteurs trompent leurs communautés de l'occident en les envoyant des livres, des Lunnettes et des medicaments, on Fait des cooperatives que par les NOMS, on s'appele r FÉRMiers sans FERME, L'aide reçu ce n'est pas pour Faire des champs, ^DDans d'autre pays d'afrique si les gouvernement veulent accordent des credits agricoles, ce sont des ministres, des riches et ceux qui dominant qui recevez ces credits les tracteurs restent dans leurs parcelles, les camions donnent aux Frères pour faire les transports et acheter peu des Mais et Manioc soit disant que nous avons des FÈRMES. D'autres gens se plaignent ils ont vu les gens les inscrivent avec leurs enfants parce-que ils sont pauvres et à leurs disant que la VISION-MONDIAL va vous envoyez des aides grande-quantite des aides sont resté dans les mains de ceux qui inscrivait, c'est par cet idée quand les gens de KATONDO je les avais deman dé de faire la Cooperative quelqu^{es} uns refuserai ent et ils disaient ^{disaient} il fait cela pour que Madame HELENA D.A. enverra des aides et ça sera pour moi. Les aides que vous m'envoyez, pour Jesus-Christ Vous surpassez un pasteur qui preche et pecher (tromper) Saint-Jean dans sa revelation il dit qu'il' avais Vu les BONS et les Mechants entrant au paradis de Dieu.

C'est a dire les Croyants et les noN croyants..

Le NOM a de grande signification dans la vie

HELENA - signifie = LuMièRe

Cette lumière ça n'a pas illumine que moi qui a été votre boy, la production aidera les vieux et les jeunes gens, surtout les jours de Fetes des Mariages et des deuils. Déjà une bonne somme d'argent qui étaient destine à moi, c'étaient tombé dans les mains d'autres pauvres et la Malle des Habits aux missionnaires, cela ne vous a pas choquer mais vous me parliez que Heureusement c'étaient tombé dans ^{les} mains d'autres pauvres.

Vous m'avez sauvé et empecher à être Voleur ces difficultés trouvent grand-nombre des gens en Afrique, surtout dans les Villes; après les licenciements aux services et quand on manque de l'argent pour acheter des vivres; parfois ce[x]s sont les Maris qui Fuients leurs femmes pour aller dans autres Villes ou ce so[n]^Nt des femmes qui abandonnent leurs Mari ris pour aller se Mariés ^à d'autres Maries, et qui sont Victimes cesont les enfants qui deviennent Vagabon. Votre aide pour ma Ferme je suis sûr, d'ici deux ans ça n'aura plus de quINZE TRavailleurs je loue grandement mon Dieu à cause de VOS grandes oevres; Madame Helèna ARÈns et Monsieur andré D. ARÈNS.

Votre ancien BOY

Julien

5. English translation

The English translation given here is tentative and may require corrections in some places. Given the absence of a standard orthography, translations for some terms or expressions cannot be considered to be more than educated guesses. These places will be marked in the text by [?], sometimes followed by a hypothetical translation. Additions necessary for the comprehension of the text, as well as some tentative corrections, will also be put between square brackets. The translation is kept as closely as possible to the original text, and consequently some sentences may be ungrammatical or stylistically torduous. I have sometimes divided passages in more or less coherent sentences, where there were none in the original text, and I have tried to mark paragraph units.

Narratives

MY LIFE

I was born in Manono on 10-12-1946 in a family with a Christian father and mother, in the Catholic faith. But since my father and mother gambled, and because of my mother's illness or problems at home, it brought me a bad life and a failure to finish my studies. I finished primary school and secondary school I didn't finish but I got as far as the fifth [class]; because of misery and hunger, I stopped going to school without obtaining a diploma.

From the year 1965 onwards, when my father became ill and wasn't a man who gave me a good upbringing, I came to Lubumbashi, which was called Elisabethville at that time after the name of the queen of Belgium. I arrived at my uncle's, who worked as a cook (boy), and I always went to help him at his work, and so I learned the trade of a cook. In the year 1966 I started working for

Mr. Devolder and in the year 1967 I married my wife, whose name was Jacqueline. Mr. Devolder had returned to Belgium, [and] we stayed for two years with my wife, and my wife had no job, and therefore my wife's family started harassing me [about] my wife because of the hunger and the misery [we were in].

