

## ***KITUBA, KILETA, OR KIKONGO?*** **WHAT'S IN A NAME?**

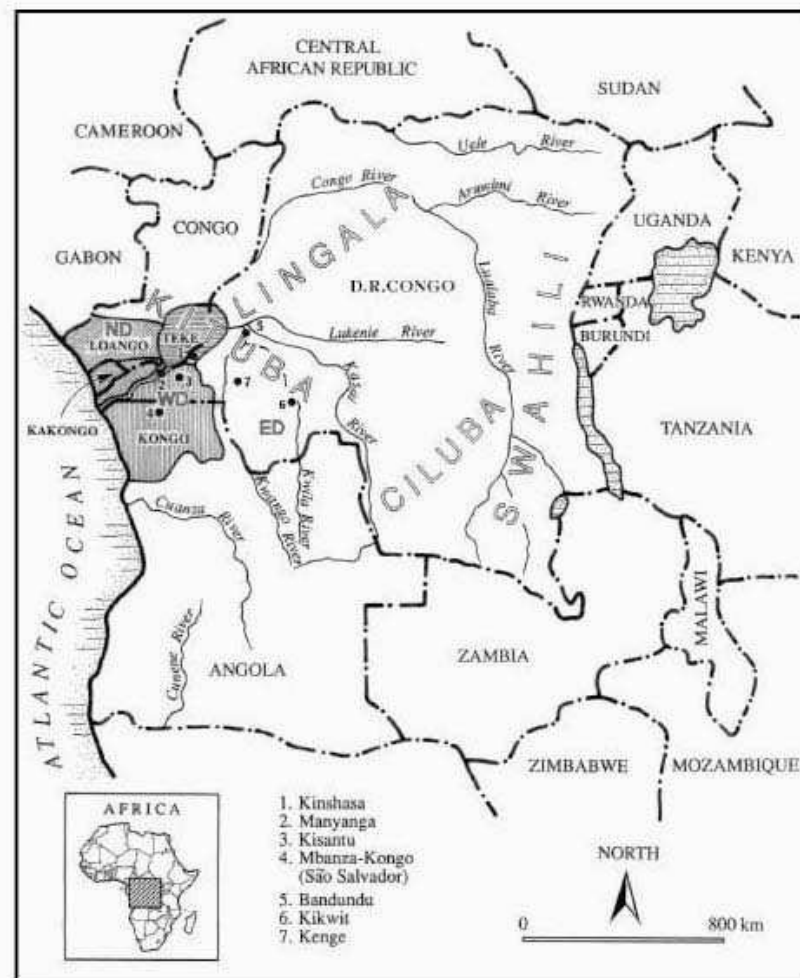
**Salikoko S. MUFWENE**  
University of Chicago

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

*Kituba*, short for *Kikongo-Kituba*, is a « contact-based » language variety of central Africa, spoken especially in the southern part of the Republic of Congo, in the southwestern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and in the northern part of Angola. As explained in Mufwene (1997a), it is Bantu-based, lexified primarily by *Kimanyanga*, a member of the *Kikongo* cluster (H16, according to Guthrie's 1953 classification) which was already functioning as a major trade language by the time of the colonization of the Congo (the present DRC) by King Leopold II in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Like *Lingala*, it evolved mostly out of labor migrations occasioned in this case by the construction of the railway connecting Kinshasa to the Atlantic Ocean in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Bakongo's resistance to participate in the colonial forced labor led the colonizers to bring laborers from as far as the eastern part of the present DRC to build the railroad. The local language, *Kikongo-Kimanyanga*, emerged as their lingua franca and later as the vernacular of early colonial administration posts west, south, and east of Kinshasa, having been taken outside the Bakongo area (in the west) by both the colonizers and their auxiliaries, by merchants, and by Christian missionaries and their auxiliaries.

