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CONSTRUCTING SOCIOLINGUISTIC CONSENSUS
A Linguistic Ethnography of the Zairian Community in Antwerp, Belgium

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DE CONSTRUCTIE VAN SOCIOLINGUÏSTISCHE CONSENSUS
Een Linguïstische Etnografie van de Zaïrese Gemeenschap in Antwerpen

Proefschrift voorgelegd tot het behalen van de graad van
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Samenvatting

Dit proefschrift is een studie van de Zaïrese gemeenschap in Antwerpen, in het bijzonder van de patronen van taalgebruik waardoor deze gemeenschap gekenmerkt wordt en van de sociale en culturele kennis (de 'linguïstische ideologie') waarop de leden zich beroepen om deze sociolinguïstische patronen tot stand te brengen en te interpreteren. De studie is gebaseerd op een uitgewerkt theoretisch en methodologisch model, maar wil in de eerste plaats een informatieve bijdrage leveren tot de etnografische, historische en sociolinguïstische kennis betreffende de Zaïrese migrantengemeenschap in België en Vlaanderen. Deze gemeenschap wordt in de sociale wetenschappen, in het bijzonder in het domein van Belgische migrantenstudies, immers vaak over het hoofd gezien.

De studie is gebaseerd op de etnografische methode zoals aangewend in de taalkundige antropologie. Dit houdt in dat het onderzoek uitgaat van een gedetailleerde, kwalitatieve gevalsanalyse, eerder dan van een kwantitatieve overzichtsstudie. De gevalsanalyse in kwestie heeft betrekking op een locatie in Antwerpen waar leden van de Zaïrese gemeenschap elke zaterdagavond samenkomen om een katholieke mis te vieren en om te ontspannen met landgenoten.

In deze katholieke context komen Zaïrezen van verschillende taalkundige, etnische en regionale achtergronden bij elkaar. Toch blijkt dat Lingala, een van de vier 'nationale talen' van Zaïre, zowel de mis als andere aspecten van de context domineert. Deze dominantie van Lingala leidt er echter niet tot openlijke conflicten, maar is het object van een consensus onder de leden. Vanuit het theoretische perspectief dat in de analyse van sociale fenomenen homogeniteit en consensus binnen gemeenschappen niet a priori kunnen gepostuleerd worden – m.a.w. vanuit een conflictbenadering van maatschappij – stelt de gevalsanalyse zich tot doel te onderzoeken hoe deze consensus op zichzelf verwezenlijkt wordt. Hegemonie is daarom een van de sleutelbegrippen in het onderzoek: er wordt nagegaan hoe de linguïstische ideologie en de voorkeuren van taalgebruik van de sociolinguïstisch dominante groep (de sprekers van het Lingala) onbewust worden overgenomen door de leden van de sociolinguïstisch gedomineerde groep (de sprekers van de andere Zaïrese talen).

De consensus representeert een geheel aan taal-ideologische ingrediënten dat gedeeld wordt door de dominante groep en de gedomineerde groep. De leden van beide groepen gaan uit van een gelijkaardig arsenaal aan argumenten die de stelling moeten ontkrachten dat er voor de gedomineerde groep legitieme motieven zouden zijn om de dominantie van het Lingala als kwalijk, beledigend of onaanvaardbaar te ervaren. Elk van beide groepen baseert deze argumenten echter op sterk uiteenlopende visies betreffende zulke basisfenomenen als de sociolinguïstische situatie van Zaïre, de sociolinguïstische structuur van de Zaïrese migrantengemeenschap, de 'waarde' van de Zaïrese talen en hun

grammaticale vorm, de interculturele (Vlaamse) omgeving waarin de Zaïrese, katholieke context in kwestie is verankerd en andere.

De analyse van de linguïstische ideologie die deze bepaalde context vorm geeft, duidt ook aan in welke mate de gevalsanalyse representatief is voor de gemeenschap in Antwerpen, Vlaanderen en België in het algemeen. Vele van de taal-ideologische ingrediënten bevatten immers verwijzingen naar structuren die de specificiteit van de geselecteerde context overschrijden. Dit betekent dat de argumenten van de informanten zich vaak onafhankelijk ontwikkelen van de context waarop ze initieel betrekking hebben en dat hun gedetailleerde analyse daarom inzicht verschaft in de patronen van taalgebruik – en in de overeenkomstige sociale en culturele kennis – zoals die vorm geven aan de Zaïrese gemeenschap in het algemeen.

Dit proefschrift is opgebouwd uit een algemene inleiding, een algemene conclusie en acht hoofdstukken. Deze laatste zijn opgedeeld in drie delen.

De algemene inleiding situeert de doelstellingen en het beschrijvend bereik van de studie.

Het eerste deel bevat drie hoofdstukken die de theoretische en methodologische uitgangspunten verduidelijken. In hoofdstuk 1 wordt de studie gesitueerd binnen de traditie van de taalkundige antropologie, en wordt duidelijk gemaakt dat attituden en ideologieën benaderd zullen worden op basis van de premissen van het sociaal-constructionisme en in het bijzonder op basis van het recent ontwikkelde model van discursieve sociale psychologie. In hoofdstuk 2 wordt de toepassing van enkele cruciale concepten uit de sociale theorie verduidelijkt, zoals ‘conflict’ en ‘groepsidentiteit’. Het derde hoofdstuk is methodologisch van aard: het staat stil bij het etnografische veldwerk waarop de studie gebaseerd is en bij de methode aangewend in de analyse van uiteenzettingen van informanten.

De hoofdstukken in het tweede deel verschaffen achtergrondinformatie. In hoofdstuk 4 wordt Zaïre voorgesteld in zijn staatkundige, etnische, taalkundige en religieuze dimensies. Hoofdstuk 5 bevat een sociografische voorstelling van de Zaïrese gemeenschap in België, Vlaanderen en Antwerpen. In hoofdstuk 6 wordt de beperkte context waarop de gevalsanalyse toegepast is, beschreven.

In het derde deel komen de centrale sociolinguïstische onderwerpen aan bod. Hoofdstuk 7 bespreekt de patronen van taalgebruik in de geselecteerde context (o.m. de dominantie van het Lingala). In Hoofdstuk 8 wordt de analyse van de linguïstische ideologie en haar ingrediënten onderliggend aan deze patronen van taalgebruik voorgesteld.

De algemene conclusie vat de voornaamste bevindingen samen en veralgemeent de gegevens bekomen in de gevalsanalyse tot uitspraken over de Zaïrese gemeenschap in Antwerpen, Vlaanderen en België in het algemeen.

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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is a study of the Zairian community in Antwerp, Belgium, in particular of the patterns of language use employed within this community and of the native knowledge underlying these patterns. My study is meant as a contribution to our understanding of a group of immigrants about whom too little ethnographic, historiographic, and sociolinguistic information is available at the present moment. Indeed, social scientists working in the field of Belgian migrant studies have long overlooked the Zairian immigrant community; the initial preponderance of graduate students within this community led to the false impression that the presence of Zairians was merely a transient phenomenon, irrelevant to the study of the foreign communities that form an ingrained part of Belgian society. Even if recent years have witnessed the publication of some reports on the Zairians in Belgium (i.a., Mayoyo 1995; Zana 1993), research on the sociolinguistic and related features of this community is entirely nonexistent. It is my intention in this dissertation to help filling these documentary gaps.

My study as a whole falls within the scope of that range of disciplines that are situated at the juncture of anthropology and sociolinguistics. I will not be concerned with situating this study within one single tradition or school. Rather than referring to such an individual tradition, I wish to link up my study with a general research practice shared by a variety of traditions. This general research practice involves the study, on the basis of ethnographic methods adopted from anthropology, of patterns of language use and of the social knowledge members need in order to produce and interpret these patterns. This kind of research is mostly referred to by means of the interchangeable terms 'linguistic anthropology' and 'anthropological linguistics' (i.a., Blount 1995). Other scholars have used the terms 'linguistic ethnography' (i.a., Auer 1995) and 'ethnographic linguistics' (i.a., Duranti 1994), which they consider synonymous with the two other terms. In any case, particular attention will be paid to an attempt not to overshadow the primarily documentary purposes of this dissertation with elaborate historical and philosophical reconstructions of scientific paradigms. For purely practical reasons of consistency, then, I will mostly use the terms 'linguistic ethnography' and 'linguistic anthropology' to characterize my study in relation to the general research practice mentioned.

The dependence of the present study on ethnographic methods implies, among other things, that the research is based on one detailed case study, rather than on a wide-scale survey of the community at large. That is, the study of the patterns of language use of the Zairian community in Antwerp is concentrated around a profound investigation of one particular setting. This setting is 'Neptunia' (a pseudonym), which is located in the basement of a building in Antwerp's inner city and which is both 'a church' and 'a clubhouse'; each Saturday night, roughly 100 Antwerp Zairians come to Neptunia to celebrate a Catholic mass and to relax over a drink at Neptunia's bar. Neptunia is representative of the Zairian community in Antwerp at large in that membership of Neptunia is not constrained by age or sex, nor by regional or linguistic background. Other constraints, such as social position, do apply (Neptunia is predominantly a meeting place for Zairian intellectuals and their families), and in this sense the degree of representativeness depends on the degree to which social position actually affects the patterns of language use in Neptunia, which is an object of empirical analysis.

In Neptunia, speakers of each of Zaire's four major African languages, Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba (in some contexts called the country's 'national languages' (*langues nationales*)), come together to pray and pass some spare time with each other. The Neptunia masses, Neptunia as a clubhouse, and a number of other contexts of Neptunia display a distinctly dominant usage of Lingala. What we have, then, is a case of structural sociolinguistic inequality: the language that week after week and in more than one context (i.e., the mass, the clubhouse situation, and other contexts) is employed as the setting's dominant language is the language of one of the linguistic subgroups in Neptunia, while the languages of the other groups occupy a position of secondary importance. The structural sociolinguistic inequality is – at least at the levels of the 'outer appearance' of social life in the setting – the object of a consensus. That is, one notices in Neptunia no overt conflicts, fights, public disputes, or explicit quarrels that concern the dominance of Lingala and the sociolinguistic inequality and that would obstruct the normal course of events.

The aim of my dissertation, i.e. to study patterns of language use and related native knowledge among the Zairians of Antwerp, is thus applied, not to the community at large, but to Neptunia as the restricted setting of the ethnographic study. The object of analysis in this sense consists in Neptunia's structural sociolinguistic inequality emerging from the dominance of Lingala and the general consensus surrounding this inequality, in relation to the set of conceptions and constructions used by the Neptunia members to interpret and produce all these phenomena.

My investigation of sociolinguistic inequality and sociolinguistic consensus is almost necessarily a study of hegemony. As I will also point out in the theoretical chapters, one of the starting points on which this study is based is that the assumptions of homogeneous culture and consensual speech communities pervading many anthropological and sociolinguistic models are to be replaced with a view in which homogeneity and consensus are regarded as analytically 'problematic'. That is, consensus should not be taken for granted, but must be 'problematized' *per se*, i.e. it must be examined in relation to the hegemonic mechanisms that bring it about and that neutralize dissension. The consensus in Neptunia thus deserves a detailed analysis in its own right, as such an analysis may clarify through what power-related processes the consensus is arrived at. What is more, such an analysis can also shed light on what the real dimensions of the consensus are at a more detailed level of inspection, i.e. how 'consensual' the consensus really is underneath the level of the setting's outer appearance, to what extent it applies, which (groups of) members endorse it and which members do not, etc.

Many different theoretical viewpoints on native knowledge are possible. Indeed, native knowledge refers to concepts such as ‘ideology’, ‘attitudes’, ‘scenarios’, ‘conceptualizations’, ‘interpretation frames’, ‘schemata’, ‘accounts’, and the like, most of which are paradigm-specific. The theoretical perspective on knowledge I adopt in my own study is drawn from the recently developed school of discursive social psychology, in particular from Michael Billig’s insights (Billig 1982; 1987; 1990; 1991; 1992; 1995; Billig et al. 1988). Discursive social psychology represents a fundamentally social-constructionist approach to traditional psychological and social-psychological issues. It views attitudes, ideologies, etc., not as stable entities stored in the mind, but rather as part of and rooted in situated discursive activities and, as such, as inevitably tailored to the conditions of their production. ‘Knowledge’, in discursive social psychology, is thereby reinterpreted in terms of ‘social-discursive constructions’. The same viewpoints are adopted in my linguistic-ethnographic study. In this sense, my study is also an attempt at integrating the recent model of discursive social psychology into linguistic anthropology.

More theoretical, methodological, and empirical details of the project may, at this point, be provided on the basis of an overview of this dissertation’s organization. The dissertation is organized in 3 parts, comprising a total of 8 chapters. The first part consists of 3 chapters in which the theoretical and methodological foundations of the study are outlined. This part is purposefully restricted in depth and scope. Given the primarily documentary nature of this study as a whole, the main aim of which is not to develop an original theoretical case, the discussion is limited to a clarification of the conceptual distinctions and theoretical and methodological working assumptions underpinning the analysis of the ethnographic data. In chapter 1, the theoretical ingredients of my linguistic ethnography are spelled out. It succinctly sketches how since the early writings of Dell Hymes, ethnography has been introduced from anthropology into linguistics. In reconstructing this influence of Hymes’s original agenda, I also point to the fact that the possibility and desirability of reconstructing native knowledge is a matter of epistemological dispute in anthropological theory formation, and I work towards my own starting point in this respect, which is an ‘observation-based interpretive approach’. I also outline the theoretical views of native knowledge developed by discursive social psychologists and by Michael Billig in particular, and I demonstrate that these views compel us to approach native knowledge as ideology. The chapter concludes with a theoretical discussion of the implications of integrating discursive social psychology into linguistic anthropology.

Chapter 2 discusses two further theoretical issues, which relate to crucial and recurring concepts in my linguistic ethnography and which need a precise identification before the ethnographic data can be presented. I develop the idea, mentioned above, that homogeneity and consensus in societies are not to be used as *a-priori* analytical assumptions, but constitute worthwhile topics of inquiry in their own right. This discussion also allows me to demonstrate that the analytical problematization of the consensus in Neptunia does not entail an ethnographic 'nonissue', i.e. a topic which may be interesting from the analyst's point of view, but which is unimportant and of no social relevance for the community's members themselves. The second crucial concept is the concept of ethnicity. I indicate, among other things, how my linguistic ethnography is based on the understanding that group formations such as ethnicities are primarily of a constructive nature. It is also argued that group formations vary according to the criterion that is used to delineate them (language, ethnic descent, religion, etc.) and that this implies that individuals in social life always operate on the basis of a repertoire of multiple identities, rather than on the basis of one fixed identity.

Whereas chapters 1 and 2 are primarily theoretical in nature, chapter 3 is concerned with explicating this study's methodological premises. I explain the procedure used for reconstructing the native knowledge of the Neptunia members. The procedure consists in problematizing the consensus 'in front of' informants in ethnographic interviews (for which I prefer the terms 'casual and organized conversations'). That is, ethnographic interviews were set up with members of the two largest linguistic subgroups of Neptunia, i.e. Lingala-speaking members and Kiswahili-speaking members, and were framed around the implicit claim that *'There are good reasons to believe that the Kiswahili-speakers are or could be offended by the dominance of Lingala in Neptunia'*. This implicit claim is motivated, i.a., by the background of the sociolinguistic situation in Zaire (itself described in chapter 4), for which reports exist documenting negative attitudes towards Lingala on the part of Kiswahili-speakers and other non-Lingala-speakers. The informants' response to my problematization is its 'deproblematization', i.e. they 'reconstruct' the consensus which the researcher has 'deconstructed'. In the course of this chapter, I will also clarify why and how the way in which the informants go about (re)constructing the consensus in the context of casual and organized conversations can provide access to the way in which the consensus is actually constructed in the Neptunia setting itself.

This chapter also includes a situation sketch of the fieldwork that I conducted for the study, as well as a description of the main data-gathering and data-constituting procedures applied in the field. The chapter then concludes with an outline of the methodology applied in the analysis of the casual and organized conversations, the organized ones existing in the form of transcribed interactions. The methodology is imposed by the theoretical orientation towards discursive social psychology and is grounded in discourse analysis, whereby discourse analysis is to be understood, not so much in terms of a specific tradition known by this label, as in terms of a general tendency to study instances of language and language use beyond the level of the single utterance or sentence and within the concrete contexts of their production.

Part II presents several types of empirical background information needed to interpret the ethnographic data. First, in chapter 4, descriptions are provided of Zaire in terms of its political history, ethnic make-up, linguistic constellation, and religious composition. Although these descriptions are meant to be limited to the necessary background information, the chapter has grown to a somehow disproportionate size. This is the result of a concern with rendering my study accessible to a readership of nonafricanists and other nonspecialists, and to the fact that none of the complexities in my ethnographic data can be understood without an extensive coverage of the situation in Zaire.

Chapter 5, then, is a sociography, including statistical data, of the Zairian community in Belgium and in Antwerp in particular. Obviously, this description is largely focused on matters that are directly or indirectly relevant to the Neptunia setting, such as the motives behind the emigration from Zaire, the demographic composition of the Zairian community in Belgium and Antwerp, and the Zairian religious organizations in Antwerp. This chapter also includes a historiographic and sociographic justification for referring to the Zairians in Belgium, most of whom are students and refugees, as ‘immigrants’, and for making mention of ‘an immigrant context’. It is also explained in more detail why in both popular and academic contexts the group of Zairian immigrants has long been overlooked as a worthwhile topic of attention in its own right. With respect to this chapter as a whole, finally, it must also be mentioned that the sociography largely focuses on first-generation immigrants, and has much less to say on the growing group of second- and third-generation Zairians in Belgium and Antwerp. This choice is based on the particular composition of the community in Neptunia, which is to a large extent a meeting place for first-generation immigrants.

In chapter 6, the ethnographic scope is further narrowed down. This chapter describes the setting that is used for the restricted case study of my ethnography, i.e. Neptunia. It depicts the essential ingredients and features of Neptunia as a setting, except for the matters related to language use, which are to be discussed in part III. In addition to the details of the Catholic mass and the nights of Neptunia as a clubhouse, the chapter devotes particular attention to the demographic composition of the Neptunia community in terms of the members’ social, regional, and linguistic backgrounds. It is shown, in this respect, that Neptunia is primarily a meeting place for first-generation immigrants, and for intellectuals and their families. It is also demonstrated that the two most dominant linguistic groups in Neptunia are the Lingala-speakers and the Kiswahili-speakers (a distinction which is arrived at on the basis of the notion of ‘habitual language’ rather than ‘native language’) and that the Lingala-speakers represent the largest group. This empirical finding concerning the linguistic identities of the Neptunia members is, in fact, also the rationale behind the emphasis on Zaire’s four national languages throughout this entire dissertation, at the expense of the numerous other languages spoken in the country. It is, finally, evident that chapter 6 is very close to the issues dealt with in part III and thus constitutes a borderline case in the transition from part II to part III.

Part III brings together the chapters that are concerned with the actual sociolinguistic aspects to be studied in this ethnography. Chapter 7 describes the patterns of language use, in terms of choices of language, applied in Neptunia. It is shown in detail how both during the mass (i.e., in its sung parts as well as in the liturgy) and in other contexts (i.a., the clubhouse situation), Lingala is the African language that is most frequently used in Neptunia. In addition to this description of the dominance of Lingala, I also provide some general explanations. I attribute the dominance to, among other things, the backgrounds of the Neptunia Fathers (one of whom was a missionary in the Lingala-speaking regions of Zaire), the composition of the Neptunia community and its choir as dominated by Lingala-speakers and western Zairians, the supremacy of Lingala in Zairian society, and the history of the songbook used by the choir. But what makes the dominance of Lingala possible in the first place is the underlying native knowledge, i.e. the way in which members themselves construct and interpret the present situation and the related historical and contextual factors. This dimension, to be analyzed in detail in later chapters, must therefore be fed back into the historiographic and other explanations presented here. In a final section, I explicate Neptunia's sociolinguistic inequality resulting from the dominance of Lingala, as well as the general consensus that surrounds it. As suggested above, however, this picture of the consensus is necessarily a provisional one, in that it only refers to the outer appearance of the setting (i.e., to a 'first-level' ethnographic observation). Only on the basis of the members' own constructions can a more complete account of the consensus be obtained.

Chapter 8 is the analysis of the informants' construction of sociolinguistic consensus in the casual and organized conversations. It will be shown how the informants marshal a host of accountings, excuses, justifications, denials, explanations, and rationalizations in order to neutralize the implicit claim that *'There are good reasons to believe that the Kiswahili-speakers are or could be offended by the dominance of Lingala in Neptunia'*, i.e. the researcher's problematization of the sociolinguistic consensus. The analysis will show that this neutralization is achieved through 9 counterarguments, which are *shared* by both the Lingala-speaking and the Kiswahili-speaking informants. However, each of these 9 counterarguments is arrived at by means of interpretive constructions that significantly *differ* across the two linguistic groups. These differences pertain to fundamental discrepancies in the members' views of issues such as the role and position of Lingala, Kiswahili, and French in Zaire, their roles in the Zairian community in Belgium, the functions of codeswitching in Zaire, the demographic proportions in Neptunia, the role of the Neptunia Fathers, the choir, and the songbook, and other matters.

The analysis of these complex matters is preceded by an identification and explication of some conceptual issues that operate as pivotal, but only implicitly formulated, ingredients in the informants' construction of sociolinguistic consensus. These pivotal ingredients are different perspectives (an 'ethnic', 'biographical', and 'cultural' one) on geographically and linguistically delineated groups of people. The analysis of the construction of the sociolinguistic consensus can hardly be understood without a detailed assessment of these perspectives and their applications.

The chapter concludes with a more complete description of the consensus in Neptunia. The previous close analysis indeed allows us to assess the consensus in more exact terms than was possible in chapter 7. The precise scope of the consensus (i.e., to what degree it applies), which members endorse it most, where its limitations are situated, etc., may now be established beyond the level of Neptunia's outer appearance. It is inferred, among other things, that on the whole the sociolinguistic inequality and the dominance of Lingala in Neptunia are considered less problematic by the Lingala-speakers than by the Kiswahili-speakers, who, although they are equally concerned with refuting the implicit claim, display some reluctance to refute it in as radical terms as are used by the Lingala-speakers. Some (though not all) Kiswahili-speakers are, for instance, more inclined to construct the acceptability of the dominance of Lingala as a contingent matter, restricted to the particular context of Neptunia (because of its numerical proportions and because of other historical and social contingencies). Some Lingala-speakers, on the other hand, are more inclined to construct the acceptability of the dominance of Lingala as a matter of principle, i.e. as a norm which applies to all settings involving Zairians of different linguistic and regional origins. These and other matters lead me to conclude that the consensus in Neptunia is not a 'perfect' one. The process of hegemony, in which the linguistic preferences and ideology of the dominant group of Lingala-speakers are imposed upon the dominated group of non-Lingala-speakers, are not (yet) fully accomplished. In this respect, it will also be shown that the mechanisms of hegemony affect some members of the dominated group more than others. Therefore, the degrees to which the hegemony is accomplished, and, correspondingly, the degrees to which the consensus in Neptunia applies, will thus have to be represented in terms of a continuum, whereby the most resistant non-Lingala-speakers are situated at one extreme and those Lingala-speakers that take the dominance of Lingala and the sociolinguistic inequality most for granted at the other.

After this chapter, a general conclusion closes the entire study. First, the main arguments and findings are recapitulated. Next, it is indicated to what extent the findings obtained in the Neptunia setting relate to the Zairian community in Antwerp (and, if possible, in Belgium) at large. This discussion will be framed in terms of a number of possible directions that may be followed in extrapolating the findings, rather than in terms of decisive generalizations. It will, in this sense, be indicated what directions for additional research are suggested by the case study itself. I will work on the assumption that the structures and ideologies that are most intricately related to Neptunia as a restricted setting are least amenable to extrapolation, and that those members' constructions that refer to patterns transcending Neptunia's singularity may best lead the way. Finally, I will briefly review where and how the combination of discursive social psychology with linguistic anthropology has been rewarding in the analysis and interpretation of my ethnographic data.

The appendices to this dissertation are contained in a separate volume. They include such raw materials as a copy of the songbook used by the Neptunia choir (amply referred to in chapters 6 and 7), a translation of this songbook, and the transcripts of the organized conversations.

In concluding this general introduction, I would like to clarify some of the typographical conventions used throughout the body text of this dissertation (the transcription conventions used for the organized conversations are presented in the appendices). In order not to privilege the prefix system of one or another Bantu language, the Bantu prefix system will largely be ignored in references to languages and ethnic groups. This means that languages and ethnic labels will be mentioned in their root form: in this dissertation, I will – to take one example – talk about the 'Kanyok' who speak 'Kanyok', and not about the 'Binkanyok' who speak 'Tshinkanyok'. Still, a limited number of exceptions are made to this principle. In Zaire, as in many other contexts, the names of Zaire's four national languages almost always appear in their declined forms, which must thus be seen as fossilized declinations: 'Kikongo', 'Kiswahili', 'Lingala', and 'Tshiluba'. Labels such as '*Ngala', '*Kongo', or '*Luba' are virtually unattested in references to these languages. 'Swahili' does appear in addition to 'Kiswahili', but the latter form is here preferred in order to treat the four national languages in a consistent fashion. The ethnic labels 'Mongala' (plural 'Bangala'), 'Mukongo' (plural 'Bakongo'), and 'Muluba' (plural 'Baluba') represent cases that are similar to the corresponding languages. For these three ethnic labels, I will also use the fossilized declined forms. It goes without saying that this notational system is only the preferred one in my own texts and that it does not affect the representation of quoted, members' speech.

Pseudonyms are used to conceal the identity of informants. In chapter 3, more on my motives behind the chosen pseudonyms will be explained. At the present stage, it is useful to mention that both in the body text and in the transcripts German pseudonyms are used for informants belonging to the linguistic group of the Kiswahili-speakers, Spanish ones for Lingala-speaking informants, English ones for Zairian informants belonging to other linguistic groups (Kikongo-speakers, Tshiluba-speakers, etc.), and Russian ones for Belgians.

PART I : THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

1. LINGUISTIC ETHNOGRAPHY

1.1. Introduction

The present chapter is an explication of the theoretical working assumptions underlying my description and analysis of the ethnographic data. I will start this chapter in section 1.2 by presenting a brief historical reconstruction of how Hymes's original theory for the ethnographic study of language has since its inception been adopted and further developed by a number of disciplines situated at the crossroads of anthropology and (socio)linguistics. In this sketchy historical reconstruction, I do not so much mean to present a comprehensive overview of paradigms in its own right, as to work towards an identification of my own linguistic ethnography as based on an 'observation-based interpretive approach'.

In section 1.3, I discuss the theoretical perspective from which native knowledge is approached in my linguistic ethnography, i.e. the perspective offered by discursive social psychology. Since the discipline of discursive social psychology is fairly recent and since, therefore, its scope and positions cannot be assumed to be shared by the majority of readers, the presentation here is a rather extensive one, comprising three subsequent sections (1.3.1 through 1.3.3). In these sections, I will first operate a rather loose terminological frame of reference in discussing 'native knowledge'. I will freely resort to labels such as 'attitudes', 'discourse', 'ideologies', 'opinions', 'accounts' and so on as interchangeable terms, and occasionally use one of them as a cover term (which will be announced). I ask the reader to endure this momentary terminological disarray until section 1.3.4, where I will establish a more precise terminological and conceptual frame of reference to be used throughout the remainder of the dissertation. In this section, I will also substantiate the conviction, reflected in my theoretical preference for discursive social psychology, that native knowledge underlying sociolinguistic behavior is basically to be interpreted as linguistic ideology.

This chapter concludes with a discussion of the theoretical implications of combining discursive social psychology with linguistic anthropology (1.4). One of the implications is that in contrast to many traditional anthropological reports, my linguistic ethnography is an 'anthropology-with-text', i.e. a case of anthropology in which the analyses and deductions are not only based on memories from fieldwork (or, at best, on scanty and paraphrasing field notes), but in which they are primarily conducted on the basis of tangible, controllable, and presented transcripts of the actual interactions the researcher set up for eliciting her or his ethnographic information.

1.2. Linguistic ethnography: An observation-based interpretive approach

My study of patterns of language use and the related native knowledge among Zairians in Antwerp is based on ethnography. In the first decades of this century, ethnography grew as the research method of anthropology, which is the discipline aimed at understanding communities in ways that are 'endemic', 'native', 'natural', etc. to the members of these communities themselves (i.a., Agar 1986; 1995; Basso & Selby eds., 1976; Hammersley & Atkinson 1983; Stocking ed., 1983; Wax 1971). Ethnography was from its inception a composite enterprise, consisting of a variety of fieldwork techniques the most important of which include interviewing, participant observation, nonparticipant observation (i.e., eavesdropping and watching), the collection of all types of existing written materials (such as archives, pamphlets, etc.), and video and audio recording. In addition to these fieldwork techniques for data gathering, however, ethnography from the start also referred to procedures related to the sifting, ordering, processing, and analysis of the materials. At this level as well, ethnography has always been a fundamentally eclectic enterprise: for the examination of the gathered materials, ethnographers freely draw upon the practicable tools provided by a variety of sociological, linguistic, and other disciplines.

Against this background of ethnography as the method of anthropology, Hymes (1967; 1974; 1986[1972]; 1993; see also Fitch & Philipsen 1995) developed a descriptive theory for the ethnographic study of language. He called it *"a general theory of the interaction of language and social life"* (1986[1972]: 39), by which he meant that the objects of study are a community's ways of speaking as they construct and reflect social structures and processes. This endeavor was to be *"jointly ethnographic and linguistic"* (1986[1972]: 39), in that *"the interaction of language with social life is viewed as first of all a matter of human action, based on a knowledge, sometimes conscious, often unconscious, that enables persons to use language"* (1986[1972]: 53). Thus, to Hymes, ways of speaking were to be examined as a form of human conduct intricately related to the native knowledge that both reflects in and underlies this conduct. In Hymes's theory, as in all anthropology and ethnography, the members' knowledge was not to be isolated from the members' actions, but was to be approached as part and parcel of these actions, as actions are basically produced on the basis of this knowledge. Hymes labeled this native knowledge as part and parcel of human linguistic conduct 'communicative competence'.

Hymes's ethnographic approach to language in society has permeated a great number of subsequent schools situated at the juncture of anthropology and (socio)linguistics. These subsequent schools all pushed Hymes's initial ideas further in different directions and have greatly determined the ways in which linguistic ethnographies are now commonly conducted. There is, of course, the ethnography of communication (see Duranti 1988; Fitch & Philipsen 1995; Saville-Troike 1982 for insightful retrospective overviews), which was the direct product of Hymes's own writings. A later and equally important recipient of Hymes's views was the interactionalist trend within sociolinguistics, represented by figures such as Gumperz (i.a., 1982) and C. Goodwin (i.a., 1981). These interactional sociolinguists combined Hymes's ethnographic views with the social-theoretical background of ethnomethodology and the fine-grained practical apparatus developed by conversation analysis, among other things. Other influential scholars developed Hymes's theory stressing the aspect of metacommunication. Going back to the writings of B.L. Whorf, Silverstein (i.a., 1976; 1979) elaborated the idea that all linguistic action in itself encompasses the metacommunicative, evaluative, attitudinal, etc. references to this action. That is, tokens of linguistic action in themselves reflect the members' knowledge related to this linguistic action and its social embedding. Finally, the fact that Hymes's agenda has survived in linguistic anthropology until the present day is manifest in such recent publications within the field as Duranti (1994) and Auer (1995). Auer defines the goals of what he labels 'linguistic ethnography' as to enter a community and *"to isolate and analyze socially salient linguistic phenomena and to reconstruct (explicate) the knowledge members must dispose of in order to produce and interpret these phenomena"* (1995: 425). This formulation of the goals of linguistic ethnography indeed makes it clear that the main concern is still with indicating and describing language and patterns of language use and with explaining why they appear as they do by referring to underlying modes of native knowledge.

Of course, Hymes's general anthropological view that the two research matters, i.e. observed linguistic behavior on the one hand and the related members' knowledge on the other, actually coalesce in one single research object has remained essential in all modern forms of linguistic anthropology. Members' knowledge is always more than a number of rationalizations or interpretations proffered by lay people in retrospective reflections on their own behaviors. Knowledge is an essential ingredient of behavior, because when members bring about certain patterns of behavior, they actually do this on the basis of their own meaning attributions and interpretations. Auer's identification of native knowledge as something *"members must dispose of in order to* produce and interpret *these phenomena"* (1995: 425, emphasis added) eloquently paraphrases the continuity of Hymes's starting point, and of the ultimate ambition of all linguistic anthropology to arrive at an 'ethnotheory' of language.

The complexity of the relationship between observable ('etic') phenomena on the one hand and related native ('emic') knowledge on the other has given rise to a number of epistemological critiques within anthropology in general (e.g., Clifford 1983; 1988; Fabian 1979; 1983; 1991; Harris 1968; 1974; 1979; Headland et al. eds., 1990; Narayan 1993). These critics have, among other things, quite pertinently questioned the possibility for a nonnative researcher of actually retrieving native knowledge, as well as the theoretical and methodological status customarily attached to such knowledge. The title of Narayan's 1993 publication, *How Native is a 'Native' Anthropologist?*, testifies to these doubts. I do not wish to dwell upon the philosophical (mainly epistemological) details of these complex criticisms, but I merely want to indicate the viewpoint I adopt in my own linguistic ethnography. I work on the assumption that every ethnographic enterprise is ultimately and inevitably an *etic* enterprise in its entirety. That is, even if anthropology set outs to examine native knowledge, the analysis of this knowledge, and the very constitution and ordering of the data believed to reveal this native knowledge, are ultimately part of the researcher's observational accomplishments. In some types of ethnography, the observed behavior is presented to native informants (e.g., in the form of video recordings) in order to retrieve their emic interpretations of this behavior. The interpretations generated in such feedback interviews may in themselves be presented to other or the same informants in new feedback interviews – a heuristic process which is in principle infinite. In any case, the *ultimate* interpretation of the data, as well as the very choice to constitute the ethnographic data by organizing a layered schema of feedback interviews, are always the product of the researcher's intervention. Etic observation is, in other words, omnipresent in ethnography, as it not only pertains to the analysis of observable behavior, but also affects the analysis of the native knowledge. In my own linguistic ethnography, I therefore adopt the view that ethnography is observation-based in its entirety. But, as an observation-based approach, it is always to be an *interpretive* one, in that the basic concern is with members' own interpretations of the social phenomena. As Auer & di Luzio (1984) show, the identification of a scientific practice as 'interpretive' does not imply that it is hermeneutic (impressionistic) at the level of the analytical enterprise; it rather means that the analysis is constantly concerned with members' own endeavors to *"make interpretable and interpret each other's [...] activities"* (1984: viii; see also Gumperz 1982: chapter 1 on 'interpretive sociolinguistics'). In short, my linguistic ethnography is to be identified as an 'observation-based interpretive approach'.

The holistic nature of my observation-based approach also implies the incorporation of descriptions of the broader contexts that surround the selected object of analysis and with which any explanation of this object must be linked up. In terms of my own study, this means that the analysis of the Neptunia members' sociolinguistic behavior and underlying native knowledge is impossible without integrating descriptions of the historical and contemporary correlates in Zaire, of the larger social processes marking the Zairian immigration in Belgium and Antwerp, and of the historical origins and structural features of Neptunia as a Zairian place in Antwerp. Strictly speaking, all these matters lie outside the realm of the object of analysis *per se*, but their description and analytical connection with the object of analysis is a constitutive ingredient of the observation-based approach. This scope evidently implies a rather free exchange of methods across an equally heterogeneous collection of ethnographic data types (as also advocated by Auer 1995). The combination of various types of data and of a variety of methodological angles is inevitable in the creation of a comprehensive ethnographic picture. Among the main methodological angles combined in my linguistic ethnography are ethnomethodology, fieldwork, historiography, the sociology of language, interactional sociolinguistics, pragmatics, metaphor theory, and discursive social psychology. Discursive social psychology fulfills an important role in the reconstruction of the native knowledge underlying the Zairians' sociolinguistic behavior in Neptunia and will therefore be the subject matter of an elaborate discussion in the following sections.

1.3. A perspective on native knowledge

1.3.1. Discursive social psychology

The theoretical perspective on 'knowledge' from which my study is conducted is based on the recently developed paradigm of 'discursive social psychology' (i.a., Edwards & Potter 1992; 1993; Edwards et al. 1992; Gilbert & Mulkay 1984; Harré & Stearns eds., 1995; Potter 1995; Potter & Wetherell 1987; Potter et al. 1993; Shi-xu 1994a; 1994b; 1995; Wetherell & Potter 1988; 1992) and, especially, on Michael Billig's work (Billig 1982; 1987; 1990; 1991; 1992; 1995; Billig et al. 1988). Discursive social psychology represents the fundamentally social-constructionist renewal which has recently been observed in some branches of social and cognitive psychology (see Burr 1995 for a recent and insightful overview of social constructionism). Going back to such early social-constructionist writings as Berger & Luckmann's *The Social Construction of Reality* (1967) and Garfinkel's *Studies in Ethnomethodology* (1967), discursive social psychologists reject a great number of the assumptions and methodological preferences of traditional, quantitative social psychology, and replace them with more constructionist concepts. The discrepancies between traditional social psychology and discursive social psychology are spelled out amply in the references cited. In the following paragraphs, I will limit the discussion to a reproduction of those fragments that are needed to set the stage for my own study.[1]

One of the major differences between discursive social psychology and quantitative social psychology is the former's unconditional rejection of 'logocentricism' – a term which is not used in discursive social psychology, but which I here adopt from deconstructionism (see Schirato 1995: 571) as a handy short-cut term. Logocentricism is the view of language use as a passive vehicle, apt to convey thoughts and pregiven inner states in a truthful fashion. As all forms of social constructionism, discursive social psychology refuses to view language use merely as *"a good telephone line or a window which has no irregularities in the glass"* (Burr 1995: 34). In traditional social psychology, it is indeed assumed that attitudes, ideologies, opinions, beliefs, and other matters allegedly 'stored in the mind' can be 'accessed' through the use of surveys, questionnaires, and similar procedures in which language is merely a colorless methodological conduit. Discursive social psychologists challenge this assumption and set out to topicalize the very linguistic practices in which the alleged transmission of the attitudes – to use this as a cover term – from the mind towards the outer world takes place. This means that not so much the

1. There is, indeed, much more to discursive social psychology and, especially, to Billig's theory than what is presented here. Billig's theory of ideology and common sense, for instance, is extremely rich in structure and content (i.a., Billig 1987; 1991; Billig et al. 1988).

attitudes 'behind' or 'revealed by' the informants' speech, as this speech itself, becomes the central object of study.[2] In Billig's words (1991: 15):

> *"Too often, social psychologists have assumed that an 'attitude' is a mental reality, and that in speaking their attitude people are giving an outward expression to an inner mental state. It is the inner state which is presumed to constitute the reality of the matter. For the discursive social psychologist, this assumption needs to be […] inverted; the giving of the attitude – the use of attitudinal language – is the reality which needs to be studied".*

It is important to note that the denial of logocentricism is not merely the object of a *methodological* controversy, but that it also affects the *theoretical* levels of the discussion. It is not the discursive social psychologists' aim to improve, on the basis of the topicalization of attitude speech, the existing techniques in order to arrive at a better heuristic apparatus, allowing for a more truthful retrieval of the attitudes 'as they really are'. Rather, the very ontology of attitudes is subjected to serious rethinking. To discursive social psychologists, attitudes are not stable, mental entities: an individual does not 'have' one and only one attitude per attitude object, whereby this attitude may change over portions of time throughout her or his life span, but is fundamentally stable in the 'semantic', acontextual sense. These scholars do not accept the view that deviations from the semantic essence only occur as pragmatic adaptations in contexts of situated language use, e.g. when an informant is tempted to 'lie' to the analyst for some situational reasons.[3] Rather, *all* expression of attitudes is pragmatic and must be approached as such. Be it in front of a psycholinguist in a laboratory, approached by a pollster in the street, alone in a room filling out a questionnaire, during everyday chats with peers, etc., an informant always produces her or his attitude speech in a particular context and, thus, always designs it to fit the occasion. The variation observable in attitude speech is, in other words, not merely a matter of methodological nuisance, impeding the analyst's access to the 'real' essences stored under the skull; variability is an intrinsic feature of attitudes themselves. Attitude variation is, indeed, the key notion in discursive social psychology.

This orientation towards attitude variation, and towards the pervasiveness of pragmatics in attitude speech, stems from the basic belief in the inevitability

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2. Topicalization of the very discourse produced in interviews, questionnaires, surveys, and other procedures is, of course, not a novel initiative of discursive social psychology. Long before the rise of discursive social psychology, sociologists such as Cicourel (1969; 1974) and Grimshaw (1969), as well as many anthropologists (see Briggs 1986 for an overview), made a similar point.

3. In paraphrasing the traditional belief in the existence of one 'basic' attitude, one could, instead of using the notion of 'semantics-with-possible-pragmatic-adaptations', also draw on the notion of 'prototypes-with-possible-extensions'. I prefer to use the notion of semantics because it is well suited to evoke the idea of 'acontextualness'.

of construction. As all forms of social psychology (see Burr 1995), discursive social psychology starts from the observation that accounts do not simply describe reality, events, people etc., but always actively construct a particular version of these things. However naturalized or factualized, i.e. presented as 'objective' and free from human intervention, the versions are always selective and evaluative in nature. Construction is not an occasional matter, but is, rather, ubiquitous and inevitable. As Potter & Wetherell (1987: 36) argue: *"descriptions […] are inevitably 'distorted', not simply occasionally, but perenially, in the sense that they are always constructions for some purpose"*.

What Potter & Wetherell mean, then, when they write that attitudes are always contained in constructions *"for some purpose"* is that people's expressions of attitudes must always be seen, not as occurring in isolation, but as serving other, 'higher' purposes of human interaction, such as creating and maintaining the moral order through impression and face management and through explaining, excusing, justifying, denouncing, accounting for, and rationalizing one's own and other persons' actions. Discursive social psychologists therefore focus very much on the broader social and rhetorical activities which surround the expressions of attitudes and to which these expressions are functionally tailored, rather than on the attitudes alone. Social psychology becomes, in this sense, a form of discourse analysis. Indeed, Jonathan Potter, Margaret Wetherell, and Derek Edwards have developed what they call a 'discursive action model' (DAM) for social psychology (Edwards & Potter 1993; Potter et al. 1993) and they commonly refer to their model as 'discourse analysis' (see also chapter 3, section 3.4).

The new social psychologists' emphasis on the discursive contexts of attitudes may lead one to believe that discursive social psychology involves, in a near-behaviorist vein, a turndown of notions such as cognition and the mind. This assessment is only partly correct, in that it only applies to certain trends within discursive social psychology. In fact, it is this issue which sets the work by scholars such as Potter, Wetherell, and Edwards (see the references cited) apart from the work by Billig, and from the perspective preferred in my own study.

To the first set of authors there is, so to speak, nothing about the analysis of attitudes outside the analysis of their production in discourse. These scholars do not go as far as to deny the *existence* of cognition and the mind, but they do opt for a radically and exclusively discourse-analytical approach, in which discourse is to be our only *domain of attention* in the study of attitudes. It is appropriate to quote them at length.

> *"We are not denying the importance and interest of cognitive science and the insights it has to offer; the point is that analysis and explanation can be carried out at a social psychological level which is coherently separable from the cognitive. […] [I]t is discourse analysis which offers a systematically* non-cognitive *social psychology as an alternative to the increasingly pervasive cognitive variety. […] Our focus is exclusively on*

> *discourse itself: how it is constructed, its functions, and the consequences which arise from different discursive organizations. In this sense, discourse analysis is a radically non-cognitive form of social psychology."* (Potter & Wetherell 1987: 157 and 178, emphasis in original)

> *"The discursive model, then, takes [attitudes] out from the mental relays of the human bio-computer and places them in talk and writing. This leads to a basic analytical reorientation. We are no longer concerned with the attempt to construct models of putative hidden inference processes, which requires the usual research technology of social and cognitive psychology; we are now concerned to analyse attributions as situated actions [...]."* (Edwards & Potter 1992: 103-104)

> *"DAM is offered as a discursive meta-theory, contrasted with perceptually-based cognitive* alternatives*. [...] However, this does not mean a denial of the reality of cognitive processes, nor of the validity of those methods. Rather, it calls for a* relocation *of attributional findings within a wider, discursive model."* (Edwards & Potter 1993, emphasis added)

We must conclude that these scholars rely on a pretheoretical and implicit duality between the mind – and cognitive research – on the one hand and discourse – and discourse analysis – on the other. They do not deconstruct this duality; nor, so they claim, do they intend to deconstruct the insights obtained within the realm of traditional cognitive paradigms: to them, these insights remain 'important' and 'interesting' in themselves.[4] The turn to discourse is, thus, nothing more than a choice pertaining to research *locus*. Discourse, i.e. the outer, social world as opposed to the world of the mind, is simply the site where from now on the analysis of attitudes should be conducted, and an analysis of attitudes should only consist in an indication of the attitudes' behavior in discursive action. The pretheoretical duality separating mind from linguistic and other action remains unaffected: to these scholars, the outer world is merely a preferred 'terrain of work', and it is fully legitimate for cognitively oriented scholars to continue working within the realm of their own paradigmatic conjectures. In such a pretheoretical duality, the two 'worlds', i.e. discursive social psychology and cognitive social psychology, live side by side on peaceful, or at least 'noninterventionist', terms. Obviously, this position

4. The recognition of the *existence* of the cognitive mind and the polite respect for the findings obtained in cognitive paradigms are, together with the assertion that discursive social psychology involves emic and not etic types of study, the main arguments marshaled against accusations of behaviorism (see Edwards & Potter 1992: 100 for a complete list of these counterarguments).

seriously weakens the discursive social psychologists' attacks on logocentricism in traditional social psychology.

1.3.2. Michael Billig's thinking as arguing

In his publications, Michael Billig (1982; 1987; 1990; 1991; 1992; 1995; Billig et al. 1988) opts for a form of discursive social psychology which is significantly different from the one described above. Billig jettisons the duality between mind and action, which provides him with leverage to 'intervene' in the cognitive and psychological theories and to really deconstruct the views of attitudes received therein. Billig does not only provide insights into the intricacies of attitudinal *discourse*, but also into the intricacies of attitudinal *thinking*.

His work fundamentally relies on the early views of Voloshinov, Vygotsky, and others, holding that *"it is not experience that organizes expression, but the other way around – expression organizes experience"* (Voloshinov 1973: 85). That is, the composition, form, and contents of inner, mental states originate from interactive processes taking place in the outer, social world. Mental functions, including soliloquy and all other forms of mental capacities, are internalized social interactions and their very structure is therefore fundamentally social and interactive in outlook. Billig applies this basic insight to ideologies, attitudes, opinions, beliefs, etc.

Billig starts from the observation that attitudes are always situated in a wider argumentative and controversial context (Billig 1987). People do not have attitudes about such commonsensical matters as the round shape of the earth, but about issues which are integrated in some mode of social controversy, whereby 'controversy' must be understood in its most general sense:

> *"we can see that people hold attitudes about controversial issues and that there are certain issues on which people are expected, or are liable, to take pro or con stances. Whether the topic is political, moral, religious, commercial, or whatever, an attitude refers to a stance on a matter of public debate and disagreement. In other words, an attitude represents an evaluation of a controversial issue or sometimes a controversial individual such as a president or a queen. Therefore, the social context of attitudes is the context of controversy"* (Billig 1987: 178-179).

As a consequence, attitudes are never *unique* stances towards thought objects, but always exist in relation to their counterarguments: *"any attitude is more than an expression in favour of a position: it is also implictly or explicitly an argument against a counter-position"* (1991: 112). An opinion about a president is not a single evaluation of this person; it is always at the same time a position *against* other opinions about this person. Every attitude thus necessarily implies its countertheme, and every *expression* of attitudes necessarily *invokes* the counterthemes at least at the implicit layers of meaning production.[5]

Thus, argumentation, as action in the outer world, is the locus where the *formation and development of attitudes take place*, i.e. where mental structures *originate*. As all other discursive social psychologists, Billig therefore topicalizes attitudinal discourse. Insights into attitudes may only be provided by means of a discursive and contextual analysis of social interaction, for this constitutes the natural context of attitudes. And Billig's reasoning goes one step further. He does not draw the conclusion, as Potter, Wetherell, and their colleagues do, that discourse as social action is also the domain to which all we are able to say about attitudes is limited. This, indeed, is where the conception I attributed to Vygotsky and Voloshinov comes in. Billig has it that our attitudinal thinking, as a mental process, is an internalization of social argumentation. The origins of attitudinal thinking must be found, not in innate faculties within the individual, but in the individual's interactions with other individuals in the social world. As a consequence, the form and structure of attitudinal thinking are fundamentally social. Thinking has all the characteristics of rhetorical action in social contexts: thinking, to Billig, is arguing. The attitudes 'in our minds' are always positions we assume against the backlog of arguments and their counterarguments. 'Having' one particular evaluative stance towards an issue is nothing but the result of the ways in which we weigh pros and cons against each other within ourselves. We are, thus, always 'having an argument' with ourselves, or, better, with opposing voices within ourselves. As such, the individual, even when engaged in soliloquy or, indeed, in thinking, is always a social actor, and individual thinking is not essentially different from public debating in open, social contexts: *"the thinker is seen as a debater, engaged in argument either silently with the self, or more noisily with others"* (Billig 1991: 31).[6]

So, in contrast to Potter and his colleagues, Billig provides a thorough reevaluation of the very concept of attitudes. His insights allow us to talk about attitudes in social, argumentative, and discursive terms, without, at the same time, lapsing into an unsatisfactory elusion of the cognitive world. Potter and his colleagues do not venture to talk about that black box, the mind, and therefore concentrate all their attention on the tangible world of discursive action. To Billig, the outer world – the world of discourse and argumentation – is not the only possible domain of attitude research, but it is the world in which attitudes are rooted, in which they are formed and developed. By doing away

5. Reminiscence of such structuralist schools as Derrida's deconstructionism (see Schirato 1995), in which each element is taken to imply and to derive its meaning from its contradiction, is unavoidable. Billig, however, never identifies deconstructionism as a source of inspiration.

6. It must be mentioned that Michael Billig is not the only one to have developed a theory along these lines. The psychological models suggested by Harré (i.a., Harré & Gillet 1994), the Gergens (i.a., Gergen & Gergen eds., 1984), and T.R. Sarbin (i.a., Sarbin ed., 1986) are also based on the idea of a 'discursive' or 'narrative' mind.

with the duality between mind and the outer world, he offers us an understanding of how the mind and the social world are fully integrated structures, and, on this basis, of how the mind itself works.

This entire endeavor allows him to show that, in contrast to the near-behaviorist reflex of the other scholars, the mind does represent an accessible domain of study. Billig himself formulates this accessibility as follows.

> *"It has often been assumed that thinking is essentially an unobservable process, locked within the recesses of the brain and unfolding in mysterious silence. If, however, internal deliberations are modelled upon public arguments, then, in observing debates, we are observing the structure of thinking itself. If thinking were not observable in this way, then it would be impossible to learn to think."* (Billig 1991: 49)

In other words, his fundamentally 'Vygotskian' perspective allows him to approach attitudinal thinking through the analysis of observable action. We are touching, here, on the borderline between theory and methodology, and methodology will be the particular object of discussion in later sections. These methodological considerations are, however, consequential for the present theoretical discussion, as they indicate that Billig's theory remains a fundamentally discursive social-psychological one. First, in Billig's theory discourse occupies both a genetically and an analytically prior position with regard to the cognitive world. Secondly, attitudes and other matters are approached from the angle of their function and role within social activities, such as argumentation, rhetoric, debate, and the like. As such, the insight that attitudes are always contained in 'constructions for some purposes' (see above) and that their expression is thus always functionally designed to serve 'higher' purposes of justification, rationalization, or other strategies for creating and maintaining the moral order, remains a quintessential ingredient of his theory.

Given the emphasis on the context-related nature of attitudes, it is self-evident that Billig holds on to the analytical orientation towards *variation* in attitudes. To Billig, attitudes are essentially *"unfinished business"* (Billig 1987: 252). A position vis-à-vis a social issue assumed by an individual in one particular context does not represent this individual's definite 'disposition' or 'nature' as he or she 'really' or 'always' is in the semantic, acontextual sense. In other social contexts and, indeed, even at different moments in the same conversation, antithetical positions may be assumed by the same individual if this is required by the argumentative needs of the occasion. In the domain of attitudes, inconsistency is, in fact, the norm rather than the exception. As such, there is no such thing as an 'ultimate' attitudinal expression which would be the manifestation of the 'true', stable, and mentally preexisting personality of the individual.

Billig does not only inform us about inconsistency at the level of cross-situational variation, but also about the noteworthy inconsistency between attitudes and actual behavior. It is a common source of discomfort to many social scientists that people often appear to behave in manners which are opposite to their reported opinions or attitudes. A reported negative attitude towards a president may, for instance, exist side by side with friendly forms of behavior in the vicinity of this president. The reaction of many social scientists to the attitude-behavior discrepancy is to assume that either the behavior or the reported opinion represents the 'real' attitude, and that the other one is a strategic contortion (a 'lie'), imposed by contextual conditions. Above, I demonstrated that this view is untenable in discursive social psychology. The solution for the attitude-behavior discrepancy is not to be found in the analyst's endeavor to disclose the 'lies' in either the behavior or the reported attitudes. Rather, the analytical problem must be transposed from the level of the researcher to the level of the members themselves. That is, it must be examined how members account for the discrepancy between their own reports and their behavior (or between the reports and behavior of others) when explicitly and consciously confronted with such discrepancies. It is the members' rationalizations, justifications, excuses – in sum, neutralizations – of such discrepancies which are to be topicalized and examined as to their social complexities.

The same applies, in actual fact, to all types of inconsistency, including inconsistency at the cross-situational level. Attitudinal inconsistency and variation across situations should not be seen as a methodological obstacle, but as a natural feature of attitudes and attitude expressions as functionally tailored to the occasions of their production. The relevant question to ask is how members rhetorically neutralize cross-situational inconsistencies when confronted with them at a more or less conscious level. It should be mentioned, in this respect, that more often than not, cross-situational and attitude-behavior inconsistencies go unnoticed to social actors, as inconsistency is very often concealed in the implicit meaning layers of communication and behavior.

1.3.3. The problem of cross-situational stability: Against reification

The discursive social psychologists' emphasis on cross-situational variation is, in a way, counterintuitive. Do we not all have the impression that certain people 'have' certain attitudes which are more less stable across situations, i.e. which exist in a more less time- and space-independent dimension of social reality? It must be recognized that neither Billig nor other discursive social psychologists offer explicit and elaborated theoretical solutions in this respect.

It would be preposterous to maintain that, next to all the pragmatic situatedness of attitudes, there is not such a thing as a semantic, cross-situationally stable reality about attitudes and similar matters. However, this stability should not be approached in terms of a preexistent cognitive essence, to be postulated as prior to actual activities in situations. Rather, the semantic stability is a structural reality which *emerges from* concrete situational activities. In this view, cross-situational stability exists *because of* the local activities in situations, and not vice versa. Semantic stability is the broadening of local situations on a wider time-space canvas. This broadening occurs, i.a., as members try to avoid coming across as incoherent or inconsistent social actors – which is, as already mentioned, dependent on the extent to which inconsistencies are explicated, visible, or amenable to conscious reflection. The broadening is a matter of a phenomenological order. That is, it occurs at the level of both scientists' and lay people's observational endeavors. Semantic, stable phenomena such as basic attitudes, personality, disposition, etc. are, as national culture, structures we actually infer from regularities we believe we observe throughout situations. As Burr (1995: 30) puts it: *"our feelings of consistency and continuity in time [and space] are provided by our memory. Memory allows us to look back on our [and others'] behaviours and experiences, to select those that seem to 'hang together' in some narrative framework [...] and to look for patterns, repetitions and so on that provide us with the impression of continuity and coherence"*.

The issue of cross-situational stability is a significant one in the debate surrounding discursive social psychology. The lack of theoretical attention to the issue has led some scholars to fierce and exaggerated reactions against discursive social psychology. Teun van Dijk is one of them (1989; 1990; 1992; 1993a; 1993b; 1995). His model for the social psychology of attitudes, ideologies, and so on is not social-constructionist but cognitive and logocentric in its points of departure. To van Dijk, attitudes and ideological systems are in the first place cognitive essences. These essences exist prior to social action and are brought to the outside world through language and language use. Their original structures may thus be 'accessed' through the analysis of discourse and other linguistic materials, which are believed to provide a more or less perfect window onto the mind. As cognitive essences, attitudes and ideological systems are stable, context-independent, and internally consistent. Inconsistencies observed in the linguistic materials do not go back to the intrinsically dilemmatic nature of the systems themselves, but are merely the product of pragmatic constraints conditioning the *expression* of the mental systems in the outside world.[7]

In this model, the ways in which attitudes and ideological systems are actually produced and maintained in local situations are entirely discarded. Situations fulfill a secondary role: they are merely sites in which the cognitive essences are employed and in which they 'manifest themselves'.

> *"Ideologies are general and abstract. From an ethnomethodological perspective, the contextual variability of (the expression of) ideology*

7. In an earlier publication (Meeuwis 1993a), I implicitly – and without much theoretical deliberation – adopted a fairly similar viewpoint in a study of nationalist ideology through the analysis of news reporting. The present dissertation is a good opportunity to revoke these earlier working assumptions.

> *might be taken as evidence that ideologies are 'locally produced', and that no general, abstract system should or need be postulated […]. In our theory, we propose an alternative approach, viz. that ideologies, as such (that is, as abstract systems) are situation-independent, and that only their possibly variable expressions are locally produced and contextually constrained. The main theoretical reason for our proposal is that, without an assumption of relative stability and continuity of ideological systems, we would be unable to explain why social members so often* are *consistent and similar in their ideological expressions. Strictly local, situational or contextual descriptions are unable to account for context-independent similarity of discourse and action of many group members."* (van Dijk 1995: 247, emphasis in original)

Van Dijk's essentialist, cognitivist, and logocentric model is inspired by a concern with cross-situational stability and by a dissatisfaction with the discursive social psychologists' treatment of this issue. The concern and the dissatisfaction are legitimate; the conclusions are out of proportion. Van Dijk is right in observing that members *"*are *consistent and similar in their ideological expressions"* and that there is such a phenomenological thing as a *"context-independent [better would have been 'cross- or trans-contextual'] similarity of discourse and action of many group members"* which needs to be accounted for in scientific analysis. He is wrong, nonetheless, in making the quantum leap over and beyond the ethnomethodological (and social-constructionist) insight that cross-situationally consistent structures such as ideologies are the outcome of series of local work performed in situated occasions. (This applies to ideologies in the same way as it applies to macro structures such as 'culture', 'society', and the like; see my discussion of scholars such as Goodwin, Gumperz and Sherzer in 1.4 below.) The claim that the observation of cross-situational stability compels us to postulate the existence of stable and semantic cognitive essences, whereby situations merely exist to contain the exteriorization and pragmatic adjustments of these essences, is based on an unwarranted reification and hypostatization. Even if cross-situational similarity and stability are recognized, the ethnomethodological emphasis on the local (re)production of attitudes and on the logical primacy of situations and contextual use still stands: we must adopt the view that the stability is a structure *emerging from* series of situated actions and that it is the extension of phenomena occurring in local situations into a wider time-space context.[8]

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8. Van Dijk's reflex – inspired by observed cross-situational similarity – against the local creation of structures and meaning has a strikingly similar, but independently developed pendant in the field of codeswitching. Here, Carol Myers-Scotton (1993) developed a theory in which she fully rejects interactional-sociolinguistic models for codeswitching, such as Gumperz's (1982) and Auer's (1984; 1988), in which the analysis of codeswitching is conducted from the perspective of local meaning creation in concrete interactions, and not on the basis of investigations of meaning at a macro and acontextual level of social reality (see also Meeuwis & Blommaert 1994). Her argument against these views resembles van Dijk's point made in the context of discursive social psychology: *"[t]he problem I see with these views is that it is*

1.3.4. Some conceptual distinctions: Native knowledge as ideology

In the remainder of this dissertation, the notion 'discourse' is not applied (as it is in Foucauldian types of discourse analysis) in its ideational, abstract sense, denoting *"complexes of social meanings"* (Kress 1989: 450) or *"a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events"* (Burr 1995: 48). In this view, each discourse corresponds with the identifiable content of one particular version of reality. I use it, rather, in its more tangible sense, as referring to *"language use conceived as social practice"* (Fairclough 1993: 138) without implying the identifiable content of one particular version of reality. The term's meaning is, thus, more restrictive in that it specifically covers language production as a material reality; it remains general, on the other hand, in that it covers *all possible forms* of language production, including conversations, monolingual speech, written texts, advertisements, etc. Concrete tokens of discourse will mostly be referred to by means of labels such as 'discursive practices', 'discursive activities', and similar ones.

'Ideology' is the term I reserve for the 'complexes of meanings' in the ideational sense, i.e. for versions of reality and their contents. And, when these realities are particularly of a linguistic order, the term 'linguistic ideologies' (also 'language ideologies') will be appropriate. In contrast to some marxist and other modes of analysis, I do not restrict the usage of 'ideologies' to those complexes of meanings that imply a deliberate distortion of reality or a 'false consciousness' (e.g., Althusser 1971), but I use the term to encompass a more neutral and more general range of complexes of meanings. Nevertheless, not every complex of meanings may be called ideological. In accordance with assumptions underlying much of the research on language ideologies in linguistic anthropology (see Woolard & Schieffelin 1994 for an overview), and, in fact, with more general discussions of ideology in the domain of sociology and cultural studies (e.g., Thompson 1990), the term 'ideology' is only to be used insofar as it is revealed how the complexes of meanings are *"rooted in or responsive to the experience of a particular social position"* (Woolard & Schieffelin 1994: 58), in other words how they are linked to the interests of, and the power relationships between, groups and individuals in society. Ideologies

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difficult to reconcile all of this individuality, and the accompanying view that social meaning is locally created, with the empirical fact that, in general, members of the same speech community interpret the same interaction as communicating more or less the same social intention" (Myers-Scotton 1993: 61). Her conclusion, as van Dijk's, is that codeswitching meaning is to be reified as a mental and situation-independent essence, based, moreover, on innate faculties. To Myers-Scotton, codeswitching is based on the innate competence to know *"[w]hether (and to what degree) a linguistic choice is marked* and how it is to be interpreted *in the context in which it occurs"* (1993: 79, emphasis in original).

are, in other words, those complexes of meanings that are approached from the angle of their societal and historical contingency.

The term '(linguistic) attitude' is commonly used in social-psychological domains which do not treat complexes of meanings from this social and historical angle, but which are rather cognitively and psychologically oriented (see Baker 1992). In addition to 'attitudes', scholars working in these domains also make use of notions such as 'representations', 'conceptualizations', 'mental schemata', and so on. The emergence of the field of discursive social psychology, however, has actually entailed a disavowal from within social psychology of purely cognitive and psychological accounts of attitudes. Discursive social psychology has thereby retained the usage of standard social-psychological terms such as 'attitudes', but has endowed them with the power- and society-related dimensions that are traditionally recognized in more anthropologically and sociologically inclined studies of ideologies. What is left, therefore, is not so much a conceptual and theoretical distinction between 'attitudes' and 'ideologies', as a purely terminological one. In this dissertation, I will therefore not apply a basic theoretical distinction between '(linguistic) attitudes' and '(linguistic) ideologies' in which only the latter would cover complexes of meanings which are linked to power relations and to the interests of certain groups or individuals.[9]

Given all these conceptual and terminological distinctions, we are now in a position to reinterpret the concept of native knowledge as I used it in previous discussions, and to link it up with the concrete object of analysis of this linguistic ethnography of the Zairian community in Antwerp. Attitudes and ideologies are by definition complexes of meanings and representations that are connected to the historically and socially contingent contexts of their occurrence. The native knowledge that I set out to analyze, i.e. the knowledge the Neptunia Zairians need to dispose of in order to produce and interpret their patterns of language use, is exactly that. The native knowledge (now interpreted in terms of constructions anchored in discursive activities) underlying and reflecting the language usage patterns in Neptunia is a linguistic ideology. It is contingent upon (and made intertextual by) the historical and social conditions of the wider Neptunia context, the context of Zairian immigration in Belgium and Antwerp, and the sociolinguistic situation in Zaire. What is more, it is related to the power relations between the different subgroups that make up the Neptunia community: the native knowledge as ideology is the product of the

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9. The conceptual equation between '(linguistic) attitudes' and '(linguistic) ideologies' allows me, nonetheless, to differentiate between the terms for purely expository purposes. The former term will often be preferred when the complexes of meanings are situated at the reported level. That is, in informants' discourse on their own and other people's opinions on languages and language matters (as occurring, e.g., in chapter 8), I will call these reported opinions 'linguistic attitudes'. In my own accounts, on the other hand, I will mostly use the term 'ideologies'. It needs to be stressed that this is merely a terminological choice going back to a concern with presentational clarity.

hegemonic mechanisms that allow the language of one linguistic group within Neptunia, i.e. Lingala, to be used as the setting's dominant code at the expense of the other languages and without this entailing major social disruptions or conflicts between the various subgroups. In my linguistic ethnography, hegemony, ideology, and knowledge are thus closely interrelated phenomena, directly referring to the processes and mechanisms of the interaction of language and social life in Neptunia.

1.4. Linguistic ethnography and discursive social psychology: Anthropology-with-text

The integration of discursive social psychology into an anthropological study is, to my knowledge, an unprecedented project. As chapter 3 will show, the integration of discursive social psychology implies that a methodology such as discourse analysis is used within a global anthropological framework. In this sense, my linguistic ethnography compares with endeavors such as the ones by M.H. Goodwin (1990) and Moerman (1988), in which anthropology is complemented with conversation analysis. Especially M.H. Goodwin's study shows resemblance with mine, in that her goals and objects remain defined in distinctly anthropological terms, while a particular linguistic model (in her case, conversation analysis) is drawn upon as a heuristic and analytical strategy. In the same way as her study may be said to be linguistic anthropology with conversation analysis, my own study is meant to be a linguistic anthropology with discourse analysis.[10]

Both M.H. Goodwin (1990) and Moerman (1988) take traditional forms of anthropology to task for omitting the texts on which their observations are based from the ultimate ethnographic report. That is, while anthropologists typically take pride in investigating native knowledge and categories by looking at members' accounts, statements, and discourse – occurring either among members themselves or in interviews with the anthropologist –, the actual instances of talk through which these issues are investigated are never presented as such in the ethnographic publications. Anthropologists immediately present *results*, i.e. deductions they have made from the materials on the basis of their own interpretations, abstractions, eliminations, and generalizations. M.H. Goodwin writes:

> *"Ironically, it is not at all uncommon for anthropologists investigating activities constructed through talk – whether informal or rhetorical – to omit texts from their [reports]. Thus, while gossip is constituted by what people say to one another, in only a few instances […] have researchers described how people gossip by providing transcripts of naturally occurring gossip. Unfortunately, Malinowski's […] early critique that 'there is hardly any record in which the majority of statements are given as they occur in actuality and not as they should or are said to occur' is still applicable to the ways in which anthropologists present their findings. […] [M]any anthropologists report their personal reactions to*

10. It must be noted that the comparison between linguistic anthropology with conversation analysis and linguistic anthropology with discourse analysis holds more at the levels of theory and methodology than at the level of the apparatus of methods. As will be made clear in chapter 3, discursive social psychology does not rely on an as thoroughly elaborated and finite set of descriptive and explanatory devices as conversation analysis does, but is much more eclectic and flexible in this respect.

> *speech phenomena rather than providing transcripts of transactions which others may inspect for rival interpretations"* (1990: 7).

Complementing anthropological reports with the actual transcripts ('texts') of the interactive materials used in the research process is, therefore, in the first place a matter of academic courtesy: presenting detailed transcripts of the ethnographic interviews or of the members' accounts allows the community of linguists to check the conclusions and, in principle, to repeat the analysis. I will not dwell upon the naive belief in the unbiased character of transcripts and in the perfect replicability and falsifiability of any kind of science. Much more important is the *theoretical* rationale behind integrating real texts in anthropology. The publications by M.H. Goodwin and Moerman have been particularly rewarding in invigorating the old view, shared by leading scholars such as Garfinkel (1967), Goffman (1961; 1971), Goodenough (1971), Gumperz (1982), Sherzer (1987), and many others, that social processes and culture are best analyzed, not at the macro level of a society and *in vacuo*, but at the level of concrete, situated activities of interaction developing between identifiable human actors (see also my critique of van Dijk's reification of ideology in section 1.3.3 above). Goodwin and Moerman have offered a methodologically more radical interpretation of this theoretical view than was customary so far, by embedding their analyses of social processes and culture within the framework of rigorous descriptive models and by examining 'open' (presented) data, i.e. by opting for an 'anthropology-with-text'.

My linguistic ethnography, as involving an integration of discursive social psychology into a broader anthropological framework, is also an instance of anthropology-with-text. The texts in question are ethnographic interviews ('casual and organized conversations') with informants, analyzed and presented in the form of detailed transcripts. Transcribing my ethnographic interviews and working on the transcripts has allowed me to analyze the Zairians' constructions and interpretations in greater detail and with more rigor than would have been possible if the data set was restricted, as is the case in many ethnographies, to general impressions gathered during fieldwork (which merely exist in the form of memory) or, at best, to field notes imprecisely reformulating members' speech. That is, the discourse-analytical scrutiny of such precise texts as transcripts allows one to pinpoint the members' interpretations with critical measure and with an eye for detail, contradiction, and nuance. In addition, by including the transcripts of these ethnographic interviews in the ethnographic report (see appendices), I want to answer to Malinowski's and later critics' complaint that anthropologists do not lay open the raw materials on which their deductions are based and that they thereby tend to stretch the discrepancy between what actually happened in fieldwork and what is ultimately admitted in the published report.

More on the methodological starting points on which my linguistic ethnography is based, including the ethnographic interviews, will be explained in chapter 3. In this section, I have tried to point at some of the implications of combining linguistic ethnography as an anthropological research practice, outlined in section 1.2, with the theoretical preferences of discursive social psychology, explained in section 1.3.

2. ETHNOGRAPHY AND SOCIAL THEORY: DEFINING CONSENSUS AND ETHNICITY

2.1. Introduction

This chapter links up the theoretical starting points of the linguistic ethnography with two social-theoretical elements which are of pivotal importance in the treatment of the ethnographic data. First (2.2), I will explain that on the basis of both theoretical and empirical considerations, a case of sociolinguistic consensus such as the one in Neptunia is to be considered a valuable research topic in its own right. In a second section (2.3), it will be spelled out how in my linguistic ethnography such central social-theoretical notions as group formations and ethnicity are approached.

2.2. Consensus as a research finding

If in chapter 1 (section 1.3), I touched upon the phenomenon of inconsistency, this was mostly done with reference to contradictions at the intraindividual, cross-situational level. Single individuals may display mutually inconsistent attitudes, because attitudes are always – even within the individual's mind – tailored to local argumentative, explanatory, justificatory, etc. needs. Variation and contradiction also exist, however, at the interindividual level, i.e. *across* different individuals and subgroups within communities.

In anthropology, scholars such as Asad (1980), Clifford (1988), and Hannerz (1992), among many others, have criticized the deeply-rooted view of cultures as bodies of shared values, meanings, and predispositions. Homogeneity and culture are, indeed, too often considered coextensive. As Hannerz (1992: 11) puts it, in anthropology and other social sciences there is *"a customary commitment [...] to one particular understanding of culture as collective, socially organized meaning – the idea of culture as something shared, in the sense of homogeneously distributed in society"*.

In Brisard & Meeuwis (1994) and Meeuwis & Brisard (1993), a similar premise of homogeneity is traced with regard to sociolinguistics and its notion of the speech community (see also Bourdieu 1991; Guy 1988; Pratt 1987; Rickford 1986; Williams 1992; Woolard 1985). In line with these authors, we trace the influence which general social-theoretical theories, in which societies are viewed as tied together by patterns of consensus, have had on *sociolinguistic* theory formation. The manifestation of these consensual theories in sociolinguistic models relates to the pretheoretical assumption that speech communities are homogeneous at the level of communicative competence. That is, although in the late 1960s scholars such as Labov (i.a., 1966) enriched the linguistic sciences with a theoretically and methodologically elaborated notion of *linguistic* variation, it is still very often assumed that all members of a speech community share the same knowledge and views as to what rules for appropriate language use are to be followed in their speech community, what symbolic social value each of the linguistic variants stands for, and what linguistic variants need to be adopted by the members of the lower social classes in order to enhance their social position (which is considered the cornerstone of linguistic change in correlational sociolinguistics). In other words, a consensual view of society in general social-theoretical terms is projected onto the sociolinguistic level. The consequence is a sociolinguistics in which sociolinguistic consensus operates as an *a-priori* premise, i.e. as an assumption before the fact. In reaction to this type of sociolinguistic research, Brisard and I, and the other authors cited, have argued for a sociolinguistics which is more oriented towards those forms of social theory in which *conflictual* views of society prevail. Sociolinguistics should be based on that kind of social theory that recognizes variation and heterogeneity at *all* levels of meaning and knowledge distribution within societies, and not merely at the sublevel of linguistic variants.

Thus, it is a matter of principle that within sociolinguistic theory and methodology the possibility of conflict has to be left open for recognition. It is not a matter of principle, however, that conflict *must* be attested in sociolinguistic studies of contingent societies. The occurrence or nonoccurrence of conflict is, indeed, something which has to be observed empirically in each individual sociolinguistic case study (Brisard & Meeuwis 1994: 17). The urge for theoretical and methodological flexibility allowing for the recognition of conflict when it occurs does not mean that the possibility to attest consensus at *some* levels in a given society – possibly coexisting with conflicts at other levels – is altogether precluded.

So, consensus should be moved from the order of premises and pretheoretical working assumptions to the order of empirical *research findings*. This necessarily entails a processual and action-oriented approach to sociolinguistic consensus, in which it is treated as 'being accomplished'. In other words, the research question is not so much directed at processes sustained by the consensus, but at how the consensus itself is established. This type of study thus sets out to identify mechanisms of hegemony through which one particular ideology, one particular version of reality, etc. comes to suffuse and obliterate the others present in a society. The anthropologists referred to above formulate this issue quite forcefully. Hannerz (1992: 44) writes: *"[t]here is nothing automatic about cultural sharing. Its accomplishment must rather be seen as problematic"*. Asad (1980: 623) asserts that *"the whole business of looking for and reproducing the essential meanings of another society's […] 'authentic culture' […] should be problematised far more drastically than it has been in social anthropology […]. Instead of taking the production of […] authoritative discourse […] in given historical societies as the problem to be explained, anthropology takes the existence of […] 'authentic discourse' […] as the basic concept for defining and explaining historical societies"*. As may be noticed, ‘problematizing’ consensus – i.e., not taking it for granted – is to become the key practice in our analytical enterprises.

In my linguistic ethnography, the same approach to consensus as a research finding rather than a premise is adopted. I set out to show how in the Zairian community in Neptunia sociolinguistic consensus is created and maintained. In spite of a structural sociolinguistic inequality, i.e. the fact that the language with which one of the groups is identified, Lingala, is the dominant code at the expense of the other languages, two linguistic groups within Neptunia, i.e. the Lingala-speakers and the Kiswahili-speakers (and other non-Lingala-speaking groups), live, work, pray, and relate to each other in consensus. As will be explained in more detail in chapter 7 (section 7.4), the observed consensus consists in the fact that in Neptunia there are no overt fights or major public conflicts over language matters, that people appear not to stay away from Neptunia in spite of the unequal distribution of their respective languages – in short, that at the levels of the ‘outer appearance’ of social life in Neptunia, they appear to accept the structural sociolinguistic inequality. My starting point is a problematization of this consensus: in line with Asad’s and Hannerz’s positions, I take it that there is nothing ‘automatic’, ‘evident’, or ‘to be taken for granted’ about the consensus, and that an investigation is needed into how it is actually established and maintained (which is my analysis of the *construction of sociolinguistic consensus*). This starting point is furthermore sustained by empirical observations. As the discussions in chapter 4 will spell out in detail, sociolinguistic descriptions of Zaire make mention of negative attitudes towards Lingala, especially in the eastern and south-central parts of the country. These negative attitudes are very often framed around the idea that Lingala is a ‘suppressive’ and ‘unpleasant’ language, used by the presumptuous inhabitants of the capital, by Mobutu’s corrupt and often disliked political environment, and by the brutal and menacing military, not only inside, but also outside Lingala’s original area of expansion. My problematization of the consensus in Neptunia is thus empirically informed by an intertextual contrast between the sociolinguistic consensus in Neptunia on the one hand and the negative attitudes towards Lingala in Zaire on the other.

It is important to mention that the investigation into the ways in which the sociolinguistic consensus in Neptunia is constructed must also provide insights into ‘how consensual’ the consensus really is. That is, in chapter 7 (section 7.4), the consensus is a ‘first-level’ ethnographic observation, and it can therefore only be considered a preliminary finding. A profound analysis of the processes and mechanisms at work in the construction of sociolinguistic consensus allows us to refine the picture: at closer consideration, the consensus is an ‘imperfect’ consensus, or a consensus ‘to certain degrees’ and ‘only for some members’. (This recapitulation is presented in the concluding section 8.4 of chapter 8.)

A word needs to be said, in this respect, about the risk of constructing ethnographic ‘nonissues’. One could argue that if the unequal distribution of linguistic resources in Neptunia does not appear to be ‘a problem’ for the members, as the first-level observation of the consensus seems to indicate, a problematization of this matter is merely an analyst's construct, artificially imposed upon the members as a dictated issue of discussion and reflection. There are, however, many arguments against this view. First of all, the fact that there are no *overt* conflicts in Neptunia does not mean that the language issue does not preoccupy the Neptunia members. In chapter 7 (section 7.4), I will show that the issue is regularly talked about 'on the quiet' (i.e., outside the public context of Neptunia) and that it often appears in jocular forms of teasing, revealing a certain degree of emic salience.

Secondly, the very renunciation of consensus-as-a-premise at the level of sociolinguistic theory in itself sanctions the problematization of consensus and its building blocks as a legitimate object of study. That is, the orientation towards consensus-making as a research object in its own right is a natural outcome of the theoretical starting point that cases of consensus in given societies cannot be considered self-evident.

Thirdly, in many types of ethnography the alleged danger of the nonissue is circumvented by means of pilot studies. The ethnographer first conducts a limited pilot study in order to establish the 'really important' matters in the community at hand, which once identified are treated as the topics of the 'actual' study. In spite of the commonsensical appeal of this practice among anthropologists in general, I consider it open to certain objections. Because of their socially sensitive character, socially or politically laden matters may very often be concealed by a community's members in their discursive and other practices. In other words, such issues are no less relevant to the members' daily lives and social relationships, but they are carefully avoided in open debates and may, thus, elude a researcher's attention during a pilot study.

Fourthly, the status of a topic as either a nonissue or a relevant issue should not only be seen a precondition for a research project, but also as a possible subject matter of the research project *per se*. In fact, temporarily 'imposing' a preconceived topic upon one's field may lead to insightful findings, not only concerning the question whether the topic is at all relevant to the community members, but also concerning the actual degrees to which it is relevant. Phenomena such as, in my own study, the 'imperfect' nature of the sociolinguistic consensus would remain inaccessible if the issue were not problematized.

2.3. Ethnicity, group formations, and multiple identities

The view of ethnicity and other types of human group formations which I adopt in my study is in line with the global social-constructionist orientation. In general, I adopt the viewpoints suggested by scholars such as Anderson (i.a., 1983), Barth (i.a., 1969; ed., 1969; 1994), Chrétien & Prunier (eds., 1989), Delannoi & Taguieff (1991), Roosens (1989), and others, who have brought to our attention that the most essential aspect about ethnicity is not its status as an 'objective', natural part of human existence, but rather its status as a construction accomplished by human beings as social actors. Let us have a closer look at Barth's suggestions in this respect.

To Barth, ethnicity is not a natural given, but a form of social organization. It is a process of human action which consists in the formation of group boundaries through self-ascription and ascription by others, i.e. the opposition of a notion of 'we-ness' to a notion of 'them-ness' or the juxtaposition of various (third) 'them-nesses'. Ethnic communities are, thereby, imagined rather than natural. Barth does not exclude the reality of what he calls *"the cultural stuff"* (1969: 15), i.e. real distinctive backgrounds of experience within communities. However, ethnicity as a form of group formation cannot be assumed to be a natural correlate or outcome of the 'cultural stuff' it contains. In a retrospective reference to his 1969 edition, Barth wrote: *"[w]e chose to regard ethnic identity as a feature of social organization, rather than a nebulous expression of culture [...]. This means focusing on the boundary and the processes of recruitment, not on the cultural stuff that the boundary encloses"* (Barth 1994: 12). Essential to Barth's view are, thus, (i) a recognition of the subjective, imagined nature of ethnicity; (ii) a constructionist rather than essentialist viewpoint; (iii) a recognition of the historical, economic, political, and, even, contextual contingencies of ethnicity; (iv) a concern with the strategic and highly variable manipulation of diacritica, i.e. the criteria for delineating boundaries between we- and them-groups; and (v) a preference, inspired by the constructionist viewpoint, for a processual approach to ethnicity, rather than an approach in terms of static products.[11]

Some authors, such as Roosens (1994) and, in fact, Barth himself (1994: 27), have pointed out that Barth's earliest views of boundary-making were too much dominated by a consideration of the diacriticon of shared ethnic descent. Barth (1994: 27) admits that in some parts of the world *"the dominant discourse on identity is indeed increasingly cast in terms of religion, not ethnicity"*. Here, Barth merely couches his amendments of the earlier focus on ethnic descent in terms of historical changes. Roosens, on the other hand, is in

11. With regard to the preferred processual approach, one could indeed cast ethnicity in Billig's vocabulary and view them as eternally 'unfinished business'.

my view more correct in casting this amendment in terms of theoretical principles. He writes:

> *"[t]he auto- or hetero-attribution of a so-called culture item or a combination of items to a category or a group of people does not give them an 'ethnic identity' per se. Self- or hetero-attribution of a number of cultural traits does not create or contribute to the establishment of 'ethnic identity', unless one presupposes that the group of people to whom the traits are already attributed is an ethnic group, displaying, by definition, a certain persistence in time. In Barth's model, potential duration and 'substance' are provided for by the social act of intentional self-ascription to a group, and by defining the ethnic group as a 'social' – not cultural – 'vessel'. But this theoretical model is not specific enough: many religous and linguistic groups (la Francophonie) are also social vessels requiring acts of self-ascription, and also these types of groups do keep their boundaries up. What, in my view makes an ethnic group specific, is the genealogical dimension, which unavoidably refers to origin, and always involves some form of kinship or family metaphor. […] The reference to origin is, without being an indispensable human trait, the primary source of ethnicity which makes a* socio-cultural *boundary into an* ethnic *boundary"* (1994: 83, emphasis in original).

In other words, ethnic identity is *one specific* type of group formation, i.e. one in which the diacriticon referred to is the members' shared genealogical history, i.e. their shared ethnic descent. Therefore, in addition to ethnically based group formations, many other types of boundary-making exist.

In this dissertation, I choose to extend Roosens's remarks into a number of basic conceptual distinctions. I will draw on a conceptual distinction between group formations in general and ethnically based boundary-making processes in particular. In other words, 'group formations' is the concept I will apply to talk about constructed and imagined communities *as empty shells*, i.e. as groups of people the allegedly distinctive trait of which I do not wish to specify. Group formations may, then, be of different kinds, according to the diacriticon on which the boundary-making process is based. Some of the most frequently recurring diacritica for boundary-making are: language (e.g., the group of speakers of Dutch); ethnic descent (e.g., the group of people of Croatian genealogy); religion (e.g., a group of Christians); geo-administrative unit (e.g., the group of people with a Belgian passport); geographical unit (e.g., the group of people living on the territory of Belgium); culture (e.g., the group of people who share Japanese habits, moral standards, values, experiences, etc.); caste (e.g., the Hindus of the Kshatriya caste); social class (e.g., a group of workers in a capitalist society); age (e.g., a group of seniors); gender (e.g., a group of women); and politics (e.g., the members of a socialist party). The point is that group formations throughout the world (and throughout history) are not all of the same type, but depend on the allegedly distinctive feature(s) that is (are) marshaled in the boundary-making process. For the Muslims in Bosnia, for instance, language is a less relevant diacriticon than it is, e.g., for the Basques in the France and Spain.

It must be recognized that in actual practice, most cases of group formation involve an overlapping or combination of more than one diacriticon. In Flemish nationalist ideology, for instance, Flemish group formation appears to be based on five concurrent diacritica: ethnicity, geo-administrative unit, geographical unit, culture, and language. Diacritica are not only combinable along this syntagmatic axis (i.e., the axis at which *different* diacritica are brought together), but also along a paradigmatic axis. That is, *variants* of *one and the same* diacriticon may be alternated to form different, overlapping groups. If we only consider the diacriticon of geo-administrative unit, for instance, we notice that the same individuals may at the same time be delineated as Europeans, as Belgians, as Belgians from the region of Flanders, as Flemish from the province of Antwerp, as Flemish from a certain town in the province of Antwerp, etc.

The fact that there is a wide variety of group-formation criteria and that there are many different scenarios for combining the various criteria has important consequences for the identity of individuals. An individual's identity refers to her or his membership of a certain group. But since, given the syntagmatic and paradigmatic variety of diacritica, one is always a member of more than one group, the identity of an individual is – at least in decontextualized terms – always multiple. For instance, at the syntagmatic axis of the combination of diacritica, one and the same individual may at the same time be a Belgian from the viewpoint of geo-administrative unit, a Muslim from the viewpoint of her or his membership of a religious group, and a Hutu from the ethnic viewpoint. At the paradigmatic axis, then, this individual may be said to be at the same time a European, a Belgian, a Fleming, etc. The totality of an individual's memberships of syntagmatically and paradigmatically delineated group formations, then, is her or his *repertoire of multiple identities*.

The multiplicity of identities only holds, as already alluded to, as long as identity as group membership is cast in context-independent terms. That is, only at a 'semantic' level of description may an individual be said to 'carry along' a repertoire of multiple identities. The identities in the repertoire are functional resources, each of which can be selectively oriented to according to the contingent conditions and needs of the context at hand, whereby the other items in the repertoire are situationally backgrounded. This means that in actual situations, not all the items in the repertoire are oriented to, but that one (or some) of them is (are) specifically selected to accomplish the local goals. The multiple repertoire thus allows an individual to shift identities across situations. At the paradigmatic level, each traveler is familiar with the experience that he or she is a Westerner in China, a European in Guatemala, a Belgian in Spain, a Walloon in Flanders, etc. At the level of syntagmatic variation, it may happen that at one moment one capitalizes on one's identity as a holder of the Belgian nationality and on another occasion on one's identity as a Muslim. As will be shown in chapter 8, such strategic processes of identity shifting are particularly prominent in my informants' discursive activities in the construction of sociolinguistic consensus.

3. METHODOLOGY AND FIELDWORK

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I explicate the methodological preferences on which my study is based. In section 3.2, I will indicate that my reconstruction of the native knowledge underlying the sociolinguistic behavior in Neptunia is conducted by problematizing the sociolinguistic consensus in Neptunia ‘in front of informants’, i.e. by showing informants in ethnographic interviews (to use this as a provisional term) that I do not take the consensus for granted. This section will also substantiate why and how the reactions, answers, justifications, etc. provided in the context of these ethnographic interviews may count as an indication of how the consensus is constructed in the actual context of Neptunia.

In section 3.3, practical information is provided on the time and space limitations of the fieldwork that I conducted for my linguistic ethnography, as well as on my data-gathering and data-constituting techniques, which includes a detailed account of how the ethnographic interviews were set up. In 3.4, finally, I explain the methodology applied in the analysis of the transcribed ethnographic interviews as texts. This methodology is drawn from discourse analysis as the general study of language and language use beyond the sentence level and in relation to the contexts of their production.

3.2. Reconstructing native knowledge: The problematization of consensus in ethnographic interviews

In the context of Neptunia itself, no accounting practices take place in which the members explicate the linguistic ideology that sustains the patterns of language use they employ. The members mostly just *do* these patterns of language use, without, for instance, dedicating explicit words to it in the mass or in the clubhouse. The underlying ideology of course manifests itself in the observable behavior, but the complementary analysis of members’ own accounts is essential to any type of linguistic ethnography. Therefore, for reconstructing the linguistic ideology a certain additional elicitation procedure is needed, based on ethnographic interviews. The discussion in chapter 2 (section 2.2) has shown that the reconstruction of the linguistic ideology underlying the patterns of language use in Neptunia must consist in a ‘problematization’ of this consensus. The ethnographic interviews serve to accomplish this problematization in front of informants. That is, in ethnographic interviews informants are confronted with the fact that I, as a researcher, do not take the consensus for granted. Given the sociolinguistic inequality in Neptunia as based on a dominance of Lingala, the problematization of the consensus in front of informants is conducted in the following ways.

There are ethnographic interviews with Lingala-speaking members of Neptunia and ethnographic interviews with Kiswahili-speaking ones (chapter 6, in particular section 6.3.4, contains my breakdown of the Neptunia Zairians into linguistic subgroups and in detail explains the rationales behind it). In the interviews with the Lingala-speaking informants, the consensus is problematized as *‘What do the Kiswahili-speakers think of the dominance of Lingala in Neptunia? Aren’t they offended by it?’*. In the interviews with the Kiswahili-speakers, it is problematized as *‘What do you think of the dominance of Lingala in Neptunia? Aren’t you offended by it?’*. (Although the practical arrangement of the ethnographic interviews will be discussed in 3.3.2, it must already be noted that these representations of the problematization are abstract. In actual practice, the words and paraphrases that are used for the problematization, the degree of explicitness to which it is formulated, the discursive preparations needed to arrive at it, etc., differ considerably across the interviews. That is, the problematization must not be interpreted as a single question that is always clearly localizable in the transcripts or in the talks.) It is my aim through these two question to confront the informants with the basic presupposition that *‘There are good reasons to believe that the Kiswahili-speakers are or could be offended by the dominance of Lingala in Neptunia’*, an insinuation which is motivated by the sociolinguistic situation, including documented linguistic attitudes, in Zaire (themselves described in chapter 4 and already mentioned as a rationale for my procedures in chapter 2, section 2.2).

The informants’ response to the problematization achieved through the two questions and their shared presupposition is a ‘deproblematization’: one could say that they ‘rebuild’ what the researcher has ‘demolished’, or, in fact, that they ‘reconstruct’ what has been ‘deconstructed’. I therefore call the discursive processes and activities that take place in the ethnographic interviews *the construction of sociolinguistic consensus*. The choice to contrast the deproblematizations presented by Neptunia’s two major groups, one of which is the group which ‘possesses’ the language dominantly used (the Lingala-speakers) while the other one is a group which does not (the Kiswahili-speakers), is made in order to be able to compare each group’s constructions of the patterns of language use in Neptunia, to examine what differences or similarities across these constructions underpin the sociolinguistic consensus in Neptunia, and, eventually, to pinpoint the processes of hegemony through which the ideology of one subgroup is imposed upon the other subgroups.

The theoretical and methodological question imposes itself as to how the *informants’* construction of sociolinguistic consensus *in the interviews* relates to the *members’* creation and maintenance of consensus *in the actual context of Neptunia*. Indeed, it is not my claim that the Neptunia consensus was actually ‘made’ at those specific moments when the Zairians had an interview with the researcher. The consensus is, as the related sociolinguistic inequality, a structural one, which means that it was also present before the ethnographic interviews took place. I am also unable to claim that the construction of sociolinguistic consensus as it appears in the interviews is an exact, isomorphic representation of how the consensus takes place in Neptunia itself. It cannot be asserted that, in the ethnographic interviews, the informants simply ‘redo’ the construction of sociolinguistic consensus in ways that are not marked by situational interests: doubtlessly, the very context of an ethnographic interview with an outsider triggers many new, ‘inauthentic’ interpretive processes and, conversely, hides a number of relevant, ‘authentic’ ones. It must always be considered that, as a form of social praxis, ethnographic interviews are different from the actual praxis of praying, communicating, and living together in Neptunia. Yet, it does not follow that the processes that are at work in each of these two forms of praxis are mutually dissimilar or, worse, incomparable. Indeed, what the researcher confronts the informants with in the ethnographic interviews, i.e. the dominance of Lingala and the sociolinguistic inequality, is not very different from what they are confronted with in their everyday practices and interpretations in Neptunia. The interviews may, in fact, be considered a locus in which the informants *explicate* parts of what operates at a tacit level in the Neptunia context.

3.3. Situating the fieldwork and data-gathering procedures

3.3.1. The fieldwork

The details of the fieldwork on which my linguistic ethnography is based may be described as follows. I have been conducting many types of research on Zairian sociolinguistics, including actual fieldwork in the country, since 1987. My fieldwork among the immigrant Zairian community in Belgium, and in Antwerp in particular, started in 1991 and has been continued until the present day. My fieldwork in Neptunia, finally, was carried out between the fall of 1992 and the summer of 1995. It must be noted, in this respect, that although my report on Neptunia is written in the present tense, the findings only apply to the period between 1992 and 1995. Some changes occurred in Neptunia after September 1995, but these are not covered in this study. This, in fact, also applies to the information provided on Zaire and on the Zairian immigration in Belgium.

In practice, all these instances of fieldwork first consisted in 'entering' the community, i.e. in rendering my presence and participation as self-evident as possible and in making friends and acquaintances in ways that are natural to the members of the community. During the entire period of my fieldwork in Neptunia, I integrated profoundly with the Neptunia community. I participated in almost all weekly masses, in Neptunia as a clubhouse and social occasion, and in the occasional activities organized during the week (which are explained in chapter 6). Friends and acquaintances from within Neptunia were also very often my sponsor-guides in accessing other Zairian occasions (i.e., feasts, weddings, Protestant and other churches, family reunions, etc.) in Antwerp and in other Belgian and European cities. Almost all of my observational data are derived, therefore, from immediate participant and nonparticipant observation. In addition, I was lucky to discover a number of unpublished and informal writings by former managers of Neptunia, in which they trace the early history of Neptunia and its connection with the port of Antwerp. These notes were handed to me by one of the present Fathers of Neptunia, who appreciated my interest in the historical and colonial backgrounds of Neptunia on personal grounds. Another token of written ethnographic materials that I was able to retrieve in the field is the Neptunia songbook, which will be discussed in chapters 6 and 7 and a copy and translation of which are included in the appendices.

I made it a habit to always wear a tape recorder, operating with micro cassettes and a small microphone, when moving around in my field. This allowed me to record a number of spontaneous interactions, both between members and between members and myself. For the analysis of certain details of Neptunia I also made use of video tapes.

As mentioned, in addition to the data obtained from participant and nonparticipant observation, to the original written materials collected, and to the audio and video tapes, I also made use of constituted data in the form of ethnographic interviews. For a variety of reasons, I refer to these interviews as 'casual conversations' and 'organized conversations'. The details of these data and their constitution are described in the following section.

3.3.2. More on data constitution: The casual and organized conversations

I distinguish two types of ethnographic interviews, i.e. 'casual conversations' and 'organized conversations'. The casual conversations differ from the organized conversations in that the former occurred in encounters which did not announce themselves – neither to the informants nor to me – as potentially involving a conversation on sociolinguistic matters. In a number of the numerous everyday occasions on which I met with Neptunia members (e.g., at home, in a bar, on the street, over the telephone, etc.), it sometimes happened that the topic of conversation shifted towards language issues – at times with, but very often without my purposeful intervention. I took up these shifts in conversational topic to elaborate on the matters that really interested me, but it is clear that these chats remained far too informal to be called 'interviews' in the standard sense of the term.

The 'organized conversations' are based on more obtrusive techniques. They must be called 'organized', in that they were held in encounters which were set up by myself: I previously asked the informants if they would agree to meet on a specific date and time and in a quiet location in order to have a talk on their own linguistic backgrounds and on Zairians' linguistic behaviors in general. The conversations are also 'organized' in that at least in some of them (see below) a video tape of a Neptunia mass was used as a shared point of reference. I prefer to call them 'conversations' rather than 'interviews', on the other hand, because they are open-ended and relaxed talks the structure and development of which were steered only to a very limited extent. Thus, the term 'interview' too much evokes the practice of soliciting answers to a bounded set of questions which the informant is forced to answer 'at gunpoint' and one by one. My organized conversations – and, *a fortiori*, the casual ones – are much looser in set-up and development, in that they involved an open talk in which informants were allowed to digress on issues as they saw fit and to direct the conversation in ways of their own choosing, and in that no time limits were set in advance. Each of the organized conversations was, with the agreement of the informant, recorded on audio tape and subsequently transcribed for detailed analysis. The transcripts, as well as an elaborate clarification of the applied transcription techniques, are included in the appendices to this dissertation.

Since the organized conversations exist in the form of readily consultable transcripts, whereas the casual conversations are only available in the form of paraphrasing field notes, the organized conversations constitute the primary materials for the analysis of the members' own constructions and interpretations. This means that the analysis was first and foremost conducted on the transcripts and that the occasional recordings and field notes of the casual conversations were used as secondary data, i.e. to locate additional examples or clarifications or to find answers to problems not properly solved by the organized conversations. The role of the casual conversations should, however, not be underrated: in a considerable number of cases, the field notes put some of the findings in a different perspective and compelled me to cast them in new terms.

In the remainder of this dissertation, the identification of the informants used in the casual and organized conversations in terms of the linguistic group to which each of them belongs will be facilitated through the usage of different classes of pseudonyms. The Kiswahili-speaking informants are disguised and distinguished by means of German-sounding pseudonyms, which are designed so as to reveal gender differences. Lingala-speaking informants are distinguished by means of Spanish pseudonyms. Members of other Zairian linguistic groups, such as Kikongo-speakers, Tshiluba-speakers, and others, are all referred to by means of English pseudonyms. Belgian members of Neptunia, such as the Fathers, are given Russian pseudonyms and the names of the second-generation children of the Zairians are all replaced with French pseudonyms. (My usage of pseudonyms also applies to individuals referred to by informants in their own speech.)

The organized conversations were set up as follows. In order to ensure that the informant would not feel 'controlled' by onlooking fellow members and in order to facilitate the recordings and transcription, I chose to limit the number of informants per organized conversation to one. Preference was given to a low number of extensive and detailed organized conversations, rather than to a higher number of shorter and more superficial ones. It was decided to have 8 organized conversations. The total recording time of all the organized conversations is more or less 12 hours, which is an average of 1.5 hours per conversation. For reasons mentioned above (see 3.2), there are 4 organized conversations with Lingala-speaking members of Neptunia and 4 organized conversations with Kiswahili-speaking members. The 4 Lingala-speaking informants were all born and/or raised in the western regions of Zaire and are 'Lorenzo', 'Joaquín', 'Begoña', and 'Manuel'. All of them are also members of the Neptunia choir (itself described in chapter 6). The 4 Kiswahili-speaking informants in the organized conversations are from eastern Zaire and are 'Hans', 'Jürgen', 'Ingrid', and 'Ulrike'. None of them belongs to the Neptunia choir. It must be mentioned that some of these 8 informants were also consulted in casual conversations, which took place in contexts different from the organized conversations.

The 8 organized conversations took place between February and October 1994. The organized conversations with Joaquín, Hans, and Jürgen took place in a room of the University of Antwerp, while all the other conversations took place at the homes of the respective informants. More detailed information on the dates, locations, and contexts of the organized conversations is provided as an introduction to each of the transcripts (see the appendices).

There are a number of parameters which distinguish two groups within the set of 8 organized conversations and which cut across the distinction of the linguistic identities. The 4 conversations in the first group are the conversations with Lorenzo, Joaquín, Hans, and Jürgen, and the 4 conversations in the second group involve Begoña, Manuel, Ingrid, and Ulrike. In the first 4 conversations, I used a sheet with a prepared set of questions related to the informant's background as a means to initiate the conversation. One could say that these 4 organized conversations start with a 'directive' part. In the appendices, the transcripts of these 4 conversations are preceded by an indication of the line number at which the directive part ends. The other 4 conversations, i.e. the conversations with Begoña, Manuel, Ingrid, and Ulrike, were organized later and by that time I had understood that a directive control of the beginning of the conversation on the basis of a sheet with questions was not necessary and at times even hindered the transition from the biographical questions to Neptunia matters. These 4 conversations are, therefore, much more relaxed from the start, as may be noticed in the transcripts.

The second parameter distinguishing the two groups of 4 conversations is that in the first group I showed a video tape of a Neptunia mass in order to enhance the feedback character of the conversation. All organized conversations (and, in fact, all the casual ones as well) are 'feedback conversations', in that they all imply a shared frame of reference, i.e. Neptunia. That is, both the informants and myself are regular visitors of Neptunia and are thus talking about a shared world of experience. In the first 4 organized conversations, I judged it useful to facilitate the references to the shared world of experience by means of video images of a random Neptunia mass, for which I used one of the video tapes I had obtained through the procedures explained in 3.3.1. The mass shown by this tape is an instance of what I will call the 'special masses' (see chapter 6): it is a mass celebrated on the occasion of Father Nikita's 50 years of priesthood, which was followed by an extensive feast.

One of my main concerns in each of the conversations was with having the questions *'What do the Kiswahili-speakers think of the dominance of Lingala in Neptunia? Aren't they offended by it?'* (applicable to the Lingala-speaking informants) and *'What do you think of the dominance of Lingala in Neptunia? Aren't you offended by it?'* (applicable to the Kiswahili-speaking informants) in one way or another dealt with in the course of the interaction. I want to emphasize here that in the actual texts of the conversations the issue does not always appear as a single question-answer pair in precisely localizable turns. Rather, I always tried to have each of these questions approached from as many perspectives as possible, by means of as many different paraphrases and indirect references as possible, and in as many different discursive and argumentative contexts as possible. I extensively elaborated the discursive preparations towards these key questions by first bringing up issues that are only remotely related, and by allowing the informants to digress on these issues. I also allowed that deductions and conclusions were made *from* the question once it was dealt with and that in these contexts too, the informants would digress in directions as far away from the issue as they themselves wished.

3.4. Discourse analysis

The analysis of the casual and organized conversations, and of the constructions contained in them, is based on discourse analysis, a methodology imposed by the theoretical orientation towards discursive social psychology. Both the version of discursive social psychology espoused by Potter and his colleagues, in which all we eventually have to say about attitudes is limited to what happens in the locus of discourse, and Billig's theory, in which attitudes and thinking are approached as rooted in discursive activities, are, at the level of methodology, based on discourse analysis. At the risk of oversimplification, one may say that if social constructionism and ethnomethodology inform the *theory* of discursive social psychology, discourse analysis is its *methodology* (see also Burr 1995: 163). In this context, 'discourse analysis' is not to be understood in the strict sense, i.e. as referring to a particular school or tradition known by that name (cf. Brown & Yule 1983; Sinclair & Coulthard 1975). Rather, it must be considered an umbrella term, referring to a general research practice shared by many different linguistic and related schools. 'Discourse analysis' is, as such, a loose and flexible term and only refers to 'the analysis, the study, the topicalization of discourse' (see also Östman & Virtanen 1995). In this loose sense, discourse analysis studies instances of language and language use beyond the level of the single utterance or sentence and always situates language use within the concrete contexts of its production. In fact, any school or discipline which adopts this type of approach to language may be called discourse-analytical.

Characteristic of discourse analysis within discursive social psychology is that the object of study is content, and not form. Discourse analysis is not used to arrive at a typology or characterization of some text-linguistic regularities, but rather to pinpoint some social and sociolinguistic issues. Discursive social psychology *uses* linguistics, but does not *do* linguistics. This does not mean that formal matters such as grammatical and textual structures, suprasegmental features, and the like, are not turned to in the identification of content. As Fairclough (1992: 194) says:

> *"I understand textual analysis to necessarily involve analysis of the form or organization of texts – of what one might call […] their 'texture'. This is not simply analysis of form as opposed to analysis of content or meaning: I would argue that one cannot properly analyse content without simultaneously analysing form, because contents are always necessarily realized in forms, and different contents entail different forms and vice versa. In brief, form is a part of content".*

Discourse analysis in discursive social psychology is very much in line with Fairclough's reasoning and uses form as a heuristic tool for understanding and accessing content. Yet, content remains the targeted object of analysis.

As mentioned in chapter 1 (section 1.3), in this analysis of content, discursive social psychologists try to identify evaluative stances towards thought objects, as well as the argumentative environment in which these stances are embedded and to which their structures are tailored. The recognition of variation is essential to this endeavor. When antithetical claims and propositions are encountered across different discursive locations, the analyst is not to 'neutralize' this inconsistency by qualifying one of the propositions as the 'real' or 'truthful' one and by discarding the other as merely a distortion or local adjustment. Nor does he or she attempt to isolate out contradictory propositions from their respective locations in order to bring them together in some abstract thought process and to come up with a new proposition of a construed, third, and 'higher' order that neutralizes the inconsistency between the two original propositions. Instead, thematic contradiction is 'left as it is' and is examined as to the local, contextual conditions that bring it about.

It must be noted that in my own analysis of the casual and organized conversations, I use all these principles of discourse analysis and discursive social psychology as underlying working assumptions. That is, I tacitly apply them in the description and explanation of the discursive activities observable in the conversations, but I do not constantly and explicitly try to prove them as theoretical principles. The theoretical argumentation in favor of these principles has already been provided in the many publications in discursive social psychology (see above). Interrupting the description of the constructions in the conversations with elaborate theoretical explanations of their many cross-situational contradictions would seriously burden the more important content level of the linguistic ethnography as a whole.

Concentrating on the study of language use beyond the level of single utterances and in relation to the concrete contexts of production, discourse analysis compels the researcher to always take into account the contextual features of the actual encounter in which each conversation took place. In other words, the totality of the transcripts of the conversations cannot be approached as 'a corpus', i.e. a body of contextless data that are 'obtained in' an ethnographic field but that do not refer to this field anymore once they exist as transcripts. In disciplines which treat transcripts as corpora, it is assumed that it is possible to reasonably discuss linguistic phenomena by simply extracting them from the transcripts as a data base and discarding the social context in which the transcribed speech was originally produced, as well as the identities of the speakers involved. Rather than seeing the transcripts as corpora, I approach them as 'ethnographic data', to wit as 'live' data the analysis of which cannot be dissociated from the whos (informant vs. researcher, African vs. European, etc.) and hows of the actual encounters in which they took place.

