

RECRUITING A NON-LOCAL LANGUAGE FOR PERFORMING LOCAL IDENTITY:
INDEXICAL APPROPRIATIONS OF LINGALA IN THE CONGOLESE
BORDER TOWN GOMA

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ABSTRACT:

Described are discursive processes by which inhabitants of the Congolese border town Goma attribute new indexical values to Lingala, a language exogenous to the area of which most Goma inhabitants only possess limited knowledge. This creative reconfiguration of indexicalities results in the emergence of three “indexicalities of the second order”: the indexing of (1) being a true Congolese, (2) toughness (based on Lingala’s association with the military), and (3) urban sophistication (based on its association with the capital Kinshasa). While the last two second-order reinterpretations are also widespread in other parts of the Congolese territory, the first one, resulting in the emergence of a Lingala as an “indexical icon” of a corresponding “language community,” deeply reflects local circumstances and concerns, in particular the socio-political volatility of the Rwandan-Congolese borderland that renders publicly affirming one’s status as an “autochthonous” Congolese pivotal for assuring a livelihood and at times even personal security.

Keywords: Lingala, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Goma, orders of indexicality, language community, autochthony, Kiswahili

INTRODUCTION*

The relationship between language and identity is a complex and multifarious one. In a recent study of francophone immigrant communities in Cape Town, South Africa, Vigouroux warns that the language–identity interface is “constantly reshaped socially, politically, and historically by the participants themselves” (2008:417). It is therefore urgent, she concludes, that sociolinguists make an effort to “rethink the relation between SPEAKING X and BEING X-PHONE” (416). This paper takes up this challenge and presents ethnographic evidence illustrating the need for such a reconceptualization, at the same time suggesting a number of lines along which it might proceed. During ethnographic fieldwork in Goma, the capital city of the North Kivu province situated on the Congolese-Rwandan border in the Kiswahili-speaking eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), our attention was drawn to the emergence of new forms of identification centering around Lingala, a language exogenous to the area which the large majority of Goma residents do not routinely use in their daily interactions and of which most of them only possess very limited knowledge, if any. The intrusion of Lingala in this region where Kiswahili has of tradition assumed the role of interethnic lingua franca takes the form of small snippets of Lingala discourse (usually against the background of a Kiswahili matrix) that nevertheless possess high symbolic value. We argue that this “appropriation” of Lingala must be understood as a local response to a number of recent socio-political transformations that drastically reshaped the local linguistic ecology of Goma, including rising internal interethnic strife and Rwandan involvement in the various armed conflicts in the region.

The first section below brings together the various backgrounds necessary for getting a full grasp of the phenomenon and of the way it is embedded into these wider restructurings of social relationships. We start with a brief sociolinguistic characterization of Lingala and document how this new variety gradually encroached upon the other parts of the country, including the North Kivu province where Goma is located. We proceed with an overview of the historical development of the city of Goma, situating it within the various socio-political and demographic tensions afflicting the Rwandan-Congolese borderland. We round off with a brief discussion of the arrival of Kiswahili in the region and its position as a cross-border language. Each in its own way, these various trajectories all contributed to the shaping of the current socio-political landscape of North Kivu and to the prevailing distribution of locally available linguistic resources in the city of Goma.

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practices through which the symbolic boundaries between “autochthons” and “allochthons” are enacted in everyday settings.

BACKGROUND

The geopolitics of Lingala

Lingala, of which the origins can be traced to a series of subsequent pidginization and creolization processes in the northeast of the DRC during the earliest stages of Belgian colonization (Meeuwis 2006, 2009, 2010, in press), is today the native language of approximately 15 million speakers, while another 10 million use it as a lingua franca. The colonial era laid the basis for its institution and spread as one of the Congo’s four languages of wider regional distribution (Meeuwis 2006, 2010). These four “national languages,” as they are routinely called, top the country’s 220 or so vernacular ethnic languages, each having a distinct area of distribution. Thus, Lingala covers the west and the north, while Kiswahili is used the east, Kikongo in the south-west, and Ciluba in the center. They are used as interethnic lingua francas within their respective areas, and for many inhabitants of the urban centers in these areas it is also the native language.

From the early years of colonization until today, Lingala occupied a privileged position *vis-à-vis* the other three. It was soon adopted as the language of instruction and internal communication by the armed forces throughout the entire territory of the colony. A few years after Leopoldville (now Kinshasa) was founded in 1881, it became the new city’s primary means of communication. Leopoldville acquired the status of capital in the 1920s, and it soon became the colony’s political apex and its foremost center of socio-cultural innovation. As a consequence, Lingala also emerged as the language of modern Congolese music, which originated in the capital in the 1940s and 1950s and quickly grew to immense popularity in all parts of the country and beyond (Stewart 2004).

Independence, obtained in June 1960, further strengthened the position of Lingala. During the reign of President Mobutu Sese Seko (1965-1997), the political and administrative apparatus of the country (in 1971 renamed Zaire) was subjected to strong centralization, all powers and facilities being concentrated in the capital Kinshasa. Together with the fact that Mobutu hailed from the Lingala-speaking north, this greatly expedited the nation-wide adoption of Lingala as Zaire’s “semi-official” language, i.e. the code preferred by the elite around Mobutu and the single party MPR (*Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution*) for internal, sub-formal political communication and for addressing the masses in political speeches and rallies. Administrators and MPR representatives were stationed throughout the country, while a system of nation-wide *mutations* obliged state personnel of all ranks to relocate to another area than their region of origin. As a consequence, Lingala gradually came to encroach upon the territories of Kiswahili, Kikongo, and Ciluba (Ngalasso 1986; Sesep 1986; Boguo 1988; Mutombo 1991; Goyvaerts 1995). This is especially noticeable in towns and cities, where Lingala can now be heard in addition to the lingua franca customarily used in the area.¹

The assumption of power by Laurent-Desiré Kabila, after his AFDL rebel forces (*Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo*) expelled Mobutu in May 1997, partially reshuffled the country's power-balance in eastward direction. Kabila's coup relied heavily on Congolese expats who had taken shelter against Mobutu's dictatorship in English- and Kiswahili-speaking neighboring countries like Tanzania and Uganda. The AFDL uprising had also received strong military backing from Uganda and the new Rwandan regime that came to power after the 1994 genocide. Until today, the new regime draws most of its popular support from the east of the country. This became dramatically clear in the 2006 presidential elections, when Joseph Kabila, who assumed power after the assassination of his father in January 2001, was successfully re-elected thanks to the massive support he received in the eastern provinces. Kinshasa inhabitants are as a rule far more critical of the new regime and of Kabila's political leadership. This dormant socio-political divide between east and west has always been a latent factor in Congolese politics, but received a new impetus during the second Congolese war (1998-2003), when the North and South Kivu provinces were to a large extent economically, politically and administratively cut off from the capital Kinshasa. The peace agreement of 2003, and the territorial reintegration that followed, did not succeed in eradicating it from the minds of the people. The outcomes of the 2006 and 2011 presidential elections, for example, still closely mirrored the existing east-west territorial partition. In 2006 Kabila won the second round with 58% of the vote, but the west and the northwest (including the capital Kinshasa) supported the wealthy businessman and former rebel leader Jean-Pierre Bemba. In 2011, the capital and the northwest voted for the veteran opposition leader Etienne Tshisekedi.²