[My] work with Mr. and Mrs. André Deprins Arens

On 27-9-1969 I got work with Mrs. and Mr. Deprins, [and] my life started to look good, except when I had to return my wife [to her family]. My wife and I loved each other, but her parents had married her to another gentleman, [thus] I worked until the month of June without a wife.

When Mrs. and Mr. Deprins wanted to return to Belgium on leave, I went to Kinshasa and married a women called Julienne. I stayed well with my wife [= this period with my wife was good] because the salary was good. I could live, and for my wife food and clothing were no problem. I even received one kilo of meat every pay day. In the month of June 1971, I got my first child, and in August 1972 a second one. Well, [?] but what a surprise it was for me when in June 1973 Mrs. Helena D. Arens called me and said now we go on leave to Belgium and we won't come back, but don't be sad we will leave you with our friends, the Verspeelts. When the moment of their [= Deprins] return arrived, we were [together], Karamu, me and my wife, Kalume and his wife and papa Lukuni, together with Mrs and Mr. Deprins A[rens], and we ate and drank together, and it was very nice to eat together, only I felt very sad because my job was finished.

[My] work with Mrs. and Mr. Verspeelt

Mrs. Helena Arens had told me that Mrs. Verspeelt would be good for us [?] in character, and that was indeed how I met them [=got to know them]. But my job with them lasted for just nine months [because/after which] they returned and did not come back to Zaire.

Difficulties begin in my house

Now I stayed without a job for many days, and I got the idea of burning charcoal; I started burning it and mixing it, and the work [= business] went reasonably well. I also got the opportunity to cut firewood and to sell it to companies and bakeries. The work [= business] went well. But after a year, the company [? companies] refused to buy firewood from me,² because they had got the permission to cut firewood themselves, and there I found myself with a financial debt to Theo Kalonda; I paid him 50% monthly on top of the debt. The fact that I had to stop selling firewood brought me many difficulties and misery and put me in a difficult situation because of that debt to Kalonda.

Thus I wrote letters to Mrs. Helena Arens. I had the idea of writing her because she sent me clothes and money every year to the address of Mrs. and Mr. Bertin. And here [= this went on] from 1973 to 1979, the year in which a lot of misery came my way.

Mrs. Arens answered me that she would help me, but since the Kalonda problems came up [?] I fled to Kabinda, in the Kasai province. I wrote to Mrs. Helena Arens from Kabinda to send me money there, I would send Kalonda's money [= money for Kalonda] to Lubumbashi, and when [= by the time] I paid it was July 1980. I had a bit of money left, from which I could get the opportunity to live and to eat; I started buying and selling goats. I went to buy goats 200 km. further. I went there on foot without a bicycle. I arrived in the month of October

1981, [and] I got the job of selling in a store [= shopkeeper] in Kabinda. Then [= In the meantime], my wife stayed in Lubumbashi, with a lot of problems together with the children, until 1984, when she followed me to Kabinda. And over there [= then], the owner of the shop stopped bringing in supplies, but I stayed in his house, but [because I was] running out of money the trouble started again for me, my wife and the five children. Thus I bought a bicycle and started selling maize, manioc and groundnuts in the villages. I sold in Kabinda until the year 1986 came. That was the year in which I discussed with my wife to go back to our place in Malemba-Nkulu in the Katanga province to start working the fields.

My wife remained in Kabinda and I went to Malemba-Nkulu and I consulted the traditional chief. I bought a large plot in the bush. I cultivated the field and planted palm trees, manioc and maize. I did [= stayed] a whole year in Malemba-Nkulu, because of cultivating and cleaning the soil. People from the village of Katondo came to help me, women and men and their children. Hate and jealousy caught those other people who had hired people to work on their fields, but when it came to paying those people who worked for them, they refused to pay them well. And I paid them without delay, a good salary on top of that, and that's how many people came to work on my land.

