

## TRANSLATING CULTURE: LITERARY TRANSLATIONS INTO SWAHILI BY EAST AFRICAN TRANSLATORS

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Lengo la makala hii ni kujaribu kufafanua jinsi wafasiri walivyotafsiri kwa Kiswahili baadhi ya riwaya zilizoandikwa kwa lugha za kigeni, enzi za baada ya nchi za Afrika kujipatia uhuru. Kwa ajili ya mada yenyewe nimechagua mkusanyo wa riwaya nne zilizotafsiriwa na Watanzania, yaani *Shamba la wanyama* (kilichoandikwa na Fortunatus Kawegere, 1967), *Shujaa Okonkwo* (Clement Ndulute, 1973), *Mzee na bahari* (Cyprian Tirumanywa, 1980) na *Barua ndefu kama hii* (Clement Maganga, 1994). Wafasiri hao walikabiliana vipi na vipengele vya kitamaduni vya lugha chanzi (za jamii zenye maisha, dini, misemo, methali tofauti na yao n.k.)? Kwa kuzingatia swali hilo, makala inaeleza baadhi ya mbinu zilizotumiwa na watafsiri wa Kiswahili wakishughulika na maandishi kutoka kwa fasihi ya kigeni.

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### Introduction

The Swahili language and literature has a long history of negotiating meanings with foreign texts, starting from the translation of the highly regarded Arabic poetry (Mazrui 2007: 124). This practice, however, has to be better considered as a creative adaptation of the Arab sources, which are appropriated by the Swahili poets mainly through language, prosody, imagery and narrative structure, thus opening up the texts to a wider audience (Vierke 2009: 422; 437).

The interface with western forms of translation – rooted in different theories and aesthetics, but always concerned with the search of a kind of “faithfulness” to the source text - dates back to the activity of missionaries and colonial administrators in East Africa, who exercised their symbolic power through an attempted control over Swahili by means of the Roman script, grammars, dictionaries (Fabian 1986: 13) and translations of religious and literary works.<sup>1</sup> These colonial practices originated various and complex dynamics of resistance and appropriation on the side of East African Swahili-speaking interpreters, translators and authors, which constituted the humus where the multi-faceted modern Swahili literature emerged. The postcolonial translating activity

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<sup>1</sup> The early missionaries of the Church Missionary Society and the UMCA translated Christian texts from as early as the 1840s. Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* (entitled *Msafiri*) was released in 1888, and, in 1891, a translation of the entire Bible was published. Later on, in order to provide Swahili textbooks for colonial education, a number of booklets and pamphlets were printed in that period. These included translations from European literature (Kipling, Stevenson, Swift, etc.) and a number of more or less original fairy tales, often based on motifs from *A Thousand and One Nights*, which were translated under the title *Mazungumzo ya Alfu-Lela-Ulela* (‘Conversations of the one thousand and one nights’, 1929) by Frederick Johnson, the first Secretary of the Inter-Territorial Swahili Committee, and his East African assistant Edward H. Brenn (Bertoncini Zúbková et al. 2009: 30-31).

from and into Swahili, therefore, notwithstanding its tiny production in comparison with creative writing, has always held a high symbolic significance, first of all as a statement of linguistic and cultural agency – pioneered by Nyerere’s translations of Shakespeare’s drama *Julius Caesar* and *The Merchant of Venice*, entitled respectively *Juliasi Kaizari* (1969 [1963] under the title *Julius Caesar*) and *Mabepari wa Venisi* (1969) (Geider 2008: 75). As shown by the critical reception of these latter works and by the developments of the school curriculum policies, some translated texts are perceived as part of literature in Swahili and, in this sense, have been included by a number of critics in their definitions of the Swahili literary corpus (Mazrui 2007: 132). Although Swahili criticism has already started to deal with manifold aspects of literary translation, a great deal of work is still to be done and a closer reading of translating practices in Swahili represents a necessary preliminary activity in order to enhance our understanding of the shifting conceptualisations of translation within the historical and socio-cultural reconfigurations of Swahili literary space.

