THEY ARE CRAZY THESE SWAHILI[1]

KOMREDI KIPEPE IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF *ASTERIX*
GLOBALISATION IN EAST AFRICAN COMICS

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Abstract

The French trivial epic *Asterix* (Stoll 1974:passim) has been translated into more than one hundred languages and dialects worldwide (Selles 2002) thus making *Asterix* a global phenomenon with millions of readers. But for African readers, *Asterix* is accessible only through Arabic, English, French, Portuguese or Afrikaans but not through any African language. Nevertheless, comic culture thrives in Africa, especially in Tanzania, where at least two dozen magazines are dedicated to comics in Swahili. In one of the oldest of them, *SANI*, the comic artist Chris Katembo published his story *Komredi Kipepe na Kisa cha Bi Arafa* (Comrade Kipepe and Ms. Arafa). In this episode the well known Swahili comic figures *Kipepe* and *Madenge* rescue the kidnapped *mganga*, healer, *Bi Arafa*. It has striking parallels to *Asterix* and *Obelix* saving *Getafix* out of the wraths of the Goths.

This article aims to demonstrate how close Katembo's work is to Goscinny's and Uderzo's classical comic volume *Asterix and the Goths* by comparing both narratives, their language and their artistic realisation. But not only the similarities are pointed out. Moreover the way in which Katembo appropriates the episode into an East African setting is examined. He

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[1] The title of this article needs an explanation to those who are not familiar with *Asterix* comics. To state that the Swahili are crazy is not meant as an insult but as an initiation into the world of *Asterix*. *Asterix* is a Gaulish Warrior invented by the artists René Goscinny and Albert Udérzo in 1959. *Asterix*' friend is called *Obelix*. Usually they quarrel with the Romans and *Obelix* comments strange Roman behaviour by saying "They are crazy these Romans". If he does not understand other people he meets, he gives his comment "They are crazy these British" or "They are crazy these Egyptians". But even if he finds the behaviour of his fellow Gauls strange he also exclaims "We are crazy we Gauls". Thus to state that these Swahili are crazy means nothing but a warm welcome in Ki*Asterix*

produces more than just another mere translation of *Asterix*. It is not that *Asterix* can speak Swahili now, but he has changed to become a real *mswahili*.

Introduction

That comics are a global phenomenon is nothing new. As early as 1931 one of the most popular cartoon figures *Tintin* travelled to Africa and his adventures were eagerly read by the readers of the Belgian newspaper *Le XX. Siècle* (Sabourn 2002). More than sixty years later the *Time Magazine* honoured comics with a cover story of its international edition of the 1st November 1993. It had the headline: "Beyond Mickey Mouse – Comics grow up and go global". It was referring to the 100th anniversary of the publication of the first comic and the spread of comic culture all over the world. Although the longest tradition of comics is said to exist in the so called "Western Culture" and Japan with its *manga*-comics (Knigge 1996:7) the rest of the world is catching up fast. Especially in countries of the developing world, comics are an important medium (Odoi; Packalén 1999:3). In Mexico half of the paper, which is printed, is used for comics. Comics are cheap and easy to read for people who have no regular reading habits (Knigge 1996:234).

The East African Comic Scene

Usually an article is introduced by giving an historical background. Giving this background is a fruitless task in the case of comics in East Africa. Those few publications on East African Comics (Beck 1999 and Gikonyo 1986) state as well, that there is little known about it. The first example of comics in Africa, which is mentioned in literature, is the series *Mbumbulu* which was published in the colonial press of Belgian Congo in the 1940s. The artist called himself "Masta" and propagated white superiority. Mission journals like *Tamtam*, *Caraven* or *Vivante Afrique* also used comics to entertain their readers. These comics were drawn by Belgian artists. The first comic drawn by an African in Congo was published 1964 and was called *Jeunes pour Jeunes*. In the 1970s the publishing houses *Saint Paul Afrique* and *Afrique Biblio Club* even published biographies of politicians like Mobutu or Ghaddafi. From the 1980s comic activities from Senegal are reported and comics became a means of development work (Knigge 1996:238).