This orientation towards context should, however, not be limited to the features of the *immediate* contexts of the conversations. Conversation analysis is one of the many linguistic disciplines which treat recorded and transcribed linguistic materials as corpora. The field of interactional sociolinguistics (i.a., Gumperz 1982; Verschueren 1995) has been particularly rewarding in criticizing this conversation-analytical practice and in replacing it with a treatment of materials as 'ethnographic data'. As argued in Meeuwis (1994c; 1996) and Meeuwis & Sarangi (1994), however, interactional sociolinguistics operates with a too restricted view of context in this respect. In interactional sociolinguistics, there is a dominant stress on what is readily observable from discursive practices and from the immediate setting in which these practices occur. 'Context', in this view, equals 'micro context', in that the conversations and their surrounding encounters are taken to operate autonomously from extrasituational parameters, such as societal power relations, historically anchored patterns of relationships between groups of people, deeply-rooted ideologies such as racism and stereotypes, and other less materially visible social realities. In my own discourse analysis of the casual and organized conversations, I therefore often draw, not only upon immediate situational features of the actual encounter that contained the conversation, but also upon larger historical and social parameters that in one way or another appear to influence the interaction between the informant and myself.

Finally, some remarks need to be made about method. If discourse analysis is the methodology of discursive social psychology, what, then, is its apparatus of methods to be used for the concrete analysis of the discursive practices? At this level, discursive social psychology is purposefully vague and eclectic. Burr (1995: 163) pertinently writes about discursive social psychology that *"[a]lthough some guidelines for doing discourse analysis do exist [...], these necessarily fall short of concrete 'how-you-do-it' instructions"*. Such concrete instructions and the establishment of an apparatus with finite check lists are not only unfeasible but also undesirable. The discourse analyst in discursive social psychology is an essentially eclectic researcher, relying on a host of practicable tools such as the ones provided by conversation analysis, the pragmatics of implicitness, presupposition, and implicature, speech act theory, discourse analysis *stricto sensu*, and other traditions. In other words, the researcher freely draws upon the descriptive and analytical tools of these disciplines as he or she sees fit, but relies on her or his own theoretical preferences.

PART II : CONTEXTS

4. THE ZAIRIAN BACKGROUND

4.1. Introduction

The function of this chapter is to provide background information on Zaire. At the end of the present introductory section, I will briefly situate Zaire as a whole, which includes information on the country's size, its population figures, as well as two maps. Next, descriptions are given of the political history of the country (section 4.2), its ethnic composition (section 4.3), the languages and the sociolinguistic contexts (section 4.4), and the religious groups (section 4.5).

It must be taken into account that given the secondary function of this chapter as providing background data, the coverage of Zaire is necessarily limited in descriptive scope and explanatory depth. The limitations may be summarized as follows. First of all, the different sections in this chapter are purposefully disproportionate. Given the objects of study in my linguistic ethnography as a whole, the linguistic make-up of Zaire is given more attention than its political history, ethnic composition, and religious groups. Second, in each of the four discussions the focus is on the epoch of the Zairian 'Second Republic', i.e. the period between 1965 and 1990, as this is the period during which the informants consulted in the linguistic-ethnographic study of Neptunia were raised and/or spent the most important part of their lives. Thirdly, as was explained in chapter 3 (section 3.3.1), my research in most domains was discontinued by the end of 1995. In the case of my coverage of Zaire, this means that important political and other developments which have taken place after 1995 are not integrated into the descriptions below, or are at best touched upon cursorily. More on the descriptive and explanatory limitations applied to each section in particular, as well as on each section's organization, will be mentioned at their respective beginnings.

Zaire covers a total area of 2,345,410 km^2, which is 76 times the size of Belgium, 6.5 times the size of united Germany, and 3.5 times the size of the state of Texas (or, slightly more than one quarter the total size of the United States). In 1995, the total population of Zaire was estimated at 45,000,000, of which 5,000,000 lived in the capital, Kinshasa.

In the remainder of this dissertation, I will regularly discuss phenomena that are geographically organized. The following two maps may be referred to for better comprehension of these phenomena. The first map (figure 1) is a representation of the geo-administrative organization of Zaire, limited to the country's 'regions', as the provinces are officially called, and the capitals of these regions. The map is followed by a list of the names that were used for these regions and cities during the colonial era. The second map (figure 2) is a schematic sketch of the areas of distribution of Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba, which are Zaire's four 'national languages' – a term to be explained in due course.

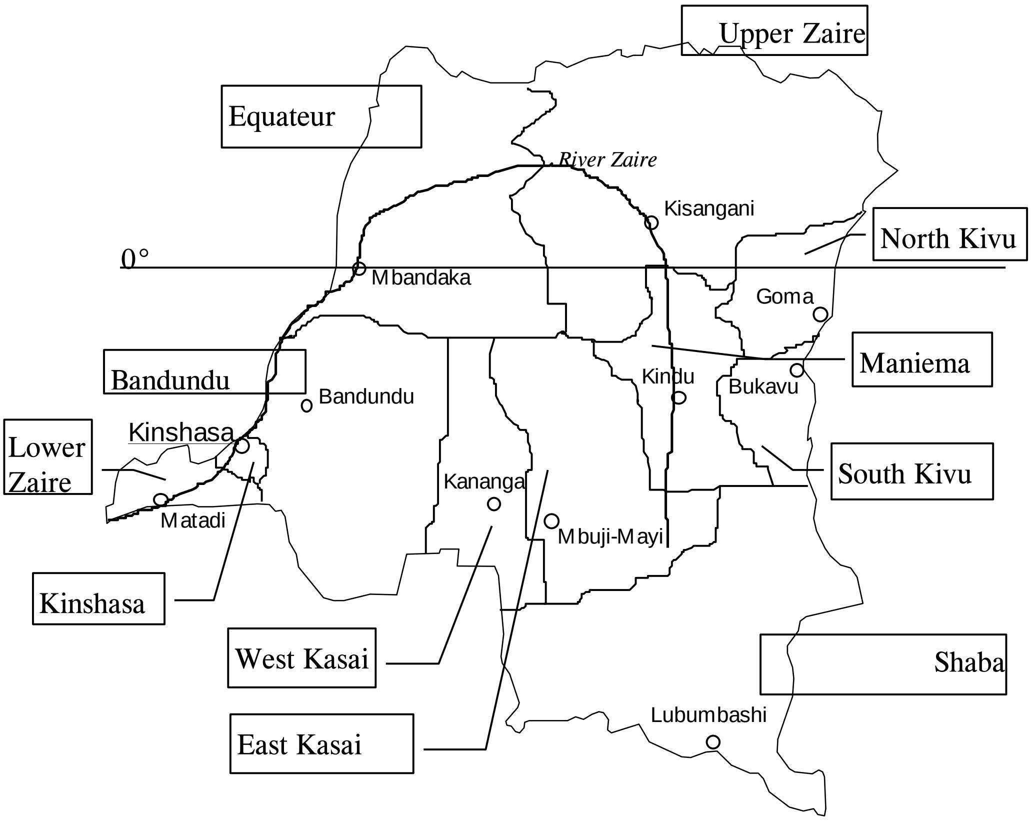

Figure 1. Geo-administrative map of Zaire

Former names:

Cities	
Bandundu	Banningville
Bukavu	Costermansville
Goma	Goma
Kananga	Luluabourg
Kindu	Kindu
Kinshasa	Leopoldville
Kisangani	Stanleyville
Lubumbashi	Elisabethville
Matadi	Matadi
Mbandaka	Coquilhatville
Mbuji-Mayi	Bakwanga

Regions	
Bandundu & Lower Zaire	Leopoldville
East Kasai & West Kasai	Kasai
Equateur	Equateur
Maniema, North & South Kivu	Kivu
Shaba	Katanga
Upper Zaire	Province Orientale

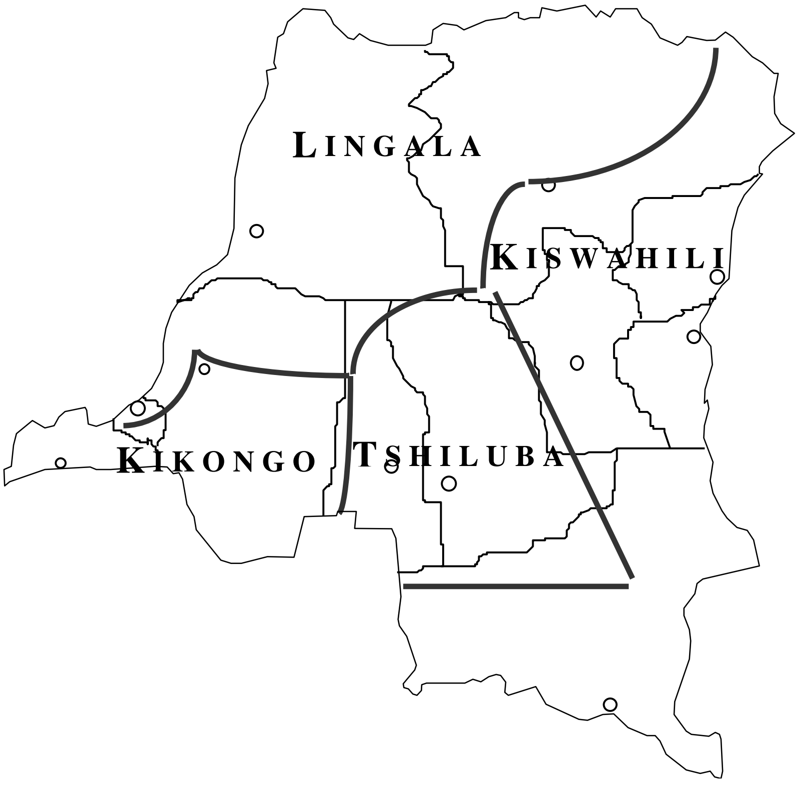

Figure 2. Map of the areas of distribution of Zaire's four national languages

4.2. Political history

The following overview of the political developments in the Congo and Zaire is framed around the subsequent periods of centralization and decentralization which have marked the country's history since early colonization.[12] Political centralization and decentralization are of crucial importance in the formation of regional, ethnic, and linguistic identities, which is a pivotal ingredient in my analysis of the construction of sociolinguistic consensus in Neptunia. Section 4.2.1 will deal with the period between 1875 and 1960, which is the epoch of the Congo Free State and of the centralist state model that dominated Belgian colonization. Attention will also be paid to the role of the three founding pillars of colonial society, i.e. the State, the Church, and Capital. In section 4.2.2, I will briefly discuss the processes of decentralization that marked the 'First Republic', i.e. the five turbulent years after independence. The two following sections, sections 4.2.3 and 4.2.4, are concerned with the era of Mobutu's 'Second Republic' (1965-1990). First, Mobutu's radical recentralization measures at the political, geo-administrative, and economic levels of society are focused upon. Secondly, attention is devoted to the state ideology of *authenticité*, which, as an ideology aimed at the formation of a single national identity, counts as an instance of centralization at the mental level. In section 4.2.5, finally, a number of centrifugal forces that undermined the unity of Mobutu's empire in the 1970s are dealt with, as well as the decentralizing tendencies at work since the April 1990 announcement of the 'Third Republic'. (The origin of the terms 'First Republic', 'Second Republic', and 'Third Republic' will be explained in due course.)

4.2.1. Centralism in the colonial state and the three founding pillars of colonial society

From 1875 onwards, Leopold II, king of the Belgians, set out to finance Henry M. Stanley's expeditions into the interior of central Africa, an area which had been largely unknown to the European powers up to then. Stanley's explorations were limited to the banks and basin of the actual Zaire river. By 1884, he and his colleagues had offered king Leopold the *de facto* control over a square territory, ranging, in its east-west orientation, from the sources of the river up to its estuary on the Atlantic coast and, in its north-south orientation, from the river's upper bend down to the same estuary. At the 1884-1885 Berlin

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12. Adam (ed., 1989) is an insightful overview of the history of the Congo and of Zaire between 1875 and 1989. Other general outlines are contained in Cornevin (1989) and Stengers (1989). Noteworthy contributions covering more specific epochs include, for the pre-1908 period, Emerson (1979), Slade (1962), and Stengers (1963), for the colonial period, Kestergat (1985), Martelli (1962), and Young (1965), and, for the postcolonial era, Braeckman (1992), Callaghy (1984), Kestergat (1986), Willame (1972; 1992), and Young & Turner (1985).

conference on the partitioning of Africa (see Förster et al. eds., 1988), the king succeeded in securing an official recognition of this territory as an independent and at the same time personally owned state. The ‘Congo Free State’, as it was named at the conference, was in no way linked to Belgian governmental structures: king Leopold would be the head of two separate and sovereign countries, Belgium and the Congo, each with its own banner, capital, and international juristic personality. The Congo Free State was governed from the royal palace in Brussels, so that all legislative, executive, and judicial powers were exercised by only one man, king Leopold II.

The participants of the Berlin conference decided that the entire territory was to be a region of free trade, open to entrepreneurs, traders, and settlers from all Western countries without restrictions or discriminatory privileges. The first foreign investors, as well as king Leopold’s own explorers and agents, were attracted by the territory’s aboveground natural resources, such as the rubber, ivory, and coffee reserves of the northern and northwestern areas. Later, i.e. in the last decades of the nineteenth century, eastward explorations led to the discovery of the rich mineral belts in the present region of Shaba and in the Kivu area. For the linguistic and ethnic discussions to come, it is crucial to note that therefore, the Europeans’ state settlements and mercantile activities were first concentrated – in addition to the river’s estuary – in the northwestern parts, stretching along the river’s bend. These areas count as the cradle of the European and Belgian colonization of Central Africa.

Given the full international accessibility of the territory’s resources and given Leopold’s own tendency to rely on agents and explorers of non-Belgian origin, the Congo Free State’s non-African population, restricted as it may have been, was very diverse, including Britons, Scandinavians, Frenchmen, Germans, Dutchmen, as well as people with other nationalities.

On November 15, 1908, king Leopold II devolved his powers over the territory to the Belgian government, which put an end to 23 years of international free trade and which inaugurated the colonial history of the Belgian Congo.

The Belgian colonization of the Congo was marked by an extreme centralization of powers in the mother country. The *Charte Coloniale*,[13] the statutory code in which the transfer of the territory to the Belgian government was enacted and which regulated the organization of the colony until its independence in 1960, granted some administrative competencies to the governor general in the Congo, but firmly excluded any delegation of political or legislative powers. Given this solid dependence on decisions taken in Brussels, it is not surprising that the colony’s organization was fundamentally based on the same three axes as was Belgian society at that time, to wit the State, the Catholic Church, and Capital.

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13. The official name of this text was *Loi sur le Gouvernement du Congo Belge*.

The State, i.e. the representatives of the Belgian government in the colony, was charged with the administrative organization of the territory, the enforcement of law and order, and the establishment and maintenance of an economic and medical infrastructure. With regard to the administrative organization of the territory, it must be mentioned that whereas the relation between the mother country and the colony was a highly centralized one, the organization of the colonial territory rested on a combination of a strong centralization in the capital (first, Boma, near the river's estuary, and from 1929 onwards Leopoldville, see also below) and a certain degree of decentralization within the provinces (see also Mpinga-Kasenda 1973: 48ff). The Belgian Congo was organized in 6 'provinces', the provinces in 'districts', the districts in 'territories', the territories in *chefferies* and 'sectors', the *chefferies* and sectors in *groupements*, and the *groupements* in 'villages'. The central administration's policy was to bypass the provinces: while lower administrative units, such as the *chefferies* and the sectors, were attributed a separate juristic personality granting them a budgetary and statutory autonomy, the provinces were not given any such juristic personality and were superintended, at least in the early years, by vice governor generals who were directly subservient to the colony's governor general. For their control over the *chefferies*, sectors, and all lower entities, the Belgians soon adopted the British policy of indirect rule in handling the local administration, relying on existing (and often imagined) local authorities, such as traditional village chiefs and others. Needless to say, these African intermediaries operated under the immediate direction of the (Belgian) 'territory commissioners'.

The colonial government was also charged with the organization of the armed forces, the military branch of which was known as the *Force Publique*. The *Force Publique* was created in 1888 out of the irregular and militia-like armed troops the first European settlers had raised to protect and enforce the exploitation of rubber as well as the slave and ivory trades (see also Harms 1981; Vangroenweghe 1985). As such, the *Force Publique* had its origins in the northern and northwestern regions, which was, as mentioned, the area of the first settlements and stations. These regional origins explain the early choice to adopt Lingala as the only official language of the armed forces – a linguistic choice which has persisted to the present day (see below).

The Church, the second pillar on which the colonial empire was built, was the government's close companion, as the missions were considered the center of gravity of the colonial *œuvre civilatrice*, i.e. the 'civilization' of the Africans. The missions' function was not only proselytic and evangelical; although state-run and private schools existed from the early years onwards, the government and the private investors mostly counted on the missionaries for the education of the Africans. Through the unequal apportionment of subsidies and land, the Belgian rulers always favored the Catholic missions against the Protestant ones, which were associated with the rivaling economic interests of the United Kingdom and Germany.

In the earliest years of the Free State, the educational project envisaged the complete cultural assimilation of the colonized (Yates 1980), similar to the policy adopted in the French colonies. Soon, however, this project was abandoned. It was replaced by the instruction of the (male, see below) masses in primary schools and the continued instruction of a selection of students in secondary education. But even secondary education mostly aimed at the formation of a technically skilled working class; only a minority of the more advanced students were prepared as junior clerks for the public administration and the private companies. The creation of universities with the aim of forming a cadre of Congolese intellectuals, finally, did not take place until the eve of independence. In sum, the colonial educational system was permanently organized with an eye for the golden mean: on the one hand, the private enterprises and the public administration were in need of a large work force and a smaller selection of literate assistants; on the other hand, the colonial authorities considered it more cautious to postpone the access of the Congolese to positions of higher responsibility and to obstruct the intellectual emancipation of the masses, which were both taken as potential causes of anticolonial insubordination. At the time of the declaration of independence in 1960, there were in the entire Congo fewer than 20 university graduates (Ngalasso 1986: 19) on a total population of 14 million.

It is worth drawing attention to one of the tangible vehicles of the Belgians' *œuvre civilisatrice*, i.e. the status of *immatriculé* and the later *Carte de Mérite Civique* and *Carte d'Immatriculation* (see Markowitz 1973: 173ff for an extensive description). The practices around these distinctions explain many of the social disparities which have marked the later Congolese and Zairian societies. The status of *immatriculé* refers to an index of social privilege used during the Congo Free State. The Free State authorities granted this status to Africans who had adopted a Christian and Western mode of life and who lived outside the traditional African environment. In contrast to the other Africans, who were treated according to a specific set of 'indigenous' codes and laws, these *immatriculés* were put under the Belgian civil code. The *immatriculés* were mostly soldiers, urban workers, and those working and living around missions and stations.

The Card of Civil Merit (*Carte de Mérite Civique*) was a similar distinction which the colonial authorities began to confer from 1948 onwards. In 1952, this *Carte de Mérite Civique* was rebaptized as *Carte d'Immatriculation*. The distinction was, as its predecessor, given to those Congolese who could prove to have successfully adopted a Western lifestyle, attitudes, and habits, and who could thus be said to have somehow 'advanced on the scale of civilization'. In order to qualify as an *évolué*, as the members of this autochthonous and well-controlled elite were called, one had to be 21 years old, speak and write impeccable French, forswear polygamy, have a clean criminal record, and know how to write, read, and count; in sum, *"justifier d'une bonne conduite et d'habitudes prouvant un désir sincère d'atteindre un degré plus avancé en* *civilisation"* (original wording, quoted by Vanderlinden 1989b: 37). The certificate was meant to grant these *évolués* privileges which in the colonial apartheid society were the exclusive prerogative of the Belgians, such as access to compartments reserved for Whites in public transport, access to White neighborhoods, bars, restaurants, shops, etc. In actual practice, many Belgians looked down on these 'assimilated' and frustrated them in their hopes of a completely equal treatment (see also Van Bilsen 1993: 36ff). By 1959, no more than 1,783 Congolese (again, on a total population of 14 million) were registered as *évolués* (Vanderlinden 1989b: 37).

The role of Capital in the colonial project may be described as follows. In line with the centralization of powers in Brussels, the economic exploitation of the Congo was organized and directed by Belgian holdings operating from the mother country. The colonial policy was to assign large tracts of land and mines to holdings and companies in Europe, which were then invited to come down and organize the exploitation themselves, capitalizing on local labor forces. As mentioned, the economic investors highly relied on the missions for the formation of a labor force. The relationship of the private sector to the governmental authorities was also very tight. Vanderlinden (1989a: 30) writes that entrepreneurial activities in the colony represented a *"capitalisme sans risques"*, in that the government committed itself to fully reimburse each new private investment. This policy counts as one of the main causes of the immense proportions to which the public debt had risen by 1960.

Although the three pillars of Belgian colonization, the State, the Church, and Capital, were close allies in terms of the structural organization of the colony, the collaboration between their representatives 'on the ground' did not always proceed in equally smooth ways. The businessmen in the private sector clashed almost daily with the government agents, whom they experienced as too meddlesome and greedy, as well as with the armed forces, considered an undisciplined and exasperating source of trouble (see also Fabian 1986a: 42ff). Especially the private companies in the rich southeastern province of Katanga (now, Shaba), with the *Union Minière du Haut-Katanga* as the most powerful center of private interests, often contested the authority of the central administration in the capital, Leopoldville. The administration presented itself as concerned with enforcing the labor legislation in order to protect the workers against the private investors' temptation to save on wages, safety, and health costs. But the work force was also the object of the government's own greed, as state officials often vied with the companies for the best African workers. The missionaries, then, often saw in the covetous aspirations of the government and private enterprises an impediment for their noble mission, i.e. the cultural, educational, and apostolic emancipation of the Africans. Many missions therefore led a rather independent life, disregarding central regulations for the organization of health care, schooling, and other matters. Their parishes were in many cases self-sufficient, in that they relied on the profits of the missionaries' own agricultural production. As will be demonstrated below, this high degree of autonomy of the missions is of particular importance with regard to the history of language use in the colonial schools.

4.2.2. Independence and decentralization between 1960 and 1965

Independence was declared on June 30, 1960, when the names 'The Republic of the Congo' and later 'The Democratic Republic of the Congo' came into use. The period between this date and 1965 was marked by great political and military turmoil. One of the main causes of this instability was the fundamental discussion between (con)federal and unitarian models of society. It must be mentioned that the Belgians had somehow vested the potential of these tensions in the *Loi Fondamentale*, the transitional constitution of the new state edited in Brussels in the spring of 1960, by inserting a number of vague statements implicitly opting for a federal organization of the country. The tensions already manifested themselves in the first days after the declaration of independence, when a fierce opposition arose between prime minister Patrice Lumumba, a strongly convinced unitarian, and a number of powerful federalist and confederalist rivals. A first major challenge for Lumumba was the secession of the rich southeastern province of Katanga, led by Moïse Tshombe in July 1960. The Katangese secession relied on Belgium's military and diplomatic support and can in fact be interpreted as an extension of the dispute, in colonial times, between the Katangese industrial lobbies in the east and the central authorities in the colonial capital in the west. Another important secessionist movement was the one led by Albert Kalonji in the Kasai province in August 1960. A third important vindicator of a federal society model, and Lumumba's most immediate foe, was president Kasa-Vubu, leader of the ABAKO, the ethnic association of the Bakongo (see below). It was Kasa-Vubu who relieved Lumumba from his office on September 5, 1960, with the diplomatic assistance of the French, the Belgians, and the Americans, who saw their political and economic interests better protected in a decentralized than in a unitarian state (and who feared Lumumba's dependence on assistance from communist countries, such as the USSR).

After Lumumba's assassination on January 17, 1961, the main stake of the political debate remained unchanged: unitarian models of the Congolese nation continued to be opposed to federalist and confederalist opinions. Greatly supported by the Western powers, the federalists finally succeeded in imposing their view of society. The constitution of August 1, 1964, known as the *Constitution de Luluabourg*, replaced the former division of the territory in 6 provinces with an organization in 22 such units (21 plus the capital, which was granted the status of an autonomous province). This constitution also transferred a considerable number of legislative, administrative, and even constitutional competencies to the new provinces and subdivisions. The *Constitution de Luluabourg* has therefore generally been known as the constitution of radical decentralization (de Saint-Moulin 1988a; Gbabendu & Efolo 1991: 27ff; Mpinga-Kasenda 1973: 47ff; Pauwels 1981; Vieux 1974: 26ff).

4.2.3. The centralization of powers in Mobutu's Second Republic

Centrifugal tendencies also lay at the heart of Mobutu's coup in November 1965. In 1964 and 1965, the Congolese army (*Armée Nationale Congolaise*, ANC), led by colonel (later, general) Mobutu, was faced with a fierce revolt of peasants and villagers in the Kwilu area, i.e. the southern parts of what is nowadays the region of Bandundu (Martens 1987). In addition, from April 1964 onwards, major parts of the eastern and northern regions were conquered by the 'Simba' rebels of Gaston Soumaliot and Christophe Gbenye (Coquery-Vidrovitch et al. eds., 1987; Verhaegen 1966; 1969). In July 1964, president Kasa-Vubu appointed Tshombe as prime minister, entrusting him with the elimination of all regional and political insurrections in the divided country. For accomplishing this task, however, the former secessionist Tshombe chose to bypass Mobutu's ANC, relying almost entirely on Katangese troops aided by external (Belgian) military support. Soon after the victory over the various rebellions in November 1964, Tshombe moreover ordered the execution of a large number of higher officers of Mobutu's army, on charges of cowardice and desertion. In October 1965, Kasa-Vubu relieved Tshombe of his position and designated Kimba as the new premier, but the members of parliament refused to accord their support to his nomination.

Irritated by Tshombe's maneuvers and by the subsequent indecisiveness of the civil authorities, general Mobutu seized power on November 24, 1965. He thereby established what he called 'the Second Republic' (*la Deuxième République*), which would last until April 24, 1990. With the installation of the Second Republic, all of the existing democratic structures were dissolved and all legislative, executive, and juridical powers were placed in the hands of one man, Joseph-Désiré Mobutu. Mobutu's assumption of power, and its enactment in the new constitution of June 1967, brought about a most extensive reorganization of all possible layers of political, social, and economic life in the Congo. The consequences of this reorganization have remained deeply rooted in the new society until the present day.

The fundamental message of the 1967 constitution and its many reinforcements throughout the 1970s and 1980s was one of radical recentralization, applied at the political, the economic, and the geo-administrative levels of the republic. At *the political level*, the Congo soon became a single-party state governed by Mobutu's MPR, the *Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution* (although the first constitution officially provided for the cohabitation of two political parties). During this period, the MPR was the nation and the nation the MPR, all authority originating from and going back to this institution and, especially, to its chairman. Mobutu drew much of his inspiration for this state model from the structures of the Chinese and North Korean communist parties. The MPR was called *le Parti-Etat*. As Mobutu himself put it (1989: 97), *"[le] MPR, parti-Etat, [est] l'expression de la nation politiquement organisée, les structures fonctionnelles de l'Etat n'étant que l'instrument d'exécution des décisions et des objectifs du parti"*. One of the best-known manifestations of this equation between the nation and the single party was the May 1970 decree, which stated that each citizen was a member of the MPR by birth, willingly or otherwise.

The MPR soon permeated all the layers of Zairian society. Each organization, each institution, each company, each place where Zairian citizens were bound to live, study, work, or pray together had its MPR representatives. The official doctrine was therefore the unique form of political awareness that was operative during the entire period of the Second Republic. Angulu eloquently observes that *"dans cet univers, il est impossible d'entendre une autre parole, impossible […] de penser qu'il puisse exister d'autres types de raisonnement que ceux exposés par le MPR"* (1991: 85).

As mentioned, in this *Parti-Etat* all political powers were centralized in the hands of Mobutu. The members of the government, the higher magistrates, the army generals, etc. were merely there to execute the presidential decrees. The president had absolute power to nominate and discharge every officer and every commission and had full control over the central finances. He also had full control over the parliament, the only legislative chamber remaining after Mobutu's abolition of the bicameral system.

The political centralization also permeated *the economic spheres* of society. From 1966 onwards, the main industrial nodes of the country were nationalized, the mighty *Union Minière du Haut-Katanga*, which was soon rebaptized as *Gécamines*, being one of the first victims. The nationalizations were further deepened during the so-called *zaïrianisation* of 1973 and the *radicalisation* of 1974 (see Pauwels 1981 for a detailed study with many references). The *zaïrianisation* dispossessed all foreigners of their farms, mines, plantations, enterprises, and other types of businesses, and put them in the hands of Zairian citizens. The *radicalisation* was a more genuine nationalization, in that it placed all these lucrative custodies under the direct control of the government. Even the restitution of some of these expropriated possessions to their original owners in 1975 and 1977, a shy denationalization experiment officially labeled *stabilisation* but commonly known as *rétrocession*, was conducted with an eye for the candidates' loyalty towards the president. In sum, from the very beginnings of the Second Republic, the economic and the political upper class in Zaire were one and the same, nearness to the president being an absolute precondition for personal enrichment through mercantile or other activities. In the Second Republic, there was no such thing as an apolitical upper class of wealthy and powerful economic actors.

At the level of *the geo-administrative organization* of the country, Mobutu's choice for recentralization manifested itself in the following way. One of the first measures taken by the new regime in 1965 was to reduce the number of provinces from 22 to 9 (8 plus the capital). Mpinga-Kasenda (1973: 51) and Vieux (1974: 27) are correct in observing that Mobutu's main objective was a return to the centralist administrative organization prevalent in colonial times, which the president himself repeatedly qualified as 'indisputably efficient'. With the exception of the capital, the territory of which was enlarged, and of the Kasai province, which was divided into an eastern and a western entity, the geographical delineation of the new provinces was an almost exact calque of the colonial administrative organization. Also, the colonial division of the provinces into such subunits as districts, territories, *chefferies*, and sectors was faithfully reinstated. Thirdly, all the provinces, with the exception of the capital, were deprived of their juristic personality and were governed by the chairpersons of the local MPR councils, who merely executed the presidential ordinances and did not enjoy any legislative or juristic autonomy (de Saint Moulin 1988a). In the first years of the Second Republic, a certain decentralization *within* the provinces along the lines of the colonial model was applied, but a presidential decree in 1973 also deprived these last autonomous subdivisions of their juristic personalities.

One of the manifestations of *authenticité*, the Zairian official state ideology which will be explained below, was the transformation of the labels of the administrative units ('provinces' being called 'regions', etc.). A presentation of these new labels allows me, at this point, to provide a description of the geo-administrative organization of Zaire in the Second and Third Republics (figure 1). Until 1989, Zaire was composed of 9 'regions' (*régions*), each having its own capital, called *chef-lieu*. These 9 regions were Kinshasa (capital, Kinshasa), Equateur (Mbandaka), Shaba (Lubumbashi), Bandundu (Bandundu), Upper Zaire (Kisangani), Lower Zaire (Matadi), West Kasai (Kananga), East Kasai (Mbuji-Mayi), and Kivu (Bukavu).[14] Each region was, and still is, divided in 'subregions' (*sous-régions*) and 'cities' (*villes*), the subregions and cities in 'zones' (*zones*), the zones in 'collectivities' (*collectivités*), and the collectivities in 'localities' (*localités*).

On the eve of the announcement of the Third Republic in 1990, the three subregions of Kivu, i.e. South Kivu, North Kivu, and Maniema, were promoted to the status of full regions, bringing the number of regions from 9 to 11.[15] The city of Bukavu was chosen as the capital of South Kivu, Goma as the capital of

14. 'Upper Zaire', 'Lower Zaire', 'West Kasai', 'East Kasai', 'South Kivu', and 'North Kivu' are English translations of the original French names *Haut-Zaïre, Bas-Zaïre, Kasaï Occidental, Kasaï Oriental, Sud-Kivu, and Nord-Kivu,* respectively. These translations are the ones most commonly used in the literature, if preference is not given to the original French names.

15. 1989 may be used as a date of reference for the division. In actual fact, the division was commenced in 1988, but only fully completed in 1990.

North Kivu, and Kindu as the capital of Maniema. In the lay perceptions of many Zairians, this further division of what was already one of Zaire’s smallest regions has not (yet) acquired much salience. In many forms of everyday speech and even in some modes of semi-official discourse *le Kivu* still counts as the only significant unit of reference, which brings South Kivu, North Kivu, and (mostly, but not always) Maniema together. In the remainder of this dissertation, my own applications of the terms ‘the Kivu regions’ and ‘Kivu’ will mostly follow these emically salient categories.

The political, economic, and administrative centralization of the country during the Second Republic has had serious effects on the growth and social role of the capital Kinshasa. With the installation of the centralist Second Republic, Kinshasa soon became the center of gravity of all political, social, economic, and religious activities. All of the nation’s administrative and legislative institutions came to operate in and from Kinshasa, whereby the role of the regional urban centers was increasingly reduced. In order to be close to the political and administrative centers of decision-making, each national company, church, or organization was compelled to transfer its seat to the capital. Obviously, the administrative and political centralization also brought with it a strong centralization of services. Until the present day, Kinshasa has been the only place in the enormous country where international passports may be procured, where hospitals with sufficiently modern equipment are located, where Western products are available on a wide scale, etc. As a consequence, Kinshasa has grown into one of Africa’s largest and most populated cities. At the declaration of independence in 1960, the population of Kinshasa was estimated at 400,000; in 1975 the number had increased to 1,600,000 and in 1985 to 3,000,000. In 1995, the estimates vary around 5,000,000 inhabitants.

As the center of all activities, Kinshasa did not take long to become Zaire’s metropolitan cradle of modernity and social change. New trends in clothing, music, social conduct, and the like have always originated in Kinshasa, and the city has always functioned as the inevitable model of prosperity, social advancement, and cosmopolitanism in Zaire (Biaya 1994; Boom 1988, de Saint Moulin 1988b; 1988c; Musangi 1988). In many respects, the case of Kinshasa compares with the situation in France, where a bipolar opposition between Paris on the one hand and *la province* on the other dominates the national variety of identities. In the discussions to come in chapter 8, the subjective and ideological connotations attached to Kinshasa will be dealt with in more depth. It will become clear, i.a., how to some Zairians and in some rhetorical contexts, Kinshasa indexes the *totality* of Zaire’s social, ethnic, and cultural identities, whereas to other Zairians and on other rhetorical occasions, it is rather viewed as emblematic of *one of the* identities that make up Zaire’s national diversity.

4.2.4. Mental centralization: Authenticité

Nation-state ideology and anti-imperialism

The nationalizations and *zaïrianisations* described above made up the economic facet of Mobutu's constant pursuit of national integration and international independence. However, this pursuit was also backed by what has become one of Africa's most complex and most outspoken state ideologies. This ideology has been referred to as *nationalisme congolais authentique, nationalisme zaïrois authentique, retour à l'authenticité, authenticité,* and, since the constitutional reform of 1974, *mobutisme* (Bokamba 1976; Kangafu 1973; Ngalasso 1986; Nyunda 1986b; Pauwels 1981). The ideology of *authenticité* was first spelled out in the MPR's 1967 birth certificate, known as the 'N'Sele manifesto', and drew much of its inspiration from a book by professor Mabika Kalanda published in 1966 and entitled *La Remise en Question, Base de la Décolonisation Mentale* (Mabika 1966). Other intellectual sources were Patrice Lumumba's speech delivered at the pan-African congress in Accra in 1958, and the 1961 congress of the marxist-leninist student organization (*Union Générale des Etudiants Congolais*, UGEC), who demanded the development of a national, postcolonial identity through the organization of cultural events. The basic tenets of *authenticité* are indeed a concern with the 'mental decolonization' of the Africans. The new state's citizens were said to be strongly alienated from their truly African identity after decades of Western colonialism and cultural paternalism. Through *authenticité*, Mobutu wanted the Zairians to regain respect for their own cultural identity after decades of looking up to the Western model. In this sense, *authenticité*'s explicit objectives were similar to the ones envisaged by comparable African ideologies, conceived in other parts of the continent, such as Senghor's *négritude*, to which Mobutu himself refers in a retrospective clarification of *authenticité* (1989: 37; see also 1976: 17-18).

As mentioned, the mental return to truly African traditions and values was officially referred to as a form of nationalism. It is crucial to note that *authenticité* draws upon the notion of nationalism both in the sense it typically covers in European contexts and in the sense it usually acquires in the rhetoric of Third-World countries. In the former case, 'nationalism' most commonly refers to an ideology advocating the division of the world in culturally and ethnically *homogeneous nation-states*, while in the latter case, an additional *anti-imperialist* position vis-à-vis the industrial and diplomatic West is brought to the fore. An integration of both versions of nationalism makes up the crux of *authenticité*.

With respect to *the nation-state aspect* of the ideology, *authenticité* consisted in the creation and promulgation of a new national identity. As in many other young African countries at that time, the awareness that the state had not been erected on a well-definable and preexisting nation encouraged the new leaders to proceed in reverse order, constructing a new nation upon the state. This invention of a new nationhood was a key aspect in Mobutu's combat against the many centrifugal forces that had been mobilized in the period between 1960 and 1965. Mobutu's concern was to install an integrative 'Zairian' identity on top of, or, preferably, in substitution for, Zaire's mosaic of ethnic, regional, and cultural identities, likely to threaten the state's unity. As Gould (1980: 99-105) and Schatzberg (1988) argue, however, the range of the centrifugal forces to be subdued extended well beyond the country's ethnic cleavages and tribalist tendencies. Voices of opposition of a purely political nature – in which, moreover, all ethnically inspired divisive forces were grounded – were another target of *authenticité*. In fact, one of the main explicit themes of *authenticité* was its legitimization of Zaire's dictatorial political system on the basis of references to what was presented as 'genuinely African' roots. Multiparty state models, oppositional democracy, freedom of speech and reunion, and the right to form trade unions were all discredited as tokens of Western intellectual import, while autocracy and the elimination of dissonant voices were said to stem from authentically African models of society, in particular from traditional village life. In an interview with a French journalist, Mobutu himself put it as follows.

> *"En 1960, nos colonisateurs belges nous ont légué le multipartisme en même temps que la redingote et le nœud papillon. […] [L'unipartisme] est le systême le mieux adapté aux réalités de l'Afrique d'aujourd'hui, à notre mentalité et à notre culture. Dans nos villages, la démocratie a toujours existé: c'est l'union autour d'un chef à la recherche du consensus avec les notables, par la technique de la palabre sous l'arbre. C'est ce que nous appelons au MPR la démocratie de juxtaposition, à l'opposé de la démocratie conflictuelle, la vôtre. Le fait est là: nos ancêtres ne nous ont pas légué votre philosophie de l'opposition […]."* (Mobutu 1989: 84-87)

Thus, *authenticité* was always more than a purely cultural stance against mental colonialism. It was explicitly conceived as an ideology of a fully political nature, on a par with (although in no ways reducible to) such 'classic' ideologies as capitalism and marxism, and providing answers for the complete political organization of a state. The architects of Mobutu's ideology even relate Zaire's notoriously corrupt and malfunctioning public administration to the tenets of *authenticité*, explaining the particularity of the Zairian administration on the basis of a United Nations recommendation which asserts that *"en fin de compte, chaque pays doit résoudre ses problèmes administratifs à sa façon car l'administration est une expression du génie national"* (from Vieux 1974: 91, who quotes this French version of the UNO recommendation).

The *anti-imperialist aspect* of *authenticité* is marked by many ambiguities. As can be observed in Mobutu's quote above, as well as in other expositions of the ideology (i.a., Kangafu 1973; Mobutu 1976), the precise nature of the authentic cultural traditions and values to which the Zairian citizens were expected to return have always remained very vague. On some occasions, they are derived from an individual Zairian ethnic subgroup (the Bakongo culture is a particularly preferred source of inspiration), on other occasions they are labeled 'typically Bantu', and on yet other occasions the adjectives 'African', 'Negro-African', etc. are used. This absence of any concern with a precise identification of the cultural antecedents referred to demonstrates that the only relevant identity in *authenticité* is a negatively defined one: the authentically African identity relates above all to an 'African-as-opposed-to-Western' identity.

In its concrete realizations, the anti-imperialist aspect of *authenticité* was aimed at reducing the control of the Western countries over the exploitation of Zaire's natural resources, without, nonetheless, ever jeopardizing the financial advantages Mobutu's politico-economic upper class was able to draw from the Western influence. The hidden agenda was a 'control over control'. The regime was not concerned with totally eliminating foreign economic control in order to establish a national system of self-reliance in the vein of, for instance, Nyerere's Ujamaa. Mobutu rather aimed at diversifying the range of Western partners so as to better control their economic and diplomatic moves towards his country and to be able to play them off against each other in his own interest. Until the present day, this strategy of diversification, and division, has mainly consisted in reducing the economic and political influence of Belgium and in orienting the country to other Western partners such as France, the USA, and, later and to a lesser extent, Germany and South Africa.

The symbolic component

The ideology of *authenticité* is best known for its complex set of tangible symbols that served to promote and monitor the acceptance of the official doctrine among the population. An overview of a number of these symbols – some of which are indeed purely symbolic attributes, while others are also structurally effective – is useful to set the scene for a discussion of the state's position towards linguistic and religious issues, which will be dealt with in sections 4.4 and 4.5.

1. One of the first symbolic measures was the change of the name of the republic and of the names of the provinces, cities, rivers, and lakes, whereby the former names were discredited as parts of the culturally alienating legacy of colonialism. It must be mentioned that most of the cities had already been rebaptized before the first official formulations of *authenticité*. In 1966, the capital Leopoldville had regained the name of the village where it was erected in the days of the Congo Free State, i.e. 'Kinshasa'. Elisabethville had been renamed 'Lubumbashi', Stanleyville 'Kisangani', Coquilhatville 'Mbandaka', and Luluabourg 'Kananga'.[16] *Within* the context of *authenticité* then, on

16. Other changes of names, such as the one from Costermansville to 'Bukavu', had already been completed by the colonial administration in the 1950s.

October 27, 1971, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (*République Démocratique du Congo*) was renamed the Republic of Zaire (*République du Zaïre*), which has since given rise to much irony, as *Zaïre* is itself a Portuguese mispronunciation of *nzadi*, the Kikongo word for 'river'. In the same period, the names of three provinces were changed: Katanga became 'Shaba', Kongo-Central *'Bas-Zaïre'*, and Province Orientale *'Haut-Zaïre'*. The names of the Congo river (now, *Zaïre*) and many other hydronyms followed. More or less one year after the transformation of the names of the provinces, the nomenclature used for the territorial units themselves was changed as well, whereby provinces were called 'regions', districts 'subregions', etc. (see above).

Still in the realm of nomenclature, *authenticité* also involved a change of names of the major tabloids and national institutions. All newspapers were given African titles in substitution for the former French ones. The official law gazette changed its name from *Moniteur Congolais* to *Journal Officiel de la République du Zaïre*. The national *Office des Transports Congolais* (OTRACO) became the *Office National des Transports* (ONATRA), the *Radiodiffusion et Télévision Nationales Congolaises* (RTNC) became the *Office Zaïrois de Radiodiffusion et Télévision* (OZRT), etc. The entire political and administrative vocabulary was submitted to a similar terminological decolonization: in Mobutu's Zaire, the parliament is called *conseil législatif*, the government *conseil exécutif*, a minister *commissaire d'Etat*, a governor *commissaire de région*, and so on.

With respect to the national institutions and their nomenclature, the most important observation is that many of the new names were forged after the example of the corresponding French institutions. The Zairian official press agency is called *Agence Zaïre Presse* (AZAP), after the *Agence France Presse*, and the Zairian public airline company was rebaptized as *Air Zaïre*, after *Air France*. Other France-oriented measures were the rejection of the Belgicisms *septante* and *nonante* and the adoption of the use of *soixante-dix* and *quatre-vingt-dix* in official texts and in the schools (Ngalasso 1988; Nyunda 1986b). *Authenticité* also substituted the French system of military ranks for the Belgian system in the *Forces Armées Zaïroises* (FAZ), and replaced the Western terms of address *monsieur*, *madame*, and *mademoiselle* by *citoyen* and *citoyenne*, to stress the resemblance of Mobutu's 'Zairian Revolution' with the 1789 French Revolution. Finally, Mobutu's choice of words for dividing his country's political history in a *Première République*, a *Deuxième République*, and a *Troisième République*, as well as his decision to bring the presidential term of office from 5 to 7 years and to divide his country into *régions* rather than *provinces*, were also based on the French model. All these manifestations of a symbolic orientation towards France are an expression of Mobutu's constant endeavors to efface the marks of Belgian colonialism, to win the sympathy of the much less critical French diplomacy, and to play the Western allies off against each other in his own interests.

2. Drawing his inspiration from his many visits to China, Mobutu also abolished the Western way of dressing, forbidding the Zairian men to wear neckties and the women to wear skirts, dresses, and wigs. The men were obliged to use the *abacost* (an acronym based on the expression *à bas le costume*), which is a copy of the maoist jacket with button holes up to the neck instead of lapels. The women were obliged to wear loincloths, preferably decorated with what are sensed to be typically African colors and designs.

3. Another noteworthy measure was the rejection of Christian given names. On July 20, 1973, Mobutu announced that from that moment on, Zairian newborns could not be given Christian or European-sounding first names anymore. Later, the decree was also enforced with retroactive effect, obliging *all* Zairians to change their names to 'authentically Zairian' ones. Zairian anthroponyms were to consist of a 'name' (*nom*), which comes first, and one or more 'after-names' (*postnoms*). The *nom* is the one provided by descent, whereas the *postnom* distinguishes the different children of the same parent, as Christian names do.[17] Mobutu's own name thus changed from Joseph-Désiré Mobutu to Mobutu Sese Seko Kuku Ngbendu Wa Za Banga. Mobutu's full title is *Président-Fondateur du Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution, Président du Conseil Exécutif National, Général de l'Armée*, whereby the last element changed to *Maréchal* in 1983.

4. *Authenticité* also brought about a wholesale reorganization of familial jurisdiction, commenced in 1971 and completed in 1978, which envisaged the 'africanization' of the relationship between husband and wife (MacGaffey 1982; Pauwels 1981). The new legislation stated, among other things, that a Zairian marriage should always involve a dowry, that the man is to be the undisputed head of the household, that the difference between legal and natural children, qualified as colonialist, must be disregarded in questions of parenthood, and that the man's liability of support should extend beyond the restricted family.

5. Another remarkable manifestation of *authenticité* is the new habit to pour a few drops of one's cocktail on the floor when someone proposes a toast, a practice which is officially said to go back to ancient local customs, but which ethnologists find very hard to identify.

6. Although I will devote specific attention to the permanent conflict between the Zairian government and the Catholic Church in section 4.5 below, it is worth noting, at this point, that the proclamation and elaboration of *authenticité* contained a number of measures that were meant to paralyze the power of the Church, which was seen as a channel of Western intellectual and material influence. The abolishment of the Christian names was one of these symbolic

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17. The order in these 'zairianized' anthroponyms still leads to much confusion when Westerners try to establish the family name and the given name of a Zairian subject. Also, it is ironic that this order has its origins in the Belgian administrators' and missionaries' bureaucratic habit, during the colonial period, to write the family names first, followed by a comma, and the Christian names last.

maneuvers. Another thorn in the Catholics' side was Mobutu's early decision to exclude Christmas from the list of official holidays. From 1971 onwards, Mobutu also ordained the laicization of all educational institutions, to begin with Lovanium, the Catholic university of Kinshasa. The state-controlled *Université Nationale du Zaïre* (UNAZA) was created, which brought together the university of Kisangani, the university of Lubumbashi, and Lovanium, whereby each of them was degraded to the status of campus of the single Zairian university.[18] The laicization of education also involved the banishment of crucifixes from the classrooms and the suspension of religious courses at all levels of education. The Catholic boy scout organizations, inherited from the Belgians, were forbidden and replaced by the *Jeunesse du MPR* (JMPR). The JMPR soon became Mobutu's much-feared civil guard, charged with the control over the population's loyalty to the regime and compliance with the *authenticité* standards of life. Representatives of this JMPR were added to the staffs of all preparatory and major seminaries throughout the country.

7. As an ideology of a primarily nationalist brand, *authenticité* also provided for concrete enactments of the new 'Zairian' identity. There is, first of all, the MPR's decision, announced in 1970, to consider each newborn an automatic member of the party, irrespective of her or his consent (see above). Membership of the party, then, is a direct expression of one's nationality, as in the Zairian *Parti-Etat* the single party and the nation coalesce. The new Zairian nationhood was also well protected by an amendment of the legislation concerning Zairian citizenship, which grounded such citizenship in a strict version of *ius sanguinis* (Pauwels 1981; see also Pabanel 1991a).

This discussion of the symbolic attributes of *authenticité* reveals that, apart from the orientation away from Belgian French, language is remarkably absent in this otherwise thoroughly elaborated set of measures. The government has never chosen to oppose Zaire's linguistic patrimony of African languages to the colonial linguistic legacy epitomized by French, although a number of Zairian linguists and other social scientists have often insisted on an integration of a linguistic program along such lines. A similar indifference, although to a lesser extent, can be detected with regard to the lack of explicit attention for the traditional religions in Zaire. These issues will be discussed in more detail in sections 4.4 and 4.5 below. Before that, I would like to indicate how a new political and administrative decentralization accompanied the end of the Second Republic.

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18. In 1981, the three campuses regained their administrative and academic independence and were rebaptized as *Université de Kinshasa*, *Université de Kisangani*, and *Université de Lubumbashi*.

4.2.5. Resurgent centrifugal forces in the two Shaba wars and decentralization in the Third Republic

A range of Western political and economic interests assured Mobutu's firm maintenance of power during more than 25 years. The *political interests* pertain to Zaire's geopolitical role in the cold war, during which it served as an important ally of the anticommunist bloc. In this capacity, it contributed to the US efforts to destabilize Neto's marxist MPLA regime in Angola (see also Schatzberg 1991). Zaire's role as a defender of French interests in Africa were equally important, e.g. through the active participation of Zairian elite troops in Hissein Habré's fight against the Libyan soldiers that had penetrated the Chad territory in 1983.

The *economic interests* are complex, but may be summarized as follows. Although, as mentioned above, Mobutu constantly endeavored to reduce the economic influence of Belgium in his country, the Belgians always retained major interests in Zaire's economic resources. Especially in such crucial sectors as the banking and mining businesses, which were basically a continuation of colonial initiatives, as well as in the domain of development cooperation, the Belgians were never outnumbered by any other Western country. The French were much more involved in newer, typically Second-Republic state projects, such as the erection of telecommunication services and of a national electricity grid, and in the formation of the commercial and military cadres. Also, France was the partner *par excellence* for cultural and educational matters, not in the least through the active participation of *Francophonie*-related institutions. The economic involvement of the United States during the Second Republic was mostly related to the exploitation of the rich diamond belts in the Kasai provinces. By according a number of important privileges to American quarrymen and diamond traders, Mobutu long maintained a firm connection with powerful lobbies in Washington and New York. Other countries of major influence were (Western) Germany, which was accorded an area of 100,000 km^2 in the Shaba province for missile tests (through the *Orbital Transporten und Raketten Aktiengesellschaft*), Italy and Japan, which participated in the construction of a giant dam for the production of electricity in Lower Zaire, and China, solicited for educational and medical programs.

The Western concern with the stability of the Mobutu regime became most manifest during what is known as 'the two Shaba wars', which took place in 1977 and 1978. The two Shaba wars count as the greatest threat for national unity Mobutu's Second Republic ever faced. Their contexts go back to the period of the First Republic, i.e. 1960-1965. After the repression of Tshombe's Katangese secession in 1963, a number of Tshombe's allies fled to Angola, where they created the *Front National de Libération Congolaise* (FNLC). In March 1977, these 'Katangese Tigers', as they were called, entered the Zairian territory and advanced into large parts of the Shaba province, easily defeating the local regiments of the *Forces Armées Zaïroises* (FAZ) on their way. In no time, a French-Moroccan-US-Belgian military intervention was set up to rescue

Mobutu's failing army and to safeguard the country's unity. In May 1978, the secessionists attacked Shaba a second time and managed to occupy the economically important city of Kolwezi, again without any significant resistance of the FAZ. Once more, the French authorities decided to intervene, this time by sending in troops of the foreign legion (the Belgians limited their intervention to a 'humanitarian' one). In a few days, the FNLC was forced to withdraw to Angolan territory, where it was dissolved soon. For Mobutu, the two Shaba wars were the resurrection of the 'Katangese secessionist beast', with which he had had to cope during the First Republic. His military repression of this latent threat was vehement and in many cases ruthless. One of the main accomplishments was the detention of Nguza Karl-I-Bond, nephew of Tshombe and known as an advocate of his late uncle's separatist aspirations.

The end of the eighties involved a certain turning point in the Western powers' position towards Zaire, which constituted an important impulse for Mobutu's announcement of decentralizing reforms in 1990. A first and very important factor in this change of position was the end of the cold war. The end of the tensions between the communist bloc and the capitalist West deprived Zaire of its former geostrategic importance. Especially the US lost its interest in Zaire and named the regime in their new, Bushian rhetoric on the worldwide need for democratization and respect for human rights (Schatzberg 1991). The end of the cold war also brought with it the downfall of a number of totalitarian regimes often compared with Mobutu's autocracy, such as the Soviet regime, Ceausescu in Romania, and others. A second factor is related to the Belgo-Zairian diplomatic relations, which have been in a profound crisis since October 1988 (de Villers ed., 1994; Willame 1989a; 1989b). This diplomatic crisis was marked by a chain of revocations, on behalf of both sides, of the economic and other privileges the two countries formerly reserved for each other, which ultimately resulted in the complete revocation of all extraordinary relations. This new Belgo-Zairian crisis disconcerted Mobutu much more than any of the many others that had preceded it since his assumption of power, as in this conflict the two other Western allies, France and the US, explicitly sided with Belgium.

A third factor was more economic in nature. By the end of the eighties, the IMF, the World Bank, and the other Western creditors, augmented the pressure on Zaire, by then submerged in enormous international debts, by imposing serious financial reforms and, later, by cutting down all forms of funding. This sudden retreat of the Western sponsors was grounded in their fading economic attention. Due to the inadequate maintenance of the mining infrastructures, Zairian minerals, such as gold, copper, and diamonds, had become very expensive and poor in quality. More promising opportunities announced themselves in southern Africa, where the suspension of the sanctions against South Africa anticipated the opening up of the region.

Within the context of worldwide democratic reforms and growing international economic pressure, Mobutu in the first months of 1990 decided to take a nationwide plebiscite on the aspirations and grievances of the population (Angulu 1991; Gbabendu & Efolo 1991; Piermay ed., 1991). The general response was a wish for more democratization, more national development, and more decentralization. Mobutu, who understood that both the international and the domestic tensions were jeopardizing his position, announced the end of the Second Republic and the installation of the Third Republic in a televized speech on April 24, 1990.

The different aspects of Mobutu's announcement of the Third Republic may be summarized as a general shift away – at least in the explicit rhetoric – from centralization, both at the level of political power and at the level of territorial administration. At the political level, the Third Republic represented the end of the single-party state. Mobutu announced a constitutional reform whereby the MPR would no longer function as the *Parti-Etat*, but would instead be treated as a normal, 'secular' political formation in a multiparty state. The Third Republic also restored the plurality of trade unions, the freedom of expression, and the freedom of reunion, which led to the formation of a multitude of political parties. Mobutu furthermore resigned as chairman of the MPR and as head of the government, in order to concentrate on what he qualified as his new role as the 'arbitrating president'. A new, transitional government was nominated, charged with the preparation of elections at all levels, including the presidential level, and with the constitutional and political reform of the country. At the time of writing (Spring 1996), no such elections have yet taken place and no new constitution has yet seen the light. Although the new era since April 1990 is often referred to as the 'Third Republic', the country is therefore strictly speaking still in a period of transition towards this Third Republic, as its existence presupposes a new constitution.

Soon, the preparation of the new republic and its institutions was taken over by the Sovereign National Conference (*Conférence Nationale Souveraine*, CNS), which is an extensive mobilization of representatives (more than 3,500) of all political, social, and other segments of Zairian society, and which is meant as a platform for the decisive breach with the Second Republic. The Sovereign National Conference and all the other institutions to which it has since given birth, such as the Republic's High Council - Transitional Parliament (*Haut Conseil de la République - Parlement de Transition*), decided to complement the purely political decentralization of powers with a territorial one. During the last 5 years, the major political parties, as well as the many apolitical organizations operating at more regional or local levels, have been demanding a less unitarian structure of the country. Some, such as Nguza Karl-I-Bond's UFERI party from Shaba, espouse a strongly confederal organization, while others, such as Tshisekedi's socialist UDPS, advocate a federal model. The nationwide ballots, now planned for July 1997, are being prepared on the basis of a highly decentralized organization of the territory, with a considerable degree of autonomy for local governors, deputies, and others. In 1991, a number of subregions in Bandundu, Equateur, and Shaba were reorganized along these new lines (Gbabendu & Efolo 1991: 107).

Another major manifestation of the general tendency towards decentralization since the end of the Second Republic was the incident in Lubumbashi on January 18, 1991. Members of Nguza Karl-I-Bond’s UFERI party replaced the Zairian flag at a number of public buildings with the former flag of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, singing the old Congolese anthem. Some regiments of the FAZ joined in this symbolic act.

For a proper interpretation of the Zairian immigrants’ situation in Belgium, it is important to note that the 1990 announcement of democratic reforms did not at all put an end to the brutal character of Mobutu’s political practices. There is, first of all, the fact that a few months after his April 1990 declaration, Mobutu simply recanted much of his promises and began to systematically obstruct the activities of the transitional institutions. Apart from these overtly declared measures, the entire period since 1990 has been marked by massive violations of human rights and the bloody repression of political opponents, as is described in Chebeya (1995), Kasonga (1994), Leslie (1993), Mukendi (1994), and Ploquin (1994). The best-known of these repressions was the massacre at the campus of the university of Lubumbashi in May 1990, organized by Mobutu’s own secret services (Gbabendu & Efolo 1991). The Lubumbashi massacre was Mobutu’s answer to antipresidential student manifestations held in all major cities of the country some days before. His aim was to demonstrate that the presidential authority was as yet indisputable.

In spite of the official restitution of the freedom of expression, Mobutu’s military and secret forces have continued to intimidate and terrorize journalists, political activists, and other influential opponents. Since 1990, two major opposition newspapers, *Elima* and *Umoja*, have found their editor in chief incarcerated and their printeries burnt down. In February, March, and December 1992, three mass demonstrations in the streets of Kinshasa were violently repressed. Mobutu also regularly aims at destabilizing the country by inciting the underpaid military to riots and lootings, after which he then intervenes with his personal elite troops to restore ‘his’ law and order. The violent lootings of September 1991 and January-February 1993, during which almost all remaining Europeans fled the country, were the culmination points of this new frenzy and chaos of the 1990s (see also Devisch 1995). During these lootings, large parts of the Zairian military and of the civil population took the streets in the major cities and ransacked almost all private and public buildings and properties, leaving many casualties. In many forms of popular consciousness, the 1991 and 1992 lootings still count as the most atrocious nightmares of the Third Republic.

4.3. Ethnic situation

As explained in the chapters that outlined the theoretical and methodological foundations of this study, group formations can be of different kinds, according to the diacriticon used in the delineation of the group. In present-day Zaire, one of the most salient types of group formation is the one based on the diacriticon of ethnic descent. In this section, I want to provide documentary information on the ethnic composition of Zaire. It must be kept in mind that the way in which members themselves construe ethnic identity may sometimes complement or differ from traditional representations, such as the ones provided in the literature. There is, for instance, the construction of what in chapter 8 (section 8.2) will be called ‘new ethnicities’, i.e. geographical and linguistic groups approached from an ethnic perspective. These complementary ethnicities are not covered here.

In a description of Zaire’s ethnic composition, it must be noted that the salience of ethnicity in Zaire cannot be considered a uniform matter. This lack of uniformity is situated at both a diachronic and a synchronic, geographical axis. That is, the visibility of ethnicity as a crucial diacriticon for group-boundary formation has not always been the same as it is today and is not the same throughout the entire Zairian territory. The diachronic and geographical variations in ethnic salience are the topic of discussion in section 4.3.1. The description of Zaire’s ethnic composition *per se*, then, is provided in section 4.3.2. In this description, I will first give an overview of the restricted ethnic groups (section 4.3.2.1), after which a selection of larger ethnic groups will be described (4.3.2.2). In the final section (4.3.3), some of Mobutu’s measures constraining the expression and political mobilization of ethnic identity in modern Zaire will be clarified.

In this dissertation, the terms ‘restricted ethnic group’ and ‘larger ethnic group’ are used to avoid the classic but contestable labels ‘tribe’ and ‘supertribe’. The first category refers to the small-scale ethnic groups that are traditionally believed to be represented by small geographical units, such as villages or groups of villages, and that are associated with what are commonly called the ‘ethnic’ or ‘vernacular’ languages. They make up the lowest level of ethnic affiliation in Zaire. Whereas this category is absolute in that it refers to the identifiable set of the traditionally declared ‘tribes’ of Zaire, the second category is a relative one. ‘Larger ethnic groups’ are superstructures which themselves subsume a number of smaller ethnic groups (see also section 4.3.1). They are a relative category in that some of them bring together a cluster of restricted ethnic groups – e.g., the Mongo, who are composed of such restricted ethnic groups as the Konda, the Ntomba, etc. – while others are themselves the collection of other larger ethnic groups – e.g., the Bangala, which consist of the Mongo, the Ngombe, and others.

4.3.1. Varying degrees of ethnic salience

The historical foundations of the present-day salience of ethnicity

The diachronic variability of ethnic salience pertains to the fact that the visibility of ethnicity in Zaire is largely a product of colonial and postcolonial times. As Young (1965; 1976: 163-215) and Fetter (1983) explain, before the first European penetrations Zaire's social landscape was composed of societies based on parameters of a political and social order. The first Europeans found a variety of kingdoms, empires, and other society types, which differed greatly in size and influence, but almost all of which cut across lines of linguistic, ethnic, and cultural resemblances. In the central parts of the present republic, for instance, such culturally and linguistically differing groups as the Kuba and the Lunda formed part of one single and centralized kingdom (Young 1976: 165). In the central basin of the Zaire river, the members of what European ethnologists would later call 'the Mongo group' actually lived in a multitude of separate and small-scale societies and did not rely on a common identity transcending the scope of the individual communities (even the application of 'Mongo' as an ethnic label is a European creation).

Colonization consisted in the imposition of a governmental superstructure upon this variety of independent political entities. For the organization of this superstructure, the colonial administration chose to replace the political nature of the community patterns with an ethnic categorization. That is, ethnicity was the colonial rulers' major unit of classification in the subjugation of and control over the Africans, whereby a conceptual grid was imposed which did not correspond with precolonial identity patterns. The European penetration thus involved the introduction of what Young calls *"the tribal paradigm"* (Young 1976: 165). The origins of this preference for a tribal paradigm must be found in views of the relationship between culture, society, and language that were prevalent in Europe at the time the first colonizers left the Old World.

The colonial 'ethnicization' of the existing political structures was most consequential. The extent of the feedback effects it had on the patterns of self- and other-identification among the Africans can hardly be overestimated. 'Tribe', the administration's major unit of classification in its relation with the colonized, figured on identity cards and birth certificates, and on registration forms used in schools and other institutions. As such, ethnic identity became a point of reference to which the colonized were obliged to turn in all their contacts with the European superiors. In this way, it was gradually adopted as a relevant category in the Africans' constructions of their own social world.

Since ethnicity was at best a vague parameter of identification in precolonial times, the colonizers' option to organize the territory's population along this parameter necessarily involved serious 'reformulations' of the ethnic landscape. That is, the existing ethnic patterns were too ambiguous and too fragmented to suit the Belgians' administrative, educational, and missionary purposes. In these reformulations, groups that were not united before were brought together under one and the same (created) ethnic label (e.g., the Mongo), while other integrated groups were artificially divided into two or more new subdivisions (e.g., the present-day Tetela and Kusu).[19]

The reformulations were enacted in scientific studies and publications, the earliest of which were mainly the accomplishment of the missionaries, who often developed an amateur interest in the local cultural, linguistic, and ethnic realities that surrounded them. The missionaries' central role in these scientific processes of ethnic reformulation resulted from a convention between the Congo Free State and the Vatican, signed in 1906, and another one between the Congo Free State and individual missions, agreed upon in 1919. These conventions stated that in exchange for a financial compensation for each delivered study, the missionaries were charged with satisfying the government's urgent need for geographical, ethnographic, linguistic, and other information on the unknown territory (Fabian 1986a: 73-75; Mutombo 1991: 95; Nsuka-zi-Kabuiku 1987: 6). The wide-scale production of ethnological studies, by both missionaries and other ethnologists, was also stimulated by the Museum of the Belgian Congo at Tervuren, Brussels.[20] In the early 1930s, this state institution started the publication of a large number of scientific series on the colony, an important part of which was occupied by anthropology, ethnology, and linguistics. The Museum sponsored, among many other things, the production of such general outlines of the colony's ethnic composition as De Jonghe (1908), Maes & Boone (1935), and, later, Boone (1961), De Jonghe (1947), and Hulstaert (1950).

The implicit, pretheoretical views underpinning the missionaries' and other first ethnologists' endeavors were dominantly marked by an ideology in which linguistic and ethnic boundaries are taken to coincide. That is, the early ethnologists almost automatically turned to language as the criterion to delimit cultural and ethnic groups.[21] This linguistic approach to ethnic matters may be illustrated by a short explication of the work by the prolific missionary-linguist-ethnologist Gustaaf Hulstaert, whose studies lay at the heart of the ethnic classifications of the northern parts of the country. Father Hulstaert published a linguistic map of the Belgian Congo in 1950 (Hulstaert 1950). As the recently published correspondence between Hulstaert and another missionary-linguist, Egide De Boeck, now reveals (Vinck 1994 is a scientific edition of this

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19. Several cases of such ethnic reformulations are described in detail by Libata (1987), Mumbanza (1973), Roosens (1989: 117-125), Turner (1993), and Young (1965; 1976).

20. Later, this institution was called 'Royal Museum of the Belgian Congo' and, after 1960, 'Royal Museum of Central Africa'.

21. This is not meant to imply that language was always the logically and heuristically primary variable. As will be argued in the following sections, in their linguistic endeavors the ethnologists also relied on shared ethnic descent as a criterion for delineating linguistic boundaries. One has to keep in mind that the 'chicken-and-egg problem' was more often than not avoided in the colonial scientific practices.

correspondence), this map was the unintended outcome of Hulstaert's original project to draw an *ethnic* map of the Congo. In the correspondence, Hulstaert explains how in collecting and ordering his raw materials for what was initially planned to be an ethnic map, the primary criterion he uses to delineate ethnic groups is shared language. The fact that the map's title suddenly and without any major comments changed from an ethnological to a linguistic one illustrates how Hulstaert took it for granted that ethnic and linguistic descriptions of the country overlap. The two modes of description were considered to be interchangeable ways of representing the same reality. Hulstaert's equation of the country's ethnic configuration with the linguistic configuration, and vice versa, was not a limited phenomenon, but was, in fact, a general tendency among ethnologists – missionaries and others – throughout the colony (see also Fabian 1986a: 79).

This tendency has also persisted in ethnological overviews that appeared after decolonization. In Boone's description and geographical placement of the country's ethnic groups (1961), the presentation of each group starts with information on how the members of this group should be referred to, as well as on the name of their language. Thus, the discussion of the Aushi sets out as follows: *"nom: des Baushi, un Mwaushi, la langue kyaushi"* (1961: 1), the discussion of the Kete: *"des Bakete, un Mukete, la langue tshikete"* (1961: 67), etc. In Obenga's book on Zaire's cultures and ethnic groups (1977), a very similar practice can be observed. Obenga provides information on the way the members of each group refer to themselves in their own language (e.g., *"les Ding; le vrai nom est: Mùding au singulier et Bàding au pluriel"*, 1977: 65), on how the phrase 'I speak X' is rendered in their language (*"Me nten kiding signifie: 'Je parle le kidinga'"*, 1977: 65), and on a number of kinship and other terms in the language. Both Boone's and Obenga's presentations imply that each ethnic group distinguishes itself from all the others on the basis of the language its members speak. Language and ethnic identity are believed to relate to each other in a consistent one-to-one fashion: there is only one language to each ethnic group, this language is shared by *all* the members of this ethnic group, and it is not spoken by any other group.

As indicated, the feedback effects of the colonial ethnic reformulations on the population's self-perceptions were greatly accomplished by the use of the category 'tribe' on identity cards, administrative forms, and in other tokens of state-sanctioned, written or spoken, discourse. It is important to note that this practice was in no way discontinued after decolonization. In addition to place of birth and residence, the identity cards in present-day Zaire, the so-called *Carte d'Identité pour Citoyen*, also mention the holder's ethnic origins, i.e. her or his *région d'origine*, *sous-région ou ville d'origine*, *zone d'origine*, and *collectivité d'origine*. These locations do not refer to one's place of birth or to any other location where the holder actually spent a part of her or his life, but to the 'original territory' of the ethnic group to which he or she belongs. For instance, whereas the place-of-birth slot on the identity card of a Zairian of Ntomba ethnic descent may indicate ‘Kinshasa’ and her or his present residence may be identified as ‘Lubumbashi’, slots on her or his *origines* will refer to an area that is known as the ‘traditional territory’ of the Ntomba (i.c., Bikoro, Region of Equateur), even if he or she has never put foot there. Thus, by continuing the colonizer’s practice to refer to ethnic origin in administrative contexts, the postcolonial authorities have carried through the inculcation of the salience of ethnicity in the patterns of self- and other-perception.

Geographical variation in the salience of ethnicity

In addition to a diachronic dimension, the variation in ethnic salience also has a synchronic, geographical dimension. As Young (1976: 195) observes, the present-day ethnic composition of Zaire *“is built upon complex, fluid, shifting units, which vary greatly in their degree of clarity and specificity”*. In other words, some ethnic groups occupy a more prominent place in Zaire’s ethnic composition, i.e. they are more conspicuous to outsiders and they rely on a more pronounced *“consciousness of kind”* among insiders (Geertz 1963: 154). Other ethnic groups are both to outsiders and to insiders of a more unobtrusive nature. Young (1976) mentions that these different degrees of salience are a function of differential patterns of ethnic opposition. In some parts of the country, two or more ethnic groups have stood in marked opposition to each other, while in other parts such oppositions have been less present, which necessarily entails lower degrees of visibility and consciousness.

Young distinguishes three historical parameters – mostly situated in colonial times – that have led to ethnic oppositions in the Congo and Zaire, i.e. the cohabitation of different ethnic groups in major urban centers, the way some of the groups were opposed to others in social stratifications, and the different degrees to which ethnic identity was articulated and politically ideologized by intellectual elites. In the following section, I will explain how during colonization these three parameters contributed to the growing salience of the Baluba, the Bakongo, and the Bangala. For the discussion here, it is important to note that ethnic oppositions were particularly present in and around Kinshasa, where from the early days of colonization onwards the Bakongo from the southwest and the Bangala immigrants from the north found themselves in opposition to each other in an urban context, as well as in the Kasai regions, where the Luba and Lulua were played off against one another in a social stratification. In contrast to the area around Kinshasa and to the Kasai regions, the west-central regions (Bandundu) and the northeastern parts (Upper Zaire), never witnessed any marked oppositions between two or more local ethnic groups. During and after colonization, the region of Upper Zaire and its capital Kisangani were never the site of major ethnic competition. In the turbulent post-independence years, e.g., Kisangani was the bulwark of the unitarian, Lumumbist politicians, who advocated a strongly nonethnic organization of the country’s political structures. As a consequence, Upper Zaire presently counts as one of the country’s ‘vaguest’ areas with regard to ethnic composition (see also Tshonda 1991). No individual ethnic group in Upper Zaire stands out or occupies a prominent place in Zairians' perception of the ethnic make-up of their country.

In addition to the historical factors mentioned by Young, the present-day geographical variation in ethnic salience is also related to the difference between larger ethnic groups and restricted ethnic groups. Larger ethnic groups are, for obvious reasons, more conspicuous than a multitude of restricted ethnic groups. However, such larger ethnic superstructures do not exist in all parts of the country, and this leads to a pronounced variation in degrees of ethnic salience throughout the territory. As will be pointed out in section 4.3.2.2, the most important examples of larger ethnic groups are the Baluba in the two Kasai regions, the Bakongo in Lower Zaire, and the Bangala in Equateur and the northern parts of Bandundu. In large parts of the region of Upper Zaire, in the three Kivu regions, and in Shaba, on the other hand, it is only possible to refer to restricted ethnic groups.[22] For historical reasons, the restricted ethnic groups in these areas have never been subsumed under simplifying labels. As a consequence, these latter regions fulfill a less prominent role on Zaire's ethnic scene than the other regions.

The fact that in some parts of the country the ethnic groups are brought together in larger structures while in other parts they are not also has direct consequences for perceptions of ethnic homogeneity. The larger ethnic group of the Bakongo comprises all the restricted ethnic groups of the region of Lower Zaire, extending, in some interpretations, beyond this region's administrative boundaries. As a consequence, Lower Zaire is perceived as an area of high ethnic integration and homogeneity. In the region of Bandundu, on the contrary, there is no ethnic superstructure that would unite the myriad restricted ethnic groups that are situated there. The ethnic composition of the region of Bandundu is therefore often said to be extremely heterogeneous.

4.3.2. A description of Zaire's ethnic composition

4.3.2.1. The restricted ethnic groups

Traditional descriptions of Zaire's ethnic composition identify over 220 restricted ethnic groups (in addition to the references cited above, see also Boone 1954; 1961; Maquet 1966; Obenga 1977; Vansina 1965). The vast majority of the authors of these descriptions choose to organize these more than 220 groups into larger geographical and/or ecological areas. Lufuluabo (1988: 561-562) provides a summary of these areas limiting their number to seven. His sketch is a useful rough outline of the range of Zairian restricted ethnic groups,

22. That is, of course, in the literature. As the discussions in chapter 8 will show, the ethnic construction of geographical groups, such as 'the people from Kivu', and of linguistic groups, such as 'the people who speak Kiswahili', may lead to 'new ethnicities' of a larger order than the restricted ethnic groups.

a complete enumeration of which lies outside the scope and purposes of the present study.

Lufuluabo first distinguishes the non-Bantu populations living in the northern parts of the country. These make up about twenty percent of the country's total population and are situated in the area comprised, broadly, by the Zaire river and the border with the Central African Republic. Examples are, in the western parts, the Ngbaka and the Ngbandi (which is the restricted ethnic group to which president Mobutu belongs), in the central parts, the Zande and the Mangbetu, and in the eastern parts, the Logo and the Bari. All the other restricted ethnic groups in Zaire are known as Bantu peoples.

The second area comprises the restricted ethnic groups living in the central basin of the Zaire river, encompassing most of the actual region of Equateur, the northern parts of Bandundu, and parts of the two Kasai regions. These populations include, among many others, the Ngombe and the Mbuja immediately north of the river and the many restricted ethnic groups that constitute the Mongo larger group south of the river. Some examples of Mongo subgroups are the Ntomba, the Konda, and the Nkundo south of the actual city of Mbandaka, the Ngando and Mbole immediately south of the river's bend, and the Tetela and Ndengese in the Kasai and Maniema regions.

Thirdly, there are the restricted ethnic groups situated in the eastern stretch along the great lakes, comprising the southeastern parts of the region of Upper Zaire and the three Kivu regions. This area consists of such restricted ethnic groups as the Lese, the Komo, the Lega (or 'Rega'), the Shi, and the Tembo, among many others.

A fourth area is made up of groups situated in the savannas of eastern and southwestern Shaba. Among the eastern groups are the Bemba and the Kaonde, among the southwestern groups are the Lunda.

The greater parts of the two Kasai regions and the central part of Shaba are traditionally ascribed to such restricted ethnic groups as the Kuba, the Lulua, the Songye, the Kanyok, and the Luba-Kasai in the central areas, and the Luba-Shankadi (also called 'Luba-Katanga' or 'Luba-Shaba') in central Shaba.

The restricted ethnic groups living in southern and central Bandundu and in parts of West Kasai make up the sixth area. This area is commonly perceived as ethnically very heterogeneous. The myriad restricted ethnic groups include, in central Bandundu, the Boma, the Sakata, the Yans, and the Mbun, in western Kasai, the Lele, and in southern Bandundu, the Yaka, the Suku, and the Pende.

Then, there is the area that almost completely coincides with the administrative region of Lower Zaire. This area is composed of a number of restricted ethnic groups which from at least the fifteenth century onwards were integrated in the Kongo kingdom (which, at that time, was not an ethnic label). Since the colonizers' introduction of the tribal paradigm, the communal label under which these restricted ethnic groups were subsumed has been an ethnic, rather than a political one, i.e. *l'Ethnie Kongo*. Examples of the restricted ethnic groups in question are the Ndibu, the Ntandu, the Yombe, the Nkanu, and the Bembe.

Finally, a group typically overlooked in many overviews, including Lufuluabo's, is the group of people commonly called 'Pygmies'. There are Pygmy groups in the equatorial rainforest of the central basin (such as the Tswa) and in the rainforest of Zaire's eastern borders (such as the Mbuti).

4.3.2.2. Some larger ethnic groups: The Baluba, the Bakongo, and the Bangala

The Baluba

Currently, the ethnic label 'Baluba' has both a limited and a more inclusive signification. In its limited sense, it refers to the restricted ethnic group of the Luba-Kasai whose 'original territory' is traditionally situated in the area around the city of Mbuji-Mayi, East Kasai. In its more inclusive usage, the term 'Baluba' is the label of a larger ethnic group and refers to a vaguely defined collection of restricted ethnic groups living in the two Kasai regions. Prototypical members are the Luba-Kasai, the Songye, the Kete, the Lulua, the Luntu, and the Binji. On some occasions, other groups such as the Tetela, the Kanyok, and the Ndengese are also construed as members of the Baluba group.[23] In chapter 8, specific shifts in the denotation of this ethnic label will be discussed in more detail and on the basis of concrete discursive materials.

Libata (1987), Roosens (1989: 117-125), Turner (1993), and Young (1976: 175ff) are studies of the history of the Baluba. The most important element in the group's history is the conflict between the 'Luba-Kasai' and the 'Lulua'. Before the arrival of the first Europeans, no ethnic, cultural, or linguistic distinction between these two groups existed and the labels 'Luba' and 'Lulua' referred to groups highly different from what they refer to today. The most important dimension of contrast was a social one: the members of the group currently known as the Luba-Kasai were the victims of the Arab-dominated slave trades, while 'the Lulua' participated in the organization of these trades. Thus, the two groups were differentiated along the lines of a purely social stratification. After having defeated the Arab slave traders, the European colonizers wanted to redress the social imbalance. At least until the early 1950s, the Belgians strongly privileged the members of the formerly dominated social class in schooling, housing, land reforms, and employment. For their many economic projects in southern Shaba, for instance, the colonial authorities relied almost entirely on 'imported' Luba, which explains the high number of Luba from Mbuji-Mayi still present in southeastern Zaire.

This colonial policy created a new but inverted social stratification, in which the social group later named Luba-Kasai stood closest to the rulers and

23. In most conceptions, the restricted ethnic group of the Luba-Shankadi, whose traditional territory is situated in the region of Shaba, is not included in the Baluba group.

'the Lulua' occupied the lower ranks in the colonial society. The missionaries and other Belgians imposed an ethnic interpretation on the social discrepancy between the two groups. Soon, the colonized also identified themselves on this ethnic basis.

A certain politicization and ideological articulation of ethnic identity by the respective groups' intellectual elites contributed to the growth of ethnicity as a new and relevant characteristic. In 1952, Lulua intellectuals founded the ethnic association *Lulua-Frères*. A few years later, the Luba Albert Kalonji created the *Mouvement National Congolais - Kalonji* (MNC-K), an ethnically based political party, which declared the independence of a Luba state in southern Kasai in August 1960. Kalonji organized his small nation-state along the lines of invented traditions of the ancient Luba kingdom, and tried to establish a sense of nationhood through the invocation of traditional culture and ancestral values.

The discrepancies between the two groups led to fierce hostilities, which reached their culmination point in the period between 1958 and the middle of the First Republic. Atrocious conflicts between the Lulua and the Luba in the actual region of West Kasai decimated large parts of the population and provoked massive migrations (Coquery-Vidrovitch et al. eds., 1987; Vanderlinden 1985; Geeraerts 1972 is a semi-documentary, autobiographical novel covering these conflicts from an insider's perspective).

The Bakongo

The larger ethnic group of the Bakongo has its roots in the Kongo kingdom, which in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries reigned over large parts of present-day northern Angola, southern Congo, and southwestern Zaire. Nowadays, 'Bakongo' is an ethnic label which refers to the totality of the various restricted ethnic groups situated in the region of Lower Zaire. In some contexts, the meaning of the label shifts to denote all the restricted ethnic groups in southwestern Zaire that make use of Kikongo as the language of wider communication, including the ones situated in the southern parts of Bandundu (see also the analysis of the discursive materials in chapter 8).

As mentioned, the group of the Bakongo is composed of such Lower-Zairian restricted ethnic groups as the Ndibu, the Yombe, the Ntandu, and others. Young (1976: 169), referring to historical studies by Doutreloux (1967) and Monnier (1970), mentions that these restricted ethnic categories *"appear of quite recent origin, and are not synonymous with subdivisions of the ancient kingdom"*. He reminds us of the fact that *"the terms Ndibu and Ntandu appear to have originated during the construction of the railway [between Matadi and the area around the later capital, Leopoldville] in the 1890s"*. In other words, European colonization not only reinterpreted the *political superstructure* (the Kongo kingdom) in ethnic terms, it also applied an ethnic nomenclature to the *component parts* of this kingdom (which was not the customary frame of reference before).

In addition to the colonial introduction of an ethnic frame of reference, two other factors have contributed to the increasing salience of Kongo ethnicity, i.e. urbanization and ideological articulation.

Before and shortly after the transfer of the colony's capital from Boma, Lower Zaire, to Leopoldville in 1929,[24] the Bakongo represented a majority in the population of Leopoldville (L. De Boeck 1953; De Rop 1953b; van Wing 1953). From the early years of the Congo Free State onwards, however, there had been significant migrations from the northwestern parts of the territory to the lower Congo. The development of Leopoldville as the center of all administrative and political activities intensified these southward migrations. Soon, the increasing influx in the capital of immigrants from the north led to urban tensions between the Bakongo and these immigrants, for whom the Bakongo and all the other southwestern groups used the undifferentiating label 'Bangala' (see below). The Bakongo, who felt that Leopoldville was part of 'their' territory, considered the Bangala immigration a threat. These growing hostile feelings were fed by the preferential treatment the Belgians accorded to the Bangala: most of the colonial agents, administrators, and other officials assigned to posts in the capital after 1929 had themselves been transferred from the earlier settlements in the northwest, and many of them felt much more familiar with the Bangala than with the Bakongo. As a consequence, they often preferred to appoint Bangala to key positions in the capital's administrative and economic structures. It is significant, also, that from 1929 onwards, Lingala, and not Kikongo, became the capital's only language for the schools and for all the official and semi-official types of 'vertical communication', i.e. communication between colonizer and colonized.[25]

In 1950, a number of Bakongo intellectuals of Leopoldville founded the *Association [later: Alliance] des Bakongo* (ABAKO). At its inception, the association was only meant as a forum for cultural emancipation (Angulu 1991: 34; Verhaegen 1971). Inspired by the abundant historical, linguistic, and ethnographic work done by Father van Wing and other missionaries, the ABAKO intellectuals wanted to promote the Bakongo culture, to restore the position of the Kikongo language in the capital, and to develop a certain linguistic and cultural unification within their ethnic superstructure. Their ideological explication of Bakongo ethnicity has been the most articulated and most complex one throughout the history of ethnic identities in Zaire (Young 1976: 181ff). In Zaire, the production of cultural manifestos with a strongly nation-state vocabulary has never been rivaled by the ideological work of any

24. The transfer was officially announced in 1923, but was only effectuated in 1929 (Bontinck 1980).

25. The notion of 'vertical communication' as opposed to 'horizontal communication' will be developed more explicitly in section 4.4 below.

other ethnic formation's intellectual elite.[26] It is, therefore, not surprising that this ideologization of ethnicity has been very effective. The Bakongo larger ethnic group presently counts as the most integrated and monolithic one in Zairians' perceptions of their country's ethnic composition. Both to ingroup members and to outsiders, the Bakongo ethnic group comes across as the country's most homogeneous and most clearly defined formation.

Although in its ideological articulation it made ample reference to the former kingdom and its rural structures, the ABAKO was in essence an urban movement of Leopoldville. As Young (1976: 169) writes, the ABAKO did not extend its organization and activities to the rural hinterland before 1959. Its primary preoccupations stemmed from the social opposition with the privileged Bangala in the capital's interethnic context. It is in great part this urban opposition which effectuated that the originally cultural mission of the association was soon complemented with a political one. But equally important in this politicization of the ABAKO (and unfortunately neglected by Young), were the ABAKO's links with the politically active religious movement of Kimbanguism (see 4.5.2.2). In the mid 1950s, the ABAKO transformed itself into a political party with a radically nationalist tendency. The political developments in the years and months leading towards independence were highly marked by the activities of the ABAKO. It is also the ABAKO which provided the first president of the independent republic, i.e. Joseph Kasa-Vubu, whose federalist and sometimes confederalist ideas dominated the political struggles during the First Republic.

The Bangala

'Bangala' is in present-day Zaire the name of a larger ethnic group. As is the case for the Baluba and the Bakongo, the range of the restricted ethnic groups covered by this superstructure is not completely unambiguous. Context-dependent shifts in its denotation will be the object of the analysis in chapter 8. At this stage, however, 'Bangala' may be roughly identified as the term used by Zairians to refer to the totality of restricted ethnic groups situated in the entire Equateur region, the northern parts of Bandundu, and the westernmost parts of Upper Zaire.

The complexity of the term's meaning is directly related to the history of the ethnic group itself, which has been amply described by Hulstaert (1974), Mbulamoko (1991), Mumbanza (1973), and Young (1965: 242ff; 1976: 171ff). It has been generally accepted, also by ethnologists working in the traditional paradigm (e.g., Burssens 1958: 37; Van Bulck 1954: 43), that prior to the European penetration there was no restricted ethnic group known by the name of 'Bangala'. Nevertheless, the term was used in this sense until World War II. In 1877, H.M. Stanley first used it to designate the population living in and

26. One such ABAKO manifesto is published as an appendix to van Wing's 1953 publication. See also Verhaegen (1971).

around the village of Iboko, a town on the Zaire river, 200 kms. north of what is now the city of Mbandaka. In 1884, Iboko became one of the first major stations of the Congo Free State, first renamed 'Bangala', later 'Nouvel-Anvers'[27] and, in recent times, 'Mankanza'. Soon, the Europeans expanded the label's meaning to all the peoples living in the area between the bend of the river and the border of the present-day People's Republic of the Congo. Through its use in ethnographic descriptions and classifications (e.g., De Jonghe 1908; Van Overbergh & De Jonghe 1907), the label was in those days also imbued with scientific validity. The feedback effects of this artificial identification on the self-perception of the colonized did not fail to appear. As Mumbanza (1973: 478-479) writes, *"peu à peu, les natifs d'Iboko et ceux d'environs en premier lieu, apprirent et adoptèrent ce 'nouveau' nom pour se distinguer à l'étranger ou pour se présenter chez les Blancs qui n'utilisaient que ce terme officiel"*. Furthermore, the label was so much established in both the Europeans' and the Africans' ethnic identifications that it was also used to coin the name of the new language that had emerged in this area in the late nineteenth century, i.e. 'Lingala'.

In the period after the 1920s, the term's designation continued to expand and came to cover all populations living along the northern banks of the Congo river. The growth of the new capital Leopoldville after 1929 largely contributed to this semantic expansion, as in this new urban context the Bakongo found themselves in opposition with the immigrants from the north (see above). At first, nonriverine equatorial groups, such as the Ngombe, the Mongo, and the Budja, refused 'Bangala' as a generalizing denomination. Later, especially after independence, these hesitations faded out.

At a still later stage, a certain inversion in the perception of the relationship between the language's name, Lingala, and the ethnic label occurred: whereas, as explained, in the early days of the colonial presence, the name of the language was derived from the alleged ethnic group, many Zairians nowadays explain the ethnic label as denoting all the peoples who use Lingala as the language of wider communication (chapter 8).

In addition to urbanization, ideological articulation by intellectuals also played a role in the formation of Bangala ethnicity (albeit to a lesser extent than was the case for the Bakongo). The *Liboke lya Bangala*, which is Lingala for 'the Association of Bangala', was founded in Leopoldville in 1951 (Young 1965: 245; 1976: 173). The Bangala intellectuals rebaptized this cultural movement as the *Fédération des Bangala* in 1958. One of this association's leading intellectuals was Jean Bolikango, whose ambition it was to reconstitute the so-called *Grande Ethnie Bangala*. During the processes of ethnic consciousness-raising in the years leading to independence, the Bangala association was never able to impose itself in a thoroughly convincing way, not

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27. In informal modes of writing, but also in official texts and on official maps, both spellings *Nouvel-Anvers* and *Nouvelle-Anvers* occur.

in the least because of the endeavors by other northern groups, such as the Ngombe and the Mongo, to dissociate themselves from the Bangala. Soon after the creation of the *Liboke lya Bangala*, for instance, Mongo intellectuals split off and founded the *Fédération de l'Equateur et du Lac Léopold* (FEDEQUALAC), which reached its culmination point in the 1960 *Anamongo* ('children of Mongo') congress in Lodja, East Kasai. In contrast to the Bakongo and their active ABAKO structures, the Bangala cultural movements died out after 1960.

4.3.3. Ethnicity in Mobutu's Zaire

Mobutu's endeavors towards a politically and intellectually centralist state involved a radical demobilization of ethnic identities. In the new regime's crusade against all forms of centrifugal forces, any expression or ideologization of ethnic affiliation was crushed out.

One of Mobutu's first measures was to dissolve and forbid all associations with ethnic or cultural aspirations. In 1966, i.e. before *authenticité*, Mobutu promulgated a law against 'tribalism' (Pauwels 1981: 234). He also abolished all newspapers written in local languages, as these were thought to feed regional sentiments. Politically, the power of the provincial administrations was reduced to a minimum and put under the direct control of the central authorities. Mobutu's early choice to reduce the number of provinces ('regions') must also be interpreted in the light of his efforts to control the latent secessionist tendencies.

Another noteworthy measure was the system of nationwide translocations – in (Zairian) French known as *mutations* – in administrative and other appointments, which Mobutu started to apply from the first years of the Second Republic onwards (Braeckman 1989: 112; Mpinga-Kasenda 1973: 59). Under this system, governors, regional commissioners, teachers, and all other public officers and civil servants, were never appointed in their own region, subregion, etc. of origin (a measure which is itself based on an orientation towards ethnic origin), but were dispersed across the country, at times at a distance of 2,000 kms. away from 'home'. The system was, moreover, elaborated in such a way that the civil servants never served more than a few years in the same place, which was intended to prevent them from taking root in a given cultural area. In the same way, the limitation of the Zairian university campuses to three, Kinshasa, Lubumbashi, and Kisangani, each with its own exclusive offer of disciplines and specializations, always compelled Zairian students to spend an important part of their lives in a culturally and ethnically different region.

During the entire period of the Second Republic, the system of translocations remained deeply rooted in Zairian society. It aimed at a nationwide leveling of ethnic and cultural differences and at the establishment of a sense of national affinity. Indeed, Mobutu's ambition was that the component ethnic identities of his country coalesce into a new and unique national identity. The single party, the MPR, incorporated this Zairian nationhood. The new nationhood was also backed by the state ideology of *authenticité*. *Authenticité* created a paradigm in which Zaire was opposed to Belgian, European, Western, etc., modes of culture. That is, the new national identity was a product of affirming what Zaire *is not*: through defining 'Zairianness' in negative, external terms, an image of an internally homogeneous identity could be established.

It cannot be denied that Mobutu's intellectual and political centralization has in some way succeeded in establishing a sense of 'Zairianness'. In their everyday practices and accounts, Zairians nowadays indeed display a certain integrative, 'Zairian' identity. It would, however, be unwarranted to conclude that this new identity has in any way *replaced* the older, small-scale forms of ethnic awareness. I do not agree with Bokamba's analysis that *"whereas before 1967, most Zaïrians would have identified themselves first in terms of their region or province of origin (e.g. Mukongo, Mungala, Moluba, etc.), if asked about their nationality today, most would identify themselves first as Zaïrians"* (1976: 133). The integrative Zairian identity rather operates as an *additional* element in the repertoire of multiple identities to which members can take recourse in structuring their and other peoples' social moves. The individual ethnic identities have remained highly salient in this repertoire as well, and are also drawn upon in contexts where they are more applicable and appear to better serve contingent discursive and social goals. In other words, the national identity has *complemented*, but not replaced, the range of available identities in Zaire. We can only establish that Mobutu's intellectual centralization has succeeded in wiping out *the ideological expression* of the ethnic subidentities, as well as their political mobilization in insurgent movements. It has in no way brought about an *extinction* of the subidentities *per se*, nor of their immediate relevance in members' interpretations and organizations of social life.

One of the manifestations, and possible causes, of this failure to entirely extinguish the subidentities is the fact that underneath the explicit layers of the nation's official ideology, some modes of ethnic privileging – and, thus, rivalry – have always remained present in modern Zaire. The maintenance of unambiguous ethnic identifications on such official documents as Zairian identity cards and birth certificates, explained above, is in itself already a clear manifestation of Mobutu's concern with ethnic identity. And, Mobutu has always attentively marshaled the ethnic subidentities of his country to his own interests. The most delicate political and military positions, e.g., have always been entrusted to members of his own restricted or larger ethnic group. The president's personal elite troops, the *Division Speciale Présidentielle* (DSP) are almost entirely composed of Ngbandi, i.e. members of his own restricted ethnic group. The other higher segments of the Zairian military as well, have always been dominated by Zairians whose ethnic origins must be situated in the region of Equateur. Ntite-Mukendi (1994: 67) explains that one of Mobutu's first maneuvers after his assumption of power in 1965 consisted in *"la purification* *ethnique de l'armée et de toutes les forces de 'l'Ordre', les transformant en milices tribales privées"*. Matanda-ma-Mboyo (1994: 37) writes that in 1994, 31 of the 62 generals in the Zairian army were from the region of Equateur. In a declaration divulged on the occasion of the nationwide plebiscite in 1990 (published as Pabanel 1991b), the civil servants of the Zairian ministry of foreign affairs enumerate all the higher public offices, commissions, and bureaus in which Zairians of the Ngbandi ethnic group or from the region of Equateur constitute a distinct majority. They mention *"des nominations qui sont motivées par des critères ethniques, tribaux, claniques, régionaux et amicaux"* (Pabanel 1991b: 104), which coincides with Ntite-Mukendi's analysis of *"la politique des quotas tribaux pour l'accès aux études supérieures et leur sanction, de même que pour l'accès aux postes de travail publics et privés"* (1994: 67).

These concealed maneuvers to tailor ethnic diversity to the needs of the political oligarchy became even more acute after the announcement of the Third Republic in April 1990. In section 4.2.5, I mentioned how on May 11, 1990, Mobutu's secret services entered the campus of Lubumbashi and murdered an as yet undetermined number of students, with the aim of intimidating the insubordinate student movements in Shaba and other parts of the country. This repressive act had clear ethnic overtones. Gbabendu & Efolo (1991: 81ff) explain how the subversive elements in the Lubumbashi student population were given away by Ngbandi infiltrators. During their raids through the campus, the squads used a Ngbandi password to distinguish these infiltrators from the targeted students.

Furthermore, since 1990 the presidential entourage has always endeavored to frame the political conflict between Mobutu and the opposition leader Etienne Tshisekedi, a Muluba from the Kasai regions, in ethnic rather than political terms. Matanda-ma-Mboyo (1994: 37ff) describes how in August 1993 pamphlets were distributed in Kinshasa inciting the inhabitants of the capital to become 'ethnically aware' and to rise up in arms against the Baluba 'aggressors'. In other parts of the country as well, ethnic revolts against Baluba have been provoked by presidential agents. This has been the case in the Kivu regions since 1993, and, more fiercely, in Shaba since 1992. As mentioned, since colonization large communities of Baluba from East Kasai have been present in the central and southern parts of Shaba. In recent years, Mobutu has used his contacts in UFERI, the political movement of Nguza Karl-I-Bond, a fierce confederalist of Lunda ethnic descent and nephew of the late secessionist Moïse Tshombe, to cause ethnic conflicts between the Baluba and the 'original' ethnic groups of Shaba, such as the Lunda. Many Baluba were killed in these hostilities and still a larger number of them have left the region to 'return' to their 'ethnic places of origin' in Kasai.

4.4. Linguistic situation

This section provides a description of Zaire as a multilingual country and society. There are various dimensions to the multilingual character of Zaire, all of which cannot be treated with equal depth. Therefore, given the pivotal role which Zaire's four 'national languages' (a term to be explained in the course of my exposition), i.e. Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba, fulfill with regard to Neptunia, the major part of what follows will be devoted to these four languages. The role of French will also be given ample attention, albeit to a lesser extent. Finally, the 'vernacular languages', i.e. all of Zaire's 'African languages'[28] with the exception of Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba, are least relevant to Neptunia and will be covered correspondingly here.

The position of French as Zaire's official language will be discussed first (section 4.4.1). I will indicate how French was referred to as the official language in the country's first constitution, how it is used as the exclusive language for formal and written types of communication, and to what extent the population takes part in the knowledge and application of this language. Next, section 4.4.2 gives a brief overview of the vernacular languages, which also includes a discussion of the prescientific assumptions on which the delineation of these languages is based in the literature.

The four 'national languages' are dealt with in section 4.4.3. First, the dominance of these four languages vis-à-vis Zaire's other African languages is discussed (4.4.3.1). It is shown how this dominance is both a function of geographical expansion and diglossic usage patterns and of a semi-official status attributed to the four languages through a number of institutional language practices. The former matter relates to the fact that of all African languages, Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba are the most widespread in Zaire, as well as to the fact that within their respective areas of distribution, in domains such as education, administration, and jurisdiction these languages are more typically used than the vernacular ones. The semi-official status attributed to them stems from their application in these three institutional domains and from the treatment they get in the media and in the discourse of Zairian academics. The media and the academic discourse are also the domains in which the identification of Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba as Zaire's four 'national languages' (*langues nationales*) is to be situated. Attached to these discussions of the dominance of the national languages in present-day Zaire is a historical reconstruction of this situation. (I would like to suggest that readers only interested in the current situation may, in fact, take these historical reconstructions as an excursus.) Section 4.4.3.2, then, explains the relationships that exist among the four national languages themselves, which includes an

28. Throughout the remainder of this dissertation, I will use the term 'African languages' to refer to all of Zaire's Bantu and non-Bantu languages as opposed to the Indo-European language, French.

emphasis on the marked spread of Kiswahili and Lingala, as well as an explication of Lingala's privileged position with regard to its application in the Zairian armed forces, in Zairian music, and in Mobutu's ideological apparatus. The next section (4.4.3.3) concludes the coverage of the four national languages with a discussion of attitudes towards these languages as documented in the literature.

Finally, section 4.4.4 addresses the topic of governmental interventions in language matters. I will indicate how in spite of the unwavering suggestions of Zairian academics to incorporate an anticolonial linguistic program in the ideology of *authenticité*, the political authorities in Zaire have never developed an elaborate linguistic policy along these lines.

Before setting out on the discussion of multilingual Zaire, I would like to indicate that there is an extensive literature in which definitions and terminologies are suggested for notions such as 'official languages', 'state languages', 'national languages', 'national official languages', and the like (i.a., Bell 1976; Fasold 1984; Fishman 1971; Kloss 1968; Mekacha 1993). In what follows, I prefer not to impose this theoretical vocabulary on the particular situation in Zaire, but rather choose to look at what terminology and classifications emerge in the Zairian situation itself. I refer to French as the 'official language' because it was labeled as such in the first constitution of the independent state, and to Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba as the 'national languages' because this is the qualification they receive in the Zairian media and in other Zairian institutions. The term 'semi-official', which I use to identify the position of Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba in Zairian society from my own point of view, is suggested by Ngalasso (1986: 24) and is indeed best suited to explain their role in Zairian society.

4.4.1. French: The official language

French in the formal and institutional domains of society

In the 1964 *Constitution de Luluabourg*, the first fully fledged constitution of the independent Congo (see 4.2.2), French was identified as the country's 'official language' (Matumele 1987: 189; Mutombo 1991: 96; Polomé 1968: 309). As in the vast majority of African countries, this official language is a legacy of colonialism: after decolonization, the language of the mother country was maintained as the medium of the new state's legislation and administration.[29] In the case of Zaire, one is struck by the discrepancy between the official Dutch-French bilingualism of the former colonial power and the nearly complete absence, in present days, of Dutch in all of Zaire's formal and

29. This was indeed the case in the vast majority of the African countries, but not in all. Calvet (1994) spells out how in Guinea, early anticolonial language policies led to the complete abandonment of French.

informal modes of communication. Before proceeding to a description of the position and usage patterns of French in current times, a brief historical clarification of this discrepancy is in order (see Ngalasso 1986; Nyunda 1986b; Polomé 1968 for more detailed discussions). As stipulated in the *Charte Coloniale*, the act through which the Congo was transferred to the Belgian government in 1908, all decrees and laws promulgated during Belgian colonization were in Dutch and French, both texts having equal official status. But in all other official and formal contexts, the only European language used *de facto* was French. This situation was partly a matter of habit, i.e. a practice inherited from the Congo Free State, where French (next to English) was used as an international world language among the many Europeans of different origins. To a certain extent, it was also rooted in the factual dominance, at that time, of French in the Belgian administrative and political structures.

The *Constitution de Luluabourg* stated that *"French is the official language of the parliament"* (Polomé 1968: 309).[30] Until the present day, the actual practices of language use in the Zairian state show a much broader interpretation of French as the official language. In order to clarify these extended official usages, I wish to draw upon a conceptual distinction between 'horizontal' and 'vertical' modes of communication (Heine 1977). Horizontal modes of communication include all the written and spoken discursive practices taking place between and among the governing structures of a state; vertical modes of communication are the structures of interaction taking place between the authorities and the population.[31] In addition, I will also deal with the use of French in the domain of formal education. As will become clear, the global picture is that in current Zairian society, French is typically attached to the institutional, formal, and written patterns of interaction.

At the level of *horizontal communication*, it can be observed that French is the medium of interaction in all higher legislative, administrative, and juridical institutions (see the many contributions to Kazadi & Nyembwe eds., 1987, as well as Boguo 1988; Bokamba 1976; 1988; Nyembwe 1986; Nyunda 1986a; 1986b; Sesep 1988; Ungina 1984). With respect to the legislative institutions, French is the medium of communication for debates and speeches in the Zairian parliament (called *conseil législatif*). It is also the only language in which the Zairian constitution and all the other legal texts are written. In general, the entire political management of the Zairian state is conducted in French. At the

30. There was also a statement to the effect that *"each of the Houses can also accept other working languages"* (Polomé 1968: 309). As such, a clear distinction was made between French, which was explicitly named 'the official language', and the other languages, which were merely qualified as 'working languages'. The freedom to resort to other 'working' languages has, in actual practice, never been made use of.

31. In principle, one could also consider the patterns of communication taking place among the population as an instance of 'horizontal' communication. In the present dissertation, I will nevertheless restrict the term to patterns of interaction among authority structures, as is most usual in the literature.

administrative level, all written correspondence between official institutions, as well as all oral contacts in formal contexts, such as in meetings and the like, are in French. In the juridical system, finally, all laws and decrees, as well as all written reports on litigations, prosecutions, and trials, are in French (Bayona-ba-Meya 1987). In sum, all forms of horizontal communication displaying a certain institutional and formal character are typically the domain of French.

With regard to the use of French in *vertical communication*, the picture is more complex. At the legislative-political level, the vulgarization of political decisions, new laws, and the official state ideology is sometimes done in French, but very often in African languages (Matumele 1987: 188; see also below). This vulgarization is a rather frequent phenomenon in Zaire and is accomplished through mass meetings organized by the MPR, political speeches read by the president, and political broadcasts on radio and television. As will be explained in more detail in section 4.4.3.2, Lingala is the language which most often serves these purposes of political vulgarization. French is, in sum, the exclusive language of governmental matters as far as they remain *within* the domain of political decision-making; once these political matters are to be shared with the population, the exclusiveness of French is abandoned.

Vertical communication in the administration is also based on a combination of French and the other languages. In this case, the combination is grounded in a functional distribution of the languages, attributed either to written or to oral types of interaction. All written official documents with which Zairian citizens come into contact in the course of their lives, such as birth certificates, passports, identity cards, diplomas, and the like, are in French. Outside the realm of written communication, oral forms of administrative vertical communication, i.e. the contacts between the population and office workers, are mostly conducted in a language other than French (Mataba 1987: 132; Matumele 1987). These interactions are characteristically, but not invariably, conducted in Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, or Tshiluba (see below), each in its corresponding area of distribution. In the actual practices of vertical communication in the administration, the choice of language is very much grounded in pragmatic, situational considerations, i.e. in considerations of satisfactory understanding. In the administration, French is thus the language of formality, whereby ‘formality’ is a function of the written character of the interaction (and/or of its horizontal character).

The role of French in vertical modes of communication in jurisdiction may be summarized as follows. In Zaire, traditional African forms of jurisdiction are imbued with the full force of law at lower and more local levels of juridical practice (Bayona-ba-Meya 1987; MacGaffey 1982). Orality is a key notion in this traditional African juridical system: testimonies, arrangements, and sentences are all legally valued in their oral forms, and unwritten disputes and, e.g., acts of slander are as eligible for prosecution as written ones. During hearings in these lower and local courts, the choice of a medium of communication is, as is the case in the administration, pragmatically based. As

Bayona-ba-Meya explains: *"le prévenu qui comparaît en personne, le témoin qui est cité à comparaître, la partie civile sont tous entendus dans la langue* qu'ils comprennent*"* (1987: 159, emphasis added).