Despite the fact that the developments within translation studies over the last two or three decades (semiotics, descriptive studies and, most significantly, postcolonial analyses) have largely contributed to remap the field and to push back its Eurocentric boundaries, in fact, the interest towards the socio-cultural and ideological aspects of the translating activity is very often not “[...] matched by adequate information about diachronic and synchronic translational practices and ideas around the world” (Kothari & Wakabayashi 2009: 5).

For the purpose of this article, I selected a micro-archive composed of four prose works of translation within the Tanzanian Swahili literary field. These Swahili translations were written in different decades, thus being interrelated with the cultural changes of the local context: *Shamba la Wanyama* by Fortunatus Kawegere<sup>2</sup> (1967, translation of Orwell’s *Animal Farm*, 1945), *Shujaa Okonkwo* by Clement Ndulute<sup>3</sup> (1973, translation of Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*, 1958), *Mzee na Bahari* by Cyprian Tirumanywa<sup>4</sup> (1980, translation of Hemingway’s *The Old Man and the Sea*, 1952) and *Barua Ndefu kama Hii* by Clement Maganga (1994, translation of Bâ’s *Une si longue lettre*, 1979). By focusing on one of the most challenging tasks faced by translators of literary texts, i.e. the approach to the culture-specific use of the source language (vocabulary drawing from material, social and religious culture, idioms, proverbs, etc.), the discourse explores some of the different strategies employed by East African translators who were transferring foreign literatures into Swahili.

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<sup>2</sup> Fortunatus Kawegere, from Bukoba, is also a writer of Swahili poetry and of English and Swahili prose (mainly adventure or detective stories for young readers).

<sup>3</sup> C. Ndulute was a lecturer in literature at the University of Dar es Salaam; he is presently professor of English at Tuskegee University in Alabama.

<sup>4</sup> Rev. C. Tirumanywa is a biblical scholar from the Archdiocese of Mwanza.

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Two categories have emerged in translation studies when considering it as an act of intercultural communication, which today are generally termed “foreignisation” and “domestication”, as proposed by L. Venuti (1995: 20), or alternatively “xenophilisation” and “localisation” (Eco 2003: 172). Whilst the domesticating strategy moves the foreign text towards the target language and culture, so that the audience will find it immediately recognisable and familiar, the foreignising approach is practised by a closer adherence to the source text and by retaining its cultural markers, thus introducing elements which are unfamiliar to the target readers. Through the analyses of the following examples, these wide categories will be confronted with case-specific translating practices, thus revealing that a heterogeneity of strategies come out, in spite of the sociological affinities amongst the translators (Christian male scholars from Mainland Tanzania).

### ***Shamba la wanyama* by F. Kawegere, 1967 (*Animal Farm* by George Orwell, 1945)**

Mr Jones, of the Manor farm, had locked the hen-houses for the night, but was too drunk to remember to shut the pop-holes. With the ring of light from his lantern dancing from side to side he lurched across the yard, kicked off his boots at the back door, drew himself a last glass of beer from the barrel in the scullery, and made his way up to bed, where Mrs Jones was already snoring. (Orwell 1987: 1)

*Shamba Ibura lilikuwa mali ya Bwana Mtiki. Siku moja alipokuwa amelewa sana alighafilika kufunga zizi baada ya kufunga kibanda cha kuku. Alijinywea bilauri yake ya mwisho, alivua viatu halafu akajitupa kitandani ambamo mkewe alikuwa ameisha anza kukoroma.* (Kawegere 1967: 7)

Already from the opening of the work, it is clear that the translator is operating a radical and coherent process of domestication, mainly through three strategies: *Africanisation* - the translator carries out a full contextualisation in his familiar milieu (Ibura is a neighborhood in the outskirts of Bukoba, seat of the Lutheran church); *De-Englishisation* - Kawegere opts for a massive removal of linguistic references to England and English culture (names, toponyms, culture-specific objects such as barrel, scullery, etc.), often without searching for replacements in the target language; *Rewriting* - he manifests his authorial attitude by omitting or reformulating sentences. He, himself a writer of poetry and prose, Kawegere manifests a perception of his translating activity pervaded by oral aesthetics. Borrowing the definition from Chandran (2011: 297), the translator Kawegere sees himself as an “ideal reader”: the process of translation is not subordinated to the source text, nor obsessed with its meanings, which are not the author’s prerogative.