Faced with such drastic shifts in regional alliances and with the concomitant restructuring of the country's internal power-balance, which entailed a more prominent role for the DRC's Kiswahili-speaking eastern provinces and its Kiswahili-speaking eastern neighboring countries, Lingala nevertheless managed to secure its key position. Kiswahili now appears on the banknotes of the new Congolese franc (together with English)³ and the elite around President Kabila adopted it as a supplementary language of semi-official political communication in addition to Lingala (Bokamba 2008, 2009), but an attempt by the new regime to introduce Kiswahili in the armed forces was abruptly curtailed as the second Congolese war that broke out in 1998 led to a rupture between the Kabila regime and his former Anglo- and Kiswahiliphone allies. As a result, Lingala remains the exclusive language of command within the military.

The political divide between the east and the rest of the country is frequently explicated in linguistic terms, both by external observers and actors on the ground. Bemba, who ran against Kabila in 2006, was a Lingala-speaker with a powerbase in the Lingala-speaking north-west. His campaign slogan, *100% Congolais!* ("100% Congolese!"), overtly challenged Kabila's citizenship and autochthony. Tshisekedi, Kabila's challenger in the 2011 elections, is a Ciluba-speaker and draws most of his support from the two Kasai provinces in the central part of the DRC. Even so, the Lingala refrain *Ya Tshitshi, zongisa ye na Rwanda!* ("Brother Tshisekedi, send him [i.e., Kabila] back to Rwanda!") quickly caught on among the inhabitants of the capital, the western, the north-western, and central parts of the DRC alike, and could also be heard in those regions where Lingala is not the prime lingua franca. One of

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Goma and the North Kivu province

A multi-ethnic border town

The city of Goma is located in the North Kivu province, in the eastern periphery of the DRC on the border with Rwanda. Today it houses an estimated number of 800,000 inhabitants (Mairie de Goma 2011). In 1906, agents of the Congolese Free State (the precursor to the Belgian colony) founded the first settlements of what would later become Goma in an area that was then still relatively uninhabited, surrounded by settlements of Bahunde and Banyarwanda (both Bahutu and Batutsi) but not claimed by any group in particular (Turner 2007; Bucyalimwe Mararo 2009).⁴ At various points in the city's development different ethnic factions declared themselves the town's original inhabitants, often through a selective, politicized use of history which at times involved the partial destruction of colonial archives (Pole Institute 2004). In the state of perpetual confusion that resulted, almost every ethnic group currently present in the area occasionally imagines itself the city's true "autochthons" (Bucyalimwe Mararo 2002).

Belgian colonization heralded the influx of other ethnic groups, and soon Goma came to house representatives of all the different populations that inhabit the North Kivu province today: Bahunde, Bakano, Bakumu, Bakusu, Bambuba, Bambuti, Banande, Banyanga, Bapere, Bataling, Batembo, Bahutu and Batutsi. After Congolese independence (1960), the town underwent rapid expansion, its economic opportunities as strategic transit point attracting people from all over Kivu and beyond (Büscher 2011). The region's subsequent history of armed conflict further reshaped the city's demographic profile and ethnic composition, but the Bahutu remained the city's principal ethnic group. Successive waves of internal displacement, mainly from the Masisi and Rutshuru areas, further reinforced their historic predominance.

Goma's growth and expansion have also been inextricably intertwined with that of its Rwandan twin city Gisenyi, with which it is historically and economically strongly interdependent (Tegera, Sematumba, Kayser, Rutinirwa & Hamuli 2007). As the latter had been established earlier (as an outpost of German East-Africa), and already boasted an important regional market by the time agents of the Congo Free State established their post on the Congolese side of the border, Goma incorporated from the beginning a considerable Rwandan presence. The town's material organization reflects this history of strong regional interconnections. Today, Goma's landscape can be characterized as an "urban borderland," a zone of intense contact, exchange and overlap, marked by constant trans-border mobility in both directions. The border has thus lost its barrier function and has in many places become literally invisible.⁵ On the Congolese side, informal settlements have (at least partly) occupied the *zone tampon*, the stretch of no-man's land, in principle unoccupied, that divides the two countries in the absence of a natural boundary. As a consequence, Goma and Gisenyi have "practically merged into a single urban agglomeration" (Tegera et al. 2007:19), where the

front entrance of a house may be located on the Congolese side while the back door gives out onto Rwandan territory.

The Congolese Banyarwanda

In addition to promoting haziness and hybridization, the town's border location also provides a fertile soil for identity politics. The border retains its fundamentally ambiguous nature in spite of the blurring of physical boundaries, operating as much as a point of exclusion as offering possibilities for interaction. One factor that significantly contributed to this ambiguity, and played a major role in the intermittent outbursts of interethnic friction that have unsettled the region from independence onwards, is the presence of large numbers of people of Rwandan origin with unclear legal status.

Rwandan migration into what are today the two Kivu provinces occurred at different points in time. A first group of people of Rwandese descent had already settled in the region well before Belgian colonization started.⁶ In the colonial epoch, these "Banyarwanda" (as **THIS IS NOT THE FINAL VERSION. AND FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS NOT ALL PAGES ARE VIEWABLE**

Violent conflict and civil war

The violent armed conflicts that struck the Great Lakes region in the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide further exacerbated the ambiguous nature of the border. First there was the FPR take-over in Rwanda following immediately after the genocide, which stirred a refugee-crisis of enormous proportions. Many supporters of the former regime mingled with Hutu refugees and crossed the border into Zairian territory. This in turn provided the *casus belli* for the first Congolese war of 1996-1997, in which the AFDL, led by Laurent-Désiré Kabila and backed by Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda, defeated what remained of the Mobutu-regime. During this war, Goma was a major military center of the rebellion. Regional alliances were drastically reformulated in the second Congolese war (1998-2003), when Congolese government troops, now under the control of Kabila, fought an insurgency by the RCD (*Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie*) supported by Congolese Tutsi populations and backed by Kabila's former supporters Rwanda and Uganda. In 2007-2009, Goma also occupied a strategic position in the CNDP rebellion (*Congrès National pour la Défense du Peuple*), led by the insurgent Tutsi army general Laurent Nkunda. The involvement of Rwanda in this insurgency remains contested until today.