However, unlike *Lingala* (C40), *Kituba* has never been classified as a *Bantu* language since Guthrie (1953). The reasons for the omission are not clear, since *Lingala*, which is also contact-based and is not associated with a particular ethnic group (Hulstaert 1974, 1989), is classified as *Bantu*. It may also be that Guthrie assumed that the riverine populations that had developed the latter and had been using it as their primary lingua franca formed an ethnic group, identified as Bangala (literally, 'littoral people') – a myth that was held by many until Hulstaert (1974, 1989) proved it mistaken. It may also be that *Kituba* has usually been lumped in the *Kikongo* cluster of languages, including, in addition to

*Kimanyanga, Kiyombe, Kintandu, Kiladi, and Kivili*, among others. However, the literature shows no evidence that traditional Bantuists have ever taken any particular interest in the structures of this particular variety. The only studies mentioning it since Fehderau (1966) are those focusing on contact languages of Africa, such as Heine (1970) and Samarin (1989, 1990), among others. Noteworthy in this particular case are studies such as Ngalasso (1989, 1992), which identify it as *Kikongo*, the prevailing name among its native speakers outside the Bakongo region, particularly in the Bandundu region, east and south of Kinshasa. This leads me to the central concern of this essay.



*The Location of Kituba in the Democratic Republic of Congo*

## 2. NAMES AND IDENTITY

*Kituba* has also been identified by several other names, including: *Kikongo ya leta* (shortened to *Kileta*) ‘the public administration’s Kikongo’; *Kikongo ya bula-matadi* or *bula-matari* (shortened to *Kibula-matadi* or *Kibula-matari*) ‘the colonial agent’s Kikongo’ (literally, ‘the stone-breaker’s Kikongo’;

see below); *Mono kutuba* 'I speak/say' (whence *Kituba* 'way of speaking');<sup>1</sup> or *Ikele ve* 'be not; it isn't true'; and *Kikongo commercial* 'trade Kikongo'. All these names are quite descriptive of the language's identity and/or origins in relation to *ethnic Kikongo*.<sup>2</sup> *Kikongo ya leta* is due to the fact that the language was adopted by the Belgian colonial administration (see below) in the then Leopoldville Province (now known as the Bas Congo Region) for communication with the Natives and other Black Africans in the region. The fact that the colonial administration adopted it as a lingua franca as they expanded their rule eastward with auxiliaries recruited from the Bakongo area must have made it necessary to distinguish between the different *Kikongo* varieties in circulation. In the school system, the distinction was important, especially because the Catholic missionaries believed in teaching the Catechism and literacy in an unadulterated and presumably morphologically richer language, although they learned and used *Kituba* to interact with the locals. As a matter of fact, they even fabricated a special variety known as *Kikongo-Kisantu* (lit., 'Kikongo of Saints') from elements of the *ethnic Kikongo* cluster, in which the Catechism and other school materials were written. It mattered little to them that this variety was as strange to *Kituba* speakers as Classical Latin certainly is to speakers of modern Romance languages. This contributed to the high rate of elementary school dropouts.

*Kikongo ya bula-matadi* alludes to the time when the now defunct railroad connecting Matadi (DRC's primary ocean harbor) to Kinshasa was built (1891-1898). The tracks run across mountains, which required blasting rocks (*matadi*) during the construction. The target language of the labor force, part of which was brought from as far as West Africa (Senegal, Sierra Leone, and the Gold Coast) and from east of the Kwango River (outside the Bakongo territory), was *Kikongo-Kimanyanga*, the language of a precolonial major trade center, which has now evolved into *Kituba* (Fehderau 1966). It was found convenient as a lingua franca by the Belgian colonial administration, locally identified as *leta* (from French *l'état* 'the state') and *bula-matadi* 'stone-breaker'. They recruited the local and

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<sup>1</sup> I explain the origins of the names *Mono kutuba* and *Ikele ve* below. *Ki-* in *Kituba* and the other names is the normal Bantu nominal prefix for instruments (Class 7), which applies also to languages, as in *Kiteke* and *Kiswahili*.

