HOW LINGUISTIC FEATURES AND SOCIAL ARRANGEMENTS CAN INTERRELATE

The position of Swahili and its speakers in Bujumbura placed in a historical context

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The very wide territorial domain of Kiswahili language renders the issue of who the true Waswahili are a very contentious one.

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Murakoze cane!
A note on geographical names

The geographical names of the country and city described in this thesis have changed in time. The following names had been in use in the period that I am writing of:

For the country:
- Before the German conquest: Burundi
- During the colonial period (ca. 1900 – 1962): Ruanda-Urundi
- After Independence: Burundi

For the city:
- Before 1962: Usumbura
- After 1962: Bujumbura

To make everything less complicated, I used the geographical names that are in use in the present time, namely Burundi and Bujumbura, unless quoting an author using other names.
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Introduction

Burundi, as Rwanda, received most of the world’s attention due to the Hutu-Tutsi division and the terrible happenings that came together with it. Competition and distrust between both groups have led to war and have cast its shadow over the country until today. Before independence though, the Hutu-Tutsi division – in contrast to Rwanda – had little if any place in Bujumbura. Bujumbura was stratified, yes, but not along the lines of being either Hutu or Tutsi. It was -depending on the time of history – stratified along lines of being African or European, Muslim or Christian, évoluté or Swahili. Especially before World War II, the Hutu-Tutsi split was relatively unimportant in Bujumbura. The basis of the Hutu-Tutsi split was only constructed during and after this war, although there were no real signs yet of any problems. According to Dickerman,

‘[d]uring World War II and in the following years, the government began to employ greater numbers of Africans in the civil service and at positions of greater responsibility. Whereas before these white-collar workers had usually been Congolese, now they were more often Rundi and Ruandans and frequently graduates of the Groupe Scolaire d’Astrida. As such, they were more likely to be ganwa (members of the nobility) or Tutsi than Hutu, for the school, established to train chiefs, chiefs’ assistants, and other administrative agents, favored those already in power in its admission policies. Thus, while this new group of Usumbura residents was predominantly – but by no means exclusively – Tutsi, it was at the same time less likely to settle in Usumbura on a long term basis.’1

It is only right at the moment of independence that the cleavage between Hutu and Tutsi came to the fore, due to the struggle for power within the leading UPRONA party. What had only begun as an intra-party struggle between Hutu and Tutsi, spread to the national Assembly and eventually permeated the entire administrative machinery.2 From here, it did not take long for the struggle to reach the masses, with consequences we have all witnessed in the years after. From then on, Rundi society was divided in Hutu and Tutsi, sometimes even forgetting the Twa minority and other ethnic groups living in the country.3

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3 Geert Castryck shows this very clear, saying that: ‘[e]stimates of the Muslim population of Burundi range from 1% to over 10% of the total population. One tenth of the population is a rather high approximation, but the World Factbook of the CIA, for instance, gives a calculated guess of 10% Muslims on a population of 8.4 million (July 2007 est.). The same source counts 85% Hutu, 14% Tutsi and 1% Twa. Along with less than 0.1% Europeans and South Asians, this totals the full 100% of the Burundian population. This state of affairs is in line with the colonial reductionism that defined Burundi’s demography along exclusively ethnic lines. It implies that virtually all Burundian Muslims would belong to one of the main ethnic groups. However, such is not the case.’ In: Castryck, G.(2007) ‘Hardboiled Soft Power: Muslim Catalysts in Burundi’s Cataclysms. Presentation for the SGIR-Conference in Turin (draft)
Most contemporary books and articles about Burundi deal with the Hutu-Tutsi division or with the ethnic war that followed. Unfortunately, this has cast a great shadow on the much larger and richer history of Burundi, and also on the many changes that take place in Rundi society these days. One of these almost unnoticed changes is the subject of this work, namely, the changing attitude regarding Swahili and its speakers. The Swahili speakers in Burundi were subject to a different stratification system than the one we usually hear of these days. The social status of the Swahili speakers, along with the status of the Swahili language, changed several times in history, and started long before the Hutu-Tutsi split in Burundi.

Although this thesis is not about the problems between Hutu and Tutsi, the ethnic struggle between them and the war that followed are indirectly an important underlying reason for the present changing attitude regarding Swahili and its speakers. However before we describe the present changes, let us first take a look at a short history of Swahili and its speakers in Eastern Africa and more specifically in Burundi.

A short history on Swahili

In Eastern and Central Africa, Swahili is widely used as a lingua franca. It has been considered unique among the African languages of the modern world for the dynamism of its development, especially because it originally owes no allegiance to any particular ethnic group of people among its speakers. According to Leston Buell the number of Swahili speakers is 40 million, but the number varies enormously according to different sources.

The Swahili language itself goes back at least to the tenth century where it was used along the East African Coast. The spread in Eastern and Central Africa started only some two hundred years ago and took place with the advent of foreigners. Particularly Arab traders, merchants, missionaries, administrators, politicians, as well as educators, have all played a part in this spread. Swahili is the official and national language in Tanzania and Kenya since the 1960s. In Uganda, the national languages are English and Swahili. Swahili in Uganda enjoys a large number of speakers especially in the army. In the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo there is a solid block of millions of Swahili speakers who speak a variety called Kingwana which is slightly different from standard Swahili (Kiunguja). In Rwanda and Burundi, a small minority speaks Swahili. The variety that is mainly being used here is Kingwana, with some usage of Kiunguja dialect, depending on the

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background of the speaker. Swahili in Rwanda and Burundi is also spoken by many returnees from long periods of stays in Kenya, Congo, Tanzania and Uganda.

In Burundi, under German and later under Belgian rule, Swahili was used to formalise indirect rule. The German administration wanted to unify the people of Rwanda, Burundi and Tanzania by the use of Swahili. The successive Belgian administration also used Swahili in Rwanda, Burundi and Congo. Swahili in those days was the working language in the capital Bujumbura and was also spoken in a few commerce centres, but was hardly spoken outside these areas. In the early 1930’s though, the Belgian administration ordered their colonial officials to use the indigenous languages, that replaced Swahili, after which Swahili lost its (political) importance in Bujumbura. French and Kirundi were the official languages, but Swahili never really disappeared from Burundi; it is still widely spoken along Lake Tanganyika, in the area of the capital Bujumbura and in commercial centres. It is especially spoken in Bujumbura’s city centre, the market and as a first language in specific communes like Bwiza, Buyenzi, Quartier Asiaticque, Muslim and Congolese neighbourhoods. It is also spoken by Muslims in other provinces, such as Gitega. Swahili has recently become even more important after Rwanda and Burundi joined COMESA in 2004 and the East African Community in 2007.

**Waswahili**

In history, and under different administrations, the status of the Swahili language in Burundi, and with it the social status of the Swahiliphones in Burundi, have changed several times. Especially since independence in 1962, it was just a minority speaking Swahili as a first language. The Swahiliphones got a distinct social status in society, and Swahili was spoken by and was seen as a language of marginal people in the urban centres. The Swahili culture was also seen as contradictory to the Rundi tradition and culture. Swahiliphones in Burundi were often referred to as ‘Swahili’ or ‘Waswahili’ (sing. ‘Mswahili’), with the label ‘Swahili’ having a very negative connotation, since this term is often connected to an uncivilized behaviour and outlook on life, and refers to a marginalized group. But were do the ‘Swahili’ actually come from? How far were they related to the Swahili language, and how is this seen in Burundi in present times?

To answer this question, we have to shift our focus to the African East Coast, where the Swahilis originate from. Actually, when people speak of the Swahili language, they usually do not refer to the Swahili in Burundi, but to the Swahili along the African East Coast.

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Many scholars have tried to grasp the concept of the Swahili for a long time already. For example, in 1913 Captain C.H. Stigand wrote that:

*A Swahili… in the more confined sense of the word is a descendant of one of the original Arab or Persian-Arab settlers on the East African coast. In the broader sense of the word it includes all who speak a common language, Swahili.*

Others, like Eastman in 1971, said that while a Swahili must have knowledge of the Swahili language, not all who know or use Swahili are considered or consider themselves Swahili. Another scholar, Kagabo, stated in 1988 that the term Swahili signifies:

*Une donnée existentielle qui fait référence à la fois à une culture et à un statut social, c'est-à-dire appartenir à une minorité socio-culturelle et religieuse dans un pays où l'influence de l'Église chrétienne est très grande et où la majorité de la population est convertie au catholicisme.*

According to Kagabo’s description, it is about cultural characteristics, but at the same time it expresses sociological factors, such as class and religion, or economic and ecological relations in the conceptualization of ethnic differences.

The Waswahili can also be seen as an organizational, rather than as a culture-bearing unit. From an organizational standpoint, says Arens, a common theme of the ethnographic discussions has been the alien or stranger status of those defined by others as being Swahili. For this situational reason a Manyema from Congo living in Tanzania, a Nyamwezi from the interior while on the coast, an African from the coast while in the interior, or a mainlander while in Zanzibar, will all be denoted by the term ‘Swahili’. Similarly emigrants from various areas who come together in a single community are regarded as Swahili by the established residents of the surrounding countryside. So, he says, since an alien status is the determining factor in the application of this term to an individual or group, there necessarily exists a wide variety of cultural expressions among those defined as members of this category for the simple reason that not all aliens to an area will share the same cultural inventory. His conclusion is, that no single culturally homogeneous category of ‘Swahili’ is possible because the variability of cultural traits, not uniformity, might be considered to be the hallmark of this ethnic group.

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Pat Caplan\textsuperscript{17} wrote an article on the different views on the Swahili, in which he shows that the Swahili themselves, the former colonial governments, many scholars writing during the colonial period and its immediate aftermath, and the governments of the modern nation-states of Kenya and Tanzania argued, all for their own reasons, that there is indeed no single Swahili culture or people.\textsuperscript{18} He also wrote that both indigenous and foreign scholars have, on the other hand, argued strongly for the recognition of the Swahili as a people with their own history and culture, and for their continuous existence for over at least a millennium.\textsuperscript{19} \textit{[T]he features that marked the Swahili off from other societies included a written language and literature, a different religion (Islam) and moral system, a complex internal structure and stratification system, and stone-built towns with a distinctive form of architecture, as well as other aspects of material culture.}\textsuperscript{20}

Coming back to the Swahilis in Burundi, we see that their Swahiliness is strongly linked to the Swahili from the African East Coast. Although the Swahili in Burundi could be called a people, the name ‘Swahili’, after a presence of half a century in Burundi, mainly referred to people who lived in a particular area of town, spoke Swahili as their mother tongue and adhered to Islam. However, the term also applied to people who lied, who were not to be trusted, who were poorly educated, etc. This was regardless of whether they spoke Swahili or not. All this had its origin in Burundi’s history, as we will see later, when we will also look into the present meaning of the term ‘Swahili’ in Burundi.

\textbf{The research area}

Because Swahili has such a long history in Bujumbura, the capital of Burundi,\textsuperscript{21} my research has been carried out here. Called Usumbura until 1962, the city of an estimated 300,000 people is situated in western Burundi’s Great Rift Valley on the shores of Lake Tanganyika. Bujumbura’s manufactures include food products, cement and other building materials, textile, soap, shoes, and metal goods. Livestock and agricultural produce from the surrounding region are traded in the city. Bujumbura is Burundi’s main port and serves as a shipping centre for Lake Tanganyika trade in coffee, cotton, hides, and tin ore with neighbouring Tanzania and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Roads connect the city to cities in Congo and Rwanda. Bujumbura has many private universities, and also the state university is situated here. The city also has an international airport. Bujumbura used to be a beautiful city, but after the civil war it has become very run down and underdeveloped, with potholed, muddy streets and old buildings (with an exception of the richer communes). Bujumbura’s communes (in popular speech called \textit{quartiers}) are named Butlerere, Buyenzi, Bwiza, Cibitoke,

\textsuperscript{18} Caplan, P. (2007) p. 306
\textsuperscript{19} Caplan, P. (2007) p. 308
\textsuperscript{20} Caplan, P. (2007) p. 309
\textsuperscript{21} See appendix 1 for a map, and appendix 3 for pictures of Bujumbura
Gihosha, Kanyosha, Kamenge, Kinama, Kinindo, Musaga, Ngagara, Nyakabiga and Rohero\textsuperscript{22}, and each commune corresponds with a certain standard of living. My research took place in only three communes: Buyenzi, Kinindo and Nyakabiga, for reasons I will explain further in this work.

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{area_swahili_spoken.png}
\caption{Areas where Swahili is spoken\textsuperscript{23}}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{map_of_burundi.png}
\caption{Map of Burundi\textsuperscript{24}}
\end{figure}

\textbf{Aim of the thesis}

After visiting Burundi in 2006, reading the thesis of Dhamili Lukomba called ‘Attitudes des Burundais Résidant à Bujumbura vis-à-vis de la Langue Swahili au Burundi’\textsuperscript{25} written in 1984, and also that of Jean de Dieu Karangwa called “Le Kiswahili dans l’Afrique des Grand Lacs”\textsuperscript{26} written in 1995, I have especially been encouraged to do a research on Swahili and its speakers in Bujumbura. Karangwa noticed in his thesis that there seemed to be a positive change in the perception of the Swahili language and its speakers in Burundi. He saw that Swahili was still associated with Islam and the city, but:

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{22} Mairie de Bujumbura (2006) Les différentes communes et les quartiers respectifs, http://www.villedebujumbura.org/images/quartiers.pdf (23 June 2008). Note: Since Bujumbura has expanded rapidly in the last few decades, different communes have been built and others have been merged. As a result there is no clear consensus in the literature of the different ministries of how to divide Bujumbura into quarters or communes. The division given here is just one out of many. See for example also IRB (2002) Responses to Information Requests, http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/research/rir/?action=record.viewrec&gotorec=413502 (accessed 22 July 2008)
\item \textsuperscript{23} Picture derived from PanAfriL10n, Swahili-Kiswahili, http://www.panafril10n.org/wikidoc/pmwiki.php/PanAfrLoc/Swahili (accessed 3 October 2008)
\item \textsuperscript{24} Picture derived from Worldatlas.com, Burundi, http://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countries/africa/bi.htm (accessed 3 October 2008)
\item \textsuperscript{25} Lukomba, Dh. (1984) Attitudes des Burundais Résidant à Bujumbura vis-à-vis de la Langue Swahili au Burundi: Enquêtes menées dans les zones de Buyenzi et de Kinama, mémoire de licence, Univ. du Burundi: Bujumbura
\item \textsuperscript{26} Karangwa, J. de D. (1995) Le Kiswahili dans l’Afrique des Grands Lacs, These pour le doctorat en linguistique, Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales: Paris
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Realizing that not much has been written on Swahili and its speakers in Burundi, and expecting to be able to show a continuing positive trend in the attitude regarding the language and its speakers since Karangwa’s research twelve years ago, I left for Bujumbura. I arrived on the 23rd of June 2007 and stayed until the 17th of January 2008; a period of almost six months. During my stay in Bujumbura, I tried to make as many contacts as possible, read books, articles and dissertations, and prepared a questionnaire of which I could compare the outcomes with those of Lukomba and especially that of Karangwa. I hoped to be able to show a positive trend in the appreciation of the Swahili language and its speakers, and to map these linguistic and social changes from the arrival of Swahili speakers in Burundi in the 19th century up to present times.

Observations and ideas during my research have led me to formulate the following research question:

- How do linguistic features and social arrangements interrelate?

In order to answer this question, I could ask the following sub-questions:

- Have there been changing attitudes of Burundi’s residents in Bujumbura regarding the Swahili language and its speakers in the city over time? And if so,

- What were the main factors for this change?

The research questions of this thesis show my focus on Swahili and its speakers in Bujumbura, and thus not solely on the attitude regarding the Swahili language. The language and the people that speak the language are equally the subjects of my thesis. We are not only looking at the interplay of...
language and society though, but also that of politics, for it has become more and more clear that changes in sociolinguistic patterns reflect social and political changes and pressures. For example, any political decision regarding (official) language, inevitably raises questions concerning equality of benefits and equality of participation in society. And with that, the social position of certain groups change, mainly - but not necessarily - affecting the immigrant or ‘ethnic’ minority groups.

Because of the long history of Swahili and Swahili speakers in Bujumbura, under different administrations, their position can not be described sufficiently without taking into account the historical context, which has been - and still is - a very important factor in their existence.

The first chapter of this thesis describes my theoretical approach to this study. After that I elaborate on the methodological approach of this research. In order to illustrate the context of my research more clearly, the third chapter will deal with the history of Swahili and the Swahili speakers in Bujumbura. In the hereupon-following chapters I will reflect on my research findings and analyse them in relation to my theoretical approach and description of the context. Chapter five deals with external influences that have contributed to the changing attitudes regarding Swahili and its speakers. To conclude, in the last chapter, I will summarise and discuss the main conclusions of this research study.
Theoretical framework

1.1 Introduction

The field that studies the relation between language and society, between the uses of language and the social structures in which the users of language live is sociolinguistics, or the sociology of language. Hertzler points out that “[t]he ‘sociology’ of a socio-cultural phenomenon has two aspects, which are in continual and unavoidable interplay and interdependence with each other. There is, first, the significance of the particular order of system of phenomena as a causal, contributory, or otherwise effective factor in society. More specifically, this aspect is concerned with: (1) the place and operational significance of the order of phenomena in human society; (2) the influence exerted by it, and the effects created by it, upon the societal structures, functions, processes, and relations; (3) the human uses of it. The second aspect is the converse or culture area and epoch upon the particular order of phenomena. More particularly, this deals with the human and socio-cultural factors which determine the nature and operation of the order of phenomena in human society, especially in particular groups, societies, and cultures. In brief, the special sociologies are concerned with the reciprocal relations of society and its notable operational features; each is at once the cause and effect of the other.” 29 As indicated before, the central theme of this theoretical framework though is not only the interplay of language and society, but also that of politics, for it has become more and more clear that changes in sociolinguistic patterns reflect social and political changes and pressures.

In order to present a clear picture of the basic theoretical notions used in this thesis, I will start this theoretical framework discussing sociolinguistics and the sociology of language and micro-sociolinguistics and macro-sociolinguistics, elaborating on the assumed differences between them. After the introduction of the field from which we depart, I will deal with more specific themes used in this research starting to describe the issue of social stratification. I will also show its relation to politics, language and stranger hood. After that, one paragraph will elaborate on the relationship between language and politics, and the chapter is ending with the concept of agency.

1.2 Sociolinguistics and the sociology of language, micro-sociolinguistics and macro-sociolinguistics

There are many definitions of sociolinguistics. Sociolinguistics is defined as ‘the study of language in relation to society’, ‘the study of the sociological aspects of language’, as ‘a term including the aspects of linguistics applied toward the connections between language and society, and the way we use it in different social situations’ 30, etc, but however it is defined though, all definitions

include *language* and *society*. Some have found it appropriate to try to introduce a distinction between sociolinguistics or micro-sociolinguistics and the sociology of language or macro-sociolinguistics. In this distinction, sociolinguistics is concerned with investigating the relationships between language and society with the goal being a better understanding of the structure of language and how language functions in communication; the equivalent goal in the sociology of language is trying to discover how social structure can be better understood through the study of language, e.g., how certain linguistic features serve to characterize particular social arrangements.\(^3\)

Looking at *micro-sociolinguistics*, the scholars’ goal might be to show how specific differences in pronunciation or grammar lead members of a speech community to make judgements about the education or social or economic status of a speaker.\(^3\) In England, H-dropping – the tendency to delete the initial \(<h>\) sound in words such as *happy* and *house* is a feature of popular speech that distinguishes speakers in the whole of England (apart from Tyneside and Northumberland) and Wales from those in Scotland, Ireland and indeed the rest of the English-speaking world, who retain their \(<h>\)s. Replacing a glottal stop /ʔ/ at the end of a word that ends with a \(<t>\), for example: what? /waʔ?,/ is very typical for the cockney accent. Another example can be found in studies demonstrating that the use of a \(<n>\) sound in words like *working*, *ceiling* or anything is more likely to occur among lower socio-economic groups and that in all social groups its use increases in informal contexts. The alternative pronunciation – using the consonant that everybody uses for the \(<n>\) in the noun *finger* or the adjective *longer* – occurs with greater frequency for all social groups in more formal contexts, thus illustrating it is considered the prestige pronunciation by speakers everywhere.

With *macro-sociolinguistics*, the scholars’ primary attention turns from the specific linguistic phenomena to the whole of a language or variety (a term we use to include any identifiable kind of language). Language (and a specific language) is treated here alongside other human cultural phenomena. We might ask, for instance, about the significance of a group immigrants shifting completely to a new language or maintaining their old one for some purposes. We might investigate the close bonds between language choice and social identity or we might ask why speakers of certain varieties are influential and powerful, and why speakers of other varieties are regularly discriminated against. These questions concern the use of a language or a language variety as a whole rather than individual variation, and asking them, makes the study of language a means to understanding a society.\(^3\)

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\(^3\) Spolsky, B. (1998) pp. 6, 7
An example of macro-sociolinguistics is Abraham de Swaans’s research about the Q-value of a language. According to de Swaan34, who describes language as an economic good, ‘preferences for learning one language rather than another are very much shaped by perceptions and expectations of other people’s language acquisition’35 ‘If efforts are equal’, he says, ‘people will choose to learn the language that they expect will benefit them more than another language’36; they will opt for the alternative that is most likely to survive in a competitive environment. For every actual speaker of the language, he says, the number and variety of possible conversation partners or correspondents increases with each new speaker added, thus the larger the number of speakers, the more attractive the language. He calls this the Q-value of a language.

