1.0.0 Linguistic policy in Central Africa

1.1.0 Introduction

The laws and regulations on the use of languages in literacy work in Central Africa are unquestionably bound up with the institutionalization of primary education in this region. The subject should be considered in relation to two periods: before independence and after independence. During the colonial period the region was divided between two powers, each with its own philosophy of colonization. Owing to the simplicity of the assimilationist philosophy advocated by France, the laws and regulations on the use of languages in the French colonies of Central Africa are themselves simple: there is very little to say, from a purely presentative, non-critical point of view; but I must first show the way in which the Belgians tried to carry out their civilizing mission while respecting the customs of the indigenous population. These two somewhat contradictory objectives of the Belgian philosophy of colonization were, in practice, rather difficult to reconcile.

1.2.0 The colonial era

1.2.1 The use of languages in the Belgian colonies

According to Pol Georis (1), the history of primary education in the Belgian Congo began in 1906, when the Congo and the Holy See concluded a Convention under which each Catholic mission undertook to found a school for the local population, the curriculum to be determined by agreement with the Governor General. Up to 1929, however, teaching was provided without written instructions to regulate it. The first project for the organization of education in the Congo was published by the Ministry for the Colonies in 1924. This project was obviously based, according to Father Albert Mauza (2), on the report of an American study mission (The Phelps Stokes Fund) which, after visiting a large part of Africa, made the following proposals for the Belgian Congo in 1921:
"The present system, which places education under the jurisdiction of the Head of the Justice Department, does not take sufficient account of the vital importance of public education ... 

The third recommendation concerns the language or languages of instruction. In our view, there can be no doubt that the first language of instruction should be the dialect of the local tribe. As soon as possible, the State should get the schools to choose one inter-tribal language, such as Lingala; in this way the pupil would be familiarized with a language understood by many tribes ...

Our conversations with representatives of education, trade and government have convinced us that Lingala will in all probability be the language of inter-tribal communication."

Before they came to drawing up in final form the first education programme to be applied in the Belgian Congo and in Ruanda-Urundi in 1929, the Belgian authorities were divided in opinion on the question of the use of languages in the colony. The first differences arose with regard to the application in favour of the Congolese of Article 3 of the Colonial Charter, which is the very first legislative instrument regulating the use of languages in Belgian Africa. Article 3 of the Colonial Charter stipulates the following:

"The use of languages shall be optional. It shall be regulated by decree, in such a way as to safeguard the rights of the Belgians and the Congolese, and only in respect of instruments of the public authorities and of judicial affairs ... 

In this regard, Belgians in the Congo shall benefit from the same guarantees which they enjoy in Belgium ...

All decrees and regulations of a general nature shall be written and published in the French and Flemish languages. Both texts shall be official."

When this article was put to the vote in the Belgian parliament, the following amendment, proposed by Deputy De Erouchoven De Bergeyck and making it compulsory for one Congolese language to be known by the Belgians, was rejected, it read as follows:

"From 1 January of the fifth year following the promulgation of the present law, no-one may be appointed to any function or post in the courts of law, the civil service or the army of the colony, unless he can first prove that, in addition to at least one of the principal languages of the Congo, he has a knowledge of Flemish and French ..."

To prevent the application of Article 3 of the Colonial Charter in so far as it contained any provision favourable to the Congolese, Michel Halewyck, considered as the official commentator of the Colonial Charter, made the following statement in his book, published in 1910(3):

"How can candidates for vacant posts in the colony, who apply in barely sufficient numbers, be required to have a knowledge of the various languages that differ from one area to another? How can the decrees and other instruments of government be published in a variety of dialects so great that it is difficult to enumerate them? How can judges be obliged to pronounce
sentence in a primitive tongue that is not structured to express legal concepts and their manifold implications? How can the Appeal Court at Boma be forced to have a knowledge of every kind of dialect that may have been used to formulate judicial decisions in the courts of first instance? If the procedures implied by the provisions of Article 3 were sanctioned by decrees, this would mean instituting inapplicable laws and regulations, fitted at best to be promulgated in the island of Utopia."

The commentator of the Colonial Charter concludes with the following recommendations to the government:

"To provide the Negroes in the Congo with a good interpreter service, to promote the teaching of our national languages in the Congo, to arrange for officials and magistrates before entering on their duties to take courses in the four major languages of the colony, to enjoin them to learn the local dialects in their respective districts so that they can converse directly with members of the indigenous population."

With regard to the "four major languages of the colony" mentioned by Mr. Halewsky, their designation as major languages merely indicates a de facto recognition. We have sought in vain a law or some official instrument according them this status. Other documents show that the de facto recognition of Kikongo, Lingala, Tshiluba and Kiswahili as major languages occurred before the year 1900. But it was not until 1929 that it was recorded in an official instrument, concerning education. Before considering the place occupied by languages in education from 1929 onwards, it is worth recalling the statement made in 1922 in the journal Congo by E. De Jonghe, Director-General at the Ministry for the Colonies and Professor at Louvain University(4):

"We must not lose sight of the fact that African primary school teachers will have to teach in the local dialects. There can therefore be no question of providing teacher training in French or in any widely used African language. In establishing teacher-training schools, regard will have to be had to the relationship of the dialects which the future teachers will be using."