The typical role of French in all forms of written as opposed to oral communication is also manifest in the media, which, as all media institutions in Zaire are state-controlled,[32] must also be considered an instance of vertical communication. Since Mobutu's 1973 abolishment of the newspapers written in African languages, all periodicals in Zaire have been entirely in French (Bondo 1987; Sesep 1986). The *Office Zaïrois de Radiodiffusion et Télévision* (OZRT), the Zairian official radio and television company, still makes use of African languages (in practice, the four national languages), but the use of French is strongly prevalent. On the Zairian radio, *La Voix du Zaïre*, 74% of the broadcast time is occupied by French and 26% by African languages; on national television, *Télé Zaïre*, French is used during 88.3% of the time, while the African languages only represent 11.6% (Mutiri 1987). In sum, the pronounced dominance of French in the Zairian media corresponds with their official and institutional character.

The use of French must, finally, also be described in the context of formal education (Kambaji 1987; Kazadi 1987b; Lufuluabo 1988; Mutombo 1991; Nsuka-zi-Kabuiku 1987; Sesep 1988; Ungina 1984; Yates 1980). Since 1974, the regulations for the use of languages in education stipulate that African languages (which remain unidentified, see 4.4.3) should be the medium of instruction in the first four years of primary education, to be replaced with French from the fifth year onwards.[33] More important than the official regulations are the actual practices 'on the ground', as the regulations are hardly ever effectively enforced and, therefore, heeded to strongly varying degrees. The only phenomenon to which there is no exception is that all Zairian secondary schools and universities make use of French as their only medium of instruction. With respect to primary education, on the other hand, three categories must be distinguished (Nsuka-zi-Kabuiku 1987). A first category of schools applies the official program in its entirety. The schools in the second category do not comply at all with any of the new regulations and continue the practice, installed during the First Republic, to use French as the only language of instruction at all levels (i.a., Mutombo 1991: 98; Nyembwe 1987b: 197). Mukendi (1988) reports that even many nursery schools, especially the ones in the urban centers, use French in communicating with the toddlers. The schools in the third category apply the 1974 program, but adapt it to their own viewpoints and needs. Some schools use the African languages only in the first two years of primary education, others start introducing French as a subject

32. That is, until the installation of the Third Republic.

33. Apart from the studies cited, a publication by the Zairian *Centre de Recherche et de Diffusion de l'Information Pédagogique* (CEREDIP 1986) provides a comprehensive historical overview of the texts of law relative to education in the Congo and Zaire.

matter in the third year and adopt it as the medium of instruction from the fourth year onwards, and still others use a different combination of French and one or more African languages.

French in everyday life

The population's knowledge and usage patterns of French in everyday life are not easy to pinpoint. With respect to the knowledge of French, the most diverging reports exist. On the one hand, Bokamba (1976: 128) writes that *"less than 10% of the Zaïrian population speak French"* and Mutombo (1991: 104) argues that *"seule une infime portion de la population [constitue] la réserve de ses locuteurs"*. Kilanga & Bwanga (1988: 48), on the other hand, maintain that *"il devient difficile à l'heure actuelle de proposer pour le contexte zaïrois une classification pyramidale où seule [sic] le sommet serait le détenteur exclusif de cette langue"*. The problem is related to the fact that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to describe the knowledge of French in Zaire in discriminatory terms, establishing either the absence or the presence of proficiency in French for a given individual. Kilanga & Bwanga (1988) and Ngalasso (1988) convincingly refine this argument, suggesting that the matter should rather be framed in terms of a continuum of proficiency degrees, whereby it is accepted that French is, to one degree or another, known by all members of society, from the most highly schooled to the less instructed ones, and in all parts of the country, from the urban centers to the most rural areas. The question is not *whether* a certain proficiency in French can be detected, but rather *what level* of proficiency.[34] That level is largely, though not exclusively, a function of formal education (see also Kukanda 1983).

At one extreme of the proficiency continuum, we find the members of the small intellectual elite. These Zairians have been able to continue their formal instruction to university or other higher levels of education. Their proficiency in French is impeccable, with more than average eloquence and literary capacities. Given all the symbolic measures taken since Mobutu's orientation away from Belgium and towards France, it should come as no surprise that the Zairian intellectuals' French coincides almost entirely with the Ile-de-France variant of the language, and is largely devoid of Belgicisms.[35] The members of the elite

34. The claim that French is in some way the property of all does in no way invalidate Mutombo's pertinent observation (1991: 104) that in present-day Zaire *"le français divise plus qu'il n'unit"* (Mutombo's observation is addressed at the classic postcolonial view that the multilingual African countries need a European language in order to neutralize the centrifugal threats latent in the mosaic of linguistic and ethnic identities.) Indeed, the extreme differences in degrees of knowledge of French in modern Zaire still constitute an efficient instrument for social exclusion through linguistic practices. In these practices, more sophisticated degrees of proficiency in French are played off against less sophisticated ones (see also Meeuwis & Blommaert in press).

35. A remarkable exception is president Mobutu himself, who can often be caught using typically Belgian variants. Mobutu is one of Zaire's oldest intellectuals alive and thus spent a larger part of his life under the Belgian school system. The matter is also related to what in

exhibit and maintain their sophisticated knowledge of French in their professional environments, as they typically occupy the higher ranks of the political, administrative, and academic institutions.

At the other extreme of the proficiency continuum, we find the class of the completely unschooled. Illiteracy was estimated at about 30% in the 1970s (Bokamba & Tlou 1977: 45) and has now risen to 45% according to a UNESCO estimate (Kazadi 1987a: 285). Illiteracy is characteristically a phenomenon of the rural areas, but modern urban contexts in booming cities such as Kinshasa have also produced a body of socially marginalized who are totally excluded from any type of formal education. The ubiquity of French in Zairian society, through its use on radio and television, in public advertising, in official documents, in the speech of others, and in codeswitching (see below) makes sure that some input of the language is inevitable even for these uninstructed. As such, *some* knowledge of French is displayed by these illiterate members of society, too. Needless to say, this knowledge is very limited and mostly does not transcend the oral production of some words, expressions, and phrases (Ngalasso 1988: 109).

The area in between the two extremes is marked by a large variety of proficiency degrees. As level of schooling is an important correlate, a consideration of the schooling rates in Zaire may provide an indication of this large variety. Bokamba (1976: 112) and Bokamba & Tlou (1977) calculated that between 1962 and 1968, only 26% of the children who had started school finished elementary education, that only 38% of those continued into secondary education, that 9% of the children who had entered secondary education also completed it, and that only 2% of the ones who had completed secondary education went to university. These figures are old, but are indicative of the general lack of access to advanced and continued levels of education in Zaire, which has remained unchanged until the present day (Kazadi 1987b; Nsuka-zi-Kabuiku 1987). It must also be added that women have always had less access to continued education than the members of the male population (Polomé 1963; Yates 1980). This discrepancy is, in fact, a legacy of colonial practices, as from the 1880s onwards school education in the Congo was exclusively reserved for boys; the first schools for girls were not opened before the late 1930s (Nsuka-zi-Kabuiku 1987: 8; Polomé 1963: 449). Moreover, as Nsuka-zi-Kabuiku (1987: 9) and Yates (1980) explain, until the 1950s French was only a medium of instruction and a subject matter in the boys' schools, whereas in the girls' schools only African languages were used. The effects of these historical, gender-related asymmetries are still very tangible today, the knowledge of

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section 4.4.4 I will refer to as 'ideological hypercorrection', i.e. the fact that the members of the intellectual upper class often display a more mobutist, a more radically nationalist, and a more *authenticité*-laden discourse and behavior than Mobutu himself, so as to make sure that their loyalty to the regime will not be questioned.

French being typically better developed among men than among women (Ngalasso 1988; Nyunda 1986b; Yates 1982).

With respect to the population's usage patterns of French, Bokamba (1976: 127ff), Mukendi (1988: 93-94), and Ngalasso (1988: 114) report that the number of households in which French serves as the exclusive means of interaction is negligible. The minority of families which make use of French as *one of the* home languages is also very small, but its presence in society is visible. In these families, the parents use French in communicating with their children, while they resort to an African language when communicating amongst themselves or with domestics and visitors. These families are typically to be found among the members of the urban intellectual upper class, many of whom have been able to travel to Europe (see also Lufuluabo 1988: 566). Apart from the language use of these two small minorities, French is as a rule not used as a habitual means of communication in Zairian homes. The home context is characteristically part of the territory of the African languages, and not of French.

A channel through which French does permeate the spheres of everyday life is writing. For all formal forms of writing, such as nonfiction publications and fiction literature (see Mukala 1984), and for most (though not all) of the personal and informal forms of writing, such as letters, notes, scribbles, etc., Zairians tend to turn to French. This is related to the fact that French is the only language of which grammar and writing are thoroughly and formally taught at school. There are, moreover, as yet no officially accepted and unique standards for writing the African languages, not even for the four national languages (Bokula 1987; Kazadi 1987a; Muwoko 1991b; Nyembwe 1993). (It is remarkable, in this respect, that not only the less highly educated but also intellectuals often display hesitations and grammatical misinterpretations when writing in one of their African languages.) For those who have not made it to secondary or higher education, this situation often turns into a dilemma: on the one hand, their knowledge of French is not sufficient to compose a complete and fully informative written text, while on the other hand, they have never learned how to write in the languages which they speak and understand best.

Finally, another very important channel through which French enters everyday life is codeswitching. Although the issue of codeswitching in Zaire is complex enough to constitute the material for a separate monograph, a limited number of observations may be presented here. In addition to linguistic borrowing, whereby foreign influences are generalized and to some extent structurally integrated, one of the very widespread linguistic phenomena in Zaire is codeswitching (Bokamba 1977; 1988; de Rooij 1996; Fabian 1982; Goyvaerts & Tembue 1992; Kamwangamalu 1987; Kitengye et al. 1987; Mayaka 1987; Meeuwis 1994d; Meeuwis & Blommaert in press; Ngalasso 1988; Nkulu 1986; Nsakala 1994), i.e. the combined usage of different languages in one syntactic or conversational unit, whereby this combination does not involve a generalized replacement of the original linguistic structures with the foreign ones. In Meeuwis & Blommaert (in press), it is shown that codeswitching in Zaire, as among Zairians elsewhere, is very often embedded in what we call 'layered codeswitching'. Layered codeswitching consists in the conversational switching of languages which are themselves the product of codeswitching. Let us first consider these latter linguistic phenomena. Here, we are concerned with codeswitching between Zaire's national languages and French. Zaire's four national languages, the African languages of particular import in this dissertation, hardly ever occur in their 'pure', unmixed variety; it is difficult to encounter an instance of speech in Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, or Tshiluba in which codeswitching with French does not occur. And, these forms of codeswitching occur at all levels of society, from the language of youngsters in the streets, over the most intimate contexts at home, to the language use of politicians (including president Mobutu himself) and others (Kamwangamalu 1987; Mayaka 1987). The extremely rare cases in which codeswitching is avoided, such as in some religious services, lead to forms of speech commonly perceived as highly marked and as particularly difficult to process (see also Kazadi 1987a: 289).

The second step in layered codeswitching, then, is that these inherently codeswitching languages may themselves be the object of conversational language switching. That is, codeswitching may occur between Lingala/French on the one hand and Kiswahili/French on the other (this combined, layered view also allows for a reinterpretation of Goyvaerts & Tembue's data on Zairian codeswitching in their 1992 publication). Such switches are mostly motivated by choices to select or exclude a certain participant in the conversation, which is done either because of the targeted participant's lack of linguistic capacities or because of her or his membership of a particular linguistic community (see Meeuwis & Blommaert in press for details).

The usage of French in codeswitching at the first level of layered codeswitching is of crucial importance in this chapter. This type of codeswitching is so widespread in present-day Zaire that it must be considered the unmarked norm, rather than an exceptional pattern of language use. The generalized knowledge of French, described above, contributes to this pervasiveness of codeswitching and its unmarked character. However, the widespread occurrence of codeswitching is not only made possible by, but also adds to this ubiquity of French in Zairian society. That is, in addition to the fact that codeswitching provides Zairians with a means to display a certain proficiency in French, the codeswitching of others also counts as an important *source of input* through which knowledge of French is actually taken up and maintained. As such, the codeswitching of others brings French to those who are denied access to formal education.

4.4.2. The vernacular languages

In the *Atlas Linguistique du Zaïre* (ALAC 1983), the number of African languages in Zaire was established at 212. Since the earliest linguistic overviews of the colony, however, the enumeration of the Zairian languages has always been a matter of dispute, estimates ranging mostly between 200 and 300, with exceptional counts of 400 and 600 (Mazala & Bwanga 1988). Whereas the number of languages is never agreed upon, all the linguistic overviews always converge on one assumption, i.e. the belief in the coincidence of ethnic and linguistic boundaries. Above, I explained how the first colonial endeavors in the realm of the human sciences were underpinned by a tacit belief that linguistic and ethnological classifications are essentially interchangeable representations of the same categories. In this view, ethnic groups are distinguished on the basis of the criterion of shared language, while languages are distinguished on the basis of ethnic boundaries.[36]

This belief is manifest in such authoritative colonial classifications of the Congolese languages as Hulstaert (1950) and, especially, Van Bulck (1948; 1952). The ethnic basis of Van Bulck's taxonomy is clear at the explicit level. In a comment on his work, Hulstaert himself wrote that *"le P. van Bulck, tout en ne négligeant nullement le point de vue linguistique, a cependant groupé les langues plutôt selon les affinités ethniques des tribus"* (1950: 4). In the introductory notes to his own 1950 classification, Hulstaert argues that his map differs from Van Bulck's in that his only attends to purely linguistic criteria and is, as such, not guided by the knowledge of ethnic boundaries (1950: 4, 14). Underneath Hulstaert's explicit argumentation, however, one can detect an implicit preference for equating the languages to be distinguished with restricted ethnic groups. Hulstaert chooses to label each of the languages according to the name of the 'tribe' that speaks it and he also classifies and discusses them from the perspective of these ethnic groups. Typical presentations of the languages in Hulstaert's text include *"les Mondunga de Lisala ne forment qu'une petite enclave dans les Ngombe. Ils ne sont que près de 4.000 individus. Leur langue est, selon Mgr De Boeck, très différente des autres langues soudanaises de la région"* (1950: 20) and *"les Bajia-Basakata du Lac Léopold II parlent une langue très apparentée au Kiteke. Elle se divise en plusieurs dialectes: Kejia, Kesakata, Keboma, etc."* (1950: 33). Thus, in Hulstaert's account as well, the languages are taken to be tied to restricted ethnic groups in a simplex, one-to-one relationship.

The postcolonial scientific productions, including the mentioned *Atlas*, have continued this tendency. First of all, the number of 212 languages suggested by

36. It must be mentioned, again, that it is of little analytical relevance to discern whether either language or ethnic descent is logically and heuristically primary in the assumed correspondence. Existing taxonomies of the restricted ethnic groups are used as grounds of justification in linguistic classifications, and in ethnic classifications existing linguistic taxonomies serve these purposes.

the *Atlas* is remarkably similar to the number of restricted ethnic groups proposed in most ethnological overviews (cf. the discussions in 4.3). Next, Ngalasso's overview includes the remark that *"les chiffres avancés naguère varient entre 200 et 300 langues et dialectes correspondant à autant sinon davantage d'ethnies"* (1986: 8). Lufuluabo introduces his overview of the languages of Zaire as follows: *"it has been reported that 250 cultural groups in Zaire speak 250 languages"* (1988: 561). In Mazala & Bwanga's study, finally, we learn that *"les langues locales sont celles qui caractérisent ou celles par lesquelles on peut identifier les tribus au Zaïre"* (1988: 60). These authors also provide an explicit formulation of the belief in the coincidence of ethnic and linguistic groups: *"on pourrait donc, à cet effet, établir une relation implicationnelle entre langues et tribus, relation qui peut se résumer de la manière suivante: à chaque tribu correspond une langue"* (Mazala & Bwanga 1988: 60).

Typologically, the vast majority of Zaire's vernacular languages are of Bantu origin. 'Zones' B, C, D, H, J, K, L, and M in Guthrie's classification of the Bantu languages (Guthrie 1948) are all represented within the territorial borders of Zaire. A small segment of the Zairian languages, all spoken in the northernmost parts, are traditionally classified under such non-Bantu labels as 'Adamawa-Eastern' and 'Nilo-Saharan' (Bendor-Samuel ed., 1989; Kutsch & Sim 1994). Examples of the Adamawa-Eastern languages are Ngbandi (the language of the restricted ethnic group to which Mobutu belongs), Ngbaka, and Zande. The Nilo-Saharan languages of Zaire fall apart in the group of Central-Sudanic languages, including Mangbetu, Moru-Madi, and Lendu, and the group of Nilotic languages, in which Alur and Kakwa are two important examples. There are also the languages of the Pygmy groups, which are also not included among the Bantu languages.

4.4.3. The four national languages: Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba

4.4.3.1. Relationships of the national languages to the other African languages

Language use and geographical spread

Whereas the 212 vernacular languages are typically associated with the smallest form of ethnic affiliation in Zaire, i.e. the restricted ethnic groups, a number of languages are known to transcend these limited spheres. These languages differ from the vernacular languages in that they are known, and more than occasionally used, by a significant number of members of other restricted ethnic groups than the one to which they are traditionally related, or in that there is no restricted ethnic group with which they can be associated. The most important of these languages of wider communication are: Mangbetu and Zande in the northeastern parts of the country, close to the borders of Sudan and the Central African Republic; Mongo in the central basin of the Zaire river; Tetela in the easternmost parts of East Kasai and in Maniema; Shi and Rwanda in North and South Kivu; Bemba in southern Shaba; Lingala in the Equateur region, in the western and northern parts of Upper Zaire, in the northern parts of Bandundu, and in and around Kinshasa; Kikongo in Lower Zaire and in the southern parts of Bandundu; Tshiluba in the two Kasai regions and in northwestern Shaba; and Kiswahili in Shaba, in the three Kivu regions, and in Upper Zaire (see figure 2). The areas of distribution of many of these languages also extend beyond the Zairian state borders.

As may be discerned from this list, four languages stand out from the other ones in terms of geographical spread, i.e. Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba.[37] From the perspective of Zaire as a whole, Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba are the African languages with the largest areas of distribution and thus count as the most prominent ones in the country's multilingual landscape.

But also when the matter is looked upon *from within* each area of distribution, a certain prominence of these four languages can be observed. This internal prominence pertains to the relationships of diglossia that exist, in each of the respective areas, between these languages and the other ones (Kazadi & Nyembwe eds., 1987; Boguo 1988; Mutombo 1991; Ngalasso 1986). As was explained in section 4.4.1, French is the exclusive medium of instruction in secondary and higher education. In primary education, on the contrary, some schools heed the official directions and use an African language in the first grades. In choosing which African language to be used, the majority of these schools turn to Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, or Tshiluba (according to geographical situation). Similar relationships of diglossia exist in the administration. I indicated that oral vertical communication in the administrative structures is mostly conducted in a language other than French. In the majority of the cases, the African language used in these contexts is Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, or Tshiluba. Jurisdiction is another functional domain characteristically occupied by these four languages. As mentioned, French is not always applied in the local and lower courts, as orality and traditional African forms of jurisdiction are legally recognized as well. Typically, it is Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba which are turned to in these contexts (Mutombo 1991: 102). In sum, diglossic usage patterns in education, administration, and jurisdiction confer on these four languages a factual prominence within their respective areas of distribution.

There are important exceptions to these diglossic usage patterns. The deviations are due to the fact that the diglossic prominence of the four languages is more grounded in patterns of historically anchored habits, which

37. Typologically, Kikongo, Lingala, Kiswahili, and Tshiluba are all Bantu languages. Kikongo belongs to Guthrie's zone H, Lingala to zone C, Kiswahili to zone G, and Tshiluba to zone L.

will be spelled out below, than in any form of official regulation. Indeed, there is no legal text in present-day Zaire stipulating that when African languages are to be used, only those four may be selected. This legal vacuum will be elaborated upon in the following sections. First, however, the exceptions occurring at the level of actual language usage must be described.

With regard to education, I already mentioned that many schools, especially in urban contexts, use French from the first years of primary education onwards. But even the schools that do use African languages do not always resort to Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba. In some schools in the region of Equateur, for instance, Mongo is used instead of Lingala, and in East Kasai, Tetela is in some cases preferred to Tshiluba (Nyunda 1986a: 87). These exceptions are grounded in preferences and habits of the individual schools, which may date back to colonial times (see below). In the administration as well, the use of Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba is not generalized to a complete and sweeping extent. The factors determining the prevalence of these four languages include Mobutu's policy of transferring civil servants to other parts of the country after a number of years of duty (see section 4.3.3). That is, the reason why Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba are most resorted to in the administration relates to the fact that the civil servants are often appointed in areas where they do not share a vernacular or other language with the local population (Mataba 1987: 132; Sesep 1988: 6). However, the multilingual competence of individual civil servants and the fact that the distances over which they are dispersed do not in each and every case extend beyond regional boundaries, may allow for the use of a local language, instead of Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, or Tshiluba, in the administrative contacts. Similar exceptions occur in jurisdiction: when the language shared by all the parties involved in a hearing – judge, witness, defendant, lawyer, etc. – is not Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, or Tshiluba, but, in fact, a local language or another regional language of wider communication, it is this latter category of languages which will be resorted to. Indeed, I mentioned that in these contexts as well, language choice is primarily grounded in pragmatic considerations, the only concern being to find a medium of communication that can be used by all the parties involved.

Institutional recognition and semi-official status

The functional (albeit approximate) attribution of Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba to such institutional domains as education, administration, and jurisdiction vests in these languages a certain 'semi-official status'. This status is furthermore substantiated by other types of formal and institutional recognition of these four languages. It is important, however, to first mention that in present-day Zaire, Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba are actually *removed* from a thoroughly sanctioned status. Reports such as Goyvaerts et al. (1983: 50), who state that *"in 1973 the four languages were officially elevated to the status of national language"*, and Kutsch & Sim

(1994: 5979), who maintain that *“Zaire recognizes four regional lingua francas”*, are based on misguided analyses. Independent juristic studies by Boguo (1988: 55), Matumele (1987: 189), Ngalasso (1986: 16), and Sesep (1988: 3) have now revealed that there is no statement in the Zairian constitution or in any other Zairian law which explicitly identifies or names these four languages as a specific class within the totality of Zairian languages. There is, in other words, no such thing as a juridical recognition of Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba in modern Zaire.[38] In education as well, the only explicit distinction made in the official instructions is between French on the one hand and all the African languages on the other, this latter category being acted towards as one monolithic block. None of the official decrees and instructions relative to primary and secondary education promulgated since 1960 (CEREDIP 1986) explicitly names Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba (see also Ngalasso 1986: 24-25). In the administration, there are no official instructions at all regulating the choice of language in oral contacts, which is similar to the situation in in jurisdiction, where the instructions only refer to orality, not to the languages to be used in this oral component.

What does exist is a set of linguistic *practices*, applied in domains which are to be situated outside the realm of the government’s official legislations, but which are undeniably close to the political authorities and which have a distinctively semi-official and institutional character. Rather than speaking of an ‘official status’, it is, therefore, more appropriate to qualify the position of Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba in Zaire as a ‘semi-official’ status, as Ngalasso (1986) suggests. This semi-official status is, however, a most tangible reality. As Ngalasso (1986: 16) writes, *“dans la pratique, le rôle imparti à chacune des grandes langues véhiculaires (ciluba, kikongo, kiswahili et lingala) est tout à fait évident. […] Dans ce sens, on pourrait dire qu’elles sont, elles aussi, partiellement, des langues de l’Etat”*.

In addition to the institutional linguistic practices applied in education, the administration, and jurisdiction, which were described above, two other important institutional domains contributing to the semi-official recognition of

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38. At this point, it may be useful to make clear that since the status and position of the four languages are not backed by any official and explicit sanction, it is also impossible to say *what variant* of each of the languages counts as the ‘national language’. Indeed, as will become clear below, each of the languages Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba, consists of a range of sociolectal and geographical variants. Whenever these languages are identified as Zaire’s four ‘national languages’, as in the academic contexts and in the Zairian media, each of them is referred to ‘as a whole’, and no identification is made of which variant of the language counts as the norm. Therefore, claims to the effect that *“Zaire […] establish[ed] Shaba Swahili as one of the four indigenous national languages”* (Blommaert 1996: 9) and that the variant of Lingala which is used by the Catholic missionaries in the northern parts of the country *“is one of the national languages of Zaire”* (1996: 19) unfortunately add to the great confusion that already exists concerning the national languages in Zaire. (With regard to the first claim, one could actually observe the opposite: in the daily newscast on *Télé Zaïre*, and very often in primary education as well, it is the East-African variant of Kiswahili which is used, and not the Shaba variant or any other Zairian variant.)

the four languages must be mentioned. One is the domain of the discourse of linguists, education specialists, and other academics and institutionally sanctioned intellectuals. Another domain is the language use of the official radio and television company, OZRT.

With regard to the first domain, the most important contribution comes from Zairian academics and their recommendations – made both on an individual basis and through the academics' participation in national advisory commissions – for the application of a state-sponsored language policy in education and other sociocultural domains. In these recommendations, Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba are very often pushed forward as the best candidates for a renewed promotion of Zaire's African languages as opposed to the ex-colonial language French. As these commissions and academics are institutionally sanctioned social arbiters of Zairian society, their recognition of the four languages in question coconstitutes these languages' 'semi-official' status. These matters are well illustrated by a 'declaration of opinions' published by the 1984 *Commission Nationale de la Réforme*, a commission composed of linguists and education specialists and installed to advise the government on educational reforms (published in CEREDIP 1986: 324). In contrast to the *official* instructions and directions (see above), this declaration includes the recommendation that not just *any* African language, but, very precisely, Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba, should be used as the media of instruction in primary education. The onset of the declaration reads: *"la Commission Nationale a fixé aux différentes cellules les recommandations suivantes: au cycle maternel, au cycle artisanal, au cycle primaire, l'enseignement se donne en […] lingala, swahili, kikongo, tshiluba selon la région"* (1986: 324). Through the identification of Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba by such an important – though not legislative – body as this national advisory commission, the four languages are recognized at an institutional level. The case of the *Commission Nationale de la Réforme* is not idiosyncratic, but is, in fact, representative of a general tendency among commissions, engaged academics, and other intellectuals.

With regard to the domain of the OZRT, it must be repeated, as explained above, that more or less one fourth of the broadcast time on *La Voix du Zaïre*, the official Zairian radio, and on *Télé Zaïre* is devoted to programs in African languages, while all the other programs are in French. In actual fact, the only African languages used here are Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba. By limiting the time reserved for the African languages to Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba, the state company OZRT institutionally sanctions these four languages and contributes to the semi-official status they enjoy among the totality of Zaire's African languages.

The academics' recommendations and the OZRT are two domains in which the four languages are also singled out by means of a distinctive linguistic label. It is in these domains that the identification of Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba as Zaire's four 'national languages' (*langues nationales*) must be situated. Both in the academics' recommendations and in the case of the OZRT, the prominence of Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba is integrated in significant wording strategies, pertaining to the use of the term *langues nationales*. In all of the state's *official, legal* decrees and instructions relative to primary and secondary education (CEREDIP 1986), the term *langues nationales* is used as an interchangeable synonym of *langues maternelles*, *langues africaines*, *langues zaïroises*, etc., and refers, as such, to all of Zaire's African languages, as opposed to the European language, French. To a large extent, the same frame of reference is adopted by the advisory commissions and the academics. The difference, however, lies in the fact that in the discourse of these intellectuals, the term *langues nationales* is also used in a more limited sense, referring restrictively to Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba. Their discourse is thus marked by a combined application of both an inclusive and a restrictive meaning of the term. An example is the common statement pronounced at the end of a linguistic colloquy held in March 1985 in Kinshasa, which treated with the need for elaborating a national policy for the use of the African languages in Zairian society (Kazadi 1987a; Kazadi & Nyembwe eds., 1987). One of the items of this statement is the participants' shared complaint that *"dans le domaine de l'orthographie et standardisation des langues nationales"*, there is an *"existence de plusieurs graphies pour les langues zaïroises"*, as well as an *"inexistence des formes standardisées pour toutes les langues nationales"* (Kazadi 1987a: 285). In these sentences, the label *langues nationales* is used in its inclusive sense, referring to all the African languages spoken in Zaire. Another item of the common statement, however, is the recommendation to *"officialiser l'utilisation de nos quatre langues nationales dans la transcription des actes et des documents courants"* (1987a: 287). Here, the term *langues nationales* particularly identifies Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba, as distinct from the rest of the country's African languages. Complementing the inclusive signification of *langues nationales* with a more restrictive one is widespread in the discourse of Zairian intellectuals (and lay people) on language matters. As such, Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba are not only singled out by means of certain institutional *practices*, they are also provided with a distinguishing label at a meta level of linguistic *naming*.

A similar wording strategy is applied by the OZRT. The programs in African languages on national radio and television are called *émissions en langues nationales*. After the day's main newscast, which is read in French, *Télé Zaïre* shows a screen-wide cardboard, reading *Informations en Langues Nationales*. What follows is a summary of the main news titles, first in Kiswahili, then in Tshiluba, then in Lingala, and last in Kikongo. No other African language is used in these 'informations in national languages'. The Zairian television thus limits the range of African languages it qualifies as *langues nationales* to Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba, and adds, as the academics and commissions do, a meta level component to the semi-official status of Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba.

In sum, the semi-official status of Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba is a matter of institutional, but *extra legem*, linguistic practices applied in education, administration, jurisdiction, and the media, and of the inclination of academics and national advisory commissions to push them forward in their engaged publications and recommendations. In the media and in the discourse of the academics, the institutional recognition is furthermore complemented, at a meta level, with an explicit identification of Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba as Zaire's 'national languages'.

Historical origins of the use and spread

The distinctive geographical spread and the functional prominence of Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba in present-day Zaire must be traced back to early language practices and policies applied in colonial times. One of the earliest influential practices goes back to the time of the Congo Free State, i.e. to the preference, arisen at that time, to maintain a pronounced discrepancy between horizontal and vertical modes of communication.

During the Congo Free State, French (probably complemented with English) was the *de facto* official language, accomplishing almost all the functions of horizontal communication. Bokamba (1976), Fabian (1986a), Hulstaert (1946), Polomé (1963; 1968) and Samarin (1984) describe how one of the first concerns of the earliest European settlers and agents was to find an appropriate medium to communicate with the Africans. After an initial enthusiasm for French (Fabian 1986a: 66; Yates 1980), this language was soon eschewed as a possible candidate for these vertical patterns of communication, as its knowledge among the Africans was taken as a threat for the colonizers' supremacy. French was thus to be exclusively attached to the domain of horizontal communication. On the other hand, many considered the territory's heterogeneity in African languages an obstacle for operational efficiency: the patterns of vertical communication could impossibly be erected on what many felt to be an insurmountable plenitude of languages and 'dialects'. So, preference had to be given to a limited number of African languages of wider communication. The supremacy, in both colonial and postcolonial times, of Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba over the other African languages stems from these nineteenth century concerns to simplify the territory's multilingual constellation and to apply different horizontal and vertical modes of communication.

The Europeans of the Free State did not simply 'happen upon' these four languages of wider communication. It would be misleading to contend that Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba, and their respective areas of distribution, were existing realities the Europeans simply 'drew upon' in designing their language practices and policies. It was, rather, the European penetration itself which shaped the spread of these four languages and their usage patterns as they present themselves today. That is, the colonizers' orientation towards Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba as the preferred media of vertical communication actually organized their spread over areas where they had never been spoken before, and where they thus had to be acquired, by the local populations, as 'new' (second or foreign) languages. In some cases, the Europeans' linguistic preferences even informed the very emergence of the language itself. A historical sketch of the origins of each language will clarify these matters.

Kikongo

The Zairian language of wider communication currently known as Kikongo did not exist as such before the 1890s (Bokamba 1993; Hulstaert 1946; Samarin 1990; also Heine 1970; Mufwene 1988; 1989; 1990). Before that period, a variety of different and small-scale languages were spoken in the lower-Congo area, such as Ntandu, Yombe, and Ndibu, among many others. As in most parts of the Congo, interactions between speakers of these different languages were based on the *de facto* multilingual competence of individuals, rather than on the use of a special and functionally limited lingua franca. In 1898, the Congo Free State began the construction of a railroad between the estuary of the Congo and the lowest navigable part of the river, which is situated at some 100 kms. north of the present capital. This immense project involved a massive mobilization and relocation of the local populations, entire families being engaged as railroad workers, porters, and station personnel. The Free State officials controlled this local work force indirectly, i.e. through a corps of intermediary soldiers and auxiliaries, who had been previously recruited on the coasts of West and East Africa (Idumbo 1987: 172; Samarin 1984; 1989b). In these processes of indirect control, a lingua franca arose out of one of the many smaller languages of the southwestern region, to wit Manyanga. The emergence of Kikongo was, thus, entirely triggered by the first European colonial activities, whereas the linguistic formation of the language was only minimally informed by the structures of the European languages. The linguistic formation of Kikongo was partly a product of simplification processes and of linguistic interference from the languages of the foreign intermediaries. Another significant factor was the wide and rapid spread of the language, controlled and organized by the colonizers – the formation and the spread of the language being historically inseparable processes. The agents and settlers used, imposed, and spread Kikongo as the unique and mandatory language of colonial vertical communication throughout the present region of Lower Zaire and the southern parts of Bandundu. The language was adopted by the local populations and, in this process, elaborated on the basis of their respective languages. By the first decade of the twentieth century, the language had also acquired a number of mother-tongue speakers. The fact that Kikongo was for the Africans a new and foreign language, imposed upon them as the only admissible language to communicate with their superiors is revealed by some of the many names that have been given to the language, i.e. *Kikongo ya Leta*, which means 'State Kikongo', and *Kileta*, which may be translated as 'Statish' or 'the language of the State'.[39]

Lingala

No language known by the name of Lingala and displaying the linguistic structures it does now existed before the first European penetrations (L. De Boeck 1952; 1953; Hulstaert 1946; 1953; 1989; Hulstaert & De Boeck 1940; Mbulamoko 1991; Samarin 1990; see also Knappert 1958; 1979; Meeuwis 1995). Lingala emerged in the northwestern, equatorial regions in the last decades of the nineteenth century. One of the most widely spoken languages met with by the first European explorers and settlers of the northwestern regions was Bobangi, the language of a restricted ethnic group living along the banks of the Zaire river between, roughly, the area immediately north of the present capital and the northern bend of the river. The first Free State agents, settlers, military officers, and others saw in Bobangi a viable candidate for the region's unique language of vertical communication. This option gave rise to an entirely new language, shaped by linguistic influences of many different kinds. The language – in the Congo Free State period also known by the labels 'Bangala', 'Ngala', and 'Mangala' – was first of all restructured by the West-African, Zanzibari, and Bakongo intermediaries (Hulstaert 1989; Samarin 1990). Another important shaping factor was, as was the case for Kikongo, the early geographical spread of the language as it was soon adopted in all the Free State stations along the river, from the present capital to the actual city of Kisangani, and north of it. In this process of directed language spread, the local populations were forced[40] to adopt Lingala as a new, foreign language (which led to its being called by the Africans *la langue de l'état*, Hulstaert 1989: 107), whereby many structural elements of their native languages were introduced into the new language. Moreover, by the end of the nineteenth century Lingala had also been adopted as the official language of the armed forces, first raised in the northwestern regions and later unfolded over the entire territory, which also led to linguistic interferences from the recruits' mother tongues. In the first decades of the twentieth century, then, a new form of linguistic influence further shaped the language. Some missionaries, such as the Protestant W. Stapleton and later and more influentially the Catholic Mgr. Egide De Boeck, a 'Scheutist'[41] stationed at Nouvel-Anvers (see also 4.3.1 and 4.3.2.2), judged that the grammar and lexicon of the newly emerged language were too poor for it to

39. Many other names have been used to refer to Kikongo. Heine (1970: 67) mentions no less than 15 such names. A few examples are 'Fiote', 'Kituba', 'Munukutuba', and 'Ikeleve'.

40. Hulstaert exclaimed: *"tout le monde [est] obligé de parler lingala à cause de l'Etat ou d'autres blancs pour… éviter la prison!!"* (Vinck 1994: 546)

41. 'The Scheutists' is the name by which this congregation is commonly known. Officially, the congregation is called, in Dutch, *De Orde van het Onbevlekte Hart van Maria van Scheutveld*, and, in Latin, *Congregatio Immaculutae Cordis Mariae* (CICM).

function properly as a medium of education, evangelization, and other types of vertical communication (Hulstaert & De Boeck 1940; Vinck 1994). They set out to artificially '(re)bantuize' the language by means of a wholesale production of prescriptive Lingala grammars and vocabularies, in which they explicitly qualified their work as 'bringing the language (back) to its Bantu roots'. The Scheutists partly succeeded in their language-forging endeavors, as some segments of the northern populations indeed adopted the newly dictated variety as their own language. At the same time, however, all the state agents and officials, as well as many other missionary orders, disregarded these (re)bantuizing endeavors and stuck to the 'original' variant for communicating with the colonized (Hulstaert & De Boeck 1940: 33). It is also this older variant which was adopted when the administration decided to use Lingala for all modes of vertical communication in the capital after its transfer to Leopoldville in 1929 (L. De Boeck 1952; 1953; De Rop 1953b; van Wing 1953).

Kiswahili

Before the first European penetrations, Kiswahili was only known in some separate centers of eastern Zaire, in particular in the central parts of what are currently the three Kivu regions. In these places, the local populations used it in their occasional contacts with East-African traders and only to a very limited extent as a language of daily communication among themselves (Fabian 1986a: 13, 43, 145; 1986b). The southeastward expansion of the Congo Free State in the late 1880s and 1890s was marked by campaigns against the East-African slave traders and, especially, their importation of Islam in Maniema (Harms 1981; Vangroenweghe 1985). It was especially through contact with these East Africans that the Free State agents and missionaries encountered Kiswahili in the eastern Congo. They adopted it and applied it as the mandatory language of vertical communication between them and the local population. By 1894, the most important missionary order in the eastern regions, the *Pères Blancs*, had come to use it as a medium of instruction in the schools. By the first decades of the twentieth century, Kiswahili – at that time also called 'Kingwana' – had succeeded in becoming the lingua franca of the entire eastern section of the Congo, from the present city of Kisangani (then, Stanleyville) in the north to Lubumbashi (Elisabethville) in the south. In the northern regions, its rapid and vast spread led to a certain competition with Lingala, which was penetrating eastwards. The use of Kiswahili did not remain limited to modes of communication between the colonial rulers and the Africans, but was also adopted by the Congolese for their interethnic contacts. In any of the cases, Kiswahili was for the Africans an introduced and imposed language, which they had to acquire as a foreign language on top of the languages they already knew. In some areas, especially in urban centers, the language also gradually acquired communities of native speakers (Polomé 1986). It is important to note that, although in some contexts this nativization of the lingua franca occurred after having been introduced as a language of interethnic communication, differing patterns prevailed in other contexts. Fabian writes how in the area around Elisabethville, for instance, Kiswahili was never *"a minimal code adopted to fill a gap that could not have been filled by any number of languages"* (1986a: 110), i.e. it was never a special and functionally limited lingua franca. The use of Kiswahili was imposed upon the Elisabethville community of urban workers – most of which were 'imported' from the northern parts of the Katanga province – as the obligatory language of vertical communication. The members of this community immediately adopted the language for all modes of ordinary and extraordinary communication among themselves.

Tshiluba

In pre-European times, the people of the Kasai regions dealt with multilingualism in more or less the same way as elsewhere, i.e. on the basis of individual multilingualism rather than on the basis of a specific lingua franca (De Rop 1960: 11ff; Heine 1970; Hulstaert 1946; Lufuluabo 1988; Muyaya 1988; Polomé 1968). The first missionaries and state agents who arrived in Kasai in the 1880s, met with a variety of different languages, one of the most dominant of which was Tshiluba, spoken by both 'the Luba' and 'the Lulua', as these two socially opposed groups would later be known (see 4.3.2.2). The language which is now called Tshiluba and which is currently known as one of Zaire's four national languages is, however, notably different from that original language. The first European settlements at the end of the nineteenth century brought with them mass relocations and ethnic reformulations of the local populations, drafted as workers for railroad and mining constructions set up in both Kasai and Katanga. It is these massive restructuring and dispersions of group patterns that gave rise to the lingua franca, which in the earliest references was distinguished from the original local languages by means of terms such as 'Tshiluba lingua franca', 'Kituba' (which, as the Kikongo lingua franca was also occasionally designated by that name, often led to much confusion), 'Kiluba' (which was also ambiguous, as 'Kiluba' was also used to refer to the language of the Luba-Shankadi in northern Shaba), and *Tshiluba de traite*. During its geographical spread, controlled and organized by the Europeans who applied it as the obligatory language of vertical communication, 'Tshiluba lingua franca' was further elaborated and shaped by the influence of the many local languages it encountered on its way, among which Kuba, Songye, Tetela, Lunda, and Tshokwe. Very early, the local missionaries (especially Mgr. De Clerq) set out to codify the language, thereby coining a new standard to be used in schools, evangelization projects, and writing (Hulstaert & De Boeck 1940: 67). In this process of language forging, the missionaries often played havoc with the existing linguistic realities, combining, for instance, the phonological system of one of the varieties of the lingua franca or a local language with the verbal inflection of another variety or local language (see De Rop 1960: 11 for technical details). Given their immense moral authority and their crucial role in such key fields of social formation as education, the missionaries succeeded in establishing their new language among some parts of the population, but their endeavors were not always heeded by the Free State's and, later, the colony's administrative and other personnel, who preferred to use the original lingua franca in communicating with the population.

Before concluding this historical overview, it must be mentioned that the selection and organized spread of Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba were not the accomplishment of the Belgian colonial body as a whole. As alluded to in the descriptions above, the promotion of these languages as the mandatory media of vertical communication was primarily a matter of the governmental administration, while some (but by no means all) missionaries and other amateur linguists did not always applaud these endeavors (Hulstaert & De Boeck 1940; Fabian 1986a; Hulstaert 1946; 1953; Samarin 1989a; Yates 1980). These disagreements can, however, hardly be explained in uniform terms. There was rather a range of widely differing degrees to which the opponents protested, as well as a whole range of varying vocabularies used in these protests. With regard to the protesting missionaries, for instance, most differences did not follow the boundaries of religious conviction, as variance also occurred *within* the Protestant and Catholic camps. It is even difficult to connect the different positions with specific congregations; the missionaries of the Catholic congregation of the *Missionaires du Sacré Cœur* (MSC), for instance, did not all embrace the same linguistic points of view. It is, we must conclude, compulsory to attribute the different tokens of protest to *individual* missionaries and to identify these persons as real historical figures rather than as representatives of social 'roles'.

The range of varying forms of protest may be summarized as follows. Many missionaries and other colonial linguists did not protest at all and unquestionably followed the practices installed by the government, using the four lingua francas as they had originally emerged for vertical communication (Coupez 1953; Hulstaert 1953; Tanghe 1930). A widespread belief among the opponents, on the other hand, was that the lingua francas were 'poor', 'underdeveloped', and 'deficient' languages. In 1953, the linguist A. Coupez observed that the opponents *"ne s'accordent que sur un seul point: tous […] condamnent, et c'est heureux, les Kongo commercial, Luba commercial, Ngala, Swahili, etc. (que le R.P. Van Bulck désigne sous le nom de 'linguae francae') dont l'extrême pauvreté ne permet que l'expression d'idées élémentaires"* (1953: 603). The opponents *dis*agreed, then, on the question as to how this problem of structural deficiency was to be solved. An important number of missionaries and others believed that the position of the four languages as the colony's main media of vertical communication had to be maintained. Only, their structural deficiency had to be repaired by means of a rapid and directed intervention from above. This is the context in which some missionaries, such as the Catholics E. De Boeck and De Clerq, set out to forge new and more elaborate languages out of the existing lingua francas (see above), embarking on the massive production of lexica and grammars on the basis of their own knowledge of the local languages that surrounded them. The others shared the common view that the four lingua francas were corrupt and deficient languages, but advocated their complete abandonment in all forms of vertical communication. In their opinion, the lingua francas had to be replaced with vernacular languages or other languages of wider communication. Father Hulstaert was one of these radicals (Hulstaert & De Boeck 1940 is a good representation of the discussion; see also Vinck 1994). He advocated the downright replacement of Lingala in his region, the central basin, by Mongo, arguing that the guided 'correction' of Lingala could never lead to satisfactory results, as this would still result in the imposition of a foreign, and thus culturally alienating, language upon the Africans. Although Hulstaert did not succeed in having his viewpoint adopted by all the members of his religious congregation, the MSC, his ideas were taken over in some other, isolate parts of the colony. In the area of the river's estuary, for instance, some missionaries similarly rejected the Kikongo lingua franca, both in its 'improved' and in its originally emerged variant (Heine 1970: 69).

Due to their internal dissension, the opponents of the State's and the linguistically uncommitted missionaries' practice to use and promote Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba in their uncorrected form never succeeded in getting their views accepted at a general level. The vast majority of the missionaries and of the administrative, military, and juridical personnel, did not feel concerned by these theoretical and 'academic' discussions of some individual eccentrics. At least until the creation of an official *Commission de Linguistique Africaine du Ministère des Colonies* in the 1950s (Nsuka-zi-Kabuiku 1987: 6), the majority considered the issue to be a tempest in a teapot. The government's attitude was eloquently epitomized in this laconic statement of a higher state official (cited by Coupez 1953: 605): *"le problème des langues en Afrique Centrale, et en tout cas au Congo belge, n'est pas un problème de linguistique"*.

Historical origins of the recognition and semi-official status

As explained above, the semi-official status of Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba in present-day Zaire pertains to their utilization in such institutional domains as education, the administration, jurisdiction, and the media, as well as to certain institutionally adopted wording strategies. None of these current practices and wording strategies are 'Zairian' initiatives. They are, instead, a continuation of colonial approaches to linguistic matters in Belgian times and of certain linguistic preferences that dominated the First Republic.

The colonial authorities never promulgated any explicit and official legislation concerning the usage of languages in the governmental structures. In 1946, Hulstaert wrote that *"il n'existe aucun texte législatif concernant la politique linguistique du gouvernement. [...] Il n'existe aucune loi réglant l'usage des langues dans l'administration de la justice"* (1946: 131) – a phenomenon which would remain unchanged until the end of the colonial empire. As far as this lack of linguistic regulation in the administration and jurisdiction is concerned, the colonial context was, thus, very similar to the current Zairian situation. The main difference, however, lies in the fact that at the level of instructions for education, the colonial government did promulgate a number of decrees in which Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba were explicitly mentioned and in which, moreover, they were qualified as 'official languages'. Before turning to the domain of education, I would like to discuss how in the colonial administrative and jurisdictional systems a set of linguistic practices developed at such a high level of uniformity that even with respect to those domains, it is possible to speak of a 'semi-official' status.

Above, it was mentioned in general terms that Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba were the colonizers' preferred languages of vertical communication. By means of a description of the linguistic practices in the colonial administrative and jurisdictional structures and in the media, a more detailed identification of these vertical usages can now be provided. With the exception of some extremely rare cases, governmental agents and civil servants only knew (one of) the four lingua francas, which they used in all their relations with the Congolese (Bokamba 1976; Hulstaert 1946). Proficiency in, or readiness to use, any other African language was virtually nonexistent among the state personnel. For all types of administrative and medical contacts with the Africans, in both the urban and the most remote and rural parts of the territory, the Belgians only made use of Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba. In jurisdiction, a distinction was made between *les tribunaux européens*, i.e. the higher courts reserved for serious infractions and appeal, and *les tribunaux indigènes*, which were operative at the geo-administrative level of the 'territories' and which were based on traditional African forms of jurisdiction. (As was explained, this distinction has persisted into present times.) The *tribunaux européens* almost completely operated in French, but *"si le magistrat connait la langue commerciale [i.e. one of the four major languages] il peut enquêter en celle-ci"* (Hulstaert 1946: 131; see also Bokamba 1976: 116). In the *tribunaux indigènes*, which were presided over by the 'territory commissioner', all hearings and other oral interactions were conducted in the four major languages. (All written administrative and legal documents, such as identity cards and juridical summons, were in French.) With regard to the media, finally, it must be mentioned that Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba were the only African languages used by the official colonial radio company, the *Radio Belgisch Kongo - Radio Congo Belge* (Bokamba 1976: 116).

Let us now turn to the domain of education (for comprehensive historical overviews of the colonial measures regarding the use of languages in education, see Hulstaert 1946; Mbulamoko 1991; Ngalasso 1986; Nsuka-zi-Kabuiku 1987; Polomé 1968; Yates 1980). The first official text in which the four languages were named was the Education Code of 1929, for which earlier propositions had been formulated from 1925 onwards. The 1929 code stipulated that Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba should be subject matters in the schools for teacher training (the *écoles normales*). Ngalasso (1986: 17-18) quotes the principle: *"la langue indigène enseignée à l'école normale sera une des quatre linguae francae"* (see also Hulstaert 1946: 132-133).[42] In one of the subsequent official documents, called *Organisation de l'Enseignement Libre Subsidié pour Indigènes avec le Concours des Sociétés de Missions Chrétiennes* and published by the colonial *Service de l'Enseignement* in 1952, a similar explicit identification of Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba turned up: *"actuellement (1952), la règlementation scolaire s'en tient, théoriquement, à quatre linguae francae dénommées kikongo, lingala, tshiluba, kiswahili"* (*Service de l'Enseignement* 1952: 35). Noteworthy is the observation that this juridical text also explicitly qualifies the four languages as the colony's 'official languages'. On p.35, the legislators use the phrase *"[les] quatre linguae francae officielles"*. Thus, whereas the privileged position of Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba in such governmental structures as the administration, the juridical system, and the media was primarily a matter of established linguistic practice, education was a legal context in which these four languages were named and treated as official languages.

It is, in turn, important to draw attention to the actual practices of the colonial schools. Indeed, the *Organisation* text of 1952 itself contains the complaint that *"en fait, on peut dire qu'une bonne partie des écoles subsidiées ne respectent pas la loi des quatre linguae francae officielles"* (1952: 35). The schools in the colonial system fell apart into two major categories, i.e. official schools and private schools (*écoles libres*). The schools in the former category were entirely run by the government, the latter category comprised the schools set up by the (Catholic) missions and those set up by, and in the vicinity of, large industrial companies, such as the *Union Minière du Haut-Katanga*, *Géomines*, *Huilever*, and the like (Hulstaert 1946: 133). The mission schools were all subsidized by the government, which committed the missions to complying with the programs and instructions the government designed. The schools in the industrial parks ran entirely on their own financial resources and thus constituted a category of schools which were not covered by any form of official regulation. But even the missions' agreement to apply the official educational programs in return for subventions remained theoretical (Lufuluabo 1988). In actual practice, many missions led a strongly detached and self-reliant way of life, and were more concerned with accomplishing their humanitarian and evangelical mission, than with the government's and private companies' colonial interests (see also the discussion of the three pillars of colonization in section 4.2.1). Their position on many social and political issues was often self-willed, and language was not an exception. Throughout the entire period of colonization, many missionaries, swore by the usage of vernacular languages at

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42. Yates' interpretation that the four languages were adduced as the mandatory *media* of instruction (1980: 275) seems to be contradicted by the original statement.

all levels of education and eschewed the lingua francas, as was described at the end of the preceding section.

To conclude this discussion of pre-Zairian official and semi-official recognition of the country's four major languages, I would like to mention briefly a measure taken during the First Republic. On January 7, 1961, the Kasa-Vubu administration divulged an official circular ordering the removal of all French-Dutch bilingual announcements, messages, and signposts in public places. In the present context, it is crucial to indicate that these bilingual public messages were not only to be replaced by French ones. Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba were selected as viable candidates as well. Matumele (1987: 189) quotes the original statement; what the Kasa-Vubu administration asked was to *"enlever de tous les lieux publics et bâtiments administratifs les écritaux flamand-français ou flamand et de les remplacer par des nouveaux en français et en une des quatre langues congolaises: lingala, kikongo, tshiluba, kiswahili suivant la province ou la région"* (see also Kazadi 1987b: 152). This official recognition of the four languages during the short transitional period of the First Republic may be seen both as an extension of the language policies and practices previously applied by the colonizers and as an inauguration of the semi-official status Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba would enjoy in the subsequent Zairian era.

4.4.3.2. Relationships between the four national languages

Besides the coordinate, geographical distribution of Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba in modern Zaire, a number of relationships exist among the four national languages contributing to an additional hierarchical arrangement. Two such hierarchical relationships deserve particular attention. One is the dominance of Kiswahili and Lingala over Kikongo and Tshiluba, which is primarily a matter of numbers of speakers and geographical spread. The second one is more of a political and sociocultural order. This is a dimension along which Lingala towers above the other three national languages.

Taking the linguistic map in figure 2 at face value, the onlooker can hardly avoid the supremacy of Kiswahili and Lingala. In terms of geographical areas of expansion, Kiswahili and Lingala are Zaire's two most important African languages. The numbers of speakers point in the same direction. Although precise statistical data on the four national languages have never been established, the most common estimates vary around the following figures: ± 8 million speakers of Kiswahili, ± 6 million speakers of Lingala, ± 3 million speakers of Tshiluba, and ± 3 million speakers of Kikongo (Ngalasso 1986: 12; Sesep 1986: 32; see also Kutsch & Sim 1994: 5079). Moreover, Kiswahili and Lingala are also used in centers outside their characteristic areas of expansion, which is less the case for Tshiluba, and especially Kikongo.[43] Mutombo (1991:

43. Until recently, Tshiluba was also present outside the Kasai regions, i.e. in the major urban centers of Shaba. However, due to the recent expulsions of Baluba from the Shaba cities (see

92-93) explains that Kiswahili is the habitual language of almost the entire staff and personnel of the Zairian national railway company, the *Société Nationale de Chemin de Fer Zaïrois* (SNCZ), which has its seat in the Kiswahili-speaking city of Lubumbashi. As such, Kiswahili is spread over all of Zaire's territory covered by the railway network: *"dans [les] quartiers [de la SNCZ], c'est la langue kiswahili que l'on entend, ces camps devenant ainsi de véritables foyers de rayonnement d'où le kiswahili part à la conquête d'autres langues véhiculaires zaïroises. Au total, les différentes ramifications du Chemin de Fer zaïrois apparaissent comme des sources de vitalisation de la langue kiswahili. Ce qui assure à cette dernière une présence quasi généralisée non seulement à l'est du pays qui est son foyer, mais aussi et de plus en plus au centre et à l'ouest"* (1991: 93).

The expansion of Lingala throughout the entire country is even more pronounced. Lingala is, actually, the only Zairian language that is spoken and understood in all of the country's major cities – in addition, of course, to these cities' local languages –, such as Mbuji-Mayi, Kananga, Lubumbashi, Matadi, Kisangani, and Bukavu (Boguo 1988; Goyvaerts 1995; Mutombo 1991; Ngalasso 1986; Sesep 1986). Its rapid and widespread expansion is related to the role it fulfills in the political and sociocultural domains of Zairian society, which will be explained in the paragraphs to come.

The current dominance of Kiswahili and Lingala are to a large extent the product of historical processes at work during the Congo Free State and the period of Belgian colonization.[44] Bokamba (1977: 183) and, in particular, Fabian (1986a: 33-44, 88ff) explain how this dominance was established by a distribution of spheres of influence, initiated under the Free State and continued by the later colonizers. As explained in earlier discussions, the Free State's first settlements and governmental activities were concentrated in the area around the northwestern bend of the river, extending, later, as far south as the capital. In an eastward direction, the nineteenth-century explorations led to the discovery of the rich mineral belts in the actual regions of Shaba and Kivu. As such, two of the main founding pillars of the European penetration and colonization, political ruling and economic exploitation, were anchored geographically: the former was anchored in the northwestern and western zones of the colony, the latter in the eastern and, in particular, southeastern parts. In this rough distribution of spheres of influence, the lower southwestern parts and the Kasai region were largely overshadowed. Correspondingly, Lingala and Kiswahili soon outplayed Kikongo and Tshiluba, as these latter two were never able to penetrate either the political or the economic structures of colonization. Shortly

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4.3), the presence of this language in the southeastern regions has decreased considerably over the last years.

44. Statements such as *"Of those four [national languages], Swahili and Tshiluba are, from a historical point of view, far more important than either of the other two"* (Goyvaerts 1995: 300), are therefore unsustained.

after the turn of the century, the establishment of Kiswahili and Lingala as the colony's most prominent languages was a fact (i.a., Stapleton 1911: c-j). It is, in this respect, indicative that during the entire epoch of colonization, of the four lingua francas only Kiswahili and Lingala were taught at the schools for colonial training in Antwerp and Brussels (Hulstaert 1946: 132).

In another hierarchical relationship between the four national languages in current Zaire, Lingala accomplishes functions of national importance which the other three languages do not share (Boguo 1988; Bokamba 1976; Mataba 1987: 129; Ngalasso 1986; 1988; Sesep 1986). This phenomenon differs from the general dominance of Kiswahili and Lingala, in that it is not only a legacy of colonial factors, but must also be attributed to a number of modern, Zairian developments.

First, there is the fact that Lingala dominates all the Zairian sociocultural activities of a widely national appeal. One influential sociocultural domain is the remarkably popular modern Zairian music, which is the most professionally managed and most flourishing of all modern African musical trends, adulated throughout the entire country, and, in fact, in all of sub-Saharan Africa (Bemba 1984). In Zaire, this music is omnipresent, permeating not only all private spheres of life, but also the religious, social, and even political domains of society, as musicians are often mobilized by religious leaders and politicians to sing their praises or defend their causes. Zairian popular music is, except for a negligible number of cases, entirely in Lingala. Regardless of a coming artist's background, he or she will always compose and sing in Lingala. The position of Kinshasa in the highly centralized Zairian state is an important catalyst of this sovereignty of Lingala in modern music. As explained at the end of section 4.2.3, Kinshasa not only functions as the metropolitan cradle of modernity and social change in Zaire, but it is also the place where all the material infrastructure necessary for a modern music industry is centralized. This implies that artists and bands always operate in and from Kinshasa (if not from Paris or Brussels), which is a Lingala-speaking city.

Another sociocultural domain is televized theater. In addition to the many small-scale theater companies performing in the local languages of their own regional centers, there is an important number of Zairian companies whose plays are broadcast across the entire country by the national television stations, themselves located in Kinshasa. Examples are *Maboke*, *Salongo*, *Le Théâtre de Chez Nous*, and, more recently, the company led by Ngadiadia Ngadios. The plays they perform are ironic interpretations of popular social themes, and are always in Lingala. As Ngalasso puts it: *"dans le domaine du théâtre, signalons [...] l'initiative des groupes très dynamiques comme Maboke ou le Théâtre Salongo qui donnent, en lingala, des créations populaires, originales et de bonne tenue scénique: des pièces [...] diffusées par la télévision ont connu un énorme succès à travers tout le pays"* (1988: 113; see also Kambaji 1987: 103).

With regard to the media, it is also significant that the presentation of the news bulletin in the four national languages on the OZRT was not customary in the first years of the Second Republic. In those years, only Lingala and French were used at the national level. Nyembwe (1987a: 124) reminds us of the fact that *“c’est depuis 1979 seulement que les 4 langues nationales ont été introduites à la télévision nationale de Kinshasa pour l’information: seuls le français et le lingala étaient d’usage au niveau national tandis que les autres l’étaient au niveau régional”*.

In addition to the domain of sociocultural activities, Lingala’s prominent position also pertains to its role in the Zairian armed forces (Idumbo 1987; Sesep 1987). Whereas French is the language used for the written administration of the Zairian army, Lingala is the only language in all oral contacts. The training of recruits, the transmission of orders along the military hierarchy, all of the military radio communication, and the contacts with the civil population are conducted in Lingala. And this practice is applied throughout the entire country. In this capacity, Lingala fulfills another function of national importance which distinguishes it from the other three languages.

Another such function is related to the political domain. The conceptual distinction between vertical and horizontal modes of communication is again of crucial explanatory value. Whereas French is the language of horizontal communication in all of the country’s political structures (see above), Lingala is strongly preferred as the language of political vertical communication (Mazala & Bwanga 1988; Mbulamoko 1987; Nyembwe 1987b; Ngalasso 1986; 1988). Lingala is used by the structures of the single party MPR for the mobilization of the masses in political speeches, mass meetings, television and radio spots, and other forms of political consciousness-raising. As Ngalasso indicates, *“le lingala s’affirme partout dans le pays comme la langue officieuse du Parti”* (1986: 112). This preference for Lingala is related to the regional origins of the president, which is the region of Equateur, where Lingala is the dominant language, and to the ascendant role of Kinshasa in the centralist state. Mazala & Bwanga (1988: 61) indicate that *“de nombreux rassemblements populaires que tient le Président de la République à l’adresse tant des habitants de Kinshasa que de l’intérieur du pays se déroulent en lingala”* (see also Van de Voorde 1975: 41, 51), and Nyembwe concludes that *“la classe politique [...], par intérêt ou par nécessité, a suivi le Chef de l’Etat dans l’usage du lingala”* (1987b: 197). From the first years of the Second Republic onwards, Mobutu’s propaganda services, the MOPAP (*Mobilisation, Propagande et Animation Politique*), set out on an intensive production of political slogans epitomizing the grandeur of the leader, the single party, and the 1965 ‘revolution’. These adages were to be learned by heart at school and were to be used in political happenings and in many work contexts (Angulu 1991). Of particular note is the fact that these MPR slogans and proverbs are all in Lingala, and that, at least to my knowledge, no such slogans exist in any of the other African languages.[45] It

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45. These are some examples of the political adages: *Soki première place te, deuxième, kasi troisième place tokondima yango te* (‘If we don’t end up first, then second, but we’ll never accept the third place’, referring to Mobutu’s 1970 promise to make Zaire a First-World country

is also significant that the so-called 'N'Sele manifesto', the French text which enacted the creation of the MPR in 1967, has until the present day only been translated into Lingala, and not into any of the other three national languages (Kambaji 1987: 103; Mbulamoko 1987: 270; Nsuka-zi-Kabuiku 1987: 17).

4.4.3.3. The four national languages and language attitudes

Attitudes towards the four national languages in Zaire are dealt with in the literature (Bokamba 1976; Goyvaerts 1995; Idumbo 1987; Kambaji 1987; Lufuluabo 1988; Mataba 1987; Mazala & Bwanga 1988; Mutombo 1991; Mwamba Kapanga 1990; Ngalasso 1986: 1988; Sesep 1986). However, none of these studies adopts the theoretical and methodological approach espoused in the present study, i.e. a social-constructionist perspective along the lines of discursive social psychology. A reproduction of the findings brought forward by these studies may thus conflict with the global argumentation developed in the rest of this dissertation. It is nonetheless necessary to indicate some of the linguistic attitudes these scholars allegedly observe, for such an indication can clarify the rationales that lie behind the questions with which I confronted my informants during the casual and organized conversations. Indeed, one of the central themes in these organized conversations is the interviewer's implicit claim that *'There are good reasons to believe that the Kiswahili-speakers are or could be offended by the dominance of Lingala in Neptunia'*, i.e. the suggestion that, given the negative attitudes towards Lingala in Zaire described in scientific reports, a conflict between Lingala-speakers and non-Lingala-speakers in Neptunia is at least a theoretical possibility.

With regard to Kikongo and Tshiluba, Lufuluabo (1988: 572) observes that in comparison with Kiswahili and Lingala, these two languages *"have been more narrowly identified with particular ethnic groups"*. Similarly, Bokamba mentions that *"of [the] four national languages only Lingala and Swahili are spoken outside their regions of origin. As a result of this distribution, Tshiluba and Kikongo have come to be identified as ethnic languages"* (1976: 117). The fact that the Baluba and the Bakongo are two of Zaire's most salient larger ethnic groups (see above) is, without doubt, an important factor: given the similarity in the names, the languages are readily associated with these very visible ethnic groups and are thus taken to be 'ethnic', vernacular languages. Lufuluabo also mentions that Tshiluba is often *"said to be a difficult language,*

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by 1980); *Okofunda leta wapi* ('The State is always right'); *Tata ayei, nzala esili* ('Father Mobutu has come, now hunger is over'); *Tata bo? Moko. Mama bo? Moko. Ekolo bo? Moko. Parti bo? Moko. Mokonzi bo? Moko* ('How many fathers? One. How many mothers? One. How many countries? One. How many parties? One. How many leaders? One'). Remarkably, the only widespread political proverbs I know of in languages other than Lingala are politically refractory ones. One example is *habakulake amani* (Kiswahili for 'you can't eat peace', cited by Jewsiewicki 1991: 95), which is a sarcastic reference to Mobutu's emphasis on the fact that his 1965 revolution brought peace after a five-year nightmare of turmoil and bloodshed. Another is *Mobutu n'kabutu* (Tshiluba for 'Mobutu is a disaster', cited by Ntite-Mukendi 1994: 70).

not softly spoken, a language of the most tribalist and arrogant of Zairians, and lacking forms of politeness" and that Kikongo *"is perceived as carrying a bad accent"* (1988: 572). Muyaya (1988:39) also describes how Tshiluba and the Baluba are often perceived as arrogant and boasting.

More numerous are the reports on attitudes towards Kiswahili and Lingala. With regard to the former language, it is remarkable that academic reports in which other than positive attitudes vis-à-vis this language are documented are very hard to find. Lufuluabo (1988) is an example of these reports. He mentions that *"Swahili is probably the language with the most positive attitudes from many people in Zaire. It is said to be the language of deference and politeness, a language spoken in a soft manner"* (1988: 571-572). Mwamba Kapanga (1990) is a study of linguistic attitudes towards the different variants of Zairian Kiswahili. On the basis of a quantitative analysis, this author maintains that the variant spoken in Shaba ranks higher on the scale of prestige than the variant spoken in and around Kisangani, but lower than the one typically associated with the Kivu regions. Kambaji (1987: 100), finally, mentions that Kiswahili differs from the other three national languages, in that it is more strongly considered a factor of unification in its area of expansion than is the case for Kikongo, Lingala, and Tshiluba in their respective areas.

Some authors believe that the association of Lingala with the pronouncedly interethnic city of Kinshasa, as well as its nationwide spread through its usage in the army and modern music, have led to a view that Lingala is an ethnically and regionally 'neutral' language (Boguo 1988; Bokamba 1976; Ngalasso 1988). Whereas Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba are emblematic of *component* parts of the Zairian mosaic of identities, Lingala has succeeded in standing for the country as a whole, as it is the language used in the city where all of these component parts live and work together. Ngalasso (1988: 107) alleges: *"Kinshasa est la ville la plus neutre du Zaïre: bien que située en pleine région kongo, elle échappe à toute appartenance ethnique ou régionale. Le lingala, en tant que langue de Kinshasa participe un peu de cette neutralité"*.

Other reports, however, do not match these observations. In sharp contrast to Ngalasso's observation, these studies maintain that, in the same way as Kiswahili is seen as the language of the eastern regions and in the same way as Kikongo and Tshiluba are considered the languages of the Bakongo and the Baluba, Lingala is typically perceived as the language of the western and northwestern parts of the country and of the ethnic groups that live there. In this view, all of the four national languages, and not just three of them, are indexical of identities that are nationally divisive. Mutombo (1991: 92), for instance, writes that *"[le] lingala [est] senti comme langue de l'ouest du pays"*, and to Lufuluabo (1988: 572) Lingala *"is [...] associated with people coming from the Region of Equateur"*.

In addition to ethnic and regional connotations, the literature also mentions a number of social connotations attached to Lingala. In this context as well, the reported attitudes contrast sharply, ranging from the most positive to the most negative ones. (Lufuluabo 1988 and Sesep 1986 have been particularly revealing in emphasizing that both extremes exist side by side.) With regard to the positive attitudes, the anchoring of Lingala in Kinshasa again fulfills an important role. As the center of modernity, Kinshasa vests in Lingala a prestige of social superiority, metropolitanism, and the new urban society model, as seen in opposition to the 'retarded' rural or provincial hinterland. As Mazala & Bwanga (1988: 69) put it: *"le lingala est considéré comme une langue supérieure qui enferme ses locuteurs dans une sorte de carcan mythique et mystérieux et qui fait d'eux des porteurs d'une nouvelle civilisation"* (see also Goyvaerts 1995; Ngalasso 1988). Some scholars also link up the positive attitudes vis-à-vis Lingala with its role in politics. It is argued that as the political upper class uses Lingala as its medium of informal communication and as Lingala is used for the vulgarization of political themes, the language symbolizes all matters related to social mobility, political promotion, and economic opportunities (Boguo 1988; Goyvaerts 1995; Ngalasso 1988). Lingala, these authors correctly observe, is a prerequisite for taking part in those structures of Zairian society where all of the country's political and economic powers are centralized. They then jump to the conclusion that this matter of observable language usage also confers a subjective prestige on the language. Goyvaerts' report (1995: 310, emphasis added) epitomizes this view when he writes: *"in short, Lingala is clearly associated with 'power',* and carries with it a lot of prestige*"*.

Not all authors jump to such conclusions on the subjective prestige attached to Lingala. Lufuluabo makes the laconic remark that *"if [Zairians] do not agree with the politics delivered in Lingala, they express their discontent with both the form and content of the discourse"* (1988: 572). Lufuluabo rightly observes that the positive evaluation of Lingala is not merely a function of *the fact that* it is used by the powers that be, but rather of the evaluations to which these powers themselves are subjected.

Negative attitudes towards Lingala are also documented with respect to its typical association with the Zairian armed forces. Idumbo explains that *"le lingala joue le rôle d'identification sociale pour les militaires vis-à-vis des non militaires. [...] Les Forces Armées Zaïroises puisent leur force non seulement dans les armes mais aussi et surtout dans la communauté linguistique, dans l'emploi d'une seule langue qui leur sert d'ailleurs de 'Signum social', d'élément d'identification"* (1987: 174 and 176). Many authors point out that this social identification of Lingala with the soldiers, who are perceived as an oppressive threat and as the incarnation of social decadence and swindling, has led to negative stereotypes of the language. Kambaji (1987: 102) maintains that *"[la langue lingala] s'est transformée en un instrument de terrorisation de ce peuple permettant ainsi aux militaires de rançonner ce dernier"*. The association of Lingala with banditism is, in fact, not restricted to the Zairian army. Some authors point to a generalized perception of Lingala as the language of brigands, rapists, and all other kinds of armed or unarmed abusers. Kambaji completes the above remark as follows: *“En outre, cette langue est utilisée comme arme par des malfaiteurs, bandits à mains armées, qui opèrent la nuit, dans les quartiers au domicile des paisibles citoyens. […] En un mot, le lingala passe malgré lui pour la langue de l’oppression sociale qu’un voleur se pointant la nuit utilise pour vous agresser et vous spolier”* (1987: 102).

Some observers explain that this perception of Lingala also lies at the heart of a number of negative attitudes towards the linguistic structures of the language. The view that Lingala is typically the language of delinquents and gangsters is accompanied by a perception of its structures as intrinsically ‘impolite’, ‘brutal’, and ‘disrespectful’. Lufuluabo notes that *“a number of Zairians object to Lingala on the basis that it lacks forms of politeness and respect, and other consider Lingala a ‘poor’ language”* (1988: 572) and Sesep argues that *“certains voient dans la pratique assidue de cette langue la manifestation évidente d’une médiocrité de culture, […] d’une manque de respect, de politesse et de finesse”* (1986: 39).

4.4.4. Language and state ideology in Zaire

As explained above, Zaire’s official state ideology, *authenticité*, champions the mental decolonization of the Zairians. *Authenticité* counts as one of Africa’s most articulated state ideologies, relying on a remarkably developed set of symbolic attributes, which all refer, to varying degrees of vagueness, to a precolonial, authentically African, past. Given its far-reaching articulation and symbolic elaboration, one of the most striking features of *authenticité* is its total lack of a linguistic program (Kazadi & Nyembwe eds., 1987; Boguo 1988; Bokamba 1976; Calvet 1994; Kimputu 1989; Muwoko 1991b; Ngalasso 1986; Nyunda 1986a; 1986b). At no time since the conception of *authenticité* in the late 1960s and early 1970s have the Zairian authorities marshaled the country’s African languages in their arguments for a revalorization of traditional African culture. There has never been any official formulation of *authenticité* in which French is discredited as a culturally alienating and imperialist legacy of colonialism, although this kind of rhetoric has been applied to so many other symbols, such as clothing, names, familial jurisdiction, etc. In short, the history of the Republic of Zaire is marked by the absence of a consciously planned, ideologically inspired, and rationally implemented form of linguistic policy in favor of the African languages.[46]

In what follows, I will first indicate briefly how the elaboration of a fiercely nationalist ideology without a linguistic component is both a continuation of and a rupture with the ideological predecessors of *authenticité*. Next, I will attempt to pinpoint the motives, if any, behind the reluctance to integrate

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46 Therefore, Blommaert’s claim (1996: 9) that *“after independence, Zaire developed what could be called (with some benevolence) a ‘national language policy’ as part of a larger ideological offensive aimed at the re-africanization of society”* remains – with or without the disclaimer of ‘some benevolence’ – an untenable conjecture.

language issues in *authenticité*. Thirdly, the way Zairian linguists and other intellectuals have reacted to this reluctance will be described.

As mentioned in section 4.2.4, two of the main sources of inspiration of *authenticité* were Patrice Lumumba and the marxist-leninist students' organization UGEC (ironically, the former was killed and the latter crushed by the very regime that installed *authenticité*). Nyunda ya Rubango (1986a: 81; 1986b: 256) explains that Lumumba, one of the most convinced nationalists of modern African history, never integrated linguistic or even cultural considerations into his nationalist theories: *"même un 'illuminé' et un nationaliste et progressiste comme Lumumba ne les [les questions culturelles et linguistiques] énonce pas dans son livre percutant posthume 'Le Congo, terre d'avenir, est-il menacé?' et les humiliations linguistiques ne figurent pas parmi celles qu'il décrie dans son discours historique du 30 juin 1960"* (1986a: 81). As far as Lumumba's influence is concerned, the lack of attention for language is thus a continuation of the earlier nationalist viewpoints.

In contrast to Lumumba, the other nationalist voice that marked the political ideas dominating the 1960s, the UGEC, did consider it necessary to complement the anti-imperialist and anticolonialist theories with an articulated linguistic agenda. At their second annual congress in 1962, the UGEC leaders explicitly identified French as one of the attributes of the colonial enterprise and demanded the complete replacement of this language with African ones. This linguistic project was to be accomplished by means of an elaboration of a categorical, state-sponsored language policy and by means of a cultural and linguistic consciousness-raising of the masses (Bokamba 1976: 118; Nyunda 1986a; 1986b). Although they amply drew upon the writings of the UGEC for other points, the Zairian architects of *authenticité* did not adopt this organization's viewpoints on linguistic issues. This is where *authenticité* constitutes a rupture with its predecessors.

In order to understand the motives behind the Zairian political rulers' reluctance to bring *authenticité* in line with the evident linguistic abundance of their country, let us first look at the 'official' rationalizations. In an interview with a French journalist, Mobutu himself once rationalized the apparent contradiction as follows:

> *"Il n'y a pas là de contradiction avec notre politique d'authenticité: notre constitution a institué le français comme langue officielle, et le peuple zaïrois à ratifié cette décision par référendum. Pourquoi? Après tout, direz-vous, on pouvait choisir une autre langue nationale. […] Notre authenticité est ouverte aux apports universels et la langue française, riche en images et en idées, est un de ceux-là. Elle nous facilite l'administration, la diplomatie et l'adaptation aux technologies modernes. Elle est parfaitement compatible avec notre politique d'identité culturelle. Par ailleurs, c'est la langue de la Révolution, de la vôtre comme de la nôtre. C'est la langue de la liberté, de l'égalité, et des droits de l'homme"* (Mobutu 1989: 207-208).

Mobutu's arguments for not excluding French from *authenticité* contain (i) an identification of French as an international language, needed to orient Zaire towards the outside world; (ii) a qualification of French as a 'rich' language, which could imply that the African languages are not 'rich'; (iii) pragmatic as opposed to ideological considerations, identifying French as a warrant for operational efficiency in the domains of administration, diplomacy, and technical advancement; and (iv) the claim that French is an intrinsically 'revolutionary' language, as it was the linguistic vehicle for the French Revolution, which is said to have been the model for the Zairian revolution.

In addition, there is an important number of less explicitly declared motives. An evident one is the fear, shared by many African states since their declarations of independence (Bamgbose 1994; Blommaert 1996), that the selection and promotion of one or more African languages would be grist to the mill of ethnic and other centrifugal forces. A European language, on the contrary, is believed to be nobody's and thus everybody's language: it is ethnically neutral and therefore perfectly suited to guarantee national unity.

Another undeclared motive is related to Zaire's diplomatic and cultural relationship with France (see also Kambaji 1987; Nyunda 1986b). Since his assumption of power in 1965, Mobutu has always greatly relied on the financial and economic support of the French government, which is, of course, conditional upon Mobutu's safeguarding of French interests in the region. These French interests to be protected are not limited to the realm of economic and military control in the world, but also include the domain of cultural and linguistic influence, of which, as known, France makes a particular issue. The loyalty of the architects of *authenticité* to the French language and the related reluctance to promote the African languages to positions where they could be interpreted as threatening competitors must to a large extent be attributed to Zaire's obligations vis-à-vis the French government. Mobutu also often expresses his high esteem of the *Francophonie* movement and the great attachment of his country to its cultural objectives and linguistic viewpoints. It is not without pride that Mobutu repeatedly reminds the world of the fact that Zaire is the largest French-speaking country. One example is the interview referred to above, in which he comments on the *Francophonie* as follows: *"non seulement le Zaïre y adhère avec enthousiasme, mais, le pays le plus vaste de la francophonie, il aspire même à en devenir un des éléments moteurs"* (Mobutu 1989: 207). This remarkable show of cultural loyalty towards France must be seen in the light of Mobutu's dependence on the financial, diplomatic, and military support from Paris.

Since the early 1970s, the apparent contradiction in *authenticité* has caused numerous reactions from Zairian linguists and other intellectuals concerned with sociocultural issues. The reactions have been voiced in an important number of individual publications (Boguo 1988; Bokamba 1976; Kilanga & Bwanga 1988; Mazala & Bwanga 1988; Mbula 1990; Mbulamoko 1991; Mukendi 1988; Muwoko 1990; 1991a; 1991b; Nyembwe 1986; 1993; Nyunda

1986a; 1986b; Sesep 1986; 1988), as well as on the occasion of two national conferences, i.e. the *Séminaire des Linguïstes du Zaïre*, held in Lubumbashi on May 22-26, 1974, and the *Colloque sur l'Utilisation des Langues Nationales dans l'Education et dans la Vie Socio-Culturelle*, held in Kinshasa on March 11-16, 1985 (the proceedings, inauguration lectures, closing speeches, and general reports of which are published as Kazadi & Nyembwe eds., 1987).

The key notion in the linguists' reactions is contradiction. The intellectuals find it incomprehensible that a movement such as *authenticité*, which advocates the decolonization of the mind and the return to authentically African values, is devoid of an agenda for fostering the country's African languages. In these intellectuals' vocabulary, language and culture are treated as organic bodies, intricately related to each other. Their claim is that French is a malicious Trojan Horse, the linguistic-cultural 'genius' of which leads to the cultural alienation of the Zairians. Only the African languages are able to convey the authentic culture and 'spirit' of the Zairians. The following quote is illustrative of this vocabulary.

> *"En effet, la greffe française sur l'âme zaïroise donne lieu à un 'fruit amer', c'est-à-dire un Zaïrois aliéné, détourné de son authenticité, de sa grille ontologique de perception, de cognition, d'intériorisation, de lecture et de réalité sociale. [...] Pour assurer davantage l'intégration socio-culturelle, politique et socio-économique du peuple zaïrois, le pouvoir a tout intérêt à lutter contre la francophrénie et à promouvoir l'éducation des Zaïrois (dès leur bas âge jusqu'à l'âge adulte) en langues zaïroises. [...] [U]ne attention spéciale doit être accordée à [l']éducation [des jeunes] en langues zaïroises, car ceci leur permet de mieux percevoir, intérioriser et résoudre les problèmes spécifiques qui se posent dans leur environnement, à la lumière des données de la philosophie de l'authenticité véhiculée par ces langues."* (Kambaji 1987: 98-103)

Some intellectuals (i.a., Nsuka-zi-Kabuiku 1987) recommend the complete eradication of French from Zairian society, including from the highest levels of official and administrative language use. French, in their eyes, is nothing but a transitory necessity. Others (i.a., Kambaji 1987) only want to reduce the role of French in favor of the African languages, which are to be officially recognized and promoted in education, the media, and other domains. There is also dissension regarding which particular African languages to be promoted. Some maintain that the country is in need of one single African language, i.c. Lingala (i.a., Bokamba 1976; Mataba 1987), while others contest this view and argue that all the African languages, or at least the four national languages, should be promoted with equal fervor. The divide between those who espouse the recognition of Lingala as Zaire's only national language and those who want to maintain the fourfold multilingual frame of Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba is a very fundamental one, and was one of the main factors that brought the 1974 conference in Lubumbashi to naught (see Bokamba 1976 and Sesep 1988 on the 1974 conference).

It is important to note that the Zairian linguists' 'critiques' have always been voiced in a polite sphere of full collaboration, rather than in confrontational or dissenting terms. It is evident that politically *antagonistic* research has never been possible in Mobutu's Zaire. Remarkable, however, is the fact that even politically *neutral or independent* scholarship has always been hard to find in Zaire, especially in the domain of the human and social sciences. That is, nearly all of the Zairian social scientists, even those working outside the country (e.g., Bokamba 1976), are engaged scientists, who are not only concerned with describing and analyzing social issues, but who are also eager to assist the authorities in applying the political decisions and official ideology to the various domains of society.

Regarding the reactions to the absence of a linguistic agenda in *authenticité*, it is striking that none of the authors contests the principles and starting points of the official state ideology. To the contrary, in all these writings *authenticité* and the political ideas of the 'Great Leader' (*le Guide*) are duly revered. It is not the linguists' ambition to replace *authenticité* with a totally new ideological program; rather, they want to urge the authorities to complement and strengthen the existing ideology with a return to the African languages and to cast off the 'treacherous', 'colonial', and 'imperialist' burden of French. The linguists' self-identification as the servants of the state's official ideology is manifest in the following passage.

> *"On ne le répétera jamais assez: la langue est le support et le miroir de toute culture. Et les langues locales, ce sont elles qui devraient apporter à l'authenticité la sève dont elle a besoin pour croître. [...] C'est elle et par elle que l'on devrait atteindre les objectifs voulus en matière de planification linguistique. [...] Par conséquent, les effets de la politique de l'authenticité seraient plus palpables si celle-ci s'était fixé entre autres tâches urgentes la valorisation des langues locales. La politique d'authenticité n'a pas besoin d'être rédefinie [sic] car les actes qui l'ont créée et les discussions qui s'en ont suivi sont claires; l'authenticité est le moteur du développement intégral de notre pays. Comme philosophie, elle tend à aboutir à une praxis; la planification linguistique est une composante de cette praxis."* (Mataba 1987: 130-131)

Thus, the Zairian intellectuals' insistence on the furtherance of *authenticité* in linguistic directions must not be interpreted as 'protest', but, rather, as a form of 'ideological hypercorrection'. That is, the social scientists present themselves as more zealous vindicators and performers of *authenticité* than the very political authorities that designed it. In their actions and discourse, the intellectuals are often more nationalist and more mobutist than the MPR officials and Mobutu themselves. Whereas Mobutu can often be caught in putting *authenticité* and everything around it into perspective or in applying it in somehow inaccurate ways, this is unthinkable in the case of intellectuals or other conspicuous social actors. The self-censorship the intellectuals apply to their own thinking, writing, and behavior does not merely filter out what could be politically delicate or menacing, it also appears to stretch the object of their adulation, the state ideology of *authenticité*, beyond its limits as drawn by the officials themselves. Through these patterns of extreme enthusiasm which I call 'ideological hypercorrection', the intellectuals want to make sure to please the authorities on which they so precariously depend and to anticipate any possible doubt as to their loyalty to the regime.

The MPR authorities have never found it necessary to implement the elaborate list of wishes and recommendations the Zairian linguists presented at the end of the two conferences. Even the urgent and repeated entreaties for the creation of a *Commission Nationale de Planification Linguistique* (Kazadi 1986a) have never been acceded to. The academics only succeeded in moving the political authorities to pronounce a few (vague) declarations of intent. At the *Colloque Nationale sur l'Authenticité*, organized by the MPR in 1981, president Mobutu himself cautiously declared: *"Quant à la littérature zaïroise [...], si le fonds et le contenu portent déjà un cachet particulier inspiré de notre Authenticité, l'usage du français – une langue étrangère – comme moyen d'expression et de communication pour nos écrivains, demeure encore – il faut bien le reconnaître – un défi lancé à l'Authenticité"* (Mbulamoko 1987: 272). And on the occasion of the *Congrès Ordinaire du MPR* in December 1982, the single party made it one of its official positions that *"le nationalisme culturel implique l'utilisation et la promotion des langues zaïroises qui figurent parmi les éléments les plus constitutifs de notre identité nationale"* (1987: 268).

In spite of these two declarations of intent, no governmental steps have ever been taken towards the elaboration of an ideologically organized, state-controlled, and explicated linguistic policy. Muwoko (1991b: 503) summarizes the situation well when he writes that *"la politique linguistique au Zaïre n'existe pas. Seules existent des dispositions marquant des intentions"*. Zaire is, in sum, a country with a highly developed scientific language *planning*, but without any form of governmental language *policy*.

By way of conclusion, finally, it may be stressed that the absence of any explicit governmental policy does not imply that language in Zaire is in no way affected by the political realm. I explained that Lingala is to a large extent the language of informal and vertical modes of communication in Zairian politics. Lingala is the working language of the president and the MPR in many of their contacts with the population. This range of factual behaviors by politicians is, as mentioned, not the object of a consciously designed agenda and is only very exceptionally rationalized in retrospective deliberations. Rather, the dominant usage of Lingala by Zairian politicians has to do with such unquestioned matters as the regional origins of president Mobutu and his entourage, which is the region of Equateur, and the extreme centralization of political and administrative powers in the Lingala-speaking capital, Kinshasa. In other words, the prominence of Lingala in some parts of the Zairian political scene is the product of a web of very implicit and self-evident activities, rather than the outcome of a consciously and rationally modeled policy. This does not mean, however, that the unintended results are less tangible. In fact, such invisible activities are probably more effective than any explicitly planned and forcefully imposed language policy could ever be. Silently but steadily, Lingala has spread outside its original area of expansion more than any other Zairian language has done. Lingala is now spoken and understood in all the major urban centers of the country. Moreover, Lingala has more than any other language become the object of a widely diverging set of language ideologies and attitudes. Researchers working in various theoretical and methodological paradigms all converge on the observation that there is more to say about Lingala in terms of both positive and negative linguistic attitudes than about any other Zairian language. All this is the outcome of decades of invisible and unplanned linguistic activities on behalf of the Zairian political upper class.

4.5. Religious situation

This section describes the religious setting of present-day Zaire. More than any of the other sections on the Zairian background, this description is incomplete as it is limited to a choice of very specific topics. Zaire's religious situation is a most complex matter and cannot be done full justice in a chapter that merely serves to provide documentary background information. Therefore, information is provided on those religious matters that are to some degree relevant to the Neptunia setting and to its surrounding structures in the Zairian community in Antwerp. This means that I will devote particular attention to such organized religions as Catholicism, Protestantism, Kimbanguism, and Islam, with a clear emphasis on Catholicism. So-called 'traditional' forms of African religion ('animism' or others) and such historically important Zairian movements as *Jamaa* (de Craemer 1976; 1977; Fabian 1977; 1985), *Kitawala* (i.a., Deberty 1953; Gérard 1969; Vellut 1987), and the like, are not covered.

Section 4.5.1 provides a general outline of the confessional groups that are officially recognized by the Zairian government. This includes an estimation of the relative numbers of adherents, which point to the supremacy of the Catholic Church, as well as a historical clarification of this supremacy. Sections 4.5.2 and 4.5.3 are individual descriptions of Zaire's four main religions. The religions of a more restricted distribution, Protestantism, Kimbanguism, and Islam, are dealt with in sections 4.5.2.1, 4.5.2.2, and 4.5.2.3, respectively. The position and role of the Catholic Church in Zaire are discussed in 4.5.3. First, some of its general characteristics are briefly recapitulated (4.5.3.1). Then, in section 4.5.3.2, I turn to 'African theology' – a cover term which I use to refer to a variety of forms of intellectual awakening emerging among African theologians in the 1950s and aimed at 'tying down' the Catholic doctrine and ecclesiastical structures in Africa's specific cultural contexts. It is described how in the early 1960s Congolese theological intellectuals both took up and contributed to this generally African movement. Section 4.5.3.3 discusses one of the most important Congolese accomplishments of African theology, i.e. the 'Zairian rite' (*le rite zaïrois*), which is particularly relevant to the Neptunia setting. The Zairian rite is a separate canonical form for celebrating the Catholic mass, officially sanctioned by the Vatican in 1988. In 4.5.4, finally, the relationships of the Kimbanguist, Protestant, and Catholic Churches with the Zairian authorities are spelled out. It is shown that the Protestants and, in particular, the Kimbanguists always vehemently supported the Mobutu regime, whereas the Catholic Church was long in conflict with Mobutu and his ideology of *authenticité*.

4.5.1. Current setting and historical foundations

Article 24 of the 1964 *Constitution de Luluabourg* (see 4.2.2) mentioned that the Democratic Republic of the Congo was to be a secular state, guaranteeing the freedom of religion without restrictions (Ekwa 1971: 42). In subsequent Zairian legislations, the idea of the secularity of the state was carried through (Van de Voorde 1975: 33), but the freedom of religion was subjected to narrow regulations. A law of December 1971, confirmed by another one promulgated in January 1979, stipulated that the expression of religious convictions could only be organized within those Churches that were officially recognized by the Zairian government (Asch 1983: 71-72, 87). In present-day Zaire, six confessions are in this way backed by officially recognized Churches, i.e. Roman Catholicism (*l'Eglise Catholique Romaine*, ECR), Protestantism (*l'Eglise du Christ au Zaïre*, ECZ), Kimbanguism (*l'Eglise de Jésus-Christ sur la Terre par le Prophète Simon Kimbangu*, EJCSK), Islam (*La Communauté Islamique en République du Zaïre*), Judaism (*La Communauté Israélite de Kinshasa*), and Orthodox Christianity (*l'Eglise Orthodoxe*).

Statistical data on the distribution of these religions among the Zairian population vary greatly, but it is certain that Roman Catholicism is the most important one, followed by Protestantism and Kimbanguism. Bosangia (1988: 28) mentions that 57% of all Zairians are Catholics, that 27% are Protestants, and that 10% are Kimbanguists. In a later publication, Kabongo-Mbaya (1994: 157-159) reports that 46% are Catholics, 32.5% Protestants, and 13.5 % Kimbanguists. Although the difference between these two quantitative assessments could be due to dissimilar estimation standards, it may also be an index of a diachronic evolution, as recent years have witnessed an increasing popularity of Protestant movements (see below).

The three other religions occupy a very marginal position in Zairian society. Zairian Muslims only represent 1.4% of the population (Kabongo-Mbaya 1994: 157). Judaism and Orthodox Christianity are even less notable. As far as I can ascertain, there is no published information available on the activities of these two Churches in Zaire. A Zairian scholar specializing in the history of religions in his country explained to me that the Jewish community is nearly nonexistent and that the Orthodox Church has been sending a limited number of missionaries to Zaire since 1970 (T.K. Biaya, personal communication).

The current supremacy of the Catholic Church is the product of colonial history. Although Portuguese Catholics had already introduced Christianity in the Kongo kingdom in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, missionary work did not take place on a thoroughly organized scale before the second half of the nineteenth century. The nineteenth-century christianization was commenced by Protestant missionary orders such as the Livingstone Inland Mission and the Baptist Missionary Society from the 1860s onwards – i.e., even before the Belgian king Leopold had any power over the region (Kabasele 1994: 38-52;

Van Bilsen 1993: 47). Most probably, this early prominence of Protestants was related to the fact that the developments towards the establishment of the Congo Free State were largely dominated by English, German, and Scandinavian settlers and tradesmen. The Catholic missionaries were less present in these early years and were mainly sent by French orders, including the *Pères Spiritains*, who first limited their activities to the Congo's estuary, and the *Pères Blancs*, who founded a mission on the banks of Lake Tanganyika in the extreme southeast (Bontinck 1980; Kabasele 1994; Markowitz 1973). Concerned about the connection of the first missionaries with the colonial aspirations of the United Kingdom and France, king Leopold soon came to favor the activities of Belgian Catholic congregations, for which he succeeded in gaining the official support of the Vatican. In 1888, pope Leo XIII, urged upon by king Leopold, proclaimed a full-fledged vicariate in the Congo, the first one in Central Africa. The vicariate was run by the order of the Scheutists and had its seat in the city of Kwamouth, situated on the Zaire river somewhat north of the present capital.

After 1908, the Belgian government continued privileging the so-called 'national missions', i.e. congregations which operated from Belgium and which, in practice, were all of Catholic faith. During the entire epoch of colonization, the Protestant missions were left to their own devices, while the Catholic ones were generously subsidized, both through immediate financial interventions and through concessions of land and other practical advantages (Bontinck 1980; Vanderlinden 1989a). As a consequence, the cohabitation of Protestant and Catholic missionaries was largely a competitive one. Partly because they were irritated by the State's unequal treatment, the Protestants often opposed the policy and practices of the Belgian colonial government, remonstrating against institutionalized and other forms of racial discrimination, including the formation of an artificial class of *évolués* (Van Bilsen 1993: 45-47; see also 4.2.1). Although similarly contesting voices arose in individual Catholic missions, the Catholic ecclesiastical authorities made the Church the close companion of the colonial government at all levels of decision-making. The competition between Protestants and Catholics was also felt 'on the ground'. The two camps vied with each other for the immense potential of African souls to be christianized, drawing disciples away from each other's camps (Vanderlinden 1989a). It is important to note, in this respect, that in order not to lose followers, the religious coercion which Protestants and especially Catholics exerted on the colonized was of a fierce kind, based on extraordinarily well-structured and rigidly controlled forms of parochial life. These early patterns of proselytic zeal are part of the origins of the strong foothold of Christian faith in current Zairian society.

Vanderlinden (1989a: 26) explains that the State's strategy to privilege the Catholic missions did not only aim at protecting the Belgian interests against the influence of Protestant colonial powers, such as England. It was also related to the efforts to eradicate Islam from Central Africa, an enterprise in which the

Catholic Church had proven to be the most effective partner. Indeed, the Belgian authorities were very careful not to give Islam the least free rein in colonial society: *"il ne peut être question au Congo belge, comme dans nombre d'autres colonies voisines, de lui reconnaître un quelconque statut, même sur le plan juridique en admettant d'appliquer en justice le droit musulman"* (Vanderlinden 1989a: 26).

4.5.2. Less widespread religions

4.5.2.1. Protestantism

As mentioned, the Zairian Protestants are organized in the *Eglise du Christ au Zaïre* (ECZ). The ECZ is an institutional superstructure subsuming a variety of Protestant convictions, such as Baptism, Congregationalism, Presbyterianism, Methodism, Mennonitism, and Lutheranism. (The representatives of the Anglican Church in Zaire have always refused to join the ECZ, Kabongo-Mbaya 1991; 1994).

The introduction of Protestantism was mainly the accomplishment of English and American missionaries. From the first years of the Congo Free State onwards, these Protestants' missionary work was highly focused on education. It is significant, in this respect, that in spite of the Protestant missionaries' smaller number and the political difficulties they were faced with during colonization, two of the main political figures of the First Republic were formed in Protestant mission schools, i.e. Patrice Lumumba and Moïse Tshombe, who were both Methodists. Another typical trait of the Protestant missions during the colonial era was the fact that they were more inclined to hand over the project of christianization to African clergymen than this was the case among Catholic missionaries. By 1946, the Protestant missions in the Congo already relied on 315 ordained and 480 other African pastors (Van Bilsen 1993: 47).

During colonization, the spread of Protestantism was mainly impeded by the moves of the Belgian government. In the years *after* decolonization, the balance was, however, not significantly redressed. This time, the spread of Protestantism was impeded by the internal division of the ECZ in comparison with the high degree of integration within the Zairian Catholic Church (Kabongo-Mbaya 1991; 1992; 1994).

Nevertheless, Protestantism has witnessed a revival over recent years. This revival is the product of a 'second missionary wave': from the second half of the 1980s onwards, representatives of fundamentalist New Churches in the US found their way to Zaire. They came down to set up modern biblical communities and to train ministers to preach in strict reference to the Bible. This new missionary work has taken place within the *"vague pentecôtisante"* (Kabongo-Mbaya 1994: 172), i.e. a Charismatic-Pentecostalist renewal that has been observed among both Zairian Catholics and Zairian Protestantism since the second half of the 1970s (Caubergs & Devisch 1995; Devisch 1994; 1995; Kabanga n.d.; Kabongo-Mbaya 1991; 1992; 1994; Verhaegen 1983; a publication by the *Comité Diocésain du Renouveau* 1986). The *vague pentecôtisante* stresses the healing intervention of the Holy Spirit and the need for a puritan and austere mode of life. The Protestant followers of this movement often prefer to call themselves *pentecôtistes*, whereas in Catholicism the term *renouveau charismatique* is most often used, but the difference in nomenclature is not clear-cut.

To many, the healing hand of the Holy Spirit, wrapped in the necessary vocabulary of natural certainties, is the most convincing answer to the socioeconomic misery and ambiguity of the last years. Both in Catholicism and Protestantism, the *vague pentecôtisante* is primarily a phenomenon of the larger urban centers, where despair and hunger are often more pronounced than in the self-sufficient villages. In large cities such as Kinshasa, the Catholic prayer groups and Protestant new evangelist communities are virtually everywhere. Caubergs & Devisch write about these groups in the capital: *"they are small neighborhood churches, [organizing] in the houses or gardens of one of the influential founders. Particularly encouraged by the women, the participants reflect upon the misery of the big city, the rapid inflation of the Zairian money, famine, diseases, death, AIDS (as an ancestors' castigation), envy, and upon witchcraft, drug addiction, and prostitution, which are very often the object of ruthless extortion. Through communal praying and singing, and especially through the collective invocation of the Holy Spirit, new forms of solidarity are developed"* (1995: 84, my translation). During my own research visit to Kinshasa in February 1996, I was able to make similar observations. With regard to the Protestants, I noted that some of the Pentecostalist communities are organized in large and financially affluent parishes, while others are restricted in scale to a few neighborhoods or to the extended family. It is characteristic of the Protestant communities that they are also tightly linked with the social spheres of life in the Third Republic, as they are often active in nongovernmental organizations, offering services and assistance to the population which the evanescing state can no longer provide.

4.5.2.2. Kimbanguism

The *Eglise de Jésus-Christ sur la Terre par le Prophète Simon Kimbangu* (EJCSK) is the institutional authority of the Kimbanguist faith. Kimbanguism is based on the teachings and life of Simon Kimbangu (1889-1951), who received a vision in 1919 encouraging him to continue his life as a prophet of Jesus-Christ (Asch 1983; MacGaffey 1983; 1986; Sinda 1972). Kimbanguism is recognized as an authentically Christian religion by the international Christian authorities, as the EJCSK was admitted to the Ecumenical Council of Churches in 1969 and to the Conference of African Churches in 1971.

Simon Kimbangu was born in the present region of Lower Zaire, in a British mission of the Baptist Missionary Society. He went to school in the

Baptist mission, where he received a catechumenal education until his baptism in 1915. From that moment on, he worked as a catechist preaching the gospel according to the Baptist principles. In the late 1910s and early 1920s, heavy epidemics and food shortages hit his region, decimating large parts of the Bakongo population. This ordeal came on top of the numerous sufferings the local people had already undergone under the Belgians' forced labor. It is in this context that Kimbangu received his divine vision. The vision inspired him 'to graze his flock', 'to preach the gospel', and 'to be the witness of Christ' (Asch 1983). Kimbangu first thought himself unworthy and denied the inspiration. In March 1921, an ill woman asked Kimbangu to heal her by imposition of hands. The woman was cured and this time Kimbangu decided to heed the divine instructions. On April 6, 1921, in the Bakongo town of Nkamba, he started preaching the gospel as a witness of Christ and curing the sick, from which moment on he was called 'the healing prophet' (*le prophète guérisseur*).

Between April and June 1921, thousands of people from the southwestern regions called on the prophet in Nkamba to listen to his teachings and beseech his healing mediation. His appeal was immense: *"paysans, ouvriers, artisans, employés, domestiques, chômeurs, malades de corps et d'esprit vont à Nkamba chercher le salut, la guérison et l'espoir. Abandonnant leur travail, les Bakongo quittent les factoreries, les plantations, les bureaux, les villas; ils désertent l'armée, les églises et les hôpitaux. […] On dit qu'il guérissait des malades incurables, qu'il les purifiait par immersion dans la source bénite, qu'il entrait en transe et tremblait sous le pouvoir du Saint-Esprit"* (Asch 1983: 22-23). Kimbangu's teachings were based on a fundamentalist interpretation of Christianity and the Bible. At the same time, they expressed the conception of an autonomously African Christianity, as opposed to the introduced, 'Western' form of Christianity. It equally rejected, however, 'traditionally African' religions or cults. He exhorted his followers to forswear all tokens of immoral behavior brought to them by the colonizers, such as tobacco, alcohol, theft, and adultery. But he also forbade manifestations of traditional religion, such as the usage of witchcraft, fetishes, and 'animist' rituals, as well as polygamy and exuberant dancing. To Kimbangu, spiritual liberation was only to be attained by abiding by the Bible and the Holy Spirit: Kimbangu was convinced that the Africans needed neither foreign missionaries nor the pre-Christian unbelief to live in accordance with the 'truth'. With Kimbangu, the Africans had their own modern prophet, gifted and inspired by the Holy Spirit, and chosen to redeem God's people.

Although it is not clear whether Kimbangu himself incited his disciples to subversive behavior, many Kimbanguists interpreted the African autonomy of Kimbangu's Christianity in political terms. They used the religious movement to rise against the colonial authorities, refusing to pay taxes, abandoning their jobs, and rejecting European types of education and medical care (Asch 1983: 23; Bontinck 1980: 58). As such, the established powers soon considered Simon Kimbangu a threat to the colonial order. The State, first, considered him a dangerous instigator of civic insurgence. In the eyes of the Catholic Church, secondly, the 'self-declared' prophet was a far too popular mouthpiece of the Protestants, if not a downright manifestation of heresy. The Catholics threatened all Congolese entering Kimbanguism with excommunication. Thirdly, even the leaders of the Protestant Church, in which Kimbanguism had its confessional roots, discredited the prophet as an impostor. At their sixth general conference in October 1921, the Protestant missionaries of the Congo prohibited their adherents to associate with Kimbanguism in any manner (Bontinck 1980: 58).

Simon Kimbangu preached no longer than six months. In June 1921, the colonial government issued a warrant for his arrest, after which he went underground. In September 1921, he was captured, tried, and sentenced to death – a verdict which was later converted to life imprisonment. He was brought to a prison in Elisabethville (Lubumbashi), where he died in 1951.

After the detention of the prophet, the Kimbanguist movement remained influential, especially in the colony's capital and in the southwestern areas, its region of origin. But Kimbanguism remained unacceptable to the colonial authorities. Until 1959, followers were prosecuted, tortured, eliminated, and 'reeducated' in work camps. A cause of and reaction to this repression was the Kimbanguists' enduring political resistance to the colonial rulers: even after Kimbangu's death, many Kimbanguists persevered in defying the Belgian authorities, practicing their religion in clandestine organizations and disobeying the colonial powers.

Around 1956, several Kimbanguist tendencies joined forces in Leopoldville and founded the EJCSK. Given the ethnic background and anticolonial activities of its members, the EJCSK was closely linked to the cultural and, later, political movement of the ABAKO (see also the discussion in 4.3.2.2 and Verhaegen 1971). Although some rivalry existed, ABAKO and EJCSK were in general each other's complements in the Bakongo's struggle towards the independence of the Congo, both in the capital and in the Bakongo hinterland. Together, they covered all of the crucial identity patterns and social domains of Bakongo society, i.e. ethnicity, religion, and intellectual mobilization. In an attempt at driving a wedge between the two organizations, the Belgian colonial authorities decided to grant the EJCSK official recognition in December 1959. One of the conditions of this recognition, accepted by the EJCSK, was the complete denouncement of political action. The EJCSK was forced to declare its organization an apolitical one and to discontinue all connections with the ABAKO.

From its inception, the EJCSK was an institution with a most elaborate structural arrangement. A whole set of constitutions and house rules, based on the commandments of Moses, Jesus, and Kimbangu, enacted the complex hierarchy of ranks as well as the contents of the doctrine. Joseph Diangienda, Simon Kimbangu's youngest son, was named head (*chef spirituel*) of the Church. The EJCSK imposed on the Kimbanguists a rigid discipline, a severe morality, and an unconditional allegiance to the ecclesiastical superiors, in particular to Diangienda. At the confessional level, the EJCSK detached Kimbanguism from Protestantism. In 1960, it defined Kimbanguism as *"un dérivé direct du christianisme"* (Asch 1983: 55), *christianisme* replacing the older term *protestantisme*.

The EJCSK has always been firmly rooted in the secular domains of society. Since the 1960s, the EJCSK has had its own, officially recognized net of primary and secondary schools, as well as one university. It has also relied on its own agricultural industry and medical infrastructure. Throughout the entire Zairian era, the EJCSK has remained active especially in the region of Lower Zaire and in Kinshasa. In the other parts of the country, however, Kimbanguism has never succeeded in challenging the influence of the strongly anchored Catholic Church.

4.5.2.3. Islam

One of the main motives behind the eastward exploration of the Congo territory in the last decades of the nineteenth century was the campaign against the Arab traders and Muslims coming from the East-African coasts (i.a., Harms 1981; Vangroenweghe 1985). In the official rhetoric, it was the campaign against the 'inhumane' slave traders which justified these anti-Arab raids. In actual fact, the European colonizers were envious of the Arabs' control over these trade routes and over other economic resources of the region. By 1908, Islam had almost completely disappeared from the territory. During colonization, the vigilant colonial authorities and Catholic missionaries crushed out any potential source of Islamic revival. In postcolonial times, then, the powerful position of the Catholic Church further prevented a renewed introduction of Islam. As a consequence, Islam is only a very marginal religious phenomenon in present-day Zaire.