De Swaan’s theory about the Q-value at first sight seems to be a valuable one, but it might be that some people have reasons to choose to learn another language than the one with the largest Q-value, or might choose to learn another language next to it. We can think in this regard about smaller, regional languages like Hausa, Arabic or Swahili, which may worldwide not have the most speakers, but might be very important in a regional setting. Also job opportunities or prejudices about a people speaking a certain language might be an important factor not to choose for the language with the highest Q-value.

Although some scholars make a difference between sociolinguistics and the sociology of language, other scholars don’t agree with this. Hudson for example describes the difference between them as one of emphasis, according to whether the investigator is more interested in language or society, and also according to whether they have more skill in analysing linguistic or social structures. He states that there is a very large area of overlaps between the two and says that it seems pointless to try to divide the disciplines more clearly than that.37 Also Ulrich takes any discussion of whether some topic is definitely an example of sociology of language, sociolinguistics, pragmatics or any other (sub)field to be a fruitless endeavour. He places the concept of sociolinguistics and that of sociology of language along a continuum where the common interest for the two is in the social aspects of language; the two concepts are in relation to each other.38 In this thesis, we will mainly look at the macro-end of the spectrum, and we will use the term sociolinguistics for the description of the discipline, since it is the most common word used these days for the study of language and society.

1.3 Social stratification

A central concern of sociolinguistics is to account for the functions dialects and languages fulfill and how speakers choose their dialects or languages. For, in addition to the horizontal

36 Swaan, de. A. (2001) p. 27
37 Hudson, R.A. (1980) p. 4
distribution across geographical regions, dialects and languages correlate with social stratification. Social stratification is not solely a socio-linguistical term, but is used in all different kinds of social and political studies. The term stratification comes from the word ‘strata’, meaning layers. Social stratification refers to the layering of social categories into higher or lower positions of prestige or respect, with a parallel distribution of resources, such as education, occupation, income and health. The building blocks of this organization of society are statuses.39

Two of the most famous people who have worked on social stratification and class inequalities were Karl Marx and Max Weber. Marx regarded the economic organization of society as the fundamental determination of social structure. Max Weber on the other hand, working on Marx’s ideas, did not limit his interpretation and discussion to a dichotomy of the bourgeoisie and proletariats, but pointed out that social stratification is not purely based on economic inequalities but is equally shaped by status and power differentials. Erik Olin Wright later combined aspects of Marx’s and Weber’s approaches and focused on ownership and control over productive assets. He distinguished three dimensions of control over economic resources in modern capitalist production. These three dimension allow us to identify the major classes which exist. The first dimension is control over investments or money capital. The second control over the physical means of production (land or factories and offices) and the third control over labour power. The second class, the managers and white collar workers, are the groups whose position is more ambiguous the contradictory class location; they are able to influence some aspects of production, but are denied control over others.40

The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu41 developed theories of social stratification based on aesthetic taste, in which he claims that how one chooses to present one’s social space to the world, one’s aesthetic dispositions, depicts one’s status and distances oneself from lower groups. According to him, these dispositions are internalized at an early age and guide the young towards their appropriate social positions, towards the behaviors that are suitable for them, and an aversion towards other lifestyles.42

Social stratification is not universal though; there are still egalitarian cultures like hunter-gatherer societies. These societies are mainly kinship-oriented and value social harmony more than wealth or status. The shift from kin-based societies to modern society made that achieved status (social

39 According to Florian Coulmas, “Contemporary society is characterized by new divisions such as that between the employed and the unemployed. And what is more, to a larger extent than in earlier times, social divisions take on cross-national features, as low-productivity jobs are relocated from the most advanced countries to those that are catching up. Some sociologists, therefore, would rather do away with class altogether, suggesting that this notion should be replaced by those of social deprivation and social mobility.” See: Coulmas, F. (2005) Sociolinguistics: The Study of Speakers’ Choices, Cambridge [etc.]: Cambridge University Press, p. 27
positions attained as a result of individual action) had become more important than ascribed status (social position that people hold by virtue of birth).43

Social stratification in a society has both advantages and disadvantages. Some advantages include the fact that the layering in today’s society allows people to determine what occupation people have, how much they earn and the area they live in. A disadvantage is that people can be, and are, discriminated by it.

1.3.1 Social stratification and the stranger

These days, societies usually are seen to be stratified along lines of economic class, skin color, religion, ethnic group, or a combination of those. This is especially true with strangers in a society, who can often be stratified on most of these lines at the same time. They can either be stratified by society itself or by governments, but are mainly stratified by a combination of these two.

‘The stranger’, as described by Simmel, ‘is fixed within a particular spatial circle, or within a group whose boundaries are similar to spatial boundaries. But his position in this group is determined, essentially, by the fact that he has not belonged from it from the beginning, that he imports qualities into it which do not, and cannot, stem from the group itself.’ He also says that ‘the stranger … is an element of the group itself. His position as a fullfledged member involves both being outside it and confronting it.’ And so, ‘in spite of being inorganically appended to it, the stranger is yet an organic member of the group.’ Thus the characteristic unity of the stranger’s position is that ‘it is composed of certain measures of nearness and distance’.44 The word ‘stranger’, in this regard, can also be replaced by words like ‘alien, intruder, interloper, foreigner, novus homo, newcomer, immigrant, guest, outsider, and so on – all are convenient labels that social groups habitually apply to people who, by reason of custom, language, or social role, stand on the margin of society’.45

Shack mentions that other scholars46, working with Simmels concept, ‘have tried to explain processes of integration, assimilation, or incorporation of culturally diverse immigrant groups into larger societal wholes’47. They saw a more complete inclusion into the host society with a corresponding change in their legal status moving from ‘alien’ to ‘citizen’. But, according to Shack, ‘alien and citizen define legal status, not social status.’48 Legal status is regulated by the machinery of government at the level of nation-state in which aliens and citizens are at opposite ends of the legal-jural continuum, along which differential sets of rights, duties, and obligations obtain between social people, social categories, and the state.’ Shack continues to say that ‘[I]n the strict Simmelian sense of

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45 Shack, W. A. (1979) p. 1
46 i.e. Robert Park and his latter-day students
47 Shack, W. A. (1979) p. 4
48 Shack, W. A. (1979) p. 4
the term, strangers are not aliens. Strangers are not found at either end of the alien-citizen continuum; they are betwixt and between, as Simmel said. Through their involvement in sundry social, economic, and quasi-political activities, strangers symbolically mediate between society and the state.  

Elliot Skinner later tried to adapt Simmel’s concept of the stranger to African societies, working on permanent stranger communities. ‘He also described how the changes in social role, spatial distance, and social status of West-African strangers in relation to their hosts affects the socio-legal distinction between alien and citizen in the African context.’ He stated that in pre-colonial Africa, most ‘African strangers were under the control of the local African political authorities, and stayed only at the sufferance of their hosts.’ It is suggested that ‘African strangers, and indeed strangers of other racial and ethnic origins, once moved with relative ease between indigenous African polities... Often, the liminality of stranger communities was maintained by the imposition of tribute and taxation; [t]he payment of these gave symbolic recognition to the superior social and political position of hosts.’ Also duties corresponding to high(er) positions. ‘Strangers-host relations were expressed in terms of superordination-sub-ordination, with the host occupying the superordinate position.’ But at the end it was the ‘cultural, rather than the political process, including the adoption of language, customs, dress, mode of livelihood, fictive kinship, and religious practices, that has been the most common and widespread method by which strangers have been completely incorporated into host societies’, Shack says.

Later, under colonial rule, social and economic conditions were created that placed strangers structurally on a lateral position with respect to the indigenous population. More often than not, colonial intervention produced a kind of situation in which strangers came to occupy superior status positions in trade and commerce, and dominated the bureaucracy of public administration. Because migration was encouraged by external authorities, local African polities were thrust into the role of being involuntary hosts to uninvited guests. ‘The economic aggressiveness of strangers inevitable engendered hostility.’ At the time when Africans attained self-government, ‘African states could exercise sovereign control over their territorial boundaries, and could distinguish legally between aliens and citizens.’ As a result, many former involuntary hosts demanded the repatriation of their involuntary guests to their homelands. In this light, it is interesting to note that Ali Mazrui argued

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49 Shack, W. A. (1979) p. 4
51 Skinner, E.P. (1965) p. 308
52 Shack, W. A. (1979) p. 8
53 Shack, W. A. (1979) p. 10
54 Shack, W. A. (1979) p. 9
55 Shack, W. A. (1979) p. 11
56 Shack, W. A. (1979) p. 6
57 Shack, W. A. (1979) p. 6
that an underdeveloped class structure lacks the capacity to accommodate outsiders, and is therefore characteristically inhospitable to strangers.

1.3.2 Social stratification and language

As we have said before, societies are usually seen to be stratified along lines of economic class, skin color, religion, ethnic group, or a combination of those. But society can also be stratified along lines of language competence. It has always been important to be able to communicate with others and thus learn strange languages, but in Africa it has become especially important during the period of colonization. In this period, we have seen the development of an entrenched linguistic elite, of which Pierre Alexandre in 1972 wrote that “the most remarkable sociological aspects of contemporary Africa [is] that the kind of class structure which seems to be emerging is based on linguistic factors…This [English or French speaking] minority, although socially and ethnically as heterogeneous as the majority, is separated from the latter by that monopoly which gives it its class specificity: the use of a means of universal communication, French or English, whose acquisition represents truly a form of capital accumulation”.

David D. Laitin points out that the process of European language acquisition has been relatively random in Africa, but noticed that certain groups have been systematically excluded from the necessary education. One such group was the African Muslims. Education during the colonial time was mainly given by missionaries. The young children that were to receive education, were supposed to convert to Catholicism. It is here where the children entered the Catechesis program that prepared them for baptism: the children that refused to convert were removed from school. Many Muslims parents did not even wait for this and refused their children to go to school and become Catholics. As a result these Muslim children later lacked the language resources needed to curtail the colonial presence. And, according to Laitin, “[A]s the independence movements attained their goals and began to rule, only citizens who could speak the language of the former colonial power could get civil service jobs. The political and social ascendency of the new linguistic elite was assured.”

Laitin also points out that self-exclusion is not the only explanation for the different impact of colonial education. The colonial powers were never prepared to educate a broad base of citizens in a European language. He refers in this to Thomas Macaulty, who as the president of the Committee of Public Instruction in India already wrote in 1835 that “English should play a limited role, only to create a class of people, Indians in blood and color, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from Western nomenclature.” This small class, however, in
most of the former British Empire, more often sought to maintain itself as a new elite than to help to
develop the vernaculars and thereby to maintain the social structure, as it was before British colonial
intrusion.” According to de Swaan, in this situation, “administrative elites attempt to monopolize
access to the government and the administration and to the higher echelons of commercial
employment. This presupposes that established and outsider groups can communicate in a shared vernacular, but that the excluded groups lack basic literacy skills that might enable them to learn the written version of the central or supercentral language so as to join the competition for the more rewarding jobs.”

Laitin also argues that “social stratification based on language criteria is more readily apparent
in multinational states and empires, where one indigenous language becomes the official language of
the central government.” He points this out by giving an example of India, where some non-Hindi
nationalities, which had invested heavily in the English language, were outraged and feared that they
would lose their capital, when it looked as if Hindi would become the sole official language. The same
tensions concerning language have emerged in nation states as well, especially when “the issue at hand
involved the national vernacular competing with an elite language” Laitin says. He refers in this to
the situation in Norway in 1930, when under a progressive government, “Norway required all its civil
service employees born after a certain date to be capable of communicating in Landsmaal (country speech). This regulation forced the old elite, literate in Riksmaal (official speech), to learn a language they scorned. But more important, it opened the bureaucracy to a whole new class of people.”

From the above, it has become clear that social stratification can be along many different lines,
but in all of them there are two important players: society itself and their government. In the light of
socio-linguistics, we have seen that language policy has in it elements of political-cultural control, and
that is has great effect on the society it rules. In the following paragraph I will elaborate on this more deeply.

1.4 Language and politics

As we have seen above, governments are very much involved in society and in the language
choices people make or have to make. Already at an early stage in the development of Old World
civilizations, language had become a target of political authority as well as an object of policy-making,
with often as a result (a changing) social stratification. Because of that, there have been many studies
dealing with both language and politics. Also in Burundi, language and politics have been very much
intertwined, especially after the first Europeans entered the country.

Studies involving language and politics are very often divided into two major fields:
“language of politics” and that of “politics of language”. The distinction between these two has shown

62 Laitin, D. D. (1977, pp. 8,9
64 Laitin, D. D. (1977) p.9
to be a very useful one. It should not be forgotten though, that there are, however, cases where a stretch of political events involves both aspects.

1.4.1 Language of politics

 According to Kawano and Matsuo, “[t]he term “language of politics” refers to political language, that is, language used in politics, or more narrowly, language used in politics with significant political function(s).” Studies in this field are about language components, words and phrases, and their rhetorical nature, but sometimes the political significance and function of a pause in a speech may equally be studied. A typical study of the first kind picks up a given (set of) words and phrases, and then explores their political function or effect, intended or achieved. For example while showing that speeches made by certain political leaders were a means of mobilizing the people to war.

 Other studies are interested in political rhetoric. Metaphors and euphemisms in dominant discourses play great roles here, for example when conquest is typically presented as liberation, destruction as protection, or when ethnic cleansing is described as human transfer of populations. Also nicknames perform the same function, like “operation enduring freedom”, the official name used by the U.S. Government for its contribution to the war in Afghanistan. Using this name has the function of legitimizing the war. “Language of politics” here involves selection from alternatives or from “variations”, to borrow a linguistic term and use it for a political goal.

 But – and this is more interesting for this study - “language of politics” is not only concerned with language components such as words and phrases, it is also concerned with language varieties. For example, “[a] landmark in the history in the development of Swahili as the official language of Tanzania was President Nyerere’s Republic Day speech of 10 December 1962 which he delivered in Swahili.” Using Swahili instead of English had a clear political intention (and effect) of showing consideration for the future of Tanzania. In this way, a choice of a language variety itself can have a political function.

 Social stratification, as is described in paragraph 1.3, is also a form of “language of politics.” By Carol Myers-Scotton called “elite closure”, the political strategy of the elite is here to try to maintain power and privileges to the exclusion of the masses through linguistic choices.

1.4.2 Politics of language

 Kawano and Matsuo define “politics of language” broadly as “politics over a language issue, politics with language as an issue, or simply politics about or over language. In most of the cases,

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68 Kawano N. and Matsuo M. (2000)
language varieties are involved. But sometimes language components may be involved. The politics or political dispute may sometimes develop into a violent conflict.”70 The issue is closely related to that of nationalism, as we can see in for example Belgium, Spain, India, etc. The most important issue in the politics of language is that of official language in government, law and education. Since speaking the language of the state is often the critical condition enabling the citizen to participate in the political arena of that state, language policy should have wide ramifications for the level and degree of political participation.71 To this, Laitin notes that “in Africa, monolingual and multilingual states face the added problem of whether to choose an indigenous language as the official language of state business, or whether to rely on the language of the former colonial power. Various permutations – an indigenous language as the national language with an European language as the official language, or a set of different regional languages as official languages – are also possible. Whatever the decision, however, certain citizens and groups will be in a better position to participate in the political arena than others.”72 He also points out that “the choice of an European language will [...] give a privileged position to those who had more social and cultural contact with the Europeans.”73

Conclusive we can say that ‘whether language issues are politicized or not depends mainly upon the internal and external political situations and upon the power relationships of the groups involved […] Hence, the term “politics of language.” The selection or its political effect may not develop into a political conflict, in many of the cases due to the great asymmetry of political powers of the parties involved. But the importance of the selection and its effect cannot be denied even in this cases.’74

1.5 Human agency

In the above paragraphs we have seen how structure can impose on the life of human beings. We have to take into account though, that human beings also have the capacity to make their own choices and impose those choices on the world on a collective basis.75 According to the sociologist Barry Barnes76, it is widely recognised that ‘[f]or an individual to possess agency is for her to possess internal powers and capacities, which, through their exercise, make her an active entity constantly intervening in the course of events ongoing around her’.

Human agency, a philosophical concept, is used in many different kinds of social sciences. It deals with the dichotomy between actor and structure and tries to make sense of ‘how people deal with their circumstances, however difficult perceptions of creativity, resilience and reflexivity in such

70 Kawano N. and Matsuo M. (2000)
71 Laitin, D. D. (1977) p. 3
72 Laitin, D. D. (1977) p. 4
73 Laitin, D. D. (1977) p. 4
74 Kawano N. and Matsuo M. (2000)
conditions may be. The debate over the primacy of structure or agency relates to an issue at the heart of both classical and contemporary sociological theory - the question of social ontology. What is the social world made of? What is a cause and what is an effect? Do social structures determine an individual's behavior or does human agency rule supreme? Yari & Yari, distinguish three possible theoretical positions in the response to this line of questioning.

1. Scholars in the tradition of (some forms of) structuralism and Marxism say that what we know as our social existence is largely determined by the overall structure of society. The perceived agency of individuals can also mostly be explained by the operation of this structure.

2. Methodological individualism, social phenomenology, interactionism and ethnomethodology stress the capacity of individual "agents" to construct and reconstruct their worlds.

3. Many modern social theorists attempt to find a point of balance between the two previous positions. They see structure and agency as complementary forces - structure influences human behavior, and humans are capable of changing the social structures they inhabit.

Despite the varieties between them, Barnes states that most social theorists concerned with voluntary actions ‘acknowledges the problems involved in identifying just what the distinctive characteristics of voluntary actions are’. He says that these social theorists have ‘no adequate technical rationale for their references to choice and agency, and no account of how to distinguish actions involving choice or agency from other actions or behaviours’. The problem though is that ‘once theories become predictable or explanatory it is going to be asked whether they are not ‘really’ causal theories, adorned in a wholly superfluous metaphysics of agency; for our familiar discourse of prediction and explanation is a broadly causal one. And if reply is made that human actions, in the last analysis, ‘could have been otherwise’, that is, as it stands, will count merely as another assertion of the metaphysics in question.

In this chapter we have seen that within sociolinguistics, social stratification is an important concept: it is not solely a linguistical term, but a term also used in different kinds of social and political studies. This makes it especially useful for this thesis, in which a connection between linguistic, social and political issues is made in order to show how linguistic features and social arrangements can interrelate. Being able to show this, we have to place these issues in its contexts. I will go into these contexts in chapter 3 and further. However before I do that, I will first reflect on the methodology of my research in the following chapter.

80 Barnes, B. (2000) p. 30
81 Barnes, B. (2000) p. 31
82 Barnes, B. (2000) p. 31
2. Research Methodology

2.1 Research strategy

According to Babbie\textsuperscript{83}, exploration is a suitable approach when a researcher examines a new interest or when the subject of study is relatively new. He adds that one of the reasons for an exploratory research could be the desire of the researcher to satisfy the researcher’s curiosity and desire for better understanding of a phenomenon. Both instances apply to my research. As mentioned in the introduction, not much has been written about the historical situation of Swahili and its speakers in Burundi. Indeed, one can argue that exploratory research rarely gives definite answers to research questions as it often lacks representativeness, but for the purpose of insight and understanding this type of research is appropriate as it can serve as a basis for more detailed research.

The research strategy that I used mainly exists out of qualitative research. According to Patton\textsuperscript{84}, qualitative research exists of three kinds of qualitative data, being interviews, observations and documents. I used all three of them. With interviewing, I was able to collect direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge. Observation was done by fieldwork, and was used to describe, interpret and explain behaviours, opinions and ‘products’ of the actors involved in a mostly limited, existing research situation (a field). It was done through direct data collection. Document analysis was realized by including program records, official publications, reports, letters, artistic work, photographs, and open-ended written responses to questionnaires and surveys.

According to \textquote{t Hart, there are three methodological principals that are of importance within field research, namely, context and holism, triangulation and direct observation.\textsuperscript{85} Context means that the object of research cannot be isolated from the surroundings in which the phenomena arise. With language this is even more the case, since it is one of the easiest export and import products and thus very much operating in a wider context. I will deal with context in chapter three, the chapter that addresses the history of Swahili and the Swahili speakers in Bujumbura; the contextual description of my research field and period. The term holism refers to the Greek word \textit{holos}, which means whole. The holistic approach is essentially couched in the belief that the whole is not only greater than the sum of the parts, but that the parts are related in such a way that their functioning is conditioned by their relationship to each other.\textsuperscript{86} Thus, anything in the contexts of the research can be relevant and could potentially be taken into account. While doing my research, it became very clear to me that a

holistic theory is very useful. But it can also be confusing. Sometimes it was hard to decide where to stop taking into account new parts since too many parts would make the whole cluttered at the end.