In the same article, he goes on to say in connexion with the place that should be occupied in the Congo by the Belgian "national" languages:

"The law on education should prohibit the opening of schools in which European languages other than one of our national languages would be taught. To allow other European languages to be taught would be to promote the spread of non-Belgian influences in our colony. A mother country, if it is worthy of the name, should use the schools as a medium for the development of a national spirit."

The instructions concerning language teaching contained in the yellow booklet (Brochure Jaune), published in 1929 by the colonial government(5) are set out below:

"Lower primary school, rural or urban: For children in rural areas, literary instruction, however slight, will be of very little use. It is enough for them to be able to tackle reading, writing and arithmetic in their own dialect.
Special schools: (vocational)

A. Clerical section

Subordinate staff of this kind will have to work in contact with Europeans ... They must be Europeanized to some extent ...

B. Teacher-training sections

A distinction should also be made between urban and rural teachers as regards the learning of the national language. The former should make a very careful study of the national language and continue to improve their knowledge of it.

The indigenous language to be taught at the teacher-training school should be one of the four lingua franca.

The mother tongue comes third among the subjects taught in the teacher-training schools, if the number of hours per week allocated to each course is taken as the basis of comparison. This is clear from page 11 of the booklet published in 1929 by the Inspection Générale de l'Enseignement, which is concerned solely with the organization and operation of teacher-training schools:

"Table of subjects taught in the three years at teacher-training schools:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects taught</th>
<th>1st year</th>
<th>2nd year</th>
<th>3rd year</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother tongue</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arithmetic</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching methods</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical work</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 1958, the status of language teaching was as follows, throughout the whole education system at that time:

1. Lower primary school:

Vehicular language: mother tongue (local dialect) or one of the lingua franca

Indigenous language to be taught: the lingua franca

European language: none.

2. Upper primary school

Vehicular language: same as in lower primary;

Indigenous language to be taught: lingua franca as first language

One of the national languages: compulsory, as second language, in urban upper primary schools; optional in rural upper primary schools.
3. Preparatory class for special schools:

Vehicular language: **lingua franca** or French, according to whether a subsidized rural or an urban school is involved.

Indigenous language to be taught: **lingua franca**, as first language in rural schools, as second language in urban schools.

One of the national languages: compulsory, as first language, in urban schools, optional in rural schools.

4. General secondary school for boys:

Vehicular language: French

Indigenous language to be taught: **lingua franca**, as second language.

One of the national languages: first language

5. Teacher-training school:

Vehicular language: **lingua franca** or mother tongue

Indigenous language to be taught: **lingua franca** or mother tongue as first language

One of the national languages: compulsory as second language.

6. Home economics school (for girls):

Vehicular language: **lingua franca** or mother tongue

Native language to be taught: **lingua franca**

European language: none.

7. Vocational training school:

Vehicular language: **lingua franca**

Indigenous language to be taught: **lingua franca** as first language.

One of the national languages: compulsory as second language.

8. General remarks:

In places where, owing to special circumstances, it seems difficult or inappropriate to raise a local dialect to the rank of vehicular language in education, one of the national languages may be used as the vehicular language at all levels."

From the table showing the use of languages published by the Education Department in 1948, we shall, for the sake of brevity, select only four kinds of schools, since the list of categories of schools is growing steadily longer. First, however, we must quote the justifications which the Belgian colonial legislator felt obliged to offer with regard to his approach to the language problem. These justifications, reiterated in the 1953 edition of the same brochure(8), had
been set forth earlier, in the 1938 edition, but in very brief outline. The following is an extract from the "Considerations", introducing the table showing the use of languages in the 1948 and 1953 curricula:

"There is no doubt that, generally speaking, if teaching is to produce the best results, instruction must be given in a language familiar to the pupil. This may be the mother tongue or a more widely used language which, though not exactly the mother tongue, is closely related to it, is understood and used by the pupil without serious difficulty, and can be employed both as a medium for teaching and as a literary language for study ..."

At present (1948), the school regulations officially confine teaching to four linguae francae - Kikongo, Lingala, Tshiluba and Kiswahili ...

Lastly, it must be emphasized that Africans, whatever their background, desire to learn the European language. They rightly consider that this language affords them an effective means of advancement. Apart from the objective of training a body of leaders, our educational work will serve a useful purpose by taking advantage on a wide scale of the African's enthusiasm for the colonizer's language; any slight knowledge of French the villager may possess is bound to strengthen the ties between ward and guardian and to promote social, professional and administrative relations between them ...