When my enemies saw that they made a witchcraft medicine for me, called Musengo. They wanted me to die, out of hate [= for they hated me] because of the fact that many people came to work for me and stopped working on their fields. I was ill from the year 1987 until 1988. I went to the Prophets to have them pray to God for me, for I am a Christian. I recovered from my illness and I went to Kabinda, where my wife stayed. In the year 1989 I returned to look at my fields. My idea was to return after having harvested the manioc, and to collect my wife and children so that we could come and live at

the farm. But I had been visited by thieves, who stole a lot of manioc, and by a wild pig that had eaten another part of the manioc. But there was a bit of manioc left on my field and when I had to go and collect my wife and children, I was afraid of collecting them, because there was no way in which we could come and eat all the manioc that the thieves had stolen [?].

I started cultivating and make cultivate [= put people to work on] another field, but only few people came, because I did not have much money to pay [them] and the field was small, and so the work on that field stopped. In the month of April 1990, I received a letter from my wife saying that they were in trouble because of a lack of food and because they had a debt of money and the debtor would cause trouble for them. At that time, I didn't have money [because] I had bought a lot, and I started the journey on my bicycle. When I arrived in Kanyama, I left my bicycle in Kanyama, and the bicycle stayed there and got lost where I left it.

The journey to Mbuji-Mayi

I got the idea of going to Mbuji-Mayi, to send letters from there to Mrs. Helena D. Arens in Belgium. I left Kanyama by car and arrived in Mbuji-Mayi, where I arrived in [= I checked into] a hotel and ate in a restaurant. I wrote a letter to Mrs. Helena D. Arens about the problems that had befallen my wife and children, but I could not stay in Mbuji-Mayi because of the price of the hotel and the restaurant. I had no brothers there, nor even one friend who could take me in his house and feed me. Life had been hard until now [= then] for many people. Therefore I went to the church on Sundays, and afterwards with God's grace [?] I asked a priest whether he knew any people who went digging in the diamond mines, so that I could dig with them. He agreed and he looked for

people for me. We left Mbuji-Mayi on 15-5-90 in the direction [?] of the town of Bakwa-Mulumba, and dug diamonds in the Mbuji-Mayi river.

Labor or slavery?

On 18-5-90 we started the slave labor. Slavery because the Luba-Kasai have a way of dominating their people. They wanted to exploit me too like they exploit and insult other people, [saying] that when there are no diamonds [where you live] you are fools. [? Those who call themselves like that] say that these are 'Boasting Luba', who like to extort or borrow money to people to buy beer or food or to get a woman, so that you stay there for many years and be exploited. They were surprised that I did not accept their ideas, my life consisted of every time [= often] going to the church. At last they found out and said [?] that I was a Luba from Malemba-Nkulu and they said that's why he talks so proudly, and why does he leave his place where there is plenty of food for little money, to come and do hard labor?

My luck was you, Mrs. Helena Arens. Of all the work I did in Bakwa-Mulumba, money only went to food, so that I could go and repay the debt of my wife Julienne in Kabinda, and the other money for buying food was your gift. If you wanted to leave me without helping me as until today, I wanted to be in Bakwa-Mulumba [?].

I took the other money you sent me and paid my debt in Bakwa-Mulumba, and I started my journey to Kabinda. I arrived in Bakwa-Mulumba on 15-5-90 until the month of January 1991, that is to say 8 months of misery, only your help soothed my suffering. I arrived in Kabinda, I paid my wife Julienne's debt, and that was the period of chaos in the whole of Zaire because of democracy.

Trouble between Katanga and Kasai

I arrived in Kabinda in January, but I didn't have money to pay for a car ride to Malemba-Nkulu. Many Katangese were fleeing from Kabinda and returned to Katanga. We stayed behind with two, with David because he had married a woman from Kabinda, and that was his blessing, but I [had] refused to marry my two daughters and people hated [me because of that]. There I wrote again to Mrs. Helena D.A. that I was in danger of being murdered, and that I didn't have money to go back home.