Throughout the text, we find many other examples of domestication. Some characters receive allegorical names, for example the boars Snowball and Napoleon become respectively Mzushi (tell-tale, slanderer) and Mkimwa (impassive, cold person). Swahili idioms are sometimes inserted even if the original sentence is not idiomatic, e.g. “Mollie agreed, but she did not sound very convinced.” (Orwell 1987: 10) is translated as *Mjinga alikubali shingo upande* (Kawegere 1967: 19; the idiom *shingo upande* is similar to the Latin *obtoro collo*).

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Finally, a number of noteworthy omissions appear, for instance in the lyrics of the song *Beasts of England* (I only quote the first and the third stanza):

Beasts of England, beast of Ireland,  
Beasts of every land and clime,  
Hearken to my joyful tidings  
Of the golden future time  
[...]  
Rings shall vanish from our noses,  
And the harness from our back,  
Bit and spur shall rust forever,  
Cruel whips no more shall crack. (Orwell 1987: 7)

*Ndugu zangu e wanyama,*  
*Mlio karibu hapa,*  
*Habari nzuri sikiliza,*  
*Siku moja itafika.*  
[...]  
*Siku hiyo ya furaha,*  
*Hazama zitakwisha,*  
*Lijamu na kigwe pia,*  
*Vitatumwa wanyama.* (Kawegere 1967: 14)

The whips, one amongst the most effective symbols of colonial violence in Africa, have disappeared in Kawegere's free translation. This seems to prevent any anti-colonial interpretation of the Orwellian (anti-Stalinist) animal rebellion on the part of Kawegere, whose anti-socialist perspective is also made very clear by his translation of the "political" terminology, which echoes the vocabulary of Nyerere's African Socialism: Animalism is translated as *unyama*, comrade as *ndugu*, and significantly rebellion is rendered as *mapinduzi* (literally meaning 'revolution', another keyword which later on, in 1977, entered into the name of Tanzania's one-party *Chama cha Mapinduzi* (Party of the Revolution)). It was surely no accident that this Swahili translation of *Animal Farm* was financed by the United States Information Service, maybe as part of the Cold War anticommunist activities (Mazrui 2007: 138), and that the book was published outside Tanzania, by the East African Publishing House in Nairobi.

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Notwithstanding the translator's communicative intention, however, his translation strategy, which appropriates the story within the trend of allegorical Swahili prose, have made it susceptible of different interpretations in Kenya, where the book was selected as an examinable text for high schools and, as reported by A. Mazrui, has been read both in relation to neo-colonialism and (silently) as a form of political counter-discourse about historical amnesia (2007: 139-143).

### ***Shujaa Okonkwo* ('Okonkwo the Hero') by C. Ndulute, 1973 (*Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe, 1958)**

The first thing to be noticed in this work of translation is that the title of the novel has been changed in order to remove the literary reference to Yeats's poem *The Second Coming*, epigraph of Achebe's novel, which is consequently absent in the Swahili translation. This omission is a clear form of Africanisation, which makes very visible the translator's anti-colonial and pan-African reading of this novel, and rejects the polyvalence of this reference to Irish literature.

In the incipit of the novel, it immediately appears that the translator Ndulute, differently from Kawegere, opts for a foreignising strategy, by keeping in the text many cultural markers which situate the novel in Igboland. At the same time, though, the translator, similarly to Kawegere, manifests an authorial attitude through the omission of details and even of a full sentence (underlined in the original text):

Okonkwo was well known throughout the nine villages and even beyond. His fame rested on solid personal achievements. As a young man of eighteen he had brought honour to his village by throwing Amalinze the Cat. Amalinze was the great wrestler who for seven years was unbeaten, from Umuofia to Mbaino. He was called the Cat because his back would never touch the earth. It was this man that Okonkwo threw in a fight which the old men agreed was one of the fiercest since the founder of their town engaged a spirit of the wild for seven days and seven nights. (Achebe 1996: 3)