At one level, these conflicts further intensified cross-border interaction and made North Kivu even more than before dependent upon its eastern neighbors (Rwanda, Kenya, Tanzania, etc.). In the second Congolese war (1998-2003), Goma served as the headquarters of the RCD rebel movement. For five years, the city was administratively and territorially disconnected from the capital Kinshasa. The resulting territorial partition had a profound impact on people's everyday lives, and for a while inhabitants of the two Kivu provinces could only reach Kinshasa via Nairobi and needed a visa to visit to the capital. This created a new dynamics that redefined Goma's relationship with the central state and further

strengthened its eastward orientation (Büscher 2011). The partition enforced the city's position in a number of trans-border economic networks, turning it into a vibrant regional center of economic transaction (Vlassenroot & Büscher 2009). It also engendered a form of semi-autonomous urban development, out of reach of the central administration and unhampered by supervision from Kinshasa. Lastly, it resulted in the emergence of a new "trans-border culture." As travelling to Kigali, Nairobi or Kampala is markedly easier and cheaper than a trip to Kinshasa, local urban culture has been increasingly influenced by East-African cultural trends, musical tastes, architecture and fashion.

On the other hand, the dynamics of violent conflict also enhanced the exclusionary dimension of the border, owing to the political mobilization of ethnic and national identification through discourses of autochthony. Since the incipient democratization process of the early 1990s, patterns of ethnic contestation over socio-political and economic resources in Goma and North Kivu progressively crystallized around the binary opposition between "autochthons" and "foreigners." Appeals to autochthony have become a crucial element in daily livelihood strategies across all layers of the population (alongside references to established "ethnic" identities), and access to economic networks, positions in the administration, jobs, membership of a particular church or school etc. are more and more determined by one's position within the matrix provided by the politics of belonging. Inhabitants of the city are now continually expected to demonstrate their *Congolité* and reaffirm their "autochthone" origins. The blurring of the physical border separating Rwanda and Congo thus goes hand in hand with the creation of "mental" boundaries to distinguish Congolese from Rwandese.

Commonly used labels that invoke autochthony pronounce judgments about who is a "true" Congolese (or *originnaire*) and who is a "foreigner" (or *non-originnaire*) on the basis of one's time of arrival on Congolese territory, before or after the advent of colonization (in line with the citizenship laws discussed above). In reality, however, such judgments are overwhelmingly made on the basis of one's ethnic identity and one's habitual language. Being perceived as "trans-border" ethnic groups, ALL Hutu and Tutsi populations now run the risk of being disqualified as *non-originnaires*, including those who arrived well before colonization and whose Congolese citizenship was never questioned. This drastic redrawing of the question of belonging runs parallel to the emergence of the new ethnonym *Rwandophone*, which was not yet in use during Mobutu's rule. This ethnonym, together with its cousin **THIS IS NOT THE FINAL VERSION. AND FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS NOT ALL PAGES ARE VIEWABLE** trust is omnipresent and has been fuelled by a series of ethnic censuses organized by local administrators, presumably intended to tell apart "real" from "false" Congolese and single out "infiltrators."

The cross-border language Kiswahili

Kiswahili, the lingua franca spoken throughout the eastern part of the DRC, predominates in most cross-border interactions. This Bantu language, historically associated with the network of urban trade centers ("stone towns") that emerged along the East African coast from the ninth century onwards (Nurse & Hinnebusch 1993; Spear 2000), made its first roads inwards

in the 19th century, in the tracks of Zanzibari traders seeking to extend their trade empire to the center of the African continent. In 1876, on his expedition from the Indian Ocean to the Atlantic coast, Henry Morton Stanley noticed that knowledge of Kiswahili had already caught on among some of the inhabitants of Nyangwe, a town on the Lualaba River (approximately 200 miles west of Lake Tanganyika) that traded with the Zanzibaris. As Stanley continued his journey up the Lualaba (which discharges into the Congo), he simultaneously opened up new trade opportunities for the Zanzibaris, who in the next ten years expanded their mercantile network in western and northwestern direction. Kiswahili's current spread as a lingua franca is a by-product of these Zanzibari trade efforts. In the late 1880s, agents of the Free State returned to the area and launched a number of military campaigns to eradicate Zanzibari competition. As the Free State agents and their troops, who were recruited in the northwestern parts of the Congo, used a proto-form of Lingala for communicating with the local populations they encountered, these "Anti-Arab campaigns" also curtailed the further spread of Kiswahili and laid down the current Lingala-Kiswahili border (see Meeuwis 2006 for details). After the Belgian government took over the Congo in 1908, Lingala was more and more associated with the military, state power, and the capital Leopoldville, while Kiswahili became the language of the country's eastern economic epicenters, in particular the fertile Kivu and the mining province Katanga. Kiswahili's precolonial and colonial history is thus responsible for its dual status as both a Congolese *langue nationale* and a cross-border language that unites populations of different countries. This is of great significance to the account below, as it explains why Kiswahili, in spite of its long-standing historical embedding in the area and its importance to people's everyday lives, is judged inadequate as a vehicle for expressing *Congolité*.

REPORTED PATTERNS OF LINGALA USAGE AND PROFICIENCY

In the course of 2010, a survey was taken from 300 informants, all permanent inhabitants of Goma, distributed evenly among ten of the 13 administrative divisions (*quartiers*) of the city. The survey included both open and closed questions inquiring about degrees of passive and active knowledge of Lingala, as well as about frequencies and contexts of use.

Overall, the respondents reported to be able to speak a totality of 25 different "languages," explicitly designated by them as such. These include Ciluba, English, French, Kiganda, Kihavu, Kihunde, Kihutu, Kikongo, Kikumu, Kikusu, Kilongo, Kinande, Kinyabwisha, Kinyanga, Kinyarwanda, Kirega, Kisonge, Kiswahili, Kitembo, Kitetela, Kitongo, Kiyombe, Kizimba, Lingala, and Mashi. The answers about language proficiency are instructive in more than one way. The high reported variety first of all reflects the continuously shifting patterns of immigration and conflict that have characterized the city's history from its foundation onwards. It must also be interpreted, however, in the light of the high rate of participants claiming individual bi- or multilingualism: virtually each informant listed two or more languages in his or her linguistic repertoire. Particularly significant is that a number of respondents claimed to be speakers of "Kinyabwisha" or "Kihutu," two neological glossonyms that literally translate as "the language of Bwisha" and "the language of the

Bahutu.” These two labels appear to be used here as substitutes for the glossonym “Kinyarwanda.”¹⁰ Such a reluctance to openly proclaim oneself *Rwandophone* should not come as a surprise given the prevailing climate of persistent hostility which the latter are exposed to. It is probably also aggravated by the fact that our questionnaire may have resembled the above-mentioned ethnic censuses organized by local authorities to identify “allochthons” and potential “traitors.”

As far as KNOWLEDGE of Lingala is concerned, only 7.3% (n=22) on a total of 300 respondents report that it is the language in which they are most proficient. As such, they may be considered “first-language speakers” of Lingala. None of them, however, claim to be EXCLUSIVELY speaking Lingala, and in their linguistic repertoire it is always complemented with other languages that are considered necessary for survival in the city. There are, to the contrary, a great deal of respondents who report NOT being able to speak any Lingala AT ALL. As far as passive knowledge of the language is concerned, 29% (n=87) declare not to understand it. Out of the 71% (n=213) who claim they do, only 4 out of 10, which equals 29% of the total group, report to understand it “well” or “very well.” As far as active knowledge is concerned, 34.3% (n=103) report not to speak it at all. And out of the 65.7% (n=197) who do, only one third (n=66) claim to speak it at the levels “well” or “very well,” which amounts to 22% of the total sample.