The sparse academic publications that document Islam in Zaire all point to this marginal position. Schulze (1993: 28-30) mentions that until 1974 the constitutive council of the Arab League, the world organization of Muslim nations, counted only three member-states from sub-Saharan Africa, i.e. Mali, Niger, and Cameroon. It was not before 1984 that Zaire, together with Burkina-Faso, Uganda, the Gambia, Chad, and Guinea, were accepted into this council. Mattes (1993) describes the activities of the *Association pour l'Appel à l'Islam* (AAI), created in 1972 and financed by the Libyan government to foster the knowledge of Islam throughout the world and throughout sub-Saharan African in particular. The AAI disposes of a large body of well-trained Muslim missionaries for the African countries: in 1977, the organization sent out no less than 193 of them. It is significant that Zaire is poorly visited by these missionaries. Between 1982 and 1986, there was only 1 AAI missionary in Zaire, while 28 were operating in Kenya, 29 in Uganda, and 21 in Ghana. The AAI also sponsors medical and other social projects in sub-Saharan Africa.

Throughout the entire history of the AAI, only one such project was set up in Zaire.

La Communauté Islamique en République du Zaïre is organized as follows. The institution has its main seat, called *Conseil National*, in Kinshasa (Hassan Mpiana Ilunga, personal communication). In the interior, the *Communauté* is represented in *entités islamiques*, *régions islamiques*, and *centres islamiques*. However, given the lack of handbooks and religious teachers, most of these local units are unable to reach the population or to follow up the religious introductions. Recently, a number of Zairian Muslims decided to join forces in a new grid of alliances, among which the *Association des Jeunes Musulmans* (AJM), in order to organize the awakening of Islam in their country. During my stay in Zaire in February 1996, I found a few mosques and Islamic centers in Kinshasa. I was told that these centers succeed in appealing to a limited but growing number of Zairians and provide schooling, medical care, and other forms of social assistance to the poor. Somewhat surprisingly, I also attested one operating Islamic center in the city of Mbandaka, the capital of the region of Equateur. All these observations may point to a timid rise of Islam, but so far the information on the phenomenon is too scarce to be assessed in its full dimensions.

4.5.3. Catholicism

4.5.3.1. General outlook

The role of the Catholic Church in the Belgian colonization of the Congo was momentous. The Catholic christianization of the territory was not merely an aftermath of the political and military projects, but was, in fact, intrinsically related to the colonial enterprise from its very inception. Indeed, the State in many respects depended on the missionaries to bring the colonial enterprise to a success. The missionaries often preceded governmental agents and explorers into unknown territories, took care of a great part of the formation of the work force, and provided the authorities with the necessary scientific information on the colony and its inhabitants. The Catholic Church was a founding pillar of colonial society, to be reckoned with ‘on the ground’ as well as at the highest levels of political decision-making, both in the colony and in Brussels.

In postcolonial times, the Church has always retained a strong foothold in Zairian society. The Catholics have remained the main organizers of education, the most important providers of health care, and the most influential moral arbiters of social life. At the political level, however, the position of the *Eglise Catholique Romaine* (ECR) in the Zairian context has been very different from its institutional power during colonization. In section 4.5.4, I will describe the conflicts marking the relationship between the ECR and the Mobutu regime between the late 1960s and the 1980s. Considered a symbol of colonialism and, above all, a menacing 'society within society', the Zairian Catholic Church was long crossed in its activities by the political authorities.

Like Protestantism, Catholicism in Zaire has over the last few years been witnessing a Charismatic-Pentecostalist renewal (see above). The Protestants' (Pentecostalists') emphasis on a thorough interpretation of the Bible, on the healing force of the Holy Spirit, and on puritan behavior is also shared by the Catholic Charismatics. Characteristic of the Catholic Charismatics is, obviously, the additional loyalty to the Pope, which Charismatics interpret in exceptionally unconditional terms. Like the Protestant Pentecostalist communities, Catholic Charismatic prayer groups are a frequent phenomenon in the urban centers of present-day Zaire and their role in the profane spheres of social life is of increasing importance.

4.5.3.2. African theology

In the first half of the twentieth century, some individual European missionaries were concerned with finding ways to gear to each other the Western background of the Catholic faith and the African context into which it was introduced. The most important example of these early efforts towards an 'African theology' is the work by the Franciscan Friar Placide Tempels, who wrote an influential book on what he called 'Bantu philosophy' (1949). In this publication, Tempels argued that God and some form of the Christian faith had already been present in Africa before the arrival of the Western missionaries. Another example is the work by Alfons Walschap, brother of a famous Flemish novelist and missionary in the central Congo basin for the order of the *Missionaires du Sacré Cœur* (MSC) until his death in 1938. In the 1920s and 1930s, Walschap designed what was posthumously called *la messe congolaise* and *la messe bantoue* (De Rop 1953a). This 'Congolese mass' consisted in a combination of the canonical structure of the Catholic liturgy with Mongo forms of artistic expression, including 'traditional' music and dance. Walschap's mass was applied in many parishes inside and outside the MSC missionary province.

From the 1950s onwards, the efforts towards an African theology received an important impetus. This was the time when a considerable number of African priests and theologians succeeded their European missionary teachers. All around the African continent, autochthonous theologians and other intellectuals came to reflect on the elaboration of an African Christian theology (Kabasele 1994; Mudimbe 1988: 56-64; Shorter 1977; Van de Voorde 1975). The main motif in these intellectuals' deliberations was a disagreement with the colonial assumption that 'christianization' was to be considered synonymous with 'occidentalization'. The movement drew much of its inspiration from such developed ideologies advocating the cultural and political emancipation of the Africans as Senghor's *négritude*. It is evident that in this rhetoric, the 'own' was defined in negative terms: 'African', 'Bantu', 'Congolese', 'traditional', and 'we' were some of the interchangeable synonyms used to construct an identity in which 'non-Western' was the only relevant point of reference.

In the Congo, the main incentive was given by the synod of the Congolese bishops in 1961, which ensued from the many individual publications and manifestos that had been written by Congolese theological intellectuals before that date (Kabasele 1994: 60ff; Van de Voorde 1975). The synod declared to be concerned about the incompatibility between the local cultures and the typically Western values permeating the Catholic doctrine. They first proposed what they called a *théologie d'adaptation*. This theology was very similar to Tempels's earlier line of reasoning. Rather than arguing that the Catholic doctrine was to be questioned and adapted to the local cultures, the bishops only wanted to show that the existing, precolonial African reality was Christian *per se* and that no importation of Western education was needed to understand God's word. From that moment on, anthropological descriptions of local cultures were screened for originally African features pointing to the age-old presence of God and Christianity on the African continent. It was asserted, for instance, that the commitment of chastity was not a new element for African Catholic Sisters, because *"au Kivu, dans le Bushi, il y avait jadis des jeunes filles qui étaient désignées par le clan pour rester vierges dans le but d'attirer la bienveillance de Muhima le bon Esprit"* (Kabasele 1994: 66).

In time, the *théologie d'adaptation* was replaced with a *théologie d'incarnation* (also called *théologie d'inculturation*). Here, the burden of responsibility was reversed. The focus was no longer on the Africans' duty to demonstrate their inherently Christian nature, but on the willingness of the Western Catholic Church to fashion the contents of its doctrine and ritual practices to the African singularity. The aims of the *théologie d'incarnation* was *"de résoudre [...] le problème majeur de nos Eglises d'Afrique, celui de rencontrer le Christ tels que nous sommes, et d'opérer nos propres choix dans l'ouverture aux autres"* (Kabasele 1994: 20). Catholicism as it was introduced during colonization was said to have an alienating effect on the Africans and to be in need of remodeling in order to appeal to the Africans 'as they really are'. The theologians always stressed that this remodeling was to be accomplished in full collaboration with the central authorities in the Vatican. They did not advocate a breach with the instructions of the Pope, but insisted on a new relationship with the authorities in Rome. It was claimed that the relationship was no longer a unidirectional one and that the Vatican itself should also be receptive to suggestions made by the African Churches (Van de Voorde 1975). As the Zairian cardinal Malula put it on the occasion of the 1974 synod of African and Madagascan bishops: *"les missionaires européens ont jadis christianisé l'Afrique; aujourd'hui, les chrétiens africains vont africaniser le Christianisme"* (Malula 1994: 14).

The *théologie d'incarnation*, as well as its predecessor, must also be interpreted in the light of the second Vatican Council. Vatican II, held from 1962 to 1965, aimed at bringing the ecclesiastical institutions closer to the lay people, at modernizing the dogmatic constitution of the Church, and at opening up the Catholic doctrine to new tendencies and to related Churches. The demand for renewal heard on the African continent since the 1950s was no doubt one of the factors that inspired the announcement of Vatican II. But the Council's subsequent *effects* on the African renewal were surely as important: Vatican II provided the Congolese and other African theological intellectuals with the sanctioned latitude they needed to accomplish their projects.

In the Congo, the *théologie d'incarnation* was elaborated from the second half of the 1960s onwards. This was accomplished by the joined forces of the council of Congolese bishops and the *Union des Supérieures Majeures*, the organization of female superiors. Kabasele (1994: 75-108) describes these two institutions' plans and strategies in detail. First, they wished to delineate the confessional areas in which the Christian faith as understood by its Western architects was in contradiction with 'African culture'. They argued, for instance, that African women have a culturally inalienable desire to have children and to dance, which are not permitted by the Roman Church. Second, solutions had to be formulated to overcome these contradictions. This mostly amounted to requesting a number of concessions from the ecclesiastical authorities in Rome. The Congolese bishops and the superiors drafted a new code of conduct for their religious women, granting them the freedom to live in urban centers and to stay with their families. Thirdly, new rites in which African traditions and the Catholic liturgy were to be associated had to be designed. One example is the 'rite of the blood pact', meant to be used by female novices at their profession of faith (Kabasele 1994). The rite of the blood pact consists in shedding a drop of blood of one's finger on a white cloth placed on the bishop's lap. The drop of blood is part of a larger set of gifts including palm wine, bananas, corn, etc. and the act symbolizes the novice's readiness to convey all that is precious to her to the hands of Jesus. Another example is the elaboration of the 'Zairian rite' (*le rite zaïrois*). The Zairian rite is a liturgical form for the celebration of the Eucharist which has been officially recognized by the authorities in Rome. Although its intellectual conception dates back to times prior to the bishops' and female superiors' activities, i.e. to the 1961 synod, it was the *theologie d'incarnation* which recuperated and energized it in the late 1960s. The following section will deal with this matter in more detail.

4.5.3.3. The Zairian rite

Among the many new rites that were designed in the context of the *théologie d'incarnation*, the Zairian rite deserves particular attention in view of the analysis of Neptunia, which is a Zairian Catholic setting. As will be explained in detail in chapter 6 (section 6.4), the masses in Neptunia are, strictly speaking, *not* based on the liturgy of the Zairian rite, but on the classic Roman liturgical pattern. However, chapter 8 will show that almost all Zairian and other members of Neptunia perceive the Neptunia masses as instances of the Zairian rite, and that many of their arguments regarding the patterns of language use in Neptunia are fundamentally grounded in this perception. Thus, information on the Zairian rite is needed as a clarification of emic points of reference.

The project of an African theology on which the Congolese theological intellectuals began to deliberate in the late 1950s and early 1960s also contained a plan for the africanization of the Eucharistic liturgy, i.e. the codes and form for celebrating the Catholic mass. At their synod in 1961, the Congolese bishops made this africanization a topic of their agenda by appointing a commission for liturgical reform, one of the members of which was the priest Joseph Malula. In 1962, the bishops sent Malula as their representative to the second Vatican Council. There, Malula contributed to the structural reform of the Catholic rites, among which the Eucharistic liturgy. (During colonization, Malula, a native of the capital, had been a member of the colonial upper class of *évolués* and the first autochthonous priest to be accorded a full individual parish. In 1964, Father Malula was ordained archbishop of Kinshasa and in 1969 he became cardinal, which he would remain until his death in 1989 (Malula 1994; Mobe-Fansiama 1989; Van de Voorde 1975).)

In 1962, the Congolese bishops did not await the results of Malula and the Vatican Council and continued working on their own concept of an africanized liturgical celebration (Vinck 1977). When in 1969 the Vatican finally issued its modernized canon for the Eucharistic liturgy, known as the *Constitutio de Sacra Liturgia* and more commonly as the *Ordo Missae*, the bishops judged that, in spite of Malula's contributions, the official reforms were not carried far enough. The same year, the editors of the Congolese journal *Orientations Pastorales* published a note declaring *"we should have the courage to express our disagreement on the new missal"* (Vinck 1977: 224, my translation). In sum, after eight years of hard work, the Congolese episcopate was not prepared to simply acquiesce to the imposed forms, and to throw overboard their own copious drafts and projects.

In the Vatican Council's 1969 declarations, the Papal authorities provided for a certain latitude with regard to local adaptations of the Catholic rites. The relevant passages in this declaration are quoted in a publication by the Zairian *Commission Episcopale de l'Evangélisation* (1974: 38-39).

> *"La sainte Mère l'Eglise veut travailler sérieusement à la restauration générale de la liturgie elle-même. […] Cette restauration doit consister à organiser les textes et les rites de telle façon qu'ils expriment avec plus de clarté les réalités saintes qu'ils signifient, et que le peuple chrétien, autant qu'il est possible, puisse facilement les saisir et y participer par une célébration pleine, active et communautaire. […] Il est à propos que l'autorité ecclésiastique ayant compétence sur le territoire […] institue une Commission liturgique […]. Il reviendra à cette Commission […] de diriger la pastorale liturgique dans l'étendue de son ressort, de promouvoir les recherches et les expériences nécessaires chaque fois qu'il s'agira de proposer des adaptations au Siège apostolique."*

The Congolese bishops could hardly ask for more. This declaration offered them the necessary authorization to further develop their reform of the Catholic mass and, most importantly, to embed it in a sanctioned context. They installed a national liturgical commission and charged it with systematizing the existing plans for a new liturgy into uniform suggestions, suitable for submission to the authorities in Rome. Malula was the leading figure in the formulations of these uniform suggestions.

The first set of suggestions was completed by 1974 and was entitled *Rite Zaïrois de la Célébration Eucharistique*. As this title indicates, the bishops aimed at a new and autonomous *Zairian* rite, i.e. a rite which was to be different from the canonical Roman rite with regard to content, but equivalent to it at the level of status and recognition. In other words, what they envisaged was a Zairian pendant of the Ambrosian, Coptic, and Ethiopian rites (Vinck 1989: 275-276). The 1974 proposition was rejected by the Vatican and sent back for reformulations. Over the years, a number of new propositions were submitted, but again to no avail. The Vatican's objections mainly pertained to the name and, thus, to the status to be accorded to the Zairian rite, as they did not want the sanctioned set of non-Roman, 'exotic' rites to expand any further. The Zairian ecclesiastics finally yielded on April 30, 1988 and agreed to accept the official name 'Roman Missal for the Zairian Dioceses' (*Missel Romain pour les Diocèses du Zaïre*). Therefore, what is commonly known as *le rite zaïrois* is, strictly speaking, a subform of the Roman Ordo Missae, and not a counterpart of it.[47]

Nonetheless, in terms of content the Zairian rite differs more from the Roman rite than, for instance, the sanctioned Ambrosian rite (Vinck 1989: 276). The singularity and allegedly 'African' character of the Zairian rite revolve around three parameters, i.e. its sequential structure, the recourse to African oral traditions, and festive forms of behavior (Bosangia 1988; Vinck 1977; 1989).

The particular sequential structure of the Zairian rite may be briefly depicted as follows (see Vinck 1977 and 1989 for more complete descriptions). Just like Roman masses, masses celebrated according to the Zairian rite consist of four consecutive parts, i.e. the Introductory Rite, the Liturgy of the Word, the Liturgy of the Eucharist, and the Concluding Rite (see also figure 4 in chapter 6). In the Zairian rite, the Introductory Rite begins with an entrance procession: the celebrant and his servants solemnly march into the church to the accompaniment of the public's cheers and dance. This is followed by an invocation of the saints and ancestors, and by the Gloria. In contrast to the Roman Ordo Missae, the Penitential Rite is not part of the Introductory Rite, but is inserted in the Liturgy of the Word. In addition to the Penitential Rite, the Rite of Peace, which in the Roman mass is part of the Liturgy of the Eucharist,

47. Many Zairian parishes did not await the Papal recognition and started applying the Zairian rite in its suggested form from 1969 onwards. As a consequence, by 1988 the use of the name *le rite zaïrois* was already generally established. Until the present day, the Vatican's official label *Missel Romain pour les Diocèses du Zaïre* has never succeeded in replacing the common name *rite zaïrois* and is, in fact, unknown by large parts of the population. In this dissertation, I adopt the popular term *rite zaïrois* ('Zairian rite') throughout.

is another foreign element in the Liturgy of the Word. As such, the Penitential Rite and the Rite of Peace are brought together and placed immediately before the Liturgy of the Eucharist, which, as in the Roman mass, includes the Offertory. The rationale behind this is that *"the Negro-African typically has a feeling of guilt vis-à-vis the transcendental beings to which he is to bring an offer"* (original formulation, quoted by Vinck 1977: 230, my translation). The 'Negro-African' is said to want a double ritual purification, i.e. one through the Penitential Rite and another one through the Rite of Peace, before proceeding to the Offertory. In the Zairian rite, the Offertory itself is also much more complex and much longer than in Roman masses. The other parts of the Liturgy of the Eucharist, i.e. the Eucharistic Prayer and the Communion Rite, on the other hand, do not differ significantly. The Concluding Rite, finally, contains the Dismissal and the Blessing, as well as a festive and elaborate leaving.

What distinguishes the Zairian rite most from the Roman Ordo Missae are the reworked liturgical texts. Many of the prayers and texts, both the ones read by the celebrant alone and the ones to be pronounced by the entire public, were adapted to what the designers of the Zairian rite called the 'typically oral character of African cultures' (Vinck 1989: 276). The Zairian rite is much more dialogic in nature than the Roman mass: many formulaic forms and canonical expressions are transformed to patterns of interaction between the celebrant and the people. Some elements, such as the form of the Penitential Rite, are also said to be based on typically African ways of 'palavering', although most analysts find this ethnological link very hard to understand (Vinck 1989: 277).

With regard to this oral component of the Zairian rite, it must be mentioned that language choice was never an issue for the designers of the rite. It was never explicitly argued that the africanization of the Eucharistic liturgy necessarily implied that only African languages were to be used in the masses. The fact that Catholic masses in Africa were to be performed in *African* languages was too self-evident and trivial to both the Congolese theologians and the Vatican authorities in general to be a possible topic of polemic in the discussions of an African theology. In fact, Catholic masses in African languages existed long before the 1960s, as the first missionaries in the nineteenth century set out on the translation of the Bible and the liturgy as soon as they arrived. Yet, it remains remarkable that all the suggestions as well as the final version of the Zairian rite were composed in French, and not in an African language. It is striking that the theologians did not consider that a strong statement could have been made by composing and submitting these texts in an African language.

A third characteristic element of the Zairian rite is its distinctive exuberance (Vinck 1989: 278). Almost all texts and prayers in the Zairian rite, even the celebrant's monologues, are sung instead of recited and songs are inserted between many of the liturgy's sequential components. Dance is also prominent in the Zairian rite. During the entrance procession, the Gloria, the Offertory, and many other items, both the public and the celebrant and his servants dance or rock in communal prayer. At the Gloria, the celebrant and servants perform a row dance around the altar. During almost the entire mass, the members of the audience stand, while they sit down at the priest's reading from the gospel, which is opposite to the practice in Roman masses. Another expression of vivaciousness are the celebrants' and servants' vestments. The vestments are wide and long and are amply decorated with colorful geometrical figures. Masses according to the Zairian rite are also much longer than Roman masses. An average mass lasts two or three hours, and some may last up to four hours.

It is important to stress that the 'Zairian rite' is not to be mistaken for 'the way Zairians celebrate the mass'. Not all Catholic masses in Zaire are performed according to the Zairian rite and not all Zairian Catholics attend masses in the Zairian rite. The churches in Zaire mostly operate a series of different celebrations on the same day. On one and the same Sunday morning, there is, for instance, first a mass for children, then a mass for teenagers, then a mass in the Zairian rite, then a Latin one in the Roman rite, then a French one in the Roman rite, then a mass in an African language, etc. The order and number of celebrations differ greatly from parish to parish, but the mass in the Zairian rite is never the only celebration, nor the most important one (see also Bosangia 1988: 30). The Zairian rite is, thus, to be understood as *one of the* liturgical forms applied by *some* Zairian Catholics on *some* occasions, not as a way of proceeding which would characterize any Catholic event engaged in by Zairians.

The culturalist vocabulary in which the elaboration of the Zairian rite was couched is reminiscent of the contents of the nationalist ideology of *authenticité*. In spite of these ideological resemblances, the Zairian rite and *authenticité* are the products of very different historical developments. Contrary to what is too easily believed (e.g., Braeckman 1989: 108), the elaboration of the Zairian rite did not fit in the development of *authenticité* as the official ideology of Mobutu's new Zairian state. First of all, the Zairian rite has its roots in the efforts towards an African theology which already emerged in the 1950s and which were shared by African theologians throughout the entire continent. The first building blocks of the Zairian rite itself date back to the early 1960s, a time at which *authenticité* was not yet conceived.

Secondly, as will also be explained in the following section, during the 1970s and 1980s the ECR in general and cardinal Malula in particular fiercely opposed the Mobutu regime and the ideology of *authenticité*. I will show that already at its very conception in the late 1960s and early 1970s, *authenticité* was often the object of Malula's sarcastic scorn. From the beginning, Mobutu and his ideological heralds were envious of the international success of Malula's and the other Catholics' africanization projects. Partly for these reasons, the MPR officials long provoked and even persecuted the leaders of the ECR, and, as such, actually obstructed the elaboration of the Zairian rite. But as they progressively realized that the ECR and the Zairian rite were there to stay, they rather preferred to appropriate the Catholics' achievements and to absorb them into the *authenticité* project. This strategy is apparent in Mobutu's following retrospective rationalization of the Zairian rite: *"les évêques du Zaïre ont été les premiers à lancer au sein de l'Eglise le grand mouvement de l'authenticité. Pour la célébration de la messe, ils ont introduit le 'rite zaïrois', plus proche et mieux adapté à notre culture"* (Mobutu 1989: 114). As will become clear in the following section, Malula and the ECR always fiercely objected to this kind of political appropriation.

4.5.4. Religion and the State in Zaire

Although Zaire's official ideology *authenticité* espouses the return to 'genuinely African' values and culture, its architects never resorted to so-called 'traditionally African' religions to make their point. In *authenticité*, there is no reference to the *contents* of any precolonial or other religious practice. What does exist in *authenticité* are references to the State's relationships with the religious *institutions* of modern Zaire, such as the EJCSK, the ECZ, and the ECR. In what follows, I will describe these relationships. I will show how at least until 1990, the Protestants and especially the Kimbanguists explicitly supported the Mobutu regime and its ideology, while the Catholic Church was almost always in conflict with the authorities of the Second Republic. From the 1990s onwards, then, the general picture has been reversed, as in recent years the ECR has been more and more benevolent vis-à-vis Mobutu, and as the Kimbanguists and Protestants have participated in the social and political reconstruction of the country.

From the very installation of the Second Republic onwards, the EJCSK presented itself as an unreserved ally of the new regime (Asch 1983; Kabongo-Mbaya 1994). It was clear to all actors that the strongly anticolonial background of Kimbanguism fitted in perfectly with the anti-imperialist and nationalist basis of Mobutu's 'revolution'. When the Second Republic started taking political shape in 1967 with the birth of the MPR, the EJCSK converted itself to an obedient attendant of the official party, uncritically complying with new regulations on religious practices and ensuring the Kimbanguists' unconditional loyalty to the MPR's political and ideological doctrine. In September 1970, MPR officials demanded that the Kimbanguist pastors become *"de véritables apôtres de l'ideologie du M.P.R. pendant leurs sermons"* (Asch 1983: 69). The EJCSK immediately consented to this. In 1971, the EJCSK joined a covenant agreed upon by Mobutu and the ECZ to neutralize the power of the Catholic Church in the country. Mobutu did not hesitate to reciprocate these tokens of loyalty: in the same year, the president and his wife visited Nkamba, the Kimbanguists' place of pilgrimage in the region of Lower Zaire, and participated in a grand Kimbanguist worship service organized on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of Simon Kimbangu's death. In the same period, Mobutu solemnly accepted Joseph Diangienda, son of the prophet and institutional and spiritual head of the EJCSK, into the Order of the Leopard, Zaire's highest order of decorations. The Kimbanguists also zealously adopted all symbolic components of *authenticité*. When in 1973 Mobutu banned the Christian given names, Diangienda at once instructed his disciples to change their own and their children's names. Over the years, Diangienda aligned his Church and the official Kimbanguist doctrine completely with the ideology of *authenticité* and the political messages of the MPR. He straightforwardly ordered the Kimbanguists *"de se pénétrer de la philosophie de l'authenticité [et] de se soumettre à l'éducation permanente du parti pour mieux comprendre la portée exacte des enseignements du Manifeste de N'Sele"* (Asch 1983: 73). The Kimbanguists' loyalty vis-à-vis the regime remained unconditional until 1990, after which the EJCSK decided to contribute, albeit very timidly, to the political reforms of the Third Republic (Kabongo-Mbaya 1994: 166). One of the leading figures of Tshisekedi's opposition party UDPS is a convinced Kimbanguist pastor and has been overtly combining his political activities in the Third Republic with his confessional convictions.

The history of the ECZ, the Zairian Protestant Church, is also marked by tight relationships of friendship with the Mobutu regime (Kabongo-Mbaya 1992; 1994; Vinck 1995). In the same way as the Belgian authorities disfavored the Protestants during colonization because of their connections with the economically influential British empire, Mobutu after 1965 soon came to use this background of the Protestants to diversify his foreign partners and to curtail Belgian control over his country. By means of all kinds of practical advantages, he set out to favor the ECZ to the detriment of the Catholic Church. The ECZ gratefully accepted this covenant against the Catholics and ordered its followers to behave as exemplary citizens in the new Zairian state. Vinck (1995: 397), translating one of the declarations of the ECZ, mentions that the Protestant authorities even depicted Mobutu and his regime as a gift from God: *"the Church and the Government have to meet each other… In such a situation we can only obey our Government hundred [sic] percent. […] Thank God for President Mobutu. God is Sovereign, it is He who gave us the President of the Republic. He [God] knows what He is doing by giving us this man"*. During the entire period of the Second Republic, the ECZ authorities worshipped Mobutu in no uncertain terms, praising him for his role as the ultimate peacemaker, as the unifying symbol of Zaire, and as the incarnation of the new nation. In return, the Protestants in Zaire could always count on the president's guardianship. From 1990 onwards, the position of the ECZ has been slightly more critical, as the ECZ has officially participated in the demands for democratic reforms and in the denunciation of the old regime's abuses. As Kabongo-Mbaya (1994) explains, however, the Protestants' anti-Mobutist actions have not been very convincing and have primarily been inspired by considerations of an opportunist nature: *"il faut reconnaître que, depuis 1990, une institution qui ne donnait pas de gages de sa rupture avec le régime était fort mal vue dans le peuple"* (1994: 174-175).

The period between the late 1960s and the 1980s was marked by an enduring conflict between the Catholic Church and the MPR authorities. The origins of this conflict are in essence political and go back to Mobutu's adoption of a single-party state model for the Second Republic. As explained in section 4.2, the MPR, *Parti-Etat*, was meant as a national and political superstructure from which all segments of society could be controlled. The MPR was to be more than merely *one of the* components, i.e. the political one, in the organization of the new state; it was to permeate all of the state's structures, activities, and social realms. The party was to be the nation and the nation the party. But the Belgian colonizers had bequeathed to the Second Republic a firmly anchored, socially active, and administratively independent Catholic Church. The Catholic Church had very much become a separate 'society within society', relying on its own nationwide material infrastructure and exerting a great moral and social influence on the population through its involvement in education and health care. This autonomy and real power 'on the ground' was, evidently, a thorn in the sides of the architects of the *Parti-Etat*. The Catholic Church had to be controlled by the only institution which was entitled to organize society and its constituent parts, i.e. the MPR.

The Catholic Church, however, was not prepared to act like the Kimbanguists and Protestants, turning itself into an instrument and mouthpiece of the new regime. This already became apparent in January 1968. In that month, Malula delivered a speech in which he overtly denounced the corruption of many ministers and other state officials in his country, as well as the pronounced social discrepancies that had arisen between the poor and the rich (Van de Voorde 1975: 19-20). In 1970, he delivered another speech, this time in the presence of the Belgian king and queen and Mobutu himself. In equally unvarnished terms, cardinal Malula criticized the new regime and assured the president that the Catholic Church would continue to demand political rights and justice for all.

By 1971, it was clear to the MPR authorities that the Catholic Church would not yield voluntarily. From that moment on, Mobutu began to promulgate a whole series of measures to curtail the power of the Catholics in his country. Between 1971 and 1975, the Catholic university of Kinshasa, Lovanium, was secularized, the preparatory and major seminaries were complemented with a representation of the JMPR (the youth organization of the MPR, see 4.2.4), confessional youth organizations, such as the boy scouts, were forbidden, Christian given names were declared illegal, confessional and clerical publications were banned, a number of Catholic holidays, such as Christmas, were removed from the list of official holidays, crucifixes were taken away from all public buildings, catechisms and other forms of religious instruction in the schools were abolished, and so on. All these measures aimed at reducing the impact of the Catholic Church on Zairian citizens and to do away with its position as a society within society (Mobe-Fansiama 1989; Van de Voorde 1975).

In order for the anti-Catholic policy to be accepted by the population, among which the Catholic Church always enjoyed a considerable prestige, these measures were immediately accompanied by smear campaigns. Mobutu and the MPR emphasized that the Catholic Church was incompatible with the new nationalist and anti-imperialist doctrine of the Second Republic. At the purely symbolic level, the Catholic Church was said to represent colonialism, with all forms of oppression and paternalism attached to it. At the more practical level, the Catholic Church was depicted as a channel through which the Western powers pursued their economic and political control over the country. In a political speech, Mobutu brought the symbolic and practical arguments together as follows: *"avant l'indépendance, on citait trois pouvoirs: l'Administration, les Sociétés et l'Eglise. Les deux premiers ont cédé la place, il n'y a pas de raison pour qu'il n'en soit pas de même pour l'Eglise… Jamais, je n'ai eu de problème avec les protestants, ni avec les kimbanguistes, parce qu'ils ne reçoivent pas de mots d'ordre de l'étranger. Mais les évêques zaïrois en reçoivent […]. Ce sont des agents au service de l'étranger. L'Eglise doit se soumettre à la discipline du M.P.R… Cette soumission ne peut pas être un simple acte de foi, un engagement bénévole, elle est un devoir constitutionnel"* (cited by Asch 1983: 74). The contradictions in Mobutu's position are obvious. The anti-imperialist argument against religions of foreign origin only targeted the Catholic Church, and thus Belgium, as Belgium was the home base and patron saint of the Catholics' activities in Zaire. Although equally of foreign origin, the Protestants were always indulged by Mobutu, as well as the economically and politically influential Western powers behind them, i.e. Great-Britain, Germany, and the US. It is clear that the claims to both the symbolic and the practical incompatibility of the Catholic Church and the new Zairian society were in reality part of the endeavors to sever the ties with Belgium.

Cardinal Malula has been known for his unwavering resistance to these intimidations. Until the 1980s, he and the entire Zairian episcopate continued delivering speeches and publishing manifestos in line of Malula's 1968 and 1970 speeches. The Catholic Church persevered in attacking the regime and in demanding the complete political autonomy of the Catholic Church in Zairian society. Malula's uncompromising attitude was not without consequences. In 1972, he was seriously threatened by Mobutu's military and was forced to retreat to the Vatican for some months (Mobe-Fansiama 1989: 21). In 1980, the Pope was compelled to intervene a second time in order to save Malula from the hands of Mobutu's secret services (Asch 1983: 88).

One of Malula's main targets of criticism since the early 1970s was the ideology of *authenticité*. He often ridiculed and discredited Mobutu's rhetoric on a return to African roots as a fake form of philosophy and as a rationalization of political despotism. Malula did everything to dissociate the internationally esteemed efforts towards an African theology, which included his Zairian rite, from the ideology of *authenticité*, while the MPR officials counted on taking advantage of their international appeal. In an editorial entitled *Authenticité* and published in the Catholic journal *Afrique Chrétienne* in 1972, Malula expressed his lack of esteem of Mobutu's new ideology in the following way.

> *"Indeed, we want to be authentically ourselves and we refuse to be guided by others. [...] But this enterprise is much more complex than it may appear. It can impossibly be accomplished by exhuming out of the night of the past an 'originally African philosophy', which, if it ever truly existed, is nothing more than the expression of a mode of social existence that is for good obsolete. A restitution of this obsolete mode of existence would not enable us to solve our current problems, nor would it indicate us how to live and function in the modern world. Our world is not the world of our ancestors anymore and their world view can never be ours. It is important to realize this and to stop talking about some 'negritude' that is long obsolete. [...] It does not help to pour out a stream of slogans on our originality [...]. We will not succeed in correcting all the weaknesses that block our way to the future by dragging up old values and norms that weakened our ancestors in front of the colonizers."* (Van de Voorde 1975: 21-22, my translation)

The same year, all bishops of French-speaking Africa divulged a similar declaration distancing themselves and the African theology from Mobutu's *authenticité*: *"[Zairian authenticité] is not the African authenticity. The Church was the first to declare it and to apply it"* (Van de Voorde 1975: 27, my translation).

Malula and the ECR reiterated their discontent with *authenticité* in 1974. In this year, Engulu, the state commissioner of political affairs, announced that *authenticité* was to be considered a religion in its own right and that it should replace all other forms of religion in Zaire, Catholicism in particular. He declared: *"we have our own Messiah in the same way as the Jews have Jesus-Christ. Our Messiah brought us the Glad News, he preached understanding and fraternity. He based his teachings on one magic word: authenticité. [...] He is not God, but is he not a prophet? President-founder Mobutu Sese Seko Kuku Ngbendu Wa Za Banga. [...] Did not the ancestors send him to us to preach understanding, to save Zaire, and, what is more, to save Africa and the whole world? He is a prophet [...] and deserves to be called the founder of a Church. [...] The MPR is that Church"* (Van de Voorde 1975: 36, my translation). In a pastoral epistle published the same year, Malula and the Zairian episcopate urged the Zairian Catholics to protest against this self-declared 'religion' and to consider it an attack on Christian solidarity.

At the end of the 1980s, the State-Church conflict in Zaire faded out, partly because of Malula's death in 1989. His successor, cardinal Etsou, has pursued a pronouncedly different course. Since the announcement of the Third Republic, he and with him most of the Catholic bishops (with the exception, to a certain degree, of the conciliator Mgr. Monsengwo) have strongly defended the position of Mobutu and have repeatedly identified him as the only warrant of national unity and stability in the country. In 1990, Etsou also forbade the

Zairian Catholics to participate in the protest march that was organized in Kinshasa after the assassination of a number of students at the campus of Lubumbashi.

5. THE IMMIGRANT CONTEXT

5.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I present general background information on the community of Zairian immigrants in Belgium, and on the Zairian community in Antwerp in particular. The information presented is primarily statistical, but ample attention is paid to the ethnographic, historiographic, and other qualitative parameters needed for a proper understanding of the statistical data. My emphasis on statistics stems from a concern with filling a documentary gap: there is only one scientific study on the Zairians in Belgium that includes some systematized quantitative information (Zana 1993). Moreover, Zana's study is historiographic in nature and does not aim at covering the present situation. The tables presented in this chapter are, therefore, compiled originally by myself, and are arrived at on the basis of raw materials furnished by Belgian official statistical services, the Belgian commissioner for refugees, demographic services of the city of Antwerp, and other institutions (each time figures are presented throughout the discussion below, the particular source used will be identified in a footnote).

The scope of my description of the Zairians in Belgium is limited in two respects. First of all, although the group of second- and third-generation Zairians in Belgium is growing rapidly, the focus here is on immigrants of the first generation. The rationale behind this focus is that the community of Zairians in Neptunia, the setting around which my linguistic ethnography is concentrated, is predominantly composed of first-generation immigrants. A second descriptive limitation pertains to the covered time depth. As mentioned in chapter 3 (section 3.3.1), the fieldwork on which my study is based was conducted mainly between 1991 and 1995. Since 1995, the Belgian minister of internal affairs has promulgated a number of important decrees aimed at the reorganization of the Belgian asylum policy (i.a., a plan to exclude refugees from the official population lists and another one to spread the presence of these refugees in equal quota across Belgian cities and provinces). Although these decrees affect the Zairian community and its numbers in the official statistics, these recent legal developments are not integrated into the account below.

This chapter is organized in two main sections. A first section (5.2) deals with the Zairians in Belgium in general and the second one (5.3) treats the Zairians in the city of Antwerp. In 5.2.1, I trace the origins of the Congolese immigration in Belgium and explain that in spite of the old colonial ties, the Belgian authorities never turned to the Congo (Zaire) in recruiting foreign labor. Section 5.2.2 attempts to identify the Zairian immigrants in Belgium in terms of their social position and status and in terms of their background in Zaire, which also includes a brief reference to the context in which emigration to Europe takes place in Zaire. In 5.2.3, then, I discuss the lack of attention paid by the

Belgian autochthonous population to Zairians as a separate category of immigrants – a lack of attention which is manifest in academic and political contexts as well as in popular consciousness. The discussion in 5.2.4 works towards the coverage of the Zairians in Antwerp, in that it shows how the Zairians in Belgium are spread across the various Belgian provinces and cities.

The discussion of the Zairians in Antwerp starts with a presentation of some general statistical data (5.3.1), followed by a social identification of the main subgroups (5.3.2). Next, in (5.3.3), I attempt to determine the relationships between the Zairian immigrants and the autochthonous population of Antwerp. With regard to this latter issue, it is indicated that the community of first-generation Zairian immigrants, as many other first-generation foreign communities, is to a large extent a centripetal one, strongly relying on its own structures and bonds of solidarity and fairly isolated from Flemish social activities. In sections 5.3.4 and 5.3.5, these centripetal relationships and structures are discussed in further detail. First, it is shown how student associations, political parties, and other well-structured Zairian organizations hold the community together at the secular level. Next, I devote attention to the Zairian religious organizations in Antwerp, to the exclusion of the Zairian Catholics, which are the topic of discussion in chapter 6.

Before proceeding, a number of terminological clarifications are in order. First, there is the term ‘immigrant’. I use ‘immigrant’ as a general cover term, encompassing refugees, students, migrant workers, and foreigners of all other statuses living in Belgium on a more stable basis than, for instance, tourists or traveling merchants. The term ‘foreigners’, then, is used in the official sense it covers in Belgian legislation, designating *“all persons who do not prove to be holders of the Belgian nationality”* (Hullebroeck 1993: 128, my translation). Next, I use ‘refugees’ as a general label comprising both ‘asylum seekers’ and ‘political refugees’. In my terminology, ‘asylum seekers’ are refugees whose applications for asylum are still being examined by the responsible Belgian offices, while the term ‘political refugees’ is used to refer to those refugees whose applications have been accepted and who are thus permanent residents in Belgium.

5.2. Zairians in Belgium

5.2.1. The colonized: Eschewed immigrants

Table 1 represents the evolution of the number of Congolese and Zairian residents in Belgium and the position they occupy among the other foreigners.

Table 1. Congolese and Zairians in Belgium[48]

	Inhabitants in Belgium (Belgians + foreigners)	Total number of foreigners	Zairians	Annual increase in number of Zairians	Rank among other foreign populations
1910			± 15		
1920			± 28		
1930			± 98		
1947			± 10		
1953			± 400		
1961			2,585		16
1970			5,244		15
Mar 1, 81	9,863,374	878,577	8,575		13
Dec 31, 81	9,854,589	885,729	9,240		
Dec 31, 82	9,858,017	891,244	9,607	+ 367	
Dec 31, 83	9,853,023	890,873	9,457	- 150	
Dec 31, 84	9,857,721	897,630	9,447	- 10	
Dec 31, 85	9,858,895	846,482	8,874	- 573	
Dec 31, 86	9,864,751	853,247	9,039	+ 165	
Dec 31, 87	9,875,716	858,650	10,740	+ 1,701	
Dec 31, 88	9,927,612	868,757	10,871	+ 131	
Dec 31, 89	9,947,782	880,812	11,186	+ 315	
Dec 31, 90	9,986,975	904,528	12,025	+ 839	11
Dec 31, 91	10,021,997	922,502	12,840	+ 815	
Dec 31, 92	10,068,319	909,265	14,606	+ 1,766	
Dec 31, 93	10,100,631	920,568	15,868	+ 1,262	
Dec 31, 94	10,130,574	922,338	16,542	+ 674	

48. Sources: Zana (1993) and the Belgian National Institute of Statistics (*Nationaal Instituut voor de Statistiek - Institut National de Statistique*, NIS-INS).

The figures in table 1 only mention the Zairians who are officially registered as holders of the Zairian nationality. Communities to be covered in any anthropological study, however, always go beyond the strictly administrative criterion of 'passport nationality'. One of the relevant categories which are not included in the table is, therefore, the group of Zairians who have acquired Belgian nationality. Naturalization is significant in the context of mixed marriages, which until the mid-1980s entailed the automatic naturalization of the foreign partner. Also, on January 1, 1985, the Belgian authorities took the once-only measure to accord the Belgian nationality to all foreign children under the age of 18, born in Belgium, and of which at least one of the parents was also born in Belgium (which also explains the decrease in the numbers of foreigners and Zairians in 1985). Since 1992, all these third-generation immigrant children are *automatically* given Belgian nationality, i.e. from this moment on, the once-only measure was extended as a *structural* measure. Between December 31, 1984 and December 31, 1992, 2,253 Zairians in Belgium acquired Belgian nationality through one of these three procedures.[49]

Other Zairians not included in the official figures are the illegal aliens. Although the Belgian authorities and right-wing organizations have since long mentioned numbers up to 100,000 and 150,000, serious quantitative research on illegal aliens in Belgium has never been conducted (Ramakers 1996). There is, however, some qualitative evidence which leads me to conclude that over the last few years, and especially since 1994, the number of illegal aliens in Belgium (Zairians and others) has increased. In this period, the Belgian asylum legislation has been seriously tightened. As a consequence, more and more potential candidates for political asylum have become afraid to even file an asylum application, as they expect that their applications will be rejected. These discouraged refugees thus prefer to go underground. The tightened regulations have also generated a growing number of people who have filed an application but whose applications have been rejected, the vast majority of which refuse to leave the country and equally become illegal aliens.

A third category that must be added to the figures above are the asylum seekers whose applications have been officially accepted ('political refugees'), as the former nationalities of these political refugees are immediately replaced with a UNO nationality in order to protect them from the governments of their original countries. The refugees whose applications are still under examination ('asylum seekers'), on the other hand, do figure in the statistics, for these asylum seekers are still holders of their original Zairian nationality. In 1993, there were approximately 616 UNO political refugees 'of Zairian origin' in Belgium and in 1994 their number was 794 (see also section 5.2.2.2).

Even if these three categories are added to the figures above, it is still fair to say that in the light of the old colonial ties between the two countries the share of Congolese (Zairians) in the history of immigration in Belgium is remarkably

49. Source: NIS-INS.

low. As the table shows, the Zairian community has never belonged to the ten most important foreign populations in Belgium.

There are several historical reasons for this remarkably low participation of Zairians. There are, first of all, factors dating back to early colonial times. Whereas other colonial powers, such as France, almost immediately accorded both the nationality and citizenship of the mother country to their colonial subjects, the Belgian position was more hesitant in this respect (Hullebroeck 1993: 137; Van Bilsen 1993: 50; Zana 1993: 25-26). Colonial laws stipulated that all Congolese were to be considered holders of the Belgian nationality, but not citizens of the state of Belgium. This juridical *tour de force* was very effective. By in principle according Belgian *nationality* to the colonized, the Belgian authorities complied with international colonial conventions. By withholding Belgian *citizenship*, on the other hand, they reduced the nationality to a worthless and immaterial technicality, to which the colonized could impossibly refer in claiming the right to travel to and settle in Belgium.

Next, the policy adopted by Belgium in its recruitment of foreign laborers, which in its most organized form began in the 1920s and lasted until 1974, was also strikingly different from the policies adopted by most of the other European countries. In contrast to the European partners, the Belgians always carefully avoided to make use of the potential of their own colony (Hullebroeck 1993; Mayoyo 1995; Morelli 1993b; Ndamina 1993; Zana 1993). Instead, countries such as Poland, Italy, Morocco, and Turkey were turned to. The Belgian authorities esteemed that the 'cultural distance' between these latter countries and Belgium was more manageable than the 'culture shock' that would ensue from immigration from a sub-Saharan country (although it remains unsure whether in the actuality of history such issues were explicitly and consciously deliberated upon by the authorities). Also, it may be the case that the Belgian colonial regime did not judge it appropriate for the African subjects to come into contact with the real background, including all its vices, of the ones who had brought them 'civilization'. The Africans' perception of the West and 'the civilized world' was not to be informed by personal experiences, but had to remain under the full control of the colonial rulers, i.e. through education and missionary work. As Vellut (1982: 99) explains: *"pour sauvegarder une certaine image de l'Europe, il fallait [...] éviter autant que possible que des Africains soient autorisés à y séjourner"*.

Important is the fact that after independence and until the immigration stop of 1974, the Belgian authorities very much maintained this rationale for an anti-immigration policy vis-à-vis the Democratic Republic of the Congo and, later, Zaire. Decolonization or not, the citizens of the former colony were to be held at the same distance from the 'epicenter of civilization' as before. As Mayoyo (1995: 90) writes, after independence *"la survie de l'apartheid de fait instauré par le système colonial reposait sur le prestige de la race blanche. Une migration des Zaïrois vers la Belgique aurait eu un effet fatal sur ce prestige"*.

In sum, Zairians have never been part of the flows of regulated labor immigration in Belgium. Who, then, are the Zairians appearing in the statistics provided above? This question is addressed in the following section.

5.2.2. A population of students and asylum seekers

5.2.2.1. The students

Zana (1993) describes the history and profiles of the very few Congolese who lived in Belgium before 1950. This group was an exclusively male population. Some of them were colonial domestics who were brought to Belgium by their Belgian employers and whom these employers abandoned upon arrival. Others were soldiers of the colonial *Force Publique* (see chapter 4, section 4.2.1) who were transported to Belgium to defend Belgian territory during World War I and who stayed in Belgium after 1918. Another category consisted of manual laborers of the colonial *Compagnie Belge Maritime du Congo* (CBMC), who managed to leave the ship on which they worked once it arrived in the port of Antwerp (see also below, section 5.3). Since before 1960 all Congolese were considered holders of the Belgian nationality, these 'accidental immigrants' could not easily be repatriated. Most of them stayed in Belgium, where they founded a number of Congolese organizations.

From 1950 onwards, the Belgian authorities began to allow a very limited number of Congolese students to come to Belgium to study at the universities, colleges, and other institutions of higher education. It was, however, not the Belgian government which organized or promoted these projects. The Congolese students were sent (or invited) by missionary orders, organizations such as Pax Christi, and, to a lesser extent, Belgian trade unions, who arranged and financed the trip, stay, and training of the Congolese. During this entire period, the Belgian government never considered setting up an officially regulated system of grants for Congolese students. But the initial impetus of a period of 'educational immigration' had been given: between 1950 and 1960, the population of Congolese in Belgium was to a large extent a student population. This would also remain the dominant trend after 1960.

Indeed, from 1960 onwards the influx of Congolese students in Belgium increased considerably. Immediately after independence, the Belgian government agreed to assist the new state in its formation of a necessary body of intellectuals. The new Congolese rulers were faced with the problem that due to the educational policy of the former colonial regime, such a body of intellectuals was painfully lacking at the time: as explained in chapter 4 (section 4.2.1), in 1960 there were no more than 20 university graduates in the entire republic of the Congo on a total population of 14 million. Bilateral agreements were signed in which the Belgian government committed itself to annually accord a number of scholarships to Congolese university students. At the same time, the Congolese government also set up an ambitious project of grants allowing its best students to be formed at universities abroad, and in the vast majority of cases preference was given to Belgium (Zana 1993).

Throughout the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, these mutual efforts to promote the formation of Congolese and Zairian intellectuals in Belgium were further developed. The Belgian government continued its policy of scholarships and so did the Zairian state. The Belgians incorporated their system of grants into their policy of development cooperation: from 1969 onwards, the grants and other matters related to foreign students were managed by the official Belgian State Department of Development Cooperation (*Algemeen Bestuur voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking - Administration Générale de la Coopération au Développement*, ABOS-AGCD). The Zairian government, then, often sent junior and senior civil servants to Belgium for additional formation, but also younger students were given Zairian scholarships.

There was, however, also a considerable number of students who were not supported by the Belgian or Zairian governments. First, there were the children of wealthy Zairians, who typically preferred to send their children to educational institutions in Belgium. These students relied entirely on personal means. Next, a number of grants were given by international organizations, such as the World Health Organization. Thirdly, some students were supported by Western ecclesiastical structures, among which individual missionary congregations and the Belgian Catholic fund for African students (*Katholiek Beurzenfonds voor Afrikanen*) (Zana 1993: 82).

During this period, the dominance of Zairians within the totality of foreign populations at Belgian universities was overwhelming. Zana (1993: 81-82) writes that in 1984, the Zairians made up 67.4% of all African students enrolled at the universities of Brussels and that in 1988 the Zairian students were the most numerous consumers of ABOS-AGCD grants for foreign students (38.65%). Within the Zairian community, then, the proportion of students during this period was also significant. In 1981, 41.4% of all Zairians in Belgium were students (Zana 1993: 80). And while, in the same year, the totality of foreigners in Belgium counted an average working population of 36.7%, the working population among the Zairians only totaled 10.2%. This again shows that the appearance of and the increase in Zairians in Belgium was never related to Belgium's most characteristic type of immigration, i.e. the organized importation of labor.

The arrival of new Zairian students faded out almost entirely at the end of the 1980s. As explained in chapter 4, the Belgian-Zairian diplomatic relationships have been in a profound crisis since 1988. The onset of this crisis was given in October 1988, when the debts owed by the Zairian state to the Belgian government became the object of mutual slander and imputation. Mobutu's reaction was to burn all bridges with Belgium, one of his first measures being to recall all Zairians students residing in Belgium. After a lot of petitioning, the students finally succeeded in obtaining the president's permission to stay in Belgium, but the Zairian government cut off all payments and thus left those students who depended on Zairian grants to their own devices. In January 1989, the Zairian students supported by the Belgian government met with the same fate. In that month, the Belgians decided to entirely discontinue the development cooperation with Zaire, which included the financial support to Zairian students. From that moment on until the present day, no more Belgian scholarships have been given to Zairian students. Those present in Belgium at the time of the decision were told that they would be supported until the completion of their training, but that after that completion new inscriptions would no longer be financed.

New Zairian students have been arriving in Belgium after 1989, but their number is extremely small. Only the children of wealthy Zairians and those students who have managed to obtain one of the rare remaining scholarships issued by international organizations have been able to make it to Belgium. But as over the last years the visa and immigration regulations for citizens of Third-World countries have been seriously tightened, even these categories of Zairian students have decreased in numbers.

Student populations are typically of the less stable kind, as in principle they need not stay longer in the host country than is required by their training. Nevertheless, it was precisely through 'educational immigration' that a well-settled and ever growing community of Zairian immigrants was established in Belgium. This matter needs closer explanation. First, as mentioned in chapter 4 (in particular sections 4.2.1 and 4.4.1), advanced education in the Congo and Zaire was long (and, to a certain extent, still is) predominantly a privilege of the male population. This implies that, with the exception of very rare cases, the educational immigration described above was for a long time an enterprise of men. Nevertheless, the Belgian government always provided for the possibility of family reunification. As a consequence, each enrollment of a Zairian student at a Belgian educational institution implied the additional immigration of his wife and children. Secondly, it has been typical of Zairian students not to view their stay in Belgium as a stage to be concluded in as short a time span as possible (Mayoyo 1995; Morelli 1993a; 1994b; Nkashama 1991; and Zana 1993). Partly due to the worsening social and political situation of their country, many of them have preferred to postpone their return by accumulating enrollments and degrees at different educational institutions. In fact, the number of students that arrived before 1989 and that have already returned to Zaire is extremely low. Many of them continue their formation relying on their own financial resources, which they draw from scanty, mostly undeclared and manual jobs (Mayoyo 1995: 107ff; Tshika Yabadi 1993). Or, as will be explained in more detail in the following section, they prefer to prolong their stay in Belgium as asylum seekers and political refugees, which is particularly the case for the many students who are engaged in political activities.

The observations that the majority of the Zairian students have not (yet) returned to Zaire and that many of them continue their stay in Belgium as refugees also point to the fact that the impact of the students on the Zairian community is still considerable. Indeed, the students' choice to apply for political asylum does not imply that their role in the Zairian community as students is not applicable anymore. The distinction between students and asylum seekers may be a relevant one in statistics – as the Belgian statistical institutions do not allow double statuses; in community life, the two categories often appear to overlap. Within the segment of Zairians who are enrolled at Belgian educational institutions, some are registered, in the national statistics, as students, while others are registered as asylum seekers, and many shifts between the two categories occur without this being noticed in the community (see also Mayoyo 1995; Morelli 1993a; Yalale-wa-Bonkele 1995). Indeed, an emically salient criterion for social categorization among Zairians in Belgium is the distinction between nonintellectuals and intellectuals. In the latter category, however, the official, statutory identity of an individual as either an asylum seeker or a student is often not known by members themselves, and is, consequently, hardly oriented to as a meaningful parameter for social classification. All these matters will be emphasized in more detail in the following discussion.

5.2.2.2. The asylum seekers

It may be discerned from table 1 that in the 16-year time span between 1970 and 1986, the Zairian community in Belgium only grew by 3,795 units, while in the 7-year time span between 1986 and 1994, it increased with 7,503 units. In other words, there has been a considerable growth of the Zairian population since the late 1980s. This growth is to a large extent the product of an increasing number of Zairian asylum seekers. Table 2 provides statistical information on the applications for political asylum filed in Belgium over the last 12 years.

Table 2. Applications for political asylum submitted in Belgium[50]

	Total applications	Applications by Zairians	% Zairian applications	Annual increase in Zairian applications	Rank of Zairian applications among other nationalities
Dec 31, 83	2,948				
Dec 31, 84	3,693				
Dec 31, 85	5,387				
Dec 31, 86	7,644	490	6.41%		
Dec 31, 87	5,352	487	9.10%	- 3	
Dec 31, 88	4,458	479	10.74%	- 8	3

50. Sources: the Belgian Agency of Foreigners (*Dienst Vreemdelingenzaken - Office des Etrangers*, DVZ-OE) and the Belgian General Commissioner for the Refugees and the Stateless Persons (*Commissariaat-Generaal voor de Vluchtelingen en de Staatlozen - Commissariat Général aux Réfugiés et Apatrides*, CGVS-CGRA).

	Total applications	Applications by Zairians	% Zairian applications	Annual increase in Zairian applications	Rank of Zairian applications among other nationalities
Dec 31, 89	8,181	840	10.27%	+ 361	3
Dec 31, 90	12,874	1,120	8.70%	+ 280	4
Dec 31, 91	15,351	2,017	13.14%	+ 897	2
Dec 31, 92	17,647	3,749	21.24%	+ 1,732	1
Dec 31, 93	26,885	4,020	14.95%	+ 271	2
Dec 31, 94	14,340	1,963	13.69%	- 2,057	2
Dec 31, 95	11,409	972	8.52%	- 991	2

It can be noticed that Zaire is one of the most highly represented countries in the requests for political asylum, especially if it is taken into consideration that Belgium receives refugees of over 110 nationalities. In 1992, the Zairian asylum seekers even constituted the largest group, outnumbering countries such as Ghana, India, Romania, and, remarkably, ex-Yugoslavia, from which Belgium is more easily accessible and for which 1992 counts as the apex of warfare activities and insecurity.

The arrival of asylum seekers from Zaire started in the second half of the 1980s, but it gained momentum from 1990 onwards, which explains much of the context in which the flight has taken place. As explained in chapter 4 (section 4.2.5), the history of Zaire after 1990 has been marked by an intensification of social and political instability. The Third Republic is the epoch of growing socioeconomic distress, caused by the massive economic deregulations imposed on the Zairian government by the World Bank and the IMF. It is also the epoch during which many activists of the newly founded political parties and engaged organizations have found themselves caught between the officially declared freedom of expression and unwavering manifestations of political oppression at the factual level. In these contexts, many Zairians have tried their luck and have hoped to find a more secure and more merciful mode of life in the country of the former colonizers (see also Mayoyo 1995; Muntu 1993; Ntumba 1994).

Nonetheless, this pursuit of a better life is only to a limited extent accomplished through direct escapes from Zaire. In 1991, *only 8%* of all the Zairian applications for political asylum were filed by persons arriving *at Belgium's international airport*, while *92%* were filed by Zairians who *already resided in Belgium*. In 1992, these proportions were 10% vs. 90%, in 1993 11% vs. 89%, and in 1994 28% vs. 72%.[51] These pronounced discrepancies indicate several things. First, they show that individuals living in Zaire and preparing themselves to flee their country prefer to first come to Belgium by other means

51. Sources: DVZ-OE and CGVS-CGRA.

(e.g., on the basis of a tourist visa) and only to apply for asylum once they are admitted to Belgian territory. Second, and most importantly, they also show that a great number of Zairian students (and others) who arrived in Belgium in the 1980s, have decided to change their status and to prolong their stay in Belgium as asylum seekers. Since the Zairian and Belgian governments' decisions to discontinue all grants and payments to Zairian students, many of them have seen their financial situation become precarious. They hope that the minimal income attributed by the Belgian government to asylum seekers and political refugees will offer them alternative resources to bring their educational formation to a completion. Also, many of the students who came to Belgium with clear intentions to return to their country after their graduation, have followed the decline of the Zairian state in the international media. As students and, thus, as members of an intellectual class, many of them have since their arrival in the 1980s been very active in political parties and are, therefore, prime targets of Mobutu's security services. They understand that the previously planned return has become a most dangerous and thus unrealizable enterprise and choose to demand political asylum.

These observations point to one of the most important characteristics of the Zairian community, i.e. the vague borderline between the category of students and the category of asylum seekers, which was also referred to in the previous section. Indeed, Zana's way of representing the two categories is inaccurate: *"the arrival of Zairians [in Belgium] happened in two waves. A first wave, in the 1970s, consisted in the influx of high numbers of Zairian students. [...] In a second wave, since 1988, large streams of Zairian asylum seekers washed ashore in Belgium"* (1993: 95, my translation). Had Zana considered the quantitative discrepancy between asylum demands filed at the airport and those filed in the interior, he would have understood that not all Zairians listed as asylum seekers in the statistics of the 1990s are part of a 'new wave', but this group also includes, among others, the same individuals who appeared as students in the statistics of the 1970s. The increase in the total number of Zairians after 1989, when no more new students were allowed, surely points to the additional arrival of many 'original' asylum seekers – Zana's 'second wave'. This, nevertheless, is not the entire story. To a very large extent, the distinction between students and asylum seekers is only of statistical relevance. In the actual and emically significant identity patterns, the two identities are very often combined, as students are very often registered as asylum seekers and intermingle with them as fellow-intellectuals.

Let us turn to a further interpretation of the statistical data on the Zairian asylum seekers in Belgium. Above, I mentioned that in 1981, 41.4% of all Zairians in Belgium were students, while 10.2% were professionally active. Until the present day, no Belgian municipal or national statistical institution disposes of information on the number of (Zairian) asylum seekers living in Belgium at one given moment. The only available information is on the number of *new* applications *filed* per year (presented in table 2); but since, in Belgium, asylum procedures may last up to 8 (or more) years, this number is not to be mistaken for the totality of asylum seekers present on Belgian territory *at one given moment*. On the basis of my own calculations, however, I have been able to establish the numbers of asylum seekers and Zairian asylum seekers living in Belgium on March 31, 1994, on December 31, 1994, on September 31, 1995, and on March 31, 1996.[52] These quantifications are presented in table 3.

Table 3. Asylum seekers residing in Belgium

	Total number of asylum seekers living in Belgium on	Zairian asylum seekers living in Belgium on	% Zairian asylum seekers of all asylum seekers	Zairians in Belgium[53]	% Asylum seekers of all Zairians
Mar 31, 94	29,487	6,156	20.88%	15,868	38.80%
Dec 31, 94	25,616	5,780	22.56%	16,542	34.94%
Sep 31, 95	22,422	5,012	22.35%		
Mar 31, 96	21,925	4,348	19.83%		

From the last column in table 3, the importance of the asylum seekers in the Zairian population in the 1990s is evident: their proportion is over one third of the entire community. It may also be appreciated, as above, how significant a place the Zairian asylum seekers occupy within the totality of asylum seekers in Belgium. Although Belgium receives refugees from more or less 110 different countries, between 20% and 25% of all asylum seekers in Belgium come from Zaire.

If in the 1990s a large segment of the Zairian population is made up of asylum seekers, questions may be asked concerning the share of the political refugees, i.e. those asylum seekers whose demands have been officially

52. My calculations are based on four tables provided by DVZ-OE and CGVS-CGRA and containing cumulative lists of asylum cases and their ratio of recognition. The first list indicates that on March 31, 1994, of all 88,154 demands for political asylum filed between February 1, 1988 and that date, 4,259 had been decisively accepted, while 53,188 had been fully rejected and 29,487 remained without a decision (1,220 were ex-Yugoslavians counted as ‘displaced persons’). The three other lists are similarly cumulative since February 1, 1988, but cover time spans up to December 31, 1994, September 31, 1995, and March 31, 1996, respectively. Each list also contains figures per country. The first list, for instance, indicates that the total number of 88,154 includes 12,755 Zairian applications, and that there were 616 accepted Zairian files, 5,983 rejected ones, and 6,156 which remained under examination. On the basis of these data *and discarding the applications that were filed before 1988*, we are able to establish how many asylum seekers and recognized political refugees were present in Belgium at one given moment: the number of accepted applications is the number of political refugees and the number of applications which are still under examination is the number of asylum seekers.

53. These data are taken from table 1. It must be kept in mind that the values are only applicable to the New Year’s Days of the years indicated. The months of March and September may have slightly diverging values.

accepted. The calculations explained in footnote 52 allow us to establish a table similar to table 3 for the political refugees (in which, it must be repeated, the applications filed before February 1, 1988 are not considered).

Table 4. Political refugees residing in Belgium

	Total number of political refugees living in Belgium on	Zairian political refugees living in Belgium on	% Zairian political refugees of all political refugees
Mar 31, 94	4,259	616	14.46%
Dec 31, 94	5,596	794	14.19%
Sep 31, 95	6,614	934	14.12%
Mar 31, 96	7,513	1,080	14.38%

The share of Zairian political refugees in Belgium's total population of political refugees is considerable, i.e. always above 14%. The proportion of political refugees within the Zairian population, on the other hand, is much less significant than the proportion of asylum seekers in that group. Adding the 794 Zairian political refugees that lived in Belgium on December 31, 1994 to the total number of 16,542 Zairians in Belgium that were counted on that day but which do not include the political refugees (see the clarifications to table 1 in 5.2.1), we are able to establish that the Zairian political refugees only made up 4.58% of the Zairian total population at that time.

As table 3 shows, the number of Zairian and other asylum seekers residing in Belgium is decreasing. This is partly related to the fact that the Belgian authorities are presently speeding up the asylum procedure. Nowadays, more applications are being dealt with and disposed of every month than was the case at the beginning of the 1990s. Nevertheless, not all of these settled cases end up as official recognitions of political refugees, as table 4 indicates. In effect, the ratio of recognized applications in Belgium is very low. The Belgian asylum policy is indeed one of the most restrictive ones and the regulations are still being tightened at the present moment (Poppe & Orvath 1996). As mentioned in footnote 52, on March 31, 1994, of all 88,154 demands for political asylum filed between February 1, 1988 and that date, only 4,259 had been decisively accepted, which is not more than 4.83%, while 53,188 or 60.33% had been rejected. On September 31, 1995, the total number of applications was 108,259 and only 6,614 (6.10%) of them had been accepted, while 78,131 (72.17%) had been rejected. (As can be noticed, the ratio of recognitions is on the increase, but so is the ratio of rejections and the increase is thus primarily a function of the growing number of settled cases.)

The figures for the Zairian demands coincide with the average: on March 31, 1994, only 616 or exactly 4.83% of all 12,755 Zairian demands had been accepted; on September 31, 1995, only 934 or 6.15% Zairian asylum seekers (on a total of 15,165) had been recognized. The striking similarity between the ratio of Zairian recognitions and the global ratio strongly suggests that the Belgian authorities make use of quantitative quota, rather than objective criteria, in their evaluation of asylum cases. Marc Bossuyt, Belgium's general commissioner for the refugees, has always firmly denied allegations along these lines. In an official memorandum divulged on January 9, 1995, Bossuyt declared: *"As long as I am general commissioner, all asylum seekers who comply with the definition of refugees as stipulated in the Geneva conventions will be recognized, irrespective of their origins and irrespective of their relative numbers"* (my translation).

5.2.2.3. Emigrating from Zaire: The profile of the emigrants and the role of Kinshasa

The two foregoing sections have demonstrated that the Zairian community in Belgium is to a large extent a population of university students and refugees, both categories overlapping considerably. This identification of the Zairian *immigrants in* Belgium offers us an understanding of the context in which *emigration from* Zaire takes place in Zaire itself (for a more complete ethnographic description of the departure situation in Zaire, see Mayoyo 1995: 53-88).

First of all, the position, function, and profile the emigrants occupied 'back home' becomes clearer. It is evident that not all segments of Zairian society are equally represented in the emigration from Zaire. The fact that the Zairian population in Belgium is strongly dominated by students and political activists indicates that emigration is primarily a matter of the members of the Zairian intellectual elite. In terms of the structure and composition of the society in Zaire, it is in particular the small segment of Zairians with an advanced level of education which provides the candidates for emigration, while the bulk of less highly schooled is excluded from this possibility.[54]

However, a number of factors which counteract this dominance of intellectuals must be taken into account. There is the fact that the increase in the number of Zairians in Belgium over the years is to a large extent the accomplishment of the already mentioned procedure of family reunification. Many male students and refugees first arrive alone and subsequently apply for entry permits for their wives and children (a right which, in Belgium, is given to students and political refugees, but not to asylum seekers). There is also the fact that not all asylum seekers functioned as intellectuals in Zairian society before their coming to Belgium. Political threats do not only exist in the form of direct prosecutions of targeted individuals. Political repression also manifests itself in the unequal distribution of economic resources and in the resulting everyday discrimination and misery of the masses. Therefore, although the primary *raison*

54. This discrepancy lies at the heart of interesting social tensions in Zaire itself, as traveling to Europe has become a significant parameter of identity attribution within Zairian society (see Biaya 1994 and Mayoyo 1995 for excellent ethnographic details).

d'être of the Zairian community in Belgium is related to the activities and careers of intellectuals, it would be unwarranted to identify each individual Zairian emigrating to Belgium as an intellectual. The wives and children of the mostly male students, as well as an important number of male and female asylum seekers, are nonintellectuals, and manifestly function, behave, and interact as such within the Zairian community in Belgium.

Another trait of the Zairian context of emigration is its typically urban, Kinshasa character. Unfortunately, there is no statistical information available on the regional origins of the Zairians in Belgium, distinguishing between Zairians who were born and raised in the eastern regions, Zairians who are from western regions, etc. Nonetheless, there are indications that all members of the Zairian community in Belgium have had at least *some* experiences in Kinshasa. The indications are the following. In Zaire, as in most Third-World countries, the class of intellectuals is by definition an urban one. Universities, political organizations, and all other structures in which intellectuals are active are located in the major urban centers and not in the hinterland. In the case of Zaire, it must also be added that in the highly centralized state (see chapter 4, section 4.2.3) these institutions have gradually been drained away from the provincial urban centers to be concentrated in one particular city, i.e. the capital Kinshasa. If not inhabitants of the capital, Zairian intellectuals are, therefore, at least to some degree familiar with it.

Since the 1980s, Kinshasa is, also, the only Zairian city provided with an internationally accessible airport. Furthermore, Kinshasa is the only place where important travel documents, such as passports, visas, and foreign scholarships may be obtained, an enterprise which often takes more than a few months. As a consequence, all Zairians, including nonintellectuals, who plan to travel to Belgium come into contact with the capital, with its people, and with its social and sociolinguistic realities. It must be stressed, in this respect, that the degrees of affinity with Kinshasa vary greatly. For some, it means that they, and in some cases their parents as well, were born and raised in Kinshasa and that they have never lived or been in another part of the country. Others were born in another part of the country and came to the capital for educational or professional purposes, and thus lived in the capital during three or more years. Still others always lived, studied, and worked in the interior, and only know Kinshasa from the inevitable trips to the capital and from the weeks or months they spent in the capital before actually leaving for Belgium. The crucial role of Kinshasa in the emigration to Belgium will appear as a particularly meaningful constructive building block in members' explanations of the dominance of Lingala in the Neptunia context and in Belgium in general, which are discussed in chapter 8.

5.2.3. An nonexistent perceptive category

The migrant studies that are exclusively dedicated to the Zairian community in Belgium and that have appeared in a more or less academically sanctioned context can be counted on the fingers of one hand: Mayoyo (1995), Morelli (1993a; which is reproduced in 1994b), Ndamina (1993), Tshika Yabadi (1993), and Zana (1993).[55] Only two of these publications, i.e. Mayoyo (1995) and Zana (1993), are monographs. The others are articles, the average number of pages of which is not higher than 4. Not only is the list extremely limited, it may also be remarked that none of these publications has appeared before 1993. Indeed, the Zairian community was for a long time overlooked in Belgian social research on migrant communities. As Zana (1993: 2) observes, neither in Braeckman's *Les Etrangers en Belgique* (1973) nor in Morelli's *Histoire des Etrangers et de l'Immigration en Belgique* (ed., 1992), two of the standard books on the foreign populations in Belgium, is the Zairian community given any attention. The Italian, Spanish, Turkish, German, Greek, Jewish, and Moroccan communities, on the other hand, are all covered in detail.

The lack of scientific attention is undoubtedly related to the Zairians' small number throughout the years. There is, however, also an important qualitative reason. As explained above, the Congolese and Zairians in Belgium never formed part of the state's organized importation of labor, but were, at least until the 1990s, predominantly represented by students. Students, it was commonly believed by academics, are passers-by, residing in Belgium on a transitory basis and preparing themselves to return to their country. Therefore, the Zairian community in Belgium was never considered a population of 'true immigrants'. It was never assumed that the Zairians would establish a firmly settled community, involving Belgian-born second and third generations and not necessarily considering their presence in Belgium a temporary one. And yet, such a firm settlement took place. As the discussions in the previous sections indicate, many, though not all, of the Zairian students who arrived in Belgium in the 1970s and 1980s tended to prolong their stay by postponing their graduations, by accumulating different university enrollments and degrees, and/or by preferring a life as an asylum seeker in a foreign country to the increasingly menacing and repressive situation in Zaire. By 1993, the academic world began to manifest the knowledge that the Zairian community was *de facto* a community of 'true immigrants'. In a number of publications (1993a; 1993b; 1994a; 1994b), the Belgian historian Anne Morelli opened the debate by asking the question *"Les Zaïrois de Belgique sont-ils des immigrés?"* (which is the title of her 1994b publication). Morelli herself, as well as a number of other researchers who felt invited by her question (e.g., Ndamina 1993; Tshika Yabadi 1993), answered in the affirmative. Other respondents, such as Yalale-wa-Bonkele (1995), altogether contested the usefulness, relevance, and authenticity of Morelli's question, arguing that the quality of the Zairian

55. Less academic publications include Bolya Sinatu et al. (1994); Jika (1994); Muntu (1993); Nkashama (1991); Ntumba (1994); Tedanga (1989); Yalale-wa-Bonkele (1995). Among those publications that mention the Zairian immigrants only cursorily are Grimmeau (1993); Hullebroeck (1993); Mat & Morelli (1985); Morelli (1993b; 1994a).

community as a population of true settlers was overly self-evident: *"force est pour nous de reconnaître, sans l'ombre d'un doute, l'existence manifeste d'une véritable immigration zaïroise en Belgique"* (Yalale-wa-Bonkele 1995: 30). In general, however, as the low number of recent academic publications indicates, even today the awakening of scholarly interest in the Zairians of Belgium remains a timid one.

This inconspicuous character of the Zairian community is not only a matter of the academic world, but also coincides with general patterns of perception among the nonacademic autochthonous population of Belgium. In these general patterns, the Zairians belong to the most atypical of all foreign communities. Belgium's foreigners which most readily come to mind and about which nonspecialists have the most outspoken viewpoints are the Moroccans, the Turks, and, to a lesser extent, the Italians (see, i.a., Blommaert & Verschueren 1992; Roosens 1989). Moreover, even when politicians and social workers want to refer to atypical groups in order to challenge popular generalizations concerning foreigners in Belgium, the range of groups mentioned is almost always limited to the Dutch, the Japanese, the Americans, and the Jews. Indeed, in the discourse of the politicians and social workers there has arisen a sort of *typical list of atypical* immigrants, and in this list the Zairians do not occur.

It is fair to say that in the perceptions of many Belgians the Zairians do not constitute a vague category, but rather an *absent* category. In general, opinions that are explicable by their holders do not include positive or negative views of Zairians, but no views at all. In my fieldwork, I often ask Belgians who have no personal ties with Zaire or with Zairians in Belgium about their opinions on the Zairian community. It is telling that most of these informants either set out to talk about 'Black Africans' in general, admit that they do not know what to say, or visibly start creating opinions *in situ*. Emically this matter is, indeed, very much a nonissue, and 'the Zairians' is largely nonexistent as a separate category in the perceptions.[56]

The origins of this conceptual gap may be indicated as follows. There is, again, the quantitative element. The relatively low number of Zairians can, however, impossibly be the decisive reason, since the Japanese expatriates, which undoubtedly come more readily to mind to politicians, social workers, and other nonacademics than the Zairians, are much less numerous. On December 31, 1994, there were only 3,604 Japanese residents in Belgium,[57] while the Zairian community totaled 16,542 people. I am inclined to believe that

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56. It must be recognized that since more or less 1993, the general salience of the Zairian community has slightly augmented. This is related to the growing attention paid to asylum seekers in the Belgian media and in political debates. Given the large share of Zairians in the number of asylum seekers arriving in Belgium, it is difficult to discuss refugee matters without mentioning the Zairians. Nonetheless, due to the very recent character of this development, an overall prominence of the Zairians and the existence of a corresponding category in the autochthonous population's perceptions are still lacking overall.

57. Source: NIS-INS.

one of the important origins is an old structural decrease in the political interest, and the related effects on the media and the autochthonous population. Since the early 1980s, the Belgian political body (in contrast to what is observable among economic actors) has been manifesting an increasing embarrassment concerning the colonial past, combined with a growing aversion to Zaire's current political system. Belgian politicians of the generation that has no background in the colonial epoch avoid more and more the confrontation with a colonial past they do not want to consider theirs, as well as with the shameful reputation of their man in power, Mobutu. In general, the rupture in the interest has been complete since the diplomatic conflict of 1989. Since that moment, Zaire has become an unmentionable and unmentioned topic in Belgian politics: the close ties between Belgium and Zaire are once and for all to be considered history.

The Belgian media have closely followed the political developments. Since the 1980s and 1989 in particular, the interest of the media in the political and social situation of Zaire has gradually been reduced to the level of attention paid to any remote African or Asian country, as if there had never been any colonial ties. For my own research, I am often compelled to turn to French newspapers in order to keep up with the developments in the former Belgian colony.

The effects of all these trends on the average concern with Zaire displayed by the members of the lay population are very tangible. Many members of the generation of Belgians who were born, roughly, after 1960, do not display any interest in Zaire. It is symptomatic that even among highly educated members of this generation, with the exception, of course, of specializing researchers and individuals with personal relations in Zaire, the general knowledge on the history and political situation of Zaire is extremely limited. To many younger Belgians, the date of June 30, 1960 or notions such as 'the two Shaba wars' and 'the Third Republic' do not even ring a bell, and legion are those who are not able to name three Zairian cities or one region. In short, in Belgium Zaire is a topic of specialized, rather than ready knowledge. Given the old ties with Zaire, the only colony Belgium has ever had, this is, to say the least, remarkable.

In the light of my focus on the Zairians in Antwerp, it is also important to mention, before closing, that the developments are more pronounced in Flanders than in Wallonia. This is related to the fact that in Flemish politics and media, Zaire and the colonial past are often associated with the old unitary state of Belgium, which in Flanders was long identified with francophone domination and the federalization of which has mainly been a Flemish claim. In Flanders more than elsewhere, Zaire is said to be part of *la Belgique à papa*, an expression which nicely combines the referral of Zaire to a to-be-forgotten past and the referral of Zaire to francophone Belgium.

5.2.4. Geographical distribution

Table 5 presents the spread of the Zairians over the Belgian provinces.

Table 5. Spread of Zairians over the Belgian provinces[58]

	Mar 1, 81	Dec 31, 87	Dec 31, 88	Dec 31, 89	Dec 31, 90	Dec 31, 91	Dec 31, 92	Dec 31, 93	Dec 31, 94
BELGIUM	8,575	10,740	10,871	11,186	12,025	12,840	14,606	15,868	16,542
	100%	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*
Brabant	6,297	7,792	7,794	7,955	8,222	8,355	8,748	9,073	9,852
	73.4%	*72.6%*	*71.7%*	*71.1%*	*68.4%*	*65.1%*	*59.9%*	*57.2%*	*59.6%*
Antwerp	256	462	437	495	639	761	1,252	1,496	1,190
	3.0%	*4.3%*	*4.0%*	*4.4%*	*5.3%*	*5.9%*	*8.6%*	*9.4%*	*7.2%*
Limburg	26	37	46	54	52	55	48	66	59
	0.3%	*0.3%*	*0.4%*	*0.5%*	*0.4%*	*0.4%*	*0.3%*	*0.4%*	*0.4%*
W Flanders	85	56	51	57	86	97	156	196	206
	1.0%	*0.5%*	*0.5%*	*0.5%*	*0.7%*	*0.8%*	*1.1%*	*1.2%*	*1.2%*
E Flanders	70	80	88	105	166	200	226	246	273
	0.8%	*0.7%*	*0.8%*	*0.9%*	*1.4%*	*1.6%*	*1.5%*	*1.6%*	*1.7%*
Liège	740	866	983	987	1,078	1,389	2,023	2,544	2,592
	8.6%	*8.1%*	*9.0%*	*8.8%*	*9.0%*	*10.8%*	*13.9%*	*16.0%*	*15.7%*
Hainaut	732	933	955	978	1,155	1,222	1,378	1,509	1,642
	8.5%	*8.7%*	*8.8%*	*8.7%*	*9.6%*	*9.5%*	*9.4%*	*9.5%*	*9.9%*
Namur	294	395	421	454	495	616	615	598	572
	3.4%	*3.7%*	*3.9%*	*4.1%*	*4.1%*	*4.8%*	*4.2%*	*3.8%*	*3.5%*
Luxembourg	75	119	96	101	132	145	160	140	156
	0.9%	*1.1%*	*0.9%*	*0.9%*	*1.1%*	*1.1%*	*1.1%*	*0.9%*	*0.9%*

Several parameters governing the spread of the Zairian immigrants throughout the Belgian territory may be distinguished: urbanity, language, the location of educational institutions, cost of living, and family networks. These parameters are not mutually exclusive, in that the relevance of one parameter would automatically exclude the possible additional relevance of others, but sometimes reinforce or, inversely, counterbalance each other in a frame of multiple causation.

58. Source: NIS-INS. On December 31, 1994, the province of Brabant was divided into two separate provinces, i.e. Flemish Brabant and Walloon Brabant. In the table provided here, the province of Brabant appears as one single province.

First of all, we notice that, as is typical of immigrant populations in general, the Zairians are strongly concentrated in the major urban centers, in particular in the country's capital. Table 5 shows that across the years the Zairian community is dominant in the province of Brabant, which is the province in which the capital, Brussels, is situated. Moreover, within each province the Zairians are primarily to be found in the province's capital. In 1991, to take one example, 79.2% of the Zairians who lived in the province of Antwerp lived in the city of Antwerp, and 76% of all Zairians in the province of Liège were counted in its capital, the city of Liège.[59] In addition to the fact that the urban appeal is typical of immigrant populations, the nature of the Zairian community in Belgium as a typically urban population is additionally grounded in the average profile of the Zairian immigrant as an intellectual and, also, in the background of the emigration from Zaire, which, as explained, is very much related to the urban context of Kinshasa.

Language also plays a role in the geographical distribution. Table 5 shows that there is a global discrepancy between the Flemish provinces (Antwerp, West Flanders, East Flanders, and Limburg) on the one hand and the Walloon provinces (Hainaut, Liège, Namur, and Luxembourg) on the other. This points to the preference that is given to the French-speaking parts of the country.

The parameter of language is, however, counterbalanced by other factors. In fact, within the set of French-speaking provinces there are provinces with lower shares than some Flemish provinces. Consider, among other things, the discrepancy between the province of Antwerp and the province of Luxembourg. This matter is related to the fact that the Zairian community is predominantly a student population. The higher educational institutions of major importance in Wallonia are located in the provinces of Liège (i.a., the university of the city of Liège) and Hainaut (i.a., the university of Mons, which is the capital of Hainaut), whereas the universities and colleges of the provinces of Namur and Luxembourg (e.g., some colleges in the city of Arlon) are less prominent within the Belgian educational panorama. Antwerp, then, is the province where a number of Belgium's few international and multilingual colleges, particularly attended by Zairians, are situated, such as the Institute of Development Policy and Management, the nautical college, and the Prince Leopold Institute of Tropical Medicine (see also section 5.3). In sum, a very important demarcation to be drawn in table 5 is the one between the provinces of Antwerp, Brabant, Liège, and Hainaut on the one hand and the provinces of West Flanders, East Flanders, Luxembourg, Limburg, and Namur on the other.

Table 5 betrays an unmistakable historical development. At least until the end of 1993, the share of the province of Brabant was always on the decrease. We observe an overall deconcentration and drift away from the capital city of Brussels, and a spread towards other parts of the country. As may be noticed, the provinces that most profited from this drift from Brussels are Antwerp (its

59. Source: NIS-INS.

downward evolution in 1994 will be explained in section 5.3.1) and Liège. The decrease of the province of Brabant accelerated considerably in 1991 and 1992. In 1992, the share of Antwerp jumped from 5.9% to 8.6% and the share of Liège from 10.8% to almost 14%. The share of Namur, on the other hand, remained remarkably steady. These data suggest that the geographical shift must be interpreted as follows.

There are no indications of a shift in preference towards nonurban areas. Figures not represented here indicate that Brussels is not particularly abandoned in favor of Belgian suburbs or the countryside, but, rather, in favor of *other* urban areas. Ethnographic evidence on disposition, life style, and social networks, also tells me that the Zairian community is today still very much an urban-oriented one. Important exceptions notwithstanding, the Zairians are still typical city-dwellers. The drift away should be seen, rather, in the light of the changing demographic composition and in the light of related changes in average financial resistance. Until the end of the 1980s, the average Zairian in Belgium was not underprivileged. The scholarships and/or the financial means these members of the Zairian upper class had accumulated in Zaire before their arrival allowed most of them to afford a more or less comfortable life in Brussels (and its southern suburbs). From the end of the 1980s onwards, by contrast, the financial situation of many Zairians has radically changed. As already explained, in 1988 and 1989 the Zairian and Belgian governments decided to cut off the financial support to Zairian students residing in Belgium, which implied that many Zairian families suddenly found themselves among the most needy of Belgian society. Also, since the 1990s the existing community has been complemented by a large body of asylum seekers, not all of whom, as explained above, are members of the Zairian upper class. In effect, the average Zairian asylum seeker's existence in Belgium is a daily struggle to make ends meet (see Mayoyo 1995: 106ff and Tshika Yabadi 1993 for further ethnographic details).

In these contexts, residence in the expensive city of Brussels has become unfeasible. A move to the less expensive parts of Brussels was made impossible by the Belgian law of June 26, 1984, which allowed six of the 19 component municipalities of Brussels, i.e. Anderlecht, Schaarbeek, Sint-Jans-Molenbeek, Sint-Joost-ten-Node, Sint-Gillis, and Vorst, to refuse to register new asylum seekers and foreigners, because their proportions of foreign inhabitants were deemed far too high already. These six municipalities are precisely the less expensive boroughs of Brussels. Moreover, although officially this measure was only limited to the six municipalities mentioned, many other municipalities in the capital followed the example – without legal sanction. Other cities thus had to be turned to by the needy Zairians. Cities such as Liège and Antwerp, which have since long been faced with persisting decreases in their populations, have developed less demanding fiscal systems than Brussels – and, in that respect, than many suburban towns. Also, initially the city of Antwerp was much more lenient when it came to filing asylum seekers into its population registers. (In

March 1993, however, the Antwerp officials decided to follow the Brussels example and to refuse to register new asylum seekers coming to Antwerp from other Belgian cities.) The appealing effect Antwerp and Liège had on the growing segment of destitute Zairians is therefore not surprising.

A last important parameter controlling the distribution of the Zairians throughout the Belgian territory is the parameter of existing networks. Rather than choosing the city where her or his educational institution is located or the city which operates the most lenient registration policy, the arriving Zairian immigrant is, as any other immigrant, often inclined to go and live in that city or neighborhood where her or his friends and relatives live (or, at least, where he or she is certain to encounter fellow countrypersons). In most cases, a Zairian carefully prepares her or his emigration to Belgium with the assistance of relatives already residing in Belgium. It is very often the milieu of these contacts to which the arriving immigrant will turn in giving shape to her or his new existence in Belgium.

5.3. Zairians in Antwerp

5.3.1. The general figures

In this section, as throughout the rest of this study, the analysis of the Zairian community in Antwerp covers the Zairians who live in 'the city of Antwerp' (*Stad Antwerpen*). The city of Antwerp as an administrative unit came into existence on January 1, 1983, when ten separate municipalities, Antwerpen (which includes the old inner city, the left bank of the Scheldt river (called *Linkeroever*), and the entire seaport), Berchem, Berendrecht, Borgerhout, Deurne, Ekeren, Hoboken, Merksem, Wilrijk, and Zandvliet, were merged. From that moment on, the ten component units were called 'districts'.

Table 6 and table 7 provide information on the official number of Zairians living in the city of Antwerp per year. Table 6 sketches their annual increase and their relation to the total population of Zairians in Belgium, while table 7 situates the Zairians in Antwerp among the other foreign populations in this city, i.e. the percentage of Zairians in the totality of foreigners and the rank the Zairian population occupies among the other foreign communities. The figures before 1983 are in each case the sum of the ten municipalities that later made up the city of Antwerp.[60]

Table 6. Zairians in Antwerp vs. Zairians in Belgium[61]

	BELGIUM	City of Antwerp	Annual increase	% living in Antwerp
1970	5,244	114		2.17%
Dec 31, 73		162		
Dec 31, 74		189	+ 27	
Dec 31, 75		182	- 7	
Dec 31, 76		193	+ 11	
Dec 31, 77		203	+ 10	
Dec 31, 78		220	+ 17	
Dec 31, 79		217	- 3	

60. For the sake of accuracy, it must be mentioned that at the time of the administrative incorporation, a small part of the municipality of Ekeren became part of the neighboring municipality of Kapellen, and was thus not integrated into the city of Antwerp. For the purposes of my analysis, this factor is negligible.

61. Source: city of Antwerp. For unclear reasons, the figures provided by the statistical agencies of the city of Antwerp do not always coincide exactly with the figures provided by the Belgian NIS-INS on the foreigners in Antwerp. I have in all cases given preference to the figures of the city of Antwerp.

Dec 31, 80	8,575	284	+ 67	3.31%
Dec 31, 81	9,240	275	- 9	2.98%
Dec 31, 82	9,607	280	+ 5	2.91%
Dec 31, 83	9,457	259	- 21	2.74%
Dec 31, 84	9,447	297	+ 38	3.14%
Dec 31, 85	8,874	306	+ 9	3.45%
Dec 31, 86	9,039	333	+ 27	3.68%
Dec 31, 87	10,740	381	+ 48	3.55%
Dec 31, 88	10,871	356	- 25	3.27%
Dec 31, 89	11,186	433	+ 77	3.87%
Dec 31, 90	12,025	535	+ 102	4.45%
Dec 31, 91	12,840	603	+ 68	4.70%
Dec 31, 92	14,606	1,062	+ 459	7.27%
Dec 31, 93	15,868	1,244	+ 182	7.84%
Dec 31, 94	16,542	942	- 302	5.69%

Table 7. Antwerp: Zairians vs. other foreigners[62]

	Total inhabitants (Belgians + foreigners)	**Foreigners**	**Zairians**	**Percentage Zairians of foreigners**	**Rank**
Dec 31, 73		35,920	162	0.45%	
Dec 31, 74		37,635	189	0.50%	
Dec 31, 75		40,462	182	0.45%	
Dec 31, 76		41,345	193	0.47%	
Dec 31, 77		42,597	203	0.48%	
Dec 31, 78		43,192	220	0.51%	
Dec 31, 79		44,114	217	0.49%	
Dec 31, 80	507,706	45,785	284	0.62%	17
Dec 31, 81	502,428	46,387	275	0.59%	17
Dec 31, 82	498,451	46,007	280	0.61%	14
Dec 31, 83	488,425	46,251	259	0.56%	17
Dec 31, 84	486,576	47,516	297	0.63%	17
Dec 31, 85	483,199	44,662	306	0.69%	15
Dec 31, 86	479,748	45,942	333	0.72%	14
Dec 31, 87	476,044	46,941	381	0.81%	15
Dec 31, 88	473,472	48,198	356	0.74%	15
Dec 31, 89	470,489	50,387	433	0.86%	14
Dec 31, 90	467,709	52,813	535	1.01%	14
Dec 31, 91	465,483	54,739	603	1.10%	14
Dec 31, 92	464,954	57,342	1,062	1.85%	10
Dec 31, 93	462,336	59,060	1,244	2.11%	8

62. Source: city of Antwerp.

	Total inhabitants (Belgians + foreigners)	Foreigners	Zairians	Percentage Zairians of foreigners	Rank
Dec 31, 94	458,725	58,341	942	1.61%	11

As in the case of table 1, there are categories of Zairians who do not appear in these official figures. There are, first, the Zairians who have acquired Belgian nationality, for which the same considerations apply as those mentioned above (see 5.2.1). Another category are the illegal aliens, whose presence in Antwerp must be considered quantitatively significant for two reasons. A first reason is that the anonymity offered in large cities such as Antwerp appeals to illegal aliens, as it implies a reduced chance of being caught and repatriated. A second reason is that the share of *asylum seekers* in Antwerp is considerable (see below): many asylum seekers whose demands have been rejected tend to stay in the city (because of family ties and other reasons) and become illegal aliens, and many illegal aliens from other Belgian cities come to Antwerp to join their families and friends who are often asylum seekers in Antwerp. A third category are the political refugees. As in the Belgian statistics, these recognized refugees with UNO status are not included in Antwerp's official figures. On December 31, 1991, there were 49 political refugees of Zairian origin in the city of Antwerp; in 1992, their number was 83, in 1993, 126, and in 1994, 148 (see also below).[63]

In addition to these statistical deviations, which also apply to the Belgian figures, other deviations are particular to the situation in Antwerp. First, there is the fact that the city of Antwerp systematically deregisters every asylum seeker whose asylum application has been rejected by the national services and who has received the decisive order to leave the country. Between the date of issuance of the order to leave and the date on which the rejected refugee is actually due to leave, he or she is not an illegal alien on Belgian territory. Nevertheless, the city officials remove these people from the population lists, which allows them to also discontinue the welfare support granted to these people. Secondly, until recent times the city of Antwerp always refused to register asylum seekers who wanted to come and live in Antwerp while their procedure was under appeal. This meant that the many refugees whose demands had been rejected, but who lodged an appeal at the Belgian Permanent Appeal Commission were unable to register in the city of Antwerp.

Thirdly, and most consequentially, on May 24, 1993, the Antwerp city council decided to stop new registrations of any asylum seekers, regardless of the stage of the asylum procedure at which they found themselves. The asylum seekers who already lived in Antwerp were allowed to stay, but newcomers

63. Source: city of Antwerp.

from other parts of the country were refused. The 1994 decrease in the absolute number of Zairians shown in the Antwerp statistics (see also table 5) must be interpreted in this light. Although this measure was illegal, the city of Antwerp persevered in this policy until 1995. In an interview with a Flemish newspaper (De Morgen, September 26, 1994), the then socialist mayor of Antwerp Bob Cools explained – in hindsight – that his decision was meant *"to urge the national government to take measures, as Antwerp found itself confronted with a swelling stream of refugees, which was likely to worsen the climate of intolerance already present in the city"* (my translation). The city council's registration stop did not keep those Zairians who still wanted to live in Antwerp, from doing so. The newcomers were simply registered in other Belgian cities and municipalities, but spent their daily lives amidst the Zairian community in Antwerp. All these observations indicate that the numbers of Zairians actually living in Antwerp are higher than what is provided in the official statistics.

But the official figures themselves already point at a pronounced increase of Zairians from the 1990s onwards. This increase does not only manifest itself in absolute numbers, but also in a relative sense. First, from table 7 it may be remarked that the Zairians' share in Antwerp's foreign population becomes particularly noteworthy from 1992 onwards. The 1990s are certainly the period in which the Zairian community in Antwerp has manifested itself within Antwerp's multiethnic landscape. Second, the percentage of Zairians in Belgium that decide to leave other cities and come and live in Antwerp is also significant (table 6 and table 5). This percentage has been consistently on the increase (except for the slight regressions in 1987 and 1988), with most remarkable peaks in 1992 (7.27%) and 1993 (7.84%). What I am claiming is that the growth of the Zairian community in Antwerp is not merely a function of the growth of the Zairian community in Belgium, but that it is also related to the growing appeal the city of Antwerp enjoys among Zairians. This growing appeal will be clarified in the following section, where the demographic history and profiles of the Zairians in Antwerp will be elaborated upon.

5.3.2. Seamen, students, and asylum seekers

As mentioned in section 5.2, some form of Congolese immigration in Belgium existed before the 1950s. As Zana's historical study shows (1993), the role of Antwerp was momentous in this period. Antwerp was, and still is, Belgium's main international seaport and was the only port from which the *Compagnie Belge Maritime du Congo* (CBMC) organized its cargo and passenger transport to and from the colony. At an epoch in which air transport was not yet commercially developed, Antwerp and the CBMC had a complete monopoly on Belgium's access to Central Africa. As such, the Belgian colonials who visited Belgium and who were sometimes accompanied by their Congolese servants all disembarked in Antwerp. As a consequence, Antwerp was the most evident host city of those Congolese servants who were abandoned by, or who managed to flee from, their employers upon arrival (see 5.2.2.1). As mentioned above, the fact that during colonization all Congolese were considered holders of the Belgian nationality brought about that (most of) these ‘accidental immigrants’ were not repatriated, but stayed and settled in Belgium.

Other accidental immigrants were Congolese laborers working on the Belgian ocean liners.[64] From 1908 onwards, the CBMC started to replace all its Belgian manual laborers with Congolese laborers (the sailors on deck, on the other hand, remained European, see Zana 1993). Once the ship arrived in the port of Antwerp, some of these Congolese laborers managed to run away and to stay in Antwerp. Although a number of these renegades left Antwerp to escape from the hands of the harbor police, who would arrest them on a charge of breach of contract and hand them over to the CBMC management, many others stayed in Antwerp. In general, it is fair to say that the Congolese ‘immigration’ in Belgium until World War II was very much related to Antwerp.

From the 1950s and 1960s onwards, the immigration was primarily the product of a student population. Although Antwerp is a Flemish-speaking city, its share in this educational immigration has always been considerable. This is due to the fact that, in addition to its three university campuses, Antwerp also accommodates four of Belgium’s international educational institutions. A closer look at these four international institutions is in order here.

There is, first of all, the Dutch-French bilingual nautical college (*Hogere Zeevaartschool - Ecole Supérieure de Navigation*). Antwerp’s nautical college offers theoretical and practical courses of civil navigation and forms commanders and other officers for ocean and inland shipping. Already in the 1950s, Congolese seamen were sent to the nautical college to be formed as officers. After independence, their number increased considerably, encouraged by financial interventions of both the CMB (*Compagnie Maritime Belge*) and the CMZ (*Compagnie Maritime Zaïroise*). Until the late 1980s, almost all of the CMZ officers, both the ones used for international shipping and the ones who worked on Zaire’s inland shipping, were formed at the nautical college of Antwerp. During these years, the Zairians constituted one of the most numerous foreign groups. From 1985 onwards, their number has been strongly on the decrease, and today there are hardly any Zairians enrolled at the college. This is related to the disintegration of the CMZ. Due to massive international debts accumulated since the 1970s, the CMZ has been compelled to sell all its ocean liners and nowadays exclusively operates by chartering ocean liners of the CMB and other companies. Without ships, the CMZ is, evidently, not in need of trained officers.

64. In this and all following discussions, it is at times important to make a distinction between the manual laborers working in the ships’ coal bunkers and engine rooms and the sailors working on deck. I will use the term ‘seamen’ when I mean to include both.

Secondly, until 1958 there was the French-speaking institute of commercial studies (*Ecole Commerciale Anversoise de l'Etat*), which later became part of the University of Antwerp. The courses in this institute were conducted in French and were particularly designed for foreign students. From 1950 onwards, many of the Congolese students who received scholarships were given business training in this institute. In 1958, a new Belgian language legislation banned all college and university programs in Flanders given in another language than Dutch (except for postgraduate programs) and the institute was closed down.

Thirdly, another, and still operating part of the University of Antwerp is the trilingual Institute of Development Policy and Management (IDPM, in Dutch and French known as *College voor de Ontwikkelingslanden - Institut de Gestion et de Politique de Développement*). The IDPM was founded in 1965 as a successor of the Belgian colonial college (*Coloniale Hogeschool*), where during colonization Belgians were trained for public service in the colony, and which was closed down in 1960. As its name indicates, the IDPM provides courses in development cooperation, for which, in addition to Dutch, both a French and an English program exist. (This is legally possible since the courses are officially organized as part of a postgraduate program). From the start, the IDPM was oriented to students from developing countries, and the Zairians have always occupied an important place in the French-speaking section of the college. Until the Zairian and Belgian governmental decisions to discontinue the support to Zairian students in 1989, the Zairians often represented more than one third of all foreign students at the IDPM. Even in the 1990s, their proportions still vary between 20% and 25%.[65]

A fourth important international institution of higher education in Antwerp is the Prince Leopold Institute of Tropical Medicine (*Prins Leopold Instituut voor Tropische Geneeskunde - Institut de Médecine Tropicale Prince Léopold*), commonly known as 'the tropical institute'. This institute was founded in the early years of colonization, after which it soon became a world center of research on tropical diseases. After 1960, the tropical institute started organizing courses in tropical medicine for physicians, nurses, and veterinarians from developing countries. As in the case of the IDPM, there are both programs in English and French: until 1975, the French and English courses were given simultaneously, while since that date, the institute has been organizing them in annual alternations. The institute's management has always aimed at a more or less equal representation of the developing countries in its courses and therefore does not allow the number of students of one and the same country to surpass 10% of the total number of students per year. In contrast to many other international educational institutions in Antwerp, the Zairians have thus never constituted a majority in the tropical institute, but their presence has always been notable.

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65. Source: IDPM.

Although the Zairian students lost their governmental support from 1989 onwards, today students still represent an important segment of the Zairian population in Antwerp. As mentioned before, only for a very small group of the Zairian students residing in Belgium has the diplomatic crisis between Zaire and Belgium at the end of the 1980s implied an actual return to Zaire. Many continue their formation on the basis of their own earnings, on the basis of short-term resources provided by Belgian professors who employ them on occasional projects, and by other means. Many, also, have filed an application for political asylum, since, as intellectuals, they are often engaged in dissident political activities. As asylum seekers they receive governmental welfare support, which allows them to continue their formation. This last factor shows, again, that the borderline between students and refugees in the Zairian population is a fuzzy one: these individuals remain active as students, but are from the day of their application statistically categorized as asylum seekers.

But in addition to these students 'statutorily converted' to asylum seekers, the 1990s are also the period of the arrival of new asylum seekers in Belgium. Unfortunately, the statistical services of the city of Antwerp have never been able (willing?) to provide me with a quantitative breakdown of the Zairian community in Antwerp along their statuses (students, asylum seekers, etc.). Yet, the chronological correspondence between the growing number of new Zairian asylum seekers arriving in Belgium from 1991 onwards (see table 2) and the growth of the Zairian population in Antwerp after the same date (table 6 and table 7) suggests that this latter growth is to a large extent the product of asylum seekers and that the share of this category in Antwerp's Zairian population has considerably increased over the last years.

Closely related to this increasing share of asylum seekers is the growing appeal Antwerp has been exerting on Zairians all over Belgium in recent years. As mentioned in table 6, after 1990 more than 4% of all Zairians in Belgium chose Antwerp as their place of residence, and from 1992 onwards this figure suddenly jumped to over 7%. This phenomenon must be interpreted as follows. I already mentioned the high cost of living in Brussels, the increasingly precarious financial situation of many Zairians, and the early refusal of some municipalities in Brussels to register new foreigners and asylum seekers. Another reason is the less unfavorable economic situation in Antwerp and its surroundings in comparison with the situation in Brussels. Zairians often explain to me that in Antwerp more Belgian restaurant owners and private individuals are willing and financially able to hire employees than in Brussels. These jobs are as a rule of the most scanty, manual, and unstable kind, i.e. as kitchen helpers, cleaning persons, newspaper boys, etc., but they allow the intellectuals and other deprived Zairians to make ends meet and they are a good enough reason to move out of Brussels (or another city) and to settle in Antwerp.

The presence of asylum seekers in Antwerp necessarily implies the additional presence of political refugees. As mentioned, since asylum seekers lose their original nationalities once they are officially recognized as political refugees, the political refugees are not included among the Zairians in the official population lists (table 6 and table 7). Nevertheless, the department of social affairs of the city of Antwerp has been able to offer me quantitative information on the political refugees of Zairian origin in Antwerp (table 8).

Table 8. Zairian political refugees in Antwerp[66]

	Official number of Zairians	Political refugees of Zairian origin	Official number + political refugees	% Political refugees of total
Dec 31, 91	603	49	652	7.52%
Dec 31, 92	1,062	83	1,145	7.25%
Dec 31, 93	1,244	126	1,370	9.20%
Dec 31, 94	942	148	1,090	13.58%

Adding the number of political refugees of Zairian origin to the *official* number of Zairians in Antwerp, we are able to deduct the ratio of political refugees in relation to the resulting total number of Zairians (as was done in table 4). As may be noticed, this ratio varies between 7% and 13%. (The high ratio in 1994 is due, not to the fact that suddenly many Zairian asylum seekers living in Antwerp were recognized as political refugees, but to the decrease in the official number of Zairians that year.) In general, a comparison of table 8 with table 4 shows that the ratio of political refugees is somewhat lower in Antwerp than it is in Belgium in general. This would mean that Zairian asylum seekers living in Antwerp are less easily recognized than Zairians in other parts of the country, which is also maintained by Muntu (1993), but for which I see no precise explanations.

With regard to all the categories mentioned so far, i.e. students, asylum seekers, and political refugees, it is useful to again emphasize that these identities more often than not imply whole families. Whereas students, asylum seekers, and political refugees are indeed the main categories on the basis of which the demographic evolution of the Zairian community in Antwerp must be *explained*, they are not categories under which each and every Zairian living in Antwerp can be subsumed *in descriptive terms*. That is, most of the children and wives are indeed there because of the heads of the families (the students, political activists, etc.), as it is in most cases these heads who organize and justify the residence in Antwerp, but the children's and women's function and place within the Zairian community cannot always be reduced to that of the social identity of the male family heads.

66. Source: city of Antwerp.

The Zairian children and wives make up a large segment in Antwerp's Zairian population. Between 1988 and 1994, 41% to 46% of all Zairians were female and 54% to 59% male. In 1994, 27% of the Zairians were between 0 and 9 years old, 15.3% belonged to the age group between 10 and 24, 49% were situated in the range between 25 and 39 years old, and 8.7% were over 40.[67]

For the sake of completeness it is useful to conclude this section by mentioning some minor categories of Zairians in Antwerp which complement the dominant categories of the students, asylum seekers, and political refugees. A number of Zairians are holders of permanent resident permits, as they are senior executives at the seats of Zairian companies in Antwerp. The CMZ and the OGEFREM, a forwarding agency specialized in maritime freights, are two such companies which have their offices in Antwerp. (Again, these executives live in Antwerp with their entire families.) Other permanent residents are the office workers and diplomats, and their families, of the Zairian consulate in Antwerp.

5.3.3. Relationships with the autochthonous population

In this section, first some observations must be made concerning Antwerp's general political climate, as well as the effects this climate has on the way in which Zairians are treated by the public administration. Secondly, I would like to indicate briefly to what extent and in what ways the members of the Zairian community interact with Antwerp's autochthonous population in daily life.

The political climate in which the Zairians have to live in Antwerp looks as follows. Since the late 1980s, Antwerp has acquired the disagreeable surname of 'racist capital of Belgium' (see also Blommaert & Martiniello 1996). This is to a large extent due to the fact that Antwerp is the stronghold of the Flemish right-wing political party, the Vlaams Blok. At the city council elections of October 1988, the Vlaams Blok became Antwerp's third largest political formation, with 17.7% of the votes, and since the city council elections of October 1994, it has been *the* largest party by far, relying on no less than 28% of the people's votes. With 28% of the Belgian inhabitants voting for a right-wing, racist party, the climate marking the Zairians' and other Black Africans' existence in Antwerp can hardly be called assuring. Moreover, although the Vlaams Blok is not in power in the Antwerp city council, their racist campaigns have strongly influenced the socialists', christian-democrats', and other rulers' governmental program, as they all judge that applying the Blok's principles will allow them to regain lost votes. It is, therefore, useful to have a closer look at the Vlaams Blok's positions concerning Black Africans in particular.

Until more or less 1992, the Vlaams Blok's campaigns were predominantly focused on the presence of Turks, Moroccans, and other Muslim nationalities in Antwerp, most of which represent a community of 'labor' immigrants, i.e.