*Okonkwo alijulikana katika vijiji vyote tisa na hata nje ya vijiji hivyo. Sifa yake ilitokana na mafanikio yake imara. Alipokuwa na umri wa miaka kumi na minane alikiletea heshima kijiji chake kwa kumtupa mweleka Amalinze, aliyefahamika kama Paka. Amalinze alikuwa ndiye shajaa wa kupiga mieleka ambaye kwa miaka saba hakuwa ameshindwa na mtu. Okonkwo alimbwaga chini jambazi huyu. Mzee Paka, kama alivyojulikana, alikiri kwamba mapigano yao yalikuwa ndiyo makali kuliko yote yaliyowahi kufanywa tangu mwanzishaji wa kijiji chao alipopambana na mzimu wa mwituni kwa siku saba usiku na mchana. (Ndulute 1973: 7)*

His Swahili translation foreignises by preserving the names of the characters (Okonkwo, Nwoye, Ekwefi, etc.), the names of the villages (Umuofia, Mbanta, etc.), the salutations (such as "*Umuofia kwenu*" and the answer "*Yaa!*"), the Igbo spirits and gods, objects, rituals, traditional beliefs, concepts, etc.. The songs, which are in Ibo in the source text, are left in original language, and also proverbs and animal tales are translated literally, not accommodated to Swahili traditions.

In some cases, the source text does not provide any explanation to the reader (for ex. about the musical instruments like *ekwe*, *udu*, *ogene*, or about the Ibo song lyrics) and the translator Ndulute has preserved the same effect of “strangeness” for a non-autochthonous reader. In most instances, though, the work of the translator as mediator is immensely facilitated by the author’s own style: Achebe’s prose is predominantly infused with what we may call “auto-ethnographic explanations”, which make clear the sense of Ibo words to an audience devoid of the necessary linguistic and cultural competence, as it is illustrated in the following examples:

[Okonkwo] had a large compound enclosed by a thick wall of red earth. His own hut, or obi, stood immediately behind the only gate in the red walls. (Achebe 1996: 13)

*[Okonkwo] alikuwa na uwanja mkubwa uliozungukwa na ukuta mnene wa udongo mwekundu. Kibanda cha kulala yeye au obi kilikuwa karibu kabisa na mlango wa ukuta huo.* (Ndulute 1973: 19)

[...] even now he still remembered how he had suffered when a playmate had told him that his father was agbala. That was how Okonkwo first came to know that agbala was not only another name for a woman, it could also mean a man who had taken no title. (Achebe 1996: 13)

*Aliweza kukumbuka jinsi alivyomizwa moyo wakati mwenzi wake aliposema Unoka, baba ya Okonkwo, alikuwa agbala. Wakati huo ndipo alifahamu kuwa agbala haikuwa na maana mwanamke tu, bali hata mwanamume, ambaye hakuwahi kupata jina la heshima.* (Ndulute 1973: 19)

As remarked by Umberto Eco (2003: 193), though, translators frequently negotiate the strategies of xenophilisation and localisation throughout the process, a decision making which involves reasoning about loss and gain. In Ndulute’s translation of *Things Fall Apart*, as well, we find a few cases of domestication, such as in the following example:

She wore a coiffure which was done up into a crest in the middle of the head. Cam wood was rubbed lightly into her skin, and all over her body were black patterns drawn with *uli*. (Achebe 1996: 66)

*Nywele zake zilifungwa na mikono ya mtu stadi sana; zilikuwa na shungi katikati ya kichwa chake. Mwili wake ulipakwa mafuta na wote ukawa na mapambo ya kupendeza.* (Ndulute 1973: 73)

Here the translator avoids the vocabulary referring to Igbo culture (cam wood, black patterns drawn with *uli*, i.e. a plant whose seeds are used to prepare a dye that temporarily stained the skin black), by replacing them with more generic Swahili words, *mafuta* (oil) and *mapambo* (ornaments).