Before deciding upon regulations, it is advisable to define what is meant by "lingua franca". We would say that a lingua franca is a widely used language, related to the local dialects of a fairly widespread area, and which, on account of its structure, vitality and possibilities, is suitable for use as a vehicular language and as a literary language for the purposes of education."

"Table showing the use of languages (1948):

**Schools for boys**

1. **Lower primary school:**
   
   Vehicular language: mother tongue or, if possible (and preferably) **lingua franca**
   
   Language to be taught: **lingua franca** (compulsory)
   
   European language: none in rural schools; French optional as second language in schools in Europeanized centres.

3. **Ordinary upper primary school:**
   
   Vehicular language: same as lower primary
   
   Language to be taught: **lingua franca** (compulsory)
   
   European language: French compulsory as second language

5. **Selective upper primary school:**
   
   Vehicular language: **lingua franca**
   
   Language to be taught: **lingua franca** and French, both compulsory
7. **Secondary schools:**

Vehicular language and first language: French

Other languages to be taught:

(a) Modern: Flemish (from the 4th year) (compulsory)
    Indigenous language (lingua franca)

(b) Classical: Latin
    Flemish (from the 4th year) (compulsory)
    Indigenous language (lingua franca)

In 1953, the organization of education in the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi differed little from that obtaining in 1948, and the system for the use of languages remained unchanged.

In addition to the use of Congolese languages in education, a Congolese language - Lingala - was the official language of the colonial army, known as the "Force publique".

In the booklet published by the Force publique in 1956 to commemorate its 70th anniversary, it is stated that each group has its own instruction centre where, besides the elements of the profession of arms, recruits learn to read ... and to make themselves understood in Lingala ... the vehicular language of the Force publique.

The date at which this language was adopted as the language of the army is not known for certain, but it was probably at the time when the first Negro soldiers recruited from among the Congolese were all Bangalas. On referring again to the aforesaid handbook we learn that:

"In 1886, Adjutant Captain Léon Roget was appointed Commander of the Force publique ... Beginning with disparate contingents recruited in other African territories, and a few Bangala volunteers sent to Boma from the Upper Congo, Roget ... trained and instructed the first regular units".

This information on the tribal origin of the first Congolese soldiers in the Force publique is amplified by Adolphe Lejeune-Chaquot in his Histoire Militaire du Congo (Brussels, 1906), in which we read the following:

"In 1885, the military organization in the Congo consisted of 100 volunteers from the coast (Zanzibaris, Hausas, Yorubas).

The establishment of a regular Force publique dates from 1886. The government made efforts to create an indigenous army, and Captain Coquillet was the first to succeed in recruiting a number of Bangalas, in 1885 ... Adjutant Lieutenant Roget was entrusted with the task of organizing the Force publique in the Congo. He spent three years instructing the contingents sent to him from the Upper Congo ..."

As regards the use of local languages by the press and radio in the Belgian colonies, each major language was represented by at least a monthly newspaper: for instance, the Kikongo language by "Kongo Dieto", Kiswahili by "Hodi", Tshiluba by "Nkuruse", Kinyarwanda by "Kinyamateka", Mongo by "Lokole lozi"o", ...
Kirundi by "Ndoroni", Lingala by "Kongo ya Sika" (1948-1962), Lokusa ya Biso and Nsango ya Bisu (by "Force publique". In addition, the government published a fortnightly periodical entitled "Nos Images" in four editions, one for each of the major languages.

Radio broadcasts in the four languages were initiated on 5 October 1949, under the title "African programmes from Belgian Congo Radio".

At the same time as these press activities, a beginning was made with the recording of oral litorature in writing, in the form of various books, which unfortunately are now difficult to find and for which there are no reliable bibliographical references. I shall therefore only quote titles of literary works further on, in dealing with the post-colonial period.

1.2.2 The use of languages in the French colonies of Central Africa

As was mentioned at the beginning of this paper, the laws and regulations on the use of languages on the French side are less complex than on the Belgian. The French policy of assimilation makes a clean sweep of the language of the colonized peoples, and French is the language used in every sphere.

The decree of 29 September 1938 on private education in French Equatorial Africa (now comprising the People's Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic and Chad) stipulates:

"Education shall be provided exclusively in French. The use of indigenous languages is prohibited. The use of indigenous languages may, however, be authorized for practical work and in indigenous educational centres. Koranic schools and catechism classes are authorized to use the local dialect for exclusively religious instruction; they are not considered as educational establishments." (9)

I have been unable to discover whether newspapers in African languages were published in French Equatorial Africa or whether those languages were spoken on the radio.