The use of multiple methods, or triangulation, means that because of the complexity of the object of research and the necessity of reliability and validity, different perspectives should be used within the field, namely theoretical triangulation, data triangulation, methodological triangulation and researcher’s triangulation. Triangulation, according to the Chronic Poverty Research Centre\(^87\), means ‘using different methods to research the same issue with the same unit of analysis […], thus cross-checking one result against another, and increasing the reliability of the result.’ In this thesis I have used methodological triangulation, as I have used different methods to investigate the same phenomenon (these will be addressed in the following paragraph). I have also used data triangulation, as I have used different sources of data.

Using direct observation\(^88\) means that data collection is done directly in the field, without the interference of constructed measure and registration instruments.\(^89\) Through observations I tried to get as close as possible to the actors’ perspective. People knew that they were being watched, so there was always a concern that individuals changed their actions rather than showing you what they were really like, but even the most contrived behaviour is difficult to maintain over time, and as a result my observational study could on the long term often catch a glimpse of the natural behaviour. During my fieldwork period I was physically present and because I did a sociolinguistic study, I had to talk to many people in order to get an understanding of their attitudes regarding Swahili and the Swahili speakers. The observations I did were made during activities, conversations, parties, diners and so on. However, I did not observe certain subjects as systematically as I should have done if I would have made use of systematic direct observations. In the following paragraph I will elaborate on this.

### 2.2 Research methods

The work presented in this thesis is based on the results of observation, surveys, interviews and written sources.

#### 2.2.1 Observation

Karangwa wrote the following about participant observation:

> “Le meilleur moyen de comprendre les usages d’une langue est l’observation de la communauté qui y fait recours ou est susceptible d’en faire usage.”\(^90\)


\(^{88}\) Also called *observational field research* or reactive observation


\(^{90}\) Karangwa, J. de D. (1995) p. 18
Participant observation takes place when the researcher is in a greater or lesser extent immersed in the day-to-day activities of the people being studied. I have not been a participant observer in the narrow sense, but I have in a way tried as much as possible to be immersed in the day-to-day activities of my target group. I never hid my reasons for staying in Burundi for anyone. Being a white woman speaking Swahili has made it very easy for me to make contacts, since it is not very common for a white person in Burundi to speak Swahili, but it also made me an outsider immediately with the non-Swahili speakers. This did not necessarily have a negative impact though, as people would still find it interesting to talk to me and tell me their point of view about Swahili and its speakers. In a way I even provoked some people by being able to speak Swahili, which made them want to talk to me even more, which of course I did not mind most of the time. But sometimes it also drove me crazy: being a Swahili speaking white woman in Bujumbura made everybody want to talk about or with me, which made being a white in Africa even more difficult.

Let me give an example of how strange some people found it to discover that I was able to speak Swahili. One day I had to go to a kilio in Buyenzi, a Swahili speaking commune. I was afraid that I would not be able to find the aunt of my friend, the sister of the man who passed away, and asked a young man standing outside, in Swahili, if he knew where she was. This young man was completely shocked. ‘How come you speak Swahili’, he asked me. ‘Are you a Rundi?’ I answered him that I was from Holland and that I learned to speak Swahili in my home country. He did not believe me. ‘You must be a métis’ he said. I again answered in the negative and told him that both my mother and father are white. ‘So how come you speak Swahili then?’, he asked me again. I answered him that I learned it in Holland, in my university, but he still did not believe me. This is when I told him that he should not be surprised: he as an African was able to learn a European language, namely French, so why could I, being a European, not be able to learn an African language, namely Swahili? He then looked very confused, shook his head and told me where to find the one that I was looking for.

Bernard points out that while doing research, ‘hanging out’ builds trust, and trust results in ordinary conversations and ordinary presence of a researcher. Once the researcher knows, from hanging out, exactly what he/she wants to know more about, and once the people in the field trust that the researcher will not betray their confidence, the researcher can ask more direct questions. I tried to participate as much as I could. I did this by living with a Rundi family in Bujumbura instead of staying in a hostel. I tried, as much as possible being a white woman in an African city, to do what the

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92 A kilio, translated as wailing, cry, mourning or problem, is a situation in which family, friends and relatives come together to mourn when someone has died.

93 Métis, French for a person of mixed blood

common local does: not often taking taxi’s to go home but moving around by bus or by hitchhiking, not eating in fancy restaurants a lot but eating where the ‘ordinary’ Rundi eats, not wearing typically ‘tourist clothes’ but clothes that match Rundi standards, not spending my evenings with people of the NGO-community but with locals, etc. This helped me create a base to formulate my interview questions and created background information for my research.

As already mentioned, even the most contrived behaviour is difficult to maintain over time, and as a result observational study will on the long term often catch a glimpse of the natural behaviour. This had been very obvious in the year before my actual research, when some elite women and girls who tried to convince me that they did not speak or understand Swahili at all, have eventually referred to me in Swahili because we had no other language in common.95 Because they had spent so much time with me during my research, some probably even forgot that they had told me that they had no knowledge at all of this language, and started to speak Swahili with me as well. But it might also be that they gradually lost a bit of the bad image of the language after noticing that many other people also conversed in Swahili with me.

In order to remember what I witnessed I made notes. Depending on the location where I received valuable information, I made some short notes on the spot or I wrote it down after coming home in the evenings.

2.2.2 Surveys

In my research I have chosen to use a survey next to other research methods, in order to be able to compare some aspects of my own research with that of Karangwa’s 12 years before.96 He had based his research on a survey, of which I have used about half of the questions for my own research. Swanborn97 points out that a survey is always used when the definition of a problem is about opinions, attitudes, motivations, aspirations or future plans of a certain amount of people. Moreover, questions about behaviour are asked as well. As mentioned by Cornish98, sometimes we do not get an adequately completed questionnaire or no information at all from a unit selected to be in a sample. The problem is part of the wider problem of coverage error where we do not get a response from some units in the target population. According to Cornish99, nonresponse arises in two basic ways, namely noncontact of selected units, or refusal to participate, fully or partially. Inability to make contact with units selected in a survey can be a significant main contributor to nonresponse, particularly if a survey is

95 In 2006 I did not yet speak any French, Kirundi or Kinyarwanda, the most common languages used in Burundi next to Swahili.
compulsory. The level of noncontact will depend on the quality of information on the frame about a unit and the processes followed to make contact. But once contact has been made with a selected unit, there is still the chance that the unit will refuse to cooperate and provide some or all of the information requested.

Nonresponse played a role in my research in both of these basic ways. The first type of nonresponse - the inability to make contact with units selected in a survey - was due to security reasons. In light of continuing political tensions, all areas of Burundi were potentially unstable during my whole stay. This was due to continuing hostilities between government and rebel forces. Also street crimes and armed robberies possessed a high risk, especially for me, a white woman. Although I had to be careful not to put my life in danger and take too many risks, it did not stop me doing what I wanted to do and going where I wanted to go. But when I came back from a short holiday in Tanzania things were different than before. Soon after my return, I felt that something had changed for the worse in Bujumbura. It was a strange feeling, I can not even explain how I was able to feel it, but it was there. And indeed I have felt right, since in my absence the political situation had worsened and more armed robberies and murders had taken place. I decided to go to the Dutch consul to ask for advice about what to do. Could I stay in Burundi or did I have to leave? The consul told me that leaving was not necessary yet, but I had to be extra careful though. Two out of three of the chosen communes of my research were advised not to enter alone or not to enter at all after dark. Even in my own ‘safe’ commune, Kinindo, I was advised not to walk on the street after dark. The consequences of this advice were quite big. Right at the moment that I was ready to start spreading the questionnaires, I was not able to do what I had to do, namely to approach people and ask them to fill in the questionnaire. But there was nothing else I could do, so in order not to put myself on a bigger security risk, friends and relatives spread the questionnaires for me. Next to the ethical problems of this solution (see the paragraph on research ethics), another problem with this approach was, that although I instructed these friends and relatives on forehand on whom to ask to respond to my questions, they sometimes did not ask the right people. I had explained them that I needed a representative sample so they should ask people randomly, not only people they knew. But this has not always happened, with as a result that I did not get the representative sample that I wanted. They also did not check for inconsistencies. All this meant that some of the returning questionnaires could not even be used at all. As with all surveys, some questionnaires did not even return to me, but despite that I had a 60 to 70% response rate (including the questionnaires I could not use at the end). Without my friends and relatives this would never have been possible so despite all things that could have gone better, I am very thankful to them.

The second type of nonresponse - refusal to cooperate – was another problem during my research. I needed a representative sample of the population, and for that, it was important that people cooperated. Refusal to cooperate was not always a bad thing though. I learned a lot from it as well. There were two categories of people that did not want to cooperate: One category were non-Swahili
speakers, who thought it was a waste of time to answer questions about a subject that was not interesting at all. I will elaborate on the conclusions that I could draw from this in the next sub-paragraph. The other category were poorer people, who demanded money\(^{100}\) when asked to complete my questionnaire. I could and would not convey with this request since I did not have a budget for it.

I also encountered problems with my surveys: my first problem was that after finishing writing the questions that I wanted to ask my respondents, consulting with my supervisors and copying the questionnaire, I had only three months left to spread it. This period turned out to be quite short, but with hard work and help from others I managed to spread enough of them in at least two out of three of my chosen communes.

As with my observations, I encountered some contradictions with the survey. Where people had just told me that they knew a little Swahili, or had spoken Swahili with me, they answered on the questionnaire that they did not speak Swahili at all. Sometimes father and mother declared to speak little Swahili, while their child had answered that his parents did not speak Swahili at all, or the other way around. While using the data of SPSS, I did not change these answers, but in my analysis I took these differences into account.

The content of the questionnaire existed out of 38 closed and open questions. Besides the first introductory questions, dealing with the interviewees background (age, sex, religion, commune, etc), eight questions were open questions. The interviewees were asked to further explain their answer twelve times.

2.2.3 Interviews

Field research can involve more active inquiry next to spreading questionnaires. One of the options is qualitative interviewing. As Babbie\(^{101}\) explains, a qualitative interview is an interaction between the interviewer and his or her respondents. It is as such not a neutral tool of data gathering.\(^{102}\) With qualitative interviewing, the interviewer has a general plan of inquiry, including the topics to be covered, but the kind of questions are flexible, iterative and continuous, rather than prepared in advance and not adaptable as with questionnaires. The art of conducting a good qualitative interview is to make sure that the answers evoked by your initial questions shape your subsequent ones, in order to improve your questions and be able to go deeper into the subject.

The interviews I conducted can be distinguished by two different forms: one is the official interview, and the other is the unexpected interview. With an unexpected interview, I mean a kind of interview that has taken place without knowing on beforehand that I would be able to ask questions to someone at all. This happened a lot when I was with friends, when they explained to others how they

\(^{100}\) Actually they did not ask for money as such, but instead asked for ‘pens’, ‘schoolbooks’, ‘notebooks’, ‘drinks’, etc.; the African way of asking money.


met me and urged me to ask them everything I wanted to know. Sometimes I managed to postpone it in order to have a real structured interview, but other times I was afraid that an interview would never take place if planned on forehand so as a result I had to decide to ask questions on the spot. I always carried a notebook with me so at least that was not the problem. Logically, these unexpected interviews were less structured than the official interviews, but were very useful as well. I had after all done a lot of interviews already and knew roughly what I needed to know.

As with the questionnaires, some people had a hard time understanding why I wanted to do a research on Swahili and to understand the use of it. This concerned especially non-Swahili speakers and happened thus most often in the Kinindo quarter. As with the questionnaires, some of them rejected my request for an interview because they did not speak Swahili or said that Swahili was not an interesting subject to do research on and thus not worth it to waste their time on. When I tried to convince them that their participation was crucial especially because they did not speak the language, and that I was truly interested in what they had to say, they sometimes still rejected it because they did not like to speak about Swahili. Although sometimes disappointing, it also helped me to realize that some people really had strong negative feelings about the language; a realization that was very useful.

2.2.4 Complementary primary sources

Primary sources as described above, can, if needed, be complemented with materials in raw form. We can hereby think of original documents (manuscripts, magazines, newspapers, song lyrics, speeches, news film footage, billboards), creative works (poetry, drama, music, arts), relics or artefacts (pottery, furniture, clothing, buildings), images (family photo albums and videos’, sitcoms) or behaviour (making beer, laying out a garden, dressing the dead for funerals). According to Bernard, these materials can be studied raw or can be decoded – turn them into variables – after which the relations among the variables can be studied. In this work I have used some materials in raw form. They will be used in chapter five.

2.2.5 Secondary sources

Next to the primary sources described above, secondary sources also play an important role in this thesis. A secondary source interprets and analyzes primary sources. In this thesis I have made large use of written, or literary sources to describe Burundi’s history within the timeframe that is important for this work. These sources are taken from books, journals, magazines and internet sources.

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which are produced by scholars specialized in a particular field. In chapter three I have dealt with secondary sources, since the chapter deals with the history of Burundi and its citizens.

2.3 Research ethics

According to William M.K. Trochim, there are some key principles of ethics that should be addressed when doing social research. These principles differ in various sources, but should at least comprise the following:\footnote{Trochim, W. M.K., Ethics in research, in: Research Methods Knowledge Base, http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/ethics.php (accessed 30 July 2008)}:

1. *Voluntary participation* – People should not be coerced into participating in research and should thus participate voluntary
2. *Informed consent* - Prospective research participants must be fully informed about the procedures and risks involved in research and must give their consent to participate
3. *Safety* - Researchers should not put participants in a situation where they might be at risk of harm as a result of their participation
4. *Confidentiality* – Confidentiality should be guaranteed. Participants should be assured that identifying information will not be made available to anyone who is not directly involved in the study.

In my research I have tried to follow these principles as well as possible. In some situations though it is arguable whether I have followed them correctly. When we look for example at the first issue, voluntary participation, I have to admit that I have indeed sometimes slightly coerced people to cooperate when they at first did not want to. But I did not bribe or forced them, I just told them that it was important for me to be able to graduate. In my opinion this is coercion within acceptable lines. To what extend coercion was used in the Nyakabiga and Buyenzi communes I do not know, since the questionnaires were primarily spread by others there. Although I wanted to go with them, they insisted to spread the questionnaires without me because I, being white, would only making it harder for them to convince people to cooperate. So although I instructed these people what to do, and saw them working the first two days, I have no knowledge of how they worked without me being present.

The second principle, informed consent, I tried to follow by asking people if I could use their full name when referring to them in my thesis. Most of them agreed. With the questionnaires I gave my respondents the option to answer anonymously. The third principle, safety, is for a large part safeguarded if the second principled is followed correctly, which I did. Apart from that, I think that the subject of this thesis is not a subject that can bring people in direct danger. The fourth principle, confidentiality, is something I followed up quite strictly. If I spoke with people about opinions that other people have, I never used any names if the information was new to them.
3. **Context - The history of Swahili and its speakers in Bujumbura**

In order to understand the present appreciation of Swahili and the social status of the Swahili speakers in Bujumbura, it is important to see them in the light of the historical processes that influenced them.\(^\text{107}\) The history of Swahili and its speakers in Bujumbura can be divided in four main periods. In the first, many people from all over settled down in Bujumbura and took with them the Swahili language. In the second period, the period of Belgian rule, Swahili remained an important language, but became less and less the language that the Belgians, and other Africans favoured. The Swahili speakers at the same time became increasingly stigmatised. Only during the independence struggle it looked as if the Swahili community revived, but their revival didn’t take very long. After independence their situation remained dubious, but the Swahilis and Swahili language did not disappear from Bujumbura.

3.1 **Swahili as a language to unite**

In the introduction of this thesis we have seen that the Swahili language itself goes back to at least the tenth century where it was used along the East African Coast and that its spread in Eastern and Central Africa started only some two hundred years ago. In the region of Lake Tanganyika, trading contacts with the Swahili world on the Indian Ocean intensified from the 1830s and Ujiji, at the western end of one of the main overland caravan routes rapidly grew in importance. Through the simple day-to-day contact between the merchants and the local population Lake Tanganyika slowly became, as it were, a second Swahili coast, with many of the defining characteristics of the Swahili being adopted here, including the Swahili language, Islamic architecture, Islamic clothing, and Islam itself.

According to many sources Burundi did not share in this change. It has often been described as being isolated and impenetrable during this period with no real markets and no contacts with other (Arab) merchants and thus not with the Swahili language. According to those sources, Swahili entered Burundi with the arrival of the Germans\(^\text{108}\). Others, like Michele D. Wagner and Emile Mworoha\(^\text{109}\), oppose this statement. Wagner for example, shows through linguistic and ethnographic evidence that:

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\(^\text{107}\) Most of the information of this chapter has been taken from Carol Dickerman’s PhD. dissertation, since she has been writing specifically about the town Bujumbura, in contrast with most others who have been writing about Ruanda-Urundi as a whole.


‘Rundi participated in a multiplicity of exchange relations, with a broad range of goals, involving goods transport over long as well as short distances, for a long time before Arab and Swahili foreigners arrived from the East African coast’\textsuperscript{110},

And according to Mworoha:

Déjà par exemple en 1858, nous avons déjà les Arabes qui connaissaient déjà le Burundi et quand par exemple Richard Burton visite sur le Lac Tanganyika, on lui parle déjà du Roi Mwezi Gisabo. Progressivement, les Arabes vont monter d’Ujiji vers le Burundi, vers la rive orientale du Lac Tanganyika. C’est les Arabes donc, les arabisés\textsuperscript{111} qui vont introduire le Swahili. Ce sont eux qui sont les intermédiaires entre les Allemands et les Burundais pour introduire le Swahili chez les Burundais.’\textsuperscript{112}

So when we follow Wagner and Mworoha, it seems hard to maintain the statement that Burundi and its inhabitants were isolated from their neighbours and had no contacts with (Arab) merchants and with the Swahili language. According to Carol Dickerman, Rumaliza, the governor of Ujiji, had even established a small camp near Bujumbura (also known as Uzigé) ‘to which captive slaves were brought, but because Burundi had so far offered little inducement for slave traders, those brought to the camp came from the interior to the west of the lake, from Ubembe, Ubwari, and Uvira’.\textsuperscript{113}

\textsuperscript{110} Wagner, M. D. (1993), p. 149
\textsuperscript{111} Les Arabisés are Africans who adapted the Arabic culture. They spoke the Swahili language, adapted their way of living like for example wearing the Arabic Kanzu, and changed their religion by becoming Muslims.
\textsuperscript{112} Mworoha, E., [personal interview 19 December 2007]
\textsuperscript{113} Dickerman, C.W. (1984) p. 30
It was not only Africans, Indians and Arabs though that spoke Swahili. Also some European explorers made an effort to learn Swahili. We can see for example that Livingstone tried to learn Swahili during the years that he spent on the lakeshores of Lake Tanganyika, and during the 1890s it were Germans like Baumann, von Götzen and Kandt that made an effort to learn the language, either on the coast or already in Germany, like Kandt did. Also the White Fathers, who converted from North Africa up to Central Africa, adapted their language from Arabic to Swahili. These White Fathers tried to settle in Bujumbura three times. The first and the second time in 1884 and 1891 did not last for long, but the third time in 1896 they were more successful. They sought to recruit Rundi men and women and not Muslim Africans who they regarded as totally untrustworthy. Eventually after two years they closed the mission post because of a lack of priests and because they preferred to concentrate their effort in the interior, where there were no Muslims. The already converted Christians in Bujumbura stayed on the site after the Fathers left and continued farming the land they had acquired on conversion.

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The Germans already created a base in Bujumbura in 1897 but their activities were more of a military nature. Their *askari*\(^{117}\) consisted out of practically every ethnic group in East and Central Africa. From 1907 the Germans changed their position to a more administrative nature and was designated ‘Residentur’ (Residency) of Urundi. They ordered that Bujumbura be the only entrance to the interior, which resulted in African immigrants being brought in and concentrated in Bujumbura.\(^{118}\) These immigrants were either merchant, or were employed by the German administration, in either its civil or military guise, for the Germans preferred employees who had no local allegiances. These employees were often Muslim, spoke Swahili and mainly originated from the Indian Ocean coast, and some from Congo. ‘Swahili speakers were crucial to the administration as translators, clerks, scribes, and male nurses because Swahili, along with German, was the official language of German East Africa.’\(^{119}\) Most people originating from India and Pakistan ‘could develop successful business relations. However, this group held on to their Asian culture and chose to remain ethnically communal rather than join the local (black) Muslim population, which – partly because of their former collaboration with the Germans – was never fully integrated into Burundi’s society.’\(^{120}\)

Most of the immigrants, Asians, Africans and Europeans built houses on a place roughly where the Asian commune is today. Swahili was their medium of communication and they, with exception for the Europeans, were mainly united by their religion, Islam. It was not a real problem for the authorities that there were so many Muslims in town: as long as they did not proselytise in the countryside they were left alone.