67. Source: city of Antwerp.

foreigners attracted to Belgium between 1920 and 1974 to fulfill the labor needs of the then growing Belgian industry. Towards the 1994 city council elections and the May 1995 national elections, the emphasis in the Blok's rhetoric shifted away from these labor immigrants towards refugees. The Vlaams Blok started to protest against what it called *"the record numbers of illegal aliens"* and *"the so-called political refugees"* (from a leaflet, my translation). The most visible group of refugees are, obviously, the Black Africans, and it is not surprising that this group was strongly targeted. In a Vlaams Blok political announcement published in an Antwerp newspaper in the months leading to the 1995 elections, there is a cartoon showing a typically African hut under a sultry sun. A sign on the hut's roof says *"travel agency"* and another one on the wall reads *"Flanders: its welfare support, its public job service, its social security"* (my translation). In front of the hut is a waiting line of smiling men, women, and children whose dresses and phenotypical characteristics are unmistakably Black African. This sort of stereotyping targeting Black Africans is new and replaces or is added to the Blok's more traditional denigration of Islamic immigrants.

The other political parties in Antwerp, which after the 1994 city elections formed an alliance to keep the Vlaams Blok out of the city government, vehemently denounce the Vlaams Blok's racist program at the explicit level. In practice, however, they implement – as mentioned – many of the party's suggestions. Zairians and other Black Africans often complain to me how badly they are treated by the city officials and the administration, e.g. when confronted with registration officers or other gatekeeping civil servants. I already mentioned the socialist mayor's decision, taken in May 1993, to refuse to register new asylum seekers in his city. The treatment Black Africans and Zairians receive from the city authorities may be further illustrated on the basis of one detailed example.

On August 4, 1994, I had an interview with the head of Antwerp's office of foreigners. As I often do in fieldwork (see chapter 3, section 3.3.2), I identified myself as a researcher, but simulated naivety and ignorance and made believe that I needed her as an expert informant, while in actual fact, I paid at least as much attention to her own constructions of the matters as to the factual information (statistics, etc.) she thought she was to provide. As soon as she understood that I was interested in Zairians, she observed that *"the Zairians are a race in themselves"* (field-note reproduction, my translation). (The fact that the Zairians do appear as a distinct category here is related to this person's professional background.) She explained that the Zairians are typically the most arrogant and impolite of all the foreign populations when it comes to contacts with the office workers – outdone, at best, by the Dutch. In contrast to the Turks, the Moroccans, and other foreigners, Zairians *"only know their rights and not their duties"*. Well settled into her stride, she continued by arguing that the Zairians are characteristically very dirty and untidy, *"because they don't wash"*. And, *"they have lots of diseases, such as TBC, AIDS, and malaria"*. These diseases, the head of the office of foreigners further clarified, are not just *"their own problem"*, but also constitute a serious threat to the health of *"our own population"*. When I asked her whether she had the impression that Zairians are generally well informed concerning administrative regulations and procedures (duties !), she answered in the affirmative, and when I asked her for an explanation, she beat, with both hands in front of her, an imaginary drum and added *"among Zairians the tam-tam does its work, you know"*, which was her way to explain that Zairians very much rely on elaborate networks of solidarity and oral advice. When I brought up the issue of asylum seekers, she said *"let's be serious, everybody knows that 99% of them are economic refugees, nothing else"*. She concluded our talk with the words *"don't misunderstand me, I like foreigners, I wouldn't want to work in any other office, not for all the money in the world, but there are serious problems with these people"*.

This person's account is an interesting topic in itself, as it offers insights into how the Zairians in Antwerp are treated by the city authorities. This person is appointed as the head of Antwerp's powerful office of foreigners and is, as such, in charge of a staff of about 30 office workers, through which she has full control over the administrative situation of all foreigners in Antwerp. The stereotypes and prejudices on the basis of which she, and, necessarily, her staff, conduct their work provides telling information on the administrative side of the Zairians' existence in Antwerp, and on the Zairians' relationships with the local authorities in general. One has to keep in mind that the racist attitudes that were displayed to me as described above is what the Zairians in Antwerp have to face in their inevitable contacts with the office workers. It needs no further explanation that these contacts are marked by negative forms of communication and understanding.

In more ordinary daily life, then, the relationships between Zairians and Belgians in Antwerp may be summarized – at the risk of oversimplifying more complex patterns – as follows. In section 5.2.3, I explained that the Zairian community in Belgium is very much nonexistent as a separate category in the autochthonous population's perceptions. In Antwerp, the situation is not different. For most Belgians in this city, existing units of categorization include the North Africans (often lumped together, on the basis of religious affiliation, with the Turks) and the Black Africans. But mostly, people who have no particular affinity with one or another African country do not reason by taxonomic distinctions *within* this category of Black Africans. Therefore, the Zairians are the attitudinal object, not of a separate set of (positive or negative) opinions, stereotypes, prejudices, and so on, but of the opinions that exist concerning Black Africans in general. What is thought of Black Africans is also what is thought of Zairians.

With the exception, of course, of second and later generations, there is little intermingling between Zairians and Belgians. As is typical of first-generation immigrants in general, the Zairians' life style and social networks are very much centripetal in nature. There is a strong reliance on companionship and social structures *within* the community, combined with a relative 'isolation' from the social networks of the autochthonous population. The contacts of (again, first-generation) Zairians with the Belgian population in Antwerp are in the majority of the cases limited to the level of ephemeral interactions, such as in shops and elsewhere. Few Zairians have intimate Belgian friends. It is also striking that few of them speak or understand Dutch, even after 10 or more years of residence in Antwerp. Those who do are rare cases, and are well known within the community. Between January 1992 and July 1994, only 8 Zairians enrolled for a Dutch course at the ICTL, an institute at the University of Antwerp which offers Dutch courses to speakers of other languages.[68] Also, the number of mixed marriages, although on the increase, is still very low. In 1994, there were 18 marriages between Belgians and Zairians – a figure which ignores whether the counted Belgians are naturalized Zairians or not.[69]

Belgians who are really integrated in the Zairian community do exist (as the following chapter will show), but are rare. They are individuals with very specific personal affinities with Zaire and its people, and include ex-colonials, ex-missionaries, or Belgians married to Zairians. My own presence among and frequent contacts with first-generation Zairians, as well as my knowledge of Lingala, always cause much surprise within the community.

The centripetal character of the Zairian community also manifests itself through the associations, structures, and occasions for social gathering that are set up by and for Zairians in Antwerp. Two types of organizational structures manifesting and reproducing the centripetal character of the Zairian community in Antwerp deserve particular attention. More of them exist and would need to be mentioned in a broader sociographic migrant study, but the purposes and scope of my dissertation impose a limitation on the discussion. The two types are, first, the Zairian student associations, political parties, and related organizations and, second, the Zairian religious groups.

5.3.4. Centripetal relationships and structures: Student associations, political parties, and related organizations

Amongst the Zairian student associations, political parties, and related organizations in Antwerp I would like to mention the following.

Some, though not all, of the Zairian postgraduate students residing in Antwerp are members of the *Cercle des Chercheurs Zaïrois d'Anvers* (CCZA). The CCZA predominantly comprises students specializing in social sciences, such as political science, development studies, and sociology, while the natural sciences are less represented. Most of these students are or have been following a formation at the Institute of Development Policy and Management mentioned above. The CCZA frequently organizes open conferences and debates on the situation and future of Zaire, for which specialists are invited to give keynote

68. Source: ICTL, University of Antwerp.

69. Source: city of Antwerp.

lectures. As such, the CCZA is very much oriented to the home country, which is always prominently present among the first-generation immigrants' concerns. The CCZA is strongly related to Neptunia, as many of its members visit or are actively engaged in this Catholic community (see also below). Also, many CCZA members are active in Zairian political parties and their representing structures in Belgium.

During the Second and Third Republics, many Zairian intellectuals have left the country and its oppressive regime, and intellectuals and political activists are therefore particularly well represented in the Zairian diaspora throughout the world. This entails that almost all Zairian political parties have antennas, satellites, branches, or other representing structures in each foreign country with a sufficiently high number of Zairian immigrants. In Belgium, which, together with France, has most of Zaire's emigrated intellectuals, these national representations are most elaborate. Involvement in political parties is indeed common among Zairian intellectuals. In Antwerp, as in the rest of Belgium, it is hard to meet a Zairian student or other intellectual who is not at least a member of the respective representations of the numerous Zairian political formations. In addition to sheer membership, many also have positions as cadres in these representations. In order to illustrate the complexity of the representations, I would like to describe in detail the structures of the national representation (as of July 1994) of Zaire's best-known opposition party, the *Union pour la Démocratie et le Progrès Social* (UDPS), and indicate how their ramifications extend into the city of Antwerp.

In countries such as France, Germany, the United States, Canada, and the Benelux (which the UDPS treats as one single unit), the national representation of the UDPS is as illustrated by the chart in figure 3. All these countries have a bicephalous representation. That is, two coordinate bodies, i.e. the *représentation* and the *section*, share the control over the entire national representation.

Figure 3. The UDPS abroad

The *représentation* consists of the party's official representative-spokesperson for the country in question – which in the Benelux has long been Justine Kasa-Vubu, daughter of the former president Joseph Kasa-Vubu – and the vice-representative. They both operate under the direct control of the party's central authorities in Kinshasa. The *section* assists and monitors the *représentation*. The *section* is itself composed of the *comité* and the *bureau*. The former could be called the executive branch of the national representation, while the *bureau* is the legislative branch. The *bureau* leads the *assemblée sectionnaire*, which is the ‘parliament’ of the national representation. The *assemblée* is not a permanent assembly, but is convened occasionally. Its members are delegates of the *sous-sections*. Each province or other important administrative division of the country in question has a *sous-section*, with its own president, first vice-president, second-vice president, secretary, and other cadres. The major cities of each province, then, are represented by *cellules* – again presided by cadres. Each city can have more *cellules*, as the number of *cellules* per city depends on the city’s number of UDPS members. In order to be able to establish a separate *cellule*, one has to gather ten members. As is the case for nearly all Zairian political parties, only holders of the Zairian nationality are admitted as members of the UDPS.

The province of Antwerp has four *cellules*, i.e. one in Mechelen, one in Turnhout, one in St.-Niklaas, and one in the city of Antwerp. Until July 1994, there were two *cellules* (*cellule alpha* and *cellule bèta*) in the city of Antwerp. The distinction between the *alpha* and *bèta cellules* is drawn on the basis of the postal codes of the members’ homes. The *alpha* and *bèta cellules* often organize meetings, conventions, and other political manifestations in Antwerp.

Not very remote from the student associations and the representations of the political parties are some organizations set up by and for Zairians to discuss topics of common interest and to provide useful information. One of these organizations is the *Organisation des Zaïrois d’Anvers* (OZA). Until at least 1994, OZA was an organization led by a Zairian political refugee and predominantly concerned with providing the Zairians in Antwerp with information on asylum procedures and other administrative regulations. Since in 1994 its president was hired by a Belgian nongovernmental organization and left the organization, the activities and impact of the OZA have faded out. During the more prolific years, the OZA organized information sessions on each Wednesday morning in a room arranged for them by the Protestant social center of Antwerp. In that period, it aimed at becoming *the* spokesperson of all Zairians of Antwerp vis-à-vis the Belgian authorities and vis-à-vis other, like-minded organizations. The generalized scope suggested in its name is an expression of this ambition. In actual fact, during that period the OZA never succeeded in being known, let alone accepted by all Zairians of Antwerp. When I asked Zairian asylum seekers and others about this organization, many had never heard of it or of its president. Among those who had, the enthusiasm was not always lively. Nevertheless, to some it constituted a useful source of information and a welcome opportunity to meet with compatriots.

5.3.5. Centripetal relationships and structures: Religion

Any discussion of the religious practices observable among Zairians in Antwerp must be based on a distinction between ‘the religious life of Zairians’ and ‘Zairian religious groups’. In less cryptic terms this means that there are a number of Churches in Antwerp which have been founded by Zairians and in which characteristically Zairian religious practices are accomplished for and by an (almost) exclusively Zairian public (‘Zairian religious groups’), but that, at the same time, an important number of Zairians do not wish to develop their spiritual lives in these contexts and prefer to go to Belgian or other churches (‘the religious life of Zairians’). Therefore, the way in which Zairians in Antwerp organize their religious lives does not coincide with the presence of Zairian religious groups in Antwerp. I will first briefly discuss the range of non-Zairian churches attended by Zairians, and then proceed to a description of the Zairian religious groups.

5.3.5.1. Zairians in other than Zairian religious groups

Given the relatively low degree of integration with the local population and the generally limited knowledge of Dutch, it is evident, first of all, that Flemish religious services only to a very small extent receive visitors of Zairian origin. Yet, it is important to mention that there are some Zairian Catholics who go to the existing Flemish churches in Antwerp. These individuals tell me that the nearness of the church is their main motivation. They explain that for a Catholic, *participation* in the Eucharistic liturgy and the Holy Communion is the most essential aspect in attending a mass. The fact that they do not understand the celebrant’s speech, they argue, is compensated by the high predictability of the structure and formulas of the Catholic liturgy. Some of these Zairians continue visiting these churches even though they are aware of the existence of Neptunia, while others, such as one of my main informants (Ulrike), went to Flemish services near their homes until they learned about Neptunia, which they then preferred.

The Antwerp branch of the Jehovah’s Witnesses organizes celebrations on Sundays and Wednesdays and offers services in three languages, i.e. Dutch, English, and French. The public attending the English and French services is highly international, comprising Africans, Asians, Americans, and Europeans. The French celebrations attract a considerable number of Zairians. The majority of them were not followers of the Jehovah’s Witnesses in Zaire, but became members after their arrival in Belgium.

The city of Antwerp also has a representation of the Baptist Church. Its group of followers is strongly dominated by US citizens living in Antwerp and the services are all conducted in English. I know of a very small number of Zairians, all proficient in English, who participate in their services and who are somehow familiar with the American population. These Zairians were born and raised in Baptist missions in Zaire and have found in Antwerp’s Baptist community a suitable environment to hold on to their confessional convictions.

Other Churches attracting Zairians include ‘The Way International’, a religious movement which started in the United States and which has spread throughout many continents, in particular Africa. I have never been able to locate or to participate in their celebrations personally, but informants tell me that they are very active and that a considerable number of Zairians, who already knew this movement in Zaire attend their services in Antwerp.

Finally, a word needs to be said about the Zairian Muslims in Antwerp. Just like the categories just mentioned, the Zairian Muslims are not organized in a separate, Zairian community. The reason is that in Antwerp, as elsewhere, the number of Zairian Muslims is very small. The few individuals that are present mostly go to Brussels in order to meet with other Zairian Muslims living there. These larger groups then pray among each other or turn to other existing Islamic communities, among which the Turks and North Africans, to pray in their mosques.

5.3.5.2. Zairian religious groups

The ‘Zairian religious groups’ in Antwerp, i.e. those religious communities that are organized and exist by virtue of and for Zairians, fall apart in three groups, according to confessional conviction. First, there are the structures of the Kimbanguist community. A second and very large group are the Zairian Protestants, who are represented by no less than six distinct communities in Antwerp. The Zairian Catholics, thirdly, are organized in Neptunia, which, given its role as the central setting of this ethnography, is dealt with separately in chapter 6. My discussion of the Kimbanguists and Protestants will focus more on an external identification of these communities, than on the internal details of the way their worship services proceed. Nevertheless, some information on the language use within the services will be provided.

It must also be mentioned that in addition to these three groups there are also many Zairian religious practices in Antwerp which are to be found in restricted home contexts, within the larger family and/or with friends.

The Kimbanguists

Outside Zaire, the EJCSK (the Zairian Kimbanguist Church) is represented by the *Centre International Kimbanguiste* (CIK). The CIK is present in all countries with a sufficiently large Zairian community. There is a coordinating CIK administration which convenes when it is judged necessary, but more important are the national branches of the CIK. The Benelux has one such branch. At present, the CIK in the Benelux is composed of four ‘parishes’, i.e. a Kimbanguist parish in Antwerp, a parish in Liège, a parish in Brussels, and one in the Netherlands (no Kimbanguist parish has so far been established in Luxembourg). Each parish has its president and board, and so does the national branch. The president of the Antwerp parish is at the present moment also the general president of the Benelux branch. The parishes of Antwerp and Liège each count between 50 and 80 members, while the parish in Brussels is composed of over 1,000 followers. On the first Sunday of each month, all Kimbanguists of the Benelux come together in Brussels to celebrate a Kimbanguist worship service in communion. On this occasion, the board of the Benelux branch convenes to discuss administrative and organizational matters. On other Sundays, the parishes celebrate with their own members in their respective cities.

In Antwerp, the members of the Kimbanguist community are predominantly asylum seekers, political refugees, and illegal aliens. As mentioned in this and the previous section, not each and every individual Zairian asylum seeker in Belgium is a political activist; there are, also, the family members (children and wives) of the refugee opponents, and there are refugees who have fled the indirect (economic, military, etc.) effects of the political repression in Zaire. The major group of asylum seekers and other refugees of the Kimbanguist community in Antwerp belong to these categories. The majority of them are not intellectuals or students, but members of Zaire's lower or middle social classes. The Kimbanguist community is an exclusively Zairian one, although some Angolans, who were already followers of the Kimbanguist faith before coming to Europe and most of which have close ties in southern Zaire, are also present. On each occasion when I participated in a Kimbanguist worship service, I was – apart from these Angolans – the only non-Zairian.

For the organization of their weekly services, the Antwerp Kimbanguists rent a church owned by the Antwerp section of the United Protestant Church of Belgium (*Antwerpse Gemeenten van de Verenigde Protestantse Kerk van België*). Their services take place on Sunday afternoons, after the Antwerp Presbyterians have cleared the room. The worship service proceeds in the same way as it does in Zaire, i.e. men and women sit apart, women wear veils, all take off their shoes at entering, the worship service falls apart in a 'liturgical part' and a 'social part', a large part of the service consists in parading across the church on the soldierly tones of a brass band, etc.

The languages used in the worship services are French and Lingala. French is mostly applied when reference is made to the Bible (of which the celebrant uses a French version), but communal prayer, individual testimonies, and the sermon are all in Lingala. Most of the songs are also in Lingala. For the social part, during which announcements are made on the Kimbanguist activities to take place during the week and on marriages and similar matters, Lingala is used.

The Protestants

The Zairian Protestant organizations in Antwerp are the ones who succeed in attracting most Zairians. They suffer, however, from a high degree of internal dissension and rivalry. Within the range of Protestant Zairian organizations, there are five Pentecostalist communities and one non-Pentecostalist one. The five Pentecostalist communities are the most important ones.

Each Pentecostalist community has its own place of celebration as well as its own pastors (mostly more than one) and administrative management. The five communities relate to each other through a certain ‘genealogical relationship’, as one of them was the first Pentecostalist community to be established in Antwerp and as the others grew out of ruptures and feuds within the initial one or within the later offshoots. These feuds were never related to confessional content, but mostly pertained to disagreements on the administrative and financial management. At present, the five Pentecostalist communities operate on strongly competitive terms. The initial group is still the largest one by far, while the other four are all small-scale communities of similar sizes. The average attendance at the weekly celebrations of the four smaller ones is between 30 and 70, while in the largest one the average attendance is between 150 and 200.

The large one is part of a superstructure encompassing a number of satellites throughout Belgium, the mother-church and administration being situated in Brussels. As a structure, this Church does not exist in Zaire, but was founded in Belgium by Zairian immigrants. It first started in Brussels, after which parallel communities, with their own services and activities, were established in Liège and Antwerp. The Belgian superstructure is not as integrated as the CIK; there are, for instance, not many shared activities which bring the Antwerp, Liège, and Brussels branches together. The Antwerp community relies on a very elaborate organization and agenda of its own. In addition to the weekly celebrations on Sundays, there is a program on each weekday, which includes Bible classes, house visits, and joint leisure activities (soccer, etc.). A staff of volunteers runs the well-organized administration of the community. Three days after my first visit to their church, at which all newcomers were asked to write down their names and addresses, I received a mailing-list letter acknowledging my visit and inviting me to continue praying with this group. From that moment on, I have been a steady item in their automatized mailing lists, receiving information on their busy agenda and activities on a regular basis.

The demographic composition of this large community is conglomerate, but there is a clear majority, again, of nonintellectuals. These nonintellectuals are asylum seekers, political refugees, illegal aliens, and their families. Students and other intellectuals are also present, but in much smaller proportions. It is not uncommon for the pastors to frame their sermons around the topic of asylum in Belgium (always relating it, of course, to the Pentecostalist faith). The public is always entirely composed of Zairians. The place where the members of this community organize their weekly celebrations is a Flemish evangelist church, which is placed at their disposal every Sunday afternoon. The structure and atmosphere during their celebrations is very similar to the ones in Pentecostalist communities in Zaire: communal prayer, songs led by a choir, lectures from the Bible, and pastors’ sermons alternate with each other.

All of the pastors' speeches, i.e. the sermons, prayers, and faith healings, are conducted in French, while the choir performs songs in both French and Lingala. On some occasions, I have observed the pastors using short Lingala phrases in their otherwise French sermons, i.e. to insert a witty remark or to animate the attention of an absent-minded audience.

The four smaller Pentecostalist communities are not part of any superstructure, but are all individual and local initiatives. Also, they are typically embedded in more modest administrative and financial arrangements than the large community. Most of them meet in garage boxes or other deserted amenities, which they manage to rent at very low prices. One of them is granted access to the rooms of the Antwerp section of the YWCA. They all have a major celebration on Sundays and one or more (evangelical or secular) activities during the week. The social backgrounds of their followers are also very similar, as nonintellectuals and refugees make up the dominant groups. In these churches as well, asylum is not an uncommon topic in the prayers and sermons.

The language use in these four smaller groups, on the other hand, is markedly different. The prayers spontaneously initiated by individual members or by the pastors, as well as the individual testimonies, are mostly in Lingala. The hymns are sung either in Lingala or in French, although there have been some occasions on which I was able to hear Kikongo and Tshiluba songs. In some of the four communities, a Lingala Bible is used for the lectures, while in others this is a French version. The secular announcements at the end of celebrations are almost invariably in Lingala.

Particularly noteworthy is the language use in the pastors' sermons in these four communities. In all these communities, this part of the mass is bilingual. The phenomenon certainly deserves to be subjected to rigorous scrutiny, preferably on the basis of good video recordings, but the scope of my dissertation compels me to limit the discussion to a brief sketch of the setting. Two pastors are standing next to each other in front of the public. One relates the sermon in French, while the other translates the first one's speech into Lingala. The translation proceeds phrase by phrase and sentence by sentence, the French-speaking pastor each time interrupting his own utterance to allow the translator to produce his Lingala version with equal vigor. This practice, so I was explained, is to allow the many participants who have not been able to continue formal education to an advanced level to follow the sermon. Ironically, however, given the immediate juxtaposition of French and Lingala, the Lingala translator is often inclined to cleanse his Lingala speech: he often makes painstaking and time-consuming efforts to leave out all forms of codeswitching with and borrowings from French, which are natural in everyday Lingala usage. The translations are also replete with a lot of most recondite hypercorrections and purifications of the Bantu grammar. As a consequence, the Lingala translations are often more impenetrable to the less instructed than the French versions. Inasmuch as listening attention may be visibly discerned in these contexts, I have been able to notice that even the participants with a restricted background in formal education concentrate more on the French speech than on the Lingala translations.

There is one Zairian religious group in Antwerp which calls itself Christian and Protestant, but which cannot be subsumed under the Pentecostalist communities. It is a very small and closed community. I have not been able to do fieldwork in this group, nor have I been able to ascertain whether or not this community is an extension of an existing movement in Zaire. It is known that this community espouses an even more fundamentalist interpretation of Christianity than the Pentecostalists, resembling the Jehovah's Witnesses in its very literal interpretation of the Bible. Another resemblance with the Jehovah's Witnesses is the fact that the members of this community are not allowed to accept any bodily introduction of foreign, live elements, such as blood transfusions and inoculations. The pivotal element in this community's weekly Sunday celebrations is devil exorcizing. The members are further recognized by their ascetic modes of life and by the veils worn by the women.

As mentioned, in addition to the Kimbanguists and the Protestants, the third important Zairian religious group in Antwerp are the Catholics. There is one organized Catholic Zairian community in Antwerp, i.e. the Catholic community of Neptunia. The Neptunia setting will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

6. THE NEPTUNIA SETTING

6.1. Introduction

This chapter situates and contextualizes the setting around which my linguistic ethnography is concentrated, viz. Neptunia. It may be useful to repeat that this description of Neptunia covers the setting as it presented itself during the years of my fieldwork, i.e. between 1992 and 1995. Since the end of 1995, the structure and activities of Neptunia have been subjected to some changes, but these are not touched upon here.

The description is organized in three main sections. First, a brief historical background of Neptunia is presented (6.2). It is shown how Neptunia as a Catholic meeting place originated from the Belgian authorities' early colonial concerns with monitoring the behavior of Congolese seamen arriving in the port of Antwerp. Next, it is spelled out how the target group of Neptunia gradually shifted from Zairian seamen to students and their families.

The second main section is 6.3. In this section, I elaborate on Neptunia's present situation. After a description of the physical premises and an identification of the Fathers who run the place (6.3.1), an overview is presented of the activities that take place in, and in the context of, the Neptunia setting (6.3.2). It is spelled out that the dominical mass (celebrated on Saturday nights) is the apex in the weekly range of Neptunia's activities, and that two types of masses must be distinguished, i.e. the 'ordinary masses', as they are celebrated 'by default', and the 'special masses', which are more elaborated celebrations organized on the occasion of a wedding, baptism, or other festive event. It is also briefly indicated how after the masses Neptunia is transformed into a clubhouse.

Sections 6.3.3 and 6.3.4 both treat the people involved in Neptunia. In section 6.3.3, I first explain how I distinguish a category of 'Neptunia regulars', i.e. participants who come to Neptunia on a more than occasional basis and who in themselves form a fairly integrated group of friends and acquaintances. It is this category of 'regulars' on which all my further discussions of sociolinguistic and related issues in Neptunia are based. I also provide an identification of the small group of Belgians and other non-Zairians that visit Neptunia, and I subsequently situate the Neptunia Zairian regulars externally, i.e. in relation to the other Zairian groups in Antwerp. Section 6.3.4, then, contains an internal breakdown of the group of Neptunia Zairians. Relative proportions are traced in terms of regions of origin in Zaire and in terms of linguistic backgrounds. On the basis of a set of quantifications, it is pointed out that the Zairians from the northwestern and western regions of Zaire constitute the largest subgroup in the Neptunia community, followed by the Zairians from the central-eastern and southeastern regions. Similarly, it is attested that the majority of Neptunia members have Lingala as their habitual language (a term to be explained in due course) and that the second largest linguistic subgroup consists of Kiswahili-speakers. These quantitative measures are all part of the background against which the language issues in Neptunia, and the members' constructions of these issues, must be understood.

In section 6.3.5, a description is provided of the Neptunia choir, which fulfills a pivotal role in the Neptunia setting and in its patterns of language use in particular. In 6.3.6, I draw attention to one noteworthy feature of Neptunia, i.e. the fact that the African character of Neptunia, and of the choir, is to some degree the outcome of expectations of exoticism imposed upon the Neptunia Zairians by the Belgian participants.

Whereas 6.3.2 enumerates the range of Neptunia's activities in a general vein, the third main section (section 6.4) discusses the two activities of major concern in this ethnography, i.e. the Neptunia mass and the Neptunia clubhouse situation, and provides a more detailed account of their internal characteristics, structures, and ingredients. In 6.4.1, I present a more or less chronological report of how a mass in Neptunia is conducted, in which I constantly draw upon the distinction between the 'ordinary masses' and the 'special masses'. Next, in section 6.4.2, I determine the features of Neptunia as a clubhouse.

This chapter makes use of pseudonyms in order to mask the identity of certain individuals and institutions. Given the detailed coverage of the setting and its people, I have chosen to change its original name to a pseudonym, i.e. 'Neptunia'. (I have drawn my inspiration for this pseudonym from Neptunia's origins as an old meeting place for seamen, see below.) Of course, the detailed coverage could in fact allow certain people to identify the setting rather easily, and the application of a pseudonym cannot change this. Still, I want to use a pseudonym as a token of politeness towards the setting and its members. In this chapter, pseudonyms are also used for the Belgian Fathers.

6.2. History

6.2.1. Neptunia's predecessors

Neptunia, as it exists today, was founded in 1951/1952, but its origins date back to Belgian maritime activities since the beginning of the colonial epoch.

As mentioned in chapter 5, from the first years of the Belgian colonization onwards, Antwerp was the gate through which Congolese seamen working on the Belgian ocean liners managed to 'immigrate' into Belgium. It is obvious that this accidental immigration did not please the Belgian authorities and had to be controlled. But these potential immigrants were not the only seamen on which tabs were to be kept. The Belgian authorities had reasons to carefully monitor the course of action of *all* Congolese seamen during the days or weeks their ship lay at anchor in the port of Antwerp, including those who did not manifest any intentions to stay in Belgium. The Belgians feared that during their stay in Antwerp the seamen would understand that, and how, Belgium differed from the way it was represented to them by the missionaries and the other educational authorities in the Congo – an understanding which would seriously damage the colonizers' prestige (see also chapter 5). Also, as Zana (1993: 51) documents, the Belgian authorities wanted to avoid that the seamen would be approached by Belgian communists in Antwerp, ready to contribute to the consciousness-raising and anticolonial emancipation of the oppressed Africans. In sum, the Congolese seamen were to be kept from trying to find their own way around Antwerp.

At first, the authorities' solution was to keep the Congolese seamen on board during loading and unloading. The history of Apostolatus Maris Antwerp is particularly relevant in this respect. Apostolatus Maris is an institution founded by the Vatican in the early 1920s, and was intended to provide a Catholic meeting place for seamen of all nationalities in each of the world's major seaports. At the creation of Apostolatus Maris *Antwerp*, the Belgian authorities inserted an explicit statement into the bylaws of this organization, stipulating that the house was open to seamen of all nationalities except Congolese. By denying the Congolese access to Apostolatus Maris Antwerp, the authorities hoped to be able to keep them on board. But these hopes were in vain, as general Belgian legislations clearly stated that no seaman could be forbidden to leave the Belgian ship on which he was engaged when it lay at anchor in a Belgian harbor (see also Zana 1993: 51). As such, the statement in the bylaws of Apostolatus Maris Antwerp only created a vacuum for the Congolese seamen and actually *compelled* them to find their own way around the city.

Thus, an individual solution had to be found for the Congolese. One of the first initiatives was the opening of *Ndako ya Biso* – Lingala for 'Our House' – in 1930 (also historically reconstructed by Vellut 1982: 99 and Zana 1993: 52).

The initiative originally came from an ex-missionary of the order of the Scheutists, but was accomplished under the joint auspices of the CBMC (*Compagnie Belge Maritime du Congo*) and the Belgian Minister of Colonies. *Ndako ya Biso* was not a success. The Father in charge was more concerned with reporting the Congolese seamen's occasional 'misbehaviors' to the harbor authorities than with the seamen's real social and human needs, and many of them preferred to continue their own promenades around Antwerp. *Ndako ya Biso* was closed down in 1935.

Between 1935 and 1950, many initiatives were undertaken to succeed the first one, but none persisted, except for the one that led to the creation of Neptunia. Neptunia grew out of the individual engagement of a Redemptorist missionary, Father Boris, who had been working in the southwestern regions of the Congo for 27 years and who was well acquainted with life in and around the port of Matadi. In 1951, during one of his holidays in Belgium, he came into contact with the head of Apostolatus Maris Antwerp and they agreed on the fact that the 'freedom' of the Congolese seamen in Antwerp was a 'problem', in need of a 'solution'. Together with the Minister of Colonies and the CBMC, the decision was taken to create a nonprofit organization, and this nonprofit organization was 'Neptunia'. For the reception of the Congolese seamen and all other activities of Neptunia, the nonprofit organization would rent the basement of Apostolatus Maris Antwerp, which the CBMC promised to furbish. As such, Apostolatus Maris Antwerp, welcoming seamen from all around the world except from the Congo, and Neptunia, its Congolese counterpart, were to operate in immediate copresence, which has remained unchanged until the present day. Neptunia was inaugurated in 1952 and was solemnly consecrated by the bishop of Antwerp in 1953.

6.2.2. From seamen to students

The first board of the nonprofit organization was composed of Father Boris, a number of lawyers, representatives of the CBMC, and representatives of the harbor authorities. After independence, it was complemented with representatives of the *Compagnie Maritime Belge* (CMB), of the Belgian State Department of Development Cooperation (ABOS-AGCD), and, after 1971, of the *Compagnie Maritime Zaïroise* (CMZ). These private companies and state institutions committed themselves to financing Neptunia and threw in their institutional weight to find external funding. Neptunia's task, in return for these subventions and other financial interventions, was to organize the 'reception' – with the exception of lodging – of all Congolese seamen disembarking in Antwerp and waiting for their ship to set sail again. The organization 'on the ground', i.e. the concrete interaction with the seamen and the daily management of Neptunia, was left to Father Boris, who, from 1955 onwards (see below), was assisted by a number of confreres. Meanwhile, the board assumed the role of institutional supervisor behind the scenes.

In the early years, the 'reception' consisted in the following. Many services and privileges were offered to the Congolese in order to convince them to spend the evenings and days in Neptunia, rather than in the streets and bars of Antwerp. Neptunia was open and accessible to the seamen every day of the week. A small shop was opened, offering European products at bargain prices. A bar was installed, which was open every night, and leisure amenities such as television sets, ping-pong tables, and the like were put at the seamen's disposal. Another privilege was that each registered seaman received a gift on the occasion of the birth of a child in his family. Furthermore, the Fathers gave the arriving seamen, who had often been away from home for more than 8 weeks, the opportunity to record messages for family members and friends on audio tapes, which were then sent to Matadi and played back to the addressees. Often, the Fathers invited a magician or other performer to entertain the seamen, and occasionally trips outside Neptunia, such as visits to the zoo or to soccer games, were organized.

An important part of the reception consisted, of course, in religious guidance. On every day of the week, except on Sundays and Mondays, the Fathers organized an abbreviated celebration of the Eucharist. The dominical mass,[70] on the other hand, was not organized in Neptunia itself, but in the harbor: on Sunday mornings, the Neptunia Fathers went to the harbor and celebrated the mass on board the ships. However, on major Christian occasions, such as Christmas and Easter, masses were held in Neptunia itself.

There have been a number of historical developments which have changed Neptunia's initial activities and orientation and which have led to its present constellation. It must first of all be mentioned that in 1955, Father Nikita, who is frequently referred to in the organized conversations to be discussed below, joined Father Boris. But an important development was the creation, in 1960, of the Belgian vicariate of foreign students (*Vicariaat van de Buitenlandse Studenten - Vicariat des Etudiants Etrangers*). As its name indicates, this vicariate was, and still is, meant as a confessional point of reference for all foreign Catholic students residing in Belgium. The vicariate itself primarily exists as an administration in Brussels. It is represented throughout the country by 'personal parishes'. Personal parishes are distinguished from the better-known 'geographical parishes', in that the latter depend on one particular Catholic church and a territory of surrounding streets, while the former are geographically unrestricted and only depend on a defined community of parishioners. Priests or chaplains of personal parishes do not dispose of their own church buildings, presbyteries, and parish halls, but are bound to rely on the infrastructure of confreres when they want to gather with their parishioners.

70. At this stage, it is useful to indicate that in Catholicism 'the dominical mass' and 'the Sunday mass' are not to be confused. The dominical mass is the apex in the Catholic weekly cycle of sacramental celebrations. It is *preferably* conducted on Sunday, but need not be. As I will explain below, this is particularly relevant to the case of Neptunia, where the dominical mass is celebrated on Saturday night, rather than on Sunday.

Personal parishes exist, e.g., in the military and, as mentioned, within student populations.

Important for the evolution of Neptunia was the fact that in 1966, the vicariate appointed Father Boris priest-in-charge of the personal parish of all foreign students living in Antwerp. As such, the vicariate put Father Boris in charge of *all* foreign students in Antwerp, although he was only well acquainted with the Congolese among them. This choice manifests how at that time the foreign student population in Antwerp was largely dominated by Congolese students. It was evident that Father Boris would soon try to integrate his additional function as priest-in-charge of the foreign students' personal parish into his existing duties towards the Congolese seamen in Neptunia, especially considering the fact that personal parishes do not have their own rooms and facilities while Neptunia had acquired a wholesale infrastructure in itself. While some Congolese students – especially those trained at the nautical college – had already started visiting Neptunia from 1960 onwards, it was Boris's appointment by the vicariate in 1966 which gave the involvement of students in Neptunia its main impetus.

In 1969, the vicariate nominated Father Pyotr, a Jesuit who was initially in no way related to Neptunia, as Boris's assistant and, later, as his successor in the personal parish. It is Father Pyotr who perpetuated the anchoring of the foreign students' personal parish into Neptunia. From the 1970s onwards, he stimulated Congolese (later, Zairian) students from all international educational institutions in Antwerp, such as the nautical college, the tropical institute, and the Institute of Development Policy and Management (IDPM), to join Neptunia. After Boris's death, Pyotr soon became Father Nikita's close companion in the everyday management of Neptunia. The *de facto* overlap between, on the one hand, the vicariate's personal parish of the foreign students in Antwerp and, on the other, Neptunia as a nonprofit organization and meeting place for Congolese seamen was, therewith, a fact. (In statutory terms, however, the two levels were always kept clearly separated.) In 1978, this *de facto* situation was further consolidated, as the vicariate decided to officially add Father Nikita to the priests-in-charge of the personal parish of foreign students.

Thus, throughout the 1970s and 1980s the attention of Neptunia as a place for seamen was additionally directed towards students. By the end of the 1980s, this shift from seamen to students was complete. Today, Neptunia is first and foremost a meeting place for students, and only occasionally a place for seamen. The completion of the shift was made possible by the following factors. First, there is the generic factor that whereas seamen only stay in the same city during one or two weeks, students make up a more permanent community. They are thus much more likely to constitute a true and stable confessional community within a place such as Neptunia than seamen. It is, therefore, not surprising that from the 1970s and 1980s onwards the Neptunia Fathers dedicated much of their attention to the students and their families in their elaboration of a stable, parish-like structure in Neptunia. Secondly, towards the end of the 1980s the number of seamen visiting Neptunia was steadily on the decrease. This was due to the fact that sharpening competition obliged the maritime companies to shorten the time span between unloading and a new departure, which left the seamen with less time to spend in the city. Also, there has been the devastating decline of the CMZ (see also chapter 5, section 5.3.2). Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the CMZ was obliged to sell all its ocean liners in order to reimburse the accumulated debts. The last ship was sold in 1992. As a consequence, the decrease in Zairian ships calling in at the port of Antwerp also implied a decrease in Zairian seamen visiting the city. In 1985, Belgian companies, such as the CMB, started to take over an important number of the Zairian seamen and employ them on Belgian ocean liners, but after a few years the Zairians were in turn replaced with cheaper Philippine crews. During all these years, the student population in Antwerp grew considerably, and thus easily outnumbered the disappearing body of seamen.

A last noteworthy event in Neptunia's history was the arrival in 1985 of Father Vladimir, who is also often referred to in the organized conversations. Father Vladimir, a Scheutist and ex-missionary in Zaire, first came into contact with Neptunia as an ordinary visitor. But Father Nikita and Father Pyotr soon urged him to stay and assist them in handling the growing complexities of the daily management and practical administration, and, importantly, to bring in his Zairian experience as an ex-missionary. Father Vladimir's contributions have been most significant in Neptunia's development towards its present shape, in particular with respect to its linguistic peculiarities. It was Father Vladimir who, from the first months of his 'employment' onwards, commenced systematizing the activities, attendance, and records of Neptunia. He made it a point, first of all, to regularize the contacts with all the educational institutions in Antwerp known to have high proportions of Zairians. This implied that an increasing number of Zairians in Antwerp were informed about Neptunia. Secondly, Father Vladimir also took the first step towards holding regular dominical masses in Neptunia. Before his arrival, there were only minor masses and many leisure activities on weekdays, while the dominical masses were celebrated on the ships in the harbor. Vladimir understood that Neptunia's growing student population was in need of a regularly scheduled dominical mass in Neptunia itself.

Thirdly, Father Vladimir, together with two students, started using Zairian songs and Zairian languages within these dominical masses. Before, the masses celebrated by Father Nikita and Father Pyotr were entirely European-styled, as neither of them had any background in Zaire. It is partly out of Father Vladimir's initiative that the choir which presently accompanies the Neptunia masses, as well as the multilingual character of the masses, were born. These and other aspects of the present situation are the objects of discussion in the following sections.

6.3. Neptunia today: General outlook and components

6.3.1. Material environment and management

Neptunia's material environment consists of a long hall that leads to a low, L-shaped basement, which is still the basement of the building owned by Apostolatus Maris Antwerp, Neptunia's lessor. The longer side of this L-shaped basement measures 18 meters and the shorter side 17 meters. The basement's walls are well insulated and finished with wooden slats and the entire place is nicely decorated with African and other pictures. A bar, complete with sink, running water, and all other necessary accessories, and an adjoining storeroom are integrated in one of the basement's walls. Behind a plastic window, there is also an 'office', provided with appliances such as a professional sound system for the feasts (see below) and a public telephone. In the hall that leads to the basement, there is a large and well-equipped kitchen, as well as a shop offering bargain-priced articles. Opposite this entrance hall, in the basement itself, there are also restrooms for men and women.

The bar and the shop are a source of revenues for the Fathers, to be used for the rent and for running costs such as electricity, water, and various taxes.

Today, Neptunia's official status is still that of a nonprofit organization. The board of this nonprofit organization is as before composed of representatives of the CMB, CMZ, ABOS-AGCD, and of the harbor authorities. It is fair to say that the nonprofit organization and its board only exist on paper. To the public, the board and Neptunia's official status are fairly invisible and members mostly refer to and conceptualize Neptunia as 'a parish' or 'a church', neither of which corresponds to Neptunia's official status. The board stands aloof from the realities and activities 'on the ground', in which it does not show much interest. This aloof attitude is related to the fact that the original concern, i.e. the reception of seamen, has lost much of its grounds, as there are hardly any Zairian seamen left. The board has, however, not (yet) decided to dismantle the nonprofit organization officially. In the beginning of the 1990s, the most important sponsors, CMB and CMZ, discontinued their financial assistance and so did the Belgian government through the ABOS-AGCD. In practice, the Fathers in charge now run Neptunia on the basis of financial resources accumulated during the more prosperous years and on the basis of their own revenues, coming from the above-mentioned bar and shop.

The priests presently responsible for Neptunia are Nikita and Vladimir (Father Pyotr died in the beginning of the 1990s). It may be useful to stress that both of them are Belgians. Father Nikita is an old man well into his seventies, who, as mentioned, has never been in Zaire, except for one short holiday. He does not speak or understand any African language. Father Vladimir is younger (between 45 and 55 years old) and spent 8 years as a missionary in Zaire before joining Neptunia. In Zaire, he was initially active in the region of Equateur and later in Kinshasa. He is therefore proficient in Lingala, which is also the *only* African language he knows. Nikita and Vladimir share apartments in a building next to the Apostolatus Maris house in which the Neptunia basement is situated. The apartments belong to the order of the Redemptorists, to which Father Nikita belongs. Father Vladimir is a member of the order of the Scheutists.

6.3.2. Activities

Since Neptunia's shift from a seaman population towards a student population, the activities in Neptunia have moved from the weekdays to the weekend. Neptunia's former accessibility on weekdays, with the weekday masses, the opportunity for leisure activities such as watching television, playing ping-pong, etc., has been discontinued. The activities are now centered around the dominical mass. The dominical mass is Neptunia's major event and is for many also the main reason for membership of the Neptunia community, the other activities being only vaguely known. It is this dominical mass which constitutes the focus in my analysis of multilingualism in Neptunia.

Out of habit, i.e. because in earlier years Sundays were reserved for the Fathers' visits to the ships in the harbor, the dominical mass is not organized on Sunday mornings but on Saturday nights. In general terms, two types of dominical masses may be distinguished, i.e. 'the ordinary masses' and 'the special masses'. The *ordinary masses* are the masses as they are in principle celebrated each Saturday night. The attendance at these masses averages around 95, including the many children under the age of fourteen accompanying their parents. These ordinary Saturday nights do not only consist of the mass itself. After the mass, the Neptunia basement is transformed into a clubhouse. The altar is removed, the bar is opened, and small tables and chairs are arranged to sit and chat (more details are provided in section 6.4).

The *special masses* are organized, for instance, when the Fathers are asked to consecrate a wedding or to integrate the christening of a newborn or the communion of a child into the mass. Other special occasions are such major Christian holidays as Christmas, Easter, Ascension Day, etc. All these special masses are organized on the basis of one and the same pattern, which is also true for the ordinary masses and which thus leads to a clear distinction between the two types in members' and outsiders' perceptions. The pattern of the special masses affects, among other things, the setting of the basement (the positioning of the altar, the chairs, etc.). The Fathers always prepare the basement in a distinctive way, which allows them to seat more people. Also, the events around which the special masses are organized are always announced well in advance, which is not done for the ordinary masses. The special masses are much larger in terms of attendance: the average goes up to 250 people or more. The liturgy itself is more elaborate. Furthermore, the mass on such special occasions is always followed by a large feast, which includes a banquet and dancing and which may sometimes last until sunrise. All these matters will be described in more detail in section 6.4, which is specifically dedicated to the internal characteristics of the Neptunia mass and its surrounding events. First, more information needs to be provided on the rest of Neptunia's set of activities.

On exceptional occasions, such as when Ascension Day or another major Christian holiday is a weekday rather than a Saturday, there may be masses during the week. These masses are typically shorter than the Saturday-night masses and attract a considerably smaller number of participants. Exceptionally, the Fathers also organize abbreviated celebrations of the Eucharist on a weekday for very specific audiences. During the years of my fieldwork, this occurred once, namely at the end of the academic year of the tropical institute, when the Fathers wanted to invite the rare students of the institute who visited Neptunia on a more than occasional basis, to a private reception and mass.

In 1990 or 1991, 8 or so members of Neptunia organized a Charismatic prayer group. This group is not consolidated by any established structures and displays a rather ephemeral character. The Neptunia Fathers have distanced themselves from this initiative, as they do not consider themselves followers of the Charismatic movement. Nevertheless, on each Wednesday evening the members of the group are given access to a part of the Neptunia basement, where they sit together in a small circle to pray and sing in all serenity.

Occasionally, Zairian organizations such as the CCZA (*Cercle des Chercheurs Zaïrois d'Anvers*) and the like approach the Fathers of Neptunia to obtain use of the basement and its amenities for a closed meeting or other event on a Sunday afternoon or on a weekday. As these events are private and will, thus, not attract a wider audience, and as they particularly concern the Zairian students of Antwerp, the Fathers mostly accede to these requests and assist the group in question with the practical organization of the event.

The Fathers are often asked by Neptunia Zairians to come and say an abbreviated celebration of the Eucharist at home. These house calls usually take place when a family member in Zaire has died. The organizer then clears his living room and invites Zairian friends and neighbors to mourn together and to participate in a modest, improvized requiem mass.

An important activity outside of the dominical mass, finally, consists of the outings of the choir (itself a component of Neptunia to be described in more detail below). Parishes all over Flanders sometimes ask the Neptunia choir to come and sing during their masses on a Sunday morning. Mostly, the members of the Flemish parish also ask Father Vladimir and/or Father Nikita to replace or assist the local parish priest, as the parish priests are as a rule not familiar with the choir's habits. This interest in the Neptunia choir is always grounded in its exotic appeal: the parishes organize this kind of performance of the Neptunia choir as a 'special attraction' for their parishioners. The Neptunia choir makes it a point not to accept more than two outings per month, although the number of requests is higher. Often, the agenda is complete for months in advance.

An outing consists, as mentioned, in the mass itself, which is said in Flemish and during which the choir sings a number of African songs. After the celebration, the choristers are mostly invited to the parish hall for a chat, a sandwich, a drink, and closer acquaintance with the Flemish parishioners.

6.3.3. The people

6.3.3.1. The category of regulars

As mentioned, the attendance at an ordinary Neptunia mass averages around 95. Out of these 95 participants, 10 are ('White', 'ethnic') Belgians and 85 are Africans. Within the group of Africans, 78 are Zairians, while the others are students at the tropical institute, the IDPM, and other international educational institutions in Antwerp. In fact, the non-Zairian foreign students to visit Neptunia are almost always Africans; only very occasionally have I been able to meet French or Latin-American students in Neptunia. The Africans come from a wide range of countries, including Benin, Togo, Ivory Coast, Burkina-Faso, Tanzania, and other. These non-Zairians' participation never affects Neptunia's Zairian identity at any structural level. The reason for this is that in contrast to the Zairians, the presence of these non-Zairians in Antwerp, and, thus, in Neptunia, is mostly limited to one or two years. Also, the entire history and present constellation of Neptunia are so heavily dominated by Zairians that a contribution of the non-Zairians leading to a change of customs or practices in Neptunia is not perceived as possible. All in all, the non-Zairian Africans consider themselves, and are considered by others, to be temporary *visitors*, and not an intrinsic part of Neptunia.

I will focus my discussion of the identity of the Neptunia public, not on a specific group of participants in one particular mass, but, rather, on what I would like to call the category of 'regulars'. There is no such thing as a declared Neptunia membership: there are no official registrations, records, or other lists on the basis of which this category of regulars may be distinguished statutorily. The category of regulars thus only exists as emerging from observations of tendencies in attendance. The regulars are people who come to the Neptunia mass almost weekly, and who are thus to be distinguished from more occasional participants, i.e. people who visit Neptunia not more than a few times per year and curious visitors who are there only once. In sum, the group of regulars refers to a (more or less) constant category, rather than to a momentary record of one individual mass. Therefore, an average attendance figure of 95 as mentioned in 6.3.2 does not necessarily include all regulars, for not all regulars are present at one mass at the same time.

In addition to, and as a consequence of, the frequency of their visits to Neptunia, the regulars are also to be distinguished on a qualitative basis, in that they constitute a fairly integrated community among themselves. All the regulars know each other, at least by name but mostly also on a more intimate basis. They chat with each other before and after the mass, are close friends outside Neptunia, visit each other's households, spend their spare time together, etc.

During the years of my fieldwork, I have been able to establish the number of Neptunia regulars at 85, which does not include the two Fathers, the children under the age of fourteen, and myself. Of the 85 regulars, 65 have the Zairian nationality and/or are of Zairian ethnic descent. The 20 other regulars are 17 Belgians, a Cameroon couple, and a young Burundian woman.

6.3.3.2. The non-Zairians

The 17 Belgians (except myself) have all been in Neptunia for at least seven years. They have personal ties with, and were first introduced in Neptunia by one of the Fathers, one or more Zairian regulars, or another Belgian regular. There are, for instance, the three unmarried sisters of Father Nikita as well as some of their friends. There are also personal friends of Father Pyotr and Father Vladimir, who first came to Neptunia out of curiosity, and then decided to stay on as regulars. Examples of Belgians who came to Neptunia out of ties with Zairians in the majority of the cases include people who spent a number of years in Zaire for professional reasons (ex-colonials, etc.). Some of them are married to a Zairian.

The 17 Belgian regulars are as a rule very close to the Fathers. They assist them with the management of the bar and the shop and with other practical chores related to Neptunia. Many of them are also close to the Zairian regulars, and they are sometimes chosen by the Zairians as godfathers and godmothers of their children, but intimate relationships are less common and the ties are less close than those with the Fathers. Except for the ex-colonials and myself, none of the Belgian regulars speaks or understands any African language.

A man who studies at the IDPM and his wife make up the Cameroon couple. The young Burundian woman also studies at the IDPM. She is single and is a good friend of some of the Zairian regulars, with whom she spends almost all of her spare time. These three individuals' presence in Antwerp extends longer than is normally the case for non-Zairian Africans in Neptunia. The Cameroon man and woman do not speak or understand any African language spoken in Zaire. The Burundian women is a native speaker of, among others, Kiswahili.

6.3.3.3. The Neptunia Zairians: Antwerp's intellectuals

Apart from 8 adolescents between 16 and 22 years old, all Zairian regulars in Neptunia are first-generation immigrants in Belgium. In line with the general approach of this dissertation, it is this group of first-generation immigrants which will be focused upon in these sections.

In contrast to the other Zairian religious groups in Antwerp, such as the Pentecostalists and the Kimbanguists, Neptunia is primarily a meeting place for intellectuals and their families. The history of Neptunia has been such that this place is marked by a particularly high concentration of Zairian students. Some of them study at one of Antwerp's educational institutions mentioned earlier. Many members of the CCZA, for instance, are Neptunia regulars. A number of them, nonetheless, are enrolled at universities or colleges in Brussels and Wallonia. Since the influx of new Zairian students in Belgium was halted around 1990, it is not surprising that most of the present Neptunia students are obtaining their second or third university degree. As such, they typically belong to a generation of married persons, mostly with children, and over the age of 30.

In chapter 5, it was spelled out that the categories of students and refugees within the Zairian population in Belgium and Antwerp are largely overlapping ones, as intellectuals often shift between the two statuses. This also applies to the Neptunia intellectuals. A number of the Neptunia students have filed an application for political asylum, without discontinuing their formation at the educational institutions. Some of them are still in the asylum procedure, while others are recognized political refugees. A very limited number of them have no legal documents and reside in Antwerp as illegal aliens.

There are also asylum seekers, political refugees, and illegal aliens who have never been students. These are thus Neptunia regulars who came to Belgium as refugees without passing through the student stage. Nevertheless, they all share the identity as intellectuals. That is, whereas the refugees in the Pentecostalist and Kimbanguist communities are mostly nonintellectuals, who have fled the indirect *consequences* of Zaire's oppressive regime, almost all of the refugees in Neptunia belong to the intellectual and politically active segment of Zairian society and of the Zairian community in Antwerp. Political activism is the unmarked case in Neptunia. Almost all of them, especially the men, are active members or cadres of the representation of a Zairian political party in Belgium. Zairian politics is also very often a topic of discussion before and after the masses.

It is, however, not only these intellectuals *per se*, but also their families, i.e. the wives, the children, and at times also the nephews and other members of the extended family, which populate Neptunia. In fact, although it is mostly the adult men who are the students and the principal holders of the asylum applications, the sexes are more or less equally represented in Neptunia and the children under the age of fourteen are nearly as numerous as the adults. The Neptunia community is thus not so much a sum of male adult intellectuals, as a community diversified in terms of age and sex groups. The community has grown around the intellectuals as its historical *raison d'être*, but its members cannot be reduced to them.

As important as the analyst's observation that Neptunia is predominantly a place of intellectuals is the fact that members' perceptions point in similar directions. Insiders, for one, know that Neptunia is a social occasion where they can meet with fellow intellectuals or, in the case of the women and children, with their family members. Outsiders also perceive of Neptunia as a meeting place for students, politicians, and intellectuals in general. The relationship between Neptunia and the Kimbanguist, Pentecostalist, and other non-Catholic

Zairian groups in Antwerp is not marked by much understanding and friendliness. Although there have been rare cases of individuals attending both Neptunia and a Pentecostalist church during the same period, membership of either the Catholic Neptunia group or of one of the other religious communities is as a rule a choice between mutually exclusive options – which is, in passing, also the case amongst the non-Catholic groups themselves. Defectors do exist, and are in general heartily welcomed by the group to which they ‘desert’; but such a defection is irreversible, as returns are usually considered highly suspicious by the defected community. In the context of these hostile relationships, Neptunia, as dominated by intellectuals, is often discredited by the other Zairians in Antwerp as a place of highbrows and eggheads. Moreover, this characterization is often linked to Neptunia’s intercultural aspects: outsiders sometimes remark that the Neptunia Zairians are eager to emphasize their identity as intellectuals by choosing to pray with Belgians. There are even some *Catholic* Zairians in Antwerp who report that Neptunia does not appeal to them because it is the church *“où les politi-chiens [a common insult] et étudiants et autres veulent aller prier avec les Blancs”* (field-note reproduction). In short, within the constellation of Zairian religious groups in Antwerp, Neptunia is, at the level of members’ perceptions, not only distinguished as the only Catholic Zairian group, but also as a meeting place for intellectuals, students, and politicians.

6.3.4. Composition of the Zairian group

6.3.4.1. Regional origins

In chapter 5 (in particular, section 5.2.2.3), it was explained that Kinshasa fulfills a momentous role in the emigration from Zaire to Belgium. In the highly centralized Zairian state, all the national and international services with which one needs to come into contact in the preparation of an emigration or flight from Zaire are concentrated in the country’s capital. These matters are also particularly relevant to the composition of the group of first-generation Zairian regulars in Neptunia in terms of their regional origins and linguistic backgrounds in Zaire.

My identification of the Neptunia Zairians’ regional origins is not based on place of birth, but on the Zairian region, city, etc. where these people spent the major part of their lives. ‘The major part of their lives’ presupposes, minimally, the period between the ages of 10 and 23. In maximal cases, however, it may also refer to one’s entire course of life, including birth up to the moment of emigration. Therefore, the results, presented in table 9, are an identification of each regular as an ex-inhabitant, and not necessarily a native, of the indicated regions.

Table 9. Neptunia's Zairian regulars per region of origin

Kinshasa	31
Equateur	6
Bandundu and Lower Zaire	7
West and East Kasai	2
Shaba, 3 Kivu regions, Upper Zaire	11

The dominance of ex-inhabitants of Kinshasa within the group of Zairian regulars in Neptunia is straightforward: a total number of 31. The group of eastern Zairians is also well represented, but is much less prominent. The presence of Zairians from the Kasai regions, finally, is hardly noticeable.

It is important to stress that the geographical categories used in this table do not necessarily refer to ethnic origins. Since in Zaire, as in many other Third-World countries, internal migration to urban centers is a common phenomenon, and given Mobutu's policy of nationwide administrative translocations (see section 4.3.3 in chapter 4) discrepancies between one's regional origin in ethnic terms and the place where one spent the major part of one's life are not uncommon in Zaire. It is, for instance, not unusual for Baluba, whose ethnic origins are to be found in the Kasai regions, to be raised in Kinshasa. In table 9, these persons would appear among the ex-inhabitants of Kinshasa, and not among the ex-inhabitants of East and West Kasai. (Such discrepancies moreover constitute particularly rich points of reference in members' own constructions of geographical and other identities, as will be shown in chapter 8). This caveat is also relevant to the linguistic backgrounds, as it implies that in addition to the language of the region where one grows up, one may also acquire a language which is in principle foreign to that region, i.e. the language of one's ethnic group. Before going deeper into these linguistic matters, some other remarks need to be made concerning the regional origins, and concerning the role of Kinshasa in particular.

In table 9, it is mentioned that 26 Zairian regulars spent the major part of their lives outside Kinshasa. Even if these regulars are not to be considered ex-inhabitants of Kinshasa, it must always be taken into account that they too, have had *some* experiences in the capital. As was explained in chapters 4 and 5, life as an intellectual in Zaire is inconceivable without some familiarity with the capital, and, moreover, contacts in the capital are indispensable for any type of emigration. Within the group of 26, however, this familiarity with Kinshasa takes on the most diverse forms. At the risk of idealization, four categories may be distinguished.

First, there are two groups of Zairians who actually *lived* in Kinshasa during a significant and continuous period of time (in itself not significant enough, however, to count as their region of origin as understood in table 9). The members of the first group lived in Kinshasa during four to seven consecutive years, the members of the other group lived in the capital during less than four years. For all these individuals, Kinshasa also counted as their last place of residence before coming to Europe. Out of the 26 noninhabitants of Kinshasa, 10 belong to the first group and 3 to the second.

The two other groups subsume persons who never lived in Kinshasa for a significant period of time. In the first (third) group, we find those Zairians who know the capital from regular but brief visits while they lived in another part of the country, and who spent a brief time in Kinshasa immediately prior to their departure to Belgium. There are 7 such persons among the 26 non-ex-inhabitants of Kinshasa. The last group contains persons who only know Kinshasa from a brief stay prior to the departure. Their number amounts to 6.

6.3.4.2. Linguistic backgrounds

My identification of the linguistic backgrounds of the Zairian regulars is based on the notion of 'habitual' language(s), i.e. the language(s) an individual prefers to use in informal or 'default' contexts, such as family contexts and the like. Application of this notion is necessary to do full justice to the fact that, as the discussions in chapter 4 (section 4.4) have pointed out, individual multilingualism is the norm rather than the exception in Zaire. The notion of habitual language(s) thus rules out the languages of which one has some additional knowledge, but which do not, or no longer, count as one's preferred language(s).[71] This reduction of the regulars' linguistic repertoires to their habitual languages allows me to classify them into separate linguistic groups.

It is, however, important that the notion of habitual language(s) not be used to impose a monolingual frame upon individuals if this does not apply, which is the reason why I add the plural of the term 'habitual language' between brackets. Indeed, the above-mentioned multilingualism also implies that for some individuals more than one language is the preferred one for informal or default contexts, without one of them gaining precedence over the other(s).

Table 10 presents the number of Zairian regulars per habitual language(s).

Table 10. The habitual languages of the Zairian regulars

Lingala as the only habitual language	34
Lingala and Mongo as the habitual languages	3
Lingala and Kikongo as the habitual languages	6
Lingala and Tetela as the habitual languages	1
Kikongo as the only habitual language	1
Tshiluba as the only habitual language	2
Kiswahili as the only habitual language	8
Tshiluba and Kiswahili as the habitual languages	2

71. Of course, the criterion used to determine a certain language from an individual's multilingual repertoire as falling within her or his set of *habitual* languages or to identify it, instead, as one of the *additionally known* languages, is always an approximative one. The distinction is not clear-cut, but is based on a continuum, of which only the extremes present unmistakable cases of habitual languages and unmistakable cases of additionally known languages.

A first and major observation is that the linguistic identities of the Zairian regulars are largely dominated by Zaire's four national languages, Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba. Tetela and Mongo are the only other languages that appear in the list of habitual languages. The dominance of the national languages must be related to the backgrounds of the Neptunia regulars in Zaire as mobile city-dwellers rather than as members of hinterland communities. The dominance of the national languages is also the rationale behind the emphasis on these languages in the organized conversations (see chapter 8), as well as in other parts of this dissertation (e.g., chapter 4).

In table 10, it is also evident that the group of Zairian regulars whose set of habitual languages at least *includes* Lingala is the dominant one in Neptunia (a total of 44). In this and all following chapters, I refer to this group as 'the Lingala-speakers'. The terms 'Kiswahili-speakers', 'Tshiluba-speakers', and 'Kikongo-speakers', then, refer to Zairians whose set of habitual languages minimally includes Kiswahili, Tshiluba, and Kikongo, respectively, so that some overlapping is inevitable.

It is possible to reduce these figures on the linguistic backgrounds to the information on the regional origins provided in table 9, but only to a limited extent. Mostly, one's habitual language is, indeed, also the dominant language of the region or city where one grew up and where one spent most of one's life. The number of ex-inhabitants of Kinshasa and the region of Equateur (37) coincides with the number of regulars whose habitual language is Lingala or Lingala and Mongo. (If not all ex-inhabitants of the region of Equateur (6) have Mongo as a habitual language (3), this is due to the fact that some of those who were raised in the distinctly multiethnic city of Mbandaka have only retained Lingala as a habitual language.)

With regard to Kikongo, a comparison between table 9 and table 10 tells us that the sum of those regulars whose regional origins are to be found in the regions of Bandundu and in Lower Zaire (7) equals the sum of those whose habitual languages include Kikongo. It may be remarked that only 1 out of these 7 regulars has Kikongo as the *only* habitual language, while the 6 other regulars combine Kikongo with Lingala. This must be related to the fact that most of the ex-inhabitants of the regions of Bandundu and Lower Zaire lived in Kinshasa during an additional period of four or more years. Also, the proximity of Kinshasa, and, thus, of Lingala, to the regions of Bandundu and Lower Zaire is an important factor.

As far as the Tshiluba-speakers and Kiswahili-speakers are concerned, finally, we notice that there are 4 Zairian regulars with Tshiluba as (one of) the habitual language(s), while there are only 2 regulars who spent the major part of their lives in the Kasai regions. Here, we must refer to the observation made above that some parents prefer to raise their children in the language of the ethnic group and not, or not only, in the language of the region. This 'ethnic' language then constitutes the only or an additional habitual language for the individual in question. The 4 Tshiluba-speakers in table 10 indeed include Baluba who were born and raised in Lubumbashi and Bukavu, but where peer pressure was significant enough for them to adopt Tshiluba as the only or as one of the habitual languages. This also explains why not all 11 eastern Zairians mentioned in table 9 have Kiswahili as their (only) habitual language: some Baluba spent their lives in eastern Zaire, but, for reasons of family pressure, did not retain Kiswahili as a habitual language.

By definition, the notion of habitual language minimizes the relevance of an individual's knowledge of other languages, which he or she uses and/or prefers less. All Zairian regulars in Neptunia are multilinguals. In addition to their habitual language(s), all of them speak or understand at least one other language.

First of all, all Zairian regulars are additionally proficient in French. Since the average Neptunia regular is an intellectual, or a family member of an intellectual, this proficiency mostly ranks from very good to excellent. The passive knowledge is always complete. There are very few individuals whose productive knowledge is not very good, but even they are able to entertain a fully comprehensible conversation in French. Dutch, secondly, is only mastered by very few Zairian regulars. There are three regulars who are able to follow a Dutch monologue, but only one of them is also proficient, to some extent, at the productive level.

The additional knowledge of African languages, thirdly, is represented in table 11, which shows how many speakers in each of the linguistic groups delineated in table 10 are proficient in a (or more) Zairian national language(s) other than their own habitual language(s). Notice, when consulting the figures, that one and the same individual may appear more than once in this table, viz. when he or she is proficient in more than one additional language.

Table 11. Additional language knowledge per linguistic group

	Lingala	Kiswahili	Kikongo	Tshiluba	none
Lingala as habitual language		1/34	9/34	2/34	19/34
Lingala and Mongo		0/3	0/3	0/3	3/3
Lingala and Kikongo		0/6	0/6	0/6	6/6
Lingala and Tetela		0/1	0/1	0/1	1/1
Kikongo	1/1	1/1		1/1	0/1
Tshiluba	2/2	2/2	0/2		0/2
Kiswahili	8/8		0/8	1/8	0/8
Tshiluba and Kiswahili	2/2		0/2		0/2

There is a sharp distinction between the Lingala-speakers on the one hand and all the other regulars on the other. Whereas out of the 44 Lingala-speakers there are 29 who have no command at all of any other Zairian national language than their habitual language(s), there is not one Kiswahili-speaker, Tshiluba-speaker, or Kikongo-speaker who is not at least passively proficient in another national language.

Let us have a closer look at the Lingala-speakers who do know another national language. There are 2 individuals who speak and understand Tshiluba. They were both born in Kinshasa from Baluba parents and have learned this language in family contexts (without having fully retained it as a habitual language). (The same applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to one woman of Ngbaka descent and a man and a woman of Tetela descent. These 3 persons, who do not appear in the table, were also born and raised in Lingala-speaking areas, and have to varying degrees learned the language of their ethnic group in family contexts.) Then, there are 9 individuals who have either a passive or a passive and productive knowledge of Kikongo. The majority of them were born from Bakongo parents in Kinshasa. Lingala has become their only habitual language, but during childhood and adolescence they were able to pick up some Kikongo in their ethnic environments. There is, finally, only 1 Lingala-speaker who has some command of Kiswahili. He learned this language during the years he spent at the university of Lubumbashi. His knowledge of Kiswahili is a working knowledge, which implies that he is able to speak and understand some elementary Kiswahili, but that he is not able to entertain faster and more complicated conversations.

All 13 non-Lingala-speakers have some additional knowledge of Lingala. In the case of the one person whose only habitual language is Kikongo and the 4 regulars whose respective sets of habitual languages minimally include Tshiluba, the knowledge of Lingala ranges from very good to excellent. Western Zairians mention that they often recognize a Kikongo or eastern accent in these persons' speech, but apart from these slight accents their productive capacities, as well as the passive ones, are almost native-like. This is also the case for 4 out of the 8 Kiswahili-speakers. The Lingala competence of the other 4 Kiswahili-speakers, by contrast, is limited to a working knowledge or less. Both at the passive and at the productive level, their knowledge is insufficient to participate fully in a long and fast Lingala conversation. They are able, nonetheless, to exchange some introductory turns and to understand slower and less complicated speech.

The non-Lingala-speakers' knowledge of languages other than Lingala, finally, may be depicted as follows. All Tshiluba-speakers have a fairly good command of Kiswahili, and so does the man whose only habitual language is Kikongo. This man also speaks and understands some Tshiluba. Among the Kiswahili-speakers, there is one person who also knows some Tshiluba and 3 individuals – not appearing in table 11 – who are competent in the language of the restricted ethnic group to which they belong.

6.3.5. The choir and its songbook

Shortly after his arrival in Neptunia in 1985, Father Vladimir started to introduce Zairian religious songs into the masses. At certain points in the mass, he struck up a hymn or other relevant chant, inviting the participants to join in. He also accompanied himself and the other singers on an African drum. He had learned these songs, as well as playing the drum, during the eight years he worked as a missionary in Zaire. After a few months, two Zairian students who were already regular participants of the Neptunia masses, took over the initiative and set up a permanent choir. Other Zairians joined and a schedule of regular rehearsals for the choir members was established. From its very inception, the choir was meant as a permanent group, which implied that it was exclusively managed by the students, at the expense of the temporary group of seamen.

In the following paragraphs, I will first discuss the internal composition of the present choir in terms of regional origins and linguistic backgrounds. Next, I will deal with the position of the choir as a whole within Neptunia and with its songbook.

At present, the choir is composed of 25 members. All members are Zairians, and all of them are regulars. Out of 25, 4 are second-generation adolescents between 15 and 20 years old. The regional origins of the 21 first-generation choristers is described in table 12.

Table 12. The choristers per region of origin

Kinshasa	14
Equateur	4
Bandundu and Lower Zaire	2
East and West Kasai	1
Shaba, 3 Kivu regions, Upper Zaire	0

As may be noticed, the uneven proportions in the regional origins of the Zairian regulars in general (table 9) are carried through in the composition of the choir, which is mainly composed of ex-inhabitants of Kinshasa. What is more, none of the 11 Zairians from Shaba, Upper Zaire, and the Kivu regions belong to the choir. In the choir, there is, in other words, an enhanced prominence of westerners as compared to the Neptunia community in its entirety. This enhanced prominence is additionally accomplished by the fact that out of the 6 regulars who are from the region of Equateur, 4 are choir members. This has significant consequences at the level of the choristers' linguistic backgrounds.

Table 13 presents these linguistic backgrounds in terms of the habitual language(s).

Table 13. The habitual languages of the choristers

Lingala as the only habitual language	14
Lingala and Mongo as the habitual languages	2
Lingala and Kikongo as the habitual languages	3
Lingala and Tetela as the habitual languages	1
Kikongo as the only habitual language	1
Tshiluba as the only habitual language	0
Kiswahili as the only habitual language	0
Tshiluba and Kiswahili as the habitual languages	0

The number of choristers belonging to the group of Lingala-speakers depletes the choir almost entirely: 20 out of 21. Thus, the prominence of Lingala-speakers in the choir is even more pronounced than it is in Neptunia in general.

Again, these figures may to some extent be reduced to the figures on the regional origins (table 12). The one person whose regional origin is situated in the Kasai regions can be found in table 13 as the individual counting Tetela among his habitual languages. Also, the only person who has Kikongo as the only habitual language belongs to the 2 choristers who are from the regions of Lower Zaire and Bandundu, and the 2 choristers whose habitual languages include Mongo are among the 4 choristers from the region of Equateur.

Although the number of choristers who spent the major part of their lives in Kinshasa and the number of choristers with Lingala as the only habitual language coincide (14), these numbers do not represent the same individuals. Among the 14 choristers from Kinshasa in table 12, 2 Bakongo have both Lingala and Kikongo as their habitual languages (the third one is from Bandundu). The two remaining slots in the group of 14 in table 13, then, are occupied by 2 choristers from Equateur, who did not retain Mongo as a habitual language.

The additional linguistic knowledge of the choir members may be described as follows. Out of the 14 choristers whose only habitual language is Lingala, 6 do not speak or understand any other African language. There are 5 others who know Kikongo and 2 who know Tshiluba. The one Lingala-speaking regular who has a working knowledge of Kiswahili (see above) is also a member of the choir. The 6 choristers for whom Lingala is a habitual language *alongside* Mongo, Kikongo, or Tetela are not proficient in other African languages than their habitual languages. The person whose only habitual language is Kikongo, finally, has a good command of Lingala, and a working knowledge of Kiswahili and Tshiluba.

To a certain extent, the choir is a community *within* the community of Neptunia regulars. The choir has its own list of members and its own organizational structure, comprising a president, a vice-president, and other posts, as well as a separate set of house rules. Each year in October, elections are held among the choir members to appoint a new president and to fill the other posts. Both inside and outside Neptunia, the choristers form a strongly integrated group of friends, displaying personal frictions, gossiping, romantic affairs, and all other characteristics of such groups. The choir members are, furthermore, not answerable to the Neptunia Fathers and accomplish their duty – i.e., brightening up the dominical masses with religious songs – in ways of their own choosing. For the selection of the songs and their artistic arrangement, they work in full independence.

The choir members rehearse each Friday night, for which they can use the Neptunia basement. It is at these Friday-night rehearsals that the songs to be used in the mass of the following day are selected. The choir also disposes of its own set of instruments, such as a standing twin drum, a tambourine, a xylophone, a cow bell, a pair of maracas, and an electronic organ. This set of instruments is particularly important in the context of imposed culturality, on which more will be said below.

When the two Zairian students took over Father Vladimir's initiative in 1985-1986, they immediately set out to write down a comprehensive and fixed repertoire of religious songs to be used in the masses. They thus composed a songbook, resorting to the religious songs they had learned in Zaire. In the beginning of the 1990s, the songbook was renewed and expanded by the choir's leading figures at that time. This version is also the one used today.[72]

The present songbook is a ring binder of 73 machine-typed pages. A copy of the songbook, as well as my translation of all the songs contained in it,[73] are included in the appendices to this dissertation. The 73 pages contain a total of 201 songs. As may be noticed, these 201 songs are divided into a number of categories: there are 8 Kyrie songs (pages 6-7, following the *original* numbering of the songbook), 10 Credo songs (pages 22-25), 11 Requiem songs (pages 50-54), etc. The categories on pages 1-49 correspond with the major units of the mass, while the categories on pages 50-73 contain songs to be used in special masses. The way in which all these categories are resorted to in actual practice will be described in section 6.4.

There are about 70 copies of the songbook, which are always kept in Neptunia. Each mass, every choir member takes her or his own copy, while the other copies are put at the disposal of the public to join in the singing.

6.3.6. Imposed culturality

In the discussion of the outings in section 6.3.2, I cursorily mentioned how Belgians expect the Neptunia Zairians to assume and maintain an exotic identity. Here, I would like to go deeper into these matters and indicate how the

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72. Both in references to the old songbook and in references to the updated version, I use the term 'song' and 'songbook', rather than 'hymn' and 'hymnal', because not all of the songs contained in the book are hymns in the strict sense of word and because the members themselves do not prefer to use such 'solemn' labels, but simply call it *le bouquin* or *le livre*.

73. The procedure applied in translating the songs, i.e. the extent to which the translations are exclusively my own or were conducted with the help of informants, is spelled out in an introduction to the translations.

Fathers and the Belgian regulars in Neptunia perceive and construct the identity of the Neptunia Zairians and the choir, both in the context of the outings and in Neptunia in general. The Neptunia Zairians are subject to what I would like to call 'imposed culturality'. That is, an image of exotic Zairians or 'Africans', constructed and preferred by the Neptunia Belgians, is imposed upon them as an expected pattern of behavior and as an expected identity.

During the outings, Father Vladimir and Father Nikita always begin the mass with an introduction of the Neptunia choir and with a 'clarification' of what the Flemish audience is about to participate in. These introductions and clarifications are tailored to the exotic beliefs of the visited Flemish parishioners. Father Vladimir always identifies the way in which the mass will be celebrated as 'the African way of doing' or as 'a typically Zairian mass', etc., the sheer contrast with 'European', 'Western', etc. styles being the most important ingredient in the definition of 'African' and alleged synonyms. The typical qualification of 'the African way of celebrating the Catholic mass' is that it is *"so much more spontaneous and authentically joyful than our way of doing"* and that *"it comes from the heart and from feelings, while our way of doing is a Germanic way, coming from reason"* (field-note reproduction, my translation). Father Vladimir has also made it a habit to stress, immediately before the Offertory, that in Africa people are much more inclined to share goods with one another than in Europe, and that the Offertory is a good occasion for the Flemish parishioners to follow the African example.

These views are presented to the Flemish audience, while the Zairians are merely the passive objects of these views. There are, however, also instances where this type of discourse is directly addressed to the Neptunia Zairians. On outings, the choir members are urged by the Fathers and by the other Belgian regulars not to sing any French songs, as is regularly done in Neptunia (see below), but to make sure that the repertoire is made up of Zairian songs only. Also, whereas the choir makes use of an electronic organ during all of the dominical masses in Neptunia, the Neptunia Belgians judge that this practice is less suited for the outings. The rationale presented to the Zairians may be exemplified by means of this one utterance: *"la chorale doit rester africaine! des chansons en français c'est pas africain, et le son de l'orgue aussi est trop européen! il faut être vraiment africain, il ne faut pas toujours vouloir s'adapter!"* (field-note reproduction).

Whether these views are directly addressed to the Neptunia Zairians or not, of importance is the fact that the Zairians are the object of an imposed culturality. An identity is imposed upon them which they do not or cannot control themselves and which is not necessarily the one they prefer. At this point, I would like to show how this also occurs within the context of Neptunia itself and its dominical masses.

Although it is not customary, there have been occasions on which the Neptunia Fathers frame their sermon in the dominical mass around an allegedly African or Zairian cultural trait. There is, for instance, the case where Father

Vladimir explained that God is not a father in the Western sense, but in the African sense, and that *"vous tous vous devriez donc être capables de comprendre quel genre de père Dieu représente"* (field-note reproduction). To Vladimir, the African father differs from the Western father, in that he is responsible for an entire family and in that he *"prend soin de toute sa famille comme un vrai pater familias"* (field-note reproduction).

Another example is when Father Vladimir explained the Advent, observing that waiting for the birth of Christ is not similar to waiting in idleness. He spelled out that waiting in idleness occurs, e.g., when one is waiting for a bus, or when the person one is supposed to meet does not show up. This part of his sermon, which I was able to record on audio tape and transcribe, went as follows: *"j'attends, et parfois je dois attendre longtemps. parfois j'attends je dirais un peu à l'heure zaïroise: j'attends quelqu'un, il ne vient pas, j'attends encore, n'est pas encore là, j'attends trente minutes, on commence la messe un peu plus tard, sont pas encore là, on vient en retard, dans l'attente, l'heure zaïroise". L'heure zaïroise* is not a locally created, but a commonly used expression which Belgians and others often use to refer to the supposedly Zairian habit to arrive late. In his speech, Father Vladimir clearly situates his comments within the context of Neptunia, linking the *heure zaïroise* to the frequent late starts of the Neptunia masses. He thereby imposes an identification upon the Neptunia Zairians which forces them into folkloristic and condescending stereotypes and other constructions which are not their own.

In addition to the Fathers' sermons and commentaries, there are also the Belgian regulars' comments on the choir's identity and behavior. The choir members have since long been urging Belgian regulars to join the choir, either on a permanent or on an occasional basis (e.g., at outings). These invitations have so far not been accepted. The arguments behind the refusals are very explicit. It is argued that such an integration of Belgians *"n'est pas bien, puisque la chorale doit être une chorale purement africaine"* (field-note reproduction). Some choir members have also repeatedly asked the Belgian regulars to teach them Flemish religious songs. Although these Belgian regulars are all Flemish and know more than one religious song, this proposal has time and again been rejected. The rationale behind these refusals is similar: a choir which sings Flemish songs is not the exotic choir the Belgians want to see in Neptunia.

All these observations point in the same direction. Through expectation frames rather than through explicit coercion, the Neptunia Zairians are obliged to adapt aspects of their behavior to existing cultural stereotypes. This imposed culturality implies that whatever identity the Zairians themselves would like to assume, they are somehow doomed to remain the 'exotic Africans' the Belgian regulars want them to be.

It must be mentioned, in conclusion, that the imposition of a cultural identity in Neptunia is largely a silent or at least a cooperative process. First of all, the issue is only occasionally explicated, and many Zairians simply do not notice the process and thus have no opinions about it. Second, explicit denunciations of the culturalist arguments by the Zairians do occur, but they are always formulated in a carefree, whimsical tone and are never argumentatively insisted upon. In other words, never has any form of animosity or lasting conflict arisen from this issue. Moreover, while a number of Neptunia Zairians still display some resistance to the culturalist themes, as exemplified by the whimsical denunciations, others appear to have fully internalized them. These members may often be observed to make declarations concerning the cultural identity of the choir and Neptunia similar to the Belgians' statements, or, at least, to firmly agree with the Belgians when these present their culturalist arguments. As subjects of an inculcated frame of reference, these ideological collaborators are, obviously, most cooperative actors in the imposition of cultural identity.

6.4. The details of a night at Neptunia

6.4.1. The mass

As mentioned, the dominical masses in Neptunia are organized on Saturday nights. They start at 7:00 p.m. in summer and at 6:00 p.m. in winter. An hour or so before the actual start of the mass, the Fathers arrange the room. They bring out the altar and the chairs, which are stored behind a curtain during the week. Participants trickle in around the scheduled starting time of the mass. They pick a chair and pass the remaining time by chatting with others and with the Fathers. The majority of the eventual totality of participants, however, arrive *after* the actual start of the mass, i.e. in the first half hour, trying to sneak in and sit down as silently as possible. Upon entering the Neptunia basement, each participant picks up a songbook from a box placed at the door.

The scene of an ordinary mass may be briefly described as follows. Rows of chairs, about 100 altogether, are arranged in U-form in front of and around the altar. Behind the altar are Father Vladimir and Father Nikita, who always say mass together, taking turns in reciting parts of the liturgical texts. The choir members are seated to the left of the altar, somewhat separated from the rest of the public. The scene at special masses is different. The altar is then placed against the wall left of its normal position. This allows the Fathers to arrange 200 or more chairs. On such occasions, the choir takes place very close to the altar and occupies the doorway to the restrooms.

In the remainder of this section, I will be concerned with explicating the form of the Neptunia mass itself, i.e. the celebration of the Eucharist, which is a complex matter. As my analysis of the members' constructions in chapter 8 will clarify, members often identify the masses in Neptunia as typical instances of the Zairian rite (*le rite zaïrois*), itself explained in chapter 4. This identification is, strictly speaking, incorrect. For the global structure of the mass, the Fathers do not follow the missal of the Zairian rite, but (the French version of) the canonical Roman Ordo Missae, i.e. the order and contents of the Catholic mass as conceived by the second Vatican Council and as performed ever since in all Catholic churches in Europe. Father Vladimir once told me that *"many think that what we do is Malula's Zairian rite, but in fact it's not; it's just a Roman mass, but done in a Zairian way"* (field-note reproduction, my translation from Dutch). The extent to which the Neptunia mass is strictly based on the Roman Ordo Missae, as well as the reality behind Vladimir's pertinent identification of the Neptunia mass as 'a Roman mass, done in a Zairian way', can best be explained on the basis of a chart of its components and structure (figure 4).

THE INTRODUCTORY RITE

Zairian entrance song

1. Greeting of the people
2. Penitential Rite

Penitential preparation

Kyrie - *replaced with a Zairian song*

3. Gloria - *replaced with a Zairian song*
4. Opening Prayer

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

5. first Scripture reading - *followed by a Zairian song*
6. second Scripture reading - *followed by a Zairian song*
7. Gospel Acclamation and Gospel
8. Sermon
9. Profession of faith (Credo) - *text replaced with a Zairian song*
10. General intercessions - *interwoven with a Zairian song*

THE LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

PREPARATION

11. Offertory - *accompanied by a Zairian song*
12. Presentation of the host and chalice
13. Supplication, Incensing, Lavabo, Prayer over the gifts
14. Introductory Dialogue

THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYER

15. Preface
16. Sanctus - *replaced with a Zairian song*
17. Invocation of the Holy Spirit (Epiclesis I)
18. Institution Narrative and Consecration
19. Acclamation
20. Memorial prayer (Anamnesis) and Oblation
21. Epiclesis II
22. Intercessions
23. Concluding Doxology (Glory to Trinity)

THE COMMUNION RITE

24. Lord's Prayer - *replaced with a Zairian song*
25. Rite of Peace

The Breaking of the bread and the Lamb of God

Agnus Dei - *replaced with a Zairian song*

26. Holy Communion - *accompanied by a Zairian song*
27. Silent prayer

CONCLUDING RITE

28. Announcements
29. Blessing and Dismissal - *followed by a Zairian song*

Figure 4. Structure of the Neptunia mass

First of all, it may be noticed that the structure of the Neptunia mass is not the same as the structure of the Zairian rite, but is entirely based on the Roman Ordo Missae: there is no entrance procession and festive leaving, the Penitential Rite is integrated into the Introductory Rite, the Rite of Peace precedes the communion, etc. This structure is largely the same in Neptunia's ordinary masses and in the special masses, except that in the special masses, the relevant event (wedding, baptism, etc.) is inserted in the Liturgy of the Word, between the Credo and the General intercessions. In addition, as the Fathers always use a Roman missal to say the mass, almost all the liturgical texts recited by the celebrants and/or the public also originate in the Ordo Missae, and not in the Zairian rite.

The identification of the Neptunia mass as a mass 'done in a Zairian way' stems from the copious use of *Zairian religious songs*, and from the changes this use of Zairian songs brings about in the very contents of the mass (other facets of this 'Zairian way' will also appear as the usage of Zairian languages in Neptunia is discussed in chapter 7). It is this 'Zairian way' which lies at the heart of many members' perceptions of the Neptunia masses as based on the Zairian rite.

In ordinary Neptunia masses, there are always 13 songs. The 13 mass units for which a song is used are the entrance, the Kyrie, the Gloria, the two Scripture readings, the Credo, the General intercessions, the Offertory, the Sanctus, the Lord's Prayer, the Agnus Dei, the Communion, and the Dismissal. On the photocopies of the songbook included in the appendix, it may be seen that each of the 13 mass units is represented by a distinct category of songs. At their Friday-night rehearsals, the choristers decide which particular song from each category will be used the next day. All songs are struck up by the choir and subsequently sung along by the other members of the public. A blackboard, suspended from the ceiling to the right of the altar, allows the members of the public to find the song to be used per mass unit in their songbooks. For instance, next to the word 'Offertory' on the blackboard, the numbers '30-8' are written, which means that on this particular day, the song to be used for the Offertory is on page 30 (following the original numbering in the photocopied songbook, see appendix), number 8, i.e. *Yamba Ngai Lelo*.

In special masses, the 13 units for which a song is used are the same as in ordinary masses, but for some units other categories in the songbook are resorted to. In a requiem mass, for instance, the song used for the first Scripture reading is not taken from the category of Reading songs in the songbook (pages 14-21 in the photocopies of the songbook), but from the songbook's category of Requiem songs (pages 50-54). In special masses, it also often occurs that these occasion-specific songs are simply *added to* (i.e., sung immediately after) the standard unit song. For instance, after the second Scripture reading the choir first sings a song from the category of Readings and immediately adds a song from the Baptism category, if this is the relevant event of the mass. This practice leads to a total number of songs higher than 13.

As is shown in figure 4, there are three ways in which Zairian songs are inserted in the mass. There are, first of all, songs that are used when the Roman Ordo Missae allows for the insertion of a song (hymn, psalm, or other) of the assembly's own choosing. For instance, the Roman Ordo Missae provides for the possibility that an entrance song is used at the beginning of the mass before any liturgical element is taken up (even if in actual practice, this is not often done in European churches). Similarly, the option to sing a song after the first Scripture reading is also provided for in the Ordo Missae. In the General intercessions (Liturgy of the Word), members of the audience are given the opportunity to make intercessions spontaneously and aloud. In Neptunia, when the choir notices that the speaker is finished, one of the short intercession songs (page 26) is started, after which another speaker makes her or his intercession, and so on until the last intercession has been made. Although this practice is not common in European churches, it is entirely in line with the letter of the Ordo-Missae instructions. The Offertory and the Communion are two other examples of the usage of songs as allowed by the Ordo Missae. In Neptunia, the time during which two or three children go about the 'church' to collect the participants' money is filled with a Zairian song. Also, as soon as the priest starts distributing communion to the congregation, the choir begins a Communion song, which lasts until the last member of the congregation is served. After the song, the priest distributes communion to the choristers.

In other cases, the Zairian songs are used at places where the instructions of the Ordo Missae mention that a particular text of the liturgy may be sung instead of recited. In these cases, the text of the song cannot be of the assembly's own choosing, but must be the canonical text as it appears in the missal. Here, the Neptunia masses thus violate the rules of the Ordo Missae. This occurs at the Kyrie, the Gloria, the Credo, the Sanctus, the Lord's Prayer, and the Agnus Dei. After the Penitential preparation (*"Je confesse à Dieu tout-puissant, je reconnais devant mes frères, que j'ai péché, en pensée, en parole,…"*), the canonical Kyrie text *"Seigneur, prends pitié; Ô Christ, prends pitié; Seigneur, prends pitié"* is omitted and replaced with one of the Zairian Kyrie songs (pages 6-7). Similarly, instead of reciting or singing the canonical Gloria text (*"Gloire à Dieu au plus haut des cieux et paix sur la terre aux hommes qu'il aime,…"*), the Credo text (*"Je crois en un seul Dieu, le Père tout-puissant, créateur du ciel et de la terre,…"*), the Sanctus text (*"Saint, Saint, Saint, le Seigneur, Dieu de l'univers, Hosanna au plus haut des cieux,…"*), the standard French Lord's Prayer (*"Notre Père, qui es aux cieux,…"*), and the Agnus Dei (*"Agneau de Dieu, qui enlèves le péché du monde, prends pitié de nous,…"*), the Neptunia choir and public resort to the Zairian songs in the songbook's corresponding categories.

Finally, Zairian songs are inserted where the Ordo Missae does not provide for songs, but in which case the Zairian songs do not replace any expected liturgical text. The song brought after the second Scripture reading and the one sung at the end of the mass, after the priest's blessing and dismissal, are two such cases.

With regard to the end of the mass, it sometimes occurs that the choir spontaneously 'adds' one or two songs after the exit song. These extra songs are almost always references to one of the public announcements made between the Communion and the Blessing: these announcements may consist in a member of the public rising and asking the participants' attention in order to share a recent joyful event, such as the birth of a child or the wedding of a family member in another city in Europe or in Zaire. After the exit song, one of the choir members then wishes to express her or his contentment about the joyful event and offhand starts a song which has come to her or his mind, after which he or she is joined by the rest of the choir and the public. These songs are unplanned and are, therefore, not referred to on the blackboard. Remarkably, these spontaneous songs are almost always songs that do not appear in the songbook, but which are so generally known in Zaire that the initiating chorister in question, and the other participants joining in, know them by heart. This phenomenon occurs both in ordinary and in special masses.

6.4.2. The clubhouse situation

Ordinary Neptunia masses last about 1 hour and 30 minutes. Special masses are usually much longer. The remainder of the night after an ordinary mass looks as follows. After the priest's blessing and dismissal and after the last song, Neptunia is immediately transformed into a clubhouse. The altar and all other liturgical accessories are removed and stocked behind a curtain. The rows in which the chairs were arranged are broken up and the chairs are put around small and low coffee tables, which are taken from the same storage space where the altar and the other materials are kept. A total of 25 to 30 tables are placed throughout the Neptunia basement. Around each table, there are 5 or more chairs, but this number shifts considerably as groups of talkers are formed and break up throughout the night. The bar is opened, offering several brands of beer and soft drinks. The bar itself is serviced by volunteering Belgian regulars, but it is not customary to wait on tables. The hi-fi equipment is turned on to produce some background music – almost always popular modern Zairian hits.

Neptunia as a clubhouse thus amounts to what Goffman called a 'multifocused gathering' (i.a., Goffman 1963). This means that within the boundaries of one and the same situation, several conversational units (or 'focused gatherings') develop independently of each other, without, at the same time, losing the surrounding units out of sight. Each unit orients its behavior in such a way as to safeguard its own and the other units' integrity and thereby contributes to the integrity of the multifocused gathering as a whole. Individuals' shifts from one unit to another are possible, provided, of course, that they comply with the requirements concerning the ritual linguistic and gestural exchanges which make leave-taking and joining possible.

Most, though not all, of those who participated in the mass also stay in the Neptunia clubhouse. To many, Neptunia is not only a ‘church’, but also a social occasion. The atmosphere in the clubhouse is relaxed. People sit together and catch up on the completed week’s news over a glass of beer or soda. Topics of everyday life are the most common ones, although Zaire, its political developments, and its present situation also figure among the main topics. The Neptunia clubhouse thus provides the Zairians with a pleasant environment in which to meet with fellow immigrants. Every Saturday night, there are indeed a number of people who arrive in Neptunia only after the mass, simply to enjoy the clubhouse meeting.

It would, however, be unwarranted to analytically dissociate the clubhouse from Neptunia as a meeting place for Zairian Catholics. The Neptunia clubhouse does not exist as a separate ‘barroom’ or ‘pub’ where any Zairians of Antwerp tend to come and spend their Saturday nights. With the exception of some very rare cases, Zairians from other religious groups in Antwerp are as a rule not seen in the clubhouse, certainly not after ‘ordinary’ masses. One reason for this is the rivalry between the several Zairian religious groups in Antwerp. Another reason is that Neptunia is not an island of Zairian recreation in Antwerp, as Zairian pubs and night clubs are legion in the city.

After special masses, the clubhouse situation is different from the one after ordinary masses. In those cases, the entire night is organized around the specific event mentioned and celebrated in the concluded mass. In the case of a wedding, for instance, attention in the clubhouse situation will be focused on the newly wed couple. These special Saturday nights are wholesale feasts. The number of participants is always much higher than on ordinary Saturdays and may in some cases rises to 300. Family members and friends from other Belgian cities are especially invited for the occasion. The same multifocused gathering is created, but many more tables are brought in than is normally the case. Many, also, are obliged to keep standing up. For weeks in advance, the Zairian regulars have organized themselves to prepare a banquet, each of them being appointed for one specific dish. Their saucepans and pots are brought in immediately after the mass and gathered in Neptunia’s kitchen, where the dishes are heated. Around 10:00 or 11:00 p.m., the dishes are put together on two ping-pong tables covered with a paper tablecloth and the signal is given to line up with the distributed plates. Around midnight, the people sitting in the middle of the Neptunia basement are asked to move their chairs and tables and the resulting space is called a dance floor. The volume of the music is turned up, marking the beginning of a night of dance and enjoyment. Usually, these feasts end at around 3:00 or 4:00 a.m., but it often happened that the sun had already risen when I left the Neptunia basement.

Part III : Language in Neptunia

7. A MULTILINGUAL SETTING DOMINATED BY LINGALA

7.1. Introduction

This chapter provides a description of Neptunia in terms of the choices of language made in the setting. It is shown that Neptunia is fundamentally a multilingual setting, in that up to 6 languages are used in the mass, i.e. French, Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, Teke, and Tshiluba. Among the 5 African languages, there is, however, one language which dominates the setting's multilingual outlook, to wit Lingala. This dominance of Lingala will be explicated in sections 7.2.1 through 7.2.4. In these sections, I will demonstrate that in the songs performed during the mass (a distinction will again be made between Neptunia's 'ordinary masses' and 'special masses'), in the parts of the liturgy said by the celebrants and/or the public, in Neptunia as a clubhouse, and in a number of other contexts, Lingala dominates the other African languages in terms of sheer quantity and frequency.

In the course of these descriptions of the Lingala dominance, a number of factors explaining the dominance will already be alluded to. Section 7.3, however, brings these explanations together and adds others. I will point to the preponderance of Neptunia members from Lingala-speaking areas in Zaire, to the history of Neptunia, to the backgrounds of one of the Fathers as a missionary in Equateur and Kinshasa, and to other historical and demographic factors. Of course, the members' own constructions of these historical, demographic, and other contextual factors are of primordial importance in reconstructing the factors behind the Lingala dominance. For, in linguistic anthropology native knowledge is not merely to be considered a set of rationalizations members provide in retrospective reflections on their linguistic behaviors, but rather a complex of interpretations and constructions the members need to dispose of in order to *produce* these behaviors in the first place. Therefore, the members' own constructions as presented in chapter 8 must eventually be fed back into the presentation of factors in 7.3.

In section 7.4, I will spell out how the described dominance of Lingala leads to a structural form of sociolinguistic inequality, as the Neptunia community is not only composed of Lingala-speakers, but also comprises Kiswahili-speakers and members of other linguistic groups. It will also be shown that the dominance of Lingala and the related sociolinguistic inequality do not lead to overt, public conflicts in Neptunia. That is, at least at the level of the 'outer appearance' of the setting, Neptunia is marked by a form of sociolinguistic consensus.

7.2. The dominance of Lingala

7.2.1. The sung parts of the mass

As mentioned in chapter 6 (section 6.4.1), each ordinary Neptunia mass contains 13 songs. There are 6 different languages for these songs. A closer look at the songbook (see appendix) should clarify this. In the songbook, we notice that the lyrics of each song are written in one and the same language; language mixtures within one song do not occur.[74] The 6 different languages represented in the 201 songs contained in the songbook are Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, Tshiluba, French, and Teke. All of these 6 languages are also actually *used* in the Neptunia masses. With regard to their sung parts, the Neptunia masses may thus be said to be thoroughly multilingual in nature.

This multilingual constellation is, however, marked by certain uneven proportions. Table 14 provides quantitative information on the representation of each of the 6 languages in the songbook, i.e. the number of songs per language.

Table 14. Number of songs per language in the Neptunia songbook

Total	201	
Lingala	129	(64.2%)
Kikongo	40	(19.9%)
French	18	(8.9%)
Tshiluba	8	(4%)
Kiswahili	5	(2.5%)
Teke	1	(0.5%)

The most remarkable observation is that out of these 201 songs, more than 50% are in Lingala. Kikongo is represented in about 20% of the songs, while Tshiluba and Kiswahili unmistakably occupy a much less prominent position (less than 5%). The French songs are more frequent than the songs in these two African languages. The one Teke song is rendered on page 41, number 7. Teke is the language of a restricted ethnic group, the ‘original territory’ of which is traditionally situated in the area now covered by the city of Kinshasa. The Teke

74. Gloria 7 (page 10), Requiem 10 (page 53), and Palm Sunday 1 (page 58) are songs that can be sung in two different languages. The melody is exactly the same for both versions, and the texts are almost similar. When used in a mass, one of both languages is chosen: the two versions are never sung consecutively. Therefore, the two versions can best be considered as two separate songs, and must be counted as two separate entries in the songbook. An exception to the unmixed character of the songs is the song on page 47. In the entire songbook, this is the only instance where more than one language is used within one song. Throughout the entire period of my fieldwork, I have not been able to record one occasion on which this song was used. Some informants explain this mixture of Lingala and Kikongo as ‘a mistake’: the song must have been written down by someone who was not able to translate all the words into Lingala. The norm, both in Zaire and in Belgium, is that songs are always exclusively in one language.

are considered to be the 'original landowners' of the Kinshasa region, but their language and the salience of their ethnic identity have suffered greatly from the urban structures superimposed in early colonial years. Yet, because of the geographical links with Kinshasa, one song in this language was included in the Neptunia songbook.

As mentioned in chapter 6 (section 6.3.5), the present songbook was composed in the early 1990s by two of the leading figures of the choir at the time. Both of them were born and raised in Kinshasa. They composed the songbook on the basis of the first, more restricted songbook composed by the founders of the choir (who used existing Zairian songbooks) and on the basis of their own knowledge of religious songs. They thus knew more Lingala songs than songs in other languages, which partly explains the dominance of Lingala songs in the songbook. Also, the additional prominence of Kikongo songs may be related to the fact that one of them was of Bakongo descent.

Let us, now, consider how the songs from the book are applied in the actual Neptunia masses, and how the dominance of Lingala manifests itself there. Choir members suggest that on their Friday-night rehearsals they do not take the criterion of language into consideration when selecting the 13 songs to be used the following day. They report that their only concern is with variation across the songs: they try not to repeat the same songs and want to make sure that all 201 songs are used at least once in the cycle of one year or so. Language is not even a topic of discussion in the context of these artistic concerns. Thus, members' reports suggest that if an outsider claims to be able to observe a certain structure in the distribution of the languages in the Neptunia masses, this structure is not an intended or programed structure, but only an emerging one.

In the ordinary masses, this emerging structure looks as follows. First of all – and as mentioned above – in practice none of the 6 languages appearing in the songbook are eschewed. Although it may occur that in one individual mass, only 3 or 4 different languages are used, in time all of the 6 languages will surface. Even the Teke song, of which none of the choir members is able to understand the lyrics, is used regularly. The French songs are also commonly selected. The vast majority of songs in the masses, however, are in Lingala, and, to a lesser extent, in Kikongo. I have recorded the choice of language for all 13 mass units during 21 ordinary masses (table 15).

Table 15. Average number of songs per language in an ordinary Neptunia mass

Total	13	100%
Lingala	8.3	(63.8%)
Kikongo	3.2	(24.7%)
French	0.3	(2.3%)
Tshiluba	0.3	(2.3%)
Kiswahili	0.7	(5.4%)

Teke	0.2	(1.5%)

Throughout the 21 counted masses, there was an average of 8.3 Lingala songs per mass. In this imaginary average mass, 3.2 songs are in Kikongo. The remaining 1.5 songs are in Kiswahili, Tshiluba, French, or Teke. In other words, as a rule, more than half of all the songs in a Neptunia mass are in Lingala.

In the previous chapter (section 6.4.1), I explained that in addition to the 13 mass unit songs, it also occurs that the choir spontaneously adds one or two other songs at the end of the mass. The choir does this to manifest its contentment with the event announced by one of the participants in the public. These additional and spontaneous songs are, evidently, not announced on the blackboard, and, what is more, they are not among the songs contained in the songbook. On all the occasions on which I was able to observe such spontaneous singing, the language of these songs was always Lingala. The dominance of Lingala is thus experienced at all possible levels of the sung aspects of Neptunia, including these spontaneous and informal contexts.

In the special masses, the relative proportions of the languages are not different. I mentioned that in most special masses, more than 13 songs are used, as the choir sings more than one song in certain mass units. Whether or not the total number of 13 songs is modified, the proportion of the languages remains the same as in table 15. I have not been able to record any markedly different applications of the 6 languages in the special masses as compared to the ordinary masses.

7.2.2. The liturgy

Before the arrival of Father Vladimir in 1985, the Neptunia masses were always and entirely said in French. As mentioned, neither Nikita nor Pyotr had any background in Zaire.

Since Father Vladimir's arrival, the main language of the mass is still French, but in some parts of the liturgy French is replaced with an African language. This is, of course, first of all the case for those texts of the liturgy that are replaced with songs. Above, I mentioned that Zairian songs replace some parts of the liturgical texts imposed by the Ordo Missae (i.e., the Kyrie, the Gloria, the Credo, the Sanctus, the Lord's Prayer, and the Agnus Dei).

In addition to the songs, however, there are also liturgical texts which Father Vladimir recites in an African language, rather than in French. (Father Nikita only uses French texts.) The African language turned to in these cases is always Lingala. In other words, if in the liturgical parts of the present-day Neptunia masses another language than French is used, this is always and exclusively Lingala. For his usage of Lingala liturgical texts, Father Vladimir relies on the Lingala version of the Zairian rite, and not on the Lingala version of the Ordo Missae. This means that the otherwise Roman Neptunia mass is at certain points of its liturgy interlarded with elements from the Zairian rite.

With regard to the ordinary masses, this usage of Lingala may be described as follows. The first point in the mass at which Lingala is used is the Institution Narrative and Consecration (in the Eucharistic Prayer). The Father first recites the Institution Narrative and Consecration in French: *"…il prit le pain, il rendit grâce, il le rompit et le donna à ses disciples en disant: prenez et mangez-en tous, ceci est mon corps, livré pour vous"*. Immediately following these words, the Father, the choir, and the entire public pronounce in unison: *"Eye nzoto ya ngai mei, kamata olia. Nzoto ya ngai bilei bya lobiko"* ('This is my body, take it and eat. My body is the immortal food'). Similarly, after the priest's words *"…à la fin du repas, il prit la coupe; de nouveau il rendit grâce, et la donna à ses disciples en disant: prenez et buvez-en tous, car ceci est la coupe de mon sang, le sang de l'Alliance nouvelle et éternelle, qui sera versé pour vous et pour la multitude en rémission des péchés. Vous ferez cela en mémoire de moi"*, the entire congregation says: *"Eye makila ma ngai, kamata omele. Makila ma ngai binwa bya lobiko"* ('This is my blood, take it and drink. My blood is the immortal drink').

A second point is the Acclamation in the Eucharistic Prayer. At this moment, Father Vladimir chants: *"Kristu asekwi na nkembo"* (Lingala for 'Christ has risen in glory'), which is taken up by the choir and the public as: *"Alleluia. Kristu asekwi na nkembo. Alleluia. Asekwi. Na motema moko toyambi"* ('Alleluia. Christ has risen in glory. Alleluia. He has risen. With all our hearts we accept it').

In special masses, the use of Lingala is very often more copious. In fact, Father Vladimir often makes it a point to emphasize the extraordinary and festive character of the special masses by augmenting the number of liturgical parts said in Lingala. In these cases as well, the Lingala texts are not taken from the Lingala version of the Roman Ordo Missae, but from the Lingala version of the Zairian rite. In these special masses, Lingala is used for the Gospel Acclamation and, in the Liturgy of the Eucharist, for the *entire* Institution Narrative and Consecration, as well as for the Concluding Doxology. The Institution Narrative and Consecration are recited only by the priest, while the Gospel Acclamation and the Concluding Doxology are texts to be pronounced by the entire congregation. Suffice it here to reproduce, by way of example, the Concluding Doxology: *"Na Kristo, elongo na Ye, na kati na Ye, Nzambe, Tata wa bokasi bonso, na Elimo Santu, ozwi esengo mpe na nkembo mobimba, o bileko bya bileko – Amen"* ('Through Christ, with Him, in Him, God, almighty Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all joy and glory is Yours, for ever and ever – Amen'). On some rather rare occasions, it occurs that Father Vladimir also says the Introductory Dialogue, the Preface, and the first Epiclesis in the Liturgy of the Eucharist in Lingala.

