

THE VOCABULARY OF POTTERY FASHIONING TECHNIQUES IN GREAT LAKES BANTU: A COMPARATIVE ONOMASIOLOGICAL STUDYⁱ.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Both linguists and historians have heavily relied on the comparative study of vocabularies, in particular those of Bantu languages, in order to reconstruct the ancient past of the African continent. The “Words and Things”-method, on which those studies fall back, generally interprets shared vocabulary as the result of shared history. Vocabulary does not always reflect history, however, as shown by the comparison of the lexicon related to certain technical aspects of pottery production. The verbalising of the acts and objects involved in the coiling technique, i.e. the predominant pottery-shaping device of the Great Lakes Bantu speaking populations, is particularly revealing in this respect. The lexical strategies concerned will be analyzed along the lines of diachronic cognitive onomasiology, as recently defined by Blank (2001).

2 DIACHRONIC ONOMASIOLOGY: THE STUDY OF LEXICALISATION THROUGHOUT TIME

Onomasiology is a rather unfamiliar concept in Bantu historical linguistics. The term was coined in 1902 by the German linguist Adolf Zauner and was chiefly used in the field of Romance and Germanic studies. Onomasiology is the reverse side of semasiology, both being sub-disciplines of diachronic semantics (cf. Blank 2001; Geeraerts 1997; Grzega 2002 ; Malkiel 1993). Semasiology, derived from the Old Greek word *séma* ‘sign’, examines the different meanings of the same form or, in other words, the polysemy of a lexeme. Onomasiology, derived from the Old Greek noun *ónoma* ‘name’, investigates the different denominations of the same concept. In de Saussurian terms, semasiology takes account of the ‘signifiant’, while the ‘signifié’ is within the scope of onomasiology. Onomasiology thus examines the way in which speakers of a language lexicalise a concept or a conceptual domain. By extension, diachronic onomasiology is the study of lexicalisation throughout time. Blank (2001) distinguishes two levels of abstraction: the rather descriptive level of individual studies of concepts on the one hand, and the more theoretical approaches to types of onomasiological processes on the other hand. In the latter case, onomasiology will try to discover the different lexical ‘pathways’ through which a particular concept has been designated by going back to the respective source concepts. It is this more theoretical approach that leads to diachronic cognitive onomasiology. Diachronic onomasiological developments within various languages

are compared in order to get an idea of the universality or language specificity of processes of conceptualisation. These lexical strategies are explained against a cognitive background in terms of salient perceptions, prominence, convincing similarities, etc. Such a two-step-approach is possible within the context of Germanic or Romance studies or other areas, where one can fall back on a long tradition of written records, but it is rather difficult, even impossible, in the domain of Bantu or other languages groups, where written tradition is very recent. Diachronic research in this context is unavoidably inter-language comparative in nature. The onomasiological evolution of an individual concept or conceptual domain throughout time can only be reconstructed by the comparison of this notion(s) in different Bantu languages. In spite of the different goals served by these different kinds of studies, the necessarily comparative approach blurs somehow the methodological distinction between purely historically oriented case studies and the more theoretically directed cognitive typology studies. This endows scholars interested in the interaction between Bantu language and human history with the opportunity to take advantage of the theoretical frameworks developed by more cognitive directed linguists. These new theoretical insights might re-orientate the traditional *Wörter und Sachen*-studies, which have found a fruitful field of application in African historical linguistics (cf. Bulkens 1999a+b; Ehret 1971; Schoenbrun 1998; Vansina 1990; to only cite some examples). In the long term, data from Bantu languages might enrich recent theories in diachronic lexical semantics, which are mainly based on data from European languages. Nevertheless, this article serves a far more modest ambition, namely the exploration of integration possibilities of Bantu lexical data from one conceptual field into onomasiological frameworks of cognitive oriented diachronic semantics.

3 BANTU POTTERY VOCABULARY

The conceptual field under study is Bantu pottery vocabulary. Ceramics are the final products of a production sequence, which starts with the selection of an appropriate clay pit and ends with the application of post-firing techniques on freshly baked earthenware. This production process or “chaîne opératoire” (cf. Gosselain 2000) implies the use of different tools and a succession of different technical acts. The Bantu Pottery Terminology Database, the backbone of our comparative research, comprises thus vocabulary related to the diverse aspects of this widespread traditional handicraft, i.e. the materials and utensils used, the actions performed and the products obtained. It includes more than 5500 entries from about 400 different Bantu languages. This amount of data enables large-scale and multi-varied comparative research. Nevertheless, the scope of this paper is refrained in two ways: thematically and geographically. Out of the various production stages, one will be focussed on. We will mainly treat the vocabulary correlated to the actual shaping phase of the production chain. The geographical scope of this paper is bounded to the Great Lakes Bantu languages. The main reason for this restriction is practical, i.e. the availability of the very specific vocabulary with respect to this manufacture phase. Unlike other regions of the Bantu domain, fairly good lexical data on this aspect of pottery production are accessible for the languages of zone Jⁱⁱ. Very few Bantu language dictionaries comprise detailed information of this kind. The scanty documentation in

other language groups was remedied partly by good lexical data including ethnographical descriptions (cf. Celis & Nzikobanyanka 1984 ; Nangendo 1994 ; Nijembazi 1988 ; Wandibba 1989) and unusually rich dictionaries (cf. Coupez INRS manuscript), partly by personal fieldwork in Burundi and Ugandaⁱⁱⁱ. Moreover, supplementary data were collected in collaboration with the *Institut Supérieur Pédagogique de Bukavu* (RDC)^{iv}. Another reason for this focus on a limited number of languages is methodological. In sub-Saharan Africa, several techniques are used to shape clay pots (cf. Gosselain 2000). These methods may considerably vary from population to population or from region to region. Hence, one risks comparing apples and oranges when putting side by side the vocabulary of different languages. The populations of the Great Lakes region however largely share one and the same modelling device, commonly identified as the coiling technique (cf. Celis & Nzikobanyanka 1984 ; Gosselain 2000 ; Jensen 1969 ; Maquet 1965 ; Nangendo 1994 ; Nijembazi 1988 ; Senasson 1993 ; Trowell 1941 ; Wandibba 1989). Without wanting to decline cultural particularities or individual idiosyncrasies, the pottery traditions of most Bantu speaking populations of the interlacustrine area however, manifest a remarkable technical uniformity.