Thanks to the compassion of her and her husband they sent me money, [and] when the money arrived here the trouble was such that my children were beaten on the streets by adults, and they wanted to kill me in the town of Kasendu, that is a town where people dig for diamonds. They thought I had money and that, if they killed me, they could take the money with them. My luck were the people of the church but [= because] they hid me in the village chief's [place], who was also a Christian. I received financial support from Mrs. Helena in October 1992, and luckily there was a car [= lorry] transport delivering maize to the province of Katanga in the village of Mwambayi, 22 km from the Kyondo mission, and it was the last transport which made it into Katanga from Kasai.

They arrived in Mwambayi, and me, my wife and 8 children, and other Christians prayed to God for Mrs. Helena, her husband and child, may God bless them because of the aid you sent us. We rested there for two days and then we started the journey to Lusaka. Lusaka - Malemba-Nkulu is a journey of 300 km and I didn't want to have to walk with the children on foot. I went on foot to Malemba-Nkulu in three times [=stages], and there I found the field I had cultivated in 1990. Thieves had stolen all the manioc because those who were cultivating the land had fled. In Lusaka the people welcomed us warmly,

because the whole town is full of Christians they gave us shelter and food. In the month of July 1993 my wife got the idea of following me to Malemba-Nkulu. Her idea was that if I stayed in Malemba, that there would be another woman of mine. She left with 4 children and left 4 others in Lusaka. They told me that and I went after her; I met her when she had already done [= traveled for] one hundred kilometer in the town of Kakulu. I left her [there] with a priest. Even though I had contracted problems with my skin [?], I had to make the trip to Lusaka to look for the children, and afterwards return to Kakulu and go to Malemba without a bicycle. I thought of going to Lubumbashi by bicycle to [be able to] write to Mrs. Helena Arens and her husband.

Lusaka - Lubumbshi 966 km

I left (the village) of Lusaka in the month of November 1993 in the direction of Lubumbashi. It was a 13-day journey before I arrived in Lubumbashi. For [= In order to get] money, someone with a bicycle asked me to sell him parts of my bicycle. In Lubumbashi, I wrote to Mrs. Helena [to ask] whether she could help me with some money to pay for a car [ride], so that I, my wife and children could get to Malemba-Nkulu and that I could pay my friends who had helped me with the work on the field at the farm. She agreed and sent me the money. I did [= stayed for] six months in Lubumbashi, because I [? canceled/cut short] my trip to Ndola in Zambia, in order to write to Mrs. Helena. I returned to Malemba-Nkulu in the month of May, and I met the 4 children who had stayed behind in Lusaka with a brother. A child of an uncle had gone to fetch them in March, and my wife too had gone to Malemba-Nkulu on foot, on their recommendation. They thought that, since I had gone to Lubumbashi for many years [before], I would again go to [= stay in] Lubumbashi for many years. I

arrived in Malemba-Nkulu with that money in May. But when August came, it devaluated, and the work on the fields could not proceed the way I had planned it to proceed. Ik asked Mrs. Helena and her husband Deprins to support me during five years. That was the reason why I had come here to Lubumbashi, to collect their aid and contributions, so that I would get the opportunity to live and for the development of my farm.

There are no stupid trades, there are only stupid people

The rich and intellectual blacks prefer to have servants, but they consider them to be inferior people, with whom they can't talk for a long time, nor sit down together at a table, nor drink in a bar or restaurant. Even for paying the salary, there are some who tell their boys, you eat here and you have no respect to demand your salary. The boys sometimes reply that our families don't come to eat here, often this ends in a fight in which the boys quit their service.

Since colonization until today, during the political and economic crises, the boys always made a decent living compared to administration directors, professors [= teachers], mechanics, carpenters, at least [= except when] the latter find [= have] at their disposal the means to steal, what they call here to hustle. The houses of the servants are clean and well furnished, their wives and children are well dressed. They earn enough money and the advantages they receive from their employers, but when there is an argument between father, wife or children, people laugh at them, what do you want to say, poor boy?

The boys who aren't drunks or gluttons, but wise, their children have studied, you find them among ambassadors and ministers, their life is well compared to that of those who laugh at them. I often tell people what my work was [in your service], if not [?] to some people in order not to be badly

perceived by them when it comes to going to fetch the aid sent by you to their address. But there are blacks who are friendly towards their boys.