7.2.3. The clubhouse situation

The language use in the clubhouse situation after the mass will, as all other matters described in this and the preceding chapters, also appear as members' constructions in the casual and organized conversations to be discussed below. The very description of how languages are used and distributed in the clubhouse situation is not a matter of agreement among the members themselves. From the analyst's perspective, then, the matter may be represented as follows.

As a multifocused gathering, the clubhouse situation in Neptunia is a situation in which different conversational units develop side by side. In some cases, the language use per conversational unit is self-selective with respect to the formation of the unit. This means that people tend to form or join conversational units on the basis of shared membership of a (regional or) linguistic group: Kiswahili-speakers look up other Kiswahili-speakers to share one table, western Zairians turn to western Zairians, etc. In these cases, language choice is thus not so much an outcome of, as a criterion for, the formation of the conversational units. Such behavior occurs, for instance, if an individual's language knowledge is restricted. I mentioned that for some Kiswahili-speakers, the command of Lingala is limited to a working knowledge, which does not allow them to fully participate in, let alone really enjoy, a fast and complex conversation conducted in Lingala. These people may prefer to join fellow Kiswahili-speakers, among whom they will feel linguistically more comfortable. The behavior in question also occurs in those cases where one conversational unit is made up of friends who grew up together in the same area or of members of the same (extended) family. As these persons often belong to the same linguistic group, the choice of language in these contexts is equally self-selective.

Although this mechanism of self-selection is certainly *one of the* phenomena observable in the clubhouse situation, its incidence is not generalized. Indeed, the conversational units in the Neptunia clubhouse are more often than not mixed in terms of regional origins and linguistic backgrounds. Conversational units involving some people from Kinshasa, one person from West Kasai, another from Upper Zaire, for instance, are not uncommon. Here, language is not a criterion for the formation of conversational units, but emerges as a – rather complex – outcome.

A first observation is that only one language is chosen for each conversation. A theoretical possibility would be that each of the participants uses her or his own language when speaking, while understanding the languages in which the other participants reply. In the conversational units in Neptunia, this does not occur. One language always gains the upper hand over all the other languages 'present'. What, then, is this single language?

Two languages share the function of lingua franca in the mixed conversational units, i.e. French and Lingala. In other words, when people with different habitual languages are participants in one and the same conversation around one and the same table, it is either French or Lingala which will be turned to. *Lingala*, first of all, is used when at least one of the parties involved is a Lingala-speaker. This implies that even conversations involving a majority of Kiswahili-speakers (or Tshiluba-speakers, etc.) and only one Lingala-speaker are conducted in Lingala. The presence of one person whose habitual language is Lingala is sufficient for all the other participants to adopt Lingala as the contingent language of communication. Kiswahili, Tshiluba, Kikongo, and all other Zairian African languages thus only operate as ingroup languages, while Lingala operates both as an ingroup language (e.g., in the case of a conversation between Zairians from the region of Equateur) and as a lingua franca in intergroup contexts.

The conditions under which *French* is adopted as the lingua franca, secondly, are also complex. First of all, it is adopted in conversational units which involve participants with different habitual languages, in which none of the participants has Lingala as a habitual language, *and* in which the participants have no additional knowledge of each other's habitual language. An instance of this would be a conversation between a person whose habitual language is Kikongo and another one whose habitual language is Tshiluba, and in which the former is not additionally competent in Tshiluba and the latter not additionally competent in Kikongo. However, given the Lingala-speakers' numerical preponderance and given the vast additional-language knowledge of all non-Lingala-speakers in Neptunia, these conditions do not present themselves very frequently.

Secondly, French is also adopted in conversational units which do involve Lingala-speakers. Here, the choice between French and Lingala is based on the degree of formality, as suggested by the relationship between the interlocutors in general terms or by the conversational topic. With regard to the relationship between the interlocutors, it is uncommon in the Neptunia clubhouse for one person to approach an unacquainted interlocutor for the first time in Lingala. This type of introductory conversations almost always starts in French. As the conversation proceeds, however, and as the formal character of the interaction gradually subsides, the tendency is to switch to an African language. And, if all the interlocutors are members of the same linguistic group (Kikongo-speakers, Tshiluba-speakers, etc.), it is the shared language in question which will be selected (Kikongo, Tshiluba, etc.). If at least one of the interlocutors is a Lingala-speaker, the African language turned to is Lingala.

Conversational topic, then, informs the selection of French through the character of Neptunia as a meeting place for intellectuals. Very often, the range of conversational units in the Neptunia clubhouse includes at least one company of adult, politically active men, engaged in a discussion on the political situation in Zaire, the ever-delayed elections, Mobutu's health, and so on. French is almost invariably the preferred language in these conversations, and this is also the case if the conversational unit is composed of members of the same linguistic group.

In sum, French is not the *only* lingua franca (or ‘interethnic language’) to be used in conversational units between speakers with different habitual languages. Lingala shares this function and is used when at least one of the participants in a conversation is a Lingala-speaker. The use of French is principally determined by the *degree of formality* attached to the conversational moment.

7.2.4. Other contexts

In this section, I would like to comment on three instances that demonstrate that the appearance of the Neptunia setting itself, i.e. Neptunia as a material environment, is also marked by a dominance of Lingala.

One of the walls of the Neptunia basement is decorated with a wooden piece of ‘traditionally African’ craftsmanship measuring about 40 by 20 cms. This wooden plate reads *Yezu azali bomoi*, which is Lingala for ‘Jesus is life’. The plate is suspended at such a height that it can be seen from the largest possible distance in the basement.

The altar used by Father Nikita and Father Vladimir is always covered with the same tablecloth. A ship (referring to the seamen), a number of other designs, and four lines of text are embroidered on the parts of this cloth that hang down from the altar and that face the public. The four lines of text read: *Senga, senga, osenga. Nzambe akopesa yo. Tata Nzambe wa likolo. Nkombo ya Yo enene*. This is Lingala for ‘Ask, ask, do ask. God will give to you. Father God in heaven. Your name is great’.

A third instance relates to the fact that in 1992, the Neptunia regulars conceived a plan to teach an African language to the Belgian regulars who showed any interest in this. Almost automatically and without any explicit deliberations, it was Lingala which was chosen as the ‘African language’ to be taught. Two or three Neptunia regulars set out to organize this course on a weekly basis. The course was given during 7 months, after which it was discontinued because of organizational problems. Apart from this Lingala course, there has never been a similar initiative for any other Zairian language. As is the case in the examples of the wooden plate and the tablecloth, the fact that only Lingala, and not Kiswahili, Tshiluba, or Kikongo, was selected as the African language to be taught to the Belgians contributes to the general appearance of Neptunia as a Lingala-dominated setting.

7.3. Discussion

In the following paragraphs, I will trace the origins of the dominance of Lingala in the liturgy, its dominance in the clubhouse and in Neptunia's material environment, its dominance in the songs, and its dominance in the songbook.

The dominance of Lingala in the masses must doubtlessly be related to Father Vladimir's arrival in Neptunia in 1985. Except for the founder of Neptunia (Father Boris), Father Vladimir was the first and only priest in Neptunia with a biographical history in the former Belgian colony. At the time of his arrival, he had just completed an 8-year career as a missionary in Zaire. It was he who initiated the africanization of the Neptunia masses. He introduced the African songs and the elements from the Zairian rite. Out of his initiative grew the choir, which still fulfills a paramount role in the sociolinguistic constellation of Neptunia today. Also, the usage of liturgical texts in Lingala must be attributed to Vladimir. Concerned with imbuing the masses with a Zairian character, he set out to replace some French parts of the liturgy with their equivalents in an African language. The choice of this African language was fairly straightforward: since Father Vladimir's missionary occupations were limited to the region of Equateur and Kinshasa, Lingala is the only African language in which he is competent. In this process, his introduction of Lingala in Neptunia was most probably also facilitated by Neptunia's demographic composition as dominated by Lingala-speakers, and must also have been informed by Vladimir's own perception of the sociolinguistic situation in Zaire as dominated by Lingala.

Another relevant factor is, indeed, the position of Lingala in Zaire itself. In chapter 4 (section 4.4 in particular), Zaire's multilingual constellation was described. It was demonstrated that the relationships between four languages of wider communication in Zaire, i.e. Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba, are not in all respects based on a structural equality. In addition to the distribution over geographically discrete areas of distribution, the Zairian sociolinguistic constellation is also marked by a distinct prominence of Lingala, both at the social and political levels of the country and in terms of its geographical spread throughout the territory. The actual way in which the prominence of Lingala in Zaire was 'transferred' to a diaspora setting such as Neptunia is, however, in need of closer scrutiny.

One of the mediating factors in this 'transfer' is the demographic composition of the Neptunia public and of the Neptunia choir in terms of regional origins and linguistic backgrounds. The quantitative information provided in table 9 and table 10 above is unambiguous. Out of 57 first-generation Zairian regulars, 37 (or 65%) are from Kinshasa or from the region of Equateur, and 44 (77.2%) among them have Lingala as (one of) their habitual language(s). (This prevalence of Zairians from western Zaire is, in turn, a product of patterns of emigration from Zaire and of the paramount role of

Kinshasa in the centralized state.) In addition, all the other Neptunia regulars, whose habitual language is not Lingala, are to varying degrees additionally competent in Lingala. (This element as well, is to be attributed to the central role of Kinshasa in Zaire, but also to the spread of Lingala throughout the Zairian territory and throughout Zairian society.) All these conditions help explain the patterns of multilingual language use in the clubhouse situation, including the usage of Lingala as a lingua franca in mixed conversational units. They also explain the dominance of Lingala as it is manifested in Neptunia's material environment (i.e., the tablecloth, etc.).

Furthermore, table 12 and table 13 show that in the choir, the imbalance in regional and linguistic backgrounds is even more pronounced than it is in the general group of regulars. Almost all of the first-generation choristers are from the region of Equateur or from Kinshasa: 18 out of 21. And the group of choristers with Lingala as one of the habitual languages – 20 out of 21 – nearly coincides with the choir as a whole. To a large extent, the dominance of Lingala in Neptunia consists in its dominance in the songs, and it is the choir on which the choice of these songs rests. I mentioned that on average, 8.3 songs per mass are Lingala songs. The choir members tend to favor the songs they know best. As the vast majority of the choir members are Lingala-speakers and ex-inhabitants of Kinshasa, the step towards – intentionally or inadvertently – privileging Lingala is a small one.

The choir's selection of the songs to be used in the masses is limited to what is offered by the songbook. The history of the songbook is, indeed, another important factor which has led to the dominance of Lingala in present-day Neptunia. Any selection of songs from the Neptunia songbook as it presently exists is necessarily informed by the pronounced preponderance of Lingala songs in this songbook. Out of 201 songs, 129 are in Lingala. This preponderance must itself be traced back to the historical roots of the songbook. Above, I explained that the songbook was composed by two choristers who where born and raised in Kinshasa. In composing the book, their own Kinshasa backgrounds and their related inclination towards Lingala songs eventually permeated the songbook's make-up.

7.4. Sociolinguistic inequality and consensus as a first-level ethnographic observation

Sections 7.2.1 through 7.2.4 have demonstrated that Neptunia is a Lingala-dominated social occasion. In the present discussion, I would like to identify Neptunia as marked by a structural social inequality ensuing from this dominance of Lingala. Also, I wish to draw attention to the consensus that surrounds this Lingala dominance and the sociolinguistic inequality, i.e. to the fact that the dominance of Lingala does not seem to lead to overt and lasting conflicts within the Neptunia community.

In chapter 6 (section 6.3.4), it was explained that the two most important linguistic groups in Neptunia are the Lingala-speakers and the Kiswahili-speakers (see table 10). The dominant usage of Lingala throughout the various contexts of Neptunia (mass, clubhouse, etc.) brings about a structural sociolinguistic inequality. Week after week and both inside and outside the context of the mass, the language of *one* of the linguistic groups making up the entire Neptunia community manifests itself as the setting's main language to the detriment of the languages of the other groups. Neptunia's structural sociolinguistic inequality thus consists in the fact that the existing language usage patterns allow the members of one linguistic group, i.e. the Lingala-speakers, to operate, communicate, live, pray, etc. in the language that defines their own group, while the Kiswahili-speakers (and, *a fortiori*, the less numerous Kikongo- and Tshiluba-speakers) are compelled to operate in a language with which they are not identified. Neptunia is not a setting in which a neutral and fully external language (e.g., English, Dutch, Zapotec) is used, effectuating that no single group is identified with the dominant language. To put it differently, Neptunia's structural sociolinguistic inequality relates to the observation that only one linguistic group 'possesses' the language that controls the setting, while the other groups cannot be said to be such 'possessors'.

Another observation is that Neptunia displays no open conflicts over the language issue. The dominance of Lingala and the related sociolinguistic inequality do not lead to overt schisms between (groups of) people, to public slander, to explicit rows, or to other obtrusive forms of dissension. During the entire period of my fieldwork, I have not been able to record a single case in which the language issue was the object of explicit and public variance between Neptunia members. I also know of no cases of Zairian Catholics living in Antwerp who stay away from Neptunia *because of* the dominance of Lingala and the sociolinguistic inequality. In chapter 5 (see 5.3.5.1) and chapter 6 (6.3.3.3), I mentioned that there are Zairian Catholics in Antwerp who do not attend Neptunia and prefer to go to Flemish churches. The reasons for these preferences are never related to the language usage patterns of Neptunia, but, rather, to such practical considerations as the proximity of the church to one's home, to some personal feuds with Neptunia members (broken relationship between husband and wife, jealousy, etc.), or to the identity of Neptunia as a meeting place for intellectuals (by some perceived as eggheads and highbrows). In sum, Neptunia's structural sociolinguistic inequality and the dominance of Lingala take place within a context of consensus.

This consensus can, however, only be established provisionally: it is a 'first-level' ethnographic observation in that it is limited to the 'outer appearance' of social life in the setting and in that more data are needed to arrive at a precise picture of its actual structure and ingredients. This picture must be the outcome of the analysis of the members' own constructions of the situation in Neptunia and its origins, which will be spelled out in chapter 8.

The consensus as a first-level ethnographic observation does not imply that the linguistic constellation of Neptunia is an issue that does not at all *preoccupy* the Neptunia members. First of all, there is the observation that the language issue does appear in jokes, witty forms of teasing, and other types of interaction that take place between members of different linguistic subgroups and that are presented as socially innocent. It is not uncommon to notice, for instance, a Tshiluba-speaking member of the audience jocularly whispering *"enfin…"* to her or his Lingala-speaking neighbor when the choir breaks into a Tshiluba song after a long series of Lingala songs. In the clubhouse situation, to mention another example, one regularly hears witty remarks on a person's choice of language, e.g. when a Lingala-speaker is addressed in Kiswahili and is not able to answer.

Secondly, in more private contexts one sometimes hears less jocular references to and disapprovals of the language usage patterns in Neptunia. Once, when I participated in a family reunion of Tshiluba-speaking and Kiswahili-speaking Zairians from Shaba, the topic shifted – without my intervention – towards the Zairian languages in general and their application in Neptunia in particular. The topic of discussion was maintained for at least 45 minutes and the expression of a dissatisfaction with the dominance of Lingala in Neptunia was general. This case of explicit deliberation on the sociolinguistic situation in Neptunia is not isolated, but may be observed rather frequently among certain Neptunia members. As mentioned, such deliberations and expressions of discontent only occur in private contexts, and do not appear in open, public debates within the Neptunia community as a whole. Moreover, so far these forms of discontent have not led to the critics' wholesale withdrawal from Neptunia. Even to those critics, Neptunia remains a cherished social occasion to pray and relax with fellow countrypersons.

Both the jocular references in Neptunia and the more embittered forms of complaint in private contexts indicate that the sociolinguistic inequality and the dominance of Lingala are linguistic phenomena that are also salient to the members themselves. To what extent this salience applies, to which particular (groups of) Neptunia members it applies and to which it does not, and in what discursive contexts it typically manifests itself are all questions that can only be answered on the basis of a close examination of the members' constructions and interpretations of the sociolinguistic phenomena. The issue of the consensus in Neptunia will therefore be recapitulated in a conclusion to the informants' construction of sociolinguistic consensus (chapter 8, section 8.4).

8. CONSTRUCTING SOCIOLINGUISTIC CONSENSUS

8.1. Introduction

In the first part of this dissertation (especially chapter 2, section 2.2 and chapter 3, section 3.2), it was spelled out that my reconstruction of the linguistic ideology (native knowledge) that underlies the Zairians' sociolinguistic behavior in Neptunia is based on a problematization of the consensus surrounding the sociolinguistic inequality of Neptunia. In casual and organized conversations, I make it clear to informants that I do not take this consensus for granted, i.e. that I find it remarkable and in need of an explanation and more precise description. The discussions in chapter 6 have indicated that the Neptunia community is composed of members of various linguistic subgroups, the group of Lingala-speakers being the largest one and the group of Kiswahili-speakers the second largest one. In chapter 7, then, it was explained that in spite of this presence of Zairians belonging to other linguistic groups than the Lingala-speaking one, Neptunia is dominated by the usage of Lingala. For these reasons, I chose to accomplish my problematization of the consensus by distinguishing between two groups of informants, i.e. Lingala-speaking members of Neptunia (who were all born and/or raised in western Zaire and who are all members of the Neptunia choir) and Kiswahili-speaking ones (all of them are from eastern Zaire and none of them belongs to the choir), and by framing the casual and organized conversations with the Lingala-speaking informants around the question *'What do the Kiswahili-speakers think of the dominance of Lingala in Neptunia? Aren't they offended by it?'* and the conversations with the Kiswahili-speaking informants around the question *'What do you think of the dominance of Lingala in Neptunia? Aren't you offended by it?'*. These two questions contain the implicit claim that *'There are good reasons to believe that the Kiswahili-speakers are or could be offended by the dominance of Lingala in Neptunia'*, which represents the problematization of the consensus in Neptunia in its most immediate form.

The informants' reaction to this problematization of the consensus is its 'deproblematization': they reconstruct what the researcher has deconstructed and thereby engage in the *construction of sociolinguistic consensus*. The ways in which the construction of sociolinguistic consensus as it takes place in the context of the casual and organized conversations reflects the process of consensus-making as it takes place in the actual context of Neptunia have been outlined in chapter 3 (section 3.2) and primarily relate to the observation that what the researcher confronts the informants with in the conversations is not basically different from what they are confronted with in their everyday practices in Neptunia.

This chapter presents the analysis of the informants' construction of sociolinguistic consensus. The chapter is organized in three main sections (8.2, 8.3, and 8.4). Section 8.2 is preparatory, in that it deals with a number of pivotal ingredients or cornerstones in the informants' construction of sociolinguistic consensus, most of which are only present in the implicit meaning layers of this construction. These ingredients and cornerstones are different perspectives on geographically delineated groups of people, i.e. groups of people who are said to be 'from the same country, region, province, city, etc.', and different perspectives on linguistically delineated groups, i.e. groups of people who are said to 'speak' or 'have' the same language. It will be shown how the construction of sociolinguistic consensus is based on discursive shifts between what I will call a 'biographical', an 'ethnic', and a 'cultural' perspective on these two types of group formation. The way in which these three different perspectives affect geographically delineated groups will be discussed in section 8.2.1; next, in section 8.2.2, linguistic groups will be dealt with.

The second main section, section 8.3, is the analysis of the informants' construction of sociolinguistic consensus *per se*. A particular introduction (8.3.1) will offer more detailed information on my organization of this complex analysis.

In the concluding section (8.4), I will link up the close analysis of the construction of sociolinguistic consensus with the description of this consensus as provided in chapter 7 (section 7.4). There, the description of the consensus was provisional, in that it was limited to a first-level ethnographic observation, i.e. an assessment of the outer appearance of Neptunia. The analyses presented in 8.2 and 8.3, however, allow me to pinpoint the scope, structure, and (ir)regularities of the consensus in Neptunia with more precision. It will, among other things, be indicated that for some members the sociolinguistic inequality in Neptunia counts as 'more consensual' (less problematic) than for others, who consider it 'less normal', and that mechanisms of hegemony do not affect all members in equal ways.

At this point, a number of practical notes need to be made regarding the present chapter as a whole. In all of the discussions below, I will amply quote informants' speech. In these quotations, I will fully retain the transcription conventions as applied to the organized conversations (see the appendices), which include a set of notational symbols as well as more general information (e.g., with regard to Zairian French). I would like to stress that a consultation of the transcription conventions is indispensable for a proper understanding of the quoted materials presented below. It must, in this respect, be mentioned that the transcription conventions which were used for transcribing the *organized* conversations are also applied to informants' speech that was written down in field notes, as is the case for the *casual* conversations.

With regard to the organized conversations, I will identify the extracts I use by referring to the line numbers that appear in the transcripts. These line numbers will always be preceded by means of the '#'-sign and, mostly, by means of a transparent abbreviation of the informant's pseudonym ('JO' stands for 'Joaquín', 'MA' for 'Manuel', etc.).

In my references to quoted speech, my usage of different classes of pseudonyms will allow me to indicate the linguistic group identity of each informant without having to burden the discussions with repeated and lengthy paraphrases of these identities. As was also made clear in chapter 3, Spanish pseudonyms denote Lingala-speaking informants (the four Lingala-speaking informants with whom I had an organized conversation are ‘Lorenzo’, ‘Joaquín’, ‘Begoña’, and ‘Manuel’), German pseudonyms denote members of the Kiswahili-speaking group (the four Kiswahili-speaking informants consulted in organized conversations are ‘Hans’, ‘Jürgen’, ‘Ingrid’, and ‘Ulrike’). Members of other linguistic groups (Kikongo-speakers, Tshiluba-speakers, etc.) are distinguished by means of English pseudonyms, Russian pseudonyms are used for (‘ethnic’, ‘White’) Belgians, and French pseudonyms, finally, denote Zairian children.

It must also be repeated that the eight names of the informants with whom I had organized conversations will also appear in references to casual conversations, as in addition to the organized conversations, I also often consulted these eight persons in other contexts.

8.2. Pivotal ingredients

8.2.1. The ethnic, biographical, and cultural perspectives on geographical group identity

In chapter 2 (section 2.3), it was explained that group formations may be based on a variety of diacritica. One of these diacritica is geographical unit. Group identity in terms of the diacriticon of geographical unit corresponds, broadly, to answers to the question *'Where are (is, etc.) you (she, etc.) from?'*. That is, when answering such a question, one informs the inquirer about one's (or a third person's) membership of a group of people who share the same geographical background. I call a person's membership of such a group her or his 'geographical (group) identity', and this identity belongs, alongside linguistic identity, religious identity, ethnic identity, etc., to the syntagmatic axis in a person's repertoire of multiple identities.

When asked about one's geographical identity, one may answer by referring to one's place of birth, to the place where one spent most of one's childhood and adolescence, or to the place where one lives at the present moment. In all of these cases, contingent conditions of relevance may, moreover, cause shifts in paradigmatic variation: depending on the questioner and the situation, one may identify the place of birth in more specific terms (e.g., naming the exact town) or in less specific terms (e.g., naming only the country). In all these cases, geographical identity relates to *the personal life cycle* of the individual whose geographical identity is at issue. Geographical group identity is, as such, *biographically* based.

However, the materials used in this linguistic ethnography make evident that geographical group identity is not always approached from such a biographical angle, but that it may also be based on *ethnic* considerations. In this ethnic perspective, the delineation of a group on the basis of a shared geographical unit does not necessarily imply that the members of the group were actually born or raised in that geographical unit. Instead, geographical identity is, in much the same way as ethnic identity, inherited from earlier generations and remains unaffected by the individual's actual course of life. This means that the answer to the question *'Where are (is, etc.) you (she, etc.) from?'* contains references, not to the location where the individual in question lives or was born or raised, but to the location where the individual's *ascendants* are believed to have lived. The ethnic perspective on geographical group identity thus differs from the biographical perspective in that the locations inhabited by the individual in her or his own course of life are not at issue in identifying her or his geographical group identity.

In the following sections, I will first (8.2.1.1) elaborate on the ethnic perspective on geographical group identity. In section 8.2.1.2, I will demonstrate that the ethnic perspective should not be considered the Zairians' 'only' or 'typical' way of approaching geographical group identity, but that the biographical perspective is also oriented to when this is deemed relevant situationally. As such, the biographical and the ethnic perspectives are part of a range of functional resources, variously drawn upon in different discursive contexts according to contingent needs and goals. It will also be shown that the ethnic perspective on geographical group identity also appears in non-Zairian, 'Western' modes of discourse, e.g. in the discourse of some Belgian social scientists working in the domain of migrant studies. Finally, section 8.2.1.3 will demonstrate how in the casual and organized conversations geographical group identity is at times approached from a cultural perspective, i.e. how geographically delineated groups may receive a number of allegedly typical and authentic traits.

8.2.1.1. The ethnic perspective

The main mechanism

As mentioned, the ethnic perspective on geographical group identity consists in the fact that the delineation of a group on the basis of shared geographical unit does not so much imply that each member of this group lives or was born or raised in this geographical unit, but, rather, that in earlier times this geographical unit was the place of birth and/or residence of the members' ascendants. Let me clarify this matter by means of some examples.

In BE#80 (as in #97), Begoña informs me about her geographical identity in the following, seemingly straightforward terms: *"je suis du Mayombe"*. 'Mayombe' is the name of an area on the right bank of the Zaire river in the region of Lower Zaire. Several places in the organized conversation (such as #6-14), as well as the general ethnographic information I have on Begoña, indicate that she was born and raised in Kinshasa and that, before coming to Belgium, she had never lived in another place. Still, Begoña refers to herself as *"du Mayombe"*. She does so because her forefathers lived there. Of particular interest is the fact that even Begoña's parents spent most of their lives outside Mayombe. In BE#267, we learn that *"mon père a quitté le Mayombe très jeune"* and, in #274-275, that *"ma mère aussi, ma mère n'a pas grandi au Mayombe. ma mère a grandi à Boma"*. In the ethnic perspective on geographical identity, this identity is thus not necessarily 'inherited' from the parents, but may be passed on over several generations.

As a person 'from Mayombe', Begoña is automatically also someone 'from the region of Lower Zaire', as Mayombe is one of this region's subareas. This paradigmatic variation in geographical group identity is controlled by shifts in contextual relevance. In the case above, conditions of presupposed knowledge select the more narrow geographical identity as the contingently relevant one: at the time of this organized conversation, Begoña and I have already been well acquainted with each other, and she knows that I am at least aware of her Lower-Zairian geographical identity. Against this background of presupposed knowledge, Begoña wishes to inform me about her more narrow geographical identities, one of which is her membership of the group of people from Mayombe. On other occasions in the organized conversation, geographical units of higher paradigmatic levels are of contextual relevance. The discussions in BE#407-438 and in BE#560-578, for instance, hinge on a contrast between the Zairian regions as a whole. Begoña's geographical self-identifications in #433 and #575 agree with these prevailing contexts: *"moi du Bas-Zaïre"* and *"je suis du Bas-Zaïre"*. In concrete discursive locations, the paradigmatic variation in Begoña's geographical group identity is, thus, never oriented to in its entirety; rather, on the basis of conditions of local functionality, one of its constituent items is situationally selected, while the contextually irrelevant ones are backgrounded. In the remainder of the present discussion, I will leave these well-known pragmatic processes implicit, in order not to burden the central description and explanation of the ethnic perspective on geographical group identity.

Some additional examples may be useful to further clarify this ethnic perspective. In JO#1062-1067, Joaquín refers to Ramón, Begoña, and Enrique as being 'from' the region of Lower Zaire, although in the many casual conversations I had with him, he often displayed the knowledge that all three of them were born and raised in Kinshasa. Manuel, to present another example, refers to Blanca by means of the term *"Kasaïenne"* (MA#312), although Blanca spent all of her life in Kinshasa – as is also discussed in MA#195-204. Manuel thus uses the geographical label *Kasaïenne*, not in the biographical sense, i.e. as referring to places inhabited during one's personal course of life, but in the ethnic sense, i.e. as relating to the place of origin of the genealogical ascendants: Blanca 'is' *Kasaïenne* because her forefathers lived there, wherever she may have resided during her own course of life.

The ethnic perspective on geographical identity also regularly surfaces in the casual conversations. In the first face-to-face conversation I ever had with Rodrigo, he answered my inquiry about his origins as follows: *"je suis né à Kin, mais je suis originaire du Bas-Zaïre"* (field-note reproduction). In another casual conversation, I talked with Lorenzo about a mutual friend who visits Neptunia only infrequently. When we discussed her background, Lorenzo identified her as *"quelqu'un du Haut-Zaïre"* (field-note reproduction). Only a few minutes later in our talk, Lorenzo mentioned that he and she were born in the same neighborhood in Kinshasa, and that they used to play together in childhood. Finally, during one of my casual conversations with Iñigo, who was born and who spent his entire life in Kinshasa before coming to Belgium, this informant told me that he was surprised by what he called 'the way Belgians refer to their own and other people's origins' (see also the discussion of this cross-cultural interpretation below). He added *"moi par exemple je suis du Kasaï et tout le monde me connaît comme Kasaïen. et la première et unique fois dans ma vie que j'ai été là-bas, c'était quand je rentrais de Lubumbashi et mon* *avion faisait escale à Mbuji-Mayi pendant vingt minutes! ((laughs))"* (field-note reproduction).

The ethnic perspective does not only manifest itself in the use of derived proper names, such as *Kasaïen*, or in the use of geographical paraphrases, such as *je suis du Bas-Zaïre*, but also appears in less typical wordings. In JO#1051 and #1584, Joaquín identifies the Zairians who have their origins in the region of Bandundu as *"les Bandundu"*; that is, he combines the toponym with an article. This combination results in a perfect analogy with more classic, straightforwardly ethnic terms such as *les Baluba*, *les Bakongo*, *les Ngbaka*, *les Tetela*, etc., and thus casts *les Bandundu* as a label covering an ethnic identity *sui generis*. In #1584, Joaquín underscores this analogy. When I ask him what he understands by the label *Bangala*, he answers: *"vous voyez les Bakongo, les Bandundu […] alors aussi les Bangala"* (#1584-1585). In this sentence, his claim is that in order to understand that the Bangala are an ordinary ethnic group, one must compare them with straightforwardly ethnic groups such as *les Bakongo* and *les Bandundu*. He thus implicitly reasons that *les Bandundu* is an unambiguously ethnic identification. It should be noted, in this respect, that 'Bandundu' is not the name of any traditionally declared or known ethnic group in Zaire, but only the name of one of the administrative regions.

In similar ways, Ulrike (UL#297-298) puts the geographical identity 'being from the region of Bandundu' on a pair with such identities as 'being a Mukongo', 'a Songe', and 'a Muluba', when she says *"si c'est un Mukongo, un de Bandundu, un Musonge, un Muluba, bon […]"*. Ulrike constructs the geographical unit Bandundu in ethnic terms by associating it with such ethnic identities as the Songe and the Baluba.

The geographical identifications presented by Joaquín and Ulrike evince what is also present in the other examples. Geographical identities as 'being from Bandundu' or 'being a *Kasaïenne*' are identities that are inherited over genealogical lines, i.e. they are approached as *ethnic* identities. As units that are in principle of a purely geographical or geo-administrative nature, Bandundu, Kasai, Lower Zaire, and the other geographical units, are 'ethnicized'. They have become landmarks of ethnic identity in themselves, in much the same way as the Baluba, the Bangala, the Tetela, the Songe, and the many other traditionally known ethnicities in Zaire are ethnic identities.

The comparison with the traditional ethnicities implies that we are touching upon an expansion of the range of ethnic identities in Zaire. 'Being from Kasai', 'being from Bandundu', etc. are 'new' ethnic identities, added to the list of Zaire's traditionally declared ethnic groups. I will discuss the issue of the 'new' ethnic identities in more depth below. Before that, however, I would like to elaborate on a number of noteworthy implications of the ethnic perspective on geographical group identity.

Some implications

The ethnic perspective on geographical identity has some implications that can come across as remarkable when looked upon from the vantage point of a biographical perspective. Three such implications may be distinguished.

1. Since geographical identity is a matter of inheritance and not of individual biography, the geographical unit that forms the basis of a person's geographical group identity is a natural, inalienable part of her or his being, in much the same way as this person's ethnic identity is such an ingrained part. One already belongs to one's geographical unit 'before one's birth', and this belonging cannot be affected by one's actual course of life.

The indications for this in the casual and organized conversations are twofold. There is, first of all, the use of the phrase *chez nous*, *chez moi*, *chez eux*, etc. and the use of phrases combining a geographical reference (*village*, *région*, etc.) with a possessive pronoun (e.g., *son village*). We have seen how Begoña indicates Mayombe, and not Kinshasa, as the place where she is from, although she was born and bred in the capital. In addition to self-identifications as *"je suis du Bas-Zaïre"* (BE#575), which were mentioned above, she also refers to Mayombe as *mon village* and *ma région*. In #79-81, she says: *"nous dans ma région, mon village, moi je suis du Mayombe [...] on nous critique souvent"* and in #86 she speaks about *"les vieux de mon village"*. In #96-107, she twice refers to Mayombe by means of the phrase *chez moi*: *"quand je dis par exemple aux autres je suis du Mayombe [...] ,* ***{****((using an exaggerated high pitch and an invented segmental tonology)) ah! toi tu es=! ah! Any! où est-ce que vous bitez?****}*** *tu vois, ce sont les gens de chez moi qui parlent comme ça. quand ils causent avec des gens= [...] lui il préfère dire, même si il sait pas construire sa phrase, il dit, ah! il dit, où est-ce que vous bitez? donc il préfère parler en français, chez moi en tout cas. les gens du Mayombe sont des gens qui aiment beaucoup parler français"*. In #455-457, she uses the terms *chez lui* and *chez moi* to refer to the regions of Bandundu and Lower Zaire, respectively: *"John il parle kikongo, parfois on parle en kikongo, lui il parle le kikongo de chez lui moi je parle le kikongo de chez moi. lui est du Bandundu"*. As mentioned, Begoña never lived in the region of Lower Zaire. Nevertheless, in all these phrases she expresses that the region of Lower Zaire, and Mayombe in particular, are her 'natural home', i.e. an inalienable part of her being.

Another example can be found in the organized conversation with Lorenzo. In LO#1-65, we learn that Lorenzo was born and raised in Kinshasa and that he always lived there before coming to Europe. Yet, in LO#87 and #99 he uses the terms *notre village* and *chez nous* to refer to the small village in the region of Equateur where his forefathers lived in earlier decades: *"si quelqu'un qui commence à chanter dans la langue de mon père et de ma mère je sais te dire que, ça c'est la langue de notre village"* (#86-87); *"donc on a plus l'influence au niveau de la langue, de kikongo que de la langue de= puisque la langue de chez nous quand tu me parles en tout cas je ne comprends rien"* (#97-100).

The ‘natural belonging’ to an original geographical ‘home’ is passed down over more than one generation. One of my Kiswahili-speaking informants with whom I had many casual conversations was born and raised in Lubumbashi, Shaba, as were her grandparents and parents. In our talks, I often inadvertently identified her as someone from the region of Shaba. Quite often, she corrected these identifications and insisted that she is from the region of East Kasai, adding that *“et mon village c’est Mbuji-Mayi”* (field-note reproduction). Despite the fact that her family has been removed from Mbuji-Mayi for more than two generations, this informant still refers to Mbuji-Mayi as her ‘home town’. She naturally ‘belongs’ to that town and inherited this membership over genealogical lines that extend beyond the generation of her parents and, even, her grandparents.

A second indication suggesting the ingrained and inalienable character of geographical origin relates to the following. If a person does not live or was not born in the place where he or she is said to ‘be from’, this is accounted for as an accidental deformation of the natural situation. At the same time, the deviation amounts to a mere historical contingency which has no essential consequences for a person’s identity: as geographical identity is fundamentally ethnic in nature, one ‘is’ one’s geographical origin, irrespective of what may have occurred in subsequent times. A case in point is Manuel’s qualification of the Baluba children who were born in Kinshasa as *“dépaysés”* (MA#201). Another telling manifestation is to be found in JO#252-267. In this passage, Joaquín talks about the origins of his wife Paloma. Paloma’s father was born in Bamanya, a village in the region of Equateur, and Paloma herself was born and raised in Mbandaka, the same region’s capital. On the basis of the ethnic perspective on geographical identity, Joaquín reasons that Paloma ‘is from’ the region of Bandundu, for Paloma’s forefathers came from the northern parts of this region. His choice of words is particularly noteworthy here. To Joaquín, Paloma may have been born and raised in Mbandaka, *“en principe”* (JO#256) and *“au départ”* (#270) she is from the region of Bandundu.

2. The place where one is from is a location one can ‘leave’ without ever having put foot there. In IN#12-13, for instance, Ingrid explains how the members of her people ‘left’ their original territory: *“nous sommes des Warega mais nous avons quitté le pays”*. From #13-17, however, we know that she was born in the city of Bukavu and that she spent her childhood and the subsequent parts of her life in this city, which is not situated in the original Rega territory. She uses the first person plural to include herself among those Rega generations that emigrated to Bukavu. Since the ethnic perspective on geographical identity does not relate to an individual’s actual biography, but to the place of origin of her or his ethnic forefathers, it is not a contradiction to maintain that one ‘has left’ a place where one has never been.

3. One can ‘return’ to the place one is from without having been born there or without ever having lived there. Hans, for instance, argues that youngsters who were born and raised in Kinshasa are not interested in going to live in the places of origin of their forefathers: *“les parents peuvent être d’une région de l’intérieur, mais les enfants qui naissent à Kinshasa, ils ne sont pas prêts à rentrer dans leur village* (#612-615). He describes the hypothetical migration out of the capital by using the verb *rentrer* together with the term *leur village*. From a biographical perspective on geographical group identity, this combination is an oxymoron. In the ethnic perspective on geographical identity, no such an oxymoron is entailed: returning to a place in which one has never put foot is not a contradiction.

New ethnicities

Some of the geographical units used as diacritica for geographical group identity empirically coincide with the ‘home sites’ of the traditionally declared ethnic groups of Zaire. The Kasai regions (especially East Kasai), for instance, are largely dominated by the ethnic group of the Baluba. It could thus be argued that the references to geographical identity are simply based on an extrapolation of the original territory of the ethnic group to which one belongs. That is, one indicates the Kasai regions as the place where one is from because one is Muluba and because the original territory of the Baluba is comprised by the Kasai regions. In this reasoning, the attribution of geographical group identity to a person is mediated by this person’s *ethnic* group in the traditional sense. As such, the ethnically approached geographical identities do not represent any ‘new’ ethnic identities, but are merely alternative ways of paraphrasing the existing ethnic group identities.

A number of indications suggest, however, that this interpretation is not able to cover the totality of the phenomena related to the ethnic perspective. There is indeed evidence suggesting that the attribution of geographical group identity is largely unmediated by the traditionally known ethnic identities and that we are dealing with ‘new’ ethnicities. Through their ethnification, the geographical identities become ethnic identities in their own right and thereby come to *complete* the range of existing ethnic groups in Zaire. To put it in more abstract terms, these new ethnicities are *coexistent*, but not *consubstantial* with the existing ethnic groups of Zaire.

Two indications for this may be distinguished. First, there are the explanations given by members themselves for the attribution of geographical identity. I often inquire with informants about their motivations for indicating one or the other geographical unit as the place where they, or the third person referred to, ‘are from’. I have so far not recorded cases in which the informant unambiguously advances her or his ethnic identity in traditional terms as a rationale for the attribution of geographical identity: explanations such as *je suis du Kasaï *parce que je suis Muluba* do not occur. Reference is made, rather, to the origins of the forefathers. Earlier, I mentioned a young lady who was born and raised in Lubumbashi, Shaba and who identifies herself as ‘from the region of East Kasai’ and ‘from Mbuji-Mayi’. On one occasion, my immediate reaction to her assertion that she has never been in Mbuji-Mayi was to ask her why, then, she mentions Mbuji-Mayi as her place of origin. She replied *"parce que nous sommes de là! mes arrière-grands-parents je ne sais pas qui, étaient venus de là!"* (field-note reproduction).

Another illustration may be found in the organized conversation with Joaquín. In JO#1056-1065, Joaquín identifies some choir members as being from the region of Equateur, others as being from Lower Zaire, etc.: *"[Lorenzo il est] de l'Equateur [...] James [...] Bas-Zaïre [...] Antonio aussi il est du Bas-Zaïre"*. A few lines further, he explains that most of them grew up in the capital, Kinshasa (#1075-1080). In #1083-1084, I ask him to explain why, if they were born and raised in Kinshasa, he identifies them as 'being from the region of Equateur' or 'from the region of Lower Zaire'. His reply is an explicit formulation of the ethnic perspective: *"non c'est-à-dire, quand je dis Equateur c'est origine des parents"* (#1085-1086). To him, the attribution of an Equateur geographical identity to a certain person is grounded in an identification of the geographical origins of the person's parents. The attribution is, as such, not mediated by her or his ethnic identity in traditional terms.

Another example is Hans's account in HA#608-615. In these sentences, Hans argues *against* the ethnic perspective (see also below). In this disapproval, Hans qualifies the ethnic perspective as a generally salient one among Zairians and thereby implicitly provides an explanation for it: *"Kinshasa est une ville cosmopolite je dirais. donc Kinshasa c'est= les Kinois c'est tout homme né à Kinshasa. donc c'est un Kinois. il est même inutile de chercher à l'identifier à un type de les régions de l'intérieur. les <u>parents</u> peuvent être d'une région de l'intérieur, mais les enfants qui naissent à Kinshasa, ils ne sont pas prêts à rentrer dans leur village, de leurs parents. donc ce sont des Kinois"* (#608-615). Hans's explanation does not involve any reference to existing Zairian ethnic groups. Rather, the ethnic perspective consists in *"identifier [une personne] à un type de les régions de l'intérieur"*, which underscores the unmediated character of the attribution of locations to individuals. And, importantly, it also consists in equating a person with the place of origin of the parents: *"les <u>parents</u> peuvent être d'une région de l'intérieur"* and *"[les enfants] ne sont pas prêts à rentrer dans leur village, de leurs parents"*.

A second indication relates to the following. Whereas there are indeed cases in which geographical units coincide with some of the traditionally known ethnic groups of Zaire, such as East Kasai and the Baluba, this does not apply to *all* geographical units used as diacritica. This matter is illustrated by cases in which the regions of Bandundu and Upper Zaire are used for geographical group identity. The region of Bandundu is, as known, extremely heterogeneous in ethnic terms and the region of Upper Zaire altogether lacks restricted or larger ethnic groups of any particular salience (see section 4.3.1 in chapter 4). Still, these geographical units can be used in ethnically approached geographical group identities. Above, I explained how the term *un Bandundu* is used for the identification of persons whose origins are situated in this region but who were not born or raised there. Also, I mentioned how Lorenzo referred to a Kinshasa-born friend of his as *"quelqu'un du Haut-Zaïre"* (field-note reproduction). Due to their ethnification, the geographical labels *un Bandundu* and *quelqu'un du Haut-Zaïre* fully behave as ethnic identities in their own right. But they cannot be regarded as paraphrases of traditionally declared ethnic identities, since no such 'underlying' ethnic identities coincide with, or are salient in, these two regions.

All these indications suggest that the ethnic perspective on geographical groups expands the total range of ethnic identities in Zaire. The ethnically approached geographical groups are 'new' ethnicities, i.e. ethnic identities that do not replace or represent, but complement the existing ones.

Genealogical memory and the colonial enactment of identities

In the ethnic perspective, a person's geographical identity is constructed on the basis of the place of origin of the ancestors. However, the ancestors' place of origin is itself *not* approached in ethnic terms, but in biographical ones. One's geographical identity is the place where certain earlier generations *actually lived*, i.e. for whom the location in question was the basis of their geographical group identity *in the biographical sense*. Thus, if for the present generations geographical identity is conceived of in *ethnic* terms, the reference point in genealogical history is itself always cast in *biographical* terms. Some members are aware of this logical 'inconsistency'. When an informant once explained to me the use of the ethnic perspective on geographical identity, he added *"et tu sais, à un certain point ça s'arrête. cet endroit que nous autres aujourd'hui nous disons être notre village, nos origines, il y a une génération qui a aussi réellement vécu dans cet endroit-là. donc si je dis Banza-Manteke c'est chez moi, je renvoie au village* **{***((mimicking the steps of a ladder with his hand)) où mes parents étaient nés et habitaient, et si pas eux, alors leurs parents, mais au moins quelqu'un habitait réellement là-bas***}***. tu vois,* **{***((his hand insisting on the top step of the imaginary ladder)) ça s'arrête toujours quelque part***}***"* (field-note reproduction).

The accounts presented above already suggest that the 'biographical' generation that serves as the historical point of reference can be situated *in relative time*. We have seen, for instance, how Hans explains that *"les parents"* are the ones who proffer geographical identity (HA#612-615). And Joaquín advances the point that someone's geographical identity must be established by referring to the *"origine des parents"* (JO#1085-1086). In these two cases, the relative historical point of reference is the generation that immediately precedes the generation of the speaker (or of the person referred to). However, in Joaquín's account of the origins of his wife Paloma in JO#251-277, it is rather the generation of the grandparents that is indicated. In JO#256, he identifies Paloma as someone 'from the region of Bandundu', although she was born in Mbandaka and although her father was born in Bamanya, two towns in the region of Equateur. In his subsequent sentences, Joaquín provides the rationale for this identification. Paloma's father's father was from the region of

Bandundu in the biographical sense. I also mentioned the young female informant who was born and raised in Lubumbashi and who identifies herself as from the city of Mbuji-Mayi, East Kasai. In her case, the historical point of reference is not the time in which her parents lived, nor the time of her grandparents, but the time in which her grandparents' parents lived.

Relating the points in relative time these informants provide to the age or generation of the individuals they refer to, we are able to situate the historical points of reference *in absolute time*, i.e. in real history. As mentioned in section 4.3.1 of chapter 4, an important historical momentum was the colonial influence on the identity patterns of the colonized, and on present generations' perceptions of their ethnic and geographical identities. The massive matriculations the colonial administrations imposed as they gradually penetrated the territory were often based on (deliberate or involuntary) misrepresentations and on an ethnic interpretation of the previously political organization of societies. Through the unquestionable authority of the missions and the colonial administration and through the enactment of the imposed identities on colonial identity cards and other documents, these identities were inculcated in the emic perceptions of origin and identity among the Africans. They were thereby solidified, rendered timeless, and, as such, installed as the 'natural' identities and origins for future generations. In the subsequent Zairian society as well, a person's ethnic place of origin is mentioned on her or his identity card and birth certificate. The Zairian identity card mentions, in addition to place of birth, what is called the holder's *collectivité d'origine*, *zone d'origine*, *sous-région* or *ville d'origine*, and *région d'origine*. The birth certificate adds the *localité* and the *groupement*. To generate a person's identity card or birth certificate, the Zairian administration retrieves its data from the information the person her- or himself is able to provide, or from the files it keeps of one of the person's parents. These files are themselves based on the files of older family members. But the first files ever established were the ones written down by the colonial and missionary administrations in early Belgian times. The independent Zairian republics thus continued the colonial classifications and applied them in their own administration. The fact that the genealogical memory of present Zairian generations all point in the direction of early colonial times is evidence of this link to actors and actions identifiable in real historical time.

8.2.1.2. The biographical perspective and cross-cultural variation

In the previous discussions, it was explained how identifying a person in geographical terms consists in attributing a certain geographical location to this person, not on the basis of her or his place of birth, youth, or residence, but on the basis of the geographical origins of earlier generations. This ethnic perspective on geographical group identity does not embody a 'Zairian way of thinking'. Zairians do not always and on each occasion interpret geographical identity in ethnic terms. However appealing cultural explanations may seem to be, any identification of Zairian 'culture' as 'viewing geographical identity in ethnic terms' or of 'Zairians' as people 'for whom geographical identity equals ethnic descent' perverts a reality of complex variation. The fact that the ethnic perspective indeed occurs in the discursive practices of Zairians does not mean that Zairians are prisoners of it. Similarly, it would be as unfounded to view Western or European conceptions of geographical group identity as distinctively based on a biographical perspective. Rather, in each of the two societies members have a range of varying and thematically contradictory versions at their disposal, which manifest themselves in discourse as locally functional resources. In my ethnographic materials (as well as in other types of data, see below), the ethnic perspective on geographical group identity is not the omnipotent one and the biographical perspective is amply used as well. To repeat, in this biographical perspective, naming a person's geographical identity amounts to referring to the location that has actually dominated her or his individual course of life.

In this section, I wish to devote particular attention to the variation in perspectives on geographical identity that is displayed in the Zairians' discourse, and to the Zairians' application of a biographical perspective in particular. The discussion will also show how members themselves account for this variation in culturalist terms. That is, they cast the variation as neatly aligned with cultural borders: the ethnic perspective is considered the 'Zairian', 'African', etc. way of viewing things, while the biographical perspective is considered to be the 'Western', 'European', conception. However, before proceeding to these matters I would like to present an illustration of the ethnic perspective as it appears in Western forms of discourse. Reasons of space and expository clarity, as well as its peripheral relevance for the matters at hand, compel me to limit the discussion of this issue to some brief and indicative observations.

Orientations to the ethnic perspective on geographical identity in the discourse of Westerners may be found, i.a., in the opinions of some less moderate African American groups. In the rhetoric of these groups, Africa, instead of the actual place of birth, the United States, is attributed the status of geographical identity. Moreover, not infrequently do these groups make use of verbs such as 'to return' and 'to go home' in references to Africa, although they, as many generations before them, have never been there. Secondly, Blommaert & Verschueren (1992) and Roosens (1989: 127-148) have spelled out how large segments of the Belgian public opinion consider displacing second- and third-generation foreigners to their parents' and grandparents' countries of origin to be a suitable 'solution' to the Belgian 'migrant problem'. They also show how the members of this majority often refer to this expulsion of Belgian-borns as a process in which these people are 'sent back' or 'repatriated' to 'their' countries. I would like to add that this way of constructing the identity of second- and third-generation immigrants does not only occur in forms of popular consciousness, but that it may also be observed in important tokens of Belgian social-scientific research. In studies on second-generation immigrants in Belgium such as the ones by Byram (1990), Leman (1982; 1990), and Stallaert (1992), the terms 'country of origin', 'home', 'home culture', and 'to return' are used in unquestioned ways to refer to what actually counts as the place where the parents and grandparents of the Belgian-born children come from, but not these children themselves. Likewise, the term '*host* country' is used to refer to Belgium, the very country in which these second-generation children were born and raised. In a biographical perspective on geographical origin, such a use of these terms is nonsensical, as one can impossibly return to, or have one's 'home' in, a place where one has never been, and as a country cannot be a '*host* country' for people who were born and always lived there. These Western scholars all use an ethnic perspective on geographical group identity, i.e. a perspective in which the individual's course of life since her or his birth is discarded and which forces people back into the identity of their ethnic ascendants.

Zairians' orientations to the biographical perspective may be observed at different levels. In the organized conversations, there is, first of all, one instance in which the informant does not himself *construct* the biographical perspective, but rather directly *reports* on the use of it. In JO#1603-1616, Joaquín explains that the Kasai regions are so much associated with the larger ethnic group of the Baluba, that in the casual speech of many of his fellow countrypersons the geographical label *Kasaïen* is treated as synonymous with the ethnic label *les Baluba*. This association is so much established that the Tetela, of whom it is said that they and the Baluba do not live on very amicable terms, do not like to be referred to as *Kasaïens*: *"[un Tetela] ne veut pas être confondu avec les Baluba, il te dira moi je suis Tetela. […] il ne va pas dire je suis Kasaïen [parce que un Kasaïen c'est un] Muluba!"* (#1611-1616). A Tetela who was born and raised in Kinshasa would explicitly object to being referred to as someone 'from the region of Kasai', even if her or his parents and grandparents were from this region. In other words, in Joaquín's account the Tetela do not accept that their geographical identity is cast in ethnic terms, but strictly require to be referred to on the basis of a biographical perspective.

At the level of members' discursive constructions, then, many other manifestations may be observed. For instance, a number of the arguments used in the construction of sociolinguistic consensus bear on the differential linguistic competences across the Neptunia members. I will explain that the Lingala-speaking informants often refer to the limitations of their knowledge of other languages as a justification for the dominance of Lingala in Neptunia and as evidence for the claim that they, and not the Kiswahili-speakers, constitute the linguistically disadvantaged group in Neptunia. As an individual's personal course of life is much more relevant to the acquisition of linguistic competence than any type of ethnic identity, geographical group identity is, in the cases where linguistic competence is at issue, approached from a biographical perspective. In LO#774-775, for instance, I ask Lorenzo whether the Kiswahili-speakers are not offended by the dominant usage of Lingala in Neptunia.

Lorenzo reacts by stressing that *“non mais=! les gens de Kinshasa ont plus de problèmes quand tu leur apprends par exemple une chanson en swahili ou en tshiluba!”* (#776-778). In this account, the identification *“les gens de Kinshasa”* clearly refers to the people who spent most of their lives in Kinshasa, i.e. to a biographical perspective on the question *‘Where are (is, etc.) you (she, etc.) from?’*.

At one point in her cultural description of the people of the region of Kivu (see also below), Ingrid wants to highlight the contrast between climatological experiences in Kinshasa and such experiences in the Kivu regions (IN#942-945). Climatological experiences, just like linguistic ones, require the actual presence of the measurer in the location in question. The geographical identification in #943, *“des garçons de Kinshasa”*, is therefore biographical, and not ethnic, in nature.

Above, I mentioned how through phrases such as *mon village*, *chez nous*, etc., the geographical identity of a person is represented as her or his ‘natural home’. In IN#117-119, I ask Ingrid about the use of the languages in Catholic masses in Zaire. Ingrid replies: *“au Zaïre dans ma région parce que je vais parler de ma région, parce que c’est là celle que je connais. bon, par exemple chez nous, à Bukavu, nous parlons et nous chantons en swahili”* (#120-123). Ingrid’s references to *ma région* and her usage of the phrase *chez nous* are used within a biographical perspective. On the basis of her remark *“nous avons quitté le pays. on est né dans une région shi”* in #12-13 and of general ethnographic information on Ingrid, I know that the place of origin of her forefathers lies outside the city of Bukavu, the place where she was actually born and raised. As such, all her experience concerning the selection of languages in Catholic masses is limited to Bukavu. The phrases *ma région* and *chez nous* do not refer to the place of origin of her ascendants, but, instead, to Bukavu, and they are therefore clearly used in a biographical frame of reference.

These examples are but a few of the many instances of the biographical perspective on geographical group identity in the organized conversations and in the other ethnographic materials. They demonstrate that the occurrence of an ethnic perspective in some places, does not preclude that geographical identity may be approached from a biographical perspective in other places. As shifts and choices between the ethnic and the biographical perspective are related to local rhetorical functionality, many of their manifestations will reappear in the discussion of the construction of sociolinguistic consensus below. However, local rhetorical functionality does not control all of the variation in the perspectives. There is, in addition, the factor of awareness: the selection of the biographical perspective can also be based on certain individuals’ sensibility towards the variation. Hans and Jürgen are both graduate students at a Belgian university, the former in linguistic sciences and the latter in sociology. In these two academic domains, geographical identity is an analytical notion that is resorted to rather often and that is at times also explicitly discussed. Their experiences in these Belgian academic domains may have established a degree of awareness of different perspectives on geographical group identity.

As we learn in JÜ#14, the origins of Jürgen's forefathers are not situated in the city of Bukavu, but in the Kivu hinterland. Bukavu is the city where he spent most of his life and of which he has most recollections. Consider how Jürgen qualifies his initial application of an ethnic perspective on geographical identity by adding that he sees himself as a *Bukavien*, which is a biographical perspective: *"je viens du Kivu, et de la zone de Mwenga, mais je vis depuis un temps à Bukavu. depuis plus de quinze ans maintenant. donc je me considère plus comme Bukavien que comme quelqu'un de ma zone"* (#9-12). Of particular interest is the way in which Jürgen frames his preference for a biographical perspective. His utterance *"je me considère plus comme Bukavien que comme quelqu'un de ma zone"* (JÜ#11-12) casts this preference in a contrastive light. Apparently, he is aware of the fact that there are different perspectives on geographical identity, an ethnic one and a biographical one. The rejection of the self-identification *"quelqu'un de ma zone"* is remarkable in two respects. First of all, from a biographical perspective, one must recognize the ingenious *tour de force* to distance oneself from an identity that one refers to in terms of *ma* (!) *zone*. Secondly, by rejecting this ethnic identification, he seems to be anxious to forge a bond of we-ness with the Western interviewer, thereby assuming a cross-cultural contrast between the two perspectives: the biographical perspective is the one he believes to share with the interviewer, the ethnic perspective is presumably the one the interviewer disprefers.

Hans's account in #608-615 manifests a similar argument. In these sentences, Hans argues that inhabitants of Kinshasa should be identified by means of a biographical perspective rather than an ethnic one: *"Kinshasa est une ville cosmopolite je dirais. donc Kinshasa c'est= les Kinois c'est tout homme né à Kinshasa. donc c'est un Kinois. il est même inutile de chercher à l'identifier à un type de les régions de l'intérieur. les <u>parents</u> peuvent être d'une région de l'intérieur, mais les enfants qui naissent à Kinshasa, ils ne sont pas prêts à rentrer dans leur village, de leurs parents. donc ce sont des Kinois"* (#608-615). Hans engages in a serious contestation of the ethnic perspective and, above all, rejects the compatibility of the ethnic and biographical perspectives. To Hans, *Kinois* can only be referred to in terms of their own places of birth and/or residence, and not in terms of the places of origin of their ascendants. Who, then, are the holders of the perspective Hans is contesting? Hans implicitly qualifies the ethnic perspective as a generally salient one among Zairians. Distancing himself from the ethnic interpretation and appropriating the biographical one, he 'joins' what he believes to be the perspective typically preferred by the Western interviewer.

Awareness of the different perspectives is also a phenomenon which I can regularly observe in other conversations than the organized ones. Above, I mentioned the example of Iñigo, who once asked me about 'the way Belgians' conceive of geographical group identity. An expansion of this example is here in order. The setting of our casual conversation was the following. When after one of the choir's outings, I was driving Iñigo and Blanca back to Neptunia, we passed a church which Iñigo identified as the place where a mutual Belgian friend married a year or so before. I confirmed Iñigo's remark and, more or less inattentively, added *"oui, parce qu'il est d'ici je crois, hein"* (field-note reproduction). Iñigo reacted, *"mais explique-moi un peu comment ici chez vous vous dites que quelqu'un est de telle ou telle région, parce j'ai déjà remarqué chez nous je crois c'est différent"* (field-note reproduction), and then added his commentary quoted above (*"moi par exemple je suis du Kasaï et tout le monde me connaît comme Kasaïen. et la première et unique fois dans ma vie que j'ai été là-bas, c'était quand je rentrais de Lubumbashi et mon avion faisait escale à Mbuji-Mayi pendant vingt minutes! ((laughs))"* (field-note reproduction)).

Iñigo's contrastive construction *chez vous ... chez nous* is a very common one in expression of awareness of the different perspectives. Another informant, John, once remarked that *"j'ai déjà constaté, Michaël, que chez vous, vous ne regardez pas au delà du lieu de naissance, hein, pour identifier l'origine? chez nous tu sais c'est très différent, nous nous héritons toujours le lieu d'origine de nos parents"* (field-note reproduction).

In all these accounts, we can detect – at several levels of explicitness – a construction of the variation in perspectives on geographical identity as patterned along cultural boundaries. These informants view the ethnic perspective as a 'typically Zairian way of thinking' and the biographical perspective as 'the Belgian (Western, etc.) way'. Geographical origin is one of the phenomena members are regularly confronted with in their relationship with others. The culturalist explanation thus appears as an important notion on which members rely to order their social environment.

Before closing this section, one final remark needs to be made. For reasons of argumentative clarity, the foregoing discussions have focused attention on cases in which geographical group identity is either clearly biographically based or clearly ethnically based. It is nevertheless necessary to note that there is a vast 'gray zone' between the two perspectives, i.e. a range of cases for which we cannot establish which one of both perspectives applies. It can be the case, e.g., that the informant was actually born and/or raised in what is also considered to be the place of origin of the previous generations, which effectuates that the biographical and the ethnic perspectives coincide. In JO#50-60, Joaquín explains that he was born and raised in Bikoro. In #9-10, he constructs his own place of origin as follows: *"je suis originaire de l'Equateur, Equateur sud. plus pécisément la zone de Bikoro"*. From general ethnographic information on Joaquín, I know that his parents and grandparents also lived in Bikoro. There is thus no empirical basis on which to decide whether Joaquín orients either to the biographical or to the ethnic perspective. Other examples of analytical ambiguity may be found in IN#278-279 (*"ma région"*), IN#359 (*"quelqu'un de l'est"*), and IN#651 (*"les gens du Kivu"*). In all these cases, it is impossible to establish which one of the two perspectives is being applied. I would like to suggest that this obfuscation of the two perspectives should not merely be considered an analytical or methodological nuisance, and that it is very often a meaningful reality in its own right: it must always be born in mind that members themselves may resort to strategies of ambiguity and vagueness for discursive and argumentative purposes.

8.2.1.3. The cultural perspective

Groups formed on the basis of any diacriticon (language, ethnicity, etc.) are notoriously amenable to culturalization, a process in which a set of cultural characteristics (dispositions, moral and normative preferences, patterns of behavior, values, etc.) are presented as shared by and typical of the members of a group. In this process, culture is foregrounded within the syntagmatic range of diacritica that mark the boundaries of the group. This section is concerned with culturalizations of geographical groups, i.e. with the application of a cultural perspective on geographical group identity.

Culturalization can often be observed with regard to the traditionally known ethnic groups in Zaire. In BE#81-110, Begoña engages in, and at the same time reports on, culturalizations concerning the Yombe, the restricted ethnic group to which she belongs. She explains that many Zairians, including herself, find that the Yombe are presumptuous, as they often prefer to speak French, even if they are not fully proficient in it: *“en tout cas au Zaïre, on dit souvent les Bayombe sont comme les Baluba. ce sont des gens qui sont* <u>*hautains*</u>*. donc même les gens qui n’ont pas étudié ils parlent seulement français. chez moi même les gens du village, les vieux de mon village, ils parlent français, même un très mauvais français. il n’a pas été à l’école mais il aime parler français”* (#82-88). Many other Zairian ethnic groups may be the object of cultural stereotyping. In cases where geographical units coincide with these traditionally known ethnic groups, the stereotypes are readily transposed onto the corresponding geographical group. In BE#100-120, Begoña relates the cultural characteristics of the Yombe to such geographical identities as *“les gens du Mayombe”*: *“les gens du Mayombe sont des gens qui aiment beaucoup parler français”* (#106-107). In BE#83, she qualifies the Baluba, a traditionally declared ethnic group, as linguistically vain and provincialist people. In #130-131, she repeats this stereotype and attributes it to *les gens de Kasaï*, which is the geographical counterpart of the Baluba: *“les gens de Kasaï en tout cas refusent de parler lingala”*.

The cultural perspective is, however, also applied to geographical groups which do not represent a known ethnic group, i.e. to the ‘new’ ethnicities. In IN#938-953, JÜ#989-1033 and #873-881, and UL#951-1029, the cultural perspective is applied to (North and South) Kivu, Maniema, and Bandundu, respectively. Ingrid’s cultural attributions are part of a larger justification for the fact that the Zairians from Kivu do not revolt against the dominant use of Lingala in Neptunia. She attributes this consent to cultural characteristics: although their anger can be violent, the people from Kivu are typically calm, peaceful, and tolerant in nature. They are not as brutal as the Zairians from Kinshasa, but pacific *"comme leur climat [et] comme leurs vaches dans les pâturages"* (IN#942 and #946-947). (Note how this culturalization of the people from Kivu also involves a culturalization of the group of the people from Kinshasa as arrogant urbanites.)

Jürgen's cultural argument in JÜ#989-1033 is much to the same effect, and is also used to account for the Kiswahili-speakers' lack of explicit objections against the dominance of Lingala in Neptunia. He mentions that many perceive the Kivu people as submissive and acquiescent: *"je reviendrais sur un détail sur lequel peut-être je n'ai pas beaucoup insisté, mais qui est un peu le trait typique des gens des grands lacs là. [...] c'est que on ne manifeste pas directement pour dire non, écoutez je ne suis pas d'accord! ou quoi, et il y en a qui se sont leurrés sur le caractère des gens du Kivu notamment, en croyant que ce sont des gens qui sont trop dociles, qui acceptent tout, qui ne font pas de la résistance"* (#989-997).

In UL#951-1029, Ulrike wants to explain why not all the members of the older generation in the region of Maniema are proficient in French. She advances that the colonial authorities had well understood the cultural traits of the *"originaire du Maniema"* (#954). Ulrike qualifies these people from Maniema as very intelligent and as typically insubordinate to the colonial authorities: *"l'homme du Maniema discutait, rouspétait vis-à-vis d'un Blanc"* (#964-965). Ulrike argues that since the colonial authorities and missionaries were very aware of this disposition, they denied these people access to advanced education, out of fear of creating a body of intellectuals and potential rebels. This cultural perspective on the people from the region of Maniema also includes a qualification of *l'homme de Bandundu* and *l'homme du Bas-Zaïre*. These are said to be much more acquiescent, soft, and docile (#963-967): *"l'homme de Bandundu, l'homme du Bas-Zaïre est doux. [...] un de Bandundu acceptait tout. jamais discuter"*.

8.2.2. The ethnic, biographical, and cultural perspectives on linguistic group identity

In chapter 2 (section 2.3), it was explained that an individual's linguistic group identity pertains to her or his membership of a group of people that is delineated on the basis of the diacriticon of language. An individual's linguistic group identity forms part of her or his repertoire of multiple identities and is to be situated on the syntagmatic axis of identity variation, parallel to her or his religious, ethnic, and geographical identities. But, since in a society of multilinguals one always belongs to more than one linguistic group, the multiplicity of one's identities is also accomplished on the paradigmatic axis: in the case of Zaire, one and the same person is, e.g., both a member of the group of speakers of Lingala and a member of the group of speakers of Ntomba, a vernacular language spoken in the region of Equateur.

As mentioned, this multiplicity of linguistic identities is only conceivable in acontextual terms, i.e. as the sum of an individual's *possible* identities. Situated cases of linguistic identity ascription never attend to the totality of identities, but rather consist in the situational 'monolingualization' of the referent. That is, on the basis of contextual conditions, one of the various languages in the subject's multilingual repertoire is situationally highlighted, while the others are situationally backgrounded. Situational monolingualization may manifest itself in different forms. In some cases, it refers to a language in which the person is actually proficient. In these cases, identifying a Zairian as 'a speaker of Ntomba' implies that this person is to some degree able to speak and understand the Ntomba language. I will call this perspective on linguistic group identity the 'biographical' perspective, as it implies that the individual has at least had some contacts with the language in the course of her or his own life.

However, an alternative perspective on monolingualization and linguistic group identity is possible. In this alternative perspective, linguistic group identity is inherited from previous generations and is not affected by the actual course of life of the subject. Thus, the identification of an individual as a member of a certain linguistic group, e.g. the speakers of Ntomba, does not necessarily imply that he or she also understands or speaks the Ntomba language. It denotes, instead, that the person's ethnic ascendants were speakers of Ntomba.

In sections 8.2.2.1 through 8.2.2.3, this ethnic perspective on linguistic group identity will be explained on the basis of detailed examples. In 8.2.2.1, I will focus on those cases in which linguistic groups are defined as groups of *mother-tongue speakers* of a language and show that the ethnic perspective is a particularly salient process in this context. The ethnic perspective also occurs with regard to linguistic group formations that are less precisely defined. These other domains need to be dealt with separately, for some of their central mechanisms and implications are considerably different from what is at work in the case of groups of mother-tongue speakers. One of these domains, dealt with in 8.2.2.2, pertains to the usage of the word *langue* with a possessive pronoun. To state that a certain language is 'one's language' does not always imply that one actually speaks or understands this language, but rather refers to the language that was once spoken and understood by one's forefathers. Another domain is the domain of Zaire's four national languages (8.2.2.3). The ethnic perspective on linguistic group identities based on these national languages deserves particular attention, for it reveals that ethnically approached linguistic groups are 'new' ethnicities, i.e. ethnic identities that complement the range of the traditionally known ethnic groups of Zaire.

Section 8.2.2.4 will demonstrate that the ethnic perspective does not permeate *all* types of Zairians' discourse on linguistic groups. A biographical perspective, in which a person's membership of a linguistic group is conditional upon her or his actual proficiency in the corresponding language, as well as other perspectives that are thematically in contradiction with the ethnic one, are equally oriented to when contextual conditions require this. The ethnic and the biographical perspectives must, in this respect, be seen as part of a repertoire of functional resources, each of which may be applied according to contingent needs and constraints. In order to make it clear that the ethnic perspective on linguistic group identity is not to be considered a 'culturally typical' mode of thinking of Zairians, I will point to some usages of the ethnic perspective in Western forms of discourse, in particular in the discourse of some Belgian social scientists. In section 8.2.2.5, finally, it is indicated that in my ethnographic materials linguistic groups may also be approached from a cultural perspective, i.e. a perspective in which groups delineated by the diacriticon of language are attributed a set of cultural traits.

8.2.2.1. The ethnic perspective: Mother tongue

The main mechanism

Davies (1991a; 1991b), Romaine (1989), Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson (1989), and Weinreich (1953) count as some of the major discussions of scientific definitions of the notion of mother tongue. Throughout the range of definitions, the following conceptions stand out as the most commonly shared (see also the lists in Davies 1991b: 149 and Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson 1989: 453): a multilingual person's 'mother tongue' (or 'native language') is the language that he or she acquired first, in early childhood; of which he or she has the best grammatical intuitions; of which he or she has the best grammatical *and* communicative intuitions; that he or she uses for counting, inner speech, praying, poetry, dreams, and cursing; with which he or she identifies on emotional grounds, or is identified as a native speaker of by others. Some analysts advance only one of these criteria, while others indicate a number of them, adding that at least one must apply for a language to qualify as a person's mother tongue. Some, though not all, also agree on the fact that an individual can have more than one mother tongue, e.g. in cases where a child learns two languages from birth.

In spite of all these divergences in opinions and suggestions, one common thread can be detected in this list. All the definitions and criteria relate a (or more) language(s) to an individual on the basis of this individual's personal course of life since birth. Whether the preferred criterion is rank of acquisition, competence, automaticity, or emotional self- or other-identification, it always refers to linguistic experiences the person in question has gained during her or his individual life span. A multilingual individual can impossibly claim mother-tongue status for a certain language of which he or she has no command.

My ethnographic data (as well as Western forms of discourse to be presented below) make evident that this 'biographical' perspective on mother tongue should be complemented with an ethnic perspective. In this perspective, the language one has actually acquired in childhood and/or in which one is most competent, comfortable, etc., is of no relevance: a language is identified as the mother tongue of an individual irrespective of the fact whether he or she presently knows or uses the language or, what is more, whether he or she has ever spoken or known the language in her or his life. Instead, mother tongue is constructed as the language of the restricted ethnic group to which the subject belongs. Applying the ethnic perspective to the hypothetical example used above, we can say that in the ethnic perspective the 'group of mother-tongue speakers of Ntomba' equals the people belonging to the restricted ethnic group of the Ntomba.

In the case of geographical group identity, it was argued that individuals are not linked to places by the mediation of Zaire's traditionally known ethnic groups. In the case of mother tongue, on the contrary, the evidence that such a mediation is a necessary and inherent part of the ethnic perspective is unmistakable. The identification of a person's mother tongue is based on a direct extrapolation from her or his identity in terms of the traditionally known ethnic groups, and, in this respect, in terms of the *restricted* ethnic groups. Cases in which *larger* ethnic groups operate as the landmarks for mother-tongue identification do occur, but are to be considered extensions of the prototypical case. The evidence for this prototype-extension relationship, as well as for the crucial mediatory role of the known ethnic groups, will be provided below. First, the main mechanism of the ethnic perspective needs to be substantiated with some examples.

The organized conversations offer a good access to the perspectives on mother tongue, as the structure I had designed for some of them provided for direct questions on the informant's personal data, which includes questions on her or his mother tongue (see chapter 3, section 3.3.2). The conversations with Ingrid and Ulrike contain explicit instances of such questions on mother tongue, viz. *"alors je voulais te poser par exemple, ta langue maternelle?"* (IN#7-8) and *"mais alors ta langue maternelle c'est quoi?"* (UL#32). Ingrid answers the question by referring to Rega: *"ma langue maternelle? c'est le kirega"* (#9). In #18-21 and #53-55, however, we learn that Kiswahili is the language which she acquired in childhood and which still counts as the language she uses dominantly. Moreover, in #11 she reveals that she never spoke Rega as a young child and that therefore she is nowadays only competent in this language at the receptive level (see also #21-25). Thus, questions as to whether Rega is the first language she acquired in early childhood, or whether it is now her dominant language, are irrelevant to the identification of Rega as her mother tongue. Instead, Ingrid's identification of Rega as her mother tongue is a reference to the restricted ethnic group to which she belongs, which, as I know from general ethnographic information and as appears in several locations in the organized conversation (e.g., #12), is the restricted ethnic group of the Rega.

In UL#32-33 and #47-48, Ulrike indicates Kusu as her mother tongue. In #50-62, she explains that French and Kiswahili were the only two languages she learned in childhood. As her father only used French in addressing her, Kusu did not even form part of her linguistic input. In #513-528, we also learn that her father was not competent in Kusu either. Still, to Ulrike, Kusu counts as her mother tongue: *"ma langue maternelle c'est le kikusu"* (#33). My reaction in #34 is to ask her why she says so if she has no command of the language. Her answer offers an explicit paraphrase of the ethnic perspective on mother-tongue groups: *"parce que je suis Mukusu!"* (#35). In UL#49, Ulrike's identification of Kusu as her mother tongue leads me to infer that Kusu must have been the language she spoke at home as a child. The prosody and the laughter in her answer show how impertinent and absurd this inference comes across to Ulrike: *"oh **{**((laughing)) non. non. jamais!**}**"*. For Ulrike, the only reason to attribute Kusu the status of her mother tongue is that she belongs to the restricted ethnic group of the Kusu. As is the case in Ingrid's account, acquisition in early childhood, competence, fluency, or automaticity are of no relevance for the identification of a person's mother tongue.

Since mother tongue is determined by a person's ethnic descent, it can be passed on over more than one generation. Ulrike's case already testifies to this: Kusu was not the language she first acquired in early childhood, nor the language her father learned as a child, but was the language of preceding generations. Another example of this genealogical depth may be found in the organized conversation with Joaquín. In JO#258-319, Joaquín explains that the grandparents of his wife Paloma were Konda from the northern parts of the region of Bandundu (see also above), who migrated to a Nkundo-speaking region in the region of Equateur. Konda was these people's first and dominant language. Their children (Paloma's parents), however, learned and used Nkundo as a first language. Paloma, then, was born in Mbandaka, a major multiethnic city where Lingala is the language commonly spoken, and never learned Nkundo, let alone Konda. Yet, in #322-323, Joaquín does not identify Lingala, nor Nkundo as Paloma's mother tongue, but Konda: *"[la langue maternelle de Paloma] c'est l'ekonda"*. Since Konda is the language of the restricted ethnic group to which Paloma belongs, it is also 'her' mother tongue, irrespective of the linguistic ecologies in which she, or even her parents, grew up.

The mediatory role of the traditionally known ethnic groups and the prototype function of the restricted ethnic groups

A number of indications suggest that mother-tongue ascription is directly mediated by the ethnic group to which the individual belongs and that this mediation is prototypically accomplished by the *restricted* ethnic groups, whereas the connection of mother tongues with larger ethnic groups only occurs as an extension of the prototypical case.

There are, first of all, the emic perceptions concerning mother-tongue ascription, which surface in a number of explicitly offered rationales. I already mentioned how Ulrike spontaneously added *"parce que je suis Mukusu!"* (UL#35) when she identified Kusu as her mother tongue. Ulrike's selection of Kusu is directly related to her knowledge of her ethnic identity in terms of the Zairian restricted ethnic groups. In JO#120-123, Joaquín indicates Ntomba as his mother tongue: *“ma langue maternelle c’est le lontomba”* (#123). In #187-200, we learn that Ntomba is indeed the language Joaquín first acquired in childhood, which could lead us to conclude that he approaches mother-tongue group identity from a biographical perspective. Yet, when I ask him about his motivations for selecting Ntomba, and not any of the other languages in his multilingual repertoire, as his mother tongue (*“mais pourquoi tu dis lontomba parce que tu parles plusieurs langues zaïroises hein?”*, #124-125), he reacts: *“le lontomba c’est la langue de la tribu”* (#124-126).

A very similar case is Jürgen’s. As this informant explains in JÜ#121, #84-86, and #147-154, he has been using Kiswahili as his habitual language since childhood. In #157, #176-179, and #198-211, he also explains that he never spoke Rega as a child, but that it did form part of his input. When I ask him, in #87, to name his mother tongue, he answers: *“c’est le kirega”* (#88). As in Joaquín’s organized conversation, my immediate reaction is to ask *“mais pourquoi est-ce que tu identifies ta langue maternelle comme le kirega alors que tu parles plusieurs langues zaïroises?”* (#89-91). The answer Jürgen provides contains a noteworthy paraphrase of the ethnic perspective: *“oui c’est parce que, entre sa mère et d’autres mamans il y a quand même une différence. quand on parle de sa langue d’origine c’est la langue que parlent les parents, qu’on parle dans la région dont on est issu. et le swahili, ma mère ma grand-mère peut-être ne l’a pas parlé ou l’a parlé à peine. donc ça c’est la langue vernaculaire, vraiment de la petite région la localité dont je suis originaire”* (#92-99). Jürgen decomposes the noun phrase *langue maternelle* into its constituent parts. The adjective *maternelle* leads Jürgen to argue that mother tongues are languages that stem from one’s mother and that, thus, mother tongues are different if mothers are different (*“entre sa mère et d’autres mamans il y a quand même une différence”*). Paraphrased in terms of the concrete notion of the mother, ethnic descent and genealogy are cast in their most tangible forms. It can also be noticed that Jürgen implicitly equates the term *langue maternelle* with the term *langue d’origine*, thereby linking up native language with ethnicity. A mother tongue is not the language one acquired in one’s own early childhood, but is, instead, the language of one’s ‘origins’.

A second observation is that a language qualified as a mother tongue almost always coincides with a Zairian restricted ethnic group. In the case of geographical group identity, it was explained that some ethnically approached geographical groups, such as the group of people ‘from Bandundu’, do not coincide with any traditionally known ethnic groups. In the case of mother tongue, by contrast, a language is only identified as a person’s native language if it can be connected with one of Zaire’s identifiable restricted ethnic groups. For any group of mother-tongue speakers of a certain language, e.g. ‘the mother-tongue speakers of Konda’, there is always a label of an existing restricted ethnic group that counts as an equivalent term to refer to them, e.g. ‘the Konda’.

This is certainly related to the fact that almost all restricted ethnic groups in Zaire are themselves delineated on the basis of language. In earlier chapters (see chapter 4, sections 4.3.1 and 4.4.2), I explained that language has always been a major criterion in the colonial and postcolonial scientific ‘descriptions’ (and transformations) of the ethnic situation in the Congo and Zaire. This linguistic bias is also salient in members’ perceptions of the boundaries between restricted ethnic groups. In UL#11, for instance, Ulrike explicitly mentions that *“chaque tribu a son dialecte”*. Similarly, in JO#13-17 Joaquín explains that two different languages are spoken in the Lake Tumba area, i.e. Ntomba and Konda, and that this differentiation of languages correlates with a distinction between two separate restricted ethnic groups: *“la langue qui y est parlée c’est le lontomba, et il y a aussi le ekonda […] donc il y a si je peux dire deux tribus”*.

The third indication, which is related to the second one, concerns the absolute usages of the term *langue maternelle*. On some occasions, *langue maternelle* is used as a qualification of a language without reference to a particular person or group of persons, i.e. without a possessive pronoun. In these cases, identifying a language as a mother tongue does not establish a relationship between a language and an individual, but categorizes this language in absolute terms, as belonging to a specific subset in the range of Zairian languages. As such, *les langues maternelles* is used as another name for the vernacular languages of Zaire, i.e. the languages of the restricted ethnic groups. It is synonymous with such common names as *“les petites langues”* (i.a., BE#391-392, #403, #406), *“les langues locales”* (i.a., HA#1139), and *“les dialectes”* (i.a., JO#200, LO#76, JÜ#1209). Zaire’s *langues maternelles,* as a natural class of languages, stand in opposition to the national languages, Lingala, Kiswahili, Kikongo, and Tshiluba, and, in particular, to the official language, French.

In Jürgen’s account in JÜ#92-103, which I also elaborated upon above, Jürgen compares the Shi language to his own mother tongue, Rega, thereby qualifying the former as *“une autre langue maternelle”* (#101). In this qualification, Shi and Rega are represented as ‘one of the mother tongues of Zaire’, i.e. as one of the country’s vernacular languages as opposed to the languages of the other types. Shi is *“une autre langue maternelle”*, i.e. another item in the finite set of mother tongues.

In #180-197, Jürgen explains that some time ago, many urbanites in his region refused to speak the vernacular language and changed over to languages of wider communication such as Kiswahili. He refers up to three times to these ‘lost’ vernaculars by means of the term *langue maternelle*: *“il y avait une idée répandue, selon laquelle les gens qui parlaient la langue maternelle c’était des attardés des arriérés. et comme on se considérait un peu trop en avance par rapport aux gens qui venaient des villages, […] parce qu’eux parlaient ces langues maternelles on avait pris l’habitude de négliger de mépriser même ces langues. c’est à la fin quand on a pris conscience que, en allant à l’université surtout en voyant comment les gens qui venaient d’autres régions, Kasaï* *particulièrement, quand ils devaient se communiquer des messages ils se les communiquaient en langue maternelle, alors qu'on était dans des milieux universitaires. mais on s'est dit non, c'est nous qui avions mal compris la chose"* (#180-197). In Jürgen's absolute usage of the term *langue maternelle*, mother tongue is a label that designates a specific and absolute subset in the range of Zairian languages, i.e. those languages that are to be considered in opposition to the languages of wider communication and of particularly urban appeal, i.c. Kiswahili.

The term is dealt with in the same way by Ingrid in IN#112. Ingrid argues that Zairian Kiswahili differs from East-African Kiswahili by the linguistic interference it has undergone from the Zairian vernacular languages. In this reasoning, she distinguishes these vernacular languages by identifying them as *"les langues maternelles"* (#112).

A fourth indication of these matters relates to the exclusive status of mother tongues. Members can regularly be observed to recognize more than one geographical identity for one and the same person. A lady whom I know was born and raised in Kinshasa, once asserted in one breath that she is 'from the region of Equateur and from Monkoto', a village in that region. Mother tongue, on the contrary, is much more dealt with in exclusive terms: only one language can count as a person's mother tongue. This lady identified Mongo as her mother tongue, and added that by consequence, Lingala, the national language of the region of Equateur, is no candidate: *"ma langue maternelle c'est le kimongo, le lingala nous le parlons entre nous à l'Equateur, je l'utilise là-bas, mais ma langue maternelle vraiment c'est le kimongo"* (field-note reproduction). So, even though multilinguals have several languages in their linguistic repertoire, only one of these languages qualifies as the mother tongue.

If the language of the restricted ethnic group is the prototypical point of reference for mother-tongue ascription, there are also extensions of this prototype. These extensions retain the mediatory role of the ethnic identities, but apply it to other ethnic groups than the restricted ones. In the discussion of geographical group identity above (see 8.2.1.1), I mentioned that Rodrigo once said that he is from the region of Lower Zaire, although he was born in Kinshasa. In the same conversation, Rodrigo and I also discussed his linguistic identity. When I asked him about his mother tongue, he answered: *"ma langue maternelle c'est le kikongo"* (field-note reproduction). Rodrigo added that he is absolutely incompetent in Kikongo and that in his early and later childhood his parents and other peers only spoke Lingala to him. An identical situation occurred in a casual conversation with Ramón, who was also born in Kinshasa and who also identifies himself as 'being from Lower Zaire'. When I brought up the issue of languages, Ramón assured me: *"ma langue maternelle vraiment c'est le kikongo. parce que je suis Mukongo hein. tu savais ça?"* (field-note reproduction). When I inferred that Kikongo must thus be the language he learned at home as a child, Ramón reacted amusedly: *"oh non! à la maison* *nous parlions le lingala. le kikongo je l'ai seulement appris après, quand je suis allé au Bas-Zaïre"* (field-note reproduction).

As known, Kikongo is the language of the Bakongo, which is not a restricted but a larger ethnic group. In other words, the prototypical definition of mother tongue is flouted. There are several factors that lie at the heart of this deviation. (These factors need not be regarded as mutually exclusive, but can bring about the same effects in a synergetic effort.) There are, first of all, pragmatic considerations of contextual relevance. Before this casual conversation, Rodrigo and I only knew each other from sight and we had never had a face-to-face conversation with each other before. The conversation with Ramón occurred under the same circumstances. It is probable that Rodrigo and Ramón start from the assumption that the most specific knowledge I have about their identities is that they are Zairians. On the basis of this presupposed knowledge, they judge it more relevant to orient to a rather large differentiation within Zaire than to refer straightforwardly to the restricted ethnic groups.

A second possible explanation may be found in the particular character of Bakongo ethnicity. As spelled out in previous chapters (see chapter 4, especially 4.3.2.2), the Bakongo represent one of the most salient of all larger ethnic groups in Zaire. I explained that a tradition of explicit ideologization by Bakongo intellectuals has effected a high degree of centripetal integration in this larger ethnic group, which has to a large extent eclipsed the significance of most of its component restricted ethnic groups. In other words, the Bakongo have succeeded in establishing *l'Ethnie Kongo* as a monolithic ethnic unit, both for outsiders and for themselves. As a consequence, the Bakongo group is quite often acted towards, not as an overarching superethnic group, but as a restricted ethnic group *sui generis*. Rodrigo's and Ramón's preferences to derive the identification of their mother tongues from their Bakongo ethnicity may be explained on this basis.

Some implications of the ethnic perspective on mother tongue

The ethnic perspective on mother-tongue groups, in which considerations of actual language use and competence are irrelevant, has some conspicuous implications which defy the essential ingredients of the biographical perspective, in which mother tongues are considered to be first-acquired and/or dominant languages.

1. A first implication pertains to the 'naturalness' of mother tongues. In section 8.2.1.1, I explained how the application of the phrases *chez moi* and *mon village* construct individuals as naturally attached to the place of origin of their ancestors. The same applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to groups of mother-tongue speakers. In the ethnic perspective, the use of a possessive pronoun with *langue maternelle* attaches onto an individual a language that does not necessarily form part of this person's own linguistic ecology, but that is attributed to her or him on the basis of ethnic identity. As such, this language is treated as a natural and inalienable ingredient of her or his being: one 'is' one's mother-tongue identity in the same way as one ‘is’ one’s ethnic identity, and this linguistic identity cannot be affected by whatever occurs during the personal course of life. And, in the same way as one ‘is’ one’s ethnic identity, one’s mother tongue is something one ‘speaks’ and ‘knows’ *in principle*, irrespective of one’s actual linguistic repertoire.

In a number of places, i.a. JÜ#157, #176-179, #198-211, Jürgen mentions that he never learned or spoke Rega as a child. At the end of his account in #81-103, he identifies Rega as his mother tongue and explains that *“en principe je parle kirega”* (#103). Thus, despite the fact that Rega does not form part of the repertoire of languages in which he is actually proficient, it is a language of which Jürgen can say that he ‘speaks’ it. This paradox is attenuated by the modifying *“en principe”*. This modifier refers to an ideal situation in which Jürgen knows and speaks his mother tongue, but which in the real world is distorted by accidental factors.

In IN#885-888, Ingrid explains that on one of her trips to the Rega territory, she used Kiswahili, and not Rega, in conversations with fellow members of the Rega ethnic group: *“quand je faisais mes enquêtes on parlait en swahili! on ne parlait même pas en kirega”* (#885-887). She casts this incident as an unnatural one when she says that *“dans cette partie-là je devrais parler le kirega”* (#887-888). Ingrid’s use of the conditional *devrais* is significant: given her own ethnic identity, it would be natural for her to use Rega when addressing comembers of the Rega group. Also, during one of our talks outside the organized conversation, Ingrid qualified Rega, her mother tongue, as *“la langue que mes parents auraient dû me parler”* (field-note reproduction). The use of the conditional evinces the way mother-tongue identity is constructed as a natural ingredient of one’s being: Ingrid’s parents’ failure to raise her in Rega was a mistake and should be taken as a deviation from the natural order of things.

Of special note is also Joaquín’s account of his wife’s background in JO#306-316 (see also above). Joaquín identifies Konda as his wife’s ‘mother tongue’, although she never had any command of the language, and nor did her parents. In #307-311, he spells out that the members of his own family, who are also Konda, feel uncomfortable when they have to address Paloma in another language: *“des temps on est en contact avec les deux familles, bon nous on= ma famille par exemple se trouve gênée de lui parler en lingala parce qu’on sait qu’elle n’est <u>pas</u> étrangère, elle est Ekonda”* (#307-310). Thus, although Joaquín and his family know that Paloma’s family has been living in non-Konda-speaking areas for two generations, they still consider the Konda language to be Paloma’s ‘natural’ language. Joaquín’s remark in #317 is even more straightforward in this respect. He advances the idea that the reason why he and the other members of his family insist on addressing Paloma in Konda is: *“pour la remettre à sa place!”*. In other words, whatever occurred during Paloma’s personal life cycle amounts to an accidental distortion of her natural linguistic identity, to which she must be restored.

2. A mother tongue is a language that one can 'forget', 'lose', or 'not speak anymore' without ever having learned or spoken it. In IN#861-875, Ingrid comments on her and other people's fear that the Rega language is becoming extinct because many Rega nowadays prefer to speak Kiswahili. In #866, she refers to the generations who never learned Rega as follows: *"ils ont perdu vraiment"*. These people have thus 'lost' a language they never 'possessed'. About the ethnic group of Rega in general she remarks *"on va perdre notre kirega"* (#870-871). This choice of words is a common one in discourse in which Zairians comment on what they perceive as the dying vernacular languages in their country, or on their own lack of proficiency in these languages. One can often hear statements to the effect that *"je ne parle plus ma langue maternelle"* and *"nous dans les grandes villes nous ne parlons plus nos langues maternelles, nous sommes en train de perdre nos langues"* (field-note reproduction), even in cases where the person referred to never learned the language in question. The *ne...plus* negation in these statements is meant to span the history of the ethnic group as a whole, and not the particular biographical history of an individual.
3. A mother tongue is a language one can learn *after* having acquired other languages, which is antithetical to the criterion of acquisition in early childhood often applied in the biographical perspective. As she was born in Boma, a city in the region of Lower Zaire but outside the Yombe subarea, Begoña's mother did not speak Yombe as a child: *"ma mère n'a pas grandi au Mayombe. ma mère a grandi à Boma, Boma c'était la capitale. ma mère a grandi à Boma, et là à Boma elle parlait vraiment pas kiyombe"* (BE#274-277). Begoña reasons that as her mother came into contact with many other Yombe who did speak the language, she had the opportunity to learn the Yombe language later in her life. For the discussion here it is significant that Begoña does not refer to this process of adult language acquisition as 'learning', but as 'relearning' (*"re-appris"*), as if her mother had ever 'lost' knowledge of the Yombe language: *"souvent on faisait venir quelqu'un du village passer quelque temps avec nous, pour qu'ils apprennent à parler kiyombe. c'est comme ça que mes parents ont encore ré-appris à parler kiyombe"* (#281-284).

8.2.2.2. The ethnic perspective: *Ma (ta/sa/etc.) langue*

Monolingualization, i.e. the situational selection and foregrounding of one of the languages in a person's multilingual repertoire, is not exclusively effected by means of the concept of mother tongue, but can also be accomplished by means of terms with a less specific scope, such as *ma (ta/sa/etc.) langue*. In this section, I want to devote particular attention to this combination of a possessive pronoun with the singular *langue* and discuss the ethnic components of its capacity as a monolingualization device.

As mentioned above, in the case of mother tongue only one language qualifies as a criterion for monolingualization, i.e. the language of the corresponding restricted ethnic group. The term *ma (ta/sa/etc.) langue* is sometimes used as a straightforward synonym of *ma (ta/sa/etc.) langue maternelle*. It is evident that in these cases as well, monolingualization is limited to the language of the restricted ethnic group. In other cases, however, the term *ma (ta/sa/etc.) langue* broadens its scope to all types of ethnic identities, including the larger ethnic groups and the ethnically approached geographical identities.

In BE#351-352, Begoña refers to Kikongo, a language of wider communication, by means of the term *sa langue*: *"si Laura voulait bien apprendre sa langue, elle l'aurait apprise, par sa maman"*. Only a few turns later, the same term refers to a (hypothetical) Lower-Zairian *vernacular* language: *"si ils connaissent ils savent parler kikongo! mais si ils ne savent pas? chacun va parler dans sa langue!"* (#376-378). Both a vernacular language and Kikongo, the language of a larger ethnic group, can thus be referred to by means of *ma (ta/sa/etc.) langue*. In #361-364, Ingrid and I are talking about John, a mutual friend who is proficient in the four Zairian national languages. Because of his multilingualism, John would in principle be entitled to claim membership of each of the four corresponding linguistic groups. To Ingrid, however, he cannot be a member of the group of speakers of Kiswahili but only of the group of speakers of Lingala: *"il a appris le swahili, mais sa langue c'est le lingala"* (#360-361).[75] The monolingualizing *sa langue* brings this multilingual person back to his one and only linguistic identity: although he is competent in Kiswahili, this language cannot be considered 'his' language. John is of western-Zairian origin, whence he does not belong to the speakers of Kiswahili. So, in order to be able to lay claim to a language as 'one's language' (*sa langue*), it is not sufficient to know the language in question. One must have ethnic origins in the region where the language is spoken.

A similar example can be found in Ulrike's use of *"sa langue"* in UL#819. In the passage from which this utterance is taken, Ulrike discusses the dominance of Lingala in Belgium. She argues that speakers of Kiswahili may use Lingala in Belgium, but will always return to Kiswahili when they go back to their families or places of origin. But, although both Lingala and Kiswahili are items in the linguistic repertoires of these multilinguals, only Kiswahili is named 'their language': *"ici en Belgique [...]. bon on parle [le lingala] et puis quand chacun rentre dans son () il parlera sa langue hein. mais il n'a rien perdu"* (#818-820).

Consider, finally, Ingrid's account in IN#347-355, in which she describes the linguistic identities of some Neptunia regulars. She first advances the point that the majority *speak* Lingala: *"la plus grande partie qui est là, ce sont des gens qui parlent lingala"* (#346-348). When this observation has been established, Ingrid deems it necessary to add that *"et leur langue c'est le*

75. Ingrid is not very well acquainted with John. John's habitual language is not Lingala, but Kikongo, as the choice of the pseudonym indicates. This misconception does not affect the ethnic perspective applied to *ma (ta/sa/etc.) langue* as a monolingualization device.

lingala" (#348-349). Thus, the fact that Lingala belongs to these individuals' linguistic repertoires is not the reason why they can lay claim to it as 'their language', which intimates that there is another class of people who equally know Lingala, but who are not entitled to consider it 'theirs'. In order to belong to the linguistic group delineated on the basis of this language, one must have ethnic origins in what is known as the Lingala-speaking area, i.e. Kinshasa and the region of Equateur.

8.2.2.3. The ethnic perspective: The national-language groups, 'new' ethnicities, and the case of the Bangala

The ethnic perspective on linguistic group identity also occurs in the context of the four national languages, Kikongo, Lingala, Kiswahili, and Tshiluba. Discussions relating to the national languages are particularly well represented in the casual and organized conversations, as they constitute the primary matter of concern.

In the discussion of geographical group identity, I described the use of phrases such as *un Bandundu*, in which the combination of a toponym with an article is indicative of an ethnic perspective on geographical group identity (see 8.2.1.1). A very similar perspective occurs in the context of groups of people delineated on the basis of the national languages. In JO#1584-1585, Joaquín in one breath names the following group formations: *"les Bakongo, les Bandundu, les Swahili, les Tshiluba"*, and implicitly argues that the types of identity they denote are fully analogous. A number of indications reveal that Joaquín approaches the linguistic groups *les Swahili* and *les Tshiluba* from an ethnic perspective. There is, first of all, his use of the articles, which casts the linguistic groups in the same light as such ethnic groups as, e.g., *les Tetela*, *les Konda*, *les Mongo*, and all the other known ethnicities of Zaire. Another indication is Joaquín's association of *les Swahili* and *les Tshiluba* with the well-known ethnic group of the Bakongo. Comparable cases are Joaquín's use of the terms *"un Tshiluba"* in JO#1395, *"les Tshiluba"* in #1593, and Lorenzo's reference to *"les Swahili"* in LO#1292.

The terms *"les Baswahili"* and *"les Batshiluba"* in JO#1592-1593 deserve particular attention. These names can often be observed as equivalent terms for *les Kiswahili* (or, *les Swahili*) and *les Tshiluba*. The use of the Bantu (e.g., Kikongo, Lingala, Tshiluba) declinational prefix *ba-* evinces how the national-language groups are constructed in ethnic terms, as this prefix is in Bantu languages typically used for animate plural nouns. The usage of *les Tshiluba* and its variant *les Batshiluba* is remarkable, given the availability of the more obvious label *les Baluba*. Apparently, these three labels do not cover the same meaning. The two former labels refer to a group of an essentially linguistic kind, i.e. the group of people who share the national language Tshiluba, which is then approached from an ethnic perspective, while the latter term refers to one of the traditionally declared ethnic groups of Zaire. Thus, although the group of speakers of Tshiluba may coincide with the ethnic group of the Baluba on the empirical level, conceptually they are to be distinguished: the former is an ethnically approached linguistic group, the latter a declared Zairian ethnic group. (Moreover, even at the empirical level the overlapping does not apply in the opposite direction, as not each and every Muluba is actually proficient in Tshiluba.) In the case of the terms *les Kiswahili* and *les Baswahili*, there is even less doubt that we are dealing with an ethnically approached linguistic group, as there is no traditionally declared ethnic group in Zaire known by this name. This group can thus only be a direct ethnic derivation from a group of people who share the same national language.[76]

These ethnically approached national-language groups are, in other words, not a calque of the traditionally known Zairian ethnicities. They are 'new' ethnicities, coexisting, but not consubstantial, with the declared ones. As such, the range of ethnic identities in Zaire is once more expanded. We can now summarize the range of ethnic groups in Zaire as follows: the traditionally declared ethnic groups, the ethnically approached geographical groups, and the ethnically approached national-language groups.

Before closing this discussion of the national-language groups and the new ethnicities, I would like to draw particular attention to the label 'Bangala'. Inspired by the remarkable changes to which this name has been subjected since early colonization (see chapter 4, especially sections 4.3.2.2 and 4.4.3.1), I often ask informants what they understand by the term and, more specifically, what criteria they, or others in general, use to delineate the group. In their *explicit* reports, informants often advance language as the diacriticon that distinguishes the Bangala from other Zairians. Most remarkably however, this reference to *language* does not correspond with the *implicit* meaning 'Bangala' appears to cover in more routine applications of the term, where it is rather acted towards as an *ethnic* label.

Two of the organized conversations contain *explicit* discussions of the label, to wit JO#1579-1638 and LO#1199-1287. In JO#1579-1581, I ask Joaquín to explain what he understands by the term 'Bangala'. He answers by arguing that this group is a case of linguistic group formation: the Bangala are *"tous ceux qui parlent lingala […] comme langue véhiculaire"* (#1585-1587). (In the subsequent discussion, Joaquín defines the Bakongo and others in similarly linguistic terms.) In LO#1197, I ask the same question to Lorenzo. The diacriticon he mentions to distinguish the Bangala and other groups we have discussed is: *"[nous différencions] sur base de langue"* (#1250). At the *implicit* layers of discourse, nevertheless, we notice that the label 'Bangala' is acted towards, not as a case of linguistic group formation, but as an entity of a

76. On a limited number of occasions in my fieldwork, I also observed a regional discrimination within the group of speakers of Kiswahili. On one occasion, an eastern-Zairian informant did not accept my identification of the famous politician Nguza Karl-I-Bond, who is from southern Shaba, as *un Kiswahili*. She stressed that he is 'from Shaba, and not from Kisangani', implying that to her, the label *les Kiswahili* does not apply to *all* the speakers of Kiswahili, but only to the ones from the area around Kisangani, i.e. the region of Upper Zaire.

fundamentally ethnic kind. In #1198-1213, Lorenzo casts the Bangala as a superethnic group, overarching ethnicities such as the Ngombe and the Mongo: *"les Ngombe sont des Bangala. les Mongo= donc c'est un peu la superstructure de tout ça"* (#1206-1207). In #1231, he also insists on the fact that the Tetela do not form part of the Baluba, but of the Bangala: *"les Tetela font partie du groupe des Bangala"*. This identification of the Tetela as Bangala points in the direction of a purely ethnic, rather than a linguistic interpretation of the Bangala and the Baluba: the Tetela are situated in the region of East Kasai living next to the Baluba and they make use of Tshiluba rather than of Lingala for interethnic contacts and other national-language functions; but, in standard ethnological classifications, they are subsumed under the larger group of the Mongo, itself part of the Bangala.

Compare, further, Lorenzo's *explicit* references to language with his account of the different variants of Lingala in #1401-1410. In his juxtaposition of the Lingala variant spoken in Kinshasa and the one spoken in the region of Equateur, he argues that an inhabitant of Kinshasa who spends much time in the region of Equateur will soon adopt the local accent and come across as a Mongala when returning to the capital: *"il est identifié [...] aux Bangala [...], on dit mh! yo okomi Mongala hein. lingala na yo eza de Kinshasa te"*[77]. In this argument, Lorenzo implicitly recognizes that the inhabitants of Kinshasa are also speakers of Lingala. Therefore, in accordance with his *explicit* definition of the Bangala as a linguistically delineated group, i.e. the speakers of Lingala, the inhabitants of Kinshasa would in principle qualify as Bangala. Yet, the ethnic nature of the group does not allow so. An inhabitant of Kinshasa may *come across as* a Mongala, he or she will never *be* one: in Lorenzo's routine, *implicit* usage of the label 'Bangala', he thus treats it as denoting a group of people who share the same ethnic descent, and not as a group of people who share the same language.

In fieldwork as well, the routine, implicit usages of 'Bangala', in contrast with its explicit rationalizations, are based on ethnic interpretations. For a Zairian who was born in Kinshasa and who has full and exclusive command of Lingala, it is impossible to claim Bangala identity if he or she is, e.g., of Bakongo descent. 'Mongala' is also one of the most salient identities by which people from Equateur who live in Kinshasa (or in other multiethnic places) are ethnically categorized and categorize themselves. Bangala is and remains an identity one has to deserve ethnically, not linguistically. Being of Kinshasa and being a native speaker of Lingala is never sufficient to qualify as a Mongala, even if in their explicit rationalizations members claim it to be sufficient.

The incongruity between the explicit rationalizations of Bangala identity and the implicit meaning it seems to cover throughout its manifestations and discursive accomplishments is proof of an intricate coalescence of the diacritica ethnicity and language. The analytical endeavor to neatly distinguish whether

77. Lingala for 'you've become a Mongala. your Lingala is not of Kinshasa'.

members are either using ethnicity or language as the key diacriticon is in many cases beside the point, as members themselves find in obfuscation a useful resource for intercontextual adaptability and strategical vagueness. Of importance for the analysis here, is the fact that the obfuscation is the locus where two processes are blended: the process in which language is added to ethnically-based group formations and the one in which ethnicity is added to linguistically-based group formations. The former could be called the linguistic perspective on ethnic group identity, the latter is nothing less than the ethnic perspective on linguistic group identity.

8.2.2.4. The biographical perspective and other shifts away from ethnification

In the foregoing sections, I discussed discursive activities in which linguistic group identities of several kinds, i.e. groups of people who share the same mother tongue, groups of people who share the same national language, etc., are constructed in distinctly ethnic terms. In the casual and organized conversations, as well as in Zairians' discourse on language matters in general, linguistic group identity is not invariably approached from this ethnic perspective. Many observations show that on different rhetorical occasions, the ethnic perspective is purposefully avoided. The ethnic perspective is not *the* standard Zairian way of conceptualizing linguistic groups, but rather constitutes *one of the* possible perspectives Zairians may draw upon as interpretive and explanatory resources. Discursive activities in which linguistic groups are acted towards in other than ethnic terms, e.g. biographical ones, are thus amply present as well.[78] Similarly, discourse on mother tongue and linguistic group identity in the West is not exclusively marked by a biographical perspective. It would, in other words, be unwarranted to map the distinction between the biographical and the ethnic perspectives onto cultures as discrete pigeonholes. As was done for geographical group identity (see section 8.2.1.2), I will first provide some brief and indicative observations of the use of the ethnic perspective on linguistic group identity in Western discourse. Next, the use of the biographical perspective by Zairians will be explained in due detail.

Social scientists concerned with the anthropological and sociolinguistic study of migrant communities in Belgium, such as M. Byram and J. Leman (i.a., Byram 1990; Leman 1982; 1990), often use the term 'mother tongue' to refer to the language of the ethnic group to which the subjects under study belong, and not to the language these subjects actually acquired first in their lives. In a report on a multilingual education project with Italian, Spanish, Turkish, and

78. For the present discussion, largely the same strategy is adopted as was done in the discussion of geographical group identity (see the remarks made at the end of 8.2.1.2): the focus is on those instances in which the perspective is either distinguishably ethnic or distinguishably biographical. This does not imply, however, that linguistic group identity is always acted towards in such discrete terms. It is in many cases analytically impossible to establish whether either the ethnic or the biographical perspective is applied.

Moroccan second-generation migrant children in Brussels, Leman first explains how for many of these children French was *"their first socialisation language"* (1990: 11). Yet, when he describes how this project included the instruction of the mother tongues of the children's parents, in order to prevent these children *"from being robbed of their cultural identity in a Belgian context"* (1990: 12), he refers to these languages as the children's *"mother tongues"* and as their *"languages of origin"* (1990: 11 and passim). Leman thus orients away from a biographical perspective on mother tongue and opts for an ethnic perspective, removing the subjects from their own linguistic experiences and identifying them in terms of the language history of their genealogical predecessors. Once again, the subjects are forced back into their ethnic pedigree.