4 GREAT LAKES BANTU VOCABULARY LINKED TO THE COILING TECHNIQUE

In rough lines, the shaping technique called coiling consists of two basic acts: (1) the rolling of clay coils between the two hands, as shown in figure (1) and (2) the superposition of these clay coils, by a rotating movement, with each slightly overlapping the one below, until the body of the pot has reached the desired height, as shown in figure (3). From a lexical point of view, one can thus distinguish three salient realities apt to verbalising: the coil, the action of rolling the coil and the action of superposing the coils to form the body of the pot.



Fig. 1: Twa potter (Burundi) rolling clay coil between two hands (Maquet 1965)



Fig. 2: Twa potter (Burundi) showing rolled clay coil (Bostoen pers. information)



Fig. 3: Twa potter (Burundi) superposing clay coil (Bostoen pers. information)

4.1 In order to refer to clay coils, Great Lakes Bantu languages have created nouns along two different lines of onomasiological development. A first group of nouns is shown in the example table (1). It concerns in all cases deverbative nouns.

(1) *Deverbative nouns designating coils of clay used to build up a pot*

| <u>Language code</u> | <u>Language</u> | <u>Term</u> | <u>Source</u> |
|----------------------|-----------------|--------------|------------------------|
| J15 | Luganda | èkìzîngó | (Bostoens pers. notes) |
| J42 | Kinande | mùvîrîngò | (ISPB) |
| J54 | Ibembe | muhungo | (ISPB) |
| J61 | Kinyarwanda | umukarago | (Ndekezi 1986) |
| J63 | Kifuliro | muhungo | (ISPB) |
| J31C | Lubukusu | embulungusie | (Nangendo 1994) |

The first five examples in table (1) are derived from their respective verb by means of the final suffix –o, which is the canonical Bantu morpheme to derive nouns that indicate action, instrument or place (cf. Meeussen 1967 : 94 ; Schadeberg 2003 : 80). The Luganda (J15) noun èkìzîngó was used by only one potter^v. Unlike the noun òmùgò, which will be treated further on, the use of èkìzîngó is limited to the first coil placed on the base (èntóbò) of the pot under construction. This potter used the same stem, but preceded by the class 12 noun prefix (àkàzîngó) to designate a small portion of clay that he pulled off from a bigger lump and rolled between his hands. Both nouns literally signify “thing that is rolled or coiled”. They are derived from the verb kùzînga meaning “1. roll; roll up; 2. coil, wind; 3. fold” and correspond to similar deverbatives as mùzîngo “roll, e.g. paper; volume of book” or `zzîngo “1. roll; packet rolled up; 2. fold” (Snoxall 1967: 355). The verb is derived from the root reconstructed as *–dîng– “turn round (tr. + intr.); wind round, wrap up” (A B C G H J K L N R)^{vi} *–dîngò “round object”). The Kinyarwanda (J61) noun umukarago is also derived from a verb meaning “to turn, to roll”. Coupez (INRS manuscript) has translated the verb –karaga as “rouler dans les mains de l'argile ou une masse de matière semblable pour l'allonger/Tordre le fil ou la corde pour les rendre plus résistants/faire tourner”. Although mentioned first, “rouler dans les mains de l'argile” is rather a specialised sense. Alexandre Kimenyi (pers. comm.) and other informants consider the action of rolling between two hands independent of the material that is rolled as the basic sense of the verb. The specialised use of the noun mukarago to refer to a clay coil may have extended the semantic field of the source verb -karaga. In Iembe (J54) and Kifuliro (J63), two neighbouring languages in the Uvira region (DR Congo), an identical term is observed. Due to a lack of information on these languages, it is hard to recover the precise origin of the noun umuhungo. It is probably related to the verb, which was reconstructed as °–pòng– (J) and refers to the action of making a rope by twisting, e.g. Kinande (J42) erihunga “tresser (du fil)” (Kavutirwaki 1978: 49), –hungya “tourner” (Baudet 1947: 71); Kihunde (J51) ihunga “fabriquer des cordes” (Kaji 1992: 115); Mashi (J53) óokuhunga “tresser corde” (Polak-Bynon 1978: 59). The derived noun °–pungo (J) logically designates a rope. The resemblance between a rope and a clay coil is straightforward. Even though