<sup>2</sup> Reference to *Kikongo* (also spelled *Kikoongo* by some linguists, e.g., Daeleman 1972, 1982) as one language is somewhat simplistic. First, there is not always guaranteed mutual intelligibility among the putative « dialects » of *Kikongo*, viz., *Kiyombe*, *Kimanyanga*, *Kintandu*, *Kifioti*, *Kiladi*, etc., all spoken in the area of the former Kongo Kingdom. Second, speakers of these language varieties do not consider themselves to be speaking the same language, *Kikongo*, nor to be Bakongo (the corresponding name of the ethnic group in the plural), although they consider themselves to be ethnically related throughout the area between Kinshasa and the Atlantic Ocean. Like many colonized populations around the world (see, e.g., d'Ans 1997), they have been assigned these labels by scholars and use them to advantage when it is necessary to distinguish themselves as a group from other ethnic groups, especially when they are outside their collective homeland. The distinction between ethnic *Kikongo* and *Kikongo-Kituba* is thus convenient insofar as the latter is also referred to as *Kikongo* by its users, a point to which I return in the main text.

other national and foreign laborers for the railroad and other public development projects. *Kikongo ya leta* and *Kikongo ya bula-matadi* then became alternative names for the then emergent language variety, pointing to some of the non-local structural features by which it diverges from *Kimanyanga* and other traditional varieties of the *Kikongo* cluster. *Leta* and *bula-matadi* became synonymous terms of reference to ‘colonial administrators’. The fact that they facilitated the spread of *Kituba* eastward, where it would evolve into a more divergent variety (identified on the map as eastern dialect, ED ; Mufwene 1997a) justified the association of the new language variety with them.<sup>3</sup> The names thus point to the association of the language with colonial power, with the nontraditional living conditions of its speakers, especially in the emergent administrative posts, trade centers, and Christian missions, the forerunners of today’s urban or non-rural environments in which the residents have typically been of mixed ethnic backgrounds.

Both *Mono kutuba* and *Ikele ve* have to do with the less agglutinating nature of *Kituba*’s verbal morphosyntax in comparison with the canonical Bantu system (Mufwene 1988a).<sup>4</sup> *Mono kutuba* is a foreignism for what native speakers say as *mono tuba* ‘I say’. In the « narrative tense » (Dahl 1985), verbs are normally used without any prefixes in *Kituba*. The oddity of the construction *mono kutuba*, which makes the name somewhat derisive, stems from the prefixation of the infinitive marker *ku-* to the verb stem *tuba* ‘say/speak’. Native speakers would not use it in this case. The name reflects a mistaken stereotype according to which verbs are used only in the infinitive in this non-ethnic language variety. While it is true that *Kituba* lacks Subject-Verb agreement prefixes that are expected of canonical Bantu, its verbs are inflected with some non-narrative tense-aspect suffixes or combine with some preverbal aspect or mood markers, which are not attested with the infinitive. The lack of object pronominal prefixes, and the absolute reliance on independent, tonic, and morphologically invariant pronouns as well as on their syntactic positions to determine the subject and objects in a sentence, as shown in (1), should not be confused with infinitival uses of verbs:

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<sup>3</sup> The geographical location of the Kongo Kingdom (see lower shaded area on the map) as the gateway of colonial expeditions into the hinterlands must have been an important factor in the adoption of *Kikongo-Kimanyanga* as a colonial lingua franca. The need for the imported labor force to communicate with the local population and buy goods from them for their daily maintenance is another relevant factor. Perhaps the most important critical factor was the fact that *Kimanyanga* had already established itself as the trade language of the region even east of the Kongo Kingdom (in the Teke area) along the trade route for slaves and ivory, among other precious commodities of the time.

<sup>4</sup> I speak of « canonical system » or Bantu « canon » only to suggest that some features, especially morphosyntactic, which *Kituba* lacks have generally been associated with membership in the Bantu languages. However, not all traditional members of this family have them. I have shown this in the case on *Kiyansi*, which lacks Subject-Verb agreement and whose verbal prefixes have little to do with marking PERSON and NUMBER, in Mufwene (2006).

- (1) *Móno* Ø+mon+áka yánda ye yánda Ø+mon+áka móno.  
 me AGR+see+ANTER him/her and him/her AGR+see+ANTER me  
 I saw him/her and he/she saw me.

Other names of interest are *Kikwango* and *Kikongo*. The first has been used especially in association with the Christian missions in the then « Kwango-Kwilu District, » thus identifying missionaries as important agents in the spread of *Kituba* outside the Bakongo area. The *Kwango* area is halfway between *Kimanyanga* and the Kwilu area, where several Jesuit missions and schools flourished and books in the *Kisantu* variety were published. *Kikwango* thus became synonymous with the vernacular variety spoken by city dwellers and learned by whoever learned it as a lingua franca. Eventually, the Kwilu area would develop a dialect of its own (ED on the map), influenced by the *Kisantu* dialect and other languages of the area (such as *Kipende*, K10,<sup>5</sup> and *Gimbala*, K60, whose morphosyntaxes are closer to the Bantu canon).