1.3.0 The use of African languages in the post-colonial period

From the time when the Democratic Republic of the Congo gained its independence in 1960 up to the present (1971), French has become the vehicular language for education at all levels. Moreover, Congolese languages are not among the subjects taught in primary and secondary schools. Only at the university are courses in African linguistics still provided, as they were before independence. Congolese languages were abolished from the primary school curricula by Article 3 of Presidential Decree No. 174 of 17 October 1962, which states:

"Article 3 - French shall be the language of instruction in primary education. The use of one of the Congolese languages, when this is necessary for the purposes of teaching, is regulated by the national programme.

Joseph Kasa-Vubu (President)
Joseph Ngalula (Minister of Education)"

Similarly, the publication of newspapers in Congolese languages no longer exists; it has ceased of its own accord, since it has not been forbidden by law.
The army journal, "La Voix de l'ANG", has never ceased to publish articles in Lingala. For the past year, two government periodicals, "Lokole" and "Congo Magazine", have included some pages of articles in Lingala.

The four major languages of the Congo have continued to be used on the radio, where they now account for five hours' broadcasting per day, as against 19 hours' broadcasting in French (the radio broadcasts for 24 hours a day). There is one hour's television broadcasting in Lingala, as against five hours in French.

In Rwanda and Burundi, the Kinyarwanda and Kirundi languages, respectively, have kept the place they occupied in the educational system before independence (1961). In Burundi, the inscription on the coinage is in French on one side and in Kirundi on the other. The broadcasting stations installed in the aforesaid two countries after independence broadcast programmes in the national languages as well as in French and Swahili.

The People's Republic of the Congo broadcasts programmes in Kikongo and Lingala, and the Central African Republic broadcasts programmes in Sango and Lingala, in addition to their respective programmes in French. These programmes in African languages probably date from the attainment of independence. I do not have the information required to enable me to assess the place occupied by African languages in Chad.

I shall now go back a little, to show by means of bibliographical examples the situation of literature written in Congolese languages. Although, as was mentioned above, no Congolese language newspapers have been published since 1960, books written recently in the Kikongo and Lingala languages are, somewhat surprisingly, to be found in Kinshasa bookshops. In the case of Lingala, I noted the following titles:

- **Bernadette wa Lourdes**: Editions des Prémontrés de Tongerloo, 1967 (112 p.)
- **Biblia**: Société biblique du Congo, Kinshasa 1970 (1156 p.)
- **Bikela bya Peptostolo**: Centre d'Études Pastorales (CEF), B.P. 724 Kinshasa-Limete, 1969 (126 p.)
- **Bolongani bwa Bakristu**: by Joseph Malula; CEP, Limete (48 p.)
- **Bomoi na mwasu mpe mobeli kati na ndako**: by André Makasi; Leco, Kinshasa, 1969 (36 p.)
- **Kondimana ya Sika**: Biblique du Congo, 1966 (609 p.)
- **Libota na Baklisto**: Leco, Kinshasa, 1971 (109 p.)
- **Losambo ya Bekolo**: Légionnaires 1970; B.P. 117 Kinshasa/Matete (186 p.)
- **Masapo ma Bankoko**: by Paul Lepoutre; Kongo ya Sika; B.P. 724 Kinshasa/Limete, 1970 (15 p.)
- **Masabo, m. bisa**: by Paul Lepoutre; Kongo ya Sika, Limete 1966 (135 p.)
- **Masapo ma Kongo**: by Paul Lepoutre; Kongo ya Sika, Limete 1966 (139 p.)
- **Masapo ma Fankoko**: Buku I: by J. Davidson; Leco, Kinshasa 1968 (43 p.)
2.0.0. Status of research on African languages in Central Africa

According to the information given by Father Van Bulck in his book Recherches linguistiques au Congo Belge (10), more than five hundred languages are spoken in Central Africa. We are far from being able to say that we have a scientific knowledge of each of these languages, although an interest has been taken in them for a long time past. In fact the first grammar published of a Bantu language, Kikongo, was prepared by Father Hyacinthe de Vetrella in 1657. Among the reports on their travels through Central Africa brought back by explorers in the second half of the nineteenth century are to be found linguistic studies, including some word-lists drawn up by Stanley himself. With the settlement of missionaries and lengthy stays by professional linguists in various parts of the region, research became sounder and more copious. The missionaries settled along the banks of the Congo produced grammars and dictionaries of Boli, Linga, Lingala, Lomongo and Kikongo, from about 1895 to 1899. Publications on Kirundi began to appear only in 1902 and on Kinyarwanda in 1911. It was at about this time that the languages of Chad were studied by Delafosse and Miss Homburger. But the real founders of African linguistics were Bleek (1869), Torrend (1891) and Meinhof (1899). Research became better organized and was supported by the colonial governments once they realized that a better knowledge of the colonized peoples could be turned to account to give them a stronger hold over those peoples. Thus, in the golden age of colonization, several research centres came into being, both in Europe and in Africa itself. Mention may be made of the following: the Ecole Pratique des hautes études de l’université de Paris with the Institut Français d’Afrique Noire (IFAN), the Université Catholique de Louvain, with the periodicals ZaTtre and Aequatoria (the latter being established in the Belgian Congo), the School of Oriental and African Languages of London University, the Hamburg Centre (in the Federal Republic of Germany). Attention should be drawn to the
case of the centre of the University of Louvain (Belgium) and the periodicals issued under its aegis, because that centre's activities came to an end as soon as the Congo gained its independence.