It is not clear yet when the first comics came to East Africa. But the way they came is clear. They were printed as strips in the press, which was at those times dominated by European editors (Gikonyo 1986:186). Those comics were imports like *Hagar the Horrible* or *Popeye*. When the first East African artists started to produce comics is not known either. Gikonyo states that the longest running comic strip by an African artist in Kenya is E. Githau's *Juha Kalulu* which was first published in *Taifa Leo* in July 1973 (Gikonyo 1986:190).

In general it can be said that comic strips of East African writers began to be published on a regular basis only since the 1980s.

In Kenya at that time *Nyam Nyam* by Nganga and Imbuga, *Bongo and Co*. by the artist Odoi who was born in Ghana and *Bogi Benda* by the Ugandan journalist James Tusiime started appearing in the *Daily Nation*.

About the history of Tanzanian comics, there is not much more published information available other than the vita of David Kyungu. He started publishing his works from 1976 onwards in papers like *Kiongozi*, *Lengo*, *Nchi Yetu* and *Daily News* (cf. Kyungu 1993:no page numbers and pers. Comment in October 2002). He created the figure of *Kalikenye* in order to have Swahili cartoon. The only cartoon published in Tanzania at that time was *Andy Capp* who appeared in the *Daily News*. *SANI*, the oldest Tanzanian comic magazine, which still appears today, was published for the first time in 1980 by Kyungu, Yembajo and Bawji. *SANI* is an acronym derived from the names of the first owners SAidi Baywji and NIko Yembajo. Besides *SANI* one of the early comic magazines is *AFRO* which was drawn by Katti Ka-Batembo and was published in Morogoro in 1988. These days Ka-Batembo is chairman of the Tanzania Popular Media Association and publishes the cartoon *Kulakunoga* (worldcomics 2001b).

In Tanzania, during the times of Nyerere when the government was in control of most publications, the national Swahili council BAKITA watched out that no incorrect Kiswahili was published. It was definitely difficult to produce comics. With the liberalisation in the early 1990s an incredible number of publications appeared on the market. At the same time cartoons and political caricatures emerged. Up to the late 1980s it was considered a great insult to draw cartoons of the political leaders (Kipanya 2001b:14).

Comics used to be published as strips on the entertainment pages of newspapers. But as they became more and more popular comic magazines started appearing on the market. Today they are usually sold for 500 or 600 Tanzanian Shillings which is the prize of a bottle of beer.

The biggest cartoon and comic scene in East Africa is found in Dar es Salaam, where most Tanzanian comics are printed[2]. Some are also published in Morogoro and Mwanza but Dar es Salaam with its population of a few million people represents the biggest market for comics in the country. Dar es Salaam is also the home of James Mpuya who uses the pseudonym "Gayo". His strip *Kingo* gained international recognition and is also published in Kenya, Uganda, Zambia. Zimbabwe, South Africa and Namibia (Friedrich Ebert Foundation 2001:120 and Manyire 2002)[3].

Kenya has fewer but internationally more recognized artists like the Tanzanian GADO, whose official name is Godfrey Mwampembwa. GADO publishes regularly in the papers of the Nation Group[4]. The interational recognition of the Nairobi scene derives from the fact, that they use mainly English. There are no regularly published Kenyan comic magazines. But the Sasa Sema Publishers produce albums in Kiswahili and English (Gado 1996, Stano 1996, Mwangi 1997, 2000, Karani and Kham 1997, TUF 1998, 2000). Those albums are more expensive than magazines, around four bottles of beer, thus they do not have such a wide circulation.

In Uganda there seem to be no comic publications at all besides those strips and cartoons appearing in newspapers.