The domestication process is also shown by the translator’s re-writing. As we already saw in the first quotation, Ndulute seems not to be interested in a sentence-by-sentence search for the intentions of the author or for the intentions expressed by the stylistic features of text itself. A pertinent instance is to be found at the end of the novel:

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He [the District Commissioner] had already chosen the title of the book, after much thought: *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*. (Achebe 1996: 187)

*Bwana D. C. alikuwa amekwisha chagua jina la kitabu hicho baada ya taamuli kubwa: Uletaji sulubu kwa washenzi wa mto Niger*. (Ndulute 1973: 194)

The choice of the word *sulubu* (torment, torture, hard labour) suggests that the translator did not find acceptable for his target audience to read a definition of colonialism as “pacification” and, therefore, consciously deleted the sense of deep irony involved in Achebe’s reporting the point of view of the colonialist-ethnographer.

### ***Mzee na bahari* by C. Tirumanywa, 1980 (*The Old Man and the Sea* by Ernest Hemingway, 1952)**

He was an old man who fished alone in a skiff in the Gulf Stream and he had gone eighty-four days now without taking a fish. In the first forty days a boy had been with him. But after forty days without a fish the boy’s parents had told him that the old man was now definitely and finally *salao*, which is the worst form of unlucky, and the boy had gone at their orders in another boat which caught three good fish the first week. (Hemingway 1977: 5)

*Alikuwa Mzee mvuvi, alyevua peke yake mtumbwini katika Mkondo Mkuu, Bahari la Atlanta. Kwa siku themanini na nne alikuwa hakuambulia chochote. Siku arobaini za kwanza, alikuwa pamoja na mtoto mvulana. Lakini baada ya siku arobaini bila mafanikio, wazazi wa Mtoto walimwambia kwamba Mzee alikuwa bila shaka salao, yaani mtu wa shari. Kwa maagizo yao, Mtoto aliingia katika mtumbwi mwingine; nao ulinasa samaki watatu wakubwa, juma la kwanza.* (Tirumanywa 1980: 1; emphasis by the author)

By putting side by side the opening of the source-text and that of the target-text, it comes out that Tirumanywa’s work of translation is on the whole orientated towards a preservation of the foreign setting of the narration (Cuba, where Hemingway spent many years of his life), but he is also concerned about his readers, and consequently adds a geographical explanation, i.e. *Bahari la Atlanta* (the Atlantic sea) in order to help the audience to locate the setting of the narration. He also retains Hemingway’s use of Spanish words, which suggest a local flavour as well as the untranslatability of certain expressions, such as in the subsequent examples:

The shack was made of the tough bud-shields of the royal palm which are called *guano*. (Hemingway 1977: 8)

*Kibanda chenyewe kilikuwa kimejengwa kwa makuti ya mivaa, ijulikanayo kama guano.* (Tirumanywa 1980: 6; emphasis by the author)

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He [the Old man] always thought of the sea as *la mar* which is what people call her in Spanish when they love her. Sometimes those who love her say bad things of her but they are always said as though she were a woman. Some of the younger fishermen, those who used buoys as floats for their lines and had motorboats, bought when the shark livers had brought much money, spoke of her as *el mar*, which is masculine. They spoke of her as a contestant or a place or even an enemy. (Hemingway 1977: 19-20)

*Aliita bahari daima la mar, yaani jina la kike kama waiitavyo watu kwa Kispania, kuonyesha ubembe. Pengine wale wanaoipenda, husema maya juu yake, kama ambavyo wangesema juu ya mwanamke. Baadhi ya vijana wavuvi waliita bahari jina la kiume, el mar. Hawa ndio waliotumia chelezo na mitumbwi ya injini, baada ya kutajirika kwa kuuza maini ya papa. Walifikiria bahari kama mshindaji, au kama uwanja, au hata kama adui.* (Tirumanywa 1980: 17; emphasis by the author)

Here the translator reproduces Hemingway's explanation of how a gender-based grammatical shift in Spanish (*la mar* vs. *el mar*), a feature absent in English, just as in Swahili, may convey opposite feelings and worldviews.