With regard to the USE of Lingala, of the 213 informants who claim to have minimal proficiency or more (i.e., those who included Lingala at least in their passive linguistic repertoire), 6.6% (n=14) state never to use the language, 24.4% (n=52) to use it only once a

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reflects, pre-existing social arrangements (e.g., one’s membership of the military), and can therefore easily be reconstructed and modeled by external observers or by language users themselves, as they did in the questionnaire.

INDEXICAL APPROPRIATIONS OF LINGALA

Silverstein 2003a also points out, however, that indexicality constitutes an inherently dialectical field, due to the fact that the indexical meanings of linguistic signs are never fixed but subject to continuous reinterpretation. Under the right circumstances, first-order forms of indexicality like those reported in the questionnaire may in turn serve as the ground for a SECOND-ORDER INDEXICALITY that reinterprets the initial association and assigns a new meaning (and usage context) to the indexical in question (Silverstein 2003a; Johnstone & Kiesling 2008; Johnstone 2010). As a rule, such second-order indexicals are far more “fluid” in nature than their first-order counterparts, and they are usually not reflexively available to language users. The reason is that for these second-order indexicalities, the link between linguistic form and usage context is no longer dictated by a transparent association that is easily accessible to observers and language users alike, but mediated by “an ethno-metapragmatically driven native interpretation” (Silverstein 2003a:212) of the first-order indexical in terms of locally salient metapragmatic categories and ideologies. And because

they crucially depend on a reinterpretation, second-order indexicals not just simply “reflect” existing social arrangements, but may also be exploited for creatively transforming interactional constellations and restructuring relationships.

Our account of this second form of indexicality, the multiple ways in which Goma residents creatively appropriated Lingala for performing new social tasks beyond the indexing of established first-order associations, is based on observations collected during fieldwork, but also on self-reports produced by informants in informal talks and in-depth interviews. The fact that informants often demonstrate an acute metapragmatic awareness of their strategic language use, and (as we shall see below) occasionally even cite instances of language coaching, challenges the claim that such second-order indexicalities, and the indexically-entailing use of linguistic signs in general, tend to escape language users’ attention and are more resilient to discursive formulation than their first-order counterparts (see also the discussion in Silverstein 1981). To our mind, Goma residents’ surprisingly high level of metapragmatic awareness must be seen as an additional indication that in this volatile sociopolitical context language choice has indeed come to play a crucial role as identity marker.¹¹

Although the indexical appropriations cited below frequently involve instances of codeswitching, we nevertheless chose to frame the discussion in terms of underlying indexical values. The reason is that the umbrella notion codeswitching also comprises forms of language alternation in which indexical associations with usage contexts are not the primary source of situated meaning (see Meeuwis & Blommaert 1994, 1998 for a discussion of the non-generalizability of approaching codes in terms of their presumed indexical values). This is all the more the case in a volatile sociolinguistic setting like the Rwandan-Congolese borderland, where various forms of hybridization exist side by side and linguistic boundaries prove highly permeable.

Lingala as an index of Congolité

In October 2008, the local *chefs du quartier* of the Birere neighborhood, located on Congolese territory but next to the border, conducted a number of “surveys” to identify so-called *infiltrés*, non-Congolese without a valid residence permit. The surveys were organized in close collaboration with local authorities and supported by at least part of the township population. They took place in a context of great tensions, as the city was under threat of attack by the insurgent army general Laurent Nkunda’s CNDP rebel troops and the entire

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atmosphere that leaves room for negotiation. For Rwandophone Congolese (who are frequently accused of having obtained Congolese citizenship in a fraudulent way, cf. Jackson 2006), demonstrating a basic competence in Lingala may additionally be helpful for reinforcing their status as lawful possessors of Congolese citizenship: in case police officers are in doubt about your true nationality, producing a sentence or two in Lingala may help to convince them. On the whole, the risk of being halted by police or members of the military is

considerably greater for city residents suspected of being Rwandan nationals, as controlling the validity of residence permits represents an additional opportunity for generating extra income. In fact, in the first months of 2012 the same Rwandan trader from the opening incident recounted how he had recently been arrested by the police at night while he was driving a car with a Rwandan license plate:

- (1) *J'ai sorti tout mon Lingala. Je ne sais pas où je l'ai trouvé, j'étais étonné de moi même, de mon vocabulaire, mais à la fin ils m'ont laissé partir.* (“I pulled out all my Lingala, I don’t know where I got it, I was amazed about myself, about my vocabulary, but in the end they let me go.”)

The little Lingala that his Congolese friends had taught him once more proved itself highly useful.

To the extent that Lingala tends to be perceived as a certificate for passing as a true, autochthonous Congolese, the community indexed in the act of speaking it very much coincides with what Silverstein 1998 identified as a LANGUAGE COMMUNITY. Language communities consist of reflexively self-aware groups of speakers that are held together by their joint normative orientation to the referential use of a particular language (that is, a language with a capital L) (1998:407). As such, these communities depend very much on situated practice for their actualization, as this is the primary site where participants demonstrate such normative orientations and thereby “perform” the community they are part of. Because these performances contain a major subjective element, language communities are not to be confounded with the objectively identifiable recurrent interactional patterns that sociolinguists traditionally refer to as the essence of a SPEECH COMMUNITY (e.g. Hymes 1972, see also Gumperz’ 1971 notion of LINGUISTIC COMMUNITY), i.e., sets of “perduring, presupposable regularities of discursive interaction in a group or population” (Silverstein 1998:407). The case at hand provides compelling evidence that these two analytically independent levels of community-formation may intersect in intricate and unpredictable ways, as Lingala is used for demarcating new symbolic boundaries (the LANGUAGE COMMUNITY) in a context of intense cross-border interaction conducted mainly in Kiswahili (the SPEECH or LINGUISTIC COMMUNITY).

If it is indeed the case that Lingala constitutes the central “object of worship” of such an emergent language community (as the central diacritic for excluding others), the usage of this language for demonstrating one’s *Congolité* exploits the gray area between indexicality and iconicity. In the instances discussed thus far, speaking Lingala not merely “signals” an associated context but constitutes an integral part of the community being performed in the act of speaking it. Hence, to the extent that the public use of the language equals PERFORMING the community indexically associated with it, that usage constitutes an INDEXICAL ICON of the community in question (cf. the discussion in Silverstein 2003a:222ff, see also D’hondt 2010). This intertwining of indexicality and iconicity is nicely illustrated by the fact that designating someone as a compatriot must always be done in the very language that epitomizes belonging to native soil. Informants are adamant that there exists no Kiswahili equivalent for the Lingala noun phrase *mwana mboka* (litt. “child of the village/region of origin/country,” hence

“compatriot,” “fellow citizen”). Thus, a Kiswahili-speaking Goma resident who wants to categorize another person as a fellow countryman has no alternative but to do so in Lingala, as in the following example (coined by an informant):

(2) Huyu ni mwana mboka bwana! (“This is a fellow countryman, mister!”)¹²

In actual fact, there is a Kiswahili lexeme that roughly expresses the same lexical content as *mwana mboka*, namely *mwananchi* (“citizen,” litt. “child of the country” AND “child of the soil”).¹³ Resorting to a Kiswahili lexeme for declaring someone a fellow countryman would ultimately be self-defeating, however. Assertions of co-citizenship require the speaker to demonstrate his own *Congolité*, and therefore they must be done in Lingala and not in a language also spoken on the other side of the border. Only Lingala can fulfill the role of expressing *Congolité*.