Although Beck states that "the influence of European, American, or Japanese comics other than daily newspaper strips seems to be rather small" (Beck 1999:70) there are clear influences found in some publications. Anthony Mwangi was obviously inspired by *Tintin's* adventures while drawing his book *Safari ya Anga ya juu* (Mwangi 1997). The *TITANIC* comic by Joshua Amandus Mtani is another example. He has drawn the story of the award winning Hollywood movie into a comic where all characters became Swahili (Mtani 2000). After this brief overview I will now turn to a story published in *SANI*, which was influenced by Goscinny's and Uderzo's *Asterix*.

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The *SANI* Magazine

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[2] During a survey in 2001 I collected 20 different magazines: Ambha (also Ambha is an acronym of the name of the owner AMri BAwji), Bongo, Chachanda, Fikara, Jumbo, Kingo, Kiu, Kula mtoto wa bosi, Mama Huruma, Pambazuko, *SANI*, Shani, Shauku, Tabasamu, Tafrani, Tamtam, Tanua, Titanic, Tunu and Zungu.

[3] *Kingo's* international success derives from the fact that no words are used in this cartoon. Mpuya was inspired to use this stylistic means by the Spanish artist Tarmo Kaivisto. *Kingo* has also striking similarities to E.O. Plauen's *Vater und Sohn* strips of the 1930s (Ohser 2000).

[4] GADO's works can be accessed via http://www.gadonet.com

The *SANI* magazine is said to be one of the oldest African comic magazines dating back to the 1980. Over 70 issues have been published up to 2001. Though registered as a monthly publication it appears only every three months, selling around 25,000 copies for 600 Tanzanian Shillings each. In its heydays *SANI* sold around 60,000 copies but these days competition is tough especially from cheap tabloids. *SANI*'s content comprises mainly of comic strips, often series, which are continued over several issues. But there are novels to be found as well as poems and riddles. Another regular feature are the pages for the readers to greet each other and to look for pen pals.

Each comic magazine has certain cartoon characters which are drawn over the years by different artists. The characters of *Madenge* and *Komredi Kipepe* who are the heroes of the story that is going to be introduced are drawn by Chris Katembo[5] since 1992. But he says these characters have been with *SANI* since the early issues in the 1980s. Like all cartoons, they have changed a bit over the years but the artist who developed them to their current shape is the late Ndunguru Philip. In Tanzania characters are usually not owned by their inventors but by a magazine. Thus other artists can pick them up and use them in their stories. Chris Katembo, the author of this Swahili adoption of *Asterix*, was born in 1970. After finishing his primary education he visited several art schools and worked as an art teacher before joining *SANI*. As he loves comics since his childhood days, he is a comic collector. And of course Katembo knows *Tintin* and *Asterix*, classic European comic heroes. But he says he only read four to five *Asterix* books, among them *Asterix and the Magic Carpet*, *Asterix and Cleopatra* and *Asterix and the Goths* which he used as a blueprint for the story *Komredi Kipepe na kisa cha Bi Arafa*. Katembo did not know that the Gauls represent the French and the Goths the Germans. As an artist Katembo puts emphasis on the relation to his readers. Besides signing his works he writes his telephone number and email address on each strip[6]. By getting feedback from his readers he can develop his stories the way the audience likes it.

Asterix and his attraction to East African readers

Asterix and the Goths started as a series in the French magazine PILOTE as *Astérix chez les Goths* on 18.5.1961 and was published as *Asterix* album No. 3 in 1963 (Uderzo 1986:266). In *Asterix and the Goths* the Gauls *Asterix* and *Obelix* accompany *Getafix* their village druid to his annual druid meeting at the holy forest of the Carnutes. There, *Getafix* is kidnapped by the

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[5] I am very grateful to Chris Katembo for the valuable information he gave me during a talk and via email.
[6] Katembo's Tel. No. is +255-741-257132. His email address: ckatembo@yahoo.com.

Goths who want to use his magic to rule the world. *Asterix* and *Obelix* follow the druid and free him by using his powers to cause civil war.