The biographical perspective on linguistic group identity as occurring in the discourse of Zairians manifests itself in different forms. In the paragraphs below, I will first of all elaborate on the main discursive-pragmatic mechanisms of the shifts between the ethnic and the biographical perspectives. Then, the use of the biographical perspective in the context of monolingualization by means of the expression *ma (ta/sa/etc.) langue* will be discussed, followed by an account of the biographical perspective on mother-tongue groups. In the context of mother tongue, I will also explain that the biographical construction of linguistic group identity is not only a function of pragmatic choice-making, but may additionally be controlled by forms of individual awareness.

One of the informants' central concerns in the construction of sociolinguistic consensus is the justification of the dominance of Lingala in the Neptunia masses. As will be argued below, a recurrent justification is that this dominance should be attributed to the fact that the majority of the choir members, and of the Neptunia public in general, come from Kinshasa, where the common language is Lingala. In other words, this argumentative invocation of the Kinshasa origins of the Neptunia members builds on a biographical perspective on linguistic group identity: not the ethnic descent of the persons referred to, but, instead, their concrete linguistic experiences acquired in the course of their own lives, are of contingent rhetorical relevance. In these contexts, ethnic constructions of linguistic group formations are thus carefully avoided. In MA#172-173, I ask Manuel why Lingala is so prevalent in the Neptunia masses. His answer in #174-183 is in a fairly pronounced way oriented away from an ethnic perspective. He contends that the majority of the Neptunia regulars were raised in Kinshasa and that they therefore all know Lingala. He explicitly argues that the ethnic origins of these people is of no relevance for the matter at issue: *"la plupart ils sont nés à Kinshasa, ils ont grandi à Kinshasa. qu'ils soient par exemple originaires du Kasaï, ou disons que ses parents soient originaires du Kasaï, ou bein du Shaba, mais la plupart ils sont nés à Kinshasa. ils ont grandi à Kinshasa. donc ils parlent tous lingala. et c'est pourquoi il y a toujours prédominance"* (MA#179-182).

Consider, also, Lorenzo's identification of Iñigo, a Muluba, in LO#570-576. Lorenzo is aware of the fact that Iñigo's multilingual repertoire contains both

Lingala and Tshiluba. For reasons of contextual relevance, however, he situationally bases this choir member's linguistic group identity (i.e., his situational monolingualization) on Lingala, rather than on Tshiluba. When he says *"José est né à Kinshasa. Iñigo né à Kinshasa, moi né à Kinshasa"* (#570-571), I provoke him by reacting that *"mais Iñigo je croyais que c'était un Muluba?"*. Lorenzo explains that *"il est Muluba. mais il est né à Kinshasa"* (#573). Within Iñigo's repertoire of multiple identities, only his biographical, Kinshasa background is of contextual relevance, as it is Lorenzo's intention to clarify (and justify) why so many parts of the Neptunia mass are conducted in Lingala.

The biographical perspective also appears in monolingualizations by means of *ma (ta/sa/etc.) langue*. One example may be found in Hans's account in HA#608-629. Hans explains that the socially privileged inhabitants of Kinshasa frequently use French as a habitual language instead of, or alongside, an African language: *"des gens qui quittent l'intérieur pour aller à Kinshasa, le plus souvent ce sont des gens bien positionnés, leur langue c'est le français"* (#617-620). Whereas his primary delineation of the group is based on the criterion of social position, Hans additionally casts this social group as a linguistically defined one, when he says: *"leur langue c'est le français"* (HA#620-621). We are dealing with a process of linguistic group formation by means of the monolingualization device *leur langue* that does not involve any ethnic references, since this group of French-speaking Zairians is composed of members of disparate ethnic identities (cf. *"les parents peuvent être d'une région de l'intérieur"*, #612-613). Among all the languages spoken by these socially privileged, French stands out as 'their' language. Yet, there is no ethnic basis for such an identity, as would be required by the ethnic perspective.

Another case occurs in the organized conversation with Joaquín. In JO#255-267, Joaquín elaborates on the migration history of his wife's grandparents (which I also amply referred to in previous discussions). They were Konda from the northern parts of the region of Bandundu, and for career reasons emigrated to the town of Bamanya, Equateur. Joaquín explains how this emigration led these people to learn and adopt Nkundo, the Mongo variant spoken in Bamanya, on top of, or in substitution for, Konda. In JO#265-266, he paraphrases this as: *"le lonkundo disons le lomongo qu'on parle à Bamanya là-bas […] à un certain moment est devenu leur langue"*. This use of *ma (ta/sa/etc.) langue* runs counter to the ethnic continuity implied in the ethnic perspective. The ethnic perspective states that the question as to what language counts as 'one's language' is independent of the actual linguistic knowledge or language use of the person referred to, and that it is entirely related to considerations of ethnic descent. Arguing, as Joaquín does, that another language than the one characteristic of one's ethnic group can 'become' *ma (ta/sa/etc.) langue* defies this condition of ethnic continuity.

In the context of mother tongue, a number of cases can be observed in which the term *langue maternelle* is applied as a linguistic label without any ethnic connotations. One illustration may be found in Ulrike's explanation in UL#307-312 of the fact that the Neptunia masses are multilingual. She argues that this multilingualism is *"pour aider tout le monde à prier. dans sa langue maternelle"* (#311-312). In this usage of the term *langue maternelle*, Ulrike orients, not towards one's membership of an ethnic group, but towards the language which a person actually uses as her or his habitual means of communication in daily life or which he or she acquired first.

The selection of one or the other perspective on mother tongue is not always and exclusively based on pragmatic considerations of discursive functionality, but may, in fact, also be influenced by matters of awareness and individual preference. Some of the members' constructions appearing in the casual and organized conversations point to an awareness of a certain variation in perspectives on mother-tongue groups. When Helmut and I once discussed the linguistic backgrounds of some mutual acquaintances, I played ignorant and reacted surprised when he named Kanyok as the mother tongue of a person whom I know is only proficient in Kiswahili. He laughed and quickly added: *"oui mais chez vous c'est différent hein! chez nous la langue maternelle c'est la langue du groupe ethnique auquel on peut me référer"* (field-note reproduction). It is difficult to encounter a more literal explication of the ethnic perspective on groups of mother-tongue speakers, and at the same time, Helmut's explication reveals a pronounced awareness of the variation in possible perspectives.

As mentioned above, Hans is a graduate student preparing a doctoral dissertation in linguistics at a Belgian university. In this domain, the concept of mother tongue is often discussed explicitly. When in HA#140-141, I ask Hans to identify his mother tongue, he answers, after a significant pause: *"(.) c'est le swahili"* (HA#144). Kiswahili is the language which he first acquired in childhood and which he now speaks as his habitual language, which points in the direction of a biographical perspective. Moreover, when I ask him to provide his rationale for selecting Kiswahili as his mother tongue, he answers, *"parce que (.) c'est la langue la plus courante en famille hein. parce que le lega bon ce sont les parents qui l'ont souvent utilisé entre eux. mais pour s'adresser à nous [...] ils parlaient en swahili"* (#149-154). The prosody, in particular the pauses, in #144 and #149 suggests that Hans's orientation to the biographical perspective on mother tongue is a product of attentive deliberation. This is indicative of Hans's awareness of the existence of two different perspectives. Moreover, for the clarification of the reason why he selects Kiswahili as his mother tongue, Hans chooses to argue by excluding Lega, and not, e.g., French, Lingala, or Arab, three other languages that I know form part of Hans's multilingual repertoire (see also #165 and #320). Of all the noncandidates, Lega is the only relevant one because it is the language of Hans's restricted ethnic group and because it would thus qualify as his mother tongue in the ethnic perspective. Thus, Hans's defense of the biographical perspective implies a distinct awareness of the ethnic perspective.

Hans's argument in favor of the biographical perspective and against the ethnic one is attuned to his perception of the interviewer's identity. Much in the same way as was the case for geographical origin (see 8.2.1.2), Hans distances himself from what he considers to be a typically Zairian way of thinking. He identifies with the biographical view of mother tongue and thereby forges a bond of we-ness with the Western interviewer, whom he assumes to be a representative of the culture in which the biographical perspective is compelling.

In Helmut's and Hans's accounts, the variation in perspectives is cast as a function of cross-cultural contrast. The biographical perspective is constructed as 'the Belgian view' and the ethnic perspective as 'the Zairian view'. Thus, constructing the variation in perspectives as organized along the lines of discrete, monolithic cultures appears to be a powerful interpretive resource on which members draw to order the worlds that surround them.

8.2.2.5. The cultural perspective

As mentioned, culturalization is a process in which a set of cultural characteristics is constructed as typical of and shared by the members of a certain group of people. In this process, culture is added to, or highlighted among, the syntagmatic set of diacritica. In this section, I want to elaborate on the culturalization of linguistic groups, i.e. on the application of a cultural perspective to such groups. I will also devote attention to the role perceptions of linguistic *structures* (phonology, grammar, etc.) play in this cultural perspective.

Ingrid's account in IN#277-303 contains the argument that the Kiswahili-speakers, to which she belongs, are generally more tolerant vis-à-vis other languages and other linguistic groups than the Lingala-speakers (see also 8.3). The former respect other people's linguistic preferences, while the latter always seek to impose their own language. Ingrid identifies the target groups of her culturalization as, i.a., *"les gens qui parlent swahili"* (#278 and #508-509) and *"les swahiliphones"* (#519), which indicates that her culturalization is directed at group formations of a primarily linguistic kind. Another application of the cultural perspective on linguistic groups is IN#918-976. This culturalization is partly situated at the reported level, as Ingrid describes the view some people in her region of origin, the Kiswahili-dominated Kivu, hold of speakers of Lingala. She explains that at a certain moment in history many inhabitants of Kivu came to hate the Lingala-speakers (*"à ce moment-là on a commencé aussi à les détester"*, #966-967). The reason for this hate is that the Lingala-speakers fail to bargain at the local markets when they come to visit Kivu, which causes a general rise of the prices and renders many products unattainable for the local people. The group of speakers of Lingala is thus culturalized as the group of people who raise the prices: *"ces gens ils viennent augmenter les prix chez nous!"* (#967-969). This stereotype is also transposed onto the language *per se*. The behavior of the speakers of Lingala has resulted in the fact that Lingala itself is a language that 'raises the prices': *"ils trouvent que c'est une langue qui a augmenté les prix au marché"* (#921-922).

Thus, the cultural perspective on linguistic groups may be mediated by ideologies of linguistic structures. In this context, I would like to comment on the case of Lingala, as this case can shed additional light on the mechanisms involved in the cultural perspective.

UL#236-256, IN#308-338, and HA#531-546 are three occasions in the organized conversations on which the dispositions attributed to the Lingala-speakers are linked to the intrinsic qualities of the language. Ulrike argues that Lingala is *"une langue qui manque de respect"* (UL#236-237). It is a language that, in contrast to Kiswahili, lacks melody, tenderness, politeness, and the rich vocabulary of a 'true' language: *"[le swahili] c'est une langue qui a la mélodie. swahili c'est une langue chantée, qui est doux. qui est polie. et en plus qui a beaucoup de vocabul= c'est une vraie langue! le lingala, mais le lingala c'est pauvre hein! en vocabulaire"* (#241-244). The causal relationship between this quality of the language structures and the disposition of the speakers is straightforward: *"les enfants quand ils apprennent le lingala, bon ils deviennent () et ils manquent du respect"* (#253-255). Ulrike insists on the fact that when Lingala-speaking children address their parents they use the personal pronoun of the second person singular, which she – and, as I can regularly observe in fieldwork, many other Zairians – consider to be a token of most insolent behavior.

A very similar identification of Lingala and Lingala-speakers is advanced by Ingrid. To Ingrid, Lingala is a language *"qui n'est pas polie. parce que tu peux appeler ton père, yo papa, yo mama*[79]*. c'est comme tu les tutoyais quoi"* (IN#312-314). Using second person singular pronouns to address one's parents does not conform with the social norm that children should on all occasions display respect for their parents. Kiswahili, she argues, does not make use of these pronouns to address parents, and is therefore *"plus poli"* (#316).[80] Similarly, Lingala is to Ingrid the language of orders and of military brutality: *"ça c'est une langue pour commander, pour piller!"* (#336). Hans also links the disposition of the Lingala-speakers to the structural qualities of the language.

79. Lingala for 'you father, you mother'.

80. As most other Bantu languages, Lingala and Kiswahili are prodrop languages. I therefore conjecture that my informants contrast the second person singular pronoun, not to a polite variant of this pronoun such as the French *vous*, but to its omission. Luisa Martín Rojo and myself (Martín Rojo & Meeuwis 1993) have shown that in a prodrop language such as Spanish, the choice between either using or omitting the personal pronoun in subject position fulfills more functions than the attribution of contrast and the structuring of information: prodrop also involves the pragmatic management of interpersonal relations in communicative situations, including face management and politeness. The present dissertation is too differently oriented to include even a pilot study of the broader pragmatic effects of prodrop in Bantu languages, but I certainly wish to consider the reports presented by the informants as challenging suggestions for future research on the pragmatics of prodrop.

He maintains that, whereas Kiswahili has terms to convey 'please' and pronominal forms of politeness (sic), the grammar of Lingala totally lacks such polite forms: *"en lingala il n'y a pas de s'il vous plaît. il n'y a pas de vous de politesse"* (#537-538). To Hans, the moral disposition of the speakers of this language is a direct emanation of the intrinsic linguistic features of this language. Hearing someone speaking in Lingala generally gives him the impression *"que vous voulez voler, vous voulez terroriser quelqu'un, ou vous ne le respectez pas!"* (#544-545).

The link between the linguistic features of Lingala and the disposition of its speakers is of a Whorfian-Herderian kind. The informants draw lines of continuity between, on the one hand, dispositions considered to be shared by the members of a group and, on the other, the structure of the language they speak. This Whorfian-Herderian viewpoint is but one of the available resources members can draw upon for the accomplishment of contingent discursive goals. If we consider Ulrike's account in #688-732, we observe that on this rhetorical occasion, Ulrike's construction of Lingala is of a totally different kind. I confront her with the observation that although many Kiswahili-speakers find Lingala and its speakers an impolite language, they apparently do not find fault with its dominance during the Neptunia masses (see also 8.3). In the argument she advances, the deterministic influence of language structures on people's dispositions, as implied in the Whorfian-Herderian view, is fully discarded. She argues that politeness and kindness all depend on the person in question, in particular on her or his level of education, and not on the language he or she speaks: *"l'élite, même si entre nous on parle lingala on sait quand même quel mot utiliser. quoiqu'il soit vulgaire le lingala, vis-à-vis de l'autre (.) toi qui as fait des études tu expliqueras dans la politesse le mot qu'il faut"* (#696-700). She even mentions that the question whether the notorious pronoun of the second person singular is used in rude or in gentle ways solely depends on an individual's personality: *"même si on dit, yo*[81]*, on va dire ça avec une douceur. on ne dira pas <u>yo</u>! on dira avec une douceur on dit,* ***{****((softer voice and higher pitch)) yo mot'otiyaki*[82]*=****}*** *tu comprends?* ***{****((idem)) yo mot'otiyaki oyo wana*[83]*?****}****"* (#705-709). Ulrike's antithetical positions, i.e. a Whorfian-Herderian view of linguistic determinism on the one hand and a nondeterministic view on the other, are resources situationally selected to accomplish the local argumentative needs. In the first case, Ulrike's construction of Lingala as an intrinsically impolite language is embedded in an argument about her own and other Kiswahili-speakers' attitudes towards Lingala and towards the group of Lingala-speakers. In this argument, a general contrast is drawn between monolithic blocks of languages and language users, aimed at a negative

81. Lingala for 'you' (second person singular).

82. Lingala for 'are you the one who put=?'.

83. Lingala for 'are you the one who put this there?'.

depiction of Lingala and its speakers. In the second case, her local objective is to justify the Kiswahili-speakers' consent to the dominance of Lingala in Neptunia. One of her strategies is to deny the harmfulness of Lingala and to represent the Neptunia Lingala-speakers as agreeable people, which precludes a representation of the language and its speakers as impolite. All these matters are pivotal ingredients in the construction of sociolinguistic consensus, which will be presented next.

8.3. Constructing sociolinguistic consensus

8.3.1. Counterarguments and local linguistic ideologies

As spelled out in the theoretical and methodological chapters of this dissertation, and as reiterated in section 8.1 above, my analysis of the Neptunia members' construction of sociolinguistic consensus is based on my problematization of this consensus, accomplished through confronting Lingala-speaking and Kiswahili-speaking informants with the questions *'What do the Kiswahili-speakers think of the dominance of Lingala in Neptunia? Aren't they offended by it?'* and *'What do you think of the dominance of Lingala in Neptunia? Aren't you offended by it?'*, respectively. The informants react by accounting for a claim that is contained in the implicit meaning layers of each of the two questions, i.e. *'There are good reasons to believe that the Kiswahili-speakers are or could be offended by the dominance of Lingala in Neptunia'*. This means that, as a rule, the informants do not prefer to answer the respective questions directly (but, see 8.4), but to answer them by accounting for one of the questions' basic assumptions, which they feel to be particularly relevant, remarkable, and in need of discussion. In other words, the implicit claim is perceived as the basic issue around which the entire sociolinguistic situation of Neptunia revolves.

The informants account for the implicit claim by *refuting* it. That is, it is the informants' main concern to present arguments *against* the claim that the Neptunia Kiswahili-speakers have good reasons to be offended by the dominance of Lingala. These endeavors to refute the implicit claim thus represent the deproblematization of the sociolinguistic consensus, i.e. the construction of the sociolinguistic consensus of Neptunia.

I distinguish 9 'counterarguments' used by the informants for refuting the implicit claim. These 9 counterarguments are shared by the Lingala-speaking informants and the Kiswahili-speaking informants. In other words, the two linguistic groups appear to rely on a shared body of strategies for constructing the sociolinguistic consensus. They thus agree both on the fact that the implicit claim is invalid and on the reasons why it is invalid. It is this agreement on the fallacy of the implicit claim and on the reasons for its fallacy which constitute the cornerstone of the Neptunia consensus: through a shared set of strategies they manage to neutralize the potential dangers (e.g., a social conflict) of the sociolinguistic inequality in Neptunia.

Identifying the 9 strategies as 'counterarguments' is an identification *at a functional level*, i.e. the informants *use* them as counterarguments in the actual discursive contexts of the casual and organized conversations. In chapter 1 (section 1.3.4), it was argued that in a linguistic ethnography based on discursive social psychology native knowledge necessarily qualifies as 'linguistic ideology'. Therefore, *at a theoretical level*, the counterarguments may be said to count as 'local linguistic ideologies'. They are opinions on languages and language-related matters which are linked to power relations, mechanisms of hegemony, and other social and historical contingencies of the community at hand. 'Local linguistic ideologies' and 'counterarguments' relate to each other as two sides of the same coin; they refer to the same phenomena but cast them in different analytical perspectives. In my discussion in 8.3.2, I will operate a functional perspective and I will thus apply the term 'counterarguments' throughout.

As will become clear, some of these 9 local linguistic ideologies are, in terms of their thematic content, mutually complementary. Some are linked to each other in that they include subthemes that recur in other counterarguments. Many local linguistic ideologies are also straightly contradictory to each other. In line with discursive social psychology (see part I), mutual contradictions in linguistic-ideological speech are to be considered rich points of attention. It has been mentioned that attitudes, opinions, ideologies, etc. are always tailored to the rhetorical occasions in which they occur, and it is therefore typical of attitudinal (ideological, etc.) speech to display internal ambiguity and inconsistency. The local linguistic ideologies of which the informants make use as counterarguments in their construction of sociolinguistic consensus are, thus, *locally effective* as argumentative and explanatory resources in individual discursive contexts, but are not always *mutually consistent* when looked upon as component parts of native knowledge. So, the linguistic ideology underlying the sociolinguistic behavior in Neptunia is not a neatly-structured and internally harmonious unity, but is marked by multiplicity, ambiguity, inconsistency, and contradiction, which is also the discursive social psychologists' preferred view of ideologies in general. In my presentation below, the view that thematic contradictions across local linguistic ideologies are analytically 'unproblematic' will not be foregrounded but will be drawn upon as an implicit working assumption. This is done in order not to burden the central, content-oriented discussion of the construction of sociolinguistic consensus (see also the expository caveat formulated in section 3.4 of chapter 3).

In addition to the observation that the 9 counterarguments are shared by the two linguistic groups, there is the remarkable fact that each of the 9 counterarguments is arrived at on the basis of constructions and interpretations which radically *differ* across the two groups. That is, although the two groups manage to neutralize the researcher's problematization of the sociolinguistic consensus by means of a shared set of counterarguments, the Lingala-speakers and the Kiswahili-speakers ground these counterarguments in strikingly different series of premises. They appear to strongly disagree, among other things, on the way in which the multilingual make-up of Zaire is to be represented, on what the patterns of language use employed in Neptunia exactly look like and to what factors they are to be attributed, on the role of codeswitching and other formal-linguistic matters, etc. These disagreements must be considered evidence to the fact that the sharedness of the 9 counterarguments in the Neptunia community is not a ‘given’, but counts as the product of relationships of hegemony between the Neptunia subgroups. That is, the sharedness of the belief in the fallacy of the implicit claim and of the 9 counterarguments is not a *starting point* to some analysis of social relationships in Neptunia. The fact that not all beliefs concerning sociolinguistic matters are shared rather shows that this sharedness is the outcome of *hegemonic processes*, in which the existing beliefs of the sociolinguistically dominated group are gradually, and never perfectly, replaced with the beliefs of the sociolinguistically dominant group.

In the discussion in 8.3.2, I will distinguish the 9 counterarguments by means of the letters A to I. Within each counterargument, I will first paraphrase the contents of the counterargument as a whole, i.e. as it is shared by both the Lingala-speakers and the Kiswahili-speakers and as it is jointly used to refute the implicit claim. I also briefly announce the main differences in the constructions of the counterargument by the two groups. Next, I will use separate sections to elaborate on these differing constructions. In each case, the Lingala-speakers’ construction will be discussed first (in sections marked as ‘A.1’, ‘B.1’, ‘C.1’, etc.) and the Kiswahili-speakers’ construction next (‘A.2’, ‘B.2’, ‘C.2’, etc.). A general overview of the 9 counterarguments and of the Lingala-speakers’ and Kiswahili-speakers’ differing constructions is contained in this dissertation’s general table of contents.

8.3.2. The refutation of the implicit claim

A. The extenuating effect of Neptunia’s demographic composition on the dominance of Lingala

The counterargument to be discussed first is the most complex one in the refutation of the implicit claim. Moreover, many other counterarguments that will be discussed below are intricately related to it. The main assertion of this counterargument is that the dominance of Lingala in Neptunia should not be attributed to some conscious ill will on the part of the Lingala-speakers, as may be implied by the implicit claim, but that it can be explained and excused on the basis of *the demographic composition of Neptunia in terms of linguistic and other group identities*. The terms in which this extenuating effect of Neptunia’s demographic composition is constructed differ, however, sharply across the Lingala-speaking and Kiswahili-speaking informants. The differences mainly pertain to what is understood by ‘Lingala-speakers’.

Pivotal in the Lingala-speakers’ construction is the denial of Neptunia as based on a ‘two-group formation’. They challenge the conceptual organization, inherently present in the implicit claim, of the Zairian community in two distinct and individually identifiable linguistic subgroups. According to the Lingala-speaking informants, there is no such thing as a distinction between a group of Kiswahili-speakers (or non-Lingala-speakers in general) on the one hand and a limited group of Lingala-speakers on the other. Therefore, there is no valid reason to fear that the dominant usage of Lingala may cause a sociolinguistic conflict between such groups. This claim also includes a particular construction of the multilingual make-up of Zaire. It is argued that the four Zairian national languages are not organized in a coordinate frame, in which each language is used in its own, discrete area of distribution, but, instead, that Lingala extends above the other three languages as Zaire's geographically and socially ubiquitous African language – a quality which it shares with French. Whereas Kikongo, Kiswahili, and Tshiluba are all languages that are ethnically and regionally marked, and that thus represent identities that tend to divide the Zairian unity, Lingala does not carry with it the identity of a particular ethnic or regional subgroup, and therefore operates as the unmarked, unifying linguistic emblem of all Zairians. Consequently, the Zairians in Neptunia, as elsewhere, all belong to one and the same group, i.e. the group of 'Zairians-as-Lingala-speakers'. So, it is not *in spite of*, but *by reason of* the dominance of Lingala that Neptunia can be said to be symbolically indicative of Zaire as a whole, rather than of one of the divisive subidentities within Zaire. In all these constructions, linguistic (and geographical) group identities are approached from a biographical, rather than an ethnic perspective.

The Kiswahili-speakers construct the extenuating effect of Neptunia's demographic composition in different ways. They view the Zairians in Neptunia, and in Belgium and Zaire in general, as falling apart in distinct and individually identifiable linguistic subgroups, one of which is the group of Lingala-speakers in a limited sense. In this view, the multilingual make-up of Zaire is constructed as a geographically balanced one. Zaire is marked by a coordinate sociolinguistic organization in which the four national languages, Kikongo, Lingala, Kiswahili, and Tshiluba, complement each other in an equal, geographical constellation. That is, each language occupies its own geographical area of distribution, which must be seen as fully equivalent to, and as operating side by side with, the other areas of distribution. None of the four languages transcends the other three languages in any respect. In this view, linguistic (and geographical) group identities are primarily constructed from the viewpoint of an ethnic perspective. Due to its numerical preponderance of 'Lingala-speakers' (in the limited sense), Neptunia, then, is seen as 'Lingala land': it is emblematic of one of the internal identities within Zaire, i.e. the Lingala-speaking subgroup, and not of Zaire as a whole. The Kiswahili-speakers thereby cast themselves as 'guests' in a Lingala place, who have to adapt to the customs of the local hosts, the Lingala-speakers. Indeed, the Kiswahili-speakers' refutation of the implicit claim in this counterargument strongly relies on a quantitative explanation: referring to the relative proportions of what they recognize as different linguistic groups in Neptunia, they argue that the members of the Kiswahili-speaking group, or of all non-Lingala-speaking groups together, are in the minority amidst a majority of Lingala-speakers, and that it is a matter of good manners for the members of a minority to adapt to the linguistic preferences of the majority.

(Given the thematic complexity of this counterargument, both the constructions of the Lingala-speakers (A.1) and those of the Kiswahili-speakers (A.2) will be split up in different presentational units. In each case, a first presentational unit elaborates on how the constructions of the group of informants in question function as a counterargument to refute the implicit claim. Following presentational units will then separate out a number of constituent assumptions, worthy of discussions in their own right.)

A.1. The denial of the two-group formation and the *pan-Zairian* identity of Lingala and Neptunia

The main mechanism of the counterargument

The Lingala-speakers' construction of Neptunia's demographic composition operates as a refutation of the implicit claim in the following way. Building on the assertion that most Kiswahili-speakers are, in addition to their own language, also to some degree competent in Lingala, they claim that the members of what is traditionally (and in the implicit claim) known as the group of the Kiswahili-speakers actually belong to one single larger group of Lingala-speakers, which coincides with all of Zaire. The opposition between different linguistic subgroups is nonexistent since everybody in Neptunia is to be considered a Lingala-speaker. Given this representation of the composition of the Neptunia public, the Lingala dominance and the sociolinguistic inequality in Neptunia lose much of their alleged harmfulness.

Manuel's account in MA#174-185 may serve as a first illustration. Manuel makes it rather explicit that he prefers a biographical perspective on linguistic and geographical group identities to an ethnic one: *"la plupart de ces Zaïrois qui viennent à Neptunia, nonante pour cent viennent de Kinshasa. la plupart ils sont nés à Kinshasa, ils ont grandi à Kinshasa. qu'ils soient par exemple originaires du Kasaï, ou disons que ses parents soient originaires du Kasaï, ou bien du Shaba, mais la plupart ils sont nés à Kinshasa. ils ont grandi à Kinshasa. donc ils parlent tous le lingala. et c'est pourquoi il y a toujours prédominance"* (#174-182). Manuel's point is that despite the fact that these individuals have their ethnic origins in regions such as the two Kasai regions and Shaba, biographically they are of Kinshasa origin and as a result of this Kinshasa origin they are 'speakers of Lingala'. As a consequence, even the members of what is traditionally and in the implicit claim known as the group of Kiswahili-speakers must be subsumed under the larger family of Lingala-speakers. In Neptunia, there is only one, general class of Zairians, to wit 'speakers of Lingala'. Therefore, the sociolinguistic inequality in Neptunia cannot be the result of some ill will on the part of a group of Lingala-speakers in a limited sense, but is rather the outcome of the fact that all members of the

Neptunia community were born and raised in Kinshasa, including those who in the implicit claim appear as non-Lingala-speakers.

Another example occurs in JO#1214-1224. Joaquín reacts to my question (#1211-1213) whether the Kiswahili-speakers in Neptunia are not bothered by the dominance of Lingala in the following way: *"quand on parle les swahiliphones […] même les swahiliphones ici, ils ont plus vécu à Kinshasa* **{***((laughing)) que à l'intérieur***}** *[donc ils=] comprennent aussi= […] parce que* <u>*tout le monde*</u> *là, parle le lingala!"* (#1214-1222). Joaquín reasons that even if we recognize the presence of a numerically significant group of Kiswahili-speakers, its members are to be considered Lingala-speakers. The Neptunia Kiswahili-speakers spent more, or more important, parts of their lives in Kinshasa than in the Kiswahili-speaking regions, and they thereby 'exchanged' their Kiswahili identity for a fully Kinshasa, Lingala identity. Joaquín thus maintains that the Neptunia Kiswahili-speakers should not be considered 'genuine' Kiswahili-speakers, but are actually to be counted among the group of Lingala-speakers. Just like Manuel, Joaquín uses a biographical perspective on linguistic and geographical group identities: it is the Kiswahili-speakers' very tangible Kinshasa experience, rather than their ethnic background, that is of argumentative relevance.

In JO#995-1002, as well as in some of the preceding turns, Joaquín confirms that Lingala is the dominant language in the Neptunia masses. In #1003-1008, I confront him with the observation that the public, on the other hand, is composed of individuals from *all* the Zairian linguistic groups, not only the Lingala-speaking one. Joaquín denies this statement in the following way: *"nonante-neuf pour cent, des gens qui viennent à la chorale, ne viennent pas directement de l'intérieur du Zaïre. ils viennent plus de Kinshasa que de l'intérieur de Zaïre. alors comme ils viennent de Kinshasa, dans la plupart des paroisses à Kinshasa on chante le lingala le swahili le kikongo mais il y a plus une prédominance de lingala. alors donc, c'est une exportation de cela"* (#1010-1017). *All* the Neptunia Zairians have, biographically, a Kinshasa background, and Neptunia's dominance of Lingala is an 'exportation' of this shared Kinshasa background, rather than a malevolent conspiracy on the part of a limited group of Lingala-speakers. The implicit claim is thus effectively refuted: the Lingala dominance in Neptunia is an emanation of the Lingala identity shared by all Zairians in Neptunia, and not of some deliberate overpowering on the part of one particular subgroup in Neptunia.

The multilingual make-up of Zaire as presided by Lingala

The Lingala-speakers' counterargument is grounded in a particular view of the multilingual make-up of Zaire. The existence of different and opposing linguistic subgroups in Zaire is denied, among other things, by constructing Lingala as comprising and symbolizing the entirety of the Zairian territory and society. The relationships between the four national languages in terms of the social identities they symbolize are not considered to be based on a pattern of equivalence, but on a hierarchical pattern. Lingala occupies the top of the Zairian linguistic tree alongside French, and as such it rises above the other three national languages, Kikongo, Kiswahili, and Tshiluba. Whereas these three languages are all symbolically related to a particular Zairian ethnic, regional, or other subgroup, Lingala is not indexical of such a subgroup and is thus a neutral language. This 'pan-Zairian' appeal of Lingala is often said to be mediated by the neutral identity of Kinshasa. In this construction, Kinshasa is not considered an 'nth' sub-Zairian regional unit, on a par with regions such as, e.g., Lower Zaire and Shaba. Instead, its multiethnic and metropolitan nature grants it the unique status of an ethnically neutral territory. If, then, Lingala is to index a specific entity *within* Zaire, its indexical target is Kinshasa, and since multiethnic and metropolitan Kinshasa itself incorporates all of Zaire's diversity, Lingala's symbolic identity can only be a pan-Zairian one.

The Kinshasa mediation of Lingala's pan-Zairian appeal may be illustrated by means of Begoña's extensive account in BE#591-646. In #580-584, Begoña confirms my observation that Lingala is by far the most often used language in Neptunia. When I proceed by asking her, in #585-587, whether the non-Lingala-speakers in Neptunia are not neglected by this dominance of Lingala, her reaction is rather fierce: *"comment ils sont négligés! ils sont pas négligés!"* (#588). Her justification in #591-602 is worth being quoted in full: *"c'est la langue de la capitale! tu vois le fait de parler la langue= le fait de parler une langue qui est neutre, la capitale elle est <u>neutre</u> hein! elle n'est pas pour les Bakongo, ni pour les gens des l'Equateur, ni pour les gens du Kasaï. donc vous parlez une langue <u>neutre</u>. c'est pour tout le monde! c'est la capitale du <u>Zaïre</u>, c'est pas la capitale du Bas-Zaïre, ni la capitale de l'Equateur, mais c'est la capitale du Zaïre. la capitale de toutes les neuf régions! donc vous parlez une langue <u>neutre</u>. mais si nous parlons maintenant swahili, ça c'est pas une langue neutre hein! c'est une langue qui ne se parle que, du côté du (.) où on la parle"*. Begoña argues that Lingala is not a regionally marked language and that it therefore encompasses, rather than excludes, the group of Kiswahili-speakers in Neptunia. In Begoña's argumentation, Lingala has 'adopted' this neutrality from the city to which it belongs, which leads her to elaborate separately on the neutrality of Kinshasa. Kinshasa differs from the other Zairian regions in that it represents the entire country. Kinshasa is not the capital of the region of Lower Zaire or Equateur, nor of the ethnic group of the Bakongo, but it is the capital of Zaire as a whole (*"la capitale de toutes les neuf régions"*).[84] Begoña holds that this neutrality of the capital is projected onto its language, Lingala. As a consequence, the identity of this language is ethnically unmarked, which sets it off from such a highly marked language as Kiswahili: *"mais si nous parlons maintenant swahili, ça c'est pas une langue neutre hein!"*.

84. In chapter 4, section 4.2, I explained that in 1989 the number of Zairian regions was brought from 9 to 11, as the Kivu region was divided into the region of Maniema, the region of South Kivu, and the region of North Kivu. I also mentioned that in most forms of popular consciousness this geo-administrative transformation has not (yet) been generalized.

Begoña's belief in the capacity of Lingala to surpass the divisive identities of Zaire is also manifest in the following account. In #475-479, I tell her that I am quite surprised by the pronounced prevalence of Lingala in such a multiethnic situation as Neptunia. Begoña retorts: *"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 Kasaï. non! on voit tout simplement un Zaïrois, un Kinois. c'est ça! quand on parle lingala. quand on parle lingala en tout cas on fait abstraction des régions. mais quand on commence juste à parler swahili, là on sait maintenant dire que celui-là est du Haut-Zaïre, donc il est du côté où on parle swahili. mais quand on parle lingala on sait pas, on sait dire simplement ah c'est un Kinois"* (#480-496). To Begoña, the implicit claim is wrong when it assumes that Lingala is the language of one particular subgroup. Lingala is, in fact, an effective means to encompass all Zairians, a quality it draws from its ethnic 'expressionlessness', being a language which fully conceals the ethnic or regional affiliation of its users (*"on ne sait pas distinguer lui il est du Bas-Zaïre, lui il est de l'Equateur,…"*). Note, again, how Lingala shares this ethnic expressionlessness and pan-Zairian identity with the city of Kinshasa: *"on voit tout simplement un Zaïrois, un Kinois"* and *"on sait dire simplement ah c'est un Kinois"*. Being *Kinois*, as being a speaker of Lingala, is tantamount to being a Zairian.

In MA#506, Manuel enters into a very complex explanation and argumentation of the ubiquity of Lingala, which will take him up to #540. He refers to the conference of Zairian linguists held in Lubumbashi in 1974 (see my discussion in chapter 4, section 4.4.4). Of particular interest are Manuel's appeals to the scientific authority attached to such a conference: *"il y a eu un débat sur l'adoption d'une seule langue nationale pour le Zaïre. il y a eu un débat () entre les politologues, les linguistes zaïrois et tout ça ainsi de suite. ce que je vous dis avait été constaté, le constat était que le lingala par rapport aux autres langues avait pris une expansion beaucoup plus considérable. alors maintenant, bon on voulait même adopter le lingala comme la <u>seule</u> langue nationale. bon, vous voyez, bon le régime n'a pas voulu créer, provoquer d'antécédents hein. politiques. de blesser les sensibilités régionales et tout ça. ethniques. c'est ainsi que on avait adopté les quatre langues là. le swahili, le kikongo, le lingala et le tshiluba. mais sur le plan des <u>faits</u>, en tant que linguiste si tu descends au Zaïre, et que tu fais un constat linguistique, tu verras que le lingala a une expansion beaucoup plus importante. par rapport aux autres langues"* (#510-527). All the linguists, sociologists, and political scientists at the 1974 conference agreed on the fact that at the purely observable level, Lingala is the language that is distributed most widely in Zaire. Manuel argues that although the Zairian politicians never ventured to draw the necessary prescriptive conclusions from this scientific 'fact', the scientifically observable facts cannot be denied: Zaire's multilingual make-up is presided by Lingala.

Closely related to the view that in the Zairian multilingual make-up Lingala is the language that transcends and neutralizes the nationally divisive identities, is the claim that Lingala is Zaire's lingua franca *par excellence*. In BE#439-464, Begoña and I are talking about her relative usage of Lingala and Kikongo, the language of Lower Zaire, which is her region of origin. She explains, among other things, how her identification of her interlocutor as someone who shares her Lower-Zairian background is not a sufficient condition for contingently selecting Kikongo as the language of communication. She mentions that in many cases Lingala will be used instead. Her explanation of this type of language choice is that *"le lingala c'est en tout cas la langue= c'est la langue de communication chez nous!"* (#463-464). As prior to this remark, Begoña and I had been talking about the region of Lower Zaire, I am unable to determine what we-group Begoña is referring to, and I therefore ask her: *"comment, chez vous, ça veut dire quoi"* (#465). She confirms that her usage of the first-person pronoun was not aimed at the group of Zairians from the region of Lower Zaire in particular, but at Zairians as opposed to all non-Zairians. She thus meant to say that she considers Lingala to be the lingua franca of Zaire as a whole: *"chez nous, au Zaïre. quand je parle= donc au Zaïre. [...] la langue de communication chez nous est le lingala"* (#466-469).

For some informants, the pan-Zairian significance of Lingala indeed extends beyond the internal *integration* of the various divisive identities within Zaire. These informants construct Lingala as a marker of 'Zairianness' in opposition to other countries or continents. Lingala is not only *pan*-Zairian, it can also be said to be *exclusively* Zairian. This view of Lingala as one of Zaire's distinctive features necessarily includes references to the linguistic situation in other Lingala-speaking countries, in which these countries are denied the right to lay claim to Lingala as 'their' language. In other words, although these countries as well make use of Lingala, the language actually 'belongs' to Zaire.

A first manifestation of this 'national appropriation' of Lingala may be detected in Manuel's comment in MA#292-294. To Manuel, Lingala is the parameter that adds a *Zairian* identity to a Zairian's regional or ethnic identity, and that thus constitutes the feature which distinguishes her or him from a citizen of any other country: *"qu'est-ce qui va faire du Kasaïen, qui fait de l'Equatorien du Bas-Zaïrois Zaïrois? mais c'est le lingala!"* (#292-294).

A more complex version of this argument is contained in Lorenzo's long account in LO#1175-1345.[85] In this account, Lorenzo explains that more than any of its neighboring countries, Zaire really has a language of its own, viz. Lingala. One of the terms in his comparison is the case of Rwanda and Burundi, two countries where Kiswahili is the major language of communication. Lorenzo maintains that although Kiswahili is a language of great importance in

85. Lorenzo's subordinate discussion of the meaning of the ethnic label 'Bangala', in #1199-1284, was dealt with in the treatment of the ethnic perspective on geographical and linguistic group identities and can be discarded for the analysis here.

these countries, it cannot be attributed the same status of language of national unity as can be attributed to Lingala in Zaire. The reason is that Kiswahili is not an authentically Rwandese or Burundian language, as the language's origins are to be found outside these countries and as the language has undergone pervasive linguistic interference from Arabic and from local African languages: *"les Hutu et les Tutsi. bon, il y a eu le swahili. mais le swahili n'est pas une langue d'une région bien déterminée. le swahili c'est un mélange de plusieurs langues. il y a l'arabe qui est intervenu. et il y a les langues de diverses parties. mais tandis que le lingala, c'est une langue des Zaïrois"* (#1189-1194). In other words, Lingala in Zaire differs from Kiswahili in Rwanda and Burundi in that Lingala is an indigenous, authentically Zairian language. To Lorenzo, the condition of indigenity and authenticity thus controls the question as to whether a language of wider communication qualifies as a country's internationally distinctive feature or not.

Lorenzo also refers to the case of the People's Republic of the Congo. His point is that although Lingala is also spoken in the Congo, it cannot be typically indicative of this country because it does not transcend the importance of the other local languages there: *"au Congo par exemple, ils ont le lingala, ils ont le mboshi, ils ont la langue des Bangala du nord, pour que les trois peuples puissent se comprendre ils ne peuvent parler que le français!"* (#1180-1184). In the Congo, Lingala is not sufficiently distributed to replace French as the principal lingua franca. In other words, it lacks a 'pan-Congolese' appeal. This lack of a pan-Congolese appeal at the internal level of the country precludes that Lingala assume a Congolese identity at the international level. By not being sufficiently pervasive *within* the Congo, it cannot operate as one of this country's characteristic features *towards the outside world*. Congo is, thus, not a viable competitor for Zaire in the fight over Lingala as an internationally distinctive feature. As a consequence, Lingala only indexes Zaire, to the exclusion of the other Lingala-speaking countries: *"si par exemple, j'entends quelqu'un parler le lingala, un Noir, je vais dire directement ah! oyo aza Zaïrois*[86]*. [...] il peut être Congolais hein! à Brazzaville on parle aussi le lingala. mais je dirais d'abord, c'est un Zaïrois"* (#1294-1299).

The immigrant context as dominated by Lingala

The Lingala-ruled organization of the Zairian multilingual make-up is not only relevant to the situation in Zaire, but also holds for Zairian communities living abroad. What is more, in diaspora situations, the supremacy of Lingala over the other Zairian languages is even reinforced.

This view surfaces in Manuel's qualification of Lingala as the 'common denominator' of all Zairians living abroad. In MA#274-285, I ask Manuel: *"est-ce que le lingala comme on l'utilise à Neptunia peut vraiment unir tous les Zaïrois qu'on a là-bas? parce qu'on a des Zaïrois de tous les côtés"* (#281-

86. Lingala for 'this person is a Zairian'.

284). Manuel's complete reply extends from #286 to #351. His first reaction is to underscore that Lingala's capacity as an effective instrument for the unification and integration of Zairians is particularly outspoken in diaspora situations: *"oui je comprends, je comprends. mais le lingala je crois ici, surtout à l'étranger, le dénominateur commun de tous les Zaïrois c'est le lingala"* (#286-288). He reiterates this opinion in #320-322: *"je trouve que c'est ça qui cimente aussi= l'un des éléments qui cimente nos relations c'est ça"*. Lingala functions as the 'common denominator' of all Zairians abroad, including those Zairians the implicit claim identifies as non-Lingala-speakers.

As the common denominator of all Zairians in the diaspora, Lingala functions as the principal lingua franca among these diaspora Zairians, at the expense of French. Manuel's description of the linguistic behavior in an encounter between two Zairian strangers in Belgium is noteworthy in this respect. Shortly after his quoted identification of Lingala as the *dénominateur commun*, he describes such encounters as follows: *"je rencontre par exemple à Bruxelles, un Zaïrois que je ne connais pas, je vous dis que la première réaction la langue que nous allons utiliser pour nous parler ce sera le lingala. [...] pas le français! évidemment peut-être alors maintenant ça dépend du milieu quoi,* <u>*mais*</u> *la première réaction quand nous allons nous rencontrer nous allons ah mwana mboka, boni?*[87] *hein? quand je lui dis boni?*[88] *et qu'il me répond c'est fini. je sais que c'est un Zaïrois"* (#295-304). Not French, but Lingala is the default lingua franca among Zairians abroad.

Joaquín and Lorenzo also focus on the quality of Lingala as the principal lingua franca abroad. In LO#1055-1061, Lorenzo explains that Averell, another non-Lingala-speaker and Neptunia regular, was able to avoid the use and the acquisition of Lingala when he lived in Kinshasa: *"Averell au fait, il est venu à Kinshasa pour étudier. faire l'université. donc il avait le tetela, et le français. le milieu qu'il fréquentait, c'est le milieu tetela. bon, avec les amis de l'université ils se parlaient en français"* (#1055-1059). Once arrived in Belgium, however, he soon found himself obliged to speak Lingala on an almost daily basis. Lorenzo indicates the reasons for this change in linguistic requirements as follows: *"mais ici il est obligé de parler le lingala! pour être dans tous les milieux quoi"* (#1059-1061). Joaquín explains the change in Averell's linguistic needs in similar terms, when he says: *"mais* <u>*ici*</u>*, il était obligé! parce que= bon, peut-être à force de parler français à un certain moment il se sent obligé de parler une langue zaïroise. bon, peut-être l'entourage parle le lingala, il va être entraîné par le lingala!"* (#1231-1236). Whereas in Kinshasa, Averell was able to avoid the use of Lingala and to resort to French for his interethnic contacts, the composition of, and the language usage patterns in, the immigrant community have since his arrival in Belgium compelled him to adopt Lingala. In the following turns, Joaquín asserts that in Belgium, Lingala, and not French,

87. Lingala for 'hey, compatriot, how are you?'.

88. Lingala for 'how are you?'.

is the lingua franca among Zairians of different regional origins: *"la communauté ici tout le monde a besoin [...] de lingala"* (#1244-1245).

In MA#305-314, it may be noticed that Manuel does not only apply his view of Lingala as the common denominator to the diaspora situation in general, but also to the Neptunia setting in particular. In #305-306, he states that Lingala is the language *"qui nous unit ici à Neptunia"* (which he repeats, by way of conclusion, in #313-314: *"la langue qui nous unit ici à Neptunia c'est le lingala"*). He then observes that he regularly uses Lingala with Baluba members of Neptunia, such as Iñigo and Blanca: *"avec Iñigo [...] nous allons nous parler en lingala. quand moi je rencontre Blanca, tu connais Blanca? [...] mais Blanca est Kasaïenne hein. mais je parle avec Blanca en lingala hein"* (#307-313). Note how on this rhetorical occasion, Manuel orients towards an *ethnic* perspective on linguistic group identity. Iñigo and Blanca are both of Baluba ethnic descent, but were born and raised in Kinshasa, which implies that ethnically, they are members of the Tshiluba linguistic group, and biographically, members of the Lingala linguistic group. Manuel's local argumentative goals compel him to orient to the ethnic dimensions in these individuals' repertoires of multiple identities. His references to Iñigo's and Blanca's current usage of Lingala serve to compound the claim that Lingala functions as the unifying, integrative language across all the subgroups in Neptunia.

Neptunia's pan-Zairian identity

To the Lingala-speaking informants, the dominance of Lingala in Neptunia is not an index of this social occasion's *sub*-Zairian identity, but of its *pan*-Zairian identity. That is, the Lingala dominance should not lead people to conclude that Neptunia is to be equated with a linguistic group of Lingala-speakers in a limited sense. This is directly entailed by the view of Zaire's multilingual make-up as presided by Lingala. Since the group of Lingala-speakers, as the Lingala language in itself, is to be considered a pan-Zairian rather than sub-Zairian structure, the social-symbolic value of a social occasion that is dominated by Lingala, such as Neptunia, can only be pan-Zairian.

In a few places, this view of Neptunia's identity as pan-Zairian rather than sub-Zairian surfaces at the explicit levels of meaning production. Joaquín's account in #1512-1578 is a case in point. The first part of this conversational stretch, until #1530, involves a meaningful misunderstanding between Joaquín and myself. My intention is to inquire into the influence of the European identity of the Neptunia Fathers on the relationship between the linguistic subgroups in Neptunia. In #1512-1526, I ask Joaquín whether the reactions would be different if the celebrant were a Zairian priest from Kinshasa instead of a Belgian priest, assuming that within Zaire Kinshasa represents an ethnically marked unit (*"si c'étaient des pères [...] des Zaïrois de Kinshasa ou quelque chose, est-ce que ça serait pas différent pour les swahiliphones?"*, #1513-1516). The meaningful misunderstanding consists in the fact that Joaquín does not recognize a difference, in terms of ethnic neutrality or markedness, between a Belgian priest on the one hand and a Zairian priest from Kinshasa on the other. Especially his comment *"mais si c'était un père zaïrois, il faut voir maintenant de quel coin"* in #1531-1532 indicates that to him, the neutrality of Kinshasa is a very fundamental principle: he adduces the specification *"il faut voir maintenant de quel coin"* as new, additional information, while I have already alluded to Kinshasa as such a *coin*. To him, Kinshasa is not a particular Zairian *coin* with a particular sub-Zairian identity, but fully compares with Belgium when it comes to neutrality in terms of the Zairian identities.

From #1533 onward, Joaquín replaces my juxtaposition with another one that does seem meaningful to him. He contrasts the masses conducted by a priest from Kinshasa or from Belgium to hypothetical masses conducted by a Mongala priest from the region of Equateur: *"un Mongala à ce moment, des critiques peuvent émaner quand même du public [...]. il risque d'être mal accueilli par les gens [...]. alors là il y aura des gens qui seront vexés"* (#1534-1544). To Joaquín, an opposition Kinshasa/Belgium vs. Equateur is more relevant than my opposition Kinshasa vs. Belgium. In the case of a Kinshasa or Belgian priest, Neptunia's identity is distinctively pan-Zairian, in the case of a Mongala priest from the region of Equateur, Neptunia's identity would shift (*"à ce moment"*) to a sub-Zairian one, with all its possibly conflictual consequences. When I ask him, in #1546-1547, whether Neptunia with its Belgian priests presently comes across as a Zairian mass or as a Bangala mass (*"comme une messe zaïroise, globale, ou comme une messe des Bangala?"*), he answers: *"une messe zaïroise. [...] Zaïre donc la messe zaïroise"* (#1548-1552) and not *"une messe d'un coin"* (#1558).

A.2. The majority rule and the *sub-Zairian* identity of Lingala and Neptunia

The main mechanism of the counterargument

The Kiswahili-speakers' construction of Neptunia's demographic composition operates as a refutation of the implicit claim in the following way. The Zairian community in Neptunia, as the Zairian community in Belgium in general, is said to be organized in various equivalent, mutually complementary, but individually distinct linguistic and geographical groups. The group of 'Lingala-speakers' is hereby consistently constructed as a *limited* group, i.e. as one of the Zairian subgroups. This subgroup of Lingala-speakers happens to be the numerically preponderant one in Neptunia, and the dominance of Lingala and the sociolinguistic inequality in Neptunia are but a 'normal' outcome of these numerical proportions. Groups such as the Kiswahili-speakers and other non-Lingala-speakers are in the minority and are 'guests' in an inherently Lingala place. Minorities have to observe the 'majority rule': it is a token of good manners that minorities and guests adapt to the linguistic preferences of the majority and the hosts. Thus, the harmfulness of the Lingala dominance as assumed in the implicit claim (*'There are good reasons to believe that the Kiswahili-speakers are or could be offended by the dominance of Lingala in Neptunia'*) is extenuated by a reference to the majority rule. The view of the organization of the Zairian community, and of the multilingual make-up of Zaire, in discrete linguistic groups does not allow for a biographical perspective on geographical and linguistic group identities. A person's additional knowledge of another language than the one of her or his own linguistic (and ethnic) group does not affect her or his exclusive membership of this group.

In Ingrid's exculpation of the Lingala-speakers from the dominance of Lingala and the sociolinguistic inequality in IN#358-368, she indicates that the numerical proportions are to be assessed in terms of linguistic groups approached from an ethnic perspective. Ingrid constructs John, who knows some Kiswahili, as a member of the Lingala-speaking group (erroneously, as the English pseudonym indicates, see also footnote 75), thereby emphasizing that his additional knowledge of Kiswahili is merely a coincidence and does not affect his fundamental Lingala identity: *"presque tous les gens ici= si nous prenons par exemple la chorale de Neptunia, si je regarde très bien les gens qui sont là-dedans, il n'y a pas quelqu'un de l'est là qui parle swahili. il peut parler un swahili comme John, il parle le swahili parce qu'il a appris le swahili, mais sa langue c'est le lingala. c'est tout à fait normal qu'il chante dans cette langue-là"* (#356-362). John may have mastered Kiswahili later in his life, his linguistic group identity remains Lingala, for the Lingala-speaking group is the group to which he 'really' belongs.

In HA#779-793, Hans mentions the majority rule, and his moral appreciation of this rule, in references to the Neptunia choir. He observes that: *"si les lingalaphones sont majoritaires, bon ils s'enthousiasment avec le lingala! c'est normal qu'ils chantent beaucoup plus en lingala que dans d'autres langues!"* (#782-785). The majority rule states that the (language) preferences to be heeded are those of the group that is numerically preponderant in the choir. To Hans, this majority rule is socially self-evident (*"normal"*), i.e. it is not only fully comprehensible, but also socially predictable and, therefore, acceptable that the members of the majority impose their linguistic preferences.

In JÜ#669-690, Jürgen uses the same quantitative argument, but prefers to relate it to the Neptunia public in general: *"et dans le public même, si vous voyez le nombre des gens qui parlent swahili, par exemple c'est je crois que même pas dix pour cent"* (#677-680). Again, this quantitative observation is sufficient to cancel the negative effects the dominance of Lingala could possibly have for the Kiswahili-speakers: *"c'est normal que le lingala passe"* (#677). The majority rule, sanctioned as socially 'normal', again functions as a useful resource to explain and, at the same time, to extenuate the dominance of Lingala. This explanatory and extenuating capacity of the majority rule also transpires in Jürgen's conclusions in #587-588: *"alors de là comprendre que bon, à Neptunia on chante en lingala il n'y a qu'un pas"*. To Jürgen, the leap from the *explanation* of the Lingala dominance in Neptunia to its *justification* *and extenuation* is only ‘a small step’. The knowledge that the dominance of Lingala is merely a function of the numerical proportions mitigates its harmfulness, and, as such, invalidates the implicit claim that there are good reasons for the Kiswahili-speakers to be offended.

The multilingual make-up of Zaire as geographically balanced

The Kiswahili-speakers’ counterargument lodges an implicit representation of the multilingual make-up of Zaire as an organization in which the four national languages, Kikongo, Lingala, Kiswahili, and Tshiluba, complement each other in a geographically balanced constellation. In this view, each language is considered to occupy its own geographical area of distribution, which is fully equivalent to the areas of distribution of the other languages. None of the four languages surpasses the other three languages in any respect. This implies that Kiswahili-speakers must respect the use of Lingala when they visit Lingala-speaking regions, in the same way as Lingala-speakers must respect the language choice of the Kiswahili-speakers when they travel to the eastern regions. With regard to this ‘linguistic respect’, the construction of Zaire’s multilingual make-up as a geographically balanced one contains an accusation of the Lingala-speakers as linguistically domineering.

Within this construction, the capital of Kinshasa is viewed as an ordinary Zairian region, on a par with, and not on top of, the ten other regions. In other words, Kinshasa is a Lingala-speaking region, just as, e.g., Shaba is a Kiswahili-speaking one. Neither its status as Zaire’s capital nor its markedly multiethnic character can grant it any superiority over the rest of Zaire. The Kiswahili-speakers do not view Kinshasa as ‘incorporating’ or ‘representing’ the entire Zairian territory, or the entire range of sub-Zairian identities.

The passage IN#501-556 provides an illustration of the construction of the Zairian multilingual make-up as a geographically balanced one, and of its function as a defense against the linguistically domineering Lingala-speakers. Ingrid indicates that she does not understand why many Lingala-speakers react negatively when Kiswahili-speakers want to speak Kiswahili. She contrasts the tolerance of Kiswahili-speakers towards Lingala, as *one* of the *four* national languages, to the linguistic intolerance often displayed by Lingala-speakers towards Kiswahili-speakers: *“les gens qui parlent swahili, tolèrent la langue lingala. parce que c’est une langue qui a été proclamée une langue nationale au Zaïre. il faut que ça soit la même chose chez les autres”* (#508-512). She emphasizes that the language spoken in Kinshasa is Lingala, while Bukavu is a Kiswahili-speaking city – a reality she knows I am aware of (*“vous avez été là dernièrement”*, #534), but which she wishes to highlight in order to make it clear that Lingala should not claim authority outside its own area of distribution. She argues that Kiswahili-speakers too, have no such ambitions with regard to Kiswahili and that they honor the territorial boundaries of their language. She uses the example of political meetings: referring first to the case of the eastern regions, she says *“vous allez faire un meeting dans les villages en lingala, qui* *va vous écouter? personne! […] c'est la même chose pour un gouverneur de swahili qui part dans une des régions de l'Equateur. là tu dois parler en lingala. mais si tu vas parler en swahili qui va t'écouter? personne!"* (#545-551). To Ingrid, Kiswahili is as foreign a language in the western regions as Lingala is in the eastern regions, and neither language, including her own, should claim a place or function outside its original area of distribution. In the long account that follows (#558-624), Ingrid marshals various points of evidence to indicate that the instances of Lingala usage in the eastern regions, and of Kiswahili usage in the western regions, are exceptional and constitute a distortion of the natural linguistic identity of the respective regions. This includes, among other things, some references to the fact that the Kiswahili-speakers in Kivu are generally not very keen on Lingala: *"les gouverneurs qui nous parlaient en swahili on les aimait bien que les gouverneurs qui nous parlaient en lingala"* (#559-561).

The construction of four equivalent national languages also transpires in Ingrid's claim that a true Zairian should know all four national languages. On more than one occasion, she makes comments to the effect that *"comme ce sont des langues nationales bon, on est obligé de les connaître"* (#456-458) and *"bon, la langue nationale chez nous il y a aussi le tshiluba. je ne parle pas tshiluba et pourtant je suis Zaïroise. vous trouvez ça normal?"* (#614-617).

Criticizing the Lingala-speakers for not reciprocating the linguistic tolerance displayed by the Kiswahili-speakers towards speakers of Lingala, is also a noticeable strategy in Ingrid's account in IN#277-317. Again, Ingrid juxtaposes the Kiswahili-speakers' and the Lingala-speakers' sociolinguistic behavior. Whereas the former respect the other party's choice of language (*"quand ils parlent lingala, d'abord nous on ne va pas dire que vous exagérez, on les laisse parler, c'est leur liberté"*, #299-301), Lingala-speakers do not tolerate that the Kiswahili-speakers use Kiswahili among themselves. Instead, they want to impose the use of Lingala on *all* Zairians: *"ils vous disent, ah vous aussi vous exagérez avec votre swahili! […] eux ils peuvent préférer que nous tous= on nous entraîne dans le lingala"* (#284-285 and #302-303). Ingrid also reports that in eastern Zaire the Lingala-speakers' linguistic intolerance leads to negative attitudes towards Lingala and its speakers. She observes: *"c'est comme s'ils préféraient imposer la langue lingala sur toute la région. alors les gens ils se sont rendu compte, ils disent mais comment on va parler cette langue-là?"* (#309-312), after which she proceeds with an enumeration of other reasons why many Kiswahili-speakers have an aversion to Lingala (in #312-338, e.g., *"c'est une langue qui n'est pas polie"* and *"une langue de commandements pour les militaires"*).

In JÜ#456, Jürgen explains that Lingala is seldom heard in the Kivu regions, by comparing the use of Lingala in eastern Zaire with the use of Kiswahili in the western parts. His remark on the scarce usage of Lingala in the east effectively summarizes the balanced view of the multilingual make-up: *"le lingala c'est comme le swahili à l'ouest"* (#456-457). A few turns further, I ask

Jürgen about the impression the people in the Kivu regions have of Lingala-speakers (#479-480). The answer Jürgen provides is also based on a construction of Zairian multilingualism as geographically balanced: *"c'est un étrang= d'abord c'est un étranger. celui qui parle lingala c'est un étranger. ou alors, c'est quelqu'un qui a vécu= une fille un homme du Kivu qui a vécu dans les zones lingalaphones"* (#481-484). To Jürgen, a Zairian's usage of Lingala indexes above all her or his regional affiliation. Lingala is nothing more than the language of the people from Lingala-speaking areas. If there are people from Kivu who speak and use Lingala, they are exceptions to the natural situation, in which the spheres of influence of the four national languages coincide with clearly delineated geographical areas.

In JÜ#499-533, Jürgen brings up the conference of Zairian linguists held in Lubumbashi in 1974. He mentions how this conference was burdened by a hidden political agenda, set up by Mobutu and his administrators in Kinshasa, to have the participating academics 'scientifically advise' the declaration of Lingala as Zaire's unique national language: *"il y a eu un colloque où il y avait des linguistes, mais il y avait aussi une délégation de politiciens qui étaient venus de Kinshasa, et la mission non-déclarée c'était de montrer que le lingala devait être la langue du Zaïre. dans le mythe de l'unité nationale, l'unité du pays, il fallait une seule langue, et c'était le lingala"* (#501-507). Jürgen's point is that the politicians' intention went counter to the natural, scientifically observable sociolinguistic situation of Zaire, which is marked by a balanced geographical distribution of the four national languages. He thus appeals to the authority of academically trained scientists, who are concerned with an *unbiased description* of reality, whereas politicians have *prescriptive* considerations in mind. In his words: *"mais les professeurs, d'éminents linguistes comme Mudimbe et d'autres ont démontré que le lingala était une des langues parlées au Zaïre"* (#507-510). Jürgen's argumentative references to the Lubumbashi conference are particularly informative if compared to Manuel's sharply contrasting account of the same event, described above.

In the view of Zaire's multilingual make-up as a geographically balanced one, Kinshasa is taken to be part of the area of distribution of Lingala, without 'incorporating' or 'representing' the entire range of Zairian linguistic and regional subidentities. In UL#322-341, Ulrike mentions that in Europe, Lingala has strongly enlarged its sphere of influence (*"le lingala est généralisé"*, #324), and that this spread is grounded in the linguistic attitudes and behaviors of the Lingala-speakers. The Lingala-speakers take it for granted that each Zairian they meet is from Kinshasa and thus belongs to the group of the Lingala-speakers: *"tout Zaïrois qu'on voit on croit qu'il est de Kinshasa"* (#326-327). Ulrike's denunciation (see also below) of the Lingala-speakers' linguistic attitudes is built on a very fundamental belief in the identity of Kinshasa as merely an 'nth' Zairian region, on a par with the other regions. To Ulrike, supposing that a certain person is from Kinshasa amounts to supposing that he or she is from a part of the Lingala-speaking areas within Zaire's multilingual make-up.

In addition to accusing the Lingala-speakers of presuming that every Zairian belongs to the same linguistic group, Ulrike is also irritated at listening to her own representation of the typical dialogue between a Lingala-speaker and another Zairian: *"je croise un Zaïrois, ah vous êtes Zaïrois? oui. tout de suite bon, en lingala! c'est automatique! pour tout Noir vis-à-vis de l'autre Noir, Zaïrois, bon il est censé connaître parler le lingala"* (#338-341).

More on Zaire's multilingual make-up: the role of French

As shown, the balanced interpretation of Zaire's multilingual make-up casts Kiswahili and Lingala as two equivalent languages, each with its own area of influence. The two languages serve as the exclusive means of communication in their respective communities and areas and, as ethnically and regionally marked codes, are not supposed to transcend this community-restricted function. The only language that may claim neutrality in terms of ethnic or other group identities is French. To the Kiswahili-speakers, French is Zaire's only interregional lingua franca and need or should not be assisted in this capacity by Lingala. The multilingual make-up of Zaire is thus described as a pyramid, the top of which is exclusively occupied by French, and in which the four national languages occupy the second step in perfect mutual equivalence.

The view of French as *the* Zairian language of interregional communication is often included in discussions of the clubhouse situation in Neptunia. As described in chapter 6 (section 6.4.2), after the liturgical celebration the Neptunia basement is converted into a clubhouse, where members have a pleasant chat over a glass of beer or soft drink. It was mentioned that the clubhouse consists in what Goffman calls a 'multifocused gathering', i.e. a setting made up of several conversational units which develop independently. Some informants observe that in this clubhouse situation, language choices depend on the identity of the particular conversational unit: the Kiswahili-speakers always use Kiswahili when they sit together, the Lingala-speakers use Lingala, etc. French, then, is used for communication across these linguistic groups. The clubhouse situation is thus constructed as a linguistic economy in which French operates as the *liaison* language across the different linguistic subgroups.

In JÜ#902-907, I ask Jürgen about the language preferences displayed in the clubhouse situation. To Jürgen, the formation of conversational units is itself based on regional and linguistic affiliations. Each of the conversational units embodies a distinct and linguistically homogeneous company. In this constellation, the language use in each of the conversational units is self-selective: it is not so much an outcome of, as a criterion for the composition of the units. Appealing to his own authority as a doctoral student in sociology, he observes *"vous êtes dans les langues, mais en sociologue sur l'état quoi, vous savez remarquer que les gens se regroupent selon leurs affinités"* (#911-914). To Jürgen, the self-selection of the language choice in such contexts is evident:

"les gens parleront selon les cerc= les petits groupes qui se forment, les langues de ces groupes-là" (#926-928).

The same construction of the setting and of the self-selective nature of language choices may be found in Hans's account in HA#1169-1174, which is also part of his answer to my question on the clubhouse situation. To him, *"bon d'abord les gens se regroupent selon leurs affinités, après la messe. […] et selon les affinités, les swahiliphones se retrouvent entre eux, pour la plupart, lingalaphones entre eux, les tshilubaphones entre eux"*.

The Kiswahili-speaking informants understand that the borders between the different conversational units in the clubhouse are often crossed, and that as a result interactions between Zairians from different regions and different linguistic groups do occur. Blending ethical considerations with descriptive observations, they argue both that French is the language that *should be* used in the interactions across conversational units and that French is the language that *is actually used* in these interactions. To Hans (HA#1245-1249), it is clear that once the boundaries of the conversational units are crossed, French takes over from the languages of the respective linguistic groups: *"après la messe les gens parlent plus français. s'ils ne se sont pas regroupés selon leur géolinguistique. ils parlent plus français. ensemble. mais en dehors de ça, alors chacun se retrouve dans sa langue de la région"* (#1245-1249). Jürgen too, observes that *"dans un milieu avec des gens qui ne comprennent pas le swahili nous parlerons en français. en français à Neptunia"* (#933-935). Jürgen also links the role of French as a lingua franca in the Neptunia clubhouse to its status as the interregional language in Zaire: *"il vaut mieux que je leur parle dans une langue que nous parlons tous, c'est le français, pour le moment au Zaïre"* (#974-976). Ulrike makes the same statement when she mitigates her own observation that Lingala is predominant in Zaire and in the Zairian community in Belgium: *"mais, attention, n'oublie pas le français aussi hein! parce que le français c'est la première langue, parlée officielle au Zaïre hein!"* (#832-834).

As may be noticed, French, and not Lingala, is considered to be the language that unites all Zairians. French is the only language *"que nous parlons tous"*, as Jürgen holds (JÜ#975-976). The informants also observe that this view is not necessarily shared by all Zairians: the Lingala-speakers are blamed for assuming that their language is the universally Zairian one. In JÜ#939, I ask Jürgen whether Lingala-speakers would sometimes address a Kiswahili-speaker in Lingala. Jürgen's choice of words is significant: *"il y en a qui <u>osent</u>"* (#939). Talking Lingala to a Kiswahili-speaker is something one 'dares': it is a threatening act and it does not conform with received rules for appropriate sociolinguistic conduct. Jürgen completes his remark with a detailed account of how vehemently some Kiswahili-speakers react against this perceived linguistic arrogance (#943-958). He mentions, among other things, the case of a Kiswahili-speaker who once refused to answer a Lingala-speaker who had addressed him in Lingala. Jürgen recalls how this man silently remarked: *"comment ce type veut m'imposer sa langue"* (#952).

Hans levels similar reproaches at the Lingala-speakers. He also observes that some Lingala-speakers invariably use Lingala when they address other Zairians *“sans interroger les gens!”* (#1212), and criticizes the Lingala-speakers for not respecting Zaire’s linguistic diversity and for their ignorance of the negative reactions this arouses among the Kiswahili-speakers: *“ils croient que tout le monde parle lingala. [...] mais ils pensent effectivement que vous pensez en lingala! que vous parlez le lingala que c’est votre langue. [...] ils ignorent que les autres se plaignent même”* (#1217-1229).

Ulrike’s rendition of the language choices in the Neptunia clubhouse also contains a noteworthy condemnation of the Lingala-speakers (UL#530-595). In #555-561, she explains that when two strangers meet for the first time, they will first try to establish each other’s regional and linguistic identity in order to choose the situational means of communication. As her account does not include information on the language the two strangers actually use in asking about each other’s identity, I ask her whether Lingala-speakers would immediately use Lingala when they address other Zairians (#562-563), inviting her to elaborate on the encounters in Neptunia as an example. She answers in the negative, specifying that the Zairians in Neptunia mostly use French to initiate a conversation: *“tous les gens que moi j’ai rencontrés ils ont commencé par le français. là, à Neptunia, parlent français. en tout cas jamais= je me rappelle pas. quelqu’un qui a commencé tout de suite comme ça en me voyant, me parler en lingala”* (#577-581). She then specifies that one of the first topics of conversation will be each other’s regional identity: *“et puis on se demande après, vous êtes de quelle région”* (#585-586). This exchange of identifications will then determine the language choice for the remainder of the conversation.

Ulrike’s account of the way in which this exchange of identifications determines the contingent language choice deserves more particular attention. Ulrike first mentions that once she and her interlocutor are aware of each other’s regional and linguistic identity, Kiswahili and Lingala are equal candidates for the remaining conversation: *“là à ce moment on parle swahili ou bien lingala”* (#586-587). In #588-591, I react surprised and say that I had rather predicted a similarity in regions of origins to select the shared Zairian language as the means of communication (Kiswahili among Kiswahili-speakers, Lingala among Lingala-speakers, etc.), and a discrepancy in regions of origin to automatically select French. Ulrike denies this by remarking that a conversation between a Lingala-speaker (e.g., from the region of Equateur) and a Kiswahili-speaker (e.g., from the region of Maniema) will be conducted in Lingala once the regions of origin are known (which is not completely in line with her earlier statement that both Kiswahili and Lingala may be used). She thus maintains that French is merely used in the more formal opening parts of a conversation between strangers. Once the identities are mutually known and ‘the conversational ice is broken’, a Zairian language can take over from French. Which Zairian language this will be is quite clear in a context where the interlocutors share the same linguistic group identity. If the linguistic group identities are not shared, on the other hand, the interlocutors will choose to conduct the rest of the talk in Lingala. The selection of French is thus not a function of the lack of a shared Zairian language, but is rather controlled by parameters such as conversation-initial formality.

Neptunia's sub-Zairian identity and the Kiswahili-speakers' role as guests

Building on the balanced view of Zaire's multilingual make-up, the Kiswahili-speakers construct Neptunia as part of the distribution area of Lingala. In other words, Neptunia, with its Lingala dominance, is 'Lingala land' as a Zairian subunit. The fact that the linguistic identity of this Zairian place is Lingala, and not, e.g., Tshiluba or Kiswahili, is taken to be the result of accidental historical factors, such as the Kinshasa and Malula background of the Neptunia mass. Neptunia's Lingala identity is cast as 'nobody's fault' and, at the same time, as a *fait accompli*, the conclusions to be drawn from this *fait accompli* being considered more important than its causes. These conclusions are that since Neptunia is Lingala land, the Kiswahili-speakers in Neptunia fulfill the role of 'guests' in a foreign place in which the Lingala-speakers are the hosts. The Kiswahili-speakers represent themselves as 'visiting' Lingala-speaking Neptunia, and maintain that, as guests, they are in no position to contest the customs of the house.

When in UL#814 I ask Ulrike why the dominance of Lingala is a harmless phenomenon in Neptunia, whereas this would probably be socially unacceptable in the region of Maniema, she argues *"c'est une minorité ici! tu ne vas pas faire parler tout le Maniema le lingala! non hein"* (#815-816). Ulrike's asyndetic construction, directly contrasting the situation in Neptunia to the situation in Maniema, reveals how she considers Neptunia to be Lingala territory in exactly the same way as Maniema is Kiswahili territory. The Lingala-speakers would constitute a minority in the Maniema region and would have no right to generalize Lingala there. Similarly, it would be absurd for the Kiswahili-speakers in Neptunia to require that Kiswahili be considered equal to, let alone be substituted for, Lingala in this setting.

A similar comparison may be found in HA#1114-1118. Hans demonstrates that the position of the Kiswahili-speakers in Neptunia compares with the hypothetical situation in which someone would come to live with him in his own house. If Hans and his children spoke French at home and his mother came to live with them, then it would only be normal for his mother to adapt to her hosts' linguistic preferences: *"c'est même comme si ma mère venait habiter avec moi, tous mes enfants parlent français. elle va se forcer à parler français"* (#1114-1116). In such a situation, his mother would be a guest, who could not claim any enforceable linguistic rights. In the same way, the Kiswahili-speakers are not allowed to claim the recognition or the promotion of their language in Neptunia, where they come only as guests.

In IN#461-468, Ingrid backs her opinion that the Kiswahili-speakers should accommodate to the Lingala-speaking majority in Neptunia by drawing a parallel with the position of Tshiluba in the Kasai regions: *"si vous allez aujourd'hui au Kasaï, vous n'allez quand même pas trouver beaucoup de langues de swahili et beaucoup de chansons de lingala. vous allez trouver beaucoup de chansons de tshiluba"* (#461-465). Neptunia's linguistic identity is Lingala, in the same way as the linguistic identity of the Kasai regions is Tshiluba. Neptunia is not treated as a social occasion that gathers Zairians from all regional and linguistic groups on an equal basis, but as a social occasion for and by Lingala-speakers.

The Lingala identity of Neptunia is partly grounded in its connection with Kinshasa, which, as mentioned above, is itself seen as operating on a par with, rather than on top of, the rest of the Zairian geographical and ethnic identities. To Hans, it is of central importance that *"l'église ici, c'est une église de Kinshasa"* (HA#759-760). On more than one occasion, he repeats this argument. In HA#581-684, e.g., we read: *"si beaucoup de chansons sont en lingala, c'est parce que Neptunia ici, c'est pratiquement une paroisse de Kinshasa"*.

In his long account in HA#838-967, Hans also argues that the dominance of Lingala is the result of the fact that the Neptunia masses are based on the Catholic ritual as conceived by cardinal Malula – whereby he most probably refers to 'the Zairian rite' (see chapter 4, section 4.5.3.3). This argument is twofold. The continuity of Lingala from the Malula masses to the Neptunia masses is first of all explained by means of the construction of a Lingala identity for Malula. Selecting a biographical perspective on linguistic groups and locally orienting away from the ethnic perspective, Hans foregrounds Malula's concrete life experiences as the reasons for his Lingala identity: although, as Hans himself mentions (#932-933), Malula had his ethnic origins in the Kasai regions and, on the maternal side, in the region of Lower Zaire, *"sa langue que lui-même préférait c'est le lingala! c'est sa langue préférée"* (#934-935). But the legacy of Lingala is also explained on the basis of the location where Malula started his liturgical renovations. By mentioning Kinshasa as the cradle of the Malula mass in the opening sentences of his long account and by attentively repeating this (*"il y a une messe que le cardinal Malula avait initiée à Kinshasa, il y a une messe que le cardinal Malula avait initiée à Kinshasa avec des chansons comme ça"*, #847-850), Hans gives special prominence to this argumentative element, and he also explains that after the conception of the new rite in Kinshasa, this city served as the epicenter for the wavelike diffusion of the rite throughout the rest of Zaire: *"mais donc maintenant ça s'adapte, à chaque église locale"* (#930-931). In sum, Hans refers to the Malula background of the Neptunia masses in order to emphasize Neptunia's Kinshasa identity. This emphasis on the Kinshasa identity of Neptunia is in itself essential to the construction of Neptunia as Lingala land, i.e. as a social occasion in which the Kiswahili-speakers are guests who have to adapt to the local linguistic preferences of the Lingala-speakers.

The connection between the Kinshasa-Lingala identity of Neptunia and the view that Neptunia is an event in which the Kiswahili-speakers are mere guests nicely surfaces in Hans's excited reply in HA#1056-1065: *"je l'ai déjà dit, c'est pratiquement une paroisse de Kinshasa. mais bon moi, à mon niveau, quand je quitte ma région pour aller à Kinshasa ou pour aller ailleurs, donc dans une autre région, je m'adapte! [...] mais si je dois communier avec les autres, je dois m'intégrer!"*. To Hans, going to Neptunia in Belgium is not different from traveling to a foreign region in Zaire, such as Kinshasa. The Kiswahili-speakers in Neptunia are 'abroad' (*"quand je quitte ma région"*), while the Lingala-speakers are 'at home'. In Hans's reasoning, it is 'normal' that the Kiswahili-speakers adapt themselves to the local practices. Hans's view of the Kiswahili-speakers in Neptunia as foreigners in Lingala land is manifest in his last words: the Kiswahili-speakers are the ones who have to *integrate* with the host community (*"je dois m'intégrer"*).

B. Neptunia's pan-Zairian identity

Above, it was explained that the Lingala-speakers disagree with the Kiswahili-speakers on the identity of Neptunia. The former construct Neptunia as a place with a pan-Zairian identity, the latter construct it as representing the Lingala subsegment of Zairian society and of the Zairian community. In other argumentative contexts than the ones described above, however, the Kiswahili-speakers also appear to approach Neptunia as a pan-Zairian social occasion. This implies a sharp thematic contradiction within the Kiswahili-speakers' repertoire of counterarguments.

In order to refute the implicit claim, both linguistic groups thus dispose of the counterargument that Neptunia is a pan-Zairian social occasion. The way in which the Kiswahili-speakers construct Neptunia's pan-Zairian identity is notably different from the Lingala-speakers' construction. As mentioned, the Lingala-speakers arrive at it by referring to the pan-Zairian appeal of Lingala. By virtue of Lingala being the dominant language in Neptunia, this pan-Zairian identity is then projected onto Neptunia as a whole.

For the Kiswahili-speakers, on the other hand, Neptunia is to be identified as a pan-Zairian occasion, not *because of*, but *in spite of* its Lingala dominance. To the Kiswahili-speakers, the pan-Zairian identity is effectuated by the contingent intercultural context in which it is situated. The contrast with the surrounding Western (Belgian, Flemish) world prompts the Kiswahili-speakers to interpret Neptunia in undifferentiated Zairian terms. The fact that the priests in Neptunia are Belgians, rather than Zairians, also appears to play an important role.

B.1. The pan-Zairian appeal of Lingala

The Lingala-speakers' construction of Neptunia's pan-Zairian identity was explained and illustrated in the discussion of the previous counterargument. I will therefore limit its treatment here to a brief paraphrase. The argument builds on a construction of the multilingual make-up of Zaire as presided by Lingala. In this view, Lingala is not so much a fourth national language within a balanced sociolinguistic frame, as a geographically and socially ubiquitous language in which the different substructures of Zaire's multilingual and multiethnic reality coalesce. Lingala thereby stands for Zaire as a whole, and not for one of its divisive subidentities. This pan-Zairian denotation of Lingala is projected onto social occasions in which it is used as the only or dominant code, such as Neptunia. The explanatory strategy at work appeals to a syllogism: if Lingala equals Zaire in its entirety, and if Neptunia equals Lingala, then Neptunia equals Zaire in its entirety.

B.2. The intercultural basis

On some occasions, the Kiswahili-speakers' construction of a pan-Zairian identity for Neptunia is contained in a representation of Neptunia as 'a Zairian beacon light in a Western see'. Thus, the intercultural context in which Neptunia takes place is of crucial importance in this argumentation. The informants qualify the dominance of Lingala as an unlucky state of affairs, but add that this dominance cannot spoil the advantage of having a Zairian mass at their disposal in an otherwise Western, Belgian, Flemish environment. The claim is that within an otherwise Western context, Neptunia is above all a *Zairian* social occasion. Thus, the identification of Neptunia as 'Zairian-as-opposed-to-Western' immediately entails a neutralization of all possible intra-Zairian disparities. The external *deviation* triggers an internal, centripetal *integration*, resulting in an identification of Neptunia in unitary, pan-Zairian terms.

In UL#381-386, I explain to Ulrike that I am confused by what I consider to be a contradiction between her earlier descriptions of the sometimes fierce rejection of Lingala in eastern Zaire on the one hand, and my general impression that the Kiswahili-speakers approve of the dominance of this language in Neptunia on the other. She accounts for this contradiction by explaining that to her, the three most important aspects about Neptunia are the fact that one can be among fellow countrypersons, the fact that the global character of the Neptunia masses is Zairian and not Western, and the fact that the masses are unique in Antwerp in that they are not conducted in Dutch but in a language Zairians are able to understand: *"on retrouve des Zaïrois. on parle français ou le lingala. ils se retrouvent= disons c'est un Zaïre en miniature. pour moi. c'est un Zaïre en miniature. [...] ils se retrouvent là, c'est bien, c'est une messe dite en français. et puis il y a un peu de lingala, bon. que d'aller à une messe en flamand par exemple. c'est ça. là, enfin pour moi je trouve qu'ils prient mieux là que aller assister à une messe en flamand"* (#388-397). All these advantages of the

Neptunia masses make the dominance of Lingala an ‘unessential detail’, easily to put up with: *“et puis il y a un peu de lingala, bon”*. Neptunia’s predominant use of Lingala pales into insignificance beside the inconveniences experienced in Flemish masses.

In UL#422-476, Ulrike reminds me of the fact that unlike Africa, Europe nowadays witnesses very few religious vocations and is marked by a very low church attendance. The members of the Zairian community should thus be most grateful to have a Zairian mass at their disposal within this ‘religious desert’, and they should certainly not find fault with such trivialities as language choice: *“ils sont à l’étranger. déjà ils ont cette Neptunia, mais c’est beaucoup pour eux! [...] ils ne vont pas exiger voilà qu’il y ait une messe uniquement en lingala ou en swahili ou en kikongo, non. ça c’est demander beaucoup. déjà tu vois actuellement, dans le monde actuel, il y a moins de vocations. les prêtres il y en a pas beaucoup. déjà le père Vladimir il est là, ce qu’il fait c’est déjà beaucoup hein. qu’on a une messe tous les samedis en français hein”* (#422-436).

Hans uses a shorter exposé to make a similar statement. In HA#1228, I ask Hans about his personal opinion on the Lingala-speakers’ linguistic overconfidence which he has just described. He mentions, among other things, the cases of Kiswahili-speakers who voiced objections against the excessive use of Lingala in Neptunia: *“en fait les autres se plaignent comme Lothar [...] j’ai déjà entendu à maintes reprises Ingrid ah bon, ah cette messe-là mais ((klicks tongue)) c’est toujours le lingala”* (#1230-1233). He expresses certain doubts as to the legitimacy of these objections, arguing that Neptunia is an event in which you meet fellow countrypersons (*“on va rencontrer ses compatriotes, qui vous ont peut-être invités pour tel tel tel et tout ça”*, #1234-1236), which is enjoyable in itself and which therefore surpasses language issues. Hans also situates Neptunia in its intercultural context, arguing that its place in Belgium and Europe imbues it with a primarily Zairian – as opposed to Western – character: *“et puis ça recrée quand même l’ambiance qu’on a d’habitude au pays”* (#1237-1238). In other words, when contrasted to what is offered by the masses in Flanders, Neptunia’s indexical value shifts from a sub-Zairian to a pan-Zairian one.

On other occasions, the view of Neptunia’s pan-Zairian identity surfaces from a construction of the role the Belgian Fathers play in the sociolinguistic relationships between Lingala-speakers and Kiswahili-speakers. Jürgen’s account in JÜ#877-892 provides an illustration of this. He draws my attention to a mass in Antwerp that is celebrated in Kikongo by a Zairian priest of Bakongo ethnic descent. Whereas the use of Lingala in Neptunia, where the priests are not Lingala-speaking Zairians but Belgians, is an acceptable phenomenon, he makes it clear that he would most probably not accept the Zairian Father’s use of Kikongo in his masses: *“mais si moi vous m’invitez à une messe comme celle-là [...] <u>si</u> je suis un peu trop susceptible, je dirai écoutez vous faites la messe pour la tribu moi ça ne m’intéresse pas. je vais* *ailleurs"* (#885-892). In other words, if the user of the dominant Zairian language (say, Kikongo) were a Zairian instead of a Belgian, it would become obvious that the dominance of this language is grounded in the social occasion's corresponding sub-Zairian (say, Bakongo) identity. In Neptunia, such is not the case: the users of the dominant language, Lingala, are Europeans, and this means that the dominance is not a function of some Lingala identity of the place. In this reasoning, Jürgen thus strongly orients away from a Lingala identity for Neptunia and constructs it as a pan-Zairian social occasion.

In #1431-1438, Hans contends in similar terms that Neptunia would lose its pan-Zairian character ('color') if the Belgian priests were to be replaced with Zairians: *"mais à supposer qu'on amenait maintenant un prêtre zaïrois. lingalaphone. là ça changerait de couleur. [...] si on amenait un prêtre zaïrois lingalaphone, on ne dirait plus une église zaïroise. on dirait une église lingalaphone"*. The consequences for the sociolinguistic relationships between Lingala-speakers and Kiswahili-speakers in Neptunia would be detrimental: *"les swahiliphones diraient mais est-ce que nous nous pouvons pas avoir un prêtre swahiliphone! ça poserait directement le problème de la langue. [...] si un type du Zaïre venait seulement avec sa langue, on dirait non. nous aussi nous devons avoir notre prêtre de notre langue"* (#1450-1461). To the Kiswahili-speakers, a dominance of Lingala is harmless as long as its use is not grounded in a Lingala *identity* of the social occasion in which it appears. Once the occasion comes to assume such an identity, the dominance could immediately be considered a serious stumbling block. In other words, the language issue only becomes problematic once it is connected to sub-Zairian group identities. Attributing to Neptunia the social identity of the language that already constitutes its dominant code, would transform the sociolinguistic reality into a sociolinguistic problem: *"ça poserait directement le problème de la langue"*. Neptunia's *present* identity is thus constructed as a pan-Zairian one. It is this pan-Zairian identity that renders the dominant use of Lingala acceptable. And Neptunia owes this Zairian identity to the fact that its managers are not Zairians, but Belgians, a remarkable antilogy that also appears in Hans's remark in #1453-1455: *"comme il y a des prêtres belges, donc non-zaïrois, bon la situation est différente. ils [the Kiswahili-speakers] estiment que, c'est une église zaïroise"*.

C. Denying the existence of negative attitudes vis-à-vis Lingala in Zaire

The implicit claim (*'There are good reasons to believe that the Kiswahili-speakers are or could be offended by the dominance of Lingala in Neptunia'*) is grounded in the presupposition that negative attitudes towards Lingala are to some degree and in some form present in eastern Zaire. In the counterargument to be discussed here, the informants challenge this presupposition. The Kiswahili-speakers' and the Lingala-speakers' common strategy is to represent the attitudinal variation in eastern Zaire in diachronic terms. The positive attitudes are located in the present, while the negative attitudes are referred to the past, so that attitudes are presented as socially uniform (and cross-contextually stable) during the respective periods, each period being characterized by one type of attitude and by interindividual homogeneity. In this diachronization of what is in fact a synchronic attitudinal variation, it is maintained that some decades ago, a certain aversion to Lingala could indeed be observed in the eastern regions of Zaire, but that this aversion has now been replaced by some appreciation of the language. The only skepticism towards Lingala that can be recorded in present days, it is also argued, is to be found among the older generations.[89]

The Lingala-speakers' actualization of this counterargument involves a fierce discrediting of the former negative attitudes, as well as of the remaining present ones, as retarded and illegitimate. Characteristic of the Lingala-speakers' constructions is also their preference to entirely invert the dimension of the attitudes towards Lingala. The Lingala-speakers do not simply negate the present existence of negative attitudes, they also set out to argue that Lingala is actually a language of very *high* prestige among eastern Zairians. And it is this high prestige that has fostered the factual spread of the language throughout the entire Zairian territory. In this view, subjective prestige is seen as logically and historically prior to objective language spread.

The Kiswahili-speakers, on the other hand, are not inclined to stigmatize the negative attitudes that flourished in the past, nor their remnants that have persisted into present days. Also, to them, the subsidence of the hostility vis-à-vis Lingala has not been accompanied by a replacing *positive* appraisal of the language, but has rather left an ideological void or indifference. This subsidence of the negative attitudes is the natural and inevitable product of a mechanical, involuntary process. The main driving force here is the growing spread of Lingala throughout the Zairian territory and social spheres of life. The acceptance of Lingala is thus represented as a natural outcome of, and not as a

89. I would like to mention here that the diachronization of synchronic (interindividual) variation in linguistic attitudes does not only occur in forms of popular consciousness, but that it is also recurrent in scientific reports on language attitudes. One example in the context of Zaire is Goyvaerts (1995). Goyvaerts suggests that the growing spread of Lingala in eastern Zaire is grounded in a historical 'replacement' of the former negative attitudes towards the language with new, positive ones (see also my discussion in chapter 4, section 4.4.3.3): *"People use [Lingala] phrases to meet the needs of their* changing *community in a flexible, subtle, and elegant way. In Bukavu, and elsewhere for that matter, they bring a* new *cultural dimension to a society whose members are constantly searching for mobility, adaptability, and prestige.* Initially, *Lingala was looked upon merely as the language of vagrants and villains in cities like Mbujimayi, Lubumbashi, and even Bukavu […]"* (1995: 309, emphasis added). In this account as well, it is implied that variation in language attitudes within a speech community at one given moment in history must be 'repaired' by the observer: it is repaired by projecting it onto a diachronic axis. The application of this strategy is not restricted to Goyvaert's report alone, but in fact underpins the vast majority of monographs on language attitudes.

precondition for, the factual spread of Lingala. In this view, objective language spread is seen as logically and historically prior to subjective prestige.

C.1. Lingala's markedly high prestige

In LO#636-641, I bring up the issue of language attitudes in eastern Zaire, mentioning reports of hostile feelings vis-à-vis Lingala in those regions. In #642-644, Lorenzo interrupts me and hastens to situate the negative attitudes in past times: *"à l'époque. à l'époque. à l'époque. [...] mais actuellement c'est= tu sens chez les jeunes, il veulent maintenant parler le lingala"*. In the following turns, until #694, Lorenzo describes this history of attitude change in more detail. He refers, among other things, to the great influence of modern Zairian music, which is almost exclusively in Lingala. At a certain time in history, the eastern Zairians wanted to understand the lyrics of this popular music and thereby came to abandon their original aversion to the language: *"ça a un peu influencé leur façon de percevoir les choses"* (#652-653). In order to clarify and back his claim that there has been a decisive attitude change, Lorenzo also marshals some of his own experiences. After having stressed again that *"ça a changé. vraiment ça a beaucoup changé!"* (#669), he brings up some of the observations he was able to make during his time as a student at the University of Lubumbashi. Whereas in the beginning of his studies, around 1979, he noticed that many of the autochthonous students disfavored Lingala, only a few years later, by the time he was about to graduate, he was able to observe that many of them were very interested in learning and speaking the language: *"la plupart de mes amis ils voulaient apprendre le lingala. donc quand ils venaient par exemple à se parler en lingala, fais tout pour nous corriger si nous faisons des fautes en lingala!"* (#684-688). To Lorenzo, this new desire to learn Lingala was related to the social-symbolic value of Lingala as a badge of membership of the capital, Kinshasa: *"il y avait aussi grand nombre des gens qui étaient à l'université qui étaient des Kinois. alors eux [the eastern Zairians] ils ne voulaient vraiment pas se faire= qu'on puisse voir qu'ils viennent de l'intérieur comme si les Kinois allaient les (remarquer), alors pour montrer que eux aussi ils sont aussi Kinois il faut parler lingala quoi"* (#688-694).

Of particular relevance is also Lorenzo's rendition of the attitude change in #323-337, which is contained in his description of multilingual masses in Zaire. He contends that one of the conditions for the Catholic services in Zaire to become multilingual was a change in linguistic attitudes throughout the entire country, and that this change was brought about by president Mobutu. Prior to Mobutu's assumption of power, a certain distrust of languages other than the one of one's own linguistic and regional area could be felt in all parts of the country. Lorenzo maintains that Mobutu transformed this linguistic provincialism into a form of national tolerance (#328), accomplishing that *"par exemple les gens qui sont au Bas-Zaïre, de parler le lingala, les Kasaïens qui sont par exemple à l'Equateur, de parler le tshiluba. on te regarde pas d'un* *mauvais œil comme c'était dans le temps! un Moluba parlait le tshiluba à l'Equateur, non. mais maintenant, les gens ont un peu dépassé ce temps-là"* (#329-334).

In some of these quotes, it may be noticed how the historical argument also involves references to a generation gap in the present (e.g., *"chez le jeunes"* in the first quote). When in MA#100-110 I ask Manuel whether it is possible to discern a certain animosity towards Lingala in the Kivu and Shaba regions, he answers: *"chez les jeunes non. peut-être chez les vieilles personnes hein, mais chez les jeunes non"* (#111-113). The historical attitude change towards a positive appreciation of Lingala has left fossils as witnesses of the former situation: among older generations, the attentive observer may still record some remnants of the negative attitudes. Note the contrastive perspective around which Manuel chooses to frame his utterance. He foregrounds the absence of negative attitudes among the younger generations as the norm (cf., the role of the first phrase and the introductory function of *"mais"*) and backgrounds their presence among the older generations as the exception (cf., *"peut-être"*). To Manuel, the present absence of such attitudes is the most important observation. Manuel's foregrounding and backgrounding also surface in the remark that concludes his account. He downplays the significance of the older generations – and, thereby, of the skepticism concerning Lingala that remains today – by mentioning that the elderly only represent a very small portion of the entire Zairian population: *"s'il y a animosité c'est au niveau des vieux, des vieillards, des conservateurs mais ils ne sont pas nombreux hein. au Zaïre la majorité de la population c'est soixante pour cent c'est la jeunesse hein"* (#130-133).

This last quote also shows Manuel's disapproval of the people that hold negative attitudes towards Lingala and of the negative attitudes themselves. His choice of words in *"des vieux, des vieillards, des conservateurs"* is derogatory. A similar implicit depreciation of the few dissenters left may be found in Manuel's comments in #482-487. In these comments, the opponents of Lingala are again cast as conservatives and, worse, as reactionary purists: *"si vous trouvez peut-être une réaction de rejet, ça je le dis c'est peut-être au niveau de certains conservateurs. évidemment là-bas aussi il y a des personnes qui tiennent à garder la pureté de leur langue. <u>là</u>, au niveau de certains conservateurs"* (#482-487).

When in #528 I ask Begoña why certain groups are averse to Lingala, Begoña provides an interpretation that discredits these groups as presumptuous and their rejection of Lingala as counterproductive and illegitimate. In #529-534, she comes to the conclusion that the Kiswahili-speakers and the Tshiluba-speakers reject Lingala out of sheer conceit: *"ils sont fiers, ils se vantent"* (#530). She then argues that it is fully justifiable to know and use languages such as Kiswahili and Tshiluba, but that the additional knowledge of Lingala is a minimal condition to be a 'real Zairian': *"moi je crois que tu peux parler swahili, tu peux parler toutes les langues que tu veux, le mieux serait aussi de parler la langue de la capital en tout cas. pour être vraiment un Zaïrois <u>tout-</u>*

fait quoi" (#535-538). As can be noticed, Lingala, the language of the capital, is considered to be a symbol of 'Zairianness'. In contrast to all the other Zairian languages, which are regionally marked and therefore nationally divisive, Lingala is a language that can transcend and neutralize the opposition between the subidentities in Zaire. This theme has already been elaborated upon above. Of importance for the present discussion, however, is Begoña's contention that the non-Lingala-speakers' aversion to Lingala runs counter to their own interests.

Whereas these interests are situated at the symbolic level, Begoña also refers to the counterproductive effects negative attitudes may have at very practical levels. In #538-546, she ridicules those Kiswahili-speakers who often find themselves in linguistic problems when they visit Lingala-speaking areas: *"si tu vas quelque part où on ne parle que lingala alors toi avec ton swahili! tu vois, il y a souvent certaines femmes elles se sentent mal à l'aise hein. parce qu'elles savent pas parler lingala. elles n'ont vraiment pas vécu à Kinshasa, elles ont seulement été à l'intérieur, alors quand vous parlez lingala, oh! moi je ne comprends pas"* (#538-544). Begoña apprises the Kiswahili-speakers of the fact that they 'will not go far' with Kiswahili, and observes that they must often pay for their own linguistic pride, being frequently excluded from conversations with fellow Zairians.

The denial of the existence of hostile feelings towards Lingala in Zaire is not always limited to a mere disapproval in negative terms, pointing to what is *not* the case. On some occasions, the informants also provide a fully opposite description of the linguistic attitudes, claiming that the eastern Zairians are actually proud and eager to learn Lingala. This was already present in Lorenzo's references to his fellow students' desire to come across as inhabitants of the capital. Similarly, Begoña underscores that contrary to what is presupposed in the implicit claim, Lingala is a language of high prestige in the eastern (as well as other) parts of Zaire: *"puisque les gens aussi, les villageois aussi sont fiers d'apprendre le lingala hein. tout le monde apprend le lingala"* (BE#612-614). In Begoña's language use, the label *villageois* denotes every Zairian who is not from the capital, which she also explicitly, and not without some embarrassment, admits in #617-619: *"quand je parle villageois =**{**((laughing)) souvent**}** on dit les villageois les gens qui viennent, les gens qui ne sont pas nés à Kinshasa hein"*.

Whereas for Begoña, *villageois* is a routine classificatory concept, Joaquín shifts from the object level to the meta level, reporting himself on how the inhabitants of Kinshasa employ this concept in their everyday speech (JO#1276-1289). Joaquín's report is also contained in a description of the high social value attached to Lingala. As all Zairians want to come across as inhabitants of the capital, they are very keen to adopt this city's language: *"alors ils préfèrent plus parler le Kinshasa, paraître Kinois. Kinois, Kinois! […] même ceux qui ne viennent pas de Kinshasa ils disent que je viens de Kinshasa. tout ça parce que quand quelqu'un dit, non je viens de Isiro ou de quoi, on va dire c'est un* *villageois. quelque part il y a cette connotation-là, ce villageois-là, qu'est-ce qu'il connaît! les gens préfèrent plus prendre l'identité d'une ville qui est inventée"* (#1280-1289). Joaquín's report is a reaction to my remark that not all the Zairians who visit Neptunia are from the Lingala-speaking regions (#1270-1271), which insinuates that there is a potential basis for hostility and conflict in Neptunia. Joaquín's references to the creed *"paraître Kinois. Kinois, Kinois!"* are thus another strong contestation of the presupposition in the implicit claim concerning the negative attitudes towards Lingala in Zaire. The observation that everyone in Zaire wants to come across as a *Kinois* is evidence for the claim that nowadays the attitudes towards Lingala are distinctly positive.

The emphasis on the eastern Zairians' high esteem of Lingala also surfaces in the organized conversation with Manuel. One of the issues Manuel repeatedly brings up is the fact that Lingala is considered by all male Zairians to be the language *par excellence* for dating, seducing, charming, and related matters. To Manuel, it is clear that one of the most effective ways to appeal to a woman in Lubumbashi is to speak to her in Lingala: *"supposé que je côtois une femme ou bien j'ai une copine, moi je lui parle en lingala hein"* (#93-94). The reason is that *"elle est fière aussi de parler le lingala"* (#96-97). Manuel also mentions that due to its application in popular music, even the (male) inhabitants of the eastern regions have now understood that Lingala is the most appropriate medium for romance and declarations of love: *"très souvent bon, lorsque peut-être un Kivutien va parler à une des ses copines il va utiliser le langage musical. il va lui parler en quoi? lui exprimer l'amour, il va utiliser le lingala hein!"* (#264-268).

Many of the examples above evince a view of the relationship between the objective issue of language spread and the subjective matter of language attitudes, in which the former is a historical and logical outcome of the latter: people learn to speak and come to regularly use a certain language, when and because they evaluate this language and the social values attached to it in positive terms. This lay conception of linguistic attitudes transpires in Lorenzo's description of his fellow students in Lubumbashi, whose desire to become fully proficient in Lingala was grounded in an idolization of the Kinshasa way of life, of which Lingala is the emblem. The spread of Lingala among these students was, in other words, a result of their appreciation of the language.

From a heuristic perspective, then, this lay conception holds that one can read the contents of linguistic attitudes from observable linguistic behavior: if at the tangible level of language use one observes the spread of a new language among a population, one can safely deduct that the members of this population also hold the language in high esteem, for otherwise, they would never have adopted it. The usage of a language is thus directly indicative of its prestige. This opinion can also be detected in Lorenzo's accounts in LO#710-714 and #812-814. In #710-711, I ask him whether the Kiswahili-speakers in Neptunia are not offended by the Lingala dominance. He answers: *"non. ils chantent hein. ils chantent"* (#714). When I ask the same question in #807-811, his reply is similar: *“bon je ne sais pas répondre vraiment à leur place, mais, ce que je constate, qu’ils chantent”* (#812-813). To Lorenzo, it is sufficient to observe the Kiswahili-speakers’ *usage* of Lingala to safely infer that they also hold this language in high esteem.

C.2. The subsidence of the negative attitudes

As mentioned, the Kiswahili-speakers also neutralize the synchronic variation in linguistic attitudes in eastern Zaire by projecting it onto a diachronic axis. In HA#1263, Hans insists on the fact that Lingala masses are nowadays not exceptional anymore in Bukavu: *“mais maintenant à Bukavu c’est déjà possible”*. When he was younger, on the contrary, it was almost impossible to attest any Catholic services conducted in Lingala in eastern Zaire, as this was the time of the serious conflicts between the Catholic Church and Mobutu’s regime (cf. chapter 4), the typical user and promoter of Lingala: *“à mon époque ce n’était pas comme ça. c’est-à-dire les années soixante-dix ce n’était pas comme ça! […] dans le temps, les autorités n’allaient pas= les autorités ont combattu l’Eglise au Zaïre. Mobutu a combattu l’Eglise! donc les autorités n’allaient pas tous les jours à l’église des histoires avec leur lingala! ah non!”* (#1266-1286). But due to the growing mobility in Zairian society, related to Mobutu’s nationwide translocations of civil servants (explained in chapter 4, section 4.3.3), more eastern Zairians came to have regular contacts with Lingala. This nationwide translocations implied that many Lingala-speaking administrators of western origins were transferred together with their families to eastern regions, and vice versa. Lingala was thereby brought to the eastern parts, both by the western administrators and their families who were transferred to the east and by the eastern administrators who were first transferred to western regions and who later brought Lingala with them when they came back: *“et beaucoup de gens qui parlaient le swahili qui allaient dans l’ouest, et dans ce mouvement, les enfants de ces gens-là ou ces mêmes gens venant à l’église ainsi de suite, bon ils se sont intégrés petit à petit. avec le lingala”* (#1295-1299).

In IN#366-371, I ask Ingrid whether the Kiswahili-speakers do not feel wronged by the dominance of Lingala in Neptunia. I thereby remind her of her earlier remarks that the army and other users of Lingala are not always received warmly in eastern Zaire (e.g., *“c’est une langue qui n’est pas polie”*, #312-313; *“c’est une langue pour commander, pour piller”*, #336). She argues that the hostile feelings to which she referred earlier cannot constitute a rejection of Lingala in Neptunia, for even in Zaire they are ‘a thing of the past’: *“c’est déjà dépassé”* (#374-375). Similarly, in #631, she interrupts my allusion to the dislike for Lingala in Bukavu by specifying: *“en tout cas au début”*. Ingrid thus casts a diachronic differentiation on the negative attitudes she described earlier in undifferentiated synchronic terms.

On some occasions, Ingrid provides a historical explanation of the subsidence of the negative attitudes. This is the case in her account in IN#722-746, which may be paraphrased as follows. She first explains how in previous days, people in her home town, Bukavu, did not display any pronounced interest in Lingala, because in those days it was rarely used in these regions: *“moi quand je grandissais, et que je voyais les gens= j’avais pas= ce sont des gens qui parlent lingala bon. parler lingala ça c’est quoi encore, c’est quoi cette langue. quand nous on grandissait, parce qu’il n’y avait pas beaucoup de gens qui parlaient lingala”* (#722-727). In the course of time, however, the presence of Lingala in the eastern regions became more salient, especially during Mobutu’s national translocation program. Subsequently, this growing *spread* of Lingala in the eastern regions triggered a certain *interest* in it: *“maintenant on voyait bon, il y a d’autres personnes qui parlent lingala. ah bon le lingala? et on commençait aussi à apprendre par les enfants qui venaient à l’école, des mutations et tout ça, quand ils étaient nombreux ils parlaient partout”* (#727-731). Moreover, Ingrid continues, the fact that Lingala is an easy language significantly facilitated its acquisition and recognition: *“et puis c’est une langue qui est très facile quoi. elle n’est pas très difficile, on peut l’apprendre facilement”* (#731-733).

In other words, Ingrid does not refer to a particular attitudinal reason for which Lingala was acclaimed or appreciated; she only refers to the fact that at a certain moment in history, the eastern Zairians did not see any reason anymore to refrain from learning the language that was so saliently present around them. We are touching here on the difference between the presence of particularly good reasons to let something happen and the absence of particularly good reasons *not* to let something happen. The earlier negative attitudes towards Lingala were not replaced by markedly positive ones; they simply disappeared without being ‘relieved’, thereby leaving an ‘ideological void’, i.e. a sheer absence of either negative or positive linguistic attitudes.

In these patterns of reasoning, the social recognition of a language, in terms of the subsidence of negative attitudes, is considered to be preceded and controlled by its factual spread, and not vice versa. The informants stress that the most important historical incident in the attitude change is the factual spread of Lingala towards the eastern regions, which was caused by the Zairians’ enhanced mobility throughout the Zairian territory. The first social reality to be established in eastern Zaire was the sheer daily utilization of Lingala by the local people. Only when this practice in terms of observable language use was rooted in, did the linguistic attitudes of the local people change. In Ingrid’s account, e.g., it is the increased contact with Lingala which caused the earlier skepticism to be replaced by some interest in the language. In this view, factual language spread is logically and historically prior to the emergence of positive attitudes.