In 1909 the Germans started a government run school in Bujumbura. Since Swahili was the only official language in Ruanda-Urundi, it was used as the language of instruction. All German schools served to educate the chiefs, sub-chiefs, assistants of the colonial administration, supervisors, and anyone else who wanted to study. ‘Those who succeeded in the school could hope for employment as secretaries with the government or traders’.\(^{121}\) Swahili thus became completely instituted in Bujumbura.

At the end of the period under German rule, there were as yet few clearly drawn lines:

‘individuals fulfilled a variety of roles, and Africans, Asians and Europeans lived and worked in close proximity to each other... The Christian-Muslim division within the African community had come with the Europeans. Aside from residence however, there was little distinction between the two groups. The army, bureaucracy, and the school were open to Muslims and Christians alike, and both groups came under urban rather than rural jurisdiction.’\(^{122}\)

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\(^{117}\) An *askari* is translated as a soldier or guard.

\(^{118}\) Dickerman, C.W. (1984) pp. 36-43


\(^{122}\) Dickerman, C.W. (1984) p. 75
3.2 The downward spiral

After the First World War in which Germany was defeated, Belgium received the mandate over Ruanda-Urundu. Initially, they preserved the linguistic policy of the Germans, mainly because Swahili was also used along Lake Tanganyika’s coastal line in Belgium Congo. But in the long term, many new rules were enforced by which the social, economic, and linguistic situation for the inhabitants of Bujumbura changed considerably.

The period under Belgian rule marked four different stages. In the first, Belgian ‘colonial officers sought to control immigration to the town and to provide as little incentive as possible for Africans settling here. But with the few Belgian agents it had, the government of Ruanda-Urundi depended heavily on its African employees. The men who fulfilled the positions in Bujumbura were not the local population, but rather the Congolese and local ‘Swahils’. The Congolese were as ‘long-term employees of the Belgian Congo administration attached to the new regime in Ruanda-Urundi. Others had received schooling in the Congo schools and possessed skills the administration needed. Still others were hired from the community of established African residents in Usumbura.

Most of them were Muslim and spoke Swahili, the language most often used after French by colonial administrators, but the ones having studied in a mission school also knew French. The Swahili speakers from the Indian Ocean coast who had worked for the German administration, stayed in Burundi because they would receive their pensions here. Depending on the ethnic roots of their forefathers they were allowed to work for the Belgian administration.

The second period of Belgian rule was a period in which their policy became one more of limitation than of elimination of Africans in town, for the administration had seen that its members provided cheap goods and other services that were necessary for Bujumbura’s economy. Bujumbura in this period was becoming more stratified, for the Belgians sought to establish separate economic and geographical spheres for the different racial groups and just as lines were drawn between rural and urban, so too were boundaries laid down within the town. Linguistically, one could also see these lines, this time created by the Africans themselves, since Rundi coming from ‘outside’ were called by

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124 The Europeans, keen to attach ethnic labels, referred to members of the African Muslim community, regardless of their origins, as Swahilis (see also the introduction of this paper for an extended explanation of the use of this word). What we can understand, is that the word Swahili refers to the use of the Swahili language as the Burundi’s Muslim community’s lingua franca and the practise of Islam as its religion
126 Newcomers drawn from the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi were easily accepted in the Swahili community and thus often converted to Islam. Bujumbura in this period mainly existed out of Muslims and this trend was still growing. Dickerman shows the following numbers: Christian Africans in 1924: 124 and in 1938: 600. Muslim Africans in 1921: 2.656 and in 1938: 4.644. See: Dickerman, C.W. (1984) p. 124
127 Interview with the leaders of Baraza la Kiswahili [personal interview 8 January 2008]
the ‘insiders’ n’gome ya Mwambutsa (cows of Mwambutsa, king of Burundi), or washenzi.130 Their ignorance of Swahili was totally inconceivable; hence the Kirundi saying mutazi igiswahili ntagerwa na ‘ndiyo’, even the most ignorant can at least say ‘ndiyo’, yes.131 So most Rundi tried to have at least some knowledge of Swahili, as shown by Bizongwako:

‘Tout le monde parle kiswahili ici en ville. Les murundi ou le munyarwanda qui ne parlait pas cette langue était considéré comme un vaurien. Par après, il devait s’afforcer être en bonne termes avec les Congolais.’132

In order to control the Africans, a separate residence area had for example been set aside for non-Muslim Africans, which had to be ‘reserved for those with full-time, salaried employment. Most Swahili’s, with their hodgepodge of occupations, were ineligible. The stratification became even stronger when Asians [and Arabs] successfully pushed the poorer Swahili’s who had recently moved in, out of the Asian commune, into an adjacent area called Kabondo,133 known as the first centre extra-coutumier134 in Bujumbura.

The Belgians also tried to contain the Africans by control over movement between country and town in the form of a required residence permit135, the regulation of African commercial activities, and the imposition of regionally weighted taxes, in which the taxes for urban residence was higher than that of rural residence. And after 1927, an ever higher tax was fallen on the ‘Swahili group’136

This last group was even harder struck by the educational measures taken from 1927 in which the Catholic Church took over almost all the educational responsibilities. The missions ‘received official sanction –and funds- to spread their influence by working with the young elite, who would in turn bring their followers into the Christian fold,’137 and was given the responsibility to create le Groupe Scolaire d’Astrida; the largest school institution of Ruanda-Urundi and East Congo. This new school for the elites had the mission to educate the chefs and auxiliary executives like male nurses, agronomic assistants, veterinaries, etc. for assisting the colonial administration.138

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130 A mshenzi in Swahili is translated as an uncivilized/uncouth person, bumpkin, savage, churl, heathen.
Mworoha, E., [personal interview 19 December 2007]
133 Dickerman, C.W. (1984) p. 134, Justification of this racial separation given by the Asians and by the colonial administration was public health.
134 Centre extra-coutumier is an urban unit with a special status outside customary law and traditions.
135 In 1956 there were so many migrants that the Resident was obliged to refuse residence permits to those who did not have a permanent job in Bujumbura. See: Bizongwako, C. (1985) p. 36

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The language of Catholic instruction changed to Kirundi in primary schools and to French in all higher education, after the Belgian administration in 1929 had raised the point that Swahili:

‘…n’étant pas celle parlée par les autochtones, il n’y avait aucun avantage à la répandre; que la diffusion du Swahili ne peut que favoriser la penetration de l’élément mahométan, ce qui n’est pas recommandable ni dans l’intérêt des indegènes, ni dans celui de l’occupation européenne.’

Muslims, as a result, were denied access to training at skills demanded by the European administration and companies. This was also true for artisanal instruction. This had as a consequence, that ‘professions which could be learned without formal instruction became increasingly prevalent among the Muslim community.’

Growing geographical separation between Catholic and Muslim Africans, underscored the increasing economic and educational isolation of the latter, and by the end of the 1920’s we could see that ‘the divisions within Bujumbura’s population and the communes allocated to them were firmly drawn: Europeans, Asians, Swahilis, and other Africans, each group with its own neighbourhood, each with appropriate occupations.’

In the third period of Belgian rule, the administration ‘began to recognise that long-term residence in Bujumbura was not only inevitable, but in certain circumstances even desirable.’ It was a period after a severe and widespread famine in which the economy started to grow as never before, and as a result, Africans were able to fill more and better positions in the colonial political economy. The administration began to consider how best to manage the various sectors of Bujumbura’s African society, and how to make a distinction between salaried workers and other residents, between Muslim and non-Muslim (Christians and traditionalists). As a result, mid-1930s, two new communes came into existence, built close to the European commune, ‘cela permet d’une part, l’accès facile au lieu de travail et d’autre part, le maintien de l’ordre et un contrôle facile’. One of these communes was Buyenzi, ‘village des Swahilis’, designed for the Swahilis, who were transferred from Kabondo, Matongoni or Mbugani. People living here were likely to be born, marry, and die locally. The other commune, Belge (the present day Bwiza), closer to the center of town, was - like Buyenzi - called ‘centre extra-coutumier’ or ‘cité indigène’. The inhabitants of this commune were Christians or

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139 The Protestant missions continued to use Swahili, as well as the language of instruction as in their worships. The pastors mobility in the Great Lakes Region in which Swahili was still the most common language, encouraged them to use Swahili as their working language.
141 Actually, it is said that the Catholics, whose schools were especially in the first period located outside Bujumbura, often did not accept anyone living in Bujumbura. See: Dickerman, C.W. (1984) p. 133.
144 Dickerman, C.W. (1984) p. 188
146 Bizongwako, C. (1985) p. 27
traditionalists. They were often men who came to Bujumbura as young adults in search for jobs, who returned home to marry but did not necessarily bring their wives and children to Bujumbura. They often had a steady employment and usually occupied good positions, which they had been able to acquire by virtue of education in a mission school. This, in contrast with those living in Buyenzi, who were often poorly trained, regularly changed jobs, and were no longer the ‘right arm’ of the administration. This new stratification policy of the Belgian administration made that ‘Islam no longer exercised the attraction to immigrants it once had. Newcomers to Bujumbura now found a large, reasonably stable community of Christians and unconverted Africans among whom they might live’. As a result, by 1948, Muslims were no longer the majority, where in the 1930s there had been three times as much Muslims as non-Muslims in Bujumbura. As Dickerman said, ‘Swahilis had been supplanted as the focal point of Bujumbura’s African community.’ As a reaction to this, the Swahili’s were forming more and more a real community in which they regrouped individual nationalities and different ethnics: Congolese, Ugandans, Rwandans, Rundi, people from Tanganyika and Arab-Swahili’s. Four essential things weaved together their unity: occupation, religion, language and residence. Swahili is not only a means of communication, but also a means of identification towards other people who do not speak it. Islam brings them a frame of cultural life and a social stratification that cuts them from the rest of society.

The fourth period is a period in which the Belgian administration developed the desirability of permanent African residence in town. It is a period in which separation and segmentation are the twin themes. Next to division already made between permanent position in the formal sector and temporary employment in the informal sector, now there was a division within ranks of the permanent labour force, between a small, better-paid group of trained workers and the larger, relatively unskilled majority of the African labour force. Congolese predominated in both these segments of labour force, with Rundi and Rwandans in the minority. In this period, 30 different languages were spoken in Bujumbura, with the largest group (in 1958) being the Rundi with 26.7%, followed by Rwandans (11.98%) and different Congolese groups. Kirundi was increasingly used, but this did not mean at all that Swahili was not used anymore:

147 Although not commonly practised, Swahilis were accepted to live in Belge, in order to practise their commercial activities as small shop owners. See: Dickerman, p. 192
Il est vrai que les barundi et les banyarwanda pouvaient communiquer dans leur langues respectives, mais leur pourcentage ne dépassait pas 38% de la population. L’autre partie, 62% était constitué par les locuteurs des langues tribales congolaises. Le kiswahili était pour eux le seul moyen de communication; raison pour laquelle les barundi et les banyarwanda étaient obligés d’apprendre le kiswahili pour communiquer avec eux. ¹⁵⁶

Especially for women, speaking Swahili was not always accepted though, as we see from the following quote:

‘Quand un homme parlait le kiswahili c’était normal, mais un femme qui parlait cette langue était considérée comme une femme libre “umushirikazi”. On utilisait cette appellation même pour les barundikazi parlant kiswahili, dont la plupart étaient des femmes sorties de leur milieu, et qui avaient des allures dégagées’ ¹⁵⁷

This idea has existed for a long time, and was connected to the overrepresentation of single women in Buyenzi and the response of the administration to that. From 1950, (new) polygamous marriages were prohibited, with the result that women became or stayed single more often. The government though did not believe that these women were really single. The believed that they were either still in an illegal marriage, or they were working as prostitutes. The high taxes that were raised on single women were by the Swahili clerks as a result called ‘kodi ya malaya’ (prostitute-tax).¹⁵⁸

The better-paid Africans, the elite, received housing in Belge, where houses for public-sector employees were built. Also private companies built houses for their employees in Belge, later followed by graduates of the Groupe Scolaire d’Astrida.¹⁵⁹ With the influx of all these new people in town (the population had doubled between 1950 and 1955¹⁶⁰), new communes had to be built, and so Cité Jardin or Ngagara was built in 1952 (which people disliked to live in), followed by Kamenge (especially drawn by Rundi newcomers) and Belge IV¹⁶¹ in 1958, a more modest commune for the better-off.

¹⁶¹ Belge IV is today called Nyakabiga. Belge II and III were never built
The elite group considered for the new kind of housing was called by Belgian colonial officers *évolués*. The category of *évolué* was a social and economic, rather than a legal status. With more Africans taking their families in town, social and educational programs were designed for men, wives and children. These *foyers sociaux*, promoted to provide *évolué* men with *évolués* wives, helped to accentuate further those divisions in Bujumbura’s African community that other activities and facilities already emphasised, by dividing according to national or religious affiliation and with separate classes for Swahili, Congolese, Ruandan, and Rundi.

The Swahili in Bujumbura lived decently though, better than the Rwandans and the Rundi, even without professions within the colonial administration. This intensified the name calling between both groups. The Swahilis were quite successful in their work in commerce, but this success was often ascribed by others to be a result of illegal commerce and theft, and not to their sharp sense for business and their open minds. A bad image of the Swahili had started to arise and spread through the population, with the term Swahili at the end becoming a synonym for thug, liar, thief and a perfidious person. And when the Swahilis, who also distinguished themselves by their different way of dressing like the kanzu and the veil, were seen as being thugs, liars in the eyes of their compatriots, their language also became to be a language of thugs, liars, thieves and uneducated people. Muslim youth were also said not to have had a ‘social education’, like the children of the country side. One who spoke Swahili was seen as someone from ‘town’ and was thus regarded as being bad. They were regarded as people without having a Rundi social education, but a foreign social education (strangers!). People who had grown up in the city had learned no manners, it was said, whereas people from the countryside could work in Bujumbura but had had more social education. As a result, within non-Swahili surroundings, the use of Swahili provoked mistrust and occasionally disdain.

So not only the Belgian administration made divisions and distinctions between the different groups in Bujumbura; Africans created them themselves as well. They also started to align themselves ethnically at elections held for them, which served to exacerbate ethnic and regional rivalry, or formed ethnic associations along ethnic lines. Belge had become the home of ethnic associations.

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162 In 1948 and 1952, two procedures were established by the administration through which an African might acquire certain privileges more akin from a legal standpoint to those of Europeans than of Africans. The first was the *Carte du mérite civique*, introduced in 1948, which gave the African ‘special rights’. Conditions to obtain such a card was to be ‘at least twenty-one years old, monogamous, without a police record, of good character, and sufficiently educated to calculate and to read and write in French, Dutch, or an African language. The *Carte du mérite civique* was a recognition of intermediate status: the holder was not yet fully assimilated to ‘European civilisation’, but was in the process of becoming so. In strict sense, he was not yet an *évolué*, but rather an *évoluant*. ’The second stage in the process of becoming an *évolué*, implemented in 1952, was a procedure known as *immatriculation*. Only those Africans who had already acquired the *Carte du mérite civique* were eligible, and the application process was even more formal and strict’. ‘With the granting of *immatriculation* status, the recipient was considered to be fully assimilated to Europeans in matters of civil procedure. See: Dickerman, C.W. (1984) p. 217-222


164 Nijinbere, G., journalist at RTNB [personal interview 25 September 2007]


while in Buyenzi, by way of contrast, the only formally recognized associations were the ones that drew their membership from the Muslim African community as a whole.167

Conclusive, we can say that at the close of the 1950’s, the creation that was Bujumbura resembled a vast formation of stratified rock, with strata composed of

‘people of differing occupations and national origins. There was also order and logic to this melange, with specific groups dominating certain activities, others strong in different fields. This configuration was the product of the changing requirements of the colonial political economy and of the recruitment procedures by which these needs have been met. Whereas in the early years the colonial regime had relied on Swahilis, in the middle period it turned to Congolese, and in the final years to Ruandans and Rundi. Each successive group occupied positions rarely open to its predecessors. The rain forest of rules and restrictions – not to mention educational constrains – insured that those qualified for the new strata could be found only outside Usumbura. […] The informal sector, composed of farmers and fishermen, self-employed artisans, merchants, landlords, and other small-scale entrepreneurs, was largely Muslim and urban rooted. Middle-level employment in the formal sector was generally the province of Congolese men, long-term but seldom permanent residents. The newest townsmen were Ruandans and Rundi, some of whom supported themselves in unskilled positions, others of whom, the very successful, occupied the highest and most prestigious positions in the civil service.’168

These strata also reflected linguistic attitudes. The new francophones considered Swahili as a language of the non cultivés and non educated, and even that of thugs and thieves. The Swahili language had as a result ended up at the bottom of the linguistic pyramid, under French and Kirundi.

3.3 The independence struggle

Towards independence, it seemed for a while that the Swahili community revived. From 1955, women of Buyenzi protested against the name calling against them and the high taxes they had to pay. Their protests evolved in overt resistance to paying taxes and filing a petition in 1956. The protests were taken over by the men from the Swahili communes in 1957. These actions by Swahili men and women were the first political resistance to the colonial administration, and as such a symbolic step to the decolonisation of Burundi.169 But there was more to come.

Prince Louis Rwagasore, son of Burundi’s mwami (king) Mwambutsa, was the leader of the most important cooperative business association, the Cooperative de Consommateurs et de Commerçants du Ruanda-Urundi, founded in 1956; an organisation that followed a Tanganyikan example, and which had attracted people from different members from ‘all segments of Bujumbura:

Christians and Muslims, merchants and consumers, Congolese and Rundi citizens. What allowed the cooperative to cover all the different operations, was African, largely Swahili interests. Rather than being systematically and progressively excluded, Swahilis, with all their contacts in East Africa, were at the very heart of Rwagasore’s cooperative. The cooperatives were principally commercial pressure groups, but in reality they developed into political organisations. Since political organisations still were prohibited, the cooperatives offered a way to avoid the ban. The Swahilis were very enthusiastic about Rwagasore and his activities and they were excited to work for him, knowing that the Belgian officials were unhappy with these activities.

The Swahilis, frustrated and longing for independence, an end to the high taxes, chances in Rundi society, freedom of commercial activities and to be able to visit the countryside, were also at the basis of the foundation of the first political party, UNARU (Union Nationale Africaine du Ruanda-Urundi) or in Swahili UTARU (Umoja wa Taifa wa Afrika wa Rwanda na Urundi) that was officially recognised in July 1959. The name was derived from Tanganyikan TANU (Tanganyika African National Union), the principal political party in the struggle for sovereignty in Tanganyika, with which the Swahilis had strong ties. UNARU’s main goal was the independence of Ruanda-Urundi (combined), but Burundi and Rwanda at the end chose multiparty democracy as the way towards independence, and in 1960 l’Unité le Progrès National (UPRONA) was officially founded in Burundi. It also had strong roots within the Swahili community, especially since the leader of UPRONA was prince Louis Rwagasore. The Swahili were of great help for the UPRONA since they knew the life in the city, and could raise a voice. The Congolese in Belge, who were still employed by the Belgian administration, could not participate, so the heart of the UPRONA was situated in Buyenzi with the Pan-African Swahilis. And when Nyerere and Kawawa (TANU, Tanzania) visited Burundi to meet Rwagasore, they stayed in the Saint-Michel where they had a meeting with Buyenzi’s Swahilis. The Swahilis in Burundi helped with propaganda, mobilisation upcountry, and organized meetings. Although they were not very educated, they had an open mind. ‘Their mobility, which is part of their intermediary position at the margins of Burundian life, proved to be not only a carrier of goods and people, but also of ideas.’ But according to the leadership of Baraza la Kiswahili, the Belgians warned the Rundi for the Swahili’s and said that if the Swahilis would get power, they would suppress the Rundi and the Rundi culture would get lost. As a result, a law was created by which (most) Swahilis could not be chosen or vote themselves on the ground that they were not ‘national’. Some though could obtain political rights based on Rundi descent. But there was another reason that Swahilis were not able to be elected: they were not educated, thus not employable to be deputy or

174 Mworoha, E., [personal interview 19 December 2007]
175 Castryck, G. (2007) p. 6
That was exactly why after independence in 1962, everything turned back almost the way it had been before for the Swahili’s. Most of the Congolese had left because of the independence of Congo in 1960, and Rundi had taken over their positions in the administration. The Swahilis, not educated enough, returned to the informal sector and decided again to openly withdraw from participating in the social and political sphere. Many of the Swahili children as a result started doing business at a very young age already.

Muslims thus stayed largely marginalized, and the same counted for the Swahili language. Likewise, on an economic and residential level, the Rundi Muslims tended to seclude themselves from public life, working and living in separate residential areas. Practically without exertion of influence in the political and administrative sphere, the community leaders shifted their activities to the civil society sector, and became active in HIV education, democratisation (voters education) and in transnational organisations like the ACRL (African Council of Religious Leaders) which promotes programmes for conflict transformation and the dialogue between the numerous African religious groups. Rundi diplomatic contacts with Islamic countries did not stop though, according to the names of several post-independent buildings referring to Islamic leaders like the Roi-Khaled Hospital (named after king Khalid bin Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia), and the Qaddafi mosque and Qaddafi library (named at the Libyan leader Muammar Abu Minyar al-Qaddafi).