it might be little relevant for the etymology of the noun, the question whether the use of *muhungo* as reference to a clay coil is the result of either an independent derivation from the verb meaning “to turn, to twist” or a metaphorical extension of the sense “rope” could bear interest from a purely theoretical point of view. Like the other nouns with a final *-o*, the Kinande (J42) is a deverbative noun, but still somehow particular. According to Ngessimo Mutaka (pers. comm.), *mũvĩrĩngò* is a Kiswahili (G42) loanword. Neither the verb *-viringa* nor the derived noun exist in Kinande (J42). In the source language, *mviringo* designates “roundness, a round shape, anything round, a circle, a curve, a ring, a washer” and is derived from the verb *-viringa* “to become round, form a curve or to bend, to be rounded (spherical)” (Johnson 1939: 514). It stems from the verb root $^{\circ}$ -*bĩdĩng-* “to turn, to round off” (C G J). Kinande (J42) speakers have a high degree of bilingualism in Kiswahili (G42), at least in the Eastern Congo variant of the language. The following sentence, noted during a an ISPB interview, clearly shows that the interviewed Munande potter switches to Kiswahili (G42) by lack of a proper word in his mother tongue: *erĩbumb’eryo sasa omundũ akatsũka erĩbumbá ĩnatsũka eriyirá mĩyiringa mo... bangináhulá momũvĩrĩngo eeee, neryo wábiyirágó ngáyiringa ngá nzokaá* “the clay that a person now starts to shape, that he starts to make is something like what they call a *circle*, yes, than you do it as it is like a snake”. Apparently, the clay coil is verbally irrelevant for the Munande potter in question, although it is important in the pottery production chain. The Lubukusu (J31c) noun *embulungusie*, finally, is the only deverbative noun that attests a final suffix other than *-o*. According to De Blois (1975: 79), the final suffix *-e* is used to derive nouns designating a person subjected to an action from verbs, e.g. */-dũ ad-/* ‘fall ill’ */-dũ ád-è/ 1/2* ‘ill person’ (*ómúlwá:lé*). The author does not mention that it is also used to derive nouns designating an object subjected to an action, but this seems reasonable to suppose. The verb itself has not been found in Lubukusu (J31c) dictionaries, but Nangendo (1984: 260) himself mentions the verb *khuulungusia* “to coil or to twirl”. It designates the action of “rolling clay between the palms of the hands” in order to form clay coils. In spite of the irregularity of the first consonant^{vii}, the verb undoubtedly stems from the verbal root that was reconstructed as $^{\circ}$ -*bũdũng-* “to be round; to make round; to surround”, e.g. Luganda (J15) *kũvũlunga* “turn over, roll” (Snoxall 1967: 325). The same verb with a similar meaning has been observed in Hehe (G62) *-ulunga* “aus Lehm formen” (Spiss 1900:167) and Nyiha (M23) *ukuvulunga* “to knead clay to make it smooth and soft before forming a pot out of it” (Klein-Arendt pers. comm.)^{viii}. In Zulu (S42) as well, both the verb *-bulunga* and the derived noun *umbulunga/imibulunga* manifest a very strong semantic analogy with the Lubukusu (J31c) examples. Doke & Vilakazi (1948: 91) have translated the verb as “to roll into sausage shape (as head-ring, clay for pot-making, ...)/to polish, to smooth the surface” and the noun as “long, sausage-shaped roll (as of putty, clay for pot-making, a snake)”. Zulu potters also apply the coiling technique for modelling pots (cf. Davison 1985; Lawton 1967; Levinsohn 1984).

Semantic extension of already existing nouns constitutes a second onomasiological source for the creation of nouns designating clay coils. The examples shown in (2) are nouns transferred from one concept to another.

(2) *Non-deverbative nouns designating coils of clay used to build up a pot*

| <u>Language code</u> | <u>Language</u> | <u>Term</u> | <u>Source</u> |
|----------------------|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------|
| J11 | Runyoro | ò̀mùsírà | (Bostoen pers. notes) |
| J15 | Luganda | ùmùgô | (Bostoen pers. notes) |
| J62 | Kirundi | umuhiro (w'ibuúmba) | (Celis & Nzikobanyanka 1984: 525) |

Nouns of this kind are without doubt observed in Luganda (J15) and Kirundi (J62). The origin of the Runyoro (J11) noun ò̀mùsírà, as will be explained further on, is more questionable. In Kirundi (J62), the origin of the noun transfer is the most straightforward. The semantic link between the term umuhiro w'ibuúmba and the noun umuhiro/imihiro “ligne saillante, pli”, found in the dictionary of Rodegem (1970: 165), is obvious. Followed by the complement amata, it designates a “replis de peau autour du cou d'un obèse, double menton” (*ibidem*). The complement amata refers to milk or other dairy products. The noun phrase imihiro y'amata designates thus rolls of fat, which shows the association between dairy and fat. By analogy with imihiro y'amata, umuhiro w'ibuúmba thus literally means “rolls of clay”. The complement ibuúmba signifies “pottery clay”^x. Due to frequent use, potters abbreviate the noun phrase by omitting the complement^x. Despite the final suffix -o, umuhiro is probably not a deverbative noun. There is no evidence of a corresponding verb -hir-. The Luganda (J15) noun ò̀mùgô has been translated by Snoxall (1967: 213) as “edge, rim”. The same stem is encountered in the nouns lùgô “fence of cattle pen, kraal” and kùgô “1. front, 2. fenced enclosure”, which belong to other noun classes. The basic meaning of this noun stem thus responds to the concept of a circle or an encirclement. The same noun is furthermore used to refer to the last coil, which will form the actual rim of the pot: ò̀mùgô gw'ènsúwà “the edge of the pot” (Bostoen pers. notes). As mentioned before, the origin of the Runyoro (J11) noun ò̀mùsírà is not clear. It does not seem to be a deverbative noun. The only corresponding, but semantically rather unlikely source verb that has been found in the dictionary of Davis (1952: 163) is -sírà “to rub (e.g. knife or stone), to file, to blunt”, cf. Luganda (J15) kù-sira “1. to rub smooth with water; 2. to grate (in making powder)” (Snoxall 1967: 288). In Rukiga (J14), a very closely related language, the verb kuziringitirira means “to roll (clay) in the hands” (Taylor 1957: 85) and corresponds to the Runyoro (J11) verb -ziringitirra signifying “to wind, to roll; to rub (e.g. eyes, sticks)” (Davis 1952: 178). Semantically, this last verb would be more credible, but its form is clearly dissimilar. Unlike the verb, the first consonant of the noun for clay coil is definitely unvoiced. However, a noun, to which ò̀mùsírà could be linked, was neither found in dictionaries nor recognized by Runyoro (J11) informants who are not familiar with pottery fabrication. The term ò̀mùsírà can therefore be considered as a genuine specialised technical term, of which the use is limited to the context of pottery making.