In the European cultural context the adventures of *Asterix* refer to history, the Roman Empire and its rule over wide parts of the continent. Anybody who studied Roman history at school gets lots of fun out of Goscinny's and Uderzo's stories. The story about the Goths gets its juice from the way the authors make fun out of the warlike Goths whose descendents started two world wars last century[7].The second world war ending only 16 years before *Asterix* and the Goths was published.

What makes *Asterix* and this story interesting for an East African audience fourty years later? The answer is that there are many similarities between *Asterix*' world and East African cultures.

First of all *Asterix* is a warrior who is frequently hunting with his friend *Obelix*. Warriors and hunters are honoured professions also in East Africa. Even *Asterix*' favourite prey, wild pigs, is commonly hunted and eaten in East Africa.

Another protagonist, the druid *Getafix*, is a familiar character to East Africans who have their *waganga* and *wachawi*, healers and witches. *Getafix* wears a white gown resembling a *kanzu* just as many famous *waganga*, e.g. Kinjikitile, the prophet of the maji maji war (Beez 1998:108). Kinjikitile had a powerful war medicine thus *Getafix*' magic portion, which makes *Asterix* invincible, fits well into the East African concept of war medicine, *dawa ya vita*. *Dawa ya vita* was and is a common thing in East Africa. Bullets can be turned into water, wild animals can be allies or somebody can be made invisible. Other Gaulish druids in the *Asterix* adventure posses rainmaking powers just as many of their African counterparts. The fact that they meet in holy forests that must not be entered by strangers has similarities in East African concepts. The *kaya*-forests in Kenya can be mentioned as one example.

The weapons used by *Asterix* like spears, swords, shields and fists are the same which are used traditionally in East Africa. That the Goths crush each other's head with a club is more exotic to the European audience than to an East African who is used to see Maasai with their *rungu*. The blowing of horns as a signal in *Asterix* might be funny for an European reader but *kupiga pembe* – blowing the horn for an announcement– is still common in East Africa. Even in cooking there are similarities. *Getafix* prepares his magic portions on an open fire just like many East African women do their cooking today. And the parties which use to occur in the end of each *Asterix*' adventure have striking similarities to *nyama choma* events: meat is roasted and served with local brew.

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[7] Some of the Gothic Characters resemble the German President Hindenburg and Adolf Hitler (Stoll 1974:152).

Like most East Africans, *Asterix* lives in a rural setting. His country Gaul is occupied by the Romans who have an urban culture. This situation reminds us of the colonial days in East Africa, where rural societies were colonized by industrialized societies.

The most funny thing about *Asterix* is that the good boys beat up the bad boys. And this is appreciated worldwide.

What seems to be irritating for African readers is the fact that in *Asterix* and also in *Tintin* dogs are kept as pets, loved and hugged by their owners. In East Africa dogs are usually kicked and only kept for hunting or as watch dogs. Therefore it seems the *Asterix and the Gauls* can be appropriated quite easily into a Swahili episode as the famous dog of *Obelix* – *Dogmatix* – only starts its appearance two volumes later. But surprisingly *Madenge* begins keeping a dog in the March 2002 edition of *SANI*. He calls his dog *Osama*. Another striking global influence on East African comics.

The Swahili Characters

Now there should be a closer examination of the characters in *Komredi Kipepe na kisa cha Bi Arafa*. According to the title *Komredi Kipepe* and *Bi Arafa* are the main characters.

As mentioned earlier *Komredi Kipepe* as a cartoon is a veteran in Swahili comic history appearing for the first time in the 1980s. His title "*Komredi*" is a humorous reference to the good old socialist days of Tanzanian Ujamaa. "*Kipepe*" is the name for loincloth in many south Tanzanian languages according to Katembo. He is a cunning hunter running after the animals in amazing speed and swinging his characteristic club. Although he is brave and courageous he is outwitted by the animals thus the readers of his stories enjoy a laugh.