From 1969 until 1973 when you finally returned to Belgium, you have known me as a poor boy and until now I have been supported solely for that reason. There it is, I have no shame to tell it to those who see your aid arrive for me. Truly, there are no stupid trades, but there are only stupid people.

According to the Bible the true cult is to visit the poor

If the whole world would have faith in the teaching of Jesus Christ, there would be no political or economic crises, people would live like brothers in Christ, the term 'third world countries' would not come into being. The world practices only mischief and doesn't practice the truth that should lead to a good [= fair] distribution, source of happiness. The leaders of Africa receive assistance, but they use them badly, the priests mislead their communities in the west by sending them [?] books, spectacles and drugs, people create cooperatives just by name, people call themselves farmers without a farm, the received aid is not for making [= cultivating] fields. In other countries of Africa, when governments want to allocate agricultural subsidies, it is the ministers, the rich and those who dominate who receive the subsidies, the tractors remain on their plots, the trucks are given to [their] brothers to do transport business and to buy a bit of maize and manioc as if to say we have farms. Other people complain [that] they have seen people registered with their children because they are poor, telling them that the Vision-Mondial will send you wholesale aid. The aid stays in the hands of those who registered [these people]. That's the idea because of which the people of Katondo, when I asked them to form a cooperative, some of them refused and they said that he does that so that Mrs. Helena D.A. will send aid

and it will be for me.

The aid you send me, in Jesus Christ, you surpass a priest who preaches and sins. Saint John in his revelation says that he has seen the good ones and the bad ones enter God's paradise. That means those who believe and those who do not believe.

The [= a] name has a great meaning in life. Helena means 'Light' That light has not only enlightened me, who has been your boy. The production [of the farm?] will help the elderly and the young people, especially during feasts and mournings. Already a big sum of money destined for me has fallen in the hands of other poor people and in the basket of clothes of the missionaries. This has not shocked you but you have said to me that, fortunately, it had fallen in the hands of other poor people.

You have rescued me and prevented me from becoming a thief. These difficulties strike a great many people in Africa, particularly in the towns. After being made redundant and when one lacks the money to buy food. Sometimes it is the husbands who leave their wives in order to go to other towns or it is the wives who leave their husbands in order to get married to other husbands, and who are the victims? It's the children who become tramps.

Your support for my farm, I am sure, in two years it will have more than fifteen employees. I praise God extensively because of your great works, Madame Helena Arens and Mister André D. Arens.

Your former boy,
Julien

6. Comments

A full analysis of this text can, for obvious reasons, not be done within the scope of this paper. Still, I want to point at a few striking characteristics of the text, and suggest tentative lines of analysis and explanation for them. Most of my suggestions are of course hypothetical and speculative.

1. *Orthography*

The edited version of the text already shows that Julien has particular difficulties in hyphenating Swahili words, and significantly less with French words. Almost 50% of the hyphenation problems appear at line breaks, indicating a degree of unfamiliarity with the material techniques of writing, probably not untypical of grassroots literacy.

Similarly, Julien has difficulties in distinguishing Swahili morpheme and word boundaries. For instance, the Swahili term *wakati* may appear as *wa kati* (unhyphenated and on different lines); *napewa* may appear as *na pewa*, and *ruhusa* as *Ru husa*. Errors in the French part of the text are, as noted above, largely grammatical in nature, and explicable in terms of difficulties in graphically representing grammatical distinctions which may be inaudible in (the local version of) spoken French. Thus, *cela ne vous a pas choquer*, with 'choquer' in the infinitive form, should be *cela ne vous a pas choquée*, *on les trouvent* should be *on les trouve*, *qu'ils appeler ici* should be *(ce) qu'ils appellent ici*. A few lexical errors may be attributable to the same phenomenon, e.g. *monquer* instead of *moquer*.

Another peculiar characteristic of the text (and probably indicative of emergent literacy) is the unwarranted use of capitals in the handwritten text.