This overt incongruity between, on the one hand, the emblematic value of Lingala and, on the other, the fact that most Goma residents have only a limited proficiency in Lingala and do not frequently use it in their everyday lives might initially seem startling. Upon closer inspection, however, it is by no means unique or exceptional. Similar disparities between use and value are a persistent feature of many of the heritage language communities found in the US (Italian-American, Irish-American, etc.), for instance. Much more remarkable, from a comparative perspective, is the absence of any traces of a Humboldtian language-thought isomorphism mediating the link between language and community. As Silverstein 2003b points out, heritage language communities are typically erected around the emblematic value of a lost or endangered minority language that ancestors spoke in times immemorial and therefore encapsulates, in a metaphysical fashion, the collectivity’s true identity. In Goma this is clearly not the case, as the language that acquired emblematic value as delineator of the Congolese community is traditionally regarded exogenous to the area where the bearers of that community reside. In view of this observation, the “ecological niche” in which this Lingala language community thrives and the socio-historically specific language ideologies facilitating its emergence deserve closer scrutiny.

When looking at the political economy of symbolic and linguistic resources in which the practice of identifying oneself as member of an imagined community of Lingala-speakers comes to make sense for Goma inhabitants, we stumble upon a second paradox: People living in a commercial urban environment where cross-border interaction flourishes and physical state boundaries appear to have almost entirely dissolved feel compelled to erect a new symbolic boundary, even if they have to do so by resorting to an (at least partially) exogenous language associated with a capital about which they have mixed feelings (cf. *infra*) and with the bureaucratic apparatus of a failed state from which they can expect little support (cf. *infra*). The felt need for such a differentiation must be understood in the context of the ambiguous character of the city’s eastward mercantile orientation. Since the outbreak of violence of the mid-1990s, Goma residents find themselves in the uncomfortable position of being both economically dependent on their Rwandan neighbor (as it controls the entry to the East-African trading chain) and subjected to its military dominance. In terms of language choice, Lingala is the most appropriate candidate for the required differentiation, as Kiswahili

lacks the discriminatory capacity which such boundary-marking requires. In spite of the fact that Kiswahili is one of the DRC's four national languages, it is also fluently spoken by many Rwandese, particularly those living close to the border. Its potential for distinction is further compromised by the fact that many Rwandan Tutsi exiles who returned to Rwanda after the 1994 FPR takeover, including many of the political and military leaders heading the new regime, received military training in Kiswahili in Uganda and Tanzania.

The link between language and the community it epitomizes furthermore appears to be mediated by a set of "pragmatic" attitudes stressing the metonymical quality of Lingala in ways that are similar to what Meeuwis 1997, 2002 found among Kiswahili-speaking Congolese in Belgium in the 1990s, who repeatedly emphasized that Lingala is the language of the capital Kinshasa and thus metonymically stands for the entire DRC. Lingala, so it is argued, fundamentally "belongs" to the DRC, even if it is nowadays also spoken elsewhere, as this is the country where it historically originated.

- (3) *Comme ça ça englobe tout le monde hein. Ça englobe donc les neuf régions du Zaïre. [...] le lingala c'est la langue de la capitale. Donc quand on parle lingala on ne sait pas distinguer lui il est du Bas-Zaïre, lui il est de l'Equateur, celui est du Kasai, non! On voit tout simplement un Zaïrois, un Kinois.* ("That way [i.e., speaking Lingala] everyone is included. It includes the nine regions of Zaire. Lingala is the language of the capital. So when one speaks Lingala, you can't distinguish this one is from the Lower-Zaire, this one is from the Equateur region, this is from the Kasai region, no! You simply see a Zairian, a person from Kinshasa.")
- (4) *Si par exemple, j'entends quelqu'un parler le lingala, un Noir, je vais dire directement ah! oyo aza Zaïrois. Il peut être Congolais hein! A Brazzaville on parle aussi le lingala. Mais je dirais d'abord, c'est un Zairois.* ("If for example I hear someone speak Lingala, a Black person, I'll immediately say 'ah! this one is a Zairian.' Mind you he might well be from Congo-Brazzaville! In Brazzaville, too, people speak Lingala. But I'll first of all say, he's a Zairian.")

The language ideology at work here holds that nation-states have in essence only one language (even if this is contradicted by actual multilingualism on the ground) and that each language of the world is the exclusive property of only one nation-state.

Importantly, these patterns of identification should not be interpreted as indicating a rapprochement between the eastern and western part of the country. Regardless of the fact that Goma residents on certain occasions indeed make use of Lingala for distinguishing themselves from their Rwandan neighbors, a significant part of the population of the capital Kinshasa regards their Kiswahili-speaking compatriots from the eastern provinces as too much influenced by Rwandese and Ugandans, and, therefore, as not really Congolese. On certain occasions (such as in the campaigns leading up to the 2006 and 2011 presidential elections, in which inhabitants of Kinshasa consecutively rallied behind Bemba and Tshisekedi against Kabila, cf. supra), Kinshasa residents embraced Lingala as an icon of autochthony that specifically excluded Kiswahili-speakers. Such distrust and suspicions are

mutual. In Goma as well, people repeatedly emphasize the cultural differences between *Kinois* and *Kivutiens*. In spite of their symbolic appropriation of Lingala, Goma residents generally hold outspokenly caricatural views of their capital and its inhabitants. On the one hand, Kinshasa is regarded as a place that radiates *ambiance* (“atmosphere”), and its residents are regarded as “modern,” “at ease,” and “cool” (cf. *infra*). It is considered worth visiting for pleasure (jocularly referred to as *une formation à la vie*, “a school of life,” for acquainting oneself with all sorts of vices and secret pleasures not locally available), but not for business

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, when respondents listed the contexts in which they use Lingala. Here as well, however, this explicitly articulated first-order association is in turn creatively exploited for accomplishing other social tasks. These include CONVEYING AUTHORITY and COMMANDING RESPECT, and at a more “behavioral” level, the assuming of A “FIRM” OR “TOUGH” STANCE through which the two previous tasks are accomplished. Together, this complex of associations is locally referred to by means of the Congolese-French gloss *s'imposer* (“to impose oneself,” but without the pejorative connotation it has in standard French).