D. The discrepancy between observable behavior and underlying attitudes

In their refutations of the implicit claim, both the Lingala-speakers and the Kiswahili-speakers construct a distinction between an underlying, deep level of 'real' attitudes, containing the permanent dispositions, and an elusive surface level, containing patterns of behavior that may occasionally conflict with the 'real' attitudes. The underlying level is the level of the semantic constancy of attitudes, while the surface level is the level of the pragmatic (context-triggered) deviations from the semantic norm.[90] They orient to this construction, not so much to deny the implicit claim in its entirety, as to argue that it is only partially correct. The assertion is made that at the deep level, the Kiswahili-speakers are indeed offended by the dominance of Lingala, as the implicit claim suggests, but that for certain reasons they prefer not to display this dissatisfaction overtly.

The two linguistic groups disagree, precisely, on the identification of these reasons for hiding one's 'real' feelings. The Lingala-speakers argue that the Kiswahili-speakers' silence is grounded in their wish to conceal their true geographical and linguistic origins. In line with the belief that everybody in Zaire desires to be part of the Lingala spheres of Zairian society, the Lingala-speakers hold that the Kiswahili-speakers in Neptunia wisely refrain from divulging their real, eastern-Zairian origins and prefer to claim membership of the Lingala-speaking parts of the Zairian territory and society, Kinshasa in particular.

To the Kiswahili-speakers, their reasons for the situational suppression of the grievances are rather to be found in their general respect for the majority rule and in their respect for religious affairs. With regard to the former, the Kiswahili-speakers' consent is attributed to their situational minority position and to their natural civility to comply with the preferences of a majority. In the latter case, their apparent consent is attributed to the Kiswahili-speakers' general reluctance to disturb the smooth course of events on religious occasions such as a Catholic mass.

D.1. The Kiswahili-speakers' claim to a Kinshasa identity

In the organized conversation with Joaquín, as well as in a casual conversation with Julio, these two informants recognize that at the deep, underlying level of fundamental dispositions, some negative attitudes towards Lingala indeed exist in eastern Zaire (which is a thematic contradiction with counterargument C). When I confronted Julio with the observation that Neptunia is also visited by people from non-Lingala-speaking regions, such as Kivu and Shaba, and that I had heard that in those regions Lingala is not always appreciated, he started by confirming that it is indeed true that *"là-bas il y a des gens qui ne sont pas très chauds envers le lingala"* (field-note reproduction). He moreover added a few observations he had made during his years as a student at the University of Lubumbashi, all pointing to the eastern Zairians' aversion to Lingala. His account then took a turn at a meaningful *"mais"*, introducing a number of reasons why this background cannot affect the social order in Neptunia. He

90. For a discussion of this view of attitudes as applied in scientific discourse, see chapter 1, section 1.3.

mentioned that the Kiswahili-speakers temporarily ‘suppress’ their negative attitudes. It was clear to Julio that this ‘grinding of one’s teeth’ is merely an occasional pragmatic adaptation of the stable and underlying reality of the negative attitudes: *“ils sont toujours mécontents, mais ils préfèrent de ne pas l’exprimer ici”* (field-note reproduction). The reasons he advanced for this temporal suppression involved the fact that in general, non-Lingala-speakers are embarrassed about their nonmembership of the higher segments of Zairian social life, as well as about their nonmembership of the capital. In his words: *“mais tu dois savoir qu’au Zaïre, tout le monde cherche un peu à se profiler comme un Kinois, comme quelqu’un qui s’est fait une vie et tout ça”* (field-note reproduction).

Similar statements can be found in the organized conversation with Joaquín. In JO#1290-1305, Joaquín agrees completely with my account of what I have understood to be the negative language attitudes towards Lingala in eastern Zaire. When I ask him whether these linguistic attitudes do not constitute a predicament for the social order in Neptunia (#1306-1308), he answers: *“quelque part là, ils ne veulent pas afficher cette attitude pour ne pas être marginalisés. mais ils ressentent ça. il faut pas dire= ils ressentent ça! [...] mais, ils ne veulent pas extérioriser ça, sinon ils risquent d’être marginalisés. alors que un nombre important du public se réclame de Kinshasa”* (#1309-1318). Joaquín maintains that the Kiswahili-speakers situationally refrain from expressing their real linguistic attitudes in order to avoid their marginalization as nonmembers of Kinshasa.

In #1451-1511, Joaquín comes back on these matters. In #1451-1462, he refers to the Kiswahili-speakers’ underlying attitudes as a latent problem, mentioning that by regularly inserting one or two Kiswahili songs, the choir does its utmost *“pour ne pas éveiller ce qui est dormant”* (#1458). The negative attitudes are thus represented as ingredients of a dormant, but menacingly lurking disposition. In #1462-1464, I remind Joaquín of his earlier references to the creed *“paraître Kinois. Kinois, Kinois!”* (see also above), and ask him whether this creed is also related to the suppression of the negative attitudes in Neptunia. His answer is affirmative: *“oui. oui. [...] les gens= comme je disais quand on dit par exemple= quelque part il y a un certain gêne de dire que je viens directement de Kivu. par rapport à ce que au niveau de Kin, on considère les gens qui viennent de l’Equateur ou bien qui viennent du Shaba, qui viennent du Bas-Zaïre, comme des villageois”* (#1465-1481). Since it is each Zairian’s everyday struggle not to come across as a *villageois*, i.e. as a nonmember of the capital, it may be expected that overt criticisms against Lingala are rarely heard. But, Joaquín argues, this does not imply that a certain criticism or disagreement does not exist. It signifies, rather, that the critics prefer not to blazon their true negative attitudes abroad.

D.2. The Kiswahili-speakers' respect for the majority rule and for religious affairs

The construction of linguistic attitudes in terms of a deep, semantic level vs. an elusive, surface level was also one of Klaus's counterarguments in his refutation of the implicit claim during one of our casual conversations. He mentioned that the Lingala-speakers make up the majority of Zairians in Antwerp, as well as in Belgium in general, and that the composition in Neptunia is a reflection of these proportions. He also argued that the Lingala-speakers' majority is the main rationale behind the Kiswahili-speakers' acceptance of the dominance of Lingala and the sociolinguistic inequality. I reacted by asking him whether this signifies that the emigration from Zaire to Belgium is accompanied by a change in the Kiswahili-speakers' linguistic attitudes, i.e. whether the negative attitudes the Kiswahili-speakers hold vis-à-vis Lingala in eastern Zaire are abandoned once they find their places in the Lingala-dominated Zairian community of Belgium. He emphatically opposed this hypothesis, maintaining that the negative feelings towards the language 'are still there', but that they are temporarily 'suppressed': *"les gens n'aiment pas le lingala et ne l'aimeront jamais! mais ici à Neptunia, bon on n'exprime pas cette position. mais elle est toujours là, elle n'a pas changé"* (field-note reproduction). Klaus does not consider attitudes to be subject to rapid historical changes, let alone to contextual orientation, but approaches them as static mental realities that exist independently of time and space.

A similar point of view may be detected in Jürgen's reaction in JÜ#782. In #778-781, I ask Jürgen whether the negative attitudes on which he reported earlier have been fully abandoned by the Kiswahili-speakers who came to live abroad (*"des réservations envers le lingala. il paraît que ça c'est parti ou comment? ici?"*, #779-781). The prosody and the laughter in his reply show how he considers this to be an unwarranted and almost absurd conclusion: *"non non, ça=* ***{****((laughing)) parti je ne dirais pas!****}****"*.

Noteworthy is also Jürgen's account in #989-1022, a stretch of conversation that also includes cases of the culturalization of geographical groups (itself explained in section 8.2.1.3 above). In #992-1000, he first explains that many students of the culture of the Kivu people describe the members of this geographical group as docile and submissive. He argues that this view is mistaken, as the submissiveness only exists at the level of illusive appearance: *"je crois que les gens qui se taisent, ne sont pas nécessairement d'accord avec tout ce qui se fait. […] on donne l'impression de subir, mais si on a l'occasion de s'exprimer, ne vous en faites pas"* (#1015-1022). Jürgen wishes to emphasize that when it comes to basic, 'genuine' attitudes, the position vis-à-vis Lingala of *"cette minorité qui semble accepter"* (#1012) is unmistakably repudiating, and that what can be observed at the surface level is nothing but a deviation triggered by contextual conditions.

What, then, are the occasions on which Jürgen would find it appropriate to expressly declare his disagreement with *"tout ce qui se fait"*? He immediately provides the answer in #1023-1032: *"si moi je fais un mariage, et j'appelle des amis, et qui sont pour la plupart des swahiliphones, par exemple [...] je dirais non, pour donner un peu de solennité et de familiarité à la cérémonie vous voulez bien chanter deux chansons en lingala mais le reste, chantez en swahili"*. Similarly, in #808-811, he remarks that *"mais vous voyez si maintenant, j'étais membre de la chorale, je suis seul ou nous sommes deux, nous imposons qu'on chante en swahili, nous serons deux à chanter à Neptunia! alors ça n'irait pas"*. Jürgen explains that if the quantitative proportions in Neptunia were different, the dormant, underlying negative attitudes vis-à-vis Lingala would automatically rise to the surface. In other words, the reasons for the Kiswahili-speakers' momentary suppression of their real linguistic attitudes are related to their respect for the majority rule, which states that members of a minority have to adapt to and conform with the wishes of the majority (see also counterargument A).

In #980-991, Jürgen also mentions another reason. This account again includes a pronounced culturalization of the inhabitants of the Kivu regions. In #980-988, I have repeated my question whether the Lingala dominance in Neptunia does not constitute an obstacle for the Kiswahili-speakers. Jürgen explicitly identifies his own account as a cultural explanation: *"je reviendrais sur un détail sur lequel peut-être je n'ai pas beaucoup insisté, mais qui est un trait typique des gens des grands lacs là"* (#989-991). He subsequently presents a qualification of the people in these regions as individuals who are respectful, serene, and dignified, especially when it comes to respect religious affairs such as Catholic masses: *"on ne manifeste pas directement pour dire non, écoutez je ne suis pas d'accord! [...] on a une certaine attitude vis-à-vis [...] des choses de l'Eglise. quand c'est une pratique qui est déjà consacrée, on se dit bon, on ne peut pas se mettre à combattre ça"* (#992-1021). One of the culturally typical traits of the inhabitants of the Kivu regions is their reluctance to immediately voice their discontent, however strong this discontent may be. The reluctance to show one's opinions, then, is especially felt when this discontent is related to religious contexts. Whether a certain practice can be agreed on or not, the disagreement must by no means lead one to intrude on the hallowed serenity of the Catholic Church.

E. Inverting the identification of the linguistically advantaged and disadvantaged in Neptunia

In the counterargument to be discussed here, the informants set out to deny the implicit claim (*'There are good reasons to believe that the Kiswahili-speakers are or could be offended by the dominance of Lingala in Neptunia'*) by presenting a reverse view of the 'winners' and 'losers' in Neptunia's linguistic economy. The assertion is that the dominance of Lingala in Neptunia entails certain linguistic advantages for the Kiswahili-speakers which the Lingala-speakers do not have, and that the implicit claim is therefore ill-addressed. Not the Kiswahili-speakers, but the Lingala-speakers are disadvantaged by the dominance of Lingala.

Both the Lingala-speaking and the Kiswahili-speaking informants make use of this counterargument, but they arrive at it in different ways. The Lingala-speaking informants maintain that whereas Lingala-speakers mostly lack any proficiency in another Zairian national language than their own, nearly all Kiswahili-speakers are at least receptively competent in Lingala (see also counterargument A). In this view, the Kiswahili-speakers' knowledge of Lingala is a *given* knowledge. This knowledge not only allows them to comfortably participate in the Neptunia masses – an argument which in itself undermines the thesis that there would be good reasons for the Kiswahili-speakers to be offended; it also privileges the Kiswahili-speakers over the Lingala-speakers, in that the former have a 'co-ownership' in the language of the latter, while the reverse is not the case. The claim is, thus, that the Kiswahili-speakers are the linguistically 'richer' group in Neptunia's linguistic economy.

The Kiswahili-speakers, on the other hand, do not work on the assumption that the members of their linguistic group are already competent in Lingala. To them, the Kiswahili-speakers can be said to be in a privileged position because the Lingala dominance in Neptunia offers them a convenient opportunity to learn an additional, *new* language. It is argued that the Lingala-speakers, by contrast, do not enjoy these practical benefits, as they are already competent in the language that is most often used in Neptunia.

The Lingala-speakers' and the Kiswahili-speakers' actualizations of the present counterargument thus differ in the construction of Lingala as either a new or a given language.

E.1. Lingala as a *given* language for the Kiswahili-speakers: The instrumental view of linguistic offensiveness

The Lingala-speakers' construction of the Kiswahili-speakers' privileged position is based on two subarguments. Before turning to a discussion of the privileged position proper, I first wish to clarify these two subarguments. In a first subargument, it is claimed that linguistic offensiveness can only be brought about by such a technical matter as the lack of linguistic competence: people can only be linguistically offended if they are forced to participate in an event conducted in a language which they do not understand. I refer to this view as the 'instrumental view of linguistic offensiveness'. Second, there is the assumption, already mentioned in counterargument A, that all Zairian non-Lingala-speakers are at least passively competent in Lingala. These two subarguments often occur in close interaction.

When I ask Manuel, in MA#208-217, whether or not he thinks the Kiswahili-speakers in Neptunia are offended by the dominance of Lingala, he answers in the negative, providing the following evidence: *"en général un swahiliphone, je crois qu'il ne (considère) pas (comme ça) parce que les* *swahiliphones beaucoup comprennent le lingala. comme je vous l'ai dit précédemment. moi si j'entre dans une église swahiliphone, franchement je me sentirai un peu offensé. parce que les trois quarts de la messe je ne comprendrais rien. les trois quarts de la messe. ce qui n'est pas le cas pour Klaus, et Jürgen par exemple. ils entrent dans une église lingalaphone, franchement ils suivent presque toute la messe. alors on se sent offensé lorsqu'on ne comprend peut-être rien, alors à ce moment-là on peut se= mais lorsqu'on comprend, là on n'est plus offensé"* (#218-229). Zairians like Klaus and Jürgen have no justifiable reason to be offended, because they are fully able to follow all the messages conveyed during a Neptunia mass. Conversely, however, if a Lingala-speaker like himself was to attend a Kiswahili mass, he would not be able to comprehend what is being said, and this would constitute a legitimate ground for offensiveness and protest. The rationale behind Manuel's comparison is that it suffices to have a passive command of a language in order to assent to this language's usage (*"alors on se sent offensé lorsqu'on ne comprend peut-être rien, alors à ce moment-là on peut se= mais lorsqu'on comprend, là on n'est plus offensé"*). This is the instrumental view of linguistic offensiveness. In this view, the lack of receptive competence is believed to be the only factor that can lead to offensiveness, to the exclusion of factors such as the emotional connotations and the social-indexical values attached to languages.

During one of our casual conversations, Iñigo also used the instrumental view of linguistic offensiveness to counter the implicit claim, remarking that *"mais ils comprennent! ça suffit. qu'on utilise le lingala ou le swahili ou le français ou quoi ça leur est égal. puisque, une langue, bon il s'agit de la comprendre ou de ne pas la comprendre hein"* (field-note reproduction). Proficiency, or the lack of it, is all there is about language and language attitudes. The pragmatic question as to whether a person knows a certain language or not is the only relevant parameter in the discussion of attitudinal issues. Values attached to languages as indices of social identities are of no importance.

A third example may be found in Manuel's account in MA#378-407. In #379-380, Manuel again refers to the Kiswahili-speakers' receptive competence in Lingala as the basis for their linguistic consent in Neptunia: *"ils n'ont pas une réaction de rejet quoi. non. parce que ils comprennent ce que le père dit!"*. After this remark, I confront him with a view of language attitudes that does take into account the social-indexical values of languages, by reminding him of the fact that the Kiswahili-speakers have to use a language with which they probably do not identify socially: *"mais ce n'est pas leur langue! alors on pourrait ne pas accepter, quand même"* (#381-382). Manuel's reaction in #383-391 shows that he is not willing to follow my noninstrumental view of linguistic offensiveness. He compares the case of Lingala in Neptunia with the introduction of French in Zaire: *"mais tu vois, nous parlons français au Zaïre. le français c'est la langue officielle du pays. mais ce n'est pas notre langue!*

mais, nous l'avons adoptée. bon dans la civilisation moderne il faut quand même un instrument de communication quoi" (#383-387). He argues that the Kiswahili-speakers' use of Lingala is analogous to the official-language situation in Zaire, where the daily organization of the state is conducted in French, which, from the perspective of Zaire as an African country, could also be said to be an 'alien' language. Manuel argues that the lack of historically or ethnically identifying bonds with French does not inhibit the Zairians to make use of this language without even the least feeling of uneasiness, aggravation, or offensiveness. The same reasoning, then, should apply to the Kiswahili-speakers and Lingala in Neptunia. Whether a language is socially 'yours' or not, the only relevant relationship between languages and people is an operational one: *"il faut quand même un instrument de communication quoi"*. In #391-397, Manuel's conclusion is again that linguistic offensiveness can only occur in contexts where a certain group lacks proficiency in the language used: *"alors un chrétien qui suit la messe du père Vladimir, qu'il soit swahiliphone ou bien tshilubaphone, mais il comprend ce que le père Vladimir dit. alors là je crois que il ne va pas rejeter, il ne va pas avoir une réaction de rejet. on réagit lorsqu'un on ne comprend rien, là alors on est un peu lésé quoi, moralement, psychologiquement"*.

Implicit in the application of the instrumental view of linguistic offensiveness is the assumption of the nationwide spread of Lingala. The claim is that, since linguistic offensiveness is only a function of competence, and since such competence is present among the Kiswahili-speakers, the Kiswahili-speakers cannot be offended by the dominant usage of Lingala in Neptunia. In JO#1217-1269, Joaquín contests the implicit claim by stressing that the Kiswahili-speakers in Neptunia all know Lingala, and that therefore they cannot be offended by the dominant application of this language. He attributes the Kiswahili-speakers' command of Lingala to the spread of this language throughout Zaire. In order to make his point clear, he elaborates on the sociolinguistic history of his country, pointing in particular to the role of the army and popular music in the spread of the knowledge of Lingala: *"ça vient peut-être de loin hein, quand le Blanc est arrivé, au niveau de l'armée par exemple, il a imposé le lingala. comme langue de l'armée. avec l'armée, même les gens qui ne parlaient pas le lingala au départ, qui étaient militaires, avec les mutations et tout ça, ils ont fini par parler le lingala. et les enfants aussi. cet esprit dans les camps, on ne parlait que le lingala. soldat et soldat. toi tu viens du Shaba, moi je viens de l'Equateur, ou bien je viens de Bas-Zaïre, tu vois? swahili kikongo. mais au niveau de l'armée nous devons nous parler en lingala. et nos enfants aussi en lingala. bon, au niveau culturel par exemple, les musiques, les grands chanteurs, Tabu Ley, il est Bandundu, il pouvait composer aussi en kikongo. bon, Luambo Makiadi, il est aussi du Bas-Zaïre, il pouvait composer en kikongo. mais, le lingala s'est imposé"* (#1252-1267).

As mentioned, both the instrumental view of linguistic offensiveness and the alleged spread of Lingala are subarguments in the denial of the identification of the Lingala-speakers as the linguistically advantaged. This could already be detected in one of Manuel's accounts quoted above. I mentioned that Manuel paraphrases the instrumental view of linguistic offensiveness rather explicitly when he says: *"les swahiliphones beaucoup comprennent le lingala. comme je vous l'ai dit précédemment. moi si j'entre dans une église swahiliphone, franchement je me sentirais un peu offensé. parce que les trois quarts de la messe je ne comprendrais rien. les trois quarts de la messe. ce qui n'est pas le cas pour Klaus, et Jürgen par exemple. ils entrent dans une église lingalaphone, franchement ils suivent presque toute la messe"* (MA#219-227). Not being competent in Kiswahili, Manuel would not be able to enjoy a Kiswahili mass. This linguistic disadvantage does not hold for Kiswahili-speakers such as Klaus and Jürgen, who are fortunate to understand the whole of the first mass they step into. Of the two linguistic groups in Neptunia, i.e. the non-Lingala-speakers and the Lingala-speakers, it is the former which is 'better off'.

When in LO#769-775 I ask Lorenzo whether the non-Lingala-speakers do not have problems with the preponderance of Lingala songs, Lorenzo reacts dismayed, underscoring that *"non mais=! les gens de Kinshasa ont plus de problèmes quand tu leur apprends par exemple une chanson en swahili ou en tshiluba!"* (#776-778). His fierce reaction against my identification of the linguistically advantaged and disadvantaged in Neptunia is significant. Lorenzo is determined to invert the identification of the Lingala-speakers as the advantaged and of the non-Lingala-speakers as the disadvantaged. His claim is that it is more difficult for Zairians from Kinshasa to learn Kiswahili or Tshiluba songs, than it is for non-Lingala-speakers to join in a Lingala song.

In #1146-1147, I ask Lorenzo to confirm my own rephrasing of the instrumental view of linguistic offensiveness, advancing the idea that the risk of the Kiswahili-speakers being offended is canceled by their knowledge of Lingala. In #1148, he affirms that my summary is correct, but immediately adds that the Kiswahili-speakers' proficiency in Lingala does more than merely neutralize a potential linguistic offensiveness. He argues that this proficiency does not only level out the discrepancy between the Kiswahili-speakers and the Lingala-speakers in Neptunia, but also utterly advantages the former group over the latter: *"ils connaissent la langue. moi je dirais de plus, c'est à leur avantage!"* (#1148-1149). He describes this privileged position as follows: *"puisque si on fait par exemple une messe, en tshiluba. moi, je vais rien comprendre. si on chante en tshiluba. sans me donner par exemple la traduction, je ne vais rien comprendre. mais eux ils ont déjà la chance de comprendre ça! ((laughs)) […] puisque <u>eux</u> par exemple bon, ils peuvent faire des secrets. en swahili ou en tshiluba. et les autres pourront pas comprendre. mais tandis que, les gens de Kinshasa, et les autres, ne peuvent pas faire des secrets. ((laughs))"* (#1149-1159). Lorenzo's point is that it is the Kiswahili-speakers, and not the Lingala-speakers, who represent the 'richer' group in Neptunia's linguistic economy. The Lingala-speakers find themselves compelled to cede part of the control over their own language to the Kiswahili-speakers, who, through their competence in Lingala, have become co-owners of this language. Kiswahili, on the other hand, remains in complete and exclusive custody of the Kiswahili-speakers, as the Lingala-speakers do not share any competence in it. Note, also, that the Kiswahili-speakers' 'linguistic riches' is not limited to the context of Neptunia and the knowledge of its songs, but that it extends towards a very practical and everyday bonus: the benefit of being able to speak confidentially and to gossip behind the Lingala-speakers' backs (*"ils peuvent faire des secrets […] et les autres pourront pas comprendre"*).

E.2. Lingala as a *new* language: A language school named Neptunia

As mentioned, the Kiswahili-speakers' construction of their group's advantageous position involves a representation of Lingala as a language that is yet to be acquired by the non-Lingala-speakers, rather than as a language they have already mastered. The Kiswahili-speakers' point is that the dominance of Lingala is not an invariably negative sociolinguistic state of affairs, but that some compensating, agreeable aspects have to be distinguished from the disagreeable ones. One of these agreeable aspects that 'get thrown in with the bargain' is the fact that Neptunia offers the Kiswahili-speakers a fine opportunity to learn a *new* language. The informants claim that they, and not the Lingala-speakers, constitute the linguistically privileged group in Neptunia, because only for them is the dominance of Lingala an occasion to learn and practice an additional language.

Jürgen specifically highlights how much Kiswahili-speaking children may benefit from the patterns of language use in Neptunia (JÜ#782-791). In #773-781, I ask Jürgen to clarify what he has just described as the Kiswahili-speakers' acceptance of the dominance of Lingala in Neptunia. Stressing how easily children acquire languages, he argues that Neptunia is an ideal context of linguistic exercise for the Kiswahili-speaking children, not only with regard to Lingala, but also with regard to such an inaccessible and distant language as Kikongo: *"évidemment c'est une occasion propice pour des enfants, d'apprendre à travers les chansons. […] c'est une opportunité pour eux d'apprendre à travers les chansons même en kikongo certaines choses. parce qu'ils demandent à des amis, mais qu'est-ce que qu'on dit là qu'est-ce que= et à la longue, ils comprennent"* (#783-791). Out of their typical curiosity, children tend to ask the meaning of everything that is being said around them, irrespective of the language being used. One of the unintended but welcome consequences is that this eventually leads to a competence in a second or foreign language.

During one of our casual conversations, Ulrike directly connected the second-language acquisition issue to the benefit-harm relationships in Neptunia. When I asked Ulrike whether the prevalent usage of Lingala during the Neptunia masses is not a thorn in the Kiswahili-speakers' sides, she observed: *"mais je trouve que c'est même bien. comme ça nous nous avons aussi notre* *pratique de lingala. eux ils n'ont pas cette chance, ils n'apprendront jamais le swahili de cette façon"* (field-note reproduction). The Lingala-speakers are already proficient in the language to which people are most exposed during Neptunia masses, while the Kiswahili-speakers are not. As a consequence, only the Kiswahili-speakers are able to profit from the patterns of language use in Neptunia. The Lingala-speakers are condemned to listen to a language they already know; therefore, they cannot use Neptunia as a language school.

F. The extenuating effect of the songs on the dominance of Lingala

The Lingala-speakers and the Kiswahili-speakers agree on the fact that much of what is potentially harmful about the dominance of Lingala in Neptunia is mitigated by the knowledge that this dominance is principally situated in the songs used during the masses. The implicit claim is thus refuted by the assertion that the dominance of Lingala is 'only' a matter of the songs. However, the question as to how, precisely, this extenuating effect of the songs on the dominance of Lingala is to be understood is constructed in markedly different terms.

The Lingala-speakers refer to the significance of the songs in *excuses* for the dominance of Lingala. They argue that Neptunia's Lingala dominance is a reality that lies beyond their own will and control and that must be attributed to such unplanned factors as the composition of the Neptunia songbook. The composition of the songbook is thus said to be a reflection and outcome of songbooks used in Zaire, of the first *Neptunia* songbook on the basis of which the present songbook was created (cf. chapter 6, section 6.3.5), of the (biographically constructed) geographical identities of the two choir members who designed the first Neptunia songbook, and of the present choristers' limited knowledge of songs in other languages than Lingala. All these attributions serve to 'naturalize' the Lingala dominance in Neptunia, i.e. to represent this dominance as not designed by human beings, or, at least, as not designed by the human beings that presently populate Neptunia.

The Kiswahili-speakers construct the mitigating value of the songs in generic, rather than historically contingent terms. To them, songs have the general characteristic of being the innocuous ingredients of Catholic masses. Songs are much less essential to a Catholic service than the spoken parts, and whatever happens to them in linguistic or other ways remains without serious consequences.

F.1. The history of the Neptunia songbook and other historical contingencies

On a number of occasions, the Lingala-speaking informants attribute the *multilingual* character of Neptunia to the fact that the structure and make-up of the Neptunia mass are primarily based on the Zairian rite, i.e. the Zairian rite that was conceived by cardinal Malula in the early 1970s, and on the songbook Malula had composed in this context. This point is brought up by Joaquín. In

JO#680-783, Joaquín and I talk about the multilingual character of Neptunia, in particular about the fact that a mass in Neptunia always involves songs in different languages. In JO#694-697, he explains: *"le cardinal Malula avait confectionné un livre pour les messes [...]. alors dans ce livre-là il y a un peu de tout. le tshiluba, le kikongo, le swahili (.)"*. In JO#963-1210, then, our topic of conversation shifts from the multilingualism in Neptunia to the preponderance of Lingala within this multilingualism. Joaquín accounts for this dominance by referring to the fact that the majority of the songs in the Neptunia songbook are Lingala songs, and that this situation is itself a reflection of the Malula songbook he mentioned earlier. In #1113-1116, I react surprised, reminding him of his own assertion that the Malula songbook contained songs in all languages, and not only in Lingala. Joaquín interrupts me and hastens to assure me that *"là aussi c'est incomplet parce que quand Malula composait il y avait plus de lingala que les autres langues!"* (#1117-1118). Joaquín thus exculpates the Lingala-speakers from the dominance of their language in Neptunia: this dominance is not the product of some deliberate design, but is due to the fact that the songbook predominantly contains Lingala songs, which is in turn a reflection of the songbook that served as its matrix.

The fact that the composition of the present Neptunia songbook is an emanation from an original, Zairian songbook is also a major ingredient in one of Lorenzo's accounts, although Lorenzo does not link up the songbook with cardinal Malula's influence. In LO#374, Lorenzo shows me a book of mass songs that is used in most parishes in Kinshasa and that was written by the archdiocese of this city. From that moment on, this book lies on the coffee table between Lorenzo and me, and Lorenzo often refers to it when he is talking about the Neptunia songbook. He returns to it, e.g., in #746-754. In #739-745, I bring up the topic of the dominance of Lingala in Neptunia. He explains this dominance by emphasizing that the Neptunia songbook is based on the songbook of the archdiocese of Kinshasa, and that the majority of the songs in this songbook were themselves in Lingala: *"<u>justement</u> c'est pour cela que je disais, le grand nombre des chants viennent de ce livre. or, grand nombre des chants, c'est en lingala. si on prend par exemple ici, en commençant par les Alléluias,* ***{****((counting all the Alléluia songs in the book)) un deux trois quatre cinq six sept huit neuf dix onze douze treize quatorze quinze seize dix-sept dix-huit dix-neuf, vingt vingt-et-un vingt-deux****}****. sur <u>vingt-deux</u> chants de Alléluia, il y a seulement <u>une</u> chanson en kikongo"* (#746-754).

Joaquín does not only attribute the preponderance of Lingala songs in the Neptunia songbook to the proportions in the Zairian archetype, but also refers to the geographical identities of the persons who composed the Neptunia book. It must be noticed, in this respect, that Joaquín orients towards a biographical perspective on geographical group identity. In JO#1096-1098, he identifies Iñigo and Antonio, two of the present choir members, as the main authors of the songbook. As in #1099-1128 Joaquín also points to himself and the other members of the choir as coproducers of the songbook, I submit him the following explanation for the Lingala dominance: *“ah, et comme vous êtes tous originaires= des Bangala disons=”* (#1129-1130). In other words, I resort to an ethnic perspective on the geographical identities of the choristers (*“originaires”*), and, more directly, to their ethnic identities *per se* (*“Bangala”*). Firmly interrupting me, Joaquín shows that he considers my ethnic reasoning to be unwarranted, for the two designers of the songbook do not belong to the ethnic group of the Bangala. Antonio has his ethnic origins in the region of Lower Zaire and Iñigo is a Muluba: *“non! c’est pas parce que= parce que ceux qui ont fait c’est Bas-Zaïre et tshiluba. donc les Bangala n’ont pas été à l’influence de ça”* (#1131-1133). He stresses that not Iñigo’s and Antonio’s *ethnic* backgrounds, but their *biographical* backgrounds are of importance. In #1146, he mentions that in composing the book, Iñigo and Antonio chose those songs that *“eux ils connaissaient plus!”*, and in #1149-1153 he adds that *“[c’est peut-être comme ça que la plupart] c’étaient des chansons en lingala. oui. […] et comme à Kin la messe c’est en lingala. donc il y a encore une forte connotation de lingala”*. In other words, from the range of possible perspectives on geographical group identity Joaquín has at his disposal, he selects the biographical one, as it is best suited to explain how Iñigo’s and Antonio’s Kinshasa backgrounds have influenced the present Lingala preponderance in the Neptunia songbook.

The extenuating capacity of the songs also surfaces in references to matters such as the lack of linguistic competence. Some Lingala-speaking informants hold that the Lingala dominance is merely the result of the choristers’ limited command of other languages than Lingala (which also recurs in counterarguments elaborated upon above), let alone of any songs in those languages. This lack of competence is presented as lying beyond their own control. This argument includes the construction of positive face for the we-group: the Lingala-speakers represent themselves as eager to learn other songs and as sociable enough to invite the Kiswahili-speakers to come and introduce their songs. An accusation of the Kiswahili group is, therefore, never far away, as the scarcity of songs in other languages can be attributed to the other groups’ reluctance to accept the kind invitations.

In #847-854, Lorenzo justifies the Lingala dominance in the songs as follows: *“mais ce que <u>nous</u> nous connaissons. donc, on est un peu limité quoi, par l’espace ici des gens. Joaquín, à Bikoro, la plupart des messes sont dites en lingala. à Mbandaka c’est lingala, alors à Lisala, les messes sont dites en lingala. et les chants sont chantés en lingala! bon, or, il n’y a personne dans la chorale qui vient par exemple du Shaba”* (#847-854). The Lingala dominance in the songs is attributed to unfortunate limitations imposed upon the choir, i.e. the range of linguistic competence available in the choir. Not one of the choir members comes from a Kiswahili-speaking region such as Shaba. Lorenzo does not view the limited knowledge of songs in itself as the product of the choristers’ intervention. In Lorenzo’s argumentation, the limited knowledge fulfills the role, not so much of an outcome or conclusion, as of an argumentative point of departure. As such, it is axiomatically posed and considered to be installed by factors that transcend the human will of the present choristers.

Similarly, Lorenzo stresses more than once that he and the other choristers are very eager to learn songs in other languages. In #832-841, for example, he explains that the Lingala-speakers are so broad-minded that they would actually welcome any form of criticism from the non-Lingala-speakers. He claims that the Lingala-speakers are very keen to learn other songs: *“bon, nous nous sommes ouverts à toutes les critiques, on veut bien quand quelqu’un dit par exemple il y a trop de chansons en lingala, ou bien trop de chansons en kikongo, on veut qu’il vienne avec les chansons que lui il connaît de chez lui. ça nous ferait plaisir hein”* (#836-840). In #795, he observes that the non-Lingala-speakers accept the preponderance of Lingala in Neptunia. When I ask him for an explanation, he says: *“puisque nous en tout cas au niveau de la chorale, on dit ceci bon, quelqu’un qui a par exemple (une langue)= et d’ailleurs, l’année passée on avait même demandé à d’autres Africains qui viennent à Neptunia, de venir nous apprendre par exemple une chanson du Cameroun, du Bénin”* (#799-804). Describing how in other and comparable contexts the Lingala-speakers amply display their good will to learn and use other songs, Lorenzo safeguards the positive face of his own linguistic group.

In chapter 6, I referred to the ‘imposed culturality’ to which the Zairians in Neptunia are subjected. Lorenzo reports on this imposed culturality in one of his descriptions of the Lingala-speakers’ readiness to employ other songs. In #1009-1010, I make the (semi-ironical) suggestion that the choir could also insert Flemish songs. Lorenzo takes up my remark and informs me that he and other members of the choir once asked the Belgians in Neptunia to teach them such songs. The Belgians refused to do this on the basis of the rationale that Neptunia and its choir must remain African in character and appearance: *“mais ça on avait demandé, <u>nous</u>; c’était sur une proposition de la chorale, qu’on puisse nous montrer aussi des chansons en flamand. bon, on a eu des critiques! de la part des Flamands, pourquoi on a eu des critiques, on nous a dit que, la chorale est une chorale africaine. quand les gens viennent, ils viennent pour écouter les chants et le rythme africains. bon, <u>nous-mêmes</u> nous n’étions pas d’accord”* (#1013-1020). Lorenzo’s reference to this incident allows him to adduce another token of the Lingala-speakers’ open-mindedness: the choristers’ wish to include songs in as many languages as possible extends beyond obvious languages such as Kiswahili and Tshiluba and also includes as remote a language as Flemish.

The positive-face management for the Lingala group goes hand in hand with a negative-face management for the non-Lingala-speakers. There is the claim that the scarcity of Kiswahili or Tshiluba songs in the choir’s weekly repertoire, against which non-Lingala-speakers could protest, is the result of the others’ own reluctance to teach such songs to the choir. Lorenzo condemns this reluctance in #805-806 and in #834-835: *“mais personne n’était venu montrer* *une chanson de chez lui"* and *"mais il n'y a pas des gens qui viennent= par exemple quelqu'un qui vient, bon moi j'ai une chanson en swahili"*.

Lorenzo's account in LO#780-789 is a rather fierce rebuttal of the non-Lingala-speakers' right to complain about *any* patterns of language use in Neptunia. His point is, again, that although the non-Lingala-speakers have been given numerous opportunities to turn the tables on the language proportions in the Neptunia songs, they have never used these opportunities. He mentions that one of the founders of the Neptunia choir is Helmut, a Kiswahili-speaker who left the choir shortly after its creation in 1985. Lorenzo intimates that one can hardly think of a better position than that of a founder to influence the choir's repertoire of songs. Nevertheless, Helmut never made use of this post to increase the number of Kiswahili and Tshiluba songs. Lorenzo's conclusion is straightforward: Helmut has been given ample opportunity to change the situation; today he is not entitled to complain anymore: *"est-ce que tu peux t'imaginer que <u>l'un</u> des fondateurs de la chorale c'est Helmut. […] <u>l'un</u> des fondateurs de la chorale c'est Helmut. or, avec Helmut, il n'y avait pas une chanson en tshiluba. ni en swahili. […] est-ce que tu peux comprendre ça? ((laughs)) donc c'est pas Helmut qui peut se plaindre"* (#780-788).

F.2. The generic innocence of the sung parts of a Catholic mass

In their references to the extenuating effect of the songs, the Kiswahili-speakers do not attend to historically contingent issues. They rather construct this extenuating effect by means of a generic evaluation of songs in any Catholic mass. The claim is that the sung fragments of a mass belong to the unessential, peripheral supplements that happen to come with Catholic masses. As a consequence, the choice of the language to be used for the songs is an inconsequential matter.

In UL#367-375, Ulrike explains that she did not prefer to go to Lingala masses when she lived in Kinshasa. I react by asking how, then, she manages to participate in the *Neptunia* masses. In #376, she denies the parallel I implicitly draw between the masses in Neptunia and the Lingala masses in Kinshasa: *"à Neptunia? bon tout n'est pas dit en lingala hein"*. Ulrike's reply in UL#387 is very much to the same effect: *"parce que déjà au départ la messe est dite en français"*. Ulrike thus finds that not everything in the Neptunia masses is conducted in Lingala; for the spoken parts of the celebration, for instance, French is used.

Ulrike's assertion that 'it's not all Lingala in Neptunia' is accompanied by references to the functional distribution of each of the languages in Neptunia. In UL#377-378, Ulrike reminds me of the fact that in the Neptunia masses Lingala is only used for the religious songs, while the celebration itself is conducted in French: *"c'est sauf des chansons hein, des chants hein"*. This reasoning is not only based on a distinction between Lingala as the unacceptable language and French as the acceptable language, but also on an evaluative juxtaposition of the sung parts and the spoken parts of a Catholic mass. While the songs are part of the unessential and innocent ornaments, the spoken parts of a Catholic celebration, on the other hand, are of more importance, and the choice of the language to be used for them is all but noncommittal: *"c'est sauf des chansons hein, des chants hein. ben je comprends. un chant, je comprends, il y a pas de problèmes"* (UL#377-380).

In a casual conversation, Helmut once provided a similar explanation: *"mais le lingala qui serait vraiment prédominant là, c'est seulement les chansons hein. et des chansons, bon c'est des chansons. ça peut être dans n'importe quelle langue hein"* (field-note reproduction). Helmut thus downplayed the sociolinguistic weight of the sung parts of a Catholic mass by means of the remark 'songs are only songs' (*"des chansons, bon c'est des chansons"*).

In IN#363-365, Ingrid's account attests to a similar construction. In #356-362, she explains that the Kiswahili-speakers' consent to the Lingala dominance in Neptunia is merely a token of their respect for the linguistic preferences of the majority (see also other counterarguments above). She argues that most of the choir members belong to the linguistic group of Lingala-speakers and that it is totally 'normal' and understandable that they sing in the language in which they feel most comfortable (*"c'est tout à fait normal qu'il chante dans cette langue-là"*, #361-362). She then proceeds to argue that: *"mais ça nous empêche pas= chanter en lingala ça peut nous réjouir aussi. comme ça on chante on participe aussi. même les chansons en lingala sont belles aussi"* (#363-365). The fact that the choristers' linguistic preferences impel them to resort more to Lingala than to any other Zairian language is inoffensive, because these preferences only materialize in the songs, in which the relationship with language is arbitrary and innocuous.

G. The construction of a distinctive Kiswahili-speaking subgroup

The Lingala-speakers and Kiswahili-speakers both argue that when it comes to linguistic-attitudinal issues, the Kiswahili-speakers who visit Neptunia represent a specific subgroup within the entire family of Kiswahili-speakers. The informants' point is that the Neptunia Kiswahili-speakers are to be distinguished from other Kiswahili-speakers on the basis of their particular linguistic open-mindedness. The implicit claim (*'There are good reasons to believe that the Kiswahili-speakers are or could be offended by the dominance of Lingala in Neptunia'*) is thus refuted by means of the argument that the Neptunia Kiswahili-speakers are not the Kiswahili-speakers that are usually opposed to Lingala. This contingent construction of the Neptunia Kiswahili-speakers as a distinctive subgroup involves the implicit recognition (contra counterargument C) that some negative attitudes towards Lingala are indeed present among Kiswahili-speakers in general, as the argument aims at distancing the Neptunia Kiswahili-speakers from negative linguistic attitudes which exist among other Kiswahili-speakers.

The Lingala-speakers and the Kiswahili-speakers construct the distinctive group of Neptunia Kiswahili-speakers in different ways. Again, the Lingala-speakers' strategy is strongly related to the view of the multilingual make-up of Zaire as presided by Lingala. They identify the Neptunia Kiswahili-speakers as Kiswahili-speakers who all spent some time of their lives in Kinshasa and thereby abandoned their Kiswahili identity, to become full members of the group of Lingala-speakers. The Neptunia Kiswahili-speakers are, in other words, no longer 'genuine' Kiswahili-speakers, but are 'impregnated' with a Lingala mentality.

The Kiswahili-speakers, by contrast, prefer to maintain the clear-cut distinction between a group of Kiswahili-speakers and a group of Lingala-speakers. They rather dissociate the Neptunia Kiswahili-speakers from the intolerant Kiswahili-speakers on the basis of parameters such as age, social position (i.a., education), and regional-cultural affiliation. Their claim is that the Neptunia Kiswahili-speakers represent a particular generational, social, or regional subgroup within the entire family of Kiswahili-speakers, which is more linguistically open-minded than the other generational, social, and regional subgroups.

G.1. The deidentification of the Neptunia Kiswahili-speakers

In the discussion of counterargument A above, I explained how the Lingala-speaking informants hold that what in the implicit claim is referred to as the group of Kiswahili-speakers actually forms part of the larger Lingala-speaking group, which more or less encompasses all Zairians. The Neptunia Kiswahili-speakers are thus 'deidentified' and 'reidentified': being reidentified as speakers of Lingala, they are stripped of their Kiswahili identity.

Above, I referred to Joaquín's account in JO#1214-1222, which is a reaction to my question (#1211-1213) whether the Kiswahili-speakers in Neptunia are not offended by the dominance of Lingala. He answers: *"quand on parle les swahiliphones, ici ils sont pas nombreux. (on peut les compter à bout de doigt!) […] même les swahiliphones ici, ils ont plus vécu à Kinshasa* **{***((laughing)) que à l'intérieur***}***"* (#1214-1218). In this argument, Joaquín deidentifies the Neptunia Kiswahili-speakers. He argues that the members of the Kiswahili group in Neptunia are to be considered Lingala-speakers, rather than 'genuine' Kiswahili-speakers, as they belong to that very specific class of Kiswahili-speakers who lived more in Kinshasa than in their own Kiswahili-speaking regions. During their stays in the capital, they fully interiorized the 'Lingala mentality' of the capital and abandoned their eastern, 'Kiswahili mentality'.

The same argument reoccurs in JO#1272-1280, where it is related to the situation in Belgium in general. In #1272-1275, he argues that almost all Zairians in Neptunia come from Kinshasa, including the ones the implicit claim identifies as Kiswahili-speakers: *"il y a des Zaïrois qui ne sont pas de Kinshasa, mais je peux dire que quatre-vingt pour cent des Zaïrois ou nonante* *pour cent des Zaïrois qui sont ici en Belgique [ont au moins passé]"*. He explains this demographic constellation as follows: *"moi je ne vois pas qui est ce Zaïrois qui aurait même l'ouverture d'esprit quitter l'Equateur directement Europe. sans avoir été à Kinshasa! s'imprégner et= donc la plupart ils ont vécu à Kinshasa, alors ils ont cet esprit-là"* (#1276-1280). The region of Equateur is used as an example to represent all the interior parts of Zaire outside the capital. It is technically impossible, Joaquín argues, to emigrate to Europe without being held up in Kinshasa during a relatively long period of time. This transit stay in the capital transforms every Zairian into a Lingala-speaking Zairian, both in terms of practical language usage and in terms of group identity. (Note that this claim is thematically contradictory to Joaquín's own description of the Tetela-regular Averell in counterargument A.1.) Joaquín's point is that the candidate emigrant becomes 'impregnated' (*"s'imprégner"*) with the Lingala identity during her or his stay in the capital, and that he or she adopts the 'spirit' and linguistic preferences of the inhabitants of Kinshasa. The Kiswahili-speakers who manage to emigrate to Belgium, which by definition applies to all the Neptunia Kiswahili-speakers, differ from the other Kiswahili-speakers in that their histories have freed them from their Kiswahili identity and from the corresponding anti-Lingala attitudes.

During a casual conversation with Iñigo, a similar point of view arose. I started this conversation by inquiring about the Kiswahili-speakers' general attitudes towards Lingala. Iñigo described how the eastern Zairians tend to become very hostile when they are addressed in Lingala. His general assessment was that these people are bigoted and paranoid language users. I immediately took up this remark and asked him to relate this to the situation in Neptunia, which in spite of its Lingala dominance contains a considerable number of Kiswahili-speakers. He reacted: *"mais les swahiliphones ici à Neptunia ce sont pour la plupart des Kinois. donc ils n'ont pas cette mentalité-là, qu'on retrouve surtout chez les autres swahiliphones, ceux qui sont au Kivu et au Shaba"* (field-note reproduction). The Neptunia Kiswahili-speakers are 'other' Kiswahili-speakers, i.e. Kiswahili-speakers who do not share the linguistic provincialism characteristic of the Kiswahili family in general. Their Kinshasa experiences have deadened their typically Kiswahili traits.

G.2. Personal disjunction on generational, social, and regional grounds

The Neptunia Kiswahili-speakers' aim is to convey that the implicit claim oversimplifies the different categories of Kiswahili-speakers. As a device to refute the implicit claim, their construction of a distinctive we-group is also as a strategy of personal disjunction managing positive face. The Kiswahili-speaking informants stress that they, and the other people around them in Neptunia, do not belong to the group of the linguistically intolerant Kiswahili-speakers, and they thereby dissociate their group from a socially disapproved disposition.

Three parameters may be distinguished in the delineation of a tolerant we-group, i.e. age, social position, and regional-cultural affiliation. A first example of the use of the parameter of age can already be found in Hans's insistence, quoted earlier, on the distinction between the linguistic attitudes of the older generations and those of the younger generations. Hans's claim is that whereas the elderly in Zaire may indeed still dislike Lingala, this is certainly not the case for the younger Zairians. Of importance here is the fact that he completes his claim by stressing that the Kiswahili-speakers in Neptunia are precisely members of this younger generation. In HA#1076-1094, for instance, I confront Hans with what I believe to be a contradiction between his statement that the elderly in eastern Zaire do not approve of the use of Lingala in Catholic masses on the one hand, and his point that the Kiswahili-speakers in Neptunia have no problems with the dominance of Lingala in this setting on the other. In #1095-1102, Hans disambiguates this contradiction, clarifying that he also counts the Neptunia Kiswahili-speakers among the 'younger generations': *"ah oui mais moi j'ai été jeune hein! [...] toute la communauté qui est ici, swahiliphone, je sais pas tshilubaphone ou quoi, c'est déjà une génération, qui a appris à évoluer et à s'intégrer selon le contexte moderne"*.

To Hans, the distinction between the older and the younger generations also paraphrases the most fundamental difference between the situation in Zaire and the immigrant situation in Belgium. Whereas the distinction between the two age groups is certainly significant in Zaire, this distinction is not relevant to the situation abroad, as the Zairian community in Belgium is exclusively composed of members of the younger generations: *"la différence c'est que au Zaïre il y a quand même deux groupes, il y a le groupe des jeunes, et il y a les autres fidèles. donc qui ne sont pas jeunes"* (#1311-1314). Hans's identification of the Kiswahili-speakers in Neptunia – and in the diaspora in general – as a particular generational subgroup, i.e. younger Zairians, involves a qualification of this group as a class that distinguishes itself from other Kiswahili-speakers by its higher degree of tolerance towards Lingala.

A similar construction of the Kiswahili-speaking Neptunia we-group may be found in Ingrid's organized conversation. In IN#914-933, Ingrid explains how a visit to Bukavu would soon show me that there are different groups with different opinions about Lingala in this city. In her words: *"quand vous entrez dans les groupes des vieilles personnes, ils vont vous dire qu'est-ce qu'il veut faire avec cette langue"* (#918-920). It is, now, important to note that Ingrid prefers to frame her reports on the adverse sentiments in her own region in the third person plural. In the account just quoted, she says *"ils vont dire"*. Another instance is *"allez dans ces coins, et causez avec ces gens-là. voir leurs idées sur la langue lingala. là vous aurez beaucoup plus"* (#910-912) (see also the long account in #935-976). It should also be noticed that Ingrid's few explications of her own linguistic antipathy are skillfully mitigated or conversationally backgrounded. It is striking, among other things, how the faint utterance *"mais pour des raisons personnelles moi je dis, moi je ne parle pas cette langue-là"*

(#410-412) is designed to have its propositional content vanish amidst the surrounding statements. All these linguistic strategies serve the personal disjunction: i.e. they must dissociate the self from the linguistic provincialism as a disapproved disposition.

Some informants ground the construction of themselves as a distinctive Kiswahili-speaking we-group in social rather than generational criteria. They emphasize that the Neptunia Kiswahili-speakers represent the instructed, intellectual segment of the group of Kiswahili-speaking Zairians in general, and that members of the intelligentsia are universally known to be more open-minded than less educated people. Jürgen's reasoning in JÜ#965-979 contains some of these points. He mentions that tolerance fully depends on the *"niveau de culture"* of the individual in question (#965), and adds that it is not very cultivated (*"indélicat"*, *"impoli"*, #973-974) for a Kiswahili-speaker to impose the use of Kiswahili upon Lingala-speakers. In his long account in JÜ#1156-1218, he argues that tolerance is something one acquires, and that education operates as the channel for this acquisition: *"donc l'élément éducation si vous voulez, niveau culturel, c'est un élément supplémentaire [...], ça joue aussi"* (#1175-1177).

Whereas in these accounts the identification of the Neptunia Kiswahili-speakers as Zairians with a distinctive *niveau de culture* is only present at the implicit levels, this identification surfaces more explicitly in Ingrid's reaction in IN#634-639. In the preceding turns, I repeat my observation that the Kiswahili-speakers in Neptunia are apparently not offended by Lingala in Neptunia. She explains: *"il faut voir leur niveau aussi. le niveau aussi change. la réaction des gens, de quelqu'un qui a étudié ça peut pas être comme les réactions de celui qui n'ont pas étudié hein. les gens qui ont étudié comprennent, bon ils tolèrent facilement"* (#634-638). Ingrid urges me to have an eye for the particular social identity of the Kiswahili-speakers who visit Neptunia. The Neptunia Kiswahili-speakers are not just any kind of Kiswahili-speakers; they represent the educated and cultured segment.

Closely related to the we-group construction on the basis of education is the claim that as members of the higher social classes, the Neptunia Kiswahili-speakers have more international experience than lower-class Zairians, and that they are therefore more familiar with diversity at all levels. Jürgen immediately completes his quoted argument about the *"élément d'éducation"* by specifying that *"les voyages en fait c'est une étude en soi"* (#1179-1180) and *"je crois que des faits qu'on vit même ici à l'étranger, que ne vivent pas encore peut-être les gens qui n'ont pas quitté tel ou tel pays, ça pousse les gens à une certaine tolérance"* (#1212-1215). Again, the Neptunia Kiswahili-speakers are not just any Kiswahili-speakers: they are internationalized people, who have acquired a certain cosmopolitan awareness and tolerance.

A third type of personal disjunction away from the intolerant segment of Kiswahili-speakers consists in attributing the intolerance to another regional or cultural subgroup of Kiswahili-speakers. This version of the 'not-we' argument involves a strong insistence on all forms of negative attitudes towards Lingala that exist among Kiswahili-speakers from other Zairian regions or cities. At the same time, the regional or cultural we-group is represented as tolerant of (or at least as indifferent towards) Lingala and its users.

On two occasions, Ingrid interrupts me when I incidentally mention the region of Shaba. In IN#640-642, I bring up a visit Ingrid, I, and some other friends paid to Klaus's family some days before the organized conversation. That afternoon, the central topics of conversation included Zairian languages and, in particular, the relationship between Lingala and Kiswahili. In my sentences, I do not explicitly mention, nor do I make any indirect reference to, the region of Shaba. Nevertheless, once she has grasped that I am talking about language attitudes and about Klaus, who is from Shaba, Ingrid quickly interrupts me and underscores that *"si vous allez aujourd'hui au Shaba, vous parlez lingala on ne vous sert pas!"* (#643-644). She also emphatically (note the prosody) repeats this point in the following turns (until #651). A very similar energetic denunciation of the people from Shaba occurs in #677-678: *"et d'ailleurs c'est là où on n'aime pas trop parler lingala hein!"*. When I ask her whether this intolerance towards Lingala is also present in the Kivu regions, her own region of origin, her answer is very evasive, expressing many doubts and using a great number of conditionals: *"il paraît que ils commencent aussi à se méfier du lingala, est-ce que c'est vrai est-ce que c'est faux, ça je ne sais pas le dire (comme je suis partie)"* (#656-659). So, while she knows with much certainty that in the region of Shaba – a region she has never visited – the attitudes are pronouncedly negative, the real extent of the opinions on Lingala in her own region are unclear to her. By overemphasizing the negative attitudes in other regions than her own, she attempts to dissociate herself from the negative attitudes.

Jürgen, who is also from Kivu, uses the same region of Shaba as the target for 'draining' the negative attitudes 'away' from himself and his own group. In JÜ#654-655, he does not accept that I mention the Kivu regions and the region of Shaba in one breath when I talk about the rejection of Lingala: *"surtout au Shaba hein! au Kivu au début, les gens semblaient (.) bon dire="*. His insistence on the strong aversion to Lingala in Shaba in #1083-1084 (*"ils vous disent carrément, vous êtes ceci écoutez, ici c'est le swahili et consort"*) is a similar reaction.

Jürgen also explains the absence of negative feelings in his own Kivu region by means of a cultural perspective on geographical group identity. A first case of culturalization as a strategy of personal disjunction may be found in JÜ#873-881. He mentions that generally, the inhabitants of the Kivu regions do not attach much importance to 'folkloristic things', implying that language matters such as the sociolinguistic relationships in Neptunia are to be considered 'folklore': *"je ne voudrais pas être catégorique, mais je crois que sans trop parler de bien, des gens de l'est parce qu'ils ont leurs défauts, ou les gens de l'ouest parce que= mais je crois que tel que je connais les gens du*

Kivu, le folklorique ils n'y attachent pas trop d'importance" (#873-877). More pronounced is the culturalization in JÜ#989-1033, to which I also referred in the context of the discrepancy between underlying attitudes and observable behavior (counterargument D). Jürgen qualifies the people in his own region as individuals who are serene and dignified (*"on ne manifeste pas directement pour dire non, écoutez je ne suis pas d'accord!"*, #992-994), especially with respect to religious affairs such as Catholic masses (*"on a une certaine attitude vis-à-vis [...] des choses de l'Eglise. quand c'est une pratique qui est déjà consacrée, on se dit bon, on ne peut pas se mettre à combattre ça"*, #1017-1021). Jürgen culturalizes his own geographical group in order to distance his group from what is sensed to be a socially disapproved disposition, i.e. intolerance vis-à-vis Lingala.

H. The construction of a distinctive Lingala-speaking subgroup and Lingala variant

In the counterargument to be discussed here, the refutation of the implicit claim is more based on formal-linguistic arguments than on sociolinguistic ones. Referring to purely linguistic structures and features, the informants dissociate the Lingala used in Neptunia from the Lingala to which Kiswahili-speakers are usually opposed. As such, this construction of a distinctive Neptunia Lingala variant involves the recognition of the existence of some negative attitudes towards Lingala among non-Lingala-speakers. The main point is that these negative linguistic attitudes concern an attitudinal object that is foreign to Neptunia, i.e. another, distant variant of Lingala, and that those negative attitudes can therefore not disturb the social harmony and fraternity there. Closely related is the construction of the Neptunia Lingala-speakers as a special subgroup within the larger family of Lingala-speakers, i.e. a class of Lingala-speakers whom Kiswahili-speakers do not regard as offensive. Thus, whereas the foregoing counterargument was related to the construction of the Neptunia Kiswahili-speakers as a distinctive category within the larger family of Kiswahili-speakers, the counterargument to be discussed here is concerned with the construction of the Neptunia Lingala-speakers as a distinctive category.

The premises on which the Lingala-speakers base their construction of a separate variant of Lingala includes statements to the effect that the Lingala variant used in Neptunia is neither the Lingala of the Zairian armed forces, nor the Lingala of the Bangala from the region of Equateur, two variants of the language to which non-Lingala-speaking Zairians are said to be averse. Analogously, the Lingala-users in Neptunia are 'identified away from' the Zairian army and from the ethnic group of the Bangala.

The Kiswahili-speakers prefer to ground their construction of a Neptunia variant of Lingala in references to the social position of its users. It is stressed that the Lingala-speakers in Neptunia typically belong to the instructed segment of the group of Lingala-speaking Zairians in general and that they generally display a more refined social behavior than the common users of Lingala. This social cultivation of the Neptunia Lingala-speakers is then said to allow them to 'bypass' the intrinsically rude nature of their language, Lingala.

H.1. Dissociating the Neptunia Lingala-speakers and Lingala variant from the Zairian armed forces and the Bangala

In #529-546, a passage also commented upon above (see counterargument A), Begoña elaborately describes the Kiswahili-speakers' and the Tshiluba-speakers' aversion to Lingala. For the present discussion, it is necessary to repeat that Begoña's description is replete with depreciations of these people's rejection of Lingala. Her choice of words (i.a., *"ils sont fiers, ils se vantent"*, #530) evinces that she discredits this rejection as puerile and illegitimate. In #547-549, I inquire whether she regards the identification of Lingala with the unpopular Zairian army as a reasonable or understandable basis for the non-Lingala-speakers to dislike the language. Begoña senses that the low esteem of the army could indeed be a valid justification for the rejection of Lingala and therefore decides to try out a different strategy to refute the implicit claim: she chooses to disprove the legitimacy of the rejection of Lingala by mitigating the Lingala identity of the Zairian armed forces.

She first expresses her doubts as to whether Lingala is really used at all hierarchical levels of the armed forces and throughout the entire country: *"je crois en tout cas la basse classe hein. la basse classe. je ne crois pas que les généraux ils parlent lingala entre eux"* (#552-554) and *"ceux qui sont dans un coin de swahili ils parlent swahili quand même!"* (#560-561). The Lingala identity of the Zairian army is downplayed by means of a qualification of its spread in the army as restricted. In a second type of mitigation, she explains that the Lingala variant used by the armed forces is an idiosyncratic one. She observes: *"les militaires aussi ils ont un lingala des soldats en tout cas. ils parlent le lingala des militaires [...]"* (#555-567). This 'military's military Lingala', to reiterate Begoña's own pleonasm, reveals the following linguistic characteristics: *"c'est un lingala militaire.* ***{****((in a much lower, aggressive pitch)) eh!****}*** ***{****((laughing)) je ne sais même pas, je ne sais même pas=****}*** ***{****((trying the aggressive tone again, stressing the more open articulation of the [o] sounds as compared to the [u] sounds that will follow)) moto, alobi, na yo*[91]*.****}*** *tu vois? c'est comme ça leur lingala. mais moi parfois je peux dire, mutu*[92]*. tu vois mutu?"* (#566-573). This construction of the Lingala of the army as an idiosyncratic variant is used by Begoña to dissociate herself and her fellow Lingala-speakers in Neptunia from a Lingala variant to which, so she implicitly recognizes, some Kiswahili-speakers are indeed averse. This dissociation is manifest in the quoted phrase *"mais moi parfois je peux dire, mutu. tu vois mutu?"*, as well as in other remarks such as *"leur lingala c'est vraiment un*

91. Lingala for 'someone, told, you'.

92. Lingala for 'someone' (*mutu* and *moto* are variant pronunciations of the same word, with allophones of one single phoneme).

lingala militaire hein. pas un lingala comme je le parle moi hein. c'est un lingala militaire" (#564-566).

The organized conversation with Joaquín also contains the application of formal-linguistic arguments for the refutation of the implicit claim. Joaquín's main contention is that the use of Lingala in Neptunia is restricted to the use of the Kinshasa variant, and that, due to its very linguistic features, this variant is ethnically unmarked. In #1320-1332, he asserts: *"même le lingala qu'on parle à Kinshasa, n'est plus le lingala des Bangala! vous voyez à ce moment, donc le lingala de Kin c'est comme un symbiose de beaucoup de langues. donc on ne peut pas prétendre, moi je suis le propriétaire de lingala de Kinshasa! non le lingala de Kinshasa est mélange de tout autour, le kikongo et ça. [...] mais, il y a ce sentiment-là qui est exprimé au niveau du pays. surtout à l'est, donc où nous on a été on a vécu ça! à Lubumbashi. ils disent que les Bangala sont venus coloniser le Shaba. quand tu parles lingala, vraiment le feed back vraiment tu ne l'as pas"* (#1320-1332).

In this account, Joaquín affirms that there are negative attitudes vis-à-vis Lingala and its speakers in eastern Zaire. As a Mongala from the region of Equateur, he moreover personally experienced this when he lived in Lubumbashi. His point, however, is that these hostile feelings are not targeted at *all* the variants of Lingala. They are only targeted at the variant and the speakers that can clearly be identified with the ethnic group of the Bangala and with the region of Equateur. They do not concern the variant and speakers that are identified with Kinshasa. The factor to which Kinshasa Lingala owes this innocuous quality, then, is the fact that it is structurally a hybrid language. Kinshasa Lingala is so much a blend of linguistic elements from surrounding languages, such as Kikongo and other ones (*"un symbiose de beaucoup de langues"*, *"mélange de tout autour, le kikongo et ça"*), that it must nowadays be considered nobody's and thus everybody's property: *"donc on ne peut pas prétendre, moi je suis le propriétaire de lingala de Kinshasa!"* and *"il est aussi quelque part propriétaire de cette langue [...] il se retrouve un peu dans ce lingala qui essaie un peu de faire le mélange tout"*.

It is, then, precisely this intrinsically neutral Kinshasa variant of Lingala which is used in the Neptunia masses: *"[à Neptunia] il n'y a pas une langue qui= une langue c'est-à-dire d'une province qui prédomine. [...] à part le lingala qui est issu de Kinshasa là! qui vient de Kinshasa! [...] mais ça ne reflète pas la langue vraiment d'une province comme ça"* (#1350-1356). In other words, since by virtue of its formal-linguistic qualities the language that is most substantially used in Neptunia is an ethnically and regionally unmarked one, language use can impossibly be a source of intergroup conflict in Neptunia, and the implicit claim does not stand.

H.2. The Lingala-speakers' resistance to Lingala's intrinsic rudeness

The Kiswahili-speakers' point is that the variant of Lingala used by the Neptunia Lingala-speakers is not the inherently impolite and vulgar one to which Kiswahili-speakers are generally averse. This argument also constructs the Lingala-speakers in Neptunia as different from other users of Lingala. The Neptunia Lingala-speakers do not share the ill-mannered and aggressive disposition of the average Lingala-speaker. I will first discuss the informants' construction of a separate category of Lingala-users, and then turn to accounts related to the language itself.

In UL#688-694, I remind Ulrike of her earlier statements (#236-237, #241-244, see also the discussion in 8.2.2.5 above) that Kiswahili-speakers generally dislike Lingala for its purely linguistic characteristics, such as its lack of forms of politeness and its characteristically harsh sounds. I ask her whether, then, the Kiswahili-speakers in Neptunia do not take offense at the dominance of a language perceived as inherently impolite. She answers that the Lingala-speakers in Neptunia are intellectuals and members of the elite, whose social demeanor is generally known to be of an impeccable kind: *"l'élite, même si entre nous on parle lingala on sait quand même quel mot utiliser. quoiqu'il soit vulgaire le lingala, vis-à-vis de l'autre (.) toi qui as fait des études tu expliqueras dans la politesse le mot qu'il faut"* (#696-700). In other words, she argues that although the observation that Lingala is an impolite language remains valid (*"quoiqu'il soit vulgaire le lingala"*), this property of the language does not influence the disposition of its speakers in fully deterministic ways. Some individuals, i.e. the educated and civilized ones, such as the Lingala-speakers in Neptunia, are resistant to this linguistic determinism, and are able to use the language in ways that run counter to its own nature, bypassing its negative aspects and retaining only the positive ones: *"le milieu ici à Neptunia, je crois que ce langage terre à terre n'est pas utilisé. les mauvais côtés quand même ils laissent hein, ils sont là, les intellectuels, et ils sont civilisés"* (#728-731).

Hilde, who was only consulted in casual conversations, once answered my question about the Kiswahili-speakers' acceptance of Lingala in Neptunia in quite similar terms, and linked up her argument with the immigrant Zairian community in general: *"ici à Neptunia et en Belgique, bon, maintenant avec les réfugiés ce n'est plus comme ça mais auparavant les Zaïrois en Belgique c'étaient qui, c'étaient surtout des personnes éduquées, étudiants et fonctionnaires et autres"* (field-note reproduction). Hilde referred to a demographic turning point in the history of Zairian immigration in Belgium. Whereas until the late 1980s the Zairian population in Belgium was predominantly composed of graduate students, the demographic composition has in recent days gravitated towards the category of refugees, most of whom – still in her view – are members of the lower social classes in Zaire.

Ulrike's quote shows that close to the construction of the Neptunia Lingala-speakers as educated Lingala-speakers is a construction of the language variant itself as a distinctive variant of Lingala. Ulrike mentions that *"le langage terre à terre"*, a particular item within the range of Lingala variants which she has just amply illustrated (#717-728), is not the Lingala variant that is used in

Neptunia. This also appears in her remark in #702-703: *"je ne verrai pas ce lingala vulgaire entre nous"*. Ulrike has a rather precise idea about the linguistic characteristics of the Neptunia variant of Lingala, as well as about the generally disesteemed variant. In #705-709, she describes the prosodic differences between the two variants by juxtaposing two pronunciations of the same phrase: *"même si on dit, yo*[93]*, on va dire ça avec une douceur. on ne dira pas yo! on dira avec une douceur on dit,* **{***((softer voice and higher pitch)) yo mot'otiyaki*[94]*=***}** *tu comprends?* **{***((idem)) yo mot'otiyaki oyo wana*[95]*?***}***"*.

I. The influence of Lingala's use of codeswitching on its social recognition

In addition to the dissociation of a separate Neptunia variant of Lingala, explained in the context of the preceding counterargument, the Lingala-speakers and the Kiswahili-speakers also share another formal-linguistic argument in their refutation of the implicit claim. This argument also involves references to the intrinsic features of Lingala, but rather than specifically orienting to the contingent context of Neptunia, it makes statements concerning the quality of Lingala in generic terms. It is particularly Lingala's quality as a codeswitching language (see chapter 4, section 4.4.1) that is at issue here. Lingala's use of codeswitching with French is said to be such that it can mitigate or eliminate the offensiveness Kiswahili-speakers might find in Lingala.

The Lingala-speakers' construction of this extenuating capacity of codeswitching is, again, strongly related to the view of the multilingual make-up of Zaire as presided by Lingala and to the construction of Lingala as the only African language of pan-Zairian appeal. It is emphasized that the French/Lingala codeswitching pattern as applied by Zairians is strongly different from the one applied by the inhabitants of the People's Republic of the Congo. This formal-linguistic difference in codeswitching behavior is part and parcel of the argument that Zaire is the only African country entitled to lay claim to Lingala as its distinctive language (see also counterargument A).

Maintaining that the high degree of French codeswitching is an exclusive characteristic of Lingala and does not affect Kiswahili, the Kiswahili-speakers argue that Lingala is a socially acceptable language because, by its overt use of French elements and structures, it has partly adopted the ethnically and regionally neutral value of this European language.

I.1. Congolese vs. Zairian Lingala/French codeswitching

Above, I explained how the Lingala-speakers' construction of the multilingual make-up of Zaire includes a belief in the pan-Zairian appeal of Lingala. I

93. Lingala for 'you' (second person singular).

94. Lingala for 'are you the one who put=?'.

95. Lingala for 'are you the one who put this there?'.

indicated that the informants identify Lingala as one of the features that distinguishes Zaire from other countries. One of the points was that although Lingala is also spoken in the People's Republic of the Congo, it can never function as this country's international badge of identity, for there it lacks the spread it has in Zaire (*"au Congo par exemple, ils ont le lingala, ils ont le mboshi, ils ont la langue des Bangala du nord, pour que les trois peuples puissent se comprendre ils ne peuvent parler que le français!"*, LO#1180-1184). The absence of a *pan*-Congolese identity at the internal level of the country thus precludes an *exclusively* Congolese identity at the external, international level. I mentioned how Lorenzo draws the conclusion that Lingala is more indicative of Zaire than of any other Lingala-speaking country: *"si par exemple, j'entends quelqu'un parler le lingala, un Noir, je vais dire directement ah! oyo aza Zaïrois*[96]*. [...] il peut être Congolais hein! à Brazzaville on parle aussi le lingala. mais je dirais d'abord, c'est un Zaïrois"* (#1294-1299).

Of particular note for the present discussion is the fact that Lorenzo does not only organize this exclusively Zairian identity of Lingala around sociolinguistic arguments, such as the spread of the language throughout a country's territory, but also around purely linguistic ones. He first remarks that *"un Congolais, quand il parle (.) le lingala, tu sens ça aussi"* (#1301-1302). After a few commentaries on typically Congolese lexemes, he argues that it is also possible to recognize an African speaker of Lingala as either a Zairian or a Congolese on the basis of structural features in her or his codeswitching behavior. The differences in linguistic patterns of French/Lingala codeswitching amount to the fact that whereas the Congolese tend to retain the French article in codeswitching, Zairians typically omit the article: *"un Congolais par exemple quand il parle son lingala, il va dire= puisque eux ils mélangent= bon, il y a aussi le mélange du français, mais l'accent aussi joue. eux ils utilisent beaucoup les articles. par exemple moi je dirais, nakei n'école*[97]*. quand je dis [...] je vais à l'école. nakei n'école. [...] mais le Congolais dira pas nakei n'école, il dira nakei na l'école*[98]*"* (#1329-1341). The exclusively Zairian identity of Lingala is thus not only a function of the sociolinguistic differences between Zaire and the Republic of the Congo, as Lingala's spread is much more comprehensive in the former country than it is in the latter. It is also actualized by such formal-linguistic matters as the contrasting applications of structural constraints in the production of codeswitching. Thanks to its structural codeswitching behavior, Lingala is an *exclusively* Zairian language, which is strongly related to its *pan*-Zairian identity. And it is this pan-Zairian identity which mitigates the potentially offensive nature of Lingala.

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96. Lingala for 'this person is a Zairian'.

97. Lingala/French for 'I am going to school'.

98. Lingala/French for 'I am going to the school'.

I.2. Lingala's adoption of the socially neutral identity of French

In previous discussions (see 0.2), I described Ulrike's construction of the use of Lingala and French in conversations between Zairians of different origins. She explained that French is the language used in the first contact between two strangers, and that when after a few turns a minimal degree of familiarity has been established, the remainder of the conversation will further be conducted (a) in the shared Zairian language if the interlocutors appear to be from the same linguistic and geographical group (e.g., Kiswahili if both interlocutors appear to be from a Kiswahili-speaking region, Kikongo if they both appear to be from the region of Lower Zaire, etc.), or (b) in Lingala if the linguistic group identities are not shared and at least one of the interlocutors belongs to the linguistic group of the Lingala-speakers.

In #594 and #596, I react surprised and mention that I expected that a difference in linguistic identities always selects French as the language of communication (*"et pourquoi vous ne continuez pas en français?"*, #594 and *"on pourrait aussi continuer seulement="*, #596). Her reply in #597-687 contains some noteworthy lay interpretations of the role and nature of codeswitching in Lingala. She remarks that Lingala makes so much use of French words and expressions that it almost coalesces with French: *"oui on pourrait continuer en français [...] mais toujours est-il que le lingala quand on le parle, mais on insert beaucoup de mots de français dedans hein"* (#597-600). To her, the pervasive use of codeswitching and loanwords sets Lingala apart from other Zairian languages, such as Kiswahili. When in #603 I ask *"mais le swahili aussi fait ça?"*, her position is unmistakable: *"non! le swahili <u>jamais</u>! le swahili <u>jamais</u> un mot de français! ah non. parce que elle est riche en vocabulaire"* (#604-606). (In the remainder of her account, until #686-687, she makes it clear that the Zairian variant of Kiswahili is indeed different from East-African Kiswahili, but that this contrast is not grounded in the Zairian variant's use of French.) Thus, in terms of purely formal characteristics, Lingala is closer to French than any other Zairian language.

This nearness to French extends, however, beyond the purely formal levels of linguistic structuring. The linguistic overlap between French and Lingala in terms of codeswitching and linguistic interference also triggers an overlap of the social identities of the languages. In this process, Lingala comes to adopt the value of French as the acceptable and regionally neutral code. In other words, the structural coincidence aptly camouflages the social 'Lingalaness' of Lingala. The discursive context in which Ulrike makes the remark *"on pourrait continuer en français [...] toujours est-il que le lingala quand on le parle, mais on insert beaucoup de mots de français dedans hein"* (#597-600) is a context in which we are discussing the influence of *social and ethnic* parameters on language choice. In this context, she argues that Lingala may be chosen as the language of communication in intergroup situations because Lingala makes use of a lot of French in codeswitching. The implicit causal relationship between Lingala using a lot of French in codeswitching and Lingala being acceptable as a language for intergroup communication is therefore grounded in the social and ethnic identity of French, i.e. in its neutral status.

8.4. Conclusion: The scope of the sociolinguistic consensus

In section 7.4 of chapter 7, the sociolinguistic consensus in Neptunia was described as it manifests itself at the level of the outer appearance of social life in this setting. It was mentioned that there are in Neptunia no open conflicts over the setting's sociolinguistic inequality (i.e., the fact that the language which controls the setting, Lingala, is only the language of *one of the* linguistic groups present). That is, first-level ethnographic observation allows the onlooker to establish that there are no public fights or other obtrusive forms of dissension hindering a smooth course of events in Neptunia. Given the foregoing analysis of the precise ingredients, mechanisms, and local linguistic ideologies on which the sociolinguistic consensus in Neptunia is based, we are now in a position to pinpoint this consensus in Neptunia in more exact terms. That is, the foregoing analysis allows us to deduce to what degrees the consensus really applies, if and where it shows imperfections, which (groups of) Neptunia members subscribe to it most, etc.

A first matter of importance is the general observation that all informants share the concern to *refute* the implicit claim that the Kiswahili-speakers (and other non-Lingala-speakers) in Neptunia have good reasons to be offended by the dominance of Lingala. This general tendency in itself confirms the onlooker's attestation of a consensus. None of the informants approached for a casual or organized conversation frames her or his entire conversation around an *affirmation* of the implicit claim. Very local (and always strongly qualified) affirmations do occur in the speech of some informants (see below), but on no occasion throughout my entire fieldwork was I able to record blatant and unqualified substantiations for the claim that the Kiswahili-speakers in Neptunia have good reasons to be offended by the dominance of Lingala. General as this observation of a broad disagreement with the implicit claim may be, it reveals that the consensus establishable as a first-level ethnographic observation is not merely an illusive one.

The analysis in the foregoing sections, however, show that the dominance of Lingala in Neptunia and the related sociolinguistic inequality are much less self-evident to the Kiswahili-speaking informants than to the Lingala-speaking informants. We must therefore conclude that the consensus in Neptunia is marked by certain imperfections. But differences also occur within each of the two linguistic groups of informants. Some Kiswahili-speakers, for instance, display more, and more significant, doubts as to the acceptability of the dominance of Lingala than others. It must indeed be taken into account that mechanisms of hegemony at work between groups of people, such as, in the case of Neptunia, between the Lingala-speakers and the non-Lingala-speakers, do not always affect the hegemonized groups as monolithic blocks. For a variety of reasons (which include level of education and social position, but also sheer personality, such as integrity, convinceability, and other dispositions), some individuals may be more resistant to hegemony than others. As far as these more resistant non-Lingala-speakers are concerned, the consensus shows imperfections. All these matters will be clarified now on the basis of three generalizing observations inferred from the analysis presented in sections 8.2 and 8.3.

First of all, a simple review of the different ways in which the Lingala-speakers and the Kiswahili-speakers arrive at the 9 local linguistic ideologies shows that the Lingala-speakers' counterarguments are often 'stronger' or 'more fundamental' refutations of the implicit claim than the Kiswahili-speakers'. That is, although the Kiswahili-speakers are equally concerned with refuting the implicit claim, they do this more cautiously, leaving room for a possible agreement with some subparts of the implicit claim or, indeed, with the implicit claim as a whole. The Kiswahili-speakers often appear not to want to deconstruct the implicit claim 'irreparably'. A few illustrations must clarify this.

In counterargument A, the Lingala-speakers completely deconstruct the implicit claim by undercutting one of its most basic foundations, i.e. the researcher's belief in the existence, in Neptunia, Belgium, and Zaire, of a distinction between a group of Lingala-speakers on the one hand and a group of non-Lingala-speakers on the other. The Kiswahili-speakers, by contrast, address more superficial layers of the implicit claim: they accept the presupposed distinction between two linguistic groups, and merely point to the fact that one group numerically outweighs the other. This allows them to argue that had the numerical proportions in Neptunia been otherwise (as is the case, e.g., in eastern Zaire), the implicit claim would regain all of its validity. To the Kiswahili-speakers, the fallacy of the implicit claim is thus merely a *matter of contingency*: its application to the specific context of Neptunia is infelicitous, but there are many contexts both in Zaire and in Belgium to which it is or could be highly relevant. For the Lingala-speakers, the fallacy of the implicit claim is a *matter of principle*: neither in Zaire nor in Belgium are there any contexts to which the implicit claim could be applied, for it is based on a fundamental mistake in the representation of Zairian linguistic groups. This difference between a *contingent* fallacy of the implicit claim and its fallacy *in principle* also underlies counterargument B, in which the Kiswahili-speakers argue that the pan-Zairian identity of Neptunia is a product of its contingent location within an intercultural environment, whereas the Lingala-speakers hold that the pan-Zairian identity is the product of the nonexistence of two different linguistic groups. (Counterargument G is a comparable case.)

In counterargument E as well, the Lingala-speakers' refutation of the implicit claim is 'stronger' than the Kiswahili-speakers'. The Kiswahili-speakers' argument is less forceful in that it refers to structures in Neptunia from which the Lingala-speakers *are not able to benefit* (i.e., the acquisition of a new language). The Lingala-speakers' argument, on the other hand, points to structures from which the Lingala-speakers are said *to really suffer* (i.e., the fact that they do not understand Kiswahili and the other languages). References to *real mischief* appeal much more directly to a hearer's sense of justice than references to a mere *lack of bonuses*.

Secondly, there are a (very limited) number of occasions on which some Kiswahili-speaking informants mention that they, or other Kiswahili-speakers, *do* or *could* indeed feel offended by the sociolinguistic inequality in Neptunia. On the part of the Lingala-speaking informants, no accounts to this effect can be found.

In HA#1230-1234, Hans makes the following observation: *"en fait les autres se plaignent comme Lothar […] j'ai déjà entendu à maintes reprises Ingrid ah bon, ah cette messe-là mais ((klicks tongue)) c'est toujours le lingala. il y a des gens= des cas comme ça!"*. Hans alerts me to the fact that there *are* Kiswahili-speakers in Neptunia who complain about the dominance of Lingala. Triangulating Hans's observations with my own (see chapter 7, section 7.4), I conclude that Hans is referring to complaints made outside the Neptunia setting, e.g. at home or in other private contexts and within conversations exclusively involving non-Lingala-speakers. More important than the information to which Hans refers, and than its verification by means of triangulation, is the fact *per se* that Hans considers it relevant to provide this information. He cautions me not to believe that the dominance of Lingala is fully accepted by all Kiswahili-speakers. He wants to make sure that although there is such a thing as a sociolinguistic consensus in Neptunia, this consensus may not be a fully accomplished one. It must be mentioned that Hans strategically dissociates himself from the complaints, by not attributing them to himself but to third persons such as Lothar and Ingrid.

In JÜ#1039-1050, Jürgen does not dissociate himself from the existing complaints, when he says: *"c'est pourquoi je disais que tout en ayant le gros de chansons en lingala, […] si vraiment on veut mettre tout le monde à l'aise ça ne serait pas mal qu'il y ait une chanson une fois en tshiluba une autre fois en= à côté du lingala qui est prédominant, en swahili, et une autre fois par exemple en kikongo. ça serait (l'idéal)"* (#1043-1050). Jürgen's usage of conditionals reveals that to his taste, there are not enough non-Lingala songs in the Neptunia masses. This is thus a complaint against the dominance of Lingala – or, at least, against the *extent* of this dominance – made within the direct context of the organized conversation. In one way, the fact that Jürgen makes this complaint within the context of a conversation with an outsider, and not within the very context of Neptunia in front of the other Neptunia members, corroborates my observation that complaints against the dominance of Lingala are mainly voiced outside the setting. In other ways, however, the fact that a Kiswahili-speaking member of Neptunia makes such a direct complaint is part of the observation that the consensus in Neptunia is not a perfect one.

Such explicit references to other people's or one's own complaints do not occur in the organized conversations with Ingrid and Ulrike. As such, these two informants may be said to be more affected by the mechanisms of hegemony in

Neptunia than the other two. In fact, in addition to the absence of complaints in Ulrike's organized conversation, there are a number of other indications pointing to the particularly high degree to which this person has incorporated the version of reality as presented by the Lingala-speaking members of Neptunia, which will become clear next.

The third inference pertains to the fact that although both groups elaborate on their 'central questions' (*'What do the Kiswahili-speakers think of the dominance of Lingala in Neptunia? Aren't they offended by it?'* and *'What do you think of the dominance of Lingala in Neptunia? Aren't you offended by it?'*) by immediately skipping to the implicit claim contained in them, the Lingala-speakers at times also hold the position that the question can be negated directly, without any elaborate qualifications. The Kiswahili-speakers, on the other hand, almost always circumvent a direct negative answer of the question and straightaway skip to the implicit claim, which allows them not to commit themselves to a blatantly negative answer, i.e. not to deconstruct the implicit claim irreparably.

In LO#695-697, I ask Lorenzo *"donc les gens qui sont là dans le public hein? donc les gens de l'est hein? ils n'ont pas de problèmes que="*, and in #710-711, I reiterate this question as *"alors là= les gens là ils n'ont pas de problèmes avec ça="*. In both cases, Lorenzo's answers are abrupt, direct, and fully committing: *"non! [...] non! non!"* (#698-700) and *"non!"* (#712). His answers are not argumentations why the Kiswahili-speakers do not have any valid reasons to be offended; it is a plain observation of facts, i.e. the fact that the Kiswahili-speakers *are* not offended. In JO#1418-1422, Joaquín too, displays no reluctance to commit himself to a clearly negative answer. In #1417, I ask him *"vous n'avez pas peur d'heurter hein?"*. His answer is only an observation of the mere fact that the Kiswahili-speakers are not offended (completed with some evidence backing his own observation): *"non. non. parce que je vois que ça ne peut pas constituer un blocage pour le déroulement d'une messe. je sais que les gens ne font pas attention et ne prennent pas ça comme un élément pour constituer un conflict ou bien disons les etentes"* (#1418-1422).

As a rule, the Kiswahili-speakers provide no such direct answers to their question, nor do they provide mere observations of the fact that they are not offended. They almost always prefer to cast their negation in highly qualified terms, approaching the matter via a 'detour': they skip the straightforward description of the fact that the Kiswahili-speakers are not offended by immediately providing an explanation *why* they are not offended, including an argumentation that this lack of offensiveness is socially appropriate, i.e. that the Kiswahili-speakers have no good reasons to be offended. An informative illustration is contained in Jürgen's organized conversation. In JÜ#561-563, I ask him *"alors quelle est ta réaction ici, si on voit à Neptunia toutes ces langues en lingala, qu'est-ce qu'on en pense en tant que kiswahiliphone comme toi?"*. Jürgen refuses to provide a direct answer as to whether he, as a Kiswahili-speaker, is offended by Neptunia's dominance of Lingala or not; he prefers to make his reply a circuitous one and argues that what we first of all need is an *explanation* of this dominance of Lingala: *"oui c'est-à-dire qu'il faut avant de dire ce qu'on en pense, essayer de comprendre d'abord le phénomène. expliquer sans être dans l'exhaustivité quoi, expliquer comment cela peut être advenu. c'est qu'au fait, si on voit même les nombres [...] les trois quarts sont des gens qui viennent de régions où on parle lingala"* (#564-573). His explanation is then meant to be extenuating: once we know why Lingala is so dominant in Neptunia, we are able to *understand* and *excuse* the Kiswahili-speakers' lack of reaction.

An exception to this general tendency among the Kiswahili-speakers is Ulrike. When in UL#406-407 I ask Ulrike whether *"les swahiliphones n'ont pas de problèmes que à Neptunia il y a tellement de lingala"*, her answer is descriptive, straightforward, and highly committing: *"non je crois que ce n'est pas= c'est le moindre de leurs soucis. [...] je crois que ce n'est pas un problème qui les tracasse"* (#408-413). At times, her answers are most emphatic, so as to make it absolutely clear to me that what I am alluding to does not stand. In UL#422-424, she explains that the Kiswahili-speakers are actually pleased to have a Zairian mass in an otherwise Flemish environment (see also counterargument 0.2): *"ils sont à l'étranger. déjà ils ont cette Neptunia, mais c'est beaucoup pour eux!"*. When I ask her *"donc ils sont contents"* (#425), she first emphatically answers *"ben oui!"* (#426), and when I insist *"ils vont pas faire="* (#427) she interrupts me and overwhelms me as follows: *"non! non non non non non, non non non non. non"* (#428). This is one of the locations in which Ulrike shows that she is much more affected by the patterns of hegemony between the two dominant groups in Neptunia than, e.g., another Kiswahili-speaker like Jürgen.

Some Lingala-speakers' more straightforward refutations of the implicit claim also evince outright indignation. This means that on various occasions, some Lingala-speakers take the central question and the implicit claim to be utterly absurd and irrelevant, and to be an offensive blame for their behavior. In BE#585-587, I ask Begoña the following question: *"mais les gens des autres coins, les gens qui sont pas de l'Equateur, qui sont pas de la capitale, ils ne sont pas négligés là [à Neptunia]?"*. Her answer displays how indignant she is at this question and its insinuations: *"comment ils peuvent être négligés! ils sont pas négligés!"* (#588). This reply is not an explanation why there is no reason for the Kiswahili-speakers to be offended; neither is it a simple observation of the fact that they are not offended. It is an astonished reaction to an unexpected and – to her – nonsensical question. It is also a fierce reaction against an accusation, however absurd this accusation may be. Her reaction in #624 is similar. In #620-623, I ask her *"donc les gens de ces côtés-là, Bukavu Lubumbashi n'importe, qui sont à Neptunia, eux ils ne disent pas, dis c'est quoi ici! c'est pour des gens de l'Equateur, surtout avec tout le lingala ici?"*. Her indignant reply again shows that such questions come across as absurd to her: *"comment! qu'est-ce qu'ils disent ça!* (#624).

Begoña’s way of reacting reveals – at least in these discursive locations within the organized conversation – that to her, the central question *‘What do the Kiswahili-speakers think of the dominance of Lingala in Neptunia? Aren’t they offended by it?’* and the related implicit claim do not constitute socially relevant issues. Her way of reacting is not general among the Lingala-speakers, and among Kiswahili-speakers such reactions are altogether absent. Nevertheless, its occurrence does furnish us with an indication that the degree to which the sociolinguistic inequality and the dominance of Lingala count as a relevant issue for members themselves is not uniform throughout the entire community. In section 2.2 of chapter 2, I mentioned that one of my objections against the traditional anthropological ‘fear’ of imposing ethnographic nonissues on the researched community is that etically imposing a certain topic may lead to valuable insights into whether or not this topic is also a relevant issue at the emic level. Begoña’s reactions must be looked upon from this perspective. Her indignant reactions reveal that in contrast with most of the Kiswahili-speaking informants, she does not consider the sociolinguistic inequality and the Lingala dominance in Neptunia to represent a socially relevant issue. To her, these matters are normal and inconspicuous structures and, therefore, in no need of discussion.

At the same time, the fact that Begoña does not orient towards the dominance of Lingala as a socially relevant issue situates her within that segment of Neptunia members for whom the consensus counts as most perfectly accomplished. That is, the imperfections in the consensus are to be found among those members who do consider the sociolinguistic inequality a socially relevant issue, for they are the ones who do not take it for granted. We are, at this point, in a position to identify the continuum of the degrees to which the consensus applies with more precision. The three observations made so far lead us to conclude that, in general terms, the dominance of Lingala and the related sociolinguistic inequality in Neptunia are more a socially relevant issue to the Kiswahili-speaking members than to the Lingala-speaking ones. The consensus in Neptunia thus shows particular imperfections on the side of the Kiswahili-speakers, while it is more accomplished on the side of the Lingala-speakers. Begoña’s indignant reactions, then, are to be situated at one extreme of the continuum, while other Lingala-speakers are less radical than she is. At the other extreme of the continuum, we find those Kiswahili-speakers who do react against the dominance of Lingala in Neptunia, such as Jürgen. Ulrike’s statements, on the other hand, gravitate more towards the Lingala-speakers’ side and are thus to be situated around the center of the continuum, in the vicinity of the less radical Lingala-speakers.

CONCLUSIONS

In this dissertation, I have analyzed patterns of language use within the Zairian community in Antwerp, as well as the linguistic ideology (and its components, called 'local' linguistic ideologies) on the basis of which members produce and interpret these sociolinguistic patterns. This study was conducted from a linguistic-anthropological (linguistic-ethnographic) perspective, which implies, among other things, that preference was not given to a wide-scale survey of the community at large, but, rather, to the ethnographic case study of the sociolinguistic processes at work in one particular setting. This broader linguistic-anthropological framework was complemented with theoretical and methodological insights obtained from the recently developed school of discursive social psychology, in particular from Michael Billig's views of attitudes and ideologies. Another theoretical preference was to proceed from an observation-based interpretive approach. Such an approach implies that the basic concern is with members' own interpretations and constructions, but that the ordering and analysis of these emic data are fundamentally etic enterprises and that an assessment of these emic data against the background of own (historiographic, ethnographic, sociolinguistic, and other) observations (and vice versa) remains in any case indispensable.

In these general conclusions, I first of all wish to summarize some of the main findings arrived at in the case study. Next, I want to demonstrate to what extent these ethnographic findings are relevant to the Zairian community in Antwerp (and, if possible, in Belgium) at large. In a final discussion, I will briefly indicate where and how the combination of linguistic ethnography with discursive social psychology has proven to be fruitful in retrieving, ordering, and interpreting the ethnographic information (especially the members' linguistic ideology), in particular when considered against the background of other, more received theories and methodologies.

The case study was conducted in 'Neptunia', a place in Antwerp where every Saturday night, Zairians of Antwerp come together to celebrate a Catholic mass and to socialize and relax over a drink after the mass (when the Neptunia 'church' is transformed into a 'clubhouse'). As Neptunia is open to Catholic Zairians irrespective of their regional or linguistic backgrounds, the Neptunia community is composed of speakers of each of Zaire's four main languages of wider communication (commonly called 'national languages'), i.e. Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Tshiluba. Yet, both in the masses and in other contexts of Neptunia, such as in the clubhouse, Lingala is used more substantially than any other Zairian language. This dominance of Lingala is to be related to factors such as the *de facto* dominance of Lingala in Zairian society, the numerical preponderance of Lingala-speakers in Neptunia, the background of one of the Neptunia Fathers as an ex-missionary in the Lingala-speaking regions of Zaire, and the like. An important question to be answered, however, was how the

Neptunia members themselves conceive of the Lingala dominance, i.e. what the members' linguistic ideology is that underlies their behavior in Neptunia.

This linguistic ideology is inherently related to mechanisms and relationships of hegemony between the subgroups in Neptunia. The group of Lingala-speakers is the sociolinguistically dominant group in Neptunia, not only because it is numerically preponderant, but also because the language of this subgroup is at the same time the most important language of the setting as a whole – a situation which was called the 'sociolinguistic inequality' of Neptunia. The relationships of hegemony consist in the fact that this dominant group of Lingala-speakers has its linguistic preferences accepted by the Kiswahili-speakers and the other sociolinguistically dominated groups, and that no explicit, conscious, or overtly antagonistic forms of coercion are involved in these processes of imposition and acceptance. The product of the hegemony is a linguistic ideology shared by all Neptunia members, including the sociolinguistically dominated non-Lingala-speakers. In this linguistic ideology, it is held that there are no good reasons for the non-Lingala-speakers to be offended by the dominance of Lingala in Neptunia, i.e. that the dominance is a 'normal' and 'socially acceptable' sociolinguistic reality. The linguistic ideology also contains views of the reasons *why* the dominance is normal and socially acceptable (the 'local' linguistic ideologies). Here, we find the shared belief in the extenuating effect of Neptunia's demographic proportions and its songs, in the generally Zairian (rather than sub-Zairian) identity of Neptunia, in the fact that the negative attitudes vis-à-vis Lingala in eastern Zaire are nonexistent or not relevant to the Neptunia setting, in a theoretical distinction between observable behavior and underlying attitudes, in the fact that the dominance of Lingala in Neptunia constitutes an advantage rather than a disadvantage for the non-Lingala-speakers, in the identity of the Kiswahili-speaking and the Lingala-speaking members of Neptunia as representing extraordinary segments within the general groups of Kiswahili-speakers and Lingala-speakers, respectively, and, finally, in the role of such formal-linguistic phenomena as codeswitching.

As mentioned, all Neptunia members share the linguistic ideology and its components. This means that the dominance of Lingala and the sociolinguistic inequality in Neptunia are the object of a *consensus*. It is tacitly agreed upon by all groups that and why the Lingala dominance and the related sociolinguistic inequality are structures against which nobody should complain, protest, or revolt.

The consensus is, however, not an absolute or perfect one. A hegemonic relationship such as the one between the linguistic subgroups in Neptunia implies a gradual process in which one version of reality is silently accepted by the entire community. It is not surprising, therefore, that disagreements on a number of sociolinguistic and related issues may still be discerned (even if these disagreements and issues are secondary to the global consensus produced by the hegemony). These disagreements pertain to different ways in which the Lingala-speakers and the Kiswahili-speakers construct or 'arrive at' the reasons why the dominance of Lingala in Neptunia is a normal and socially acceptable reality. The two linguistic groups appear to disagree, in general terms, on the question whether the acceptability of the Lingala dominance in Neptunia is either a matter of principle, which is the predominant view among the Lingala-speakers, or a historically and socially contingent matter, which is more heard among Kiswahili-speakers. The non-Lingala-speakers mostly have it that the dominance of Lingala is normal and socially acceptable *in any context* involving Zairians with different regions and linguistic backgrounds, be it in Zaire, in Belgium, in Neptunia, or in any other environment. The Kiswahili-speakers, on the other hand, have it that the dominance of Lingala is acceptable *in the concrete context* of Neptunia, and that there are other contexts where it is, or could be, unacceptable. This basic distinction between a contingent argumentation and an argumentation in principle is furthermore grounded in different descriptive and explanatory constructions of matters such as the multilingual make-up of the Zairian territory and society, the patterns of language use in the Neptunia masses and the clubhouse, the role of Neptunia's intercultural (Flemish, Belgian, etc.) environment, the linguistic attitudes of eastern Zairians, and the like.

Another indication for the imperfect, processual, and hegemonically accomplished nature of the consensus in Neptunia is provided by the varying degrees to which the hegemony is completed. That is, some members of the dominated group display more resistance to the hegemonic mechanisms than others, and the sociolinguistic consensus may thus be said to be less perfect on the side of these resistant individuals. These members of the dominated group are more doubtful about the acceptability of Neptunia's dominance of Lingala and sociolinguistic inequality. These are also the individuals who often voice complaints against the dominance of Lingala outside the Neptunia setting itself, e.g. at home in restricted companies or in conversations with an ethnographer. The other members of the dominated group do not voice such complaints, not even in private contexts. They are, in other words, effectively influenced by the hegemonic inculcation of Neptunia's dominant linguistic ideology, and the consensus may be said to be more complete on their side.

We must now deal with the problem of the extent to which the sociolinguistic processes and ideologies at work in the restricted setting of Neptunia are relevant to the Zairian community at large. This problem not only pertains to methodological questions of representativity, i.e. to the extent to which the Neptunia population counts as a representative sample of the entire Zairian population in Antwerp. In all types of anthropology, as in the qualitative social sciences in general, such considerations must always be complemented with the empirical findings arrived at in the analysis itself. In other words, extrapolation and representativity are not only logically prior to the research practice, but are also to be considered in terms of the emerging findings.[99] Thus, the degree to which the dominance of Lingala and the accompanying consensus in Neptunia appear to be based on structures and linguistic-ideological elements that transcend the particular context of Neptunia is also the degree to which the findings from the Neptunia case study can possibly be extrapolated to the community at large. The degree to which they appear to be intricately related to Neptunia-specific structures, conversely, must caution us against such extrapolations. On the basis of the analysis of Neptunia as a case study, it is thus possible to formulate a number of conjectures as to what possibly recurs in other Zairian settings in Antwerp and Belgium. Future empirical research on patterns of language use and linguistic ideologies in these other situations is then needed to corroborate or amend these conjectures. In this context, it is also important to refer to the ways in which the members themselves conceive of their representativity, i.e. how they locate themselves within the larger community and how the contents of their linguistic ideology are constrained by the particularities of Neptunia.

The dominance of Lingala as it manifests itself in Neptunia applies to the community of Zairians in Antwerp and Belgium at large, first of all, to the extent that the numerical preponderance of Lingala-speakers is not specific to the Neptunia setting alone. In chapters 4, 5, and 6, I mentioned that although no statistical figures on the regional and linguistic backgrounds of the Zairians in Belgium are available, there is evidence to believe that emigration from Zaire to Europe is dominated by Zairians from Kinshasa and its immediate surroundings. There is the factor that, at least since the late 1980s, Kinshasa is the only Zairian city provided with an international airport. Another factor is the extremely high degree of centralization that marked Zairian society until 1990 (the end of Zaire's 'Second Republic'). In the period between 1965 and 1990, all political activities, all social and administrative services, and all institutions of superregional status were concentrated in the capital. As such, it has long been impossible for a candidate emigrant not to pay regular visits to Kinshasa, or not to spend some time there, prior to her or his emigration. It is therefore fair to say that most of the Zairians in Belgium and Antwerp have at least had some experiences in the Lingala-speaking capital. So, the preponderance of expatriate Lingala-speakers is not merely specific to Neptunia as a restricted setting, but actually also applies to the Zairian immigrant community in Belgium at large. To the extent that the dominance of Lingala in Neptunia is informed by the numerical proportions, then, there are reasons to conjecture that general community life as well is marked by a dominance of Lingala. As mentioned, actual empirical analyses of patterns of language use in other

99. Goffman, for instance, reminded scholars working in the paradigm of the qualitative social sciences of the fact that *"somehow or other, there is something* in *what one studies that ends up being able to say something […] that turns out to have validity more broadly based"* (Verhoeven 1993: 340-341, emphasis added).

settings than Neptunia are needed to establish the extent to which this extrapolation is supportable.

Secondly, the dominance of Lingala may also be said to transcend the particularity of Neptunia in that it is intertextually connected with a similar situation in Zaire. The dominance of Lingala in Neptunia has not developed in isolation, but is an extension of the sociolinguistic constellation of Zaire. The application of Lingala in Zairian music, the Zairian armed forces, and the popularization of the political doctrines, has made sure that Lingala is more widespread throughout the Zairian territory and throughout the different layers of Zairian society than any other African language. There are no indications to suppose that this Zairian background would only inform the sociolinguistic patterns of Neptunia, and not those of other Zairian settings in Antwerp and Belgium.

This intertextual connection is not only a relevant background for the dominance of Lingala as such, but also for the acceptance of this dominance, i.e. for the consensus and for the Neptunia members' linguistic ideology that makes the dominance and the sociolinguistic inequality possible. That is, if all linguistic subgroups in Neptunia, including those who do not have Lingala as their habitual language, appear to more or less accept the dominance of Lingala, this is partly to be attributed to the fact that the dominance of Lingala is a *recognizable* sociolinguistic reality at the emic level, as it is intertextually reminiscent of the situation in the home country.

As mentioned, one of the main findings concerning the consensus and the shared linguistic ideology is that the Lingala-speakers predominantly conceive of the acceptability of the dominance of Lingala as a matter of principle. The Kiswahili-speakers, on the other hand, are more inclined to anchor their view of this acceptability in reasons referring to the contingent structures of Neptunia. The Lingala-speakers consider the Lingala dominance to be acceptable in all types of contexts in which Zairians of different origins are brought together, as it is held that every Zairian is capable of speaking Lingala, that Lingala is a pan-Zairian rather than sub-Zairian language, and that every Zairian has positive attitudes vis-à-vis this language. The Kiswahili-speakers, by contrast, often mention that the dominance of Lingala in Neptunia is only acceptable in the restricted context of Neptunia, and that there are many other contexts involving Zairians of constrasting regional and linguistic origins in Antwerp, Belgium, and Zaire, in which such a dominance would not be acceptable. As far as this 'reservation' on behalf of the Kiswahili-speakers is concerned, we must at least reckon with the possibility that the consensus as it manifests itself in Neptunia could be limited to this setting alone.

It is relevant to the problem of extrapolation, however, that in addition to their many arguments on contingent grounds, the Kiswahili-speakers also marshal a number of arguments that do transcend the individuality of the Neptunia setting. In this respect, then, some directions for extrapolation are warranted. There is, first of all, the Kiswahili-speakers' denial of negative attitudes towards Lingala in Zaire. Confronted with their acceptance of the patterns of language use in Neptunia, many of them argue that the negative attitudes vis-à-vis Lingala in Zaire are a thing of the past and that nowadays people in eastern Zaire experience no particular problems with using and being addressed in Lingala. They also rely on a theoretical distinction between underlying attitudes and observable behavior, which is another linguistic-ideological element that transcends the particularity of Neptunia. Thirdly, they refer to Lingala as a codeswitching language. Arguing that codeswitching with French is more copious and more frequent in Lingala than in Kiswahili, they mention that Lingala is a socially 'harmless' language, as through its ample use of codeswitching it adopts the neutral identity of French. These three reasons for the acceptability of the Lingala dominance in Neptunia are not related to any particular contingencies of the setting, but appeal to sociolinguistic realities of a general order. It is, therefore, justified to conjecture that at these levels the consensus around the dominance of Lingala and the sociolinguistic inequality is a general tendency in the Zairian immigrant community at large.

The combination of discursive social psychology and linguistic anthropology on which my study was based has allowed me to retrieve, order, and interpret the ethnographic data – in particular the members' linguistic ideology – in ways which would not have been possible from other theoretical and methodological perspectives. The requirement of close discourse analysis imposed by discursive social psychology has generated a treatment of the linguistic-ideological data against the background of their production in actual discursive contexts. In many forms of anthropology, the range of ethnographic materials used in retrieving linguistic or other ideologies is limited to the researcher's memories from fieldwork or, at best, to paraphrasing field notes or to recordings. My integration of discursive social psychology, by contrast, has implied that the actual ideological speech of members, as performed in casual and organized conversations (ethnographic interviews), had to be extensively transcribed and that the generated transcripts had to be subjected to a close discourse analysis. On this basis, I have been able to detect, not only how the linguistic ideologies differ across such subgroups as the groups of Lingala-speakers and Kiswahili-speakers in Neptunia, but also how they differ *within* each of these two groups and, what is more, how they differ for one and the same individual across different discursive and argumentative contexts. Although anthropologists are regularly aware of the existence of such interindividual and contextual discrepancies in ideologies, a theory and methodology such as the ones offered by discursive social psychology and discourse analysis make it possible to grasp these discrepancies with more precision and to trace their origins back to differing discursive-contextual conditions. In concrete terms, the details and nuances in the Neptunia members' 9 local linguistic ideologies, and, in particular, in the Lingala-speakers' and Kiswahili-speakers' opposite constructions of each of these 9 local ideologies, would have been inaccessible without the actual transcripts of the informants' speech and without the analysis of these transcripts as texts.

This description of the subtleties of the linguistic ideology has also been made possible by a theoretical and methodological orientation away from cognitively based accounts of ideology, such as van Dijk's (i.a., 1990; 1993a). In such accounts, ideologies are considered stable and internally consistent mental systems, which are stored in the minds of individuals in their constant, context-independent form. In this view, the production of ideologies in actual discursive contexts merely represents the manifestation of the mental system to the outside world. Such a viewpoint is unable to account for differences and contradictions, for it reduces them to 'situational distortions' of the 'real, mental structure' that underlies them. In the case of my linguistic ethnography, such an analytical reduction would have seriously perverted the intricate reality of the hegemonic processes at work in Neptunia. It is, indeed, the cross-contextual and cross-individual discrepancies which have pointed to the fact that the hegemony in Neptunia is accomplished to significantly varying degrees across the Neptunia members and, thus, to both the imperfections and the more complete sides of the sociolinguistic consensus as a whole.

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