Parts of words may be written in capitals, as e.g. in *MwaMBAYI*, other words such as *FEZA* or *SHAMBA* are more or less consistently written in capitals. Names of individuals and places are also often written in capitals. It should be noted that these orthographic characteristics can also be witnessed in other products of grassroots literacy from that area (e.g. in Fabian's *Vocabulaire d'Elisabethville*) and in other parts of Africa (e.g. in a Tanzanian popular novel, see Blommaert 1993).

2. *Monolingualism and French glosses*

One of the most remarkable aspects of the text is the fact that the two parts structuring the text are monolingual, i.e. they are written in 'pure' Swahili and 'pure French' (despite the orthographic problems discussed above). This is remarkable, given the reasonable assumption that everyday language usage in Julien's environment would probably be marked by a high frequency of Swahili-French codeswitching and borrowing (cf. de Rooij 1996). This may indicate an awareness of and an adaptation to generic requirements associated with formal communication. The generic qualification of the text as 'récit' could further corroborate this suggestion: the text is not a letter, not any other form of ordinary discourse, but a special genre with a name of its own.

Other corroborating evidence could be the fact that, in a number of places in the Swahili text, Julien provides French glosses for Swahili terms, probably out of a suspicion that his addressee might have particular difficulties understanding these words or expressions, and resulting in what is, in effect, a form of language mixing. The Swahili terms are followed by the French gloss between brackets, and they are sometimes underlined. These words and their original French glossed are:

somo la primeri (primaire)
 SeKONDARI (secondi^{ai}re)
 cheti (diploma)
 malkia (Reine) wa ubeleji (Belgique)
 MpiSHI (Boy)
 mapumziko (Vacance)
mushahara (salaire)
 mwezi wa AogistiNO 19₇₂ (Août)
mfano (caractere)
 kenda (9)
 ma Kupuni (Sociétés) [=makupuni]
 ma Barua (Lettres) [=mabarua]
mavazi (Habits)
anwani (adresse)
 mwezi wa julai (juillet)
 mwezi wa octoba (octobre)
duga (magasin)
viashara (marchandise)
 tano (5)
FEZA (argents)
mihidi na miHogo na Kalanga (mais,
 manioc et arachides)
 Vidjidji (Villages)
 Sultani (Chef Coutumier)
mingazi, MIHONGO na mihidi
 (palmiers, Manioc et Mais)

Chuki na wivu (haine et jalousie)
adui wangu (mes ennemis)
Musengo (poudre nocif)
manabii (les profetes)
 mwezi wa aprili (avril)
 kanyama (Village)
siku ya Mungu (dimanche)
kanisa (eglise)
Mwalimu (pasteur)
 Diama (Diamant)
muto (rivière)
UTU[X]MWA (esclavage)
yakunea mwenzao (DoMine) [=ya
 kunea]
washazi (imbecile)
DEMULU-Vantard (Baluba Vantard)
Kiburi (Dureté)
MSaada (DON, ou aide)
 munane (8)
FUjO (trouble)
waolesha wa binti wangu M[x]Bili (Faire
 marier mes deux Filles)
Sultani wa mugi (...) (Chef du Village)
 wanane (8)
 kilometri mia tatu (300KM)
 ine (4)

kilo^{Me}tri mia moja (100KM)

Mwalimu (pasteur)

Lusaka (Village)

VYOMBO ya KiNga (pieces Velo)

sita (6)

ine (4)

mjomba (oncle)

Merch (Mars)

[feza] ikatemuka nguvu (devaluation)

waza kwiitumika (programme)

pecher (tromper)

In two cases, the French glosses function as a disambiguating rather than as an translating-explanatory device: *Lusaka* and *kanyama* are qualified as 'villages', probably so as to avoid confusion with other places (e.g. the Zambian capital of Lusaka). In the other cases, Julien appears to assume that the word or expression used may be new or unknown to his reader, as e.g. with *manabii* (the Prophets, a religious sect) and *ikatemuka nguvu*, lit. 'to lose strength', and here used in connection to money to denote a devaluation.