4.2 Table (3) underneath displays several verbs referring to the action of rolling coils of clay.

(3) *Verbs referring to the action of rolling clay coils*

| <u>Language code</u> | <u>Language</u> | <u>Term</u> | <u>Source</u> |
|----------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| J11 | Runyoro | òkùzígísá òkùkúrúngá | (Bostoen pers. notes) |
| J14 | Rukiga | kuziringitirira | (Taylor 1957: 85) |
| J15 | Luganda | -kúlùng(úl)á | (Bostoen pers. notes) |
| J31C | Lubukusu | khuulungusia | (Nangendo, 1994) |
| J42 | Kinande | -gūlīngá | (ISPB) |
| J61 | Kinyarwanda | -karaga -shuungushura | (Coupez INRS manuscript) |
| J62 | Kirundi | -nyīngisha | (Bostoen pers. notes) |
| J62 | Kirundi (Bweya) ^{xi} | -nyūngusha | (Bostoen pers. notes) |

Amongst the verbs listed under (3), there is only one that turns up in different languages. It concerns reflexes of the verbal base that was reconstructed as $^{\circ}\text{-k}^{\circ}\text{d}^{\circ}\text{vng-}$ (cf. Bastin & al. 2002; Bourquin 1923; Guthrie 1967-71). In Kinande (J42), we observe in fact a non-reconstructed variant of this verbal base with the extension *-ing-* instead of *-ung-*. The *-ung-* form used by the Banyoro potters is neither attested. Davis (1952: 84) only gives *-kulinga* “to throw in dirt, to roll in mud; to spoil; to make round, to mould”, *-kulingirra* “to make round, to roll round”. Anyhow, the two variants are — at least at first sight — semantically non-distinct. In Luganda (J15), *kù-kulùnga* has been translated as “1. to make round; to knead; 2. to roll, to trail” (> *̀nkulùngo* “ball; marble”) and *kù-kulùngula* as “1. to roll over; 2. to roll along; 3. to tell yarns” (Snoxall 1967: 160). The basic meaning of $^{\circ}\text{-k}^{\circ}\text{d}^{\circ}\text{vng-}/\text{-k}^{\circ}\text{d}^{\circ}\text{ing-}$ is thus “to roll” or “to make round”, not necessarily in the context of pottery production. With reference to the action of rolling clay coils, however, its use is rather atypical. The three cited languages are the only ones in which it has been observed in this function. In the eastern Bantu languages, the verb is more typically used to designate another stage in the production sequence, i.e. the polishing of the pot’s surface, usually before the pot is burnt, e.g. Fipa (M13) *ukukulunga* “to smooth a pot inside and outside before burning it in fire” (Klein-Arendt pers. comm.), Taabwa (M41) *kukulungila* “rendre des pots lisses avant de les cuire” (Van Acker 1907: 40), Ngindo (P14) *kukulungila* “to burnish the pot with a smooth pebble (libwe)” (Crosse-Upcott 1955: 28). Sometimes, the post-firing glazing of a pot is denominated with the same verb, e.g. Sukuma (F23) *-gulungijya* “to glaze a burnt pot” (Richardson & Mann 1966: 33). The polishing is habitually done by means of a pebble, which is designated with noun derived from the verb $^{\circ}\text{-k}^{\circ}\text{d}^{\circ}\text{vng-}/\text{-k}^{\circ}\text{d}^{\circ}\text{ing-}$ by agglutinating the canonical instrumental deverbative suffix(es) (*-id*)-o, e.g. Konjo (J41) *nkulingo* “a small stone to burnish a pot” (O’Brien & Hastings 1933: 190), Kirundi (J62) *umukurungizo* “petite pierre dont on se sert pour polir après le séchage” (Nijembazi 1988:57), Tumbuka (N21) *̀nkúrúngò* “smoothing stone” (Bostoen pers. notes). Even in Kinande (J42), both the verb and the derived noun are attested with this sense: *erīgūlīnga* “donner à quelque chose une forme ronde et polie (lisser, polir)” (Kavutirwaki 1978: 35) et *engulingo* “een

ovaalvormige steen om het oppervlakte van de pot glad te wrijven” (Bergmans 1955: 22)^{xii}. This proves that the $^{\circ}\text{-k}^{\text{u}}\text{d}^{\text{u}}\text{ng-}$ in one and the same language may refer to both stages in the production sequence. Nevertheless, it is by preference linked to the polishing of a non-burnt pot, rather than to the rolling of clay coils. Its association to the latter act is much more sporadic, while its linkage to the former is systematic in the eastern part of the Bantu domain.