The name *Kikongo* for *Kituba* has commonly been used in the same area (where none of the languages of the *ethnic Kikongo* cluster is spoken) as the neutral term without any particular connotations. The term *Kituba*, adopted in my work and other Anglophone publications since Fehderau (1966), is mostly academic. My only justification for this practice is that it avoids any kind of confusion with the putative *ethnic Kikongo*, which is also designated by the same name, primarily among *Kituba* speakers, and is associated with the Bakongo, who are presumed by non-Bakongo to be a unified ethnic group. Thus, the other names are ways of avoiding ambiguity with the name *Kikongo*, despite the negative connotations that some of them are associated with.

Ngalasso (1989) may be justified in suggesting that linguists follow *Kituba*'s native speakers' practice, most of whom live outside the ethnic Bakongo area, and refer to *Kituba* as *Kikongo*. As a matter of fact, many native speakers of this new variety do not even know the name *Kituba*; they may think it is a different language variety.<sup>6</sup> We are in a « colonial » situation similar to those discussed by d'Ans (1997), in relation to Maya, in which a language is designated by a name foreign to its own speakers. On the other hand, it is hard to undo a professional tradition in which the name has been preempted for *ethnic Kikongo*, even if there are indeed more specific analyses that peruse the particularistic terms *Kiyombe*, *Kimanyanga*, *Kintandu*, *Kiladi*, etc. The hyphenated *Kikongo-Kituba* may appear to be the solution, but it still is not one of the names commonly used among *Kituba*'s native speakers.

There is no question that *Kituba*'s (native) speakers outside the Bakongo area do not think they speak the same language as the Bakongo, regardless of

<sup>5</sup> As above, these classifications are according to Guthrie (1953).

<sup>6</sup> I am reminded here of the name *Gullah* used in reference to the English creole of South Carolina and Georgia in the USA and of the term *Creole* itself, which are unknown to many of its speakers. The labels have been imposed on them and their language variety, which they identify as *English*, by outsiders (Mufwene 1988b, 1993).

whether or not they are aware that there is no single unified *Kikongo* language spoken by the latter. They also know that their language is not an ethnic one, a peculiarity which distinguishes it from traditional *Bantu* languages which also serve to distinguish one ethnic group from another. They are caught in a perversion created by the colonial administrators and Christian missionaries who invented a « Bakongo » ethnic group, perhaps by association with the precolonial Kongo Kingdom, and took (a derivative of) *Kimanyanga*, under the same *Kikongo* label into the Kwango-Kwilu area, where it was more meaningfully adopted as the natural name for the new « language » brought to the region by the Europeans and their auxiliaries. Later on, the speakers of the imported language would discover that the Bakongo people actually do not speak like them but kept the name anyway.

One might assume that the hyphenated names make more sense in the Bakongo area. They would, if there were an identified traditional *Kikongo* language spoken in the region. They actually make more sense in the Kwango-Kwilu area, where speakers are reminded that their urban vernacular and regional lingua franca is different both from the mythical vernacular they think the Bakongo people speak and from the artificial *Kikongo-Kisantu* taught in school.

Overall, the names tell us the history of the emergence of a new language (variety). They also make evident the extent to which it has diverged and autonomized from its lexifier. Some of them refer to the kinds of contact situations either in which Kituba originated or which contributed to spreading it, while some others identify a geographical area where it serves as a major urban vernacular, although it serves as a regional lingua franca throughout a wider geographical area in central Africa, as specified at the outset of this paper. However, unlike what Canut (1997) reports about languages of Mali, none of the names expresses a particular social attitude of speakers of other languages towards *Kikongo-Kituba*'s speakers, nor of the latter towards speakers of other language varieties.