This perspective, though, is negotiated throughout the work of translation with a certain degree of localisation. The names of the source text are preserved, but they are swahilised (in Nyerere's style) whenever they do not "sound well" (e.g. Manolin is rendered as Manolino). Tirumanywa also employs some forms of approximation (marlin is translated as *sansui*, also *sansuri* - barracuda) and explication (yellow rice is translated as *wali wa bizari* - rice with turmeric). He sometimes opts for an overt domestication, such as in the following example:

I have yesterday's paper and I will read the baseball. (Hemingway 1977: 10)

*Nina gazeti la jana, na nitasoma habari za mpira.* (Tirumanywa 1980: 7)

The translator domesticates by converting "baseball" into *mpira* (football), but at the same time he keeps the names of the American baseball teams (Yankees, Indian of Cleveland, etc.) and of the famous Italian-American champion Di Maggio.

Tirumanya's translation of the *Old Man and the Sea*, differently from the case of *Things Fall Apart*, shows greater adherence to the source text, without omissions or evident manipulation of lexical forms. His strategy of foreignisation reminds us of Nyerere's endeavor to render in Swahili the complexity of the source text, thus reacting against a certain colonial trend of literary translation based on simplification, omission and adaptation. On the other hand, his mild domestication suggests to his readers that this story of an old man who courageously succeeds in catching a huge fish, but fails to bring it out of the sea because the sharks devour it, even if it is settled "out there", has something to say to the East African audience, and thus implicitly posits the text within what we may call a "mafumbo aesthetics" of reception in Swahili literature.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The use of mafumbo (ambiguous, metaphorical references, enigmas) plays a major role in Swahili communication, allowing to formulate a message relating to sensitive issues (Sheikh 1994: 7).

***Barua ndefu kama hii*, by the late C. Maganga, 1994 (*Une si longue lettre* by Mariama Bâ, 1979)**

The Swahili translation of Mariama Bâ's *Une si longue lettre* is actually an indirect translation from the English version<sup>6</sup>, carried out by Modupe Bode-Thomas and published under the title *So Long a Letter* (1989).

Aïssatou,

J'ai reçu ton mot. En guise de réponse, j'ouvre ce cahier, point d'appui dans mon désarroi: notre longue pratique m'a enseigné que la confiance noie la douleur. (Bâ 2001: 11)

Dear Aissatou,

I have received your letter. By way of reply, I am beginning this diary, my prop in my distress. Our *longue* association has taught me that confiding in others allays pain. (Bode-Thomas 1989: 1)

*Aisatu*,

*Barua yako fupi nimeipokea. Ili nikujibu, nafungua hili daftari ambalo nalifanya kama nguzo ya kujiegemeza katika vurumai lililonipata. Uzoefu tulioupata kwa muda mrefu umenifundisha kwamba ukimwamini mwenzako na kumweleza matatizo yako, uchungu ulio nao utapungua.* (Maganga 1994: 1)

Starting once again with the beginning of the novel, it immediately appears the specificity of Maganga's approach to translation, clearly influenced by his activity as professor of Linguistics.<sup>7</sup> He is committed to unravel the semantic nuances of the words, like in this case the double meaning implicit in the verb *confide* (to trust someone., and to share secrets with him/her), which characterises also the French word *confiance* in the source text. His endeavour is certainly complicated by the fact that his work is an indirect translation from the English, but confronting the three texts, we can presume that Maganga was confronting the English edition with the French source: he does not, in fact, add any adjective (like *mpendwa*) to the name Aissatou and he shows more "faithfulness" to the author's choice for the generic word *cahier* instead of *journal*, which is the French word for diary, by translating it as *daftari* (not *shajara*).

This language-orientated attitude informs Maganga's strategy of foreignisation, which starts from the back-cover paratext, where the main character Ramatoulaye, the author of this fictional diary, is introduced as a Senegalese woman. As in the case of Tirumanya, he maintains the names of the characters, and only when necessary adapts them to the Swahili orthography and phonetics

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<sup>6</sup> See the work's presentation on the African Books Collective site, <http://www.africanbookscollective.com> (last visited 03-03-2014)

<sup>7</sup> C. Maganga was professor of Linguistics in the department of Kiswahili at the University of Dar es Salaam.

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(e.g. Ramatoulaye becomes Ramatulayi, Modou Fall is rendered as Modu Falli, Binetou as Binetuu, etc.).