Bi Arafa is a new figure which was created by Chris Katembo especially for this story. *Arafa* is a common name along the East African coast. But according to Katembo *Bi Arafa* is a frequent name for female witches, *wachawi*, at the coast. Its Arabic root means "the one who knows"[8] making it a perfect name for a wise *mganga*. *Bi Arafa* is tall and thin, especially in the last picture of the episode she resembles the first Tanzanian President with her grey hair. Her statement against tribalism and fundamentalism reminds the reader of Nyerere's legacy.

Kipepe and *Bi Arafa* are joined by *Madenge*. Although *Madenge* is a school boy, wearing his characteristic black shirt and white shorts with suspenders, he is – historically speaking – as old as *Kipepe* having been introduced to the Tanzanian readers in the 1980s. His name refers

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[8] I thank Farouk Topan for this valuable information.

to his hairstyle. In his episodes *Madenge* appears as a clever boy driving his parents and teachers nuts with his wit.

Kipepe, *Arafa* and *Madenge* belong to the ethnic group of the Wabushi – the people from the bush. The Wabushi appear regularly in *SANI* for many years now. They constitute of all rural characters appearing in the *SANI* magazine. The last story of every *SANI* issue is traditionally a football match between the *Bush Stars* and their urban counterparts *Maborn Town* whose members are all urban cartoon characters of *SANI*. Katembo is using the Wabushi for the first time as an ethnic group and not only as a football team. The Wabushi are the good guys and the heroes of our story, representing the Gauls in Goscinny and Uderzo's story.

In the story of *Komredi Kipepe na kisa cha Bi Arafa Kipepe* and *Madenge* escort *Bi Arafa* to a *waganga* competition in the forest of Gambush. Gambush is said to be the name of a real village in Mwanza region whose whole population consists of witches - *wachawi*. Thus Katembo takes a contemporary East African name as an appropriation for the antique name of the Gaulish forest of Carnutes, which existed close to the French city of Orléans.

Bi Arafa clearly takes over the part of the Gaulish druid *Getafix*. She is tall and slim and in the first pictures of the story she even wears the same dress: a white *kanzu* and a cape. Later she changes wearing a grey dress. Her secret of a medicine that makes someone strong enough to pull out trees is the same as *Getafix*' secret. But contrary to *Getafix Bi Arafa* is a woman. Here Katembo shows gender consciousness, as most comics are dominated by male characters.

On the first glance *Kipepe* seems to take over the role of *Obelix* and *Madenge* the role of *Asterix*. At least a comparison of Uderzo's and Katembo's drawings seems to suggest this as *Kipepe* often takes *Obelix* position in a picture and Magende poses like *Asterix*. But they may take over poses in pictures but still retain their character which they developed over 20 years as comic figures. E.g. *Kipepe* is more responsible. It is his idea to accompany *Bi Arafa* and protect her while in the French comic this is *Asterix* role. *Madenge* on the other hand seems to play *Asterix* role, he is short and it is his witty idea which rescues the heroes. Nevertheless his childishness resembles more *Obelix*' naivety than *Asterix*' sober reasoning.

An example for similarites between a drawing by Katembo and Uderzo can be demonstrated in pictures 1 and 2. The tree on the left can also be found in Uderzos picture. As details Katembo adds flying birds which can be seen in many other pictures as well and are not part of Uderzo's inventory for details. *Madenge*, just like *Asterix*, warns his comrade about approaching people. Even *Madenge*'s arm position and the direction of his look resemble *Asterix*.

insert k-29-kuna watu.jpg Picture 1: *SANI* 69

insert G E 25 watch out.jpg Picture 2: Uderzo/Goscinny 1971:25

As *Getafix* is kidnapped by the Goths, *Bi Arafa* is also taken as a hostage by another ethnic group: the Wabarukuna. Katembo says the Wabarukuna is the joking name (*jina la utani*) for the Makonde but his Wabarukuna cartoons have their own character and are not meant to be a caricature of the Makonde. Like the Goths, the Wabarukuna are bold headed and dress in furs. The Wabarukuna are divided into the clans of the Wabwai and the Wakudi who started fighting each other in a civil war. But according to Katembo these clan names have no meaning and were just coined by him.