Concerning the other verbs under (2), the idea of “rolling” or “making round” is also conveyed by both the Lubukusu (J31c) verb *khuulungusia* that was already mentioned above and the Runyoro (J11) verb *òkùzígísá*. The use of the last verb is surely not limited to the rolling of clay coils, as reveals the translation by Davis (1952: 178): “to twist, to curl (hair); to rub (sticks) together to make fire”. The similarity in gestures between rubbing sticks for making fire and rolling clay coils is quite obvious. In both cases, it concerns the rubbing of an elongated thing between the two hands. The Kinyarwanda (J61) verb *-karaga* was treated above. The verb *-shuungushura* can be considered as a near-synonym. Coupez (INRS manuscript) has translated it as “donner une forme allongée et arrondie à qqch qu'on façonne”. Its use is not limited to the context of pottery fabrication. The Kirundi (J62) verbs *-nyîngisha* and *-nyûngusha* were recorded at different locations, but refer more or less to the same actions. The first verb was recorded during interviews with Twa potters in Kibumbu (Burundi). Rodegem (1970: 298) has translated the verb *-nyîngisha* as “faire des mottes (de beurre, de pâte, de terre, ...)”. Although he considers it as a synonym of *kubûmbabumba*, a reduplication of the verb *kubûmba* “to mould pottery”, its use does not seem to be restricted to the modelling of clay. The same is true for the second Kirundi (J62) verb, which was used by the potter interviewed in Bweya (Uganda). The verb *-nyûngusha* was one of the words not recognized by my Muganda assistant, since the potter fell back on his mother tongue. Rodegem (1970: 302) has translated it as “malaxer; faire tourner entre les mains; agiter/frictionner, masser, pincer en prenant la peau et en la tordant” and its reference domain is surely not limited to pottery production, as proves the derived noun *akanyungusho* “morceau de pâte”. By this particular kind of code switching, the potter actually promotes a non-specialised term of the source language Kirundi (J62) to a specialised technical term with restricted use in the receptor language Luganda (J15). The fact the potter falls back on terms of his mother tongue to designate certain aspects of the production sequence suggests however that even in Kirundi, this semantically wide-range verb may have a specialised use. Whatsoever, this case shows in a particularly concrete manner how the migration of individual artisans may lead to the introduction and diffusion of specific foreign vocabulary in a language^{xiii}.

4.3 Once the needed coils are rolled, the potter starts raising the sides of the pot. When asked to tell what (s)he is doing at that moment, the potter simply answers “I’m modelling a pot”. The verb root used is $^{\circ}\text{-b}^{\text{u}}\text{mb-}$, which is the predominant verb for pottery making in the Eastern Bantu languages. Nevertheless, when one insists, the potter will use very common verbs that literally narrate the different acts (s)he is performing. As a consequence, the verbs presented under (4) can by no means be conceived as specialised technical terms.

(4) *Verbs referring to the action of rounding and superposing coils*

| <u>Language code</u> | <u>Language</u> | <u>Term</u> | <u>Act</u> | <u>Source</u> |
|----------------------|-----------------|-------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| J11 | Runyoro | -zígúrǎ | <i>to turn around a clay coil</i> | (Bostoen pers. notes) |
| | | -híndúrǎ | <i>to turn around a clay coil</i> | |
| | | -ðngérǎ | <i>to superpose a clay coil</i> | |
| | | -yúngǎ | <i>to superpose a clay coil</i> | |
| J15 | Luganda | -wétǎ | <i>to turn around a clay coil</i> | (Bostoen pers. notes) |
| | | -tôlólǎ | <i>to turn around a clay coil</i> | |
| | | -ðngérǎ | <i>to superpose a clay coil</i> | |
| | | -yúngǎ | <i>to superpose a clay coil</i> | |
| J42 | Kinande | -tĩmbyǎ | <i>to turn around a clay coil</i> | (ISPB) |
| J62 | Kirundi | -zĩnga | <i>to turn around a clay coil</i> | (Bostoen pers. notes) |
| | | -egera | <i>to superpose a clay coil</i> | |

The verbs referring to act of turning the coil simply signify “to turn (around)”: Runyoro (J11) -hindura “turn, change, convert” (Davis 1952: 43) (< *-pĩndvd- “to turn; to invert; to change; to deflect; to stir”), Luganda (J15) kũweta “1. to bend; 2. to warp” (< °-pèt- “to bend, to fold”), kũtoòloola “to go round and round” (Snoxall 1967: 337+314), Kinande (J42) -timbya “tourner, environner” (Baudet 1947: 170), Kirundi (J62) kuzĩnga “rouler, enrouler, replier” (Rodegem 1970: 580) (< *-dĩng- “to turn round (tr. + intr.); to wind round, to wrap up”). The Runyoro (J11) verb -zigura is translated as “to wipe, to dust, to rub, to polish” by Davis (1952: 178). This meaning does not really correspond to the act of turning around clay coils, but according to Runyoro informants the verb also means “to rotate” or “to make go round by bringing together two surfaces like boards”. It can be used in a sentence as omupiira gwe gali gukwezigura “the bicycle tyre is running”. The verb is thus related to -zigisa “to twist, to curl (hair); to rub (sticks) together to make fire”, which is used for rolling clay coils. The verbs referring to the act of superposing clay coils actually signify “to add”, e.g. Runyoro (J11) -ongera “to increase, to add” (Davis 1952: 141), Luganda (J15) kwõngera “to increase, to add” (Snoxall 1967: 268) (< *-jõngĩd- “to add to”) or “to join”, e.g. Runyoro (J11) -yunga “to join, to splice, to set” (Davis 1952: 177), Luganda (J15) kuyũnga “to join; to splice” (Snoxall 1967: 351) or Kirundi (J62) kwegera “approcher, s’approcher, aborder, accoster” (Rodegem 1970: 77). It is entirely clear that there exist no particular vocabulary to refer to the acts of turning and superposing clay coils. If requested, the potters just literally put into words what they are doing.

5 COILING VOCABULARY AND CATEGORISATION OF ONOMASIOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS

In the realm of the Romance languages, Grzega (2002: 1024) has discerned the following processes of lexemic change: (1) phonetically regular development of the inherited word, (2) modification of the inherited word (including word-formation processes), (3) neologism: (3a) absolutely new coinage, (3b) semantic modification

of an already existing word, (3c) borrowing. Although more detailed and encompassing categorisations have been developed (e.g. Zgusta 1990), this basic classification must allow us to make a rudimentary comparison of the onomasiological strategies implied in the creation of coiling vocabulary. These manners of verbalisation will be explained against a set of associative relations between the source and target concept, which Blank (2001: 13) has reduced to the three Aristotelian principles of remembering, i.e. similarity, contrast and contiguity.