3.4 French wins the battle, but is certainly not alone in Bujumbura

In Belgian Africa, the colonial government had privileged the African languages for the natives, although they had also used French. After independence though, it was completely modified, with French as the most important language, while Kirundi was given an inferior status. Swahili was left with no status at all, but was still used in Bujumbura, especially in commercial area’s. Actually, French and Kirundi/Kinyarwanda were infiltrating in the Rundi urban centers as foreign languages.

During the first years after independence, at a sociological and political level, the Swahilis received little opposition. After all, it was the Swahilis who helped the government in power. Even the Catholic Church was defending Swahili by stating that Swahili, being a language used by its neighbours, could serve as a second African language in Burundi, but because of practical and emotional reasons this didn’t happen. First of all there were not enough teachers available, and second, the administration was indifferent towards it. French was the language to reach power and influence, not Swahili. Some also had negative feelings towards the Swahili language, being it a language for the

176 Mworoha, E., [personal interview 19 December 2007]
177 Grohma, P. (2005)
178 Mworoha, E., [personal interview 19 December 2007]
180 Swahili was still widely spoken because in 1964/65, Congolese still represented 75% of the population in Bujumbura. Also many Rwandans had entered Burundi because of the civil war between 1962 and 1965. Bizongwako, C. (1985) p. 66
uneducated and illiterates and thus despised it. For others even, it brought bad memories of oppression and injustices of Belgian rule. The strictness of the Congolese, as officials responsible for order and the calls for chores, made them dislike Swahili. However, although Swahili and its speakers were still marginalized, the hard work of the Swahilis during independence resulted in the re-introduction of the Swahili language on the radio in 1961. This pleased the Swahilis, but the language did not win the hearts of the Rundi. First of all because the missionaries did not accept the language, secondly because it was a language that could not be used to address civilized people and thirdly because it was regarded to be a language of strangers.

In the first two decennia after independence, Swahili was not spoken much in Bujumbura, but its use had increased in the rural areas. This can be explained by the fact that more Rundi settled down in Bujumbura, where they occupied the posts left behind by the Congolese, of which many had left after independence (although they still represented 25% of the population in Bujumbura in 1979). These Rundi used Swahili only occasionally, in contrast to those they had replaced, and contributed to the emergence of a Francophone middle class of functionaries who worked in offices and had little to do with the Swahili language. The construction of a road network was necessarily accompanied by a small urbanisation, which brought the Swahili language, the language of town, outside Bujumbura. The number of Swahilis in town had also declined since they were allowed to travel upcountry and sometimes settled down in the smaller urban areas. Karangwa, referring to two surveys from the 1970s, shows us that where in 1970-1971 73% of Bujumbura was Swahiliphone and a very limited number, if not none, in the rural areas, in 1977-1987 already 14% of the rural area was Swahiliphone. In Bujumbura as a whole, Kirundi had taken the place of Swahili.

After the establishment of the Second Burundian Republic, that was founded in 1976, the Burundi government slowly started to make an effort promoting Swahili. They introduced Swahili courses at two universities and Swahili courses were also offered at several institutes. The Tanzanian government agreed to send Swahili teachers to Burundian universities. The Burundian government did also not ignore Swahili in the general pursuit of development in rural and urban areas,

184 They were situated in almost all the communes of Bujumbura, with the most of them in Buyenzi (40%). See: Bizonwako, C. (1985) p. 66
185 Even those who lived nearby Tanzania or Uganda came to Bujumbura, since the Tanzanian and Ugandan borders had been closed due to political and economic crisis. Bizonwako, C. (1985) p. 67
187 From Karangwa’s research it is not clear if these people spoke Swahili as a first language, or that they were just able to speak Swahili.
and in all kinds of projects ranging from agriculture to minerals, education and culture and all the way to local medicine and local customs. The use of Swahili on the radio increased a little. Radio stations were instructed to make programs of good quality in Swahili and to play popular music from Burundi and Tanzania. Taarab\(^ {189} \) was becoming more popular, and local musicians started to sing in Swahili.\(^ {190} \)

All this did not mean that the Swahili language was suddenly becoming popular in Burundi. Mfizi, Mossi and Nyyonkhuru in 1990 wrote that they think that Rundi do not know that Swahili is prospering and expanding in many African countries and is perceived as an important language in the world. They noticed that Swahili is still not used in (religious) teaching (except for Islamic schools), that the (Swahili) teachers at universities have no academic degree and that they are too few in number. They also mention a shortage of important Swahili writers and news broadcasters, and a shortage of cheap Swahili grammar books and dictionaries. Swahili magazines and newspapers lack completely.\(^ {191} \)

Swahili though had remained a symbol of modernity, of urban life, and is up to today especially for the youth an attraction. Karangwa, in his thesis written in 1995, describes Burundi as a monolingual country, with the inhabitants of Bujumbura being bilingual, and with Swahili taking the second place right after Kirundi before French and English. Almost all respondents of his survey mentioned to know at least a bit of Swahili, although the university educated spoke it less then the others. Tradesmen use Swahili the most. Whereas in former literature we could read that Swahili was seen as a languages of the uneducated, thieves, etc., Karangwa noticed that ‘[l]e kiswahili n’est pas généralement considéré comme une langue d’incultes’ and that ‘l’image positive de cette langue est plutôt répandu entre les deux âges, les plus jeunes et les plus vieux étant les plus nombreux à y croire, dans les mêmes proportions auprès des deux sexes’.\(^ {192} \)

Unfortunately little has been written about Swahili in Burundi between 1965 and present times. With the information above as a starting point for the research conducted in 2006/2007, we will move on to the next chapter to reveal the present situation of Swahili and the Swahili community in Bujumbura.


\(^ {190} \)Bigirumwani, M. (1983) p. 58


\(^ {192} \)Karangwa, J. de D. (1995) pp. 289, 290
4. A survey on the use of Swahili and the attitudes regarding Swahili and its speakers in Bujumbura

Despite the downward spiral Swahili and the Swahili community have been in during Belgian rule, the appreciation of Swahili in Burundi seems to change for the better as we come closer to the present situation.

The results displayed in the following pages are a result of a survey conducted from November 2006 to January 2007 in three different communes of Bujumbura: Buyenzi, Nyakabiga and Kinindo. It will deal with the outcomes of the survey in terms of language use, attitudes regarding Swahili and its speakers. But first what will be explained in this chapter is the reason behind the choice for the Buyenzi, Nyakabiga and Kinindo communes as the location for this study, including a small introduction of these communes.

4.1 Three different communes, three different outcomes?

As has been elaborated in the former chapters, Bujumbura was, under Belgian rule, divided in different communes for people with a different background, religion and/or occupation. This remained largely the same after independence and the results of this can still be seen in present times.\textsuperscript{193} For this reason, I chose to focus my research on three different communes in Bujumbura in order to cover as well as possible the opinion of the whole town, and at the same time to be able to look for differences or similarities between the different communes concerning attitudes regarding the Swahili language and the Swahili community. The communes chosen are Buyenzi, the ‘Swahili’ commune, Nyakabiga, a more mixed commune with people of different backgrounds, religion and/or occupation, and Kinindo, the commune of ‘patrons’, the elite group. All three communes are situated relatively close to town with Buyenzi and Nyakabiga north of the centre, and Kinindo in the south (for a map of Bujumbura see appendix 1, for a list of the different communes and the respective quarters in Bujumbura see appendix 2, and for pictures of the different communes see appendix 3).

\textsuperscript{193} Due to the war though, which started at 1993, people of the same ethnic background have had a tendency to regroup in certain zones. However, there are no zones exclusively reserved to Hutu or Tutsi, but rather zones mainly inhabited by Hutus or Tutsis. The Ngagara, Cibitoke, Nyakabiga, Mutanga South, Gatoke, Kinindo and Musaga zones are known to be mainly inhabited by Tutsi, while the Kamenge, Mutanga North, Gihosha, Gikungu, Kanyosha and Kinama zones are mainly inhabited by Hutu. However, in the Kiriri, Rohero, Bwiza and Buyenzi zones, members of the two ethnic groups are represented more evenly. There is also a high concentration of foreigners in the Bwiza and Buyenzi zones. IRB (2002)
4.1.1 Buyenzi

Buyenzi, formally called ‘centre extra-coutumier de Buyenzi’ (CEC Buyenzi) was created in 1941 by the Belgian authority. In this period we could find in this commune Congolese, Rundi, Arabs and Tanganiykan. It is this commune of Bujumbura in which Swahili took, and still takes, the most prominent place. As described before, Buyenzi was also called ‘village des Swahilis’ because it was designed for the Swahilis who were transferred that time from Kabondo or Mbugani to Buyenzi. Those living in Buyenzi that time were often poorly trained, and that is even often the case today.

In present times, Buyenzi is one of the poorest communes of Bujumbura and is considered one of the most densely populated communes in tropical Africa\(^{194}\) with 80,000 inhabitants in 3,525 households\(^{195}\). It is a lively commune situated between Bwiza, Rohero and Ngagara, just a little out of town. On the southern side of it lays a tar road, with twentyfive dirt roads heading north parallel to each other, with on the left and the right side houses. Each household belongs to one of the seven administrative quarters. On the streets of many of these dirt roads mechanics are fixing cars and busses and taxi’s are parked. Buyenzi is inhabited by people with lower incomes like small vendors, sheetmetal workers, woodworkers, drivers, mechanics and unemployed workers. Many of them are muslim and/or of foreign origin, like Rwandese (8,5%), Congolese (35,2%) or Tanzanian (3,3%), but there is also a large amount of Rundi (54,3%) married into these families. 68,9% of the inhabitants of Buyenzi is Muslim, 25,8% Catholic and 4,6% Protestant\(^{196}\). As a result many families exist of a mixture of people from different backgrounds, religions and ethnicities. The people in Buyenzi usually live with a whole family in different rooms centered around an inner court with only one entrance. Few houses are connected to the water and electricity network. Some public fountains serve the population though. As in most parts of Bujumbura, there are no street lights. At night Buyenzi is not always safe because of (organized) crime. The main language in Buyenzi, Swahili, is close to the Standard Swahili spoken in Tanzania, contrary to that of the Swahili spoken in communes in Bujumbura like Bwiza and Nyakabiga.\(^{197}\)

It is this commune that the least research is done due to safety reasons. Some results are still valuable though and used when this is the case.

4.1.2 Nyakabiga

Nyakabiga was the last centre extra-coutumier created by the Belgian administration in 1958 under the name Belge IV. It was also called Fond d’avance or Quartier experimentale, because it was

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\(^{194}\) Achibache c. (1982) p. 151


\(^{196}\) Census 2003

\(^{197}\) For more information about this, see: Yaziyazi, L. (1985) *La Situation Sociolinguistique des Enfants dans les Quartiers Buyenzi, Bwiza et Nyakabiga*, mémoire de licence, University of Burundi
the first commune built according to European standards. This meant that the roofs of the houses were not made of leaves or metal like in Bwiza and Buyenzi, but of aluminium or tile.

The first inhabitants of Nyakabiga were Rundi, Congolese and Rwandese. They were ‘le cadre moyen’, the middle class that initially existed out of teachers and members of UPRONA and later also mayor and other prominent figures. These people lived in the first six streets seen from the centre. Eventually other people with occupations like drivers, mechanics and servants moved to this commune as well. They were situated in the 7th street and higher. In 1972 the commune received the name Nyakabiga. After the initial commune was built, Nyakabiga II and Nyakabiga III were added. Nyakabiga is one of the communes that suffered great hardships during the war and many inhabitants, mainly Hutu, had to flee from this commune.

Nyakabiga is situated in the centre of Bujumbura between Bwiza, Rohero and Gihosha and has presently approximately 24,346 inhabitants. Its surface has doubled between the years 1970 and 1978. In 2003, 64,1% of the inhabitants of Nyakabiga was Rundi, 18,7% Rwandan and 16,3% Congolese. 70,9% of them were Catholic, 12,4% Protestant and 12,0% Muslim. Just like in Buyenzi, the streets and the houses are numbered. Every section has 14 to 17 streets with left and right of it houses placed in a disorderly fashion. Almost all houses are connected to the water and electricity network, but there is also a public fountain. The only paved street crossing Nyakabiga is situated between Nyakabiga II and Nyakabiga III. Nyakabiga is mainly inhabited by young civil servants and people with a low to middle income. Because its proximity to the University of Burundi, Nyakabiga as a whole houses a considerable amount of students and because of this many of the administration’s personnel have once lived in Nyakabiga. The languages spoken in Nyakabiga are Kinyarwanda, Kirundi, Swahili and French, which shows that it is a mixed commune.

4.1.3 Kinindo

Kinindo exists of five quarters and is created in the early 1980’s as an extension of Rohero II. It was mainly inhabited by the new civil servants of the second republic and staff of public enterprises. There were for example several houses of the Central Bank, some of the University, but others could also build here.

Kinindo is situated south of the centre of Bujumbura between Kanyosha, Musaga, Rohero and Lake Tanganyika. It is a quite modern place by its infrastructure. Kinindo, one of the richer communes of Bujumbura, is known to be inhabited by the upper class (ministers, ambassadors, important businessmen, etc.) and also houses some non-Africans like Europeans, Asians and Americans. It is a

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198 What is now the 5th and the 6th street, was back then the 1st and the 2nd street. Ndayiragije, N. [personal interview 2 January 2008]
201 Census 2003
commune that combines elitism and strong recent roots with the interior (contrary to i.e. Rohero; also an elite commune but with older ties to the city). As a result, they are potentially more condescending towards Swahili, but also to town (not necessarily explicit or consciously, but indeed within the framework of social standards).\textsuperscript{202}

The costs of the houses in Kinindo are enormous and the amount of houses is much lower than the demand. Kinindo is popularly said to be inhabited by ‘patrons’ or by people from ‘Babylon’ and is estimated to have around 35,000 inhabitants. According to the ‘chef de quartier’, most people living in Kinindo are either elder or young adults with children. The generation of twenty to thirty five is relatively small, since many people of this generation have left for Europe during the war.

In principle all houses in Kinindo are connected to the water and electricity network. When Kinindo was constructed, the government introduced a housing policy for the first time, and demanded fees for the preparation of the streets (frais de viabilisation).\textsuperscript{203} The community also pays a monthly contribution for refuse collection.

Contrary to Buyenzi and Nyakabiga, Kinindo is very quiet and the streets are often empty, except for some houseboys heading to the market or working in the small gardens in front of the gates. In the evening it is lively for a while when the inhabitants come home from work by car, and some youngsters meet in the streets, but after dark it is quiet again and Kinindo is then protected by guards.

Swahili is not often heard in Kinindo. If it is spoken at all, it is mainly by the guards or the houseboys or housegirls, who usually learned it at a different part of Bujumbura where they have lived before coming to Kinindo. The elite people of Kinindo that do speak Swahili usually speak it with people from other communes, and not with inhabitants from Kinindo itself.

Because Kinindo is quite a large commune, I have chosen not to take into account the Kibenga quarter, which is by some seen as a minor part of the Kinindo commune.

\subsection{4.2 Competences in Swahili}

205 people participated in this research; 125 are male and 73 female. 7 of them did not give their sex. All participants were chosen randomly, regardless age, sex, education, etc. The research did focus on three communes: Kinindo, Nyakabiga and Buyenzi. Of all interviewees, 106 live in Kinindo\textsuperscript{204}, 65 in Nyakabiga and 15 in Buyenzi.\textsuperscript{205} 18 people live somewhere else in Bujumbura.

\begin{itemize}
\item Note made by Geert Castryck
\item Frederick [personal interview January 2008]
\item Four of the interviewees of Kinindo are houseboys or housegirls. They only live in Kinindo as long as they work here, but they often originally come from the interior or in communes like Bwiza or Buyenzi. It should be remembered that these four people can influence the outcomes of the research a little, but because they do live in Kinindo at the moment, I have not excluded them from my research.
\item Unfortunately the number of respondents in Buyenzi is very low comparing with that of Kinindo and Nyakabiga. This was due to the circumstances already described in chapter 2, paragraph 2.2. ‘Surveys’. Despite the low number of respondents in Buyenzi, and despite most of them being higher educated than is common in Buyenzi, I believe, due to my own observations, that the small number of respondents living in Buyenzi does in
\end{itemize}
In the following paragraph we will discuss the results of the survey. After that, an interpretation of the results is given.

4.2.1 The outcomes of the survey

Of the 205 people questioned, 132 people declared that they were able to speak Swahili, but Kirundi and French are spoken more, with 186 and 156 people. (N=205)

What we see here, is that Kirundi is the language spoken most often, followed by French and Swahili. But what is also very interesting, is that English, a language which is commonly said not to be spoken in Burundi, still counts for 91 people.

When we look at Swahili and we separate the interviewees per commune, we find some differences between them. It is clear that Swahili is most spoken in Buyenzi with 92,9%, Nyakabiga has 76,9% of Swahili speakers and Kinindo 52,4%. This matches the fact that 96% of the interviewees indicate that the milieu in which a person lives influences the learning of Swahili.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commune</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Swahili</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kinindo</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>52,4% (55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nyakabiga</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>76,9% (50)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

certain circumstances reflect a proper sample to use in this research. Where I will find it doubtful, I will not use the surveys of Buyenzi.
Looking at the degree of competence in Swahili, we see that 61 people (30.7%) declares to speak it a little, 60 people (30.2%) average, 49 people (24.6%) well and 29 people (14.6%) very well. Only 4 people did not answer this question (N=201)

![Chart 3 - Competence in Swahili](image)

When we add up the numbers of people who are competent in Swahili, we count 199 people with at least some kind of knowledge of Swahili, but we have just seen in chart one, that only 132 people declared to speak Swahili. Let me explain where this deficiency comes from.

In the questionnaire, the interviewees were asked in question two, which languages they speak. It was an open question, so they could fill in multiple languages. Question four was a closed question ans asked ‘if you speak Swahili, do you speak it...’ (a little, average, well, very well).

Somehow some people did not mention to speak Swahili in question two, but did answer the question ‘if you speak Swahili, do you speak it...’ (a little, average, etc.). It took me a while before I could find some explanations for this deficiency. Some people could have felt that the little Swahili they speak was not well enough to mention in question two, but was well enough when they could fill in that they speak it just a little. For example: if someone would ask me if I was able to speak Kirundi after living in Burundi for half a year I would answer in the negative, but if that same person would ask me if I learned to speak at least a little Kirundi, I could answer in the affirmative, since I actually do know some words and sentences that are often used. Another explanation could be that they simply forgot to mention Swahili while answering question two.

In order to make a clear distinction between these two questions, I refer to data from question two as ‘knowledge of Swahili’, and to the data from question four to ‘competence in Swahili’.
Looking at the differences per commune, we find that there is not much difference in language competence among Swahili speakers between Kinindo and Nyakabiga, although the competence among Swahili speakers in Nyakabiga is a bit higher. And as expected, there is a large difference with the results of that of Buyenzi. Where in Kinindo 30,7% (N=101) and in Nyakabiga 40,0% (N=64) speaks Swahili well or very well, in Buyenzi this percentage is much higher with 93,3% (N=15). It is also clear that in Buyenzi all Swahili speakers speak Swahili at least on average level or higher.

When we take a look at the differences between men and woman, we see that females (59,7%) (N=72) speak almost as much Swahili as men (66,1%) (N=124). In Kinindo the difference between men and women (56,9% : 40,5%) is larger than in Nyakabiga (77,8% : 72,0%). When we look closer to the competence of Swahili, we see that 41,4% of the women who have competence in Swahili speak it just a little and this number declines according to a higher level of competence. For the men, this is different since most of them have at least an average knowledge (32,0%) of Swahili.
When we ask the interviewees to indicate the level of Swahili of their other family members (of the ones they have), we notice that children are perceived to speak better Swahili than their parents, and that the difference between mother and daughter is perceived to be bigger than that of father and son:

Of all respondents of the survey, most interviewees learned Swahili from friends (50.3%) or at home (35.9%), but also here we find a strong difference between the three communes: the inhabitants of Kinindo learn most of it from friends, those of Buyenzi at home, and those of Nyakabiga in both situations almost equal.
Of all respondents of the survey, 15,0% never use Swahili, 59,5% use it sometimes and 25,5% use it often. They mainly use it in their commune (34,0%) or at home (27,7%). Of the 30 people that never use Swahili, 16 (53,3%) live in Kinindo. Several people interviewed mentioned that with different sports different languages are used. Basketball for example, is a sport mainly practised by Kirundi speaking elites, but soccer is a sport more often practised by ‘people of town’ and thus Swahili is used as the language of communication.206

Asking people where they use Swahili the most, we can see a remarkable difference between the communes:

We see that in Buyenzi most interviewees use Swahili at home (73,3%) or in their commune (26,7%). In the other two communes it varies more, although in Nyakabiga 43,8% use it in their own commune. It is remarkable, that in Kinindo most people declare to use Swahili in their own commune, on the streets or even sometimes at home. This is remarkable because Kinindo is not a commune where one would normally hear Swahili. It is even said to be a non-Swahili commune. 24,7 of the people in Kinindo declare to use Swahili at other situations than the ones given. Most of them indicate that they use Swahili at the market or other commercial centres (11 times). Other situations in which they use

206 For more information about the history of soccer in Bujumbura see: Castryck, G. (2006), pp. 222-225
Swahili is when they are with Swahili speaking friends (5 times), when they meet a Swahili speaker (4 times), at the garage (4 times), in school (3 times), in the Swahili communes (3 times), at the hair saloon (2 times) and at the bus (1 time).