Fortunately, however, the University of Kinshasa undertook, from the time of its foundation, to make a scientific study of any of the languages of the region. Every year, the description of an African language constitutes the thesis for students sitting the final examination for the degree of licencié en linguistique africaine. In addition to those centres, mention should be made of the work carried out in the American centres of African languages and literatures, most of which were set up at about the time when our countries attained independence. Research on African languages, although it was a product of colonization, fortunately did not disappear with it. That research is in a good state and is being pursued, for our governments realize that a deeper knowledge of our languages can help them to define our authenticity and to find ways of bringing about the linguistic unification of Africa, which is one of the important objectives to be achieved, following independence.

3.0.0. Preliminary draft programme for research into and promotion of the common languages of Central Africa as media of culture

3.1.0. General principles

It is a fact that Central Africa, after being colonized and then decolonized, has remained heterogeneous from the linguistic point of view. In so far as the colonists who held sway over it were all French speaking, it might be thought that the region would be linguistically united; although French was essential in every sphere, however, the only people in the various countries who were familiar with it were the leaders. Linguistic homogeneity was confined to the élite, which is of course a minority. The majority of the population in each country, whether during or after the colonial period, has had to rely solely on African languages as a means of communication. For the purpose of carrying out projects, for the rapid development of their countries, the responsible authorities must first of all solve the problem of communication between themselves and the mass of the population. As Pierre Alexandre(11) observes, it is difficult to carry through a revolutionary development programme without being able to count on the understanding and co-operation of the masses who will have to carry it out as well as benefiting from it. The training and information afforded to them by the responsible authorities will be all the more effective if they are conveyed directly from one to the other, that is to say, in a language that is known and understood by the recipients. If the information required for the execution of a development programme is to be transmitted with maximum efficiency and economy, the choice must fall on the second of the following three methods: use of the French language once it has been taught to the population it is desired to reach; direct formulation of the problems in indigenous languages; use of translators and interpreters. The intensive teaching of French to the entire population is a very costly undertaking, and even inappropriate in the case of literacy teaching for adults - for how can peasants returning from a hard day's work be expected to learn at one and the same time French, reading, writing and the way to use fertilizers? The use of interpreters to serve as intermediaries between the national authorities and the population at large would be a gross psychological error. These two methods should be rejected; for, if new techniques, new ways of life, are to be firmly implanted, care must be taken to ensure that, in the minds of those for whom they are intended, they are not associated with an impression of strangeness, of extraneousness. Whatever his technique may be, the
technical expert must learn to explain it himself to the users in a language which is directly understandable to them.

This brings us to the problem of the linguistic unification of the countries of Central Africa. For there is no reciprocal understanding between the peoples; they use different media of communication which, though related, are not intelligible from one population to another. Some inter-tribal languages are, however, being increasingly used. The problem here is to find a way of rendering the most advanced among these languages, if not the most widely used, capable of conveying all the ideas that are current in the modern world; to bring order into the way in which the main inter-tribal languages are changing, so as to fit them to express a new culture.

I have purposely said "new culture" and not simply "culture". The African languages have always been instruments of the traditional cultures of the people who speak them. The new culture to be expressed is that which has resulted from the contact between African cultures and cultures imported from abroad. It is a fact that, if left to themselves, the African languages, faced with the necessity of adaptation to modern circumstances, resort to neologisms which are often contrary to their grammatical structure. The specialists' task is to ensure that the new terms used are brought into harmony with the basic structure of the language. In the vocabulary of African languages we often come across foreign words that have been borrowed, not to fill the gap caused by the absence of their equivalent in the language concerned, but in many cases due to laziness or to a desire on the part of some speakers to show their knowledge of a highly esteemed foreign language. Our use of so many foreign expressions is attributed to the "poverty" of our languages, whereas a little attention to what we are saying and a little consideration for the language we are speaking would enable us to find the necessary words.

It seems to me that the first prerequisite for the promotion of African languages is the conduct of a psychological campaign designed to restore to the African peoples their former confidence and pride in their own languages. We are not yet mentally decolonized. The African peoples need to be aware that their leaders are using the same languages as themselves. The intellectuals in each country should realize that, by using the African languages and seeing that their children do so, they are helping to enhance the prestige of these languages and, consequently, to diminish the ascendancy still possessed by the languages of colonization over the minds of our peoples.