With respect to the Great Lakes Bantu coiling vocabulary, only two of the basic categories of word-concept developments mentioned above can be discerned: (1) the modification of inherited words and (2) the semantic modification of an already existing word. The deverbative nouns for clay coils are the best examples of lexical creation of the first kind. Many of them are derived from verbs that belong to the inherited vocabulary of the language. It concerns reflexes of Common Bantu or regionally reconstructed verbs like **-dɪng-* “to turn round (tr. + intr.); to wind round, to wrap up”, *°-bɪdɪng-* “to turn, to round off”, *°-bʊdʊng-* “to be round; to make round; to surround” or *°-pʊng-* “to make a rope by twisting”. All of them can be considered as morphosemantic neologisms, in the sense that they change the morphology of an existing lexeme in order to create a new meaning. Notwithstanding this conformity of word-making process, each language has chosen its own verb to derive the noun designating a clay coil. Hence every noun must be considered as an independent creation, particular to the language in question and pre-eminently used in the context of pottery production. The fact that potters within a same language community use the same term excludes the hypothesis of words invented on the spot when asked to lexicalize a clay coil. The conceptualisation that underlies the creation of all these nouns is nevertheless equivalent in the different languages. The signification of the source verbs is in all cases “to roll” or “to make round”. The basic meaning of the nouns for clay coils is thus “a thing that is round or rolled”. The associative relation between the source and target concept, which underlies this kind of verbalisation, is one of contiguity between an activity and the result of this activity. In this case, the clay coil is metonymically called after the action that is performed in order to model it. There are even indications that the use of certain verbs to derive the noun for clay coil may have an influence on its proper meaning. The respective use of the verbs *khuulungusia* and *-karaga* to form the noun for clay coil may have extended their semantic field. Unlike the other source verbs for clay coils which are simply translated as “to roll” or “to make round”, the sources where these verbs were found, explicitly mention the sense “to roll clay between the hands”. This could mean that the sense of these verbs has been extended from a more general meaning to this specialised meaning. This evolution is not automatic, since in other languages, the verb used for rolling clay coils is different from the one used to derive the noun for clay coil, e.g. Luganda (J15) *-kúlùngúlá èkizîngó*.

The second group of onomasiological developments, i.e. the semantic modification of an already existing word, is also met amongst the nouns for clay coils, but to a much lesser extent. The Luganda (J15) noun *ômùgô* and the Kirundi (J62) noun *umuhirô* are examples of name transfer of one concept to another without morphological modifications. As a result, the meaning of this word is extended, which shows the subtle interaction between onomasiological and semasiological

changes. In the case of *umuhiro*, the semantic change is assisted by the ellipsis of the connective complement *w'ibuúmba* ‘pottery clay’. The associative relation, which links the source and target concept of the transferred noun, is one of similarity; in Luganda (J15) between the circle form of a rim or a fence and a clay coil and in Kirundi (J62), between a roll of fat for example and a roll of clay. The verbs linked to the acts of rolling and superposing clay coils could also be considered as instances of name transfers resulting in the semantic modification of an existing word. It is probably more convenient however to presume that no name transfer is involved at all. The different acts carried out at these stages of the manufacture process do not bear an appropriate specific name, except for the general verb ‘to mould pottery’ that refers to the modelling stages in their entirety. Consequently, when requested to verbalize the act(s) he is executing, the potter uses verbs of which the meaning is so general that they meet the verbal need at that moment. In other words, the acts of rolling and superposing clay coils for pottery purposes are verbally irrelevant. Although they constitute visually distinct parts of the pottery production sequence, the concerned acts are not endowed with a suitable specialised technical term. Exceptions might be the verbs *-karaga* in Kinyarwanda (J61) and *khuulungusia* in Lubukusu (J31c), where we observe a certain semantic specialisation. The use of a Kiswahili (G42) loanword by a Munande potter in order to refer to the clay coil itself suggests a similar kind of lexical insignificance, at least in Kinande (J42). Although the inter-linguistic diversity of word forms might confirm this suspicion, the use of the same word by the different potters within a same language community indicates nonetheless that it is to a certain extent rooted in the lexicon.

If only two of the sub-classes of lexemic change enumerated by Grzega (2002) are met, the remaining three are lacking. From a cultural historical point of view, the absence of inherited or borrowed vocabulary is highly significant. Except for the above-mentioned loan word in Kinande (J42), none of these two types was encountered. As it was stated before, the coiling method is a distinct manner of moulding pottery, of which the repartition is