The glossed Swahili terms represent a heterogeneous lexical field, probably grouping terms which Julien judges to be uncommon in everyday conversations. Quite a few terms - but by no means all of them - can be seen as representing the Arabized East-Coast *Swahili Bora* variant, and are probably perceived by Julien as 'High' and therefore uncommon terms: *anwani*, *mushahara*, *duga*, *adui*, *msaada*. Julien also glosses some terms for professional or social functions, such as *adui*, *Mwalimu*, *Sultani*, *mjomba* and so on. Other

glossed terms may represent non-prototypical, extended, idiomatic or metaphorical meanings of terms: *mfano*, *kiburi*, *vyombo ya kinga*. But there are also glossed terms of which the uncommonness would seem strange, such as *ma barua*, *muto*, *Merch*, or *kanisa*, the names for months (which, incidentally, Shaba Swahili has borrowed from French), the numbers, or other loans such as *primeri* and *sekondari*. *Feza* is probably glossed, although it is a common term in Shaba Swahili, because Julien's own preference goes to the equivalent term *franka*.

The glosses could represent a form of 'speech convergence' or 'recipient design', by means of which Julien adapts his speech to what he expects to be understandable for his addressee. Various factors seem to uphold this hypothesis. Previous letter exchanges were mostly in French, and probably, French was the language through which Julien and his employers used to interact while he worked for them. Julien's suspicion that Mrs. Arens is not very proficient in Swahili is further vindicated by the fact that Mrs. Arens sent the Swahili document to me for translation into Dutch. Furthermore, despite Mrs. Arens suggestion to write the document in the language he preferred, Julien still wrote the three final chapters in French, although Julien's French orthography shows that French, to him, was not an unproblematic medium. Placed in the wider context of intercultural communication, the French glosses evidence a speech situation in which Julien displays a very important degree of cooperativeness, over and beyond language barriers.

3. *Chronology and itinerary*

The text follows a rather precise and explicit chronology, starting with the author's birth-date (1946) until the moment of writing (1995). This

chronologically structured history ends with the beginning of chapter 9, and the language shift from Swahili to French also marks a transition between a temporal-historical and an a-temporal, more abstract and general narrative. In the Swahili part of the text, Julien provides as detailed a time sequence as possible, indicating precise dates (day, month, year) wherever possible, and months and years wherever more precise recollections appear to be absent. The temporal sequence, however, is constructed through 'slow' and 'fast' narrative passages, which can be roughly connected to two periods. The period before 1990 is a 'fast' narrative, in which time intervals of e.g. 21, 6 and 7 years are summarized in a few lines or a few paragraphs. The period after 1990 is a 'slow' narrative, in which brief intervals of time are documented in greater detail. The point of transition between the 'fast' and the 'slow' narratives in the text is the final part of chapter 4 ('Difficulties begin in my house'), where Julien decides to leave his farm in Malemba-Nkulu.

The variation of fast and slow narratives may indicate the fact that Julien wrote his story from memory, not relying on notes or other sources. It may, in other words, show us a glimpse of the oral substrate culture in which Julien situates his literary endeavor. Writing his life history is not connected to a series of other written sources, to an 'archive' from which he can draw and select information for inclusion in his final text. The 'récit' stands more or less isolated, only loosely connected to a textual tradition of writing 'serious' texts of which Julien seems to have some knowledge 'from afar', judging from the formal organization of his text (e.g. the division in chapters bearing a title).

Julien's story includes a complex itinerary. The region in which he migrates represents a huge triangle crossing the Zairean provinces of Shaba (Julien consistently uses the older name Katanga) and Kasai Oriental, stretching from Lubumbashi in the South to Mbuji-Mayi in the North, and from

Mbuji-Mayi in the West to his birthplace Manono and his farm in Malemba-Nkulu in the East. The estimated distance between the Northernmost and the Southernmost point of his itinerary is 800km, that between the Easternmost and Westernmost point 420km.³ Apart from this itinerary, Julien mentions a one-time trip to Kinshasa, and to Ndola in Zambia, right across the Zairean border south of Lubumbashi. The reasons for his migrations are diverse. They may be either economical, when Julien moves to another place to find a new job or to start a new business, or instrumental, when he goes to one of the big cities where he can send and receive letters, and collect the money sent by Mrs. Arens. But other journeys are caused by private reasons, as when Julien flees to Kabinda in order to avoid confrontation with his loan-shark, Kalonda (chapter 4), or by political ones, as when his family flees from Kasai to Shaba during pogroms against people from Shaba in Kasai (chapter 7).