On the assumption that more care is usually taken with the written than with the spoken word, another very effective way of promoting our languages is to write them down. Writing helps to preserve the purity of a language and to improve it. Writing enriches a language, because it requires reflection. The written literature may thus serve as a criterion for assessing the wealth of a language. But literary production presupposes the will to write; it depends largely on a decision, on the part of those who can write, to do so. The enrichment of a language is not a preliminary to literary production, and the latter is a consequence of and not a prerequisite for the use of writing. Once the advantages of writing are conferred on the African languages, this will undoubtedly conduce to their promotion.

A third method of developing a language is by codification. This consists primarily in defining the standard or model of the linguistic forms; it relates to both the spelling and the vocabulary to be adopted. Some people think that
the nature of this work requires that codification should precede the use of a language as a written language. For my part, I think that the models are not necessarily those established by the codifiers. These specialists can obviously be asked to create new words or to attribute new meanings to old words; but they can also be asked to inventory and disseminate the whole of the pre-existent linguistic heritage, confirming individual innovations made by speakers and writers. The code cannot run counter to participation by individuals in the inevitable process of change of a language. According to J. Larochette(12), any linguistic change has its origin in individual creations:

"Even though in most cases we cannot name the individual who invented or first used in their present acceptance such words as electricity, semiquaver, psychopathology, dinner-jacket, umbrella, it is none the less certain that they were not the outcome of the deliberations of an august body of grammarians or an assembly of peoples. A shopkeeper, a mathematician, a milliner, a ragamuffin, a journalist may launch a term; if this term meets a need, either because it is more expressive or because it applies to a new idea, it is adopted."

As regards the choice of spelling for our languages, that spelling must be simple and appropriate; in other words, there must be one letter only for each sound, to represent every phoneme in the language. In our tonal languages suitable tone marks should be indicated; it takes time to read a text without tone marks because it has to be thought about. All the media of communication - school textbooks, newspapers, television - will be used for the rapid popularization of the system of spelling chosen.

When they have codified a language, the codifiers should give examples of the way in which their rules and conventions should be applied, in the form of written texts, imagined or translated by themselves. This constitutes the beginning of the final phase of the proposed development: the production in African languages of school textbooks on every subject taught.

The economic advantages of this approach are set forth in a document, SC/CULT, 6 February 1970, drawn up by the Secretariat of the Organization of African Unity with a view to the establishment of an Inter-African Bureau of Linguistics:

"The use of indigenous languages as languages of instruction in educational and training institutions should lead to faster learning and training and to overall reduction of costs in providing these services ... Furthermore, it would lead to savings in foreign currency, which would otherwise have been spent on importing the books."

3.2.0. Application of the foregoing principles to Lingala

Lingala, the Bantu language spoken in the People's Republic of the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic and the southern part of the Democratic Republic of the Sudan, should be fostered so that it may become a fitting medium of our new common culture in Central Africa. I may be asked why I have chosen Lingala rather than Swahili which is more widely used. In reply I should say that, if something obliges you to take it, you can hardly be said to have chosen it; just as you do not choose your native country, so you do not choose your language. A normal language, apart from modern Hebrew, imposes itself on its users due to various factors outside itself. This has been
the case with Lingala throughout its history, of which little is known for certain. It was due to a fait accompli, an actual situation, that it became adopted as the language of the Congolese army and of Congolese music. It is bad policy to speak of imposing one language rather than another. It suffices to observe the confrontation of languages and be ready to promote the one that emerges victorious. The following are the facts relating to Lingala, which also militate in favour of its extension:

1. It is the language spoken in the capital (no-one knows how this came about); the attraction exerted by the capital on the rest of the country is a powerful factor making for the extension of Lingala.

2. It possesses centres of dissemination and influence throughout the country, due to the omnipresence of the Congolese army and of the national police.

3. Lingala is the only language of modern Congolese music, which is popular throughout the country. Despite all this, Lingala has not yet prevailed over Swahili, which is still the common language of the two large provinces, Kivu and Katanga, and of most of Kisangani province, to the east of the Congo river. As regards the provinces, Lingala is only spoken in the town of Kinshasa, in Equateur province and in a good deal of Kisangani province. The two other main Congolese languages - Tshiluba and Kikongo - are confined to a smaller territorial area. In introducing linguistic studies into the school syllabus, the first language taught must be the common language of the district in which the school is located, and the second language must be one chosen by the pupil or student from among those that he does not speak spontaneously on account of his district of origin. In this way, time will decide: after a certain period, one language will have been learnt by more pupils and become more widespread than the others. It may be forecast that Lingala will come out on top in this competition.

This is not the place for refuting the reasons given by the official linguists of the Belgian Congo when, in connexion with the proposal to select a single indigenous language for the whole colony, they opposed the adoption of Lingala and Swahili. E. De Jonghe, in an article on the unification of the Congolese languages, wrote:

"Swahili can be criticized for being a language totally alien to the Congo ... The adoption of a widely used literary language that is disseminated from a centre outside the frontiers of the colony would certainly not be conducive to the harmonious adaptation of literature to the specific cultural needs of the Belgian Congo ... But an objection can be made to Lingala on the grounds that it is somewhat artificial and does not have strong enough roots in the local population."