Thus, city residents who are not part of the military will nevertheless also make use of Lingala for putting up an image of toughness and authority. Consider the following exchange between a female customer and an armed guard in front of a bank office:

- (6) Customer: Banque inafanya leo? (“The bank is working today?”)
Guard: **Te, ekangi lelo. Zonga lobi!** (“No, it is closed today. Come back tomorrow!”)

Both are natives to the region and fluent in Kiswahili, but the guard nevertheless responds in Lingala to index the forcefulness associated with, and required by, the job he carries out. In this case, the guard’s symbolic authority is not solely the outcome of his linguistic choices but is also backed by other associations with the military in terms of attire, attributes and job content (uniform, machinegun, the fact that he is guarding a bank). In other contexts, such additional indexes of a non-linguistic nature are absent. This is the case, for instance, with beggars and street children (in Kinshasa called *bashegue* but locally known as *maybobo*), who will typically formulate their initial plea for money in Kiswahili but shift to Lingala for intimidating passers-by who fail to respond to their call for financial support:

- (7) Eeh bwana bwana! Toza bapetits na yo:::! **Bapetits na yo nzala, sala biso bien! Tikela biso mwa système, esala mwa façon!** (“Hey mister, mister! We’re your children! Your children are hungry, do something good for us! Leave us something that is beneficial, something from which we benefit!”)

Categorizing the recipient of the appeal as a “parent” who bears responsibility for his “children” (regardless of the actual age difference between producer and recipient of the

utterance) projects a set of mutual rights and obligations calling for an exchange of money, and the switch to Lingala adds a compelling character to the query. As one informant put it, such “requests” would simply “not work” in French (which would indicate “that you have been to school – hah hah”) or Kiswahili (“a language of the family”), and certainly not in Kinyarwanda (“[do it] in Kinyarwanda, you’re dead!” – clearly meant in a metaphorical way). Lingala is also an indispensable ingredient of the “sign equipment” of the many informal self-defense groups that operate in the city, locally referred to as *anti-gang*, alongside their bandanas and primitive weaponry (machetes, clubs). Initially, anti-gang members were recruited on a small scale from among the *maybobo* by market vendors in order to prevent petty crime by other *maybobo* and *démob* (demobilized soldiers). However, this soon developed into a full-fledged form of urban vigilantism, strongly supported by city authorities, that imposes its own concepts of security and justice, organizing nocturnal patrols and putting up roadblocks to identify people entering or leaving a particular neighborhood. The matrix of the slang these anti-gang members use is undeniably Kiswahili, but through inserting a limited number of Lingala items they manage to project the image of intimidation and roughness that forms an essential part of their group identity. The little Lingala they dispose of is thus of high symbolic value.

This creative appropriation of Lingala as a tool for commanding authority and respect is already at work within the military itself. Many soldiers quartered in North Kivu themselves grew up in areas where Kiswahili is spoken as lingua franca, but will nevertheless resort to Lingala when addressing a civilian in the capacity of member of the military (e.g., when extorting money from them). They will do so, moreover, in Lingala-only discourse, whereas *maybobo* and anti-gang members mostly rely on isolated Lingala insertions in a Kiswahili matrix. From a reverse angle, civilians who address a traffic policeman or member of the military in Lingala do so not merely “out of habit” (a first-order regularity) but because it is considered respectful, presumably creates goodwill, and is therefore considered conducive to a beneficial atmosphere (a second-order creative appropriation). Here we stumble upon an additional reason why presumed Kinyarwanda-speakers, both Rwandan citizens and Rwandophone Congolese, are more frequently singled out for extortion. Rwandese citizens usually do not know any Lingala at all, and Rwandophone Congolese are easily singled out on the basis of their “incorrect” pronunciation.¹⁴ The fact that both groups lack the Lingala language skills necessary for “talking nicely” exposes them as foreigners, limits their interactional maneuvering space and renders them more easily intimidated by soldiers’ linguistic practices (and thus more prone to give in to their demands). This represents a first clear case of the intertwining of different indexicalities, as the indexing of toughness (which is itself not exclusive to the Kivu) here locally coalesces with the iconic type of community-performative indexicality discussed in the previous section.

Still further remote from the first-order association with the military is the use of Lingala for “metaphorical” intimidation in more relaxed contexts, such as mockery among friends. Recipients of a story or assessment, for example, may resort to one of the Lingala expressions listed below for demonstrating disagreement (8 to 12) or for performing another type of disaffiliative response (13 to 15).

- (8) **Makambo ozoloba, lokuta!** (“What you’re saying is not true!”)
- (9) **Lokuta na yo!** (“What you’re saying is not true!”)
- (10) **Lokuta mabe!** (“That’s not true!”)
- (11) **Tika, tika, tika!** (“Drop it now!,” an expression of disbelief)
- (12) **Kosakana te, mon cher!** (“Don’t talk rubbish, my friend!”)
- (13) **Keba na yo, (masta)!** (“Be careful, you!”)
- (14) **Nakofacher mabe!** (“I’m really gonna get angry!”)
- (15) **Nakobeta yo!** (“I’m gonna hit you!”)

It is significant that (8) to (12) from this list comprise metapragmatic framing devices, which greatly facilitates their circulation across contexts (cf. Spitulnik 1996:167) and in turn explains why these utterances may also be employed by speakers who are otherwise not fluent in Lingala. The fact that these forms are used explicitly “to frame and orchestrate communication” (167) greatly enhances their detachability and their potential for decontextualization, as it renders them both formally and functionally more “transparent” (see also Silverstein 1992). Their “generic applicability to virtually any kind of dyadic exchange” (167) additionally explains why they can easily transferred to other contexts.

Lingala may be associated with military dominance and extortion, but for many Kivu residents Kinyarwanda epitomizes the culture of brutality and violence from which the Kivu suffered so badly during the last two decades (as the Rwandese are said to have imported the brute use of force throughout the successive Congolese wars). Of course, acts of extortion and violence by members of the military or the police are not a novel phenomenon, and already during the Mobutu period regular soldiers used to ransack the civilian population to supplement their meager income. At that time, however, soldiers almost “kindly” ordered urban inhabitants “to give with good spirit” (in Lingala, *pesa na esprit ya bien*). This changed as a consequence of the conflict, which multiplied the number of parties involved in such pillage and drastically increased the level of violence associated with it. This is wryly reflected in the new twist Goma residents added to the above-mentioned saying. Extortion by soldiers and militia members is nowadays no longer a matter of “giving with good spirit,” but of “giving YOUR LIFE with good spirit” (*pesa VIE na esprit ya bien*).