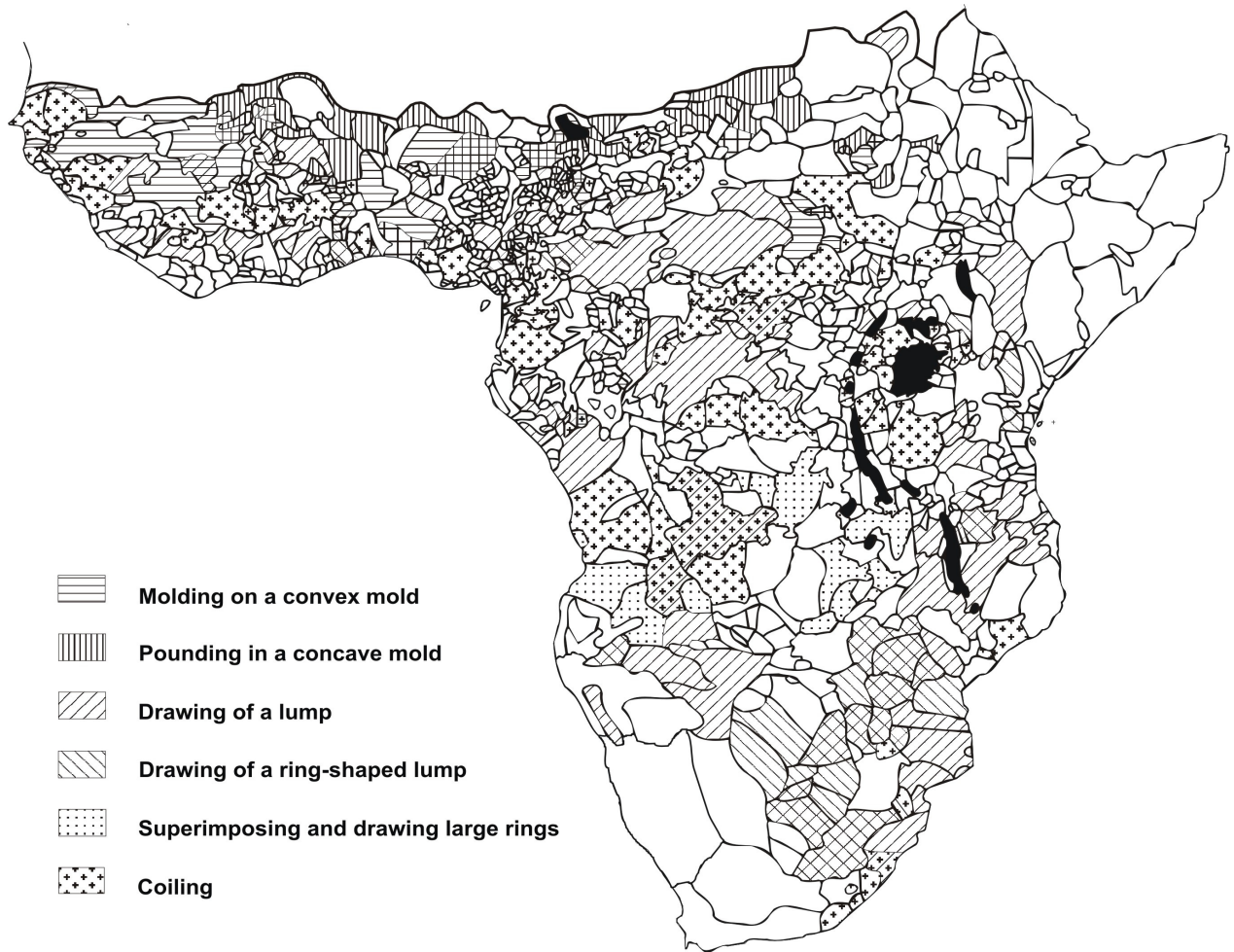


Fig. 4: Distribution of the six categories of shaping techniques in Bantu speaking Africa. Map copied from Gosselain (2000: 202) and adapted with the permission of the author.

geographically limited. According to the distribution map of shaping techniques presented by Gosselain (2000) and reproduced in figure 4 underneath, the use of the coiling technique independently of other shaping techniques in the Eastern Bantu area is fairly limited. It clusters in the Great Lakes region, where it is used by nearly all Bantu speaking peoples of zone J and their Nilotic neighbours. Further south, its attestation is refrained to some well-defined populations, as the Nyamwezi (Culwick 1935) in Tanzania, the Tabwa (Weghsteen 1963) in R.D. Congo, the Lungu (Fagan 1961) in Zambia, the Cuabo (Lawton 1967) in Mozambique or the Lovedu, the Swazi (Shaw 1974) and the Zulu (Levinsohn 1984)^{xiv} in South-Africa. In spite of this shared distinctive shaping technique, the Great Lakes Bantu languages do not share common vocabulary with respect to this technique. They share neither a phonologically regular inherited vocabulary, which could suggest a common cultural origin, nor a phonologically irregular borrowed vocabulary, which could reflect cultural transmission. In other words, the lexical heterogeneity contrasts with the technological unified situation. In the light of earlier ethno-archaeological research, this observation is rather surprising. Gosselain (2000: 209-210) has affirmed that “fashioning is a less salient stage (– *contrary to pottery decoration tools and techniques – note of the author*) of the chaîne opératoire and one that proves

especially resistant to change. It is characterized therefore by a greater stability through time and space, an intimate connection to spatial development of learning networks, and hence, a tendency to reflect those most rooted and enduring facets of identity”. Nevertheless, the fashioning related vocabulary does not seem to be rooted and hence, reflects neither identity nor common history.

In the light of ongoing research on pottery vocabulary in the Bantu languages, however, this observation of lexical diversification confirms a general tendency of historical evolution. In a very general way, one tends to find very little inherited or borrowed words in the vocabulary designating technical acts and instruments, also outside the East African Great Lakes region, while the contrary is true for vocabulary designating kinds of pots, basic materials and general pottery linked concepts. For this last group, our comparative research resulted in the reconstruction of several proto-Bantu etyma, such as *-mà- “to mould pottery”, *-bìgá “pot”, *-jòngó “cooking pot”, as well as the reconstruction of several proto-Eastern Bantu etyma, such as ^o-bóm̄b- “to mould pottery”^{xv}, ^o-bóm̄bà “pottery clay” or ^o-kádango “frying pan”, ... With respect to pottery tools, the stem ^o-kódòngò “smoothing stone” seems to be the only one with a certain recurrence in at least the Eastern Bantu languages. However, this recurrence is probably the result of independent convergent derivations, rather than the outcome of the inheritance of common etymon.