4. *Genre and style*

Some of the features mentioned above pointed towards an awareness of formality as a stylistic requirement for the kind of text Julien produces. This could be tentatively deduced from the remarkable monolingualism of the various parts of the text, and also from the graphic and structural elaboration of the text by means of divisions in chapters bearing a title, the numbering of the pages, the underlining of words and the use of French glosses to facilitate reading. It is clear that Julien has worked on the text, that he has spent a considerable effort in making the text into a product which he finds appropriate for the kind of communication he is engaging in. He has used a model of communication, a prototype, which he calls the 'récit'.

The realization of this prototype is, however, far from unproblematical.

We have seen how orthographic problems plague the text. The absence of a standard orthography, or even a widespread and pervasive standardized variant of the languages used to some extent neutralizes these orthographic problems. Judging from the elaboration of the text, it is hard to imagine that Julien would have worried about incorrect spelling, hyphenation or morpheme boundary marking. What is probably more relevant is the language choice, and how this coheres with other elements of text structuring. Strictly speaking, the autobiographical narrative stops as soon as Julien starts writing in French. From that point onwards, furthermore, the text becomes dialogical: whereas the autobiographical narrative used Mrs. Arens as a story character and referred to her in the 3rd person singular (with the exception of one brief passage on page 9 of Julien's text), the French part of the text directly addresses her and involves her as an interlocutor. All this points to a generic break: the French part of the text is a letter to Mrs. Arens, and not a part of the 'récit'. It could be noted that there is a closing formula to the text ("votre ancien boy, Julien"), but no matching opening formula ('dear Mrs. Arens', for instance) that would vindicate an *épistolaire*-like generic identification. The most likely interpretation would be that the French letter is an appendix to the 'récit', and not the other way round.

Still, this leaves us with another incongruence: the French part of the text is structurally organised just like the Swahili part, divided into chapters with a title. Here again, we could invoke the notion of 'knowledge from afar', used above. Julien seems to know the genres and their distinctions (hence the language shift and the shift from a monological to a dialogical viewpoint), but has difficulties in using them in practice. Some of the stylistic characteristics of the 'récit' spill over into the structuration of the letter, and the letter is not physically separated from the 'récit', for instance by a page break or an opening formula. The result is a generically hybrid text which probably reflects the

distance between the praxis of writing and the culture of writing. Julien knows how to write, and he is capable of writing a long and elaborate text in two languages. But he has not appropriated the cognitive, technical and material aspects of writing competence that make up the culture of writing, by lack of access to the subtle skills and forms of knowledge that enable one to write 'canonically'. Probably, this is a typification of grassroots literacy: people know how to write, but they are not literates in the sociocultural sense of the term.

At a wider scale, this informs us on the symbolic economy of the environment in which someone like Julien lives. Symbolic goods such as literacy, 'correct' language use and so on are available, but not equally accessible to everyone. By implication, it also teaches us a few things on the relativity of discourse genres and styles (see Blommaert 1994): although people write, their writing praxis is embedded in a strongly different repertoire of discourses and discourse functions, and may hence acquire very different communicative effects, statuses and identity-constitutive features. The value, the conditions of usage and the degree of impact of writing may be strongly dependent on the specific socioculturally and historically established symbolic economy of a society.

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Notes

1. Letter from Mrs. H. Arens to Jan Blommaert, 27 May 1995. It is unclear whether Mrs. Arens suggested to write in Swahili, or that Julien himself chose to write in Swahili. Hence, inferences about language preferences for specific genres cannot be made at this point.
2. Apparently, the verb *kuuza* means 'to buy' in this variant of Shaba Swahili, while *kuuzisha* means 'to sell'. In standard Swahili, *kuuza* means 'to sell', and *kununua* means 'to buy'.
3. These are the distances measured on the map of Zaire. The real traveling distances may of course be even larger, and Julien's estimate of the real traveling distance between Lusaka and Lubumbashi being 966km. may be realistic.

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