As shown in Mufwene (1988a, 1989a, 1997a), after Fehderau (1966), *Kituba*'s structures are often different from those of the varieties globally referred to as *ethnic Kikongo*. One notable example is that *ethnic Kikongo* varieties have lexical and grammatical tone, whereas *Kituba* has a predominantly fixed accent system, with the accent borne by the penultimate syllable, quite typically in any of its names. To be sure, as observed by Mufwene (1989a) and Ngalasso (1989), *Kituba* has an important proportion of polysyllabic words either with only low tones (e.g., *mùntù* LL 'person', *mùnòkò* LLL 'mouth, opening', *dìkùlù* LLL 'leg, foot', *mbàlà* LL 'time' as in 'five times'); or with a high tone on the last syllable or on both the penultimate and last syllables (e.g., *nzilà* LH 'way, road', *mbàlá* LH 'yam', *dìlálá* LHH 'citrus fruit', *màbéle* LHH 'breasts, milk'). However, the majority of the words have only one accent (high tone) borne by the penultimate syllable (e.g., *dísù* HL 'eye', *kwísà* HL 'come'-IMPERATIVE, *kàpítà* LHL 'foreman', *bábà* 'mute'). Derivative words and conjugated verbs are especially subject to this tone placement rule, e.g., *kù+sál+à* LHL 'to work' ~ *sàl+á(k)à* LHL 'work'-ANTERIOR' ~ *kù+sàd +ís+à* LLHL 'help' (lit. 'cause to work') ~

*n+sád+ì* LHL ‘helper’; *kù+pés+à* LHL ‘give’ ~ *kù+pès+íl+à* LLHL ‘give on the behalf, or for the benefit, of’.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, unlike in *ethnic Kikongo* varieties, tone/accent alone may not be used for tense-mood-aspect distinctions. Regarding segmental phonemes, some phonetically complex segments that appear in Lumwamu’s (1973) « diasystem » of the *ethnic Kikongo* cluster are not attested in Kituba, e.g., /pf, ts, dz/.

More examples of how its morphosyntax differs from that of Kimanyanga are provided in Mufwene (1994, 1997a).

### 3. ETHNOGRAPHIC STATUS

Since its beginning, *Kikongo-Kituba* has functioned as a lingua franca, especially in the *centres extra-coutumiers* ‘non-traditional [urban] centers’ formed by the colonial administration, in the Christian missions, and in the factory towns created by large concession and exploitation companies such as the « Compagnie du Kasai » and the « Frères Levers ». Africans from different ethnolinguistic groups were brought to live next to, or with, each other in these new localities. The new ethnographic conditions created by these new settings usually led to an ethnographic division of labor between the ethnic languages and *Kituba*, with the ethnic languages restricted to home or intimate situations and most of the public life conducted in the then urban lingua franca. Thus, *Kituba* evolved into a vernacular for many, i.e., as their primary means of communication in their day-to-day interactions. With the vernacularization (i.e., its usage as a vernacular) also started its expansion, normalization, auto-nomization (Chaudenson 1992, 2001), along with its speciation into sub-regional dialects (Mufwene 1997a). Contrary to Mufwene (1988a, 1989, 1994) I do not find it justified, nor necessary, to treat it as a creole, for reasons discussed in Mufwene (1997b, 2005 ; but cf. Ngalasso 1984).

To date, *Kituba* still serves in both capacities: 1) as a major vernacular for most of the urban population in the Bandundu and Lower-Congo regions of DRC (the former Leopoldville Province in the Belgian Congo, extending from west of the Kasai River to the Atlantic Ocean) and in the southern part of the Popular Republic of the Congo; and 2) as a lingua franca for the rural population in the same geographical area. While the younger urban population generally speaks it natively, a good proportion of the urban adult population still uses *Kituba* as a second or third language although the overwhelming majority of them are fluent speakers.

One reason for this differential evolution is the continuous rural exodus,

<sup>7</sup> One exception to this generalization is some deverbal derivatives that also involve partial reduplication, such as *bì+lómbà-lòmbà* L-HL-LL ‘habit of asking for things/anything’ and *bì+túbà-túbà* L-HL-LL ‘habit of talking too much (and being indiscrete)’. These are in contrast with reduplications such as *pòló-pòló* LH-LH ‘characteristic of a person that talks too much, indiscrete’, *màlémbè-màlémbè* LHL-LHL ‘very slowly’, and *mbángù-mbángù* ‘very fast’. For more on reduplication in *Kikongo-Kituba*, see Ngalasso (1993).

which brings to the city a population of non-native speakers in search of jobs. This new population has certainly contributed to variation in city speech, although at any time the less fluent speakers have been in the minority compared to fluent or native speakers. Their influence on the overall system may thus be considered rather marginal and even minimal, having undoubtedly trickled in little by little and selectively. This ethnographic state of affairs certainly accounts for words or phrases that might be associated with some of the local *Bantu* languages but are not attested across the board in the *Kituba* territory.<sup>8</sup> In any case, the variation says nothing special about the state of development of *Kituba*, which expanded and normalized soon after the urban centers, the Christian missions, and the factory towns started and as it vernacularized. Vernacularization certainly does not entail elimination of variation.