6 CONCLUSION

The Great Lakes Bantu vocabulary with respect to the pottery shaping technique commonly called ‘coiling’ is highly heterogeneous. It is a conceptual field that proves to be very apt to lexical innovation. Although very closely related, the languages of zone J manifest very few lexical resemblances. Morphologically modified inherited words and already existing words undergoing semantic shifting are the two predominant classes of lexemic change. The general absence of inherited and borrowed vocabulary is very noteworthy from a cultural historical point of view. The sharing of the coiling technique by the peoples of the Great Lakes region can be attributed to either common history or cultural contact. In spite of this, the basic axiom of “Words and Things”-studies, which reduces shared vocabulary either to shared history or to cultural contact, fails to work in this situation. With respect to this particular stage of the pottery production sequence, the lexicon does not reflect cultural history. A process of permanent re denomination, which has accompanied the dissemination of the coiling technique, has considerably reduced the appropriateness of comparative vocabulary study as a device of historical reconstruction.

ENDNOTES

ⁱ My acknowledgement goes to Yvonne Bastin, Olivier Gosselain, Claire Grégoire, Ellen Vandendorpe and Annemie Van Geldre for lending me a hand in the preparation of this paper. Research for this study was supported by the "Fonds d'Encouragement à la recherche de l'Université Libre de Bruxelles".

ⁱⁱ Although never explicitly stated in a publication, Meeussen proposed to fuse a part of Guthrie's zone E (E10-30) and zone D (D40-60) into a zone J. His choice was geographically and typologically based and recently reconfirmed by Bastin (2003). In handling with the Great Lakes Bantu languages in this article, we will respect this choice.

ⁱⁱⁱ In 2000, fieldwork was done in a Kirundi speaking Twa potter's community in Kibumbu (Burundi). In 2001, various Luganda and Runyoro speaking potters in Uganda were interviewed. These data will be referred to with the code "Bostoën (pers. notes)".

^{iv} In 2000 and 2001, we co-operated with the *Institut Supérieur Pédagogique de Bukavu* (ISPB) for the collection of pottery vocabulary in several languages of the southern and northern Kivu provinces of the DR Congo. Students of this institute interviewed several potters and recorded vernacular terms in Kinande (J42), Mashi (J53), Ibembe (J54), Kifuliro (J63) and Kivira (J631). The quality of the interviews differs heavily from language to language. For some languages, only the principal vocabulary was written down, for others, the interviews were tape-recorded. My acknowledgement goes to Constantin Bashi Murhi-Orhakube who transcribed the Shi text without tonal notation and to Ngessimo M. Mutaka who set down the Kinande text with tonal notation. We will refer to these data with the abbreviation "ISPB".

^v The term was noted during an interview with Yussuf Kakande at the Kampala suburb Busega in august 2001. In Busega, a considerable community of reputed potters is settled. Dozens of households are involved in the mass production of earthenware, according to traditional methods. They provision several markets in Kampala region.

^{vi} All reconstructed forms originate from the Bantu Lexical Reconstructions database (Bastin et al. 2002). The letters behind the form refer to the zones in which reflexes are attested. Forms that are preceded by * are Proto-Bantu reconstructions, while ° refers to an unsure and/or regional Bantu reconstruction. The following 7 vowel-system is adopted: i u e a o ɔ u.

^{vii} Preceded by the NP_{9,10}, the noun embulungusia has preserved b. In intervocalic position, the initial b of the verb khuulungusia seems to have disappeared, although *b > Ø is not regularly attested in Lubukusu (J31c) or other Lumasaba variants (cf. De Blois 1975, Siertsema 1981). Although De Blois (1975) systematically writes NP₁₅ with a long vowel, it's more appropriate here to analyse the verb khuulungusia as khu-ulungusia. In Nangendo's (1984) description of Bukusu pottery, NP₁₅ is generally written with a short vowel, e.g. khupakha liloba «fermenting the clay» and khufumbula «extend the body of the vessel outwards». If one analyses those infinitives as khu-pakha and khu-fumbula, then khuulungusia must be decomposed as khu-ulungusia.

^{viii} My acknowledgement goes to Dr. Reinhard Klein-Arendt (Institut für Afrikanistik, Köln) for giving me the permission to incorporate his non-published lexical data on pottery production into my PhD-research. During fieldwork missions in 1995 and 1996, he collected numerous pottery vocabularies in Eastern Africa, more specifically in the Lakes Corridor region between Zambia, Malawi and Tanzania.

^{ix} According to Nijembazi (1988: 57), the plural form imihiro, without the complement ibuúmba, also refers to the pattern of decoration lines around the pot.

^x According to Blank (1999: 77), frequent use tends to simplify lexical complexity, a process that he calls "Zipf's law" (cf. Zipf 1945: 142-144).

^{xi} The lexical data, preceded by the label "Kirundi (Bweya)", were recorded in Bweya village in the Luweero district of Uganda. The potter we have interviewed there was Petero Nfayokulero, who was born and raised in Burundi, but moved

into Uganda about 30 years ago. He's not a Mutwa, but he nevertheless learned to make pottery in his homeland before his settlement in Bweya, where he married a Muganda woman. Although the potter generally spoke Luganda (J15) with my interpreter Melissa Rose Nagaaya, but fell back on his mother tongue to refer to certain acts and instruments of the production sequence.

^{xii} Translation of this Dutch definition: "an oval stone used to polish the surface of a pot".

^{xiii} The same potter used the noun *òmùnyó l í* to refer to clay coils. My Luganda (J15) interpreter did not understand this word; it is however neither found back in a Kirundi (J62) dictionary, nor used by the Twa potters in Burundi or recognized by other Kirundi (J62) speaking informants. The origin of this noun is not clear.

^{xiv} According to other sources (Lawton 1967 ; Davison 1985), the Zulu use the coiling technique in combination with the technique of drawing a lump of clay.

^{xv} The verb root *-bǔmb- can definitely be reconstructed in proto-Bantu. Nonetheless, for reasons we cannot develop in this paper, we consider the meaning "to mould pottery" as a semantic innovation, which postdates the proto-Bantu age.

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