It is also interesting to look at the age factor combined with the practice of Swahili. We have already seen that younger people speak it more than their parents, and when we look closer we find that the group with the least practice of Swahili is the group of over 51 years and over (53.8%). The group of 41-50 years (73.3%) speak the most Swahili. After that, with the group of age 31-40 the number seems to have fallen to 64.1% but is rising, reaching 70.6% again among those of 20 years and younger.

When we compare the outcomes of ‘Swahili spoken per age’ in Kinindo and Nyakabiga we see the following chart:

The following chart shows the knowledge of Swahili compared to peoples religion:
Examining this chart, we can see that all Muslims questioned declare to speak Swahili. This is not remarkable, since Swahili is used in every mosque. Even Qurans are written in Arabic, with a translation in Swahili. Under ‘other’ religions, which were only 8 people, we find 4 (50%) Anglicans who answered all to speak Swahili. After that we see that the Protestants follow with 69,4% Swahili speakers. Catholics know the least Swahili of all, but Swahili speakers among them are still counting for 56,6%.

When we look at the same chart but specify this per commune, we see a remarkable difference between the Kinindo and Nyakabiga commune. In Kinindo only 46,7% of the Catholics speak Swahili, but in Nyakabiga 71,4% of the Catholics speak Swahili. The percentage Protestant Swahili speakers is almost the same in both communes. Muslims, wherever they live, all speak Swahili.

Comparing the competence of Swahili with the level of education shows that among the intermediate group (secondary school) the overall level of Swahili is best. In a chart it looks as following:
When we make a chart of the level of education per commune we see that Kinindo has – in this research - a higher percentage of people with university level education than Nyakabiga, in spite of Nyakabiga’s proximity to the University of Burundi:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Kinindo</th>
<th>Nyakabiga</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>63,1%</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary school</td>
<td>30,1%</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary school</td>
<td>5,8%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illiterate</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Nyakabiga the level of education is hardly a factor in the knowledge of Swahili. In Kinindo it is though. In Nyakabiga, interviewees with university level have more often declared to speak Swahili than university level interviewees of Kinindo, with 87,5% against 52,3%. Almost the same counts for secondary school level (71,9% against 53,3%), but in primary school level we see that the values are almost the same (80,0% against 83,3%). This last value though is greatly influenced by the housegirls and houseboys working in Kinindo. When we leave them out, primary school level still counts for 75%.
4.3 Attitudes regarding Swahili

In the above we have evaluated the use of Swahili in Bujumbura. In this part we will take a look at the attitudes regarding the Swahili language, to see if there is conformity with the use of it.

4.3.1 The outcomes of the survey

When we ask the interviewees how their parents react(ed) when they speak/spoke Swahili, 50,3% answers that their parents reacted positively, 13,5% of the parents reacted negatively and 35,8% indifferently.

| Chart 19 – How did/do your parents react when you speak/spoke Swahili? |
|---------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Positive                        | Bujumbura | 50,3%     | Kinindo   | 43,3%     | Nyakabiga | 52,3%     | Buyenzi   | 73,3%     |
| Indifferent                     | 35,8%     | 38,1%     | 35,4%     | 20,0%     |
| Negative                        | 13,5%     | 18,6%     | 9,2%      | 6,7%      |

Indifference often was motivated by the fact that Swahili was not spoken at home, so there could also be no positive or negative response to it. One of the interviewees in Kinindo stated that speaking Swahili to your parents was out of the question, since it is a sign of disrespect. Another interviewee of Kinindo said that he was not allowed to speak Swahili at home, especially not because the little Swahili that he and his brothers knew were swear words they learned from the gardener which he used when they were stealing apples from the trees. As a result Swahili was seen as a bad language. Still Swahili was in one way or the other an attractive language for the youngsters living in Kinindo. It

207 Denis [personal interview October 2007]
gave status to them since to speak Swahili made them tough. One of the interviewees mentioned that the youth of Nyakabiga, Jabe, Buyenzi, etc. (youth of the town) said that people of Kinindo were from ‘Babylon’ because their parents had enough money for expensive cars, holidays, good education for their children (école Français, école Belge), etc. It was said that the Kinindo youth did not know anything of life; they were not strong because they never faced any hardships. So the youth from the rich quarters wanted to show that they were also strong and started visiting youth from other communes in town. They started to drink beer and smoke joints, and learned Swahili in the mean time. Now, when they were at the market and in the bus they could speak a little Swahili, and were not anymore called *mjinga* (fool, idiot). They were really from town.

When we look at the answers on the question what the interviewees’ reaction would be if/when their children speak Swahili, we see that 77,2% would react positively, 3,0% negatively and 19,8% indifferently. It is clear that young people are much more positive than their elders were or are. Also here, we find a clear difference between the different communes:

| Chart 20 – What would be your reaction when your children speak Swahili? |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Positive                    | 77,2%                      | 77,9%                      | 73,8%                      |
| Indifferent                 | 19,8%                      | 19,2%                      | 21,5%                      |
| Negative                    | 3,0%                       | 2,9%                       | 3,1%                       | 0,0%                       |

‘Indifferent’ in Kinindo was mainly motivated by the comment that they did/do not speak it and so their parents could/can also not react positively or negatively. ‘Indifferent’ in Nyakabiga and Buyenzi usually was motivated positively; to speak Swahili was good, but it was the children’s choice to speak it or not.

The Burundi government introduced the instruction of Swahili in primary schools in 2007. Some University departments introduced it already in the 1980’s. When we ask the interviewees if they support the introduction of Swahili in the different schools, most of them agree. 85,0% agree with Swahili instruction in primary schools, 79,5% with Swahili in secondary schools and 71,8% supports Swahili instructions at universities. There are hardly any differences between the answers of the interviewees from the different communes.

Private as well as government radio- and television stations have Swahili broadcasts. When we ask our interviewees if they think Swahili broadcasts on television and radio are important, 94,4% indicates they find it important (Nyakabiga 95,3% and Kinindo 90,1%). Among the 166 out of 196 interviewees who at least sometimes follow radio or television broadcasts, 95,8% finds these Swahili broadcasts were important.

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208 Niyonkuru, P.[personal interview 26 December 2007]
209 Havyarimana, B., journalist at Radio Isanganiro [personal interview 8 January 2008]
broadcasts important, against 86,7% among the 30 people who declared never to follow radio or television broadcasts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Radio broadcast</th>
<th>Television broadcast</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Again, there is a difference between Kinindo and Nyakabiga. Where an almost equal number of interviewees in Kinindo and Nyakabiga follow the Swahili broadcasts on television and radio ‘sometimes’, the distributions of frequencies in Nyakabiga shifted to higher values:

Education, radio and television are important factors to influence the population. So when we ask the interviewees if they think the government is promoting Swahili in Burundi, 83,3% answers affirmative. When we ask if they think it is good that the government is involved in the promotion of Swahili, 90,4% affirms. And if Swahili would become one of the official languages in Burundi, 69,3% would agree.

Most of the interviewees (75,2%) indicate that living in Bujumbura without the knowledge of Swahili is indeed possible. When we ask the interviewees if they think the use of Swahili in Bujumbura will decline or increase, most of them (93,1%) indicate that they think it would increase. But when asking if they expect their own use of Swahili to change in the future, only 77,5% expects it to increase, with 16,0% expect no change and 6,5% even expect it to decline. Although mentioned only a few times in the open questions, 91,8% of the interviewees answered in the affirmative on the question if returned refugees play a role in the promotion of Swahili in Burundi. When asked if they think that the general attitude regarding Swahili have changed in Burundi in the last twenty years, 90,5% indicates that the attitude regarding Swahili has become better.
4.4  **Attitudes regarding Swahili speakers**

Attitudes regarding a language are about the feeling that people have about a certain language. They usually entail attitudes to the speaker of a particular language. We have seen in the introduction that the Swahili speakers in Burundi often were referred to as ‘Swahili’ or ‘Waswahili’ (sing. ‘Mswahili’), with the label ‘Swahili’ having a very negative connotation, since this term often is connected to an uncivilized behaviour and outlook on life\(^{210}\), and refers to a marginalized group. One can presume that with a positive change in the attitudes regarding Swahili and the use of Swahili, the attitudes regarding the Swahili speakers also change for the better. In this chapter we will try to find out if this premise is correct.

4.4.1  **The outcomes of the survey**

The first question we asked the interviewees in this section is how they would describe a ‘Mswahili’ in Burundi. They could choose from eight options or write their own idea of what a ‘Mswahili’ is, and they could give multiple answers. Most people (68,1%) say that a Mswahili is a person who speaks Swahili. 66,7% say that a Mswahili is a liar, robber, swindler, or a man who is not reliable, and 59,0% say that a Mswahili is a Muslim. Only 19,3% thinks that a ‘Mswahili’ does not exist in Burundi. The most frequent combinations made were the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chart 24 - correlations</th>
<th>correlation(^{211})</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quelqu’un(e) originaire d’une minorité socio-culturelle et religieuse</td>
<td>Un(e) musulman(e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quelqu’un qui habite dans un quartier où on parle plus le kiswahili</td>
<td>Un(e) musulman(e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quelqu’un qui habite dans un quartier où on parle plus le kiswahili</td>
<td>Quelqu’un(e) qui parle le kiswahili</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Un(e) descendant de l’un des immigrants d’origine Arabe</td>
<td>Un(e) étranger(e) originaire d’autres pays Africains, comme le Congo, Sénégal, Tanzanie, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is a slight difference in the answers of men and women. For women, a Mswahili is mainly a liar, robber, swindler, or a man who is not reliable (70,6%). After that it is someone who speaks Swahili (60,9%) or who is a Muslim (55,4%). Men see this a little different, since most of them say that a Mswahili is someone who speaks Swahili (71,6%), followed by someone who is a a liar, robber, swindler, or a man who is not reliable (63,8%) and a Muslim (59,8%).

\(^{210}\) Arens, W. (1975) p. 431

\(^{211}\) Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level
When we compare the outcomes of the different communes, we see that Kinindo and Nyakabiga both see a Mswahili mainly as someone who is a liar, robber, swindler, or a man who is not reliable (71,9% and 67,2%), secondly as someone who speaks Swahili (68,1% and 57,8%) and thirdly as a Muslim (62,9% and 59,4%). In Buyenzi they think a little differently about this. For them a Mswahili is mainly someone who speaks Swahili (92,9%). The other options are less found to be true, although a Muslim still counts for 46,7% and someone who lives in a Swahili commune for 42,9%. Only 20% of all the interviewees of Bujumbura decline that a Mswahili does not exist in Burundi.

The following questions we asked were questions which all could be answered with ‘true’ or ‘false’. When we ask the interviewees if it is true that the majority of the Muslims in Burundi speak Swahili, 91,5% agrees. But when we ask if the majority of the Swahili speakers are also Muslim, only 74,4% agrees. When we ask if it is true that the majority of the traders (commerçants) in Burundi speak Swahili, 76,6% agrees, but when we ask if the majority of the Swahili speakers are traders, only 50% agrees. The next question was if Swahili is a language of people with little education. 41,5% of the interviewees agrees, but when we ask if Swahili is a language that could be spoken by everyone, regardless where one lives, and regardless profession or religion, 83,5% agrees.

The next step was to find out more about the relation between being a stranger, a Muslim and a trader. Again we had 7 questions which all could be answered with ‘true’ or ‘false’. The first question we asked was if the majority of Muslims in Burundi are strangers/foreigners from African or Asian origin. 44,8% agrees with this statement. When we ask if the majority of strangers/foreigners from African or Asian origin in Burundi are traders, 76,4% agrees. The next question was if the majority of the strangers/foreigners are Muslim. 43,2% agrees with this statement. We also asked if the majority of the Muslims in Burundi are traders. 63,7% answered positively to this question. The other way around, only 34,4% agrees when asked if the majority of traders are Muslim. 28,6% agrees with the statement that the majority of the traders are strangers/foreigners. 20,8% does not agree with any of the statements.

Because it is very difficult to grasp someone’s feelings on a questionnaire, I tried to ask as many people as possible about their opinion of the social position of Swahili speakers in Bujumbura in present times. Many of them acknowledged that with the new government things changed for the better for Swahili speakers. As long as they are also able to speak French - the administrative language - Muslims have similar chances in society, some say. Swahili also seems to be less associated with Muslims than before. As one of my interviewees said: ‘I know that people have this confusion and associate sometimes Swahili speakers to Muslims, but this is changing little by little’. Another interviewee stated that ‘Swahili is not associated with Muslims anymore, but with people from poor neighbourhoods, and people in business.’ They also say that prejudices about Swahiliphones mainly come from people who originate from the interior of the country.
4.5 Interpretation of the results – Bujumbura town

Karangwa wrote in 1995 that ‘[l]e Burundi est monolingue mais les habitants de sa capitale sont au moins bilingues. Le kiswahili y occupe la deuxième place, juste après le kirundi, langue nationale et avant le français et l’anglais, appris essentiellement à l’école.’ In this study, we find that Swahili comes at the third place, after Kirundi and French, but still before English. Since the outcome of this present research indicate that the use of Swahili has grown, one wonders why it seems to have declined compared to Karangwa’s research. Since half of the interviewees in this research lives in Kinindo - a commonly known non-Swahili commune - it could well be that Karangwa met more people with knowledge of Swahili than we did in this present research. It could also be that there is, besides the people that learned to speak Swahili, an even larger number of people who learned French. I do not think this last premise can be true, since there is no more reason to learn French then before.

When we take a close look at the outcomes of the present study, it seems reasonable to claim that the two studies are not really comparable because there have probably been done research in different communities. Although the initial intention was to compare this present study with that of Karangwa, we have to conclude that comparing can be dangerous when the circumstances are not comparable. As a result we will not always be able to compare the outcomes of this research with that of Karangwa’s, but when possible we do refer to it.

Looking at the results above we can conclude that, although having slightly different numbers than Karangwa, Swahili is indeed a very important language in Bujumbura. The competence in Swahili differ enormously between the interviewees, from a little to very well. ‘Little’ and ‘average’ are most common, but there still is a large amount of people who speak it ‘well and ‘very well’. Most interviewees learned Swahili with friends, but also at home it is learned a lot. The market, school or the commune were no important places to learn the language. This is comparable with the outcomes of Karangwa.

Women and men have a different level of competence in Swahili, with women speaking it a little less.212 They are catching up though, less and less hindered by the bias that has existed for a long time, namely that society accepts a man to speak Swahili, but not when a woman speaks it because she would then be seen as a ‘femme libre’213 Like Karangwa said, it looks like ‘ce sont le désir d’ouverture et l’affirmation de soi qui animent les femmes et les jeunes dont nous avons parlé plus haut. Ils ne veulent en aucun cas rester à l’écart de leur environnement, d’une certaine mode linguistique urbaine qui s’affirme et qui tire même vers le snobisme’214

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212 It is possible that men actually speak less Swahili then they admitted to me. Some men might have lied about their knowledge of Swahili because they did not want to admit that they speak it less then I do. Although I don’t think this really influenced the outcomes (after all, in Karangwa’s research women also spoke less Swahili then men), we have to take it into account.
Contrary to the outcomes of Karangwa, we did not find that the level of education is a strong factor in the knowledge of Swahili. The self-estimation of their competence of Swahili of interviewees in secondary school level is best, and that of primary school level the least. Most university students think they speak Swahili average or well. So where Karangwa did not find any difference of competence between interviewees with primary and secondary school level, we did. However, we do have to wonder whether the results of the primary school level students are correct, since we had just a few primary school level interviewees in our survey. Karangwa also mentioned that many of his respondents did not give their level of education. In the present study we had only five people who did not respond to this question.

Most interviewees use Swahili only occasionally, and mainly in their commune or at home. Other places where it is used is at work, in religious subjects, with friends, in the Swahili communes, in school, at commercial centers or during sports. Like Karangwa, we have to conclude that these are signs that Swahili is well established in Bujumbura.

Karangwa noted that the generations between 15 and 40 appropriated more Swahili than their parents. This is about the same trend that we have found in the present research. We have also found that at the moment, the Swahili use is rising again; the younger, the more they speak Swahili. This does not yet have anything to do with the introduction of Swahili lessons in primary schools, since the primary school students in our research do not follow these classes yet.

Almost all interviewees declare that they find it important to have Swahili broadcasts on radio and television. About half of them think it is important because there are many Swahili speakers in Burundi who should also be informed. This is a sign that Rundi take into consideration the Swahili speakers in their country. The other half says they appreciate it because it helps them to learn Swahili; Swahili is seen as a language that can not be ignored in the present Rundi society and the broadcasts help to promote Swahili in the country. When asking the interviewees if they follow Swahili broadcasts themselves, most people indicate they sometimes follow them. Swahili broadcasts on television are slightly more popular than those on the radio. A few people state that Swahili broadcasts are not important. This is, they say, because there are not many people who follow the broadcasts and that little people speak the language. All but one of the people with this opinion live in Kinindo.

Looking at the religious factor in our research, it is evident that in principle all Muslims speak Swahili. This is not surprising, since Swahili is next to Arabic - the language used in the mosques and is the first language used in the ‘muslim quarters’ like Buyenzi and Bwiza. Also all of the few Anglicans in our research speak Swahili. Protestants are quite capable to speak the Swahili language as well. According to many, this is due to the fact that protestant churches are closely connected with other protestant churches in the Swahili speaking region and as a result use Swahili in their services.

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215 See for more information about Swahili in schools: chapter 6.
next to English, French and Kirundi. They also use religious songs in Swahili and the protestant radio channel plays them as well. As a result, protestants are more in contact with the Swahili language than the Catholics, who mainly use French and Kirundi in their services and songs. There are a few Catholic Swahili services though around the centre of town, but they are mainly visited by Congolese Catholics.

It is clear that the inhabitants of Bujumbura feel that the overall attitude regarding Swahili has changed for the better. This has, among other things, to do with the positive attitude that the government has taken regarding Swahili. The government has for example implemented Swahili lessons in school, and Swahili broadcasts can be followed on radio and television. Where Swahili used to be the language of foreigners, thieves and liars and people with an uncivilized behaviour and outlook on life, this view has changed for the better. Many people have started to speak Swahili, even the elite, including some of the ministers. Like one interviewee from Kinindo explained:

C’est mieux maintenant, parce que les personnes les plus respectueuses l’utilisent et cela à travers la télévision et à la radio. Même dans les écoles primaires on a commencé a l’enseigner donc, cela montre que le kiswahili commence à avoir une place importante dans la vie des Barundais comme l’anglais et le français.

The government plays an important role in the promotion of Swahili and this is viewed more and more positively: where less than half of Karangwa’s interviewees supported this idea of government intervention, now almost all interviewees support it. The introduction of Swahili instruction in school is also viewed more positively than before. Where Karangwa found that Swahili instruction would be better accommodated in secondary school, in our research Swahili instruction in primary school was preferred over Swahili instruction in secondary school or in university. The numbers of people who agree with Swahili instruction in school are higher thought than in Karangwa’s research, as was with the number of people who would agree with Swahili as an official language. The overall attitude regarding Swahili seemed to have changed for the better, if we compare the outcomes of these questions with that of Karangwa’s.

Many interviewees mention that more people speak Swahili than before. They think this has to do with the opening of Burundi to and from the wider world due to the war, the entry of Burundi in the East African Communion (EAC) and Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), resulting in more people travelling to Swahili speaking countries or regions in Tanzania, Kenya,

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216 See also Karangwa, J. de D. (1995) p. 234
217 The EAC is the regional intergovernmental organisation of the Republics of Kenya, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania, Republic of Burundi and Republic of Rwanda and aims at widening and deepening cooperation among the partner states in, among others, political, economic and social fields for their mutual benefit.
218 COMESA is a preferential trading area with twenty member states stretching from Libya to Zimbabwe and has as its objective to promote regional economic integration through trade and investment.
Uganda and Congo to find refuge or to do business. On the other hand, people from these countries have also come to do commerce in Burundi. This could also be the reason why English seem to be more spoken then before.

Most interviewees declare that they think the use of Swahili will even increase in the coming years. This group is much larger than in the time of Karangwa’s research, although they were also positive about the increase of the use of Swahili in Burundi. The reasons given for the increase are various, but a large group indicates that Burundi’s entry into the EAC and COMESA will play a big part in this change, together with the introduction of Swahili lessons in school (which was a condition for entry to the EAC). Three other main reasons were 1) the will to learn to speak Swahili, 2) a lot of people, including people from the neighbouring countries, speak Swahili, and 3) Swahili is used a lot in business and commercial centers.