Rural, non-native varieties of *Kituba* call for more discussion. Villagers do not normally use them for communication among themselves, unless there is among the participants in a speech event a stranger who cannot speak the local vernacular, usually the local ethnic language.<sup>9</sup> They thus use it only occasionally as a courtesy to strangers who are not expected to speak their local vernaculars. Among the most common occasions are market days, visits to the city to see relatives or buy goods, visits to the regional health centers, and visits by regional administrators and politicians. Rural speakers generally refer to the language as *Kikongo*, without any qualifications.

Despite the higher proportion of L2 features in the rural varieties of *Kituba*, one should resist the temptation of characterizing these deviations from the city vernacular norm as repidginization. The normal conditions for pidginization are not met, especially those of sporadic contacts with minimal, rudimentary communication affecting contact populations speaking diverse languages. On the market day, for instance, speakers of the same ethnic language, who are typically in the overwhelming majority, do not use *Kituba* with each other. In most cases, there are other fluent speakers of it around who solve communication problems either by acting as interpreters or just repairing the ill-formed utterances, while urban speakers resort to no “foreigner talk.” Thus, the less fluent speakers have plenty of opportunities to improve their communicative competence at the L2 level.

On the other hand, it seems legitimate to characterize the spectrum of varieties of *Kituba* in both the city and rural areas as a continuum spanning from the city native norm to the most deviating rural speech. To this spectrum can be added the variety of *Kituba* spoken by the educated, who often use *French* not

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<sup>8</sup> Generally, the longer the newcomers live in the city, the closer their L2 variety gets to the local city norm, in the same way that, for instance, today's non-native English in the USA adjusts progressively to the local norm but is not normally expected to change the shape of *American English*.

<sup>9</sup> In villages with more than one ethnic group, the groups live in separate parts of the village using their respective ethnic languages as their vernaculars. Inter-ethnic communication is usually in the language of the dominant group, though sometimes *Kituba* becomes useful too.



only as a more prestigious lingua franca but also as a second or third language. As observed in Mufwene (1979), it is not unusual for these speakers to transfer *French* structural features into *Kituba*, as in reported speech. The normal Bantu reported speech style is quotative, as in (2). However, due to *French* influence, sentences such as (3) are also common with the same meaning:<sup>10</sup>

(2) *Petelo tub+aka nde: « mono ata kwisa.»*

Peter say+ANTER COMP me FUTURE come

A. Peter said [<sub>COMP</sub>], « I will come. »

B. Peter said that he will/would come.

(3) *Petelo tub+aka nde yandi ata kwisa.*

Peter said that he will/would come.

Although a lot of *French* words have been borrowed into *Kituba*, the educated variety often transfers others which are not really part of the system. For instance, *bilo* ‘office, desk’ (< French *bureau*, idem), *vwatil(i)/vwatir(i)* ‘car’ (< French *voiture*, idem), *ku+luwe* ‘to rent’ (< French *louer*, idem) are established borrowings; but the status of *le dernier* ‘the last’, often heard instead of *ya nsuka* (lit., ‘OF end’), is not so clear. Less clear is that of *le premier* ‘the first’ and *le deuxième* ‘the second’; they are in normal alternation with the indigenous phrases *ya ntete* (literally, ‘OF beginning’) and *ya zole* (lit., ‘OF two’), respectively.<sup>11</sup> In non-educated speech *le premier* and *le deuxième* but not *le dernier* are commonly used, as frozen phrases, to rank-order students in a class by their grades, although none of them is normally used to rank people by, e.g., order of arrival. However, in educated speech these terms may be used both ways. Despite the prestigious ethnographic position of *French* in DRC, it must be noted that this colonial language does not participate in the spectrum of *Kituba* varieties, which I would not object to characterizing as a continuum. However, this would be a continuum without the Anglophone Caribbean kind of basilect-to-acrolect gradation. For sure, the variety of *Kituba* spoken by the educated is not a mesolect. Like the rural varieties, the latter is just one of the centrifugal evolutions from the urban vernacular developed by populations that largely did not speak *French*. We must remember that French-influenced *Kituba* is just tolerated, not emulated. The only difference is that, unlike rural varieties, it is not derided. If the continuum is conceived of linearly, than it spans bidirectionally, with the urban vernacular