V. Gelders, as an advocate of Swahili, expressed the following criticism of Lingala:

"But Lingala is a language much called in question on account of its great poverty; it has no cultural heritage to draw on. Looking at the matter from a narrowly nationalist point of view, its strength should be recognized and it should be adopted. But, even supposing that it can be raised to the level of a language of true culture, how many generations, if not centuries
may this not require? And what delay may not be entailed for the intellec-
tual development of the Congolese?"

Father Van Bulok, writing of the four cultural indigenous languages, does
not mention either Lingala or Swahili(15):

"... At the present time in the Belgian Congo, French is scarcely called
upon to replace the cultural indigenous languages. The indigenous languages
themselves are evolving at an ever-increasing pace. We observe that four
languages are obviously on the way to reaching this crucial phase: Kikongo
in the province of Leopoldville; Tshiluba in Kasai province; Lomongo,
Lokumbo in the province of Coquilhatville; Kinyarwanda-Kirundi in the
trust territory. In each of these languages, not only is unification under
consideration; it is already in process of attainment."

The argument advanced by the Belgians against the adoption of Swahili as the
common language of the Congo is by no means valid. Swahili has been spoken in
the Congo for the past century, and it is the mother tongue of several genera-
tions of Congolese. It has been assimilated in a more natural way than is re-
quired for the learning of French, through artificial means. Swahili is not
alien to Central Africa, as is French, which has nevertheless been imposed. The
only valid objection in my opinion is that Swahili is not spreading as rapidly in
the Congo as Lingala. In view of the urgent need to do away with the multiplicity
of languages, the sooner linguistic unity is achieved the better it will be,
regardless of which African language is used for the purpose. It is also urgently
necessary to relegate to the background the encroaching foreign languages, on
which some people hope to build up national unity. The priority should therefore
be given to whatever African language appears to be the best fitted to convert
these aspirations into reality. The adoption of Swahili would, it is true, lead
to the long-term linguistic unification of a very large part of Africa as a whole.
But it would considerably retard the recession of the tribal languages of Central
Africa and, consequently, the desired linguistic unity between Central and East
Africa. On the other hand, it would seem that the rapid recession and disappear-
ance of the Congolese tribal languages under the dynamic impact of Lingala would
represent a big advance towards the unity of those two regions. I would recall
that, in speaking of Congolese tribal languages, I include the languages of the
People's Republic of the Congo, where Lingala has an even better chance of winning
than Swahili. The achievement of linguistic unity between the two regions (Cen-
tral and East Africa) should therefore be contemplated in two stages. The first
stage would be that of the victory of Swahili and Lingala over the tribal lan-
guages of East and Central Africa, respectively; the second would be that of the
victory of Swahili over Lingala, or vice versa.

Assuming that this unification in two stages - in which Lingala plays a part
takes place, it is advisable to reply to the objections of poverty and artificia-
ility raised against Lingala. According to Father G. Hulstaert "the wealth of a
language is influenced by the number of people who speak it and by the size of
the geographical area where it is used"(16). Here it is the wealth of the vocab-
ulary that is meant. In the same article, this author also states:

"To be really qualified as poor, a language must be lacking in the capacity
to adapt itself to the new situation resulting from introduction to a higher
civilization or to its advances. If it has the capacity to create a ter-
mnology adapted to that situation, it is, on the contrary, alive and rich
(op. cit. p.327)."
I mentioned earlier that Lingala is at present spoken by millions of Congolese scattered throughout the country. It is a rich language, according to Hulstaert's first remark quoted above. Moreover, new words can be introduced into Lingala in accordance with its particular structure, by means of grammatical and semantic processes or of borrowing. The objection to it as an artificial language, on the grounds that it is not deeply rooted in the population, is unfounded, if account is taken of the present demographic situation of the centres where Lingala was spoken fifty years ago. Those who were born and spent their childhood in those centres certainly spoke Lingala as their first language or as their mother tongue. This means that they learnt Lingala from their mother's lips and that their earliest feelings and most cherished memories are associated with this language. In addition, as the population grows in places where Lingala is spoken the more people there are speaking Lingala as their mother tongue. The assertion (which no-one has ever been able to prove) that Lingala began artificially, does not imply that it has not taken root. Lastly, Lingala is a cultural language, according to the criterion laid down by Father Van Bulck, who states:

"Only those languages may claim to be cultural languages that are at present (1952) used as languages of instruction in primary and secondary schools, in other words, languages which already have to their credit an impressive number of school textbooks, religious and literary works, which are already used in periodicals, magazines or even newspapers."(17)

My conclusion is that, for the better understanding of Lingala, for the furtherance of its development and the promotion of its function as the link between all the peoples of Central Africa, it should be studied forthwith, from both the practical and the theoretical points of view. In regard to theory, comparative studies could be made of Lingala and any other language with which it has been in contact, with the object of demonstrating the reciprocal influences: comparative grammar of Lingala and Swahili, comparative grammar of Lingala and Kikongo, comparative grammar of Lingala and Sango, comparative grammar of Lingala, Ngombe and Mongo, comparative grammar of Lingala and French, etc.