This research shows that Swahili is more appreciated than before, and that Swahili is not necessarily seen as a language of people with little education anymore. This is in line with Karangwa’s outcomes. Islam, town and Swahili are still connected to each other, like in Karangwa’s research, but the present research also shows that more and more people regard Swahili as a language of people from the region, as an international language, instead of being solely a language of Muslims in Bujumbura or other large towns in Burundi. Swahili is also being regarded by many as a language of traders. The profession of trader is in a way connected with speaking Swahili and with strangerhood, but not necessarily with being a Muslim. Muslims are by some seen as strangers, but the majority does not see it that way, which shows that Muslims are regarded more and more as ordinary Rundi.

On the other hand, the concept of Mswahili remains quite negative. A Mswahili is still seen by a large amount of people as a person who is a liar, robber, swindler, or a man who is not reliable. Women are a little more negative than men, and we do not find a large difference of opinion between the different age groups. Another large group of people find that, conform the definition of Captain C.H. Stigand, a Mswahili is someone who speaks Swahili. By some, Muslims are still associated with the word Mswahili. This might be because of the strangerhood status in Burundi of which some still say Muslims have. But conclusively, we might say that it looks like the negative concept of Mswahili, although still being alive, is not used indiscriminately for a whole group anymore, but only for people who prove to be a liar, robber, swindler, or a man who is not reliable, or someone who really behaves like a stranger.

**4.6 Interpretation of the results – the different communes**

It has shown to be interesting to compare the outcomes of the different communes. Kinindo is clearly a commune where Swahili is less integrated than in Nyakabiga and Buyenzi. There are less Swahili speakers in Kinindo, and the ones that do speak it, are slightly less competent in Swahili than the ones in Nyakabiga. The negative feeling towards Swahili is also more clear in this community. As one of my older interviewees said: ‘I really tried to learn Swahili but I could not. In my mind Swahili
was something bad. Swahili is not just a language for me. There is more behind it; a negative image.

Another of the elder interviewees of Kinindo said: ‘In Buyenzi people have no intelligence, no manners and they are uncivilized people. That is why they could not lead Burundi after independance. [...] The young people these days like to speak Swahili just to communicate, but Swahili has no power, not at all.’ This last man though was probably the one most negative about Swahili in Kinindo. But despite his opinion that Swahili is just a language to communicate for young people, it is remarkable that many youngsters of Kinindo mention that they love to speak Swahili.

In Kinindo, women speak less Swahili in proportion to those in Nyakabiga. The inhabitants of the three communes also learned to speak Swahili differently: the inhabitants of Kinindo mainly learned Swahili through friends, those of Buyenzi at home, and those of Nyakabiga almost equal in both situations. Still, there are almost an equal amount of people that do not speak Swahili in Kinindo as well as in Nyakabiga. The use of Swahili also differs per commune: the larger part of the interviewees from Buyenzi use Swahili mainly at home, those of Nyakabiga and Kinindo mainly in their commune. All age groups of Nyakabiga speak better Swahili than those of Kinindo. In both communes though we see a trend which shows that the age group of 41-50 (and in Nyakabiga also the age group of 31-40) speak more Swahili than the people that are younger than that.

In religious matters, protestants in Kinindo speak almost as much Swahili as protestants in Nyakabiga. This is not only due to the fact that protestants use more Swahili in their services and songs, but can also be due to the fact that protestants go to churches outside their own commune more often and thus meet more people from other communes, under which also Swahili speakers. Catholics tend to go more to church in their own commune, or to comparable communes and thus meet less people from different communes. Besides that, Swahili is less used in their services.

Almost all interviewees find it important that there are Swahili broadcasts. They are well followed, as well in Kinindo as in Nyakabiga, although the inhabitants of Nyakabiga follow it more often than in Kinindo.

We can clearly see that young people of Kinindo have become very positive regarding Swahili compared to their parents. They are even more positive than the people of Nyakabiga, who were already used to the language and are thus more indifferent towards it. What is striking, is that some of the parents in Kinindo, whose children have told me that they were beaten by their parents in the past when they spoke Swahili, now state that they would react indifferent or even positive when their children would speak Swahili.

The concept of Mswahili in Kinindo and Nyakabiga is regarded more negative when we compare it with the opinion of the people living in Buyenzi. Where a Mswahili in Kinindo and Nyakabiga is either a Muslim, someone who speaks Swahili or someone who is a liar, robber,
swindler, or not reliable, in Buyenzi it is mainly someone who speaks Swahili. Being a Muslim or living in a Swahili commune is true as well for some, but is clearly less typical.

Conclusive we can say that the attitude regarding the Swahili language have changed for the better in the last decades. People these days speak more and more Swahili and are also more interested in the language. ‘Speaking Swahili is a sign of openness’, many interviewees say now. Also Muslims seem to be more accepted as fellow-citizens than before. It is said that these days they are as accepted as any other person and have similar chances in society.

We have seen in this chapter that many factors have played a role in the changes that have taken place in Bujumbura regarding the attitude regarding Swahili and its speakers. In the next chapter I will go deeper into these factors.
5. Linguistic and social change in Burundi

Due to many factors, with the war often as an underlying cause, Swahili in Burundi has begun a slow comeback. Burundi has for a long time been engaged in a civil war marked by ethnic violence, which included fighting between the Tutsi-dominated army and armed Hutu rebel groups. The fighting caused widespread civilian casualties. Although the war did not directly influence the situation of the Swahili speakers in Burundi, or the appreciation of the language itself, indirectly there have been many changes in the country due to the war. Changes that have had a positive effect on the appreciation of the Swahili language and on its speakers.

In this chapter we go deeper into the changes that have taken place in Burundi lately and we will take a closer look at the contributing factors for change in Burundi concerning the Swahili language and its speakers.

5.1 Muslims, Hutu and Tutsi during the civil war

In many ways Burundi’s history is similar and connected with that of Rwanda. Reason for many to refer to Burundi and neighbouring Rwanda as being (non identical) twins221. In Rwanda, as in Burundi, there has been a civil war due to clashing Hutu and Tutsi groups and, important for our focus, Muslims in Rwanda, although more than in Burundi, were also a socially marginal people. Lianne Belt222 has shown that the position of (Swahili speaking) Muslims in Rwandan society have changed for the better after the latest war of 1994. Muslim communities played an essential and uncommon role during the genocide; for the most part Muslims were not participants or even complicit in the genocide and it is said that they provided safe havens for both Tutsis and Hutus. The main reason for them to abstain from joining the genocide was because of their strong sense of community identification reinforced by their marginal status in society. Also links between Muslims and the state were not strong. It is said that “the provision of safe havens during the genocide has changed the national view of Muslims who are now considered as Rwandan as everyone else.”223 The new government gave this view about Muslims an extra boost by offering them more chances in society. Some Rundi interviewees have mentioned that about the same applied to the Rundi Muslims during the war; people in Buyenzi are said not to have participated fully in the ethnic rivalries, and

221 Rwanda and Burundi are often referred to as twin countries because of the similarities in size, historical heritage, cultural and demographic features. Some do not agree with this comparison though, see for example: The economist (1994) Burundi: Not a twin (Hutu-Tutsi relations compared to Rwanda), The Economist(US) (August 20)
according to Herisse Rockfeler ‘Buyenzi is lauded for their contributions to maintaining peace’. Also Paul Grohma writes about ‘Muslims opening their doors to shelter those who were running for their lives’ during war, with as a result a ‘growing number of new Muslims’. He said that ‘Muslim identity became a new horizon for many who were exhausted of being persecuted due to their Hutu or Tutsi origin’. This might have had the same effect as in Rwanda, namely that the negative view that people had about Muslims have changed for the better, although this change is much clearer in Rwanda.

Although Swahili in Burundi is usually referred to as the language of Muslims or foreigners (mainly Tanzanian these days), some people say that ethnicity also plays a role in language attitude. Pritesh, an Indian living in Burundi since 1962, was the first of my interviewees who mentioned that the attitude towards Swahili also has an ethnic background. He said that Kirundi was seen as a language of the Tutsi. He also said that Buyenzi was seen as a place of Hutu. One can conclude from this that the Hutu are regarded as being Swahili speakers, and Tutsi to be Kirundi speakers. Hassan, a Muslim living in Buyenzi, also mentioned something about ethnicity, by stating that people of Buyenzi do not like to speak the French language. He said that there are many Hutu in Buyenzi and that French is the language of Tutsi. According to him, people in Buyenzi prefer to learn English over French, as it also helps them in their businesses with Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. Combining the statements of these two people, it is possible that French and Kirundi are associated with Tutsi, and Swahili with Hutu. However, since only two of my interviewees mentioned something about the combination of ethnicity and language, it is not something I would like to bring as a fact, rather as something new to do research on. Nevertheless, if there is a truth in the above, the history behind it could probably be found in the situation after World War II, when Rundi, predominantly Tutsi - who were allowed to study at the Groupe Scolaire d’Astrida - came to live in Bujumbura to work for the Belgian administration. These Rundi newcomers spoke French and Kirundi, while the rest was still speaking Swahili. As such, an important Swahili (stranger)-Rundi (Tutsi) split could have been made.

Initially Swahilis, Hutu and Tutsi lived relatively scattered in town. However when the civil war that started in 1993 reached Bujumbura, Hutu and Tutsi had the tendency to move to predominantly Hutu or Tutsi communes. Due to these movements, youth from different communes came in contact with each other and exchanged information and strategies for protection. Non-Swahili speaking youth learned Swahili due to these movements and meetings. Mworoha also mentioned that speaking Swahili was a way of survival during the war. To be able to speak Swahili meant that

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227 Pritesh [personal interview 8 January 2008]
228 Hassan [personal interview December 2007]
229 IRB (2002)
230 Niyonkuru, P.[personal interview 26 December 2007]
you were seen as a bad-boy. And as another of my interviewees said: ‘You had to be friends with Swahili speakers in order not to be a fool and compete with [the bad-boys]: it was necessary to speak ‘slang’ to be able to live in the ghetto.’ To have knowledge of Swahili had become important again for the youth.

5.2 Former refugees

In Burundi as well as in Rwanda, the recent wars and the subsequent upheavals have paradoxically increased the knowledge and use of Swahili in those countries. This is partly because the refugees who fled to neighbouring countries, acquired Swahili in the process. Swahili is widely used in the refugee camps, especially by children, and these refugees are now coming back armed with the language. Moreover, the new regime in Burundi is made up largely of former refugees, people who joined the rebellion, often outside Burundi, or have just lived in a Swahili speaking country due to the war, and are therefore fluent Swahili speakers. They are thus more disposed towards the promotion of Swahili in Burundi. Politicians like Hussein Radjabu (party chairman of CNDD-FDD until February 2007), Dr Yves Sahinguvu (first vice president), Saïdi Kibeya (Minister of Education and Scientific Research) and Hafsa Mossi (Minister of Information, Communication, Relations with Parliament, and Government Spokesman) speak Swahili, just as president Pierre Nkurunzia, who was the first president speaking Swahili. One of my interviewees actually said: ‘People accept Swahili now because even the new president speaks it. In Africa one follows the opinion of the president, so when he thinks Swahili is important, it is indeed important.’

5.3 Muslims in the new regime

In 2004, ‘after a lengthy period of turmoil and disruption, new institutional settings were put in place [in Burundi]. It were mainly Tutsi political parties, grouped around UPRONA, Hutu political

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231 Teddy [personal interview 12 January 2008]
233 See for example: UNESCO (2006) Transmitting Traditional Knowledge in Refugee Camps for the Prevention of Socio-Cultural Obstacles to a Sustainable Reintegration of Returnees, UNESCO Research Mission Report, Kanembwa Camp (Kibondo district, Kigoma region) and Burundi (Ruyigi region) July-September 2006, p.15
234 Ndayisenga, A.[personal interview 25 July 2007]
parties, grouped around FRODEBU, and the strongest rebel movement, CNDD-FDD, who negotiated post-war Burundi.

Similarly to during Burundi’s independence struggle, there was another significant rise of Muslim involvement in politics, with good results. As we have seen in chapter 5.2, many present-day politicians speak Swahili. Many of them are also Muslim. According to Geert Castryck, ‘for the first time in Burundian history Islam was treated as an integral part of society instead of a marginal or repulsive appendix to it. A case in point was the decision to turn *Eid ul-Fitr*, the celebration that marks the end of the Ramadan, into an official holiday’, and says that ‘this policy can be seen as either openness or favouritism towards Muslims’. Castryck witnesses a similar progression of Muslims in socio-political life.

But Castryck also worries about the future position of Muslims in Burundi. He says that it looks like the opening towards Muslims is already drawing to a close again. The imprisonment of the Muslim former CNDD-FDD party chairman Hussein Radjabu is a great example here.237 Also the objections of the rival mother party of CNDD-FDD, CNDD, about granting voting rights to “Congolese citizens” and “Arabs” are important; members of the parliament were alleged relatives to these groups and the ‘importance attached to it echo the denial of Burundian citizenship to Muslims in 1961’ and is an ‘unaltered recurrence of the denial that a community of outsiders at the outskirts of Burundi can ever become full-fledged Burundians’. Castryck thinks that the position of Muslims in Rundi society will stop improving again because of this, as it has done before after independence:

> ‘[a]lthough the socio-political situation in Burundi and the surrounding region is clearly different from the one in the 1960’s, we now witnessed a similar progression of Muslims in socio-political life. They sprout at the turning point in an existential transition and get rebuffed by the time the country returns to normalcy. It goes pair with an opening up and shutting off of Burundian politics.’

Whether his fear will be real can only be told in a few years.

5.4 Regionalisation

Burundi was, with Rwanda, in the past more oriented to the Francophone west. Burundi, Rwanda and Congo were members of the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries (CEPGL), but due to political crisis within and between them, both Rwanda and Burundi focussed their policies for regional integration more and more to the Swahili speaking east, also because

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236 Castryck, G. (2007) p. 8
238 Castryck, G. (2007) p.10
Tanzania was the mediator between the countries. After the genocide in Rwanda in 1994, when Congo as well as the French had become enemies, Rwanda applied for membership of the EAC; the enemy was situated in the west, so it had to look east for safety. The Burundi government also started to look more to the east. Several embargo’s for Burundi had been forced on them by Tanzania, and they realized that it was better to be friends with the eastern region so that they should no longer enact embargo’s. Next to that, Mombasa, Dar es Salaam and Nairobi became very important for the in- and export of the country, since the results of in- and export from Congo were disappointing. So where Rundi were at first west-oriented, they now start saying that, looking at geography, trade and culture, Burundi has always belonged to the east. Even a dialect of their language Kirundi is spoken in Tanzania and Uganda. Ndayiziga mentions that not many Rundi are aware of the fact that Burundi has already entered the EAC because at the period of entrance, the Burundi government was in crisis and no attention was given to this new step in the history of Burundi. The actual proceedings were officially started at the 10th of December 2007, 5 months after the entry. My research though showed that many Rundi are indeed aware of the fact that Burundi has entered the EAC, since many of the interviewees have referred to this. Jeremy Ndayiziga also says that ‘Burundi’s membership of the EAC will cause a big change for Rundi, just as big as after independence’. He thinks that it helps to open up Burundi, since ‘many Rundi think that Burundi is situated on an island and do not realize that they are part of a bigger world’.

While entering the EAC, Burundi has accepted the EAC treaties as they were, with English as the working language and Swahili as the lingua franca. Especially Nyerere (Tanzania) and Musevini (Uganda) are promoters of the African language and have the objective to make Swahili the first, and English the second working language within the EAC. This also explains another condition for Rwanda and Burundi to enter the EAC: the implementation of Swahili instruction in schools.

5.5 Swahili education

As we have seen before, Swahili instruction in schools had stopped after Burundi’s independence. Swahili was less spoken in the city and was replaced by Kirundi and French. In 2005 it was decided though that Swahili would be introduced again.

According to Victoire Nahimana, general director of the bureau of pedagogy in Burundi, the Burundi government had three main reasons to implement Swahili education in schools from the school year of 2006-2007. The first reason was geo-political. All of Burundi’s neighbours use Swahili, and with the introduction of Swahili in schools, Burundi wanted to be more integrated in the region, especially economically. Secondly, Swahili had been recognised by the African Union (AU) as a
linking language between several states and thirdly, it was a condition for Burundi and Rwanda to enter the EAC. She also mentioned the present appreciation of African languages. After gaining independence, many African countries, in the search for national unity, selected one language (generally the former colonial language) to be used in government and education. In recent years, African countries have become increasingly aware of the importance of linguistic diversity, with the result that language policies that are being developed nowadays are mostly aimed at multilingualism. This also gave chances for Swahili.

The introduction of Swahili in schools did not face any real opposition in Burundi, Nahimana says. For years there had been a discussion about the implementation of English in primary schools, and Swahili was just annexed to this implementation, for Burundi to be able to enter the EAC. It was a surprise for the government, that the opposition they did receive due to the introduction of Swahili in schools came from the towns, while they had expected opposition from the country side. The opposition in towns can be explained through the fact that elite parents fear that Swahili would take over the importance of French, the language that they and their children master so well. The fear of losing their capital is comparable with the fear that worried the students in India who mastered English so well, as we saw in chapter one.

At the moment children in government schools have to learn four languages: English and Swahili are taught 60 minutes per week in the first four years of primary school. The lessons are only oral lessons, in the last two years they are also written, three times 45 minutes. French is given 240 minutes per week, and the rest of the lessons are in Kirundi. According to bishop Adrien Ntabona, linguist in the university of Bujumbura, the introduction of English and Swahili is one bridge too far for students who already struggle to learn their own language including French. ‘Those four languages together are causing a linguistic fog in the heads of the children and at the end they know none of them’, he warned in 2006.245

Unfortunately there are more problems with the implementation of Swahili in public schools. Teachers have not really been trained in linguistics, which means that they can have problems with pronunciations, vocabulary, grammar, etc. Most of the problems are with English, since Swahili is already more familiar and has the same linguistic roots as Kirundi. A problem with Swahili though is that the teachers who do already speak Swahili, speak the local dialect instead of the Swahili sanifu (the ‘proper’ Swahili from Tanzania). The government tried to solve these problems by the introduction of a training for teachers. During the summer vacation teachers are trained for one month to teach Swahili and English. Since the level of Swahili they have to teach is not that high yet, the government thinks that a training of one month will do, Nahimana says. A small organisation based in

Bukenzi, the Baraza la Lugha ya Kiswahili Burundi (BALUKIBU)\textsuperscript{246} (Burundi Swahili council) established in 2003, is very concerned with Swahili in Burundi and does not agree with Nahimana. They say that the Swahili level of Burundi teachers is not good enough and they wonder why the government does not employ for example former refugees who have lived in Tanzania and thus speak the Swahili \textit{sanifu} well. They have asked the government to involve BALUKIBU in the training of teachers, as for now without any result. Also Ndayiziga mentions that he thinks it would be better if first language speakers of Swahili would give the Swahili lessons. To let teachers teach Swahili after a course of just several weeks is absurd according to him.

Other problems the schools face have indirectly to do with the war: there are financial problems, resulting in a lack of books for students, and a lack of dictionaries available in the country. At Ecole Primaire de Kinanira III they recognise these problems: although they have had a training, teachers do not feel confident enough teaching Swahili, and because of a lack of books, three children have to share one Swahili instruction book.

Private primary schools, comprising about half of all primary schools in Bujumbura, do not always have Swahili in their curriculum. A staff member of Arc-en-ciel, a private primary school in Rohero, declared that they do not teach Swahili in their school because all parents speak Kirundi. As a result, Swahili is not important for them, but there might be a chance that they will start teaching Swahili next year. They do have English classes though. Also New School in Kinanira III does not offer Swahili classes to their pupils. They also do not have plans to teach it and prefer to continue with their program of French and English. The International school in Kinanira III also does not have Swahili in its curriculum yet, but is considering to add it and is waiting for the parents to agree. They have not decided which program (Oxford, Cambridge, government program, etc.) they want to use yet, but they realize that if the government wants to make Swahili an official subject they have to follow. The entrance of Burundi to the EAC made them consider to give Swahili instruction. Three countries already speak Swahili they say, and they have to follow up. In another private primary school, Seraphin in Kinindo, Swahili is already part of the curriculum. In this school the pupils use the government program and the lessons are given by teachers who already knew the language well enough to teach it. According to the staff the children love the Swahili lessons – even more than English - because it is the language they hear on the streets, radio and television, and they can actually use it outside school as well. The staff says that the parents have no objections to the Swahili lessons. As we can see, private primary schools all have their own reasons to give or not to give Swahili instruction, but even though they do not yet give the Swahili instruction, many of them are considering it and will probably introduce Swahili lessons in school in the near future.