<sup>10</sup> Due to a colonial tradition which underrated indigenous languages and cultures, the educated way is more tolerated than corrected or ridiculed (Mufwene 1988b), although the coexistence of the two rules for reported speech creates confusion. Evidence for this may be noticed in the fact that the subordinate clause tense in (3) is not reoriented, unlike the pronoun. Spoken, either sentence may be misinterpreted, depending on whether the French-derived rule or the *Bantu* rule is applied.

<sup>11</sup> The plural is formed doubly by changing the article, as in *French*, and by attaching the class-2 prefix *ba-* to the phrase, as to *Bantu* nouns of class 1a (with a zero singular prefix). This yields *ba+les premiers*; my intuitions are, however, less clear on whether or not *ba+les deuxièmes* is equally acceptable.

occupying the middle ground between the rural and the educated speakers' varieties.

The way *Kituba* is used makes it difficult to estimate accurately the total number of its speakers, except in assuming that everybody in the *Kituba* territory speaks it as a first, second, or third language, regardless of the degree of fluency. In DRC alone, it may be estimated, conservatively, that about 5-6 million people speak it. Ethnographically, its prestige ranks between French, the official language, and the ethnic languages, e.g., *Kiyombe*, *Kiladi*, *Kintandu*, *Kifioti*, *Kimanyanga*, *Kiteke*, *Kiyansi*, *Kipende*, *Gimbala*, *Kingongo*, *Kihungan*, *Kiyaka*, *Kisuku*, and *Kiboma*. They belong to groups B and H of *Bantu*, according to Guthrie (1953), and they differ in a number of their structural features, such as the number of their segmental phonemes, their tonal patterns, and whether or not they have Subject-Verb agreement. It is not obvious to what extent the structural differences among these ethnic languages are responsible for the three major dialects that Fehderau (1966) has identified for *Kituba*, viz., the « western dialect » (WD on the map), spoken between the Kwango River and the Atlantic Ocean, south of the Congo River ; the « eastern dialect » (ED), spoken between the Kwango and Kwilu Rivers, south of the Kasai River ; and the « northern dialect » (ND), spoken in the Republic of the Congo.<sup>12</sup> Correlation between dialectal variation in *Kituba* and the ethnic languages of the corresponding geographical areas is quite likely but remains to be proven. The perspective presented in this essay is, like in my earlier publications on the subject matter, primarily that of a native speaker of the eastern variety. To my knowledge, the structural differences between the eastern and the western varieties are not so strong as to raise serious questions of mutual intelligibility or whether the different dialects may in fact be considered as different languages.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

No extensive conclusions need be drawn from this paper that are not evident from Section 2. The answer to the question « What's in a name? » is that names can tell a great deal about the contact history of a language and the ecology of its emergence. There is often a disjuncture between, on the one hand, the name in currency among native speakers and, on the other, those imposed on the language by outsiders, including the experts and the groups controlling the socio-economic system. The reasons for the assignment of names are not the same from one institution or polity to another. One should therefore beware of extrapolating

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<sup>12</sup> Fehderau observes that the division is made particularly for convenience. It is, however, noteworthy that the Kwango River is near the eastern border of the former Kongo Kingdom. East of the river are spoken languages most of which belong to Group B of the Bantu family and differ more significantly from the *Kikongo* cluster of languages (Group H) than the latter do among themselves. Usage of the term *Kikwango* for a particular variety of *Kituba* coinciding roughly with Fehderau's « eastern dialect » suggests that at least part of the division is real to speakers of *Kituba* and is not simply academic.

beyond the similarities warranted by the colonial, ethnographic, and genetic histories of the relevant languages.

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