Lingala as indexing urban sophistication and modernity

Soon after Leopoldville (now Kinshasa) acquired the status of capital, it became the colony’s foremost center of socio-cultural innovation, radiating an atmosphere of coolness, sophistication, ambiance and pleasure. It managed to retain that status until today. Goma residents facetiously refer to Kinshasa as *Outre-mer* (“overseas territory”), which underscores its at once far away and mysteriously attractive character. These qualities also reflect on the language spoken in the capital. Lingala thus not only indexes a connection to Kinshasa as a geographical locality, but also invokes urban identity and a local version of modernity based on city-based style and consumption patterns (referred to as being *à la mode* or *bien griffé*).¹⁵ Here as well, we are dealing with a second-order indexicality that creatively exploits the first-order association with a geographical locality for accomplishing derived conversational tasks.

Thus, Kiswahili speakers may resort to Lingala for framing a story and marking it as “remarkable,” “beyond the ordinary” and hence “worth telling,” as in (16) to (20) below. Here as well, the fact that the instances listed are all metapragmatic framing devices facilitates their circulation and adoption by speakers not otherwise fluent in Lingala.

- (16) **Nayebisa yo likambo moko ya somo penza!** (“I need to tell you something really awesome!”)
- (17) **Moto, oyebi nini!** (“Hey man, listen up!”)
- (18) **Moto, eloko yango somo trop!** (“Hey man, that thing is really very awesome!”)
- (19) **Oyebi nini!** (“Hey, you know what!?”)
- (20) **Moto, tuna ngai nini!** (“Hey man, let me tell you something!”)

Speakers who lack the capacity to “spice up” their Kiswahili conversation with such Lingala insertions are regarded as a *yuma* (“country bumpkin”). At mass rallies held in Goma, locally popular politicians will often insert a little Lingala in their Kiswahili speeches to entice and incite their followers (and at the same time emphasize their *Congolité*, see above). According to one of our informants, many Kivu residents initially found Kabila’s speeches excessively dull precisely because they lacked these tiny bits of Lingala. Recently, however, the president’s Lingala skills improved considerably.

Of crucial importance for understanding this third complex of indexical associations is Kinshasa’s pivotal role in the Congolese entertainment industry. As mentioned above, Congolese music originated in the capital, is still for the overwhelming majority produced there and almost exclusively sung in Lingala, but is nevertheless immensely popular throughout the country (and also beyond). The city of Goma, too, is integrated into this Lingala-based cultural market of which Kinshasa constitutes the epicenter. In Goma’s clubs and bars one also quite easily comes across examples of other musical styles not available in the capital and sung in other languages than Lingala (prime examples are Ugandan *ragga* and Tanzanian *bongo flewa*, the popularity of which reflects the city’s mercantile eastward orientation), but the live events that attract most attention are those by Kinshasa-based stars such as Koffi Olomidé, Fally Ipupa, Werrason, Papa Wemba, and JB Mpiana.

The fact that Goma residents, in endorsing this third type of indexicality, orient to a Bourdieuan cultural market as the relevant centering institution for authoritatively assigning meaning to linguistic varieties is remarkable in view of the frequently voiced criticisms that Bourdieu’s field theory, in its unmodified form, is inadequate for understanding the (re)production of “legitimate language” in large parts of the African continent. Thus, according to authors like Swigart 2001 and Stroud 2003, the standard notion of “linguistic market” is of little analytical value because states like Senegal (Swigart) and Mozambique (Stroud) have no integrated labor market (where linguistic capital can be “exchanged” for job opportunities) and because regulatory institutions where the “value” of legitimate linguistic varieties is inculcated (schools, academies) are absent. This also holds for the DRC, but here the pressure exerted by the unified cultural market proves strong enough for imbuing Lingala with prestige and legitimacy.

An additional element that contributes to Lingala's association with modernity is Kinshasa's position as the Congo's principal gateway to Europe and the symbolic center of its connection to the outside world. People fluent in Lingala are generally perceived as *bien branchés*, as possessing connections that extend not only to the country's interior but also beyond, to Brussels, Paris, and to other centers of the Congolese diaspora (Meeuwis 1997, 2002; Vigouroux 2008). Kiswahili is definitely less attractive in this respect, in spite of the language's cross-border status. A Kiswahili-speaker's network, even if he or she is well-connected, will typically not extend beyond Nairobi, Dar es Salaam or, at best, Dubai.

Again, there is a strong tendency for this third type of indexicality to mutually reinforce Lingala's boundary-marking function. Clubs and bars in Goma that do not play Congolese Lingala-sung music, for example, are automatically identified as *chez les Rwandais*. Similar patterns can be observed in many other aspects of urban culture. The way in which youngsters integrate Lingala in their slang for expressing their being *à la mode*, for example, also functions as a strategy for excluding Rwandophones. This is the case among university students, where the already mentioned "G7" (the aggregate of the various "autochthonous" local ethnic groups) make a habit of publicly displaying their *Congolité* through frequently incorporating Lingala lexemes in their Kiswahili discourse.

CONCLUSION

In the specific setting investigated in this paper, language users negotiate the relationship between "speaking language X" and "being X-phone" against a general background characterized by violent conflict, interethnic strife, and external interference. Indexical appropriations of Lingala by Goma residents must above all be understood in the context of a politics of belonging centering on "autochthony," the emergence of which is intrinsically intertwined with the socio-political volatility of the Rwandan-Congolese borderland. Autochthony comprises a mode of mobilization and exclusion based not on a notion of cultural essence but on the primordial claim of "having arrived first," and as such it projects an utterly malleable form of otherness that pits "true" Congolese, with a primordial attachment to Congolese soil, against "intruders" from across the border. Our analysis shows that the need for a tool by which Goma residents can publicly proclaim their status as autochthonous Congolese translates itself into a set of highly specific linguistic practices that strongly reflect the local distribution of linguistic resources. In a local linguistic ecology where the majority of everyday interactions are carried out in a cross-border language that is no longer suitable for symbolizing one's national origins (Kiswahili), the emergence of autochthony as the primary frame of reference results in an ICONIC form of indexicality centered around a trade language originally EXOGENOUS to the area under investigation (Lingala). For Goma residents, being able to speak a few words in Lingala indicates that you are connected to the interior and to the capital Kinshasa in particular, and as such it may eliminate uncertainty concerning your *Congolité*. This second-order indexical appropriation of the non-local language Lingala is in turn facilitated by a "pragmatic" language ideology that emphasizes Lingala's "metonymic" qualities, capitalizing on the fact that it is the

language of Kinshasa and that (as opposed to Kiswahili) it is truly endogenous to the DRC. To the extent that publicly speaking Lingala, in this specific linguistic ecology and mediated by this particular ideology, equals PERFORMING one's identity as "true Congolese," Lingala may be considered an INDEXICAL ICON of the LANGUAGE COMMUNITY that is enacted in the act of speaking it. As an imagined collectivity (of reflexively self-aware "users" of Lingala) that exists primarily by virtue of interactional occasions where the demarcation of a symbolic boundary is at stake, this language community crosscuts established speech (or linguistic) communities based on "objectively" describable interactional regularities, which extend across the border and for which Kiswahili is the primary vehicle. The form of indexical appropriation sketched here is specific to the Rwandan-Congolese borderland, but in turn interacts with, and reinforces, other second-order reinterpretations of Lingala found elsewhere on Congolese territory, such as the indexing of toughness (based on Lingala's close association with the military) and the indexing of urban sophistication and modernity (based on its association with the capital Kinshasa).