\textsuperscript{246} BALUKIBU has connections with Baraza la Kiswahili la Zanzibar (BAKIZA) and the Tanzanian Baraza la Kiswahili la Taifa (BAKITA)
In public secondary schools Swahili lessons are not given yet. According to Nahimana, there will first be a review about the existing program, and after that the decision will be made on how to implement Swahili in secondary schools.

Public universities will follow the decision of the minister of education. In the university of Burundi Swahili was already introduced in the academic year of 1976-1977 (at the same time with Russian and Arabic) in the Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines, Département des Langues et Litératures Africaines. At this moment Swahili is a compulsory course here for 90 hours during the whole course. Also at the Département des Langues et Litératures Françaises it is compulsory for 45 hours and optional for another 45 hours and at the Département des Langues et Litératures Anglais 45 hours optional. Private universities decide themselves, but often offer small Swahili courses. The Swahili offered is usually orientated towards the chosen field. Université du Lac for example has Swahili courses of 45 hours at the Faculty of Law, the Faculty of Economics & International Trade and at the Faculty of Social, Political and Administrative science. Université Lumière only has Swahili at the Faculty of Law (60 hours) and Université du Lac Tanganyika has two years of Swahili at the Faculty of Communication, Political Science and Administration, at the Faculty of Economics and the Faculty of Law. What we can conclude from this information is that Swahili courses at universities in Burundi are mainly given at international oriented studies.

But also outside the official education system Swahili lessons are offered, although very limited. The French Cultural Centre (CCF) for example offers Swahili courses, which are primarily followed by expats and Congolese.

5.6 Swahili on radio and television

As in many sub-Saharan countries, Burundi has many radio stations. Radio use in sub-Saharan Africa is high since low literacy levels and poor circulation make dependence on newspapers negligible, and the cost of purchasing a television is prohibitive to many in this region.247

Radio Television National du Burundi (RTNB), the government controlled station, started with radio broadcasting in 1959. Their broadcasts were in three languages: Kirundi, French and Swahili. In present days there are two frequencies for RTNB: one is used for Kirundi broadcasts, and the other for broadcasts in French (50%), English (40%) and Swahili (10%). This last multilingual channel mainly broadcasts news, but also deals with economics, health, social issues, sports, entertainment and politics. According to Grégoire Nijinbere248, journalist at RTNB, the main subjects of this multilingual channel are the same as those on the Kirundi channel, but there is a target group so some subjects are adapted in order to reach the target group well. The target group for the multilingual

248 Nijinbere, G., journalist at RTNB [personal interview 25 September 2007]
channel are people in towns, people in the border area with Tanzania, business people, Muslims, and people from other Swahili speaking countries. Although the two channels deal with the same subjects in essence, there is a small difference. For example, when there is a subject about cows, agriculture or climate change, this subject will be given more attention on the Kirundi channel, since people in towns care less about these subjects than villagers. The multilingual channel goes deeper into subjects like the EAC and COMESA, diplomatic relations with neighbouring countries, trade, news about the cities, etc.

RTNB Television started in 1984 and broadcasted in Kirundi, French and English. Later Swahili was added. According to Nijinbere the broadcasts in Swahili and English were cancelled in the beginning of the 1990’s without any official explanation from the government, but had to do with mismanagement because of the war. Many people shifted jobs and staff that left were not replaced with new staff. As a result, in the end there were not enough people left for the department responsible for the Swahili broadcasts. The same accounted for the English department. In 2005 the government restarted the initiative for broadcasts in English and Swahili incited by the forthcoming entry into the EAC and the Swahili speaking officials in Burundi (Muslims, and people from former armed groups who had been based in Tanzania). Since Swahili has been given more importance from the Burundi government, RTNB urges politicians to speak Swahili as well while interviewed. Many politicians actually try their best and do the interview first in Kirundi, than in French and again in Swahili.

Beginning in 1996 Radio Umwizero (“Hope”) began broadcasting as a private station, funded by the European Union, with the aim of fostering peace and reconciliation in the country.\(^{249}\) The station later became Radio Bonesha, covering Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania and Congo. From the first year Swahili was as one of the languages used. In 2007 about 30% of the broadcasts was in Swahili. Radio Bonesha FM started in 2008 to re-broadcast BBC programmes across the country in Kinyarwanda, Kirundi and Swahili. Corneille Nibaruka, Director of Bonesha FM, said that it helps them “to bring together people from Burundi and the East Africa Community through a variety of rich programmes in Kirundi and Swahili, with the aim of effectively contributing to the integration of Burundi into that community.”\(^{250}\)

Radio Publique Africaine (RPA), a private radio station in Burundi, started broadcasting on March 2001. Like other private radio stations, it faced many problems because of its critics on the government. According to Jean-Marie Vianney Hicuburundi, deputy director of the RPA, the RPA has broadcasted Swahili news from the start, and extended the Swahili programs after more Swahili speakers could be employed. At this moment the radio broadcasts in Kirundi (33%), French (33%) and Swahili (33%). The radio station uses as a standard the Swahili sanifu, in order to help the people to correct their Swahili. The reason behind the Swahili broadcasts of RPA, Hicuburundi says, is that


more and more people in Burundi speak Swahili, and many Rundi children have grown up in
neighbouring Swahili speaking countries due to the war, with the result that they speak Swahili and do
not or hardly understand Kirundi or French. He says that many people initially were against the use of
Swahili on the radio, but got used to it at the end. They now even realize that it could be useful for
them, especially for business.

The private radio station Radio Isanganiro started broadcasting in 2002. It is essentially funded
by an American NGO Search for Common Ground operating in Burundi since 1995 and was created
in the realm of conflict resolution through radio; it wants to be an archetype of reconciliation through
its various programmes and works for the benefit of everyone in Burundi’s society. Since 2003 its
broadcasts are available throughout the whole country. They also work together with radio stations in
Congo and Rwanda. Initially starting with broadcasts in Kirundi and French, the radio station also
introduced Swahili broadcasts several months after its foundation. At the moment 15% of its
broadcastings are in Swahili (1 hour a day), with some of the programs coming from their partners in
Congo. There is no Swahili news yet, but they are thinking about the possibility of it. There are no
broadcasts in English.

Radio Renaissance started broadcasting in 2003 with the aim to re-establish trust between
Rundi, and to promote dialogue and the culture of peace.251 The different programmes and debates are
mainly broadcasted in French and Kirundi. Two programs are broadcasted in Swahili. Recently
Renaissance also started broadcasts on television, but does not have broadcasts in Swahili yet. They
are planning to in the future.

We see that different radio stations give a different value to the use of Swahili in their
programming. But all of them realize that Swahili is a language to consider. With their broadcasts in
Swahili, people with no Swahili knowledge can become familiar with the language, and people who
already speak Swahili can be more involved in society.

5.7 Swahili and religion

Swahili is penetrating more and more in Burundi churches, especially in protestant churches.
Many protestant pastors come from America and the United Kingdom. These people initially worked
in the Swahili speaking former British colonies. Now they travel to Burundi and other countries more
frequently, taking with them Swahili songs from Tanzania and Kenya and a positive attitude regarding
Swahili. As a result many of the guest pastors in Burundi’s protestant churches speak Swahili. Their
message is translated for the people who do not speak this language.

Protestant churches have many young attendants. They have less aversion against Swahili
than the elder and love the religious Swahili songs. According to one of the interviewees, these songs

September-October 2003, http://www.coe.int/t/e/north-
south_centre/resources_centre/1_the_interdependent/113.asp (accessed 16 November 2008)
help people to learn Swahili, because before singing the songs, the meaning is explained. Some people write them down and learn Swahili this way. It is said that Swahili songs are appreciated a lot, because they are thought to have a deeper meaning than Kirundi religious songs. They sound better and the songs make more sense. On the religious radio stations Swahili songs are played quite often as well. Swahili cassettes with religious songs from Tanzania are also sold a lot²⁵², together with the taarab cassettes from Tanzania.

Protestant churches that use Swahili in their services can be found in almost all communes, but especially in Chibitoke and Kinama, because many Congolese refugees have settled here, together with other foreigners like Tanzanians. Also in Ngagara they are to be found. In the Zion temple for example we can find services in Swahili and Kirundi, with religious songs in all languages. In Bon Berger the services are given in French and Kirundi, translated simultaneously, but if someone only speaks Swahili, there is always someone to translate. Songs are in all languages, also in Swahili. Chez David (Eglise Vivant) in Jabe commune has simultaneous services in Kirundi and Swahili, because it has many inhabitants from Congo and Tanzania. But if needed someone can translate in French. Their songs are in all languages, including Swahili. El Shaddai in the centre offers services in Kirundi and French, but has Swahili translators if needed. Like the other churches, their songs are in all languages, including Swahili. It is clear that every church can choose the languages they think will serve their clientele best, and although they do not always use Swahili in their services, there are always people around who are willing to translate.

Catholic churches mainly use Kirundi and French in their services. There are hardly any churches with Swahili services every day.²⁵³ Some, like Saint Michel in Bwiza, Saint Augustin in Buyenzi and Saint Sauver in Nyakabiga offer a Swahili service once a week. Others use Swahili only during the songs of praise, like Saint Joseph in Ngagara and Esprit de Sagesse in Mutanga Sud. Catholic churches usually offer services in French and Kirundi, but do have Swahili translators if necessary.

In mosques Swahili is always used. Preaching is in Arabic, and is translated into Swahili. Also Qurans are in Arabic, with a translation in Swahili. There is no Quran in Arabic with a translation in Kirundi, although there are rumours that a Kirundi translation is in preparation or has recently been published.

5.8 The importance of Bongo flava

Swahili in Burundi has also become popular through music. While spending a day in Bujumbura, one can hardly avoid hearing Swahili through Bongo flava: the East African Hiphop.²⁵⁴

²⁵² Papa Richie [personal interview 1 December 2007]
²⁵³ One exception is said to be Minevam, a Catholic church in the centre of town which would offer Swahili services with translations in Kirundi. I am not sure if this is correct though.
**Bongo** means brain intelligence in Swahili, but also is the street word for Tanzania’s Dar es Salaam. Bongo flava is a HipHop style that is said to have originated in the early 1990’s, when Saleh Jabir, inspired by the American HipHop scene, started rapping in Swahili. Since then, Bongo flava has developed rapidly, and the beats of Bongo flava changed slowly from the original sound of American HipHop to beats that were more and more ‘africanised’. The Swahili lyrics and phrases tackle the usual East African hip-hop subjects like poverty, ambition, success, money, HIV and AIDS, education and experiences we can all relate to such as love, education, beauty or loneliness.

Bongo flava has become the best selling music in East Africa. As Arthur Kitakufe wrote: ‘Although Bongo flava is purely a Tanzanian phenomenon, its use of Swahili and its strong roots in East Africa means that the music translates across borders. Bongo flava now has a growing fan base throughout the East African region.’ Artists from Kenya and Uganda have also become famous through Bongo flava and even in Burundi some artists, mainly originating from Bujumbura and Gitega, picked up this music style as well. Famous Bongo flava artists in Burundi are for example Big Fariouz and Lolilo.

As mentioned before, one can hardly avoid hearing Swahili through Bongo flava when spending a day in Bujumbura. Especially in the city center, bars, disco’s and minibusses, hearing Bongo flava is unavoidable. Bongo flava artists from Burundi, Tanzania and Kenya perform regularly in Bujumbura. Their songs are played on the radio as well. As a result, young people, hearing the songs every day, try to learn the lyrics by heart and have discussions about the meaning. In this way, they learn Swahili without a big effort and as such, Bongo flava is an important reason for young people to become interested in Swahili.

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Concluding chapter

By using the history of Swahili and its speakers in Bujumbura, I tried to show how linguistic features and social arrangements can interrelate, and how political decisions can influence them. To do this, I had to identify changing attitudes in Bujumbura regarding the Swahili language and regarding its speakers in Bujumbura during time, and at the same time identify the main factors for these changes.

**Highlights of the history of Swahili and its speakers in Bujumbura**

In this thesis we have seen that the position of the Swahili language and its speakers in Bujumbura has changed several times during history. Focusing solely on social arrangements, we see that Africans, Indians and Arabs who met in Bujumbura initially did not form a real community. After the arrival of the Germans, these immigrants, either merchants or employed by the German administration in either its civil or military guise, adopted through simple day-to-day contact defining characters of the Swahili from the East coast, including the Swahili language, Islamic architecture, Islamic clothing, and Islam itself.

Under Belgian rule, newcomers drawn from the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi entered Bujumbura. They were easily accepted in the Swahili community and thus often converted to Islam. Later, the Belgian administration created separate residences for Christians and traditionalists, and disfavored the Muslim Swahili group in several ways. Swahilis had to pay higher taxes and were denied access to the training of skills demanded by the European administration and companies. As a result, the Swahilis suffered increasing economic and educational isolation. Later, the Swahilis were moved to a separate commune: Buyenzi, ‘village des Swahilis’. Swahilis by then were often poorly trained, regularly changed jobs, and were no longer the ‘right arm’ of the administration: they had been supplanted as the focal point of Bujumbura’s African community, and were given no chances to integrate in Burundian society. They were increasingly regarded as being strangers because they did not originate from the interior, and they adhered to another religion than the one that was desirable. The Swahilis as a result increasingly formed a proper community based on occupation, religion and language. As a reaction to this, a negative image of the Swahilis had started to arise and spread through the population, with the term Swahili becoming a synonym for a thug, liar, thieve and a perfidious, uneducated person, lacking ‘social education’ as well.

During independence, the Swahili community revived for a short while. But soon after independence was achieved, they returned to the informal sector again; back to their professions as tradesmen or *fundi*. They withdrew from participating in the social and political sphere and secluded

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258 *A fundi* in Swahili is translated as a craftsman. A *fundi* can be an carpenter, mechanic, plumber, etc.; professions which could be learned without formal instruction.
themselves from public life, working and living in separate residential areas. The number of Swahilis in town also declined since some left for their home countries and others settled down in the smaller urban areas in Burundi. But as we have seen in the former chapters, the social position of Swahiliphones and Muslims have become better these days. All inhabitants of Burundi, regardless of religion or background, are accepted in schools again\textsuperscript{259}, with the result that Muslims have more opportunities to participate in social and political life, which they do; Muslims can be found in all spheres of life now, sometimes even taking prominent places, and there are indications, that presently there is a difference between being a Swahili, a Muslim or a Swahiliphone. I will elaborate on this a little further on. Muslims are also regarded as being less marginal than before, although Castryck points out that he thinks that the position of Muslims in society have recently stopped improving.

When we focus on linguistic features, we also see that the Swahili language in Burundi has had different statuses during history. We have seen that when the Swahili language entered Bujumbura, it was a language that united people from practically every ethnic group in East and Central Africa, as well as Asia. It was used as the lingua franca in Bujumbura. The Germans, who based themselves in Bujumbura around 1900, even adopted the language as the official language of German East Africa. It was also the language of instruction in schools. Being able to speak Swahili was a guarantee for employment as secretaries with the government or with traders. Swahili thus became completely instituted in Bujumbura.

When Belgium received the mandate over Ruanda-Urundi they initially preserved the linguistic policy of the Germans. Socially, the ignorance of Swahili was totally inconceivable and caused discrimination. But from the end of the 1920’s, when the Catholic Church took over almost all the educational responsibilities, language instruction slowly changed to French. Whereas before the knowledge of Swahili had been a guarantee for good employment, now it was French. Not everyone though was allowed entrance to Catholic mission schools to learn this language, and as such, Swahili started to become the language of the unskilled, mainly foreign and Muslim people; the ‘Swahilis’.

Even after independence, Swahili was given no place in the linguistic curriculum of Burundi. Only after the establishment of the Second Burundian Republic the Burundi government slowly started to make an effort promoting Swahili. However, due to various reasons, Swahili recently became more appreciated than before. The civil war that had started in 1993 is one of the main reasons for this. Especially in the last few years, returning refugees, the entrance to COMESA and the EAC, the re-entrance of Muslims in political life, the re-introduction of Swahili in government schools, the increasing use of Swahili at radio and television, the use of Swahili in (mainly protestant) churches and the popularity of Bongo flava, etc.; all these little changes influenced each other and have had

\textsuperscript{259} After world war II this already changed slightly: in 1946 a primary school in Buyenzi, \textit{Jumuiyya islimiyya}, was opened, combining religious and modern education. From 1953 secondary vocational education was available for Muslims. See: Castryck, G. (2006) pp. 139,140
their influences on the use and appreciation of the language. It seems that the Swahili language is in an upward spiral.

Looking at the above, it is clear that the status of the Swahili language in Bujumbura coincided with the status of Swahilis as a group. In the time that Swahilis held important positions in Bujumbura, Swahili was also an important language. But when the position of Swahilis became marginalized, the popularity of the language also declined, up to the point that the language became a synonym for these marginalized people. In the last few years, the position of Swahilis in society rised again, together with the language.

When we look at the notion of ‘strangerhood’, we see that in different times, different people were regarded as ‘strangers’ in Bujumbura. Initially, Bujumbura was inhabited by people who did not originate there. Because Africans, Asians and Arabs were the first to settle in Bujumbura, and because under colonial rule, social and economic conditions were created that placed them on a lateral position in respect to the Rundi, it was the Rundi who were regarded as strangers. Not only because they originated from the interior, but also because they did not speak the language that was in common use in Bujumbura; they were also stratified along lines of language competence.

This eventually changed during Belgian rule. Their politics of divide and conquer, and their increasing preference to work with the indigenous population, caused Swahilis, instead of the Rundi, to become the strangers in society. The stratification politics of the government caused Swahilis to be stratified by society itself, but they were also stratified along lines of language competence due to the increasing importance given to the French language, and the exclusion of Muslims from the necessary education. The tendency to feel prejudiced against Swahili and its speakers was approved by governmental authorities and educationists. Swahilis reacted to this with the withdrawal from participation in the social and political sphere, and chose to seclude themselves from public life, working and living in separate residential areas, and as such being excellent strangers.

The future of Swahili, Swahili speakers, Waswahili and Muslims in Bujumbura

We have seen that the position of the Swahili language and its speakers in Bujumbura has changed several times during history. The linguistic features and the social arrangements have been interrelated for more than a century, influenced by political decisions. An increasing number of Rundi these days regard Swahili as a language of people from the region, as an international language, instead of being solely a language of strangers in Bujumbura or in other large towns in Burundi. Nowadays, it is possible for anyone in Bujumbura to speak Swahili. So where in the past Muslims and Swahili speakers used to be one and the same group (Swahilis or Waswahili) there seems to be a difference in present times. Being a Swahili speaker in Bujumbura currently does not necessarily mean that one is also a Muslim or a foreigner; a Mswahili. The Swahili language and the Swahili group seem to be in the process of being disconnected from each other. This explains why the inhabitants of
Bujumbura are now able to appreciate the Swahili language. It also explains why the word ‘Mswahili’ has gotten a slightly different meaning in Bujumbura. In the past, the combination of being a Muslim, speaking Swahili and living in a Swahili speaking commune, made one automatically a Mswahili. These days, a Mswahili can still be someone who speaks Swahili, who is a low educated and not to be trusted, or sometimes even a Muslim, but the connection between them is less obvious. It also refers less to a marginalized group, or to strangers as it did before.

In conclusion, I would like to return to Castryck, who fears that Muslims, like before, will lose their influence in social and political life after the country shuts itself off again. What could be true about this? In a way, he could be right. We have seen that usually the status of the Swahili language changed along with the status of the Swahilis, i.e. the Muslims and/or strangers in Bujumbura. But now that the connection between the language and the people seems to be slowly disappearing, Muslims might not profit from the rising status of the Swahili language, and could indeed again be treated as strangers when their temporary ‘power to attract’ is not necessary anymore and the country shuts itself off like before. Until now there are no clear indications that this might be the case, but the future will tell.

Castryck puts forward the possibility that the connection between language and social status will concern ‘another social status’, i.e. the ‘cosmopolitical’, on East Africa oriented social status, instead of the social status of a marginal group in society of strangers and Muslims. If this would happen, the fascinating thing is that these strangers/Muslims/Swahilis have always had this cosmopolitical outlook, but the inward looking Rundi have failed to notice this.

Whatever will be the case, it would be interesting to see what future changes would do with the status of the Swahili language in Bujumbura, and how the Muslim and Rundi community would react to that. Will linguistic features and social arrangements then still interrelate, in whatever way, or will the connection between language and social status in Bujumbura end there?

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Papa Richie [personal interview 1 December 2007]
Appendix
Appendix 1 – Map of Bujumbura
### Appendix 2 – The different communes and the respective quarters

<table>
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Appendix 3 - Pictures

The city centre

A part of the bus station on the southern side of the market: a place where Swahili plays a prominent role

A street heading to the bus station of the northern side of the central market on a quiet day
Barabara ya tatu (3e Avenue); an average street in Buyenzi

Mechanics, fixing cars and busses, are always at work in the streets of Buyenzi
Nyakabiga

An average street in Nyakabiga

The first house with an aluminium roof was build in Nyakabiga
An average street in Kinindo

In the daytime it is quite in Kinindo: usually the only people to be found on the streets are servants. In the evenings some youth are taking over. At night the guards.