In regard to practice, when the spelling and vocabulary have been standardized, the use of Lingala in the schools and press of every Central African country should be intensified.
4.0.0. List of national specialists in the languages and cultures of Central Africa

Simon BWANTSA-KAFUNGU: Graduate in African philosophy, University of Kinshasa (1966); author of:
- *Esquisse phonologique et morphologique de la langue ngwili;*
- *Esquisse grammaticale de Lingala – Publications of the University of Kinshasa 1970.*
- *La musique congolaise moderne.*
- *Professor of African linguistics at the Ecole de Régence du Sacré-Coeur, Kinshasa.*

Clémentine FAIK-NZUJI: Diploma from the Ecole de Régence du Sacré-Coeur de Kinshasa; author of:
- *Un chant clanique cimuna (in collaboration with L. Steppers), in Cahiers de littérature et de linguistique appliquée, publication of the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters, University of Kinshasa, No. 1, June 1970, pp. 81-89.*

Student of African philosophy

Marcel KADUMA: Graduate in African philosophy, University of Kinshasa (1962); Doctor of Literature of the University of Leyden (Netherlands) 1969; author of:
- *Le thème pour "autre" dans les langues bantoues", in AMRAC, No. 61, 1967; pp.23-37* Professor of linguistics at the University of Kinshasa.

Alexis KAGAME: Linguist, sociologist and Rwandese poet; overseas member of the Académie Royale des Sciences d’Outre-Mer de Belgique; author of many works and articles; Professor at the National University of Rwanda, Butare.

Gaspard KAJIGA: Diocesan Inspector of schools; author of:

Augustin LEMBA: Author of novels in Lingala.

François LOUMOUAMOU: Doctor of linguistics, University of Paris, 1969; Professor at the Ecole Supérieure des Lettres, Brazzaville.
Kahombo MATEENE: Graduate in African philosophy, University of Kinshasa (1963); Doctor of linguistics, University of Paris, 1969; Professor at the University of Kinshasa; author of:

Albert MONGITA: Born 1916, Congolese playwright, author of a number of plays in Lingala; official at the Ministry of Culture and Arts, Kinshasa.

Petrice MUFUTA: Graduate in African philology, University of Kinshasa, 1962; Doctor of Ethnology, University of Paris, 1968; Author of:
- "Le chant kasâla des Luba", Julliard, Paris, 1969. Professor at the University of Lubumbashi.

Albert MUTANDA: Graduate in African philology, University of Kinshasa, 1964; professor at the Institut Pédagogique National, Kinshasa.

Jean-B. NSANDA: Graduate in African philology, University of Kinshasa, 1970; Assistant Professor at the University of Kinshasa.

Yvon NSUKA: Graduate in African philology, University of Kinshasa; author of:
- Littératures traditionnelles au Congo-Kinshasa, au Rwanda et au Burundi (annotated bibliography), in Cahiers congolais; Vol. XIV, No. 2, 1970; 89-153. Assistant Professor at the University of Kinshasa.

Alphonse RWAKAZINA: Graduate in African philology, University of Kinshasa, 1966; author of a monograph entitled "Esquisse grammaticale de la langue taabwa"; Assistant Professor at the University of Kinshasa.
(1) Paul GEORIS: Esai d'aculturation par l'enseignement primaire au Congo; Ed. CEMUEAC, Brussels, 1962 (pp. 26-27).

(2) Albert MAUSS: Le nouveau programme de l'enseignement libre; in periodical Congo (Vol. II), 1938; 491-525; (Vol. I), 1939; 1-20. See also: Th. JESSE JONES: The education of Africans, report of the study mission of the "Phelps Stokes Fund", in the periodical Congo; July 1921; pp. 162-175.

(3) Michel HALEWYCK: La charte coloniale; Ed. Weissenbruch, Brussels, 1910.


(5) Congo Belge: Organisation de l'enseignement libre au Congo Belge et au Rwanda-Urundi, in collaboration with the sociétés des Missions Nationales; Boma, 1929.

(6) Congo Belge: Inspection générale: Instructions pour les inspections provinciaux de l'enseignement relatives à l'organisation et au fonctionnement des écoles normales; Boma, May 1923.

(7) Congo Belge: Organisation de l'enseignement libre; Leopoldville, 1938.

(8) Cf. preceding note.


(12) J. LAROCHELLE: Le problème des langues dans l'enseignement aux indigènes du Congo-Belge; in Problèmes d'Affrique Centrale, No. 16; 1952, pp. 72-78.


(17) Cf. note (15).