NOTES

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¹ The reverse is not the case, as the other three national languages have limited visibility in Lingala-speaking territory.

² It should be noted, though, that in the eastern parts of the country as well, Joseph Kabila's popularity has significantly waned after his victory in the 2006 presidential elections, largely because he did not succeed in keeping his promise to stabilize the region and protect its population.

³ In 2012, the Congolese government issued new banknotes of 1,000, 5,000 and 10,000 francs. English has been removed from these banknotes, and the languages used are now French and the four national languages Kiswahili, Ciluba, Lingala, and Kikongo. The banknotes we refer to, however, are still valid and are the most widely used.

⁴ "Banyarwanda" literally means "people from Rwanda." In the pre-colonial epoch, Kinyarwanda-speaking communities in the Kivu were politically linked to the central authority of the Rwandan kingdom, but operated with varying degrees of autonomy.

⁵ The erosion of the border's barrier function is a crucial element in the transformation of two adjacent border towns into "twin cities" (Heddebaut 2001; Pick, Viswanathan & Hettrick 2001).

⁶ Historians disagree over the exact time of arrival of these first immigrants and the extent to which they were integrated into the Rwandese Kingdom. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the Rwandan kingdom entered a phase of territorial expansion and intensive centralization under the rule of Mwami Rwabugiri, who destroyed the political clout of the formerly semi-autonomous Tutsi and Hutu lineages and concentrated powers in the hands of the Tutsi nobility. For some authors, Rwandan presence on Congolese soil dates back to Rwabugiri's precolonial incursion into the Kivu region (see, e.g., the discussion in Newbury 1997:216ff). According to Turner (2007:109ff), however, the present Goma-Rutshuru-Masisi

triangle had already been inhabited by groups of Rwandan descent long before that time, over which the Mwami had little or only nominal control. In 1910, Belgium and Germany reached a definitive agreement over the location of the border separating Congo and Germany's East-African territories (to which Rwanda belonged), which further curtailed the influence of the Rwandan kingdom over these Kinyarwanda-speaking communities on Congolese territory.

⁷ In the former German territories Rwanda and Burundi, which were mandated to Belgium after the German defeat in World War I, Belgian colonial authorities adopted a radically different policy and instead reinforced Tutsi-dominated state structures.

⁸ The successive citizenship laws stipulate four different points of entry as criterion for qualifying as a Congolese citizen: the take-over of the Free State by the Belgian Government in 1908 (the 1964 constitution), the year 1950 (the 1972 revision), the foundation of the Free State at the Berlin Conference in 1885 (the revocation of the latter in 1981), and Congolese independence in 1960 (the new citizenship law passed by Kabila in 2005) (Jackson 2007). Note the anachronistic nature of some of these stipulations, as the Congolese-Rwandan boundary defining the precise boundaries of the territory of the Congo was not permanently settled until 1910 (Mathys forthcoming) (cf. supra).

⁹ Congolese Kinyarwanda-speakers themselves readily accepted this new label, as it allowed them to downplay the significance of the internal Tutsi-Hutu divide. While the RCD was in command in Goma (from 1998 to 2003), its leadership actively promoted the notion of *rwandophonie*, in order to create an image of “togetherness” in view of the collective “exclusion and discrimination” Bahutu and Batutsi were presumably facing. Anticipating national elections, RCD politicians, many of them Tutsi, resorted to *rwandophonie* in an attempt to widen their electoral basis and also attract the support of the Hutu populations, who in North Kivu greatly outnumber the Tutsi (Clark 2008: 5).

¹⁰ Bwisha is one of the localities in the Northern Kivu where a large number of Bahutu has been present since precolonial times. As Lughuna remarked, “[t]o identify oneself as Munyabwisha [i.e., the ethnonym derived from that locality] is assumed to automatically eliminate every doubt concerning the legitimacy of one's membership of the Zairean, now Congolese, nation” (2004:86, our translation).

¹¹ Metapragmatic awareness is of course very much a gradient concept, and this explains why the second-order indexically-entailing usage of Lingala does routinely pop up in in-depth interviews but not in respondents' answers to the questionnaire. On the one hand, the absence of second-order indexicality from the survey answers may indicate that it remains somehow more fluid and less tangible. On the other, it may also be an effect of the pragmatic constraints on filling out a questionnaire. The standardized phrasing of the latter (“I use Lingala in the following situations and with the following persons”) quite naturally leads survey-taker and respondent in the direction of clear-cut categories of speakers and associated situations.

¹² In our discourse data fragments, the following conventions will be used. **Bold** text indicates Lingala elements. Underlined text indicates Kiswahili. French lexical items that appear in the context of Lingala discourse will not be separately marked, as Lingala is hardly ever used in its “pure” form and Lingala interlarded with borrowings from and codeswitches to French

may be considered a “monolectal” variety (Meeuwis & Blommaert 1998), much like Town Bemba (Spitulnik 1998) or Urban Wolof (McLaughlin 2001).

¹³ In Tanzania itself, *mwananchi* acquired an additional sense of “patriotism” during the country’s socialist Ujamaa-period (1967-1986). As such, it stood for an inclusive form of citizenship based on anti-imperialism and commitment to socialism irrespective of one’s ethnic or national origins that is forthright incompatible with notions of autochthony (Madumulla, Bertocini & Blommaert 1998). There are no indications, however, that this specifically Tanzanian understanding of *mwananchi* (which is moreover specific to one particular political-historical epoch) would somehow be implicated in the fact that Goma residents’ adopted the Lingala *mwana mboka*.

¹⁴ Examples of phonological shibboleths betraying one’s Rwandophone background include the occasional substitution of an intervocalic velar stop with a glottal one and the interchangeability of the alveolar trill and the lateral approximant.

¹⁵ Lingala shares this role of indexing a modern urban identity with other urban vernaculars such as Town Bemba (Spitulnik 1998), Urban Wolof (McLaughlin 2001) and chiHarare (Makoni, Brutt-Griffler & Mashiri 2007). Like these other urban lingua francas, Lingala is the product of extensive hybridization without its speakers necessarily having full competence in the different component languages that make up the amalgam (in this case, Lingala and French), or without them even being at all aware of the heteroglossic character of the new variety (Meeuwis & Blommaert 1998). Other authors have argued that the heteroglossic character of such urban vernaculars reflects the fact that city life and the modern experience themselves also “depend on the ideas of flux, hybridity, newness and experimentation” (Spitulnik 1998:33). It is doubtful, however, that Lingala’s hybrid character is responsible for the association with modernity that Goma residents project onto it. The contrast with “pure” Lingala that such an analysis implies is emically irrelevant to Lingala-speakers outside the language’s core area, due to the quasi-exclusive ubiquity of the heteroglossic variety. Furthermore, Kiswahili too exists in Goma only its “monolectal” variety (that is, interlarded with French).

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