The use of the French language in Mariama Ba's novel, very much as in the case of English in Achebe's work, is associated with a very correct, standard register, which underlines her status of educated woman, but infused with many lexical and cultural references to the Wolof language, to Islamic traditions and to the Senegalese society. These are often clarified in the text itself or in footnotes, for the benefit of a non-autochthonous francophone audience. Maganga's translation keeps very consistently these textual characteristics (in the English edition, instead, the notes are postponed at the end of the work), like in these examples:

Le *Zem Zem*, eau miraculeuse venue des Lieux saints de l'islam, pieusement conservée dans chaque famille, n'est pas oublié. (Bâ 2001: 15)

*Maji ya "zam-zam", yenye miujiza, yaliyoletwa kutoka katika Nchi Takatifu za Kiislamu, na ambayo kila familia huyatunza kwa makini, sharti yawepo pia.* (Maganga 1994: 4)

Hier, elles nous ont offert de l'excellent *thiakry*\*\* pour éteindre notre soif. (Bâ 2001: 22)

\*\*Boisson obtenue en mêlant du lait caillé sucré à la farine de mil malaxée finement et cuite à la vapeur.

*Jana walituletea uji mtamu sana wa "thiakiri" ili tupoze kiu yetu.* (Maganga 1994: 10)

\*\**Uji wa unga wa mtama uliochanganywa na maziwa ya mtindi yaliyowekwa sukari na kupikwa kwa mvuke.*

Maganga's strongly source-orientated and foreignising strategy, however, prevents him from adding other footnotes to the text, when it exhibits cultural references which may be not too familiar to a Swahili-speaking audience, for example the important symbolic function of the cola nut, which is chewed in many West African societies, especially in social rituals.

Les *Sigil ndigalé*\* se succèdent, poignants, tandis que des mains expertes distribuent à l'assistance biscuits, bonbons, colas judicieusement mêlés, premières offrandes vers les cieux pour le repos de l'âme du disparu. (Bâ 2001: 18)

\*Formule de condoléances qui contient un souhait de redressement moral.

*Milio ya "sigil ndigalé" inafuatana, na inchoma kweli moyoni, na wakati huo huo, mikono miepesi inagawanya biskuti, pipi na "kola" zilizochanganywa kwa uangalifu, na vitu hivi ndilo tambiko la mwanzo lielekezalo ili roho ya marehemu ipumzike kwa amani.* (Maganga 1994: 7)

\* *Namna ya rambirambi inayoomba majerekebisho ya kimaadili.*

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The translator's decision here is to "Swahilise" *cola* into *kola* and to put it between brackets in order to signal that it is a foreign word (in Swahili *kola* means collar).

The translator, moreover, avoids domesticating words by approximation: the term *pagne*, for instance, is rendered with less specific *nguo* (cloth), although it refers to a textile similar to East African *kitenge*.

What emerges from these few examples is that Maganga conceives his role of translator more as a technician than a creator and, consequently, shows a strongly source-orientated attitude. Furthermore, he has introduced innovations to the Swahili tradition of translation, by choosing a work, which was written by a woman and in a language other than English. Although he had to rely on the English version, Maganga's method attempts consciously to reduce its intermediation, by putting it side by side with the French source text. The English language, in fact, given its official status and his prestige, is still the dominant language in East African academic studies, and the study of other languages is not frequent. As a consequence, today even modern Arabic literature is translated from English (like Naguib Mahfouz's *Al-Tariq*, translated into Swahili under the title *Msako* and published by Mkuki na Nyota in 2004).

### Conclusion

In independent East Africa, translating literary works into Swahili, just as producing Swahili creative writing, cannot be simply considered as a profession: it is rather a vocation, orientated towards the growth of Swahili language and literature, which deserves in my view a serious critical investigation. Here above, the analysis of some translated works has revealed that, in spite of the sociological similarities amongst the authors, a variety of translating strategies emerge, ranging from a quite coherent process of localisation in *Shamba la wanyama* to different combinations of foreignising and domesticating techniques. These heterogeneous approaches to intercultural transfer point out to shifting conceptualisations of the activity of translation in Tanzania and, more in general, in the Swahili-language literary world, which call for further analyses and contextualisation.

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