Three more characters in Katambo's have names*: Kibibi Jitu*, *Bi Kunya* and *Bi Mabaka*. They are friends of *Bi Arafa* in the *waganga* contest but they play only a minor role. All other figures are anonym, contrary to the *Asterix* narration where most characters get funny names according to their ethnic origin. In *Asterix and the Goths* there are more than 25 characters with a name.

Appropriations

Besides using Swahili characters for his story Katembo also appropriates features from the material culture of *Asterix*, translating them into a Swahili context.

Goscinny and Uderzo used a Gothic helmet resembling German helmets from the first world war as a symbol for a savage and war thirsty nation. This helmet was lost by a Goth during the capture of *Getafix* thus giving *Asterix* a hint of the kidnapping.

But a helmet does not fit into an East African context. Thus Katembo created a special kind of spear, a very short one, as a symbol for the Wabarukuna. As this spear is found in the forest of Gambush, *Madenge* knows, that the Wabarukuna captured *Bi Arafa*.

In Ubarukuna a strange feature for East Africa appears in the form of thick stone walls. The Barukuna ruler lives in a stone palace. Although stonewalls are known in the urban Swahili culture they surprise in the rural setting of the story. Also the V shaped doors appear to be exotic to a Tanzanian context. As *Madenge* and *Kipepe* enter Ubarukuna to follow *Bi Arafa* it is striking that the environment of Ubarukuna resembles the way Uderzo portraits the Goths. Also the gag of an owl arguing with a woodpecker (*SANI* 66:21; Goscinny; Uderzo 1971:9), which is a running gag in many *Asterix* adventures, appears in Katembo's story. This is astonishing as an owl is a symbol for witchcraft and evil for many East Africans which should be avoided.

In *SANI* No. 69 Katembo uses a light bulb as a symbol of a bright idea of *Madenge*. This is quite a modernisation of the *Asterix* theme. During *Asterix* times there were no light bulbs. If someone has an idea Uderzo indicates it by an oil-lamp. But as Katembo's story is not playing in the past, he can use the symbol of a light bulb.

Another form of appropriation of symbols is the trophy for the winner of the druid or *wachawi* contest. *Getafix* is awarded a small golden menhir for his craft. Menhirs are unknown in East Africa thus Katembo lets *Bi Arafa* be presented with a *tunguli*[9] *ya mpingo*, a gourd for local medicine made of ebony (Goscinny;Uderzo1971:13, *SANI* 67). Ebony replaces gold as symbol of honour.

Serialization of the story

As mentioned earlier Katembo published his story as a series over seven issues. Thus, without knowing it as he got to know this *Asterix* story as an album, he returns to the roots of *Asterix* as the adventure of *Asterix and the Goths* was first published as a series in the comic magazine PILOTE in 1961 and only later in 1963 as an album.

But Katembo has not as much space as Goscinny and Uderzo had, as PILOTE was published more frequently than *SANI*. As a consequence Katembo has to squeeze a comic of 48 pages into nine pages. Much of the story telling cannot be done in pictures but has to be written in special frames and boxes. Only a few sequences which are taken over directly from *Asterix* have panels without written text in a box. But Katembo also needs text frames because he serialised a story. He has to keep the tension high at the end of each issue to keep the reader eagerly waiting for the next issue and at the beginning of each new issue he has to tell what has been happening so far. Besides texts Katembo also uses pictures to get the reader back into the story at the beginning of a new episode. In *SANI* No. 70 the story ends with a Barukuna guard blowing a horn. The same horn blower is shown in the first panel of the story in *SANI* No. 71 together with an explanation of what happened last.

Besides narrating the story in text frames, Katembo also shortens the episode by drawing various sequences in one panel. For example in *SANI* No. 70 the beating up of the Wabarukuna is combined in one picture with the stealing of their clothes as a disguise for

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[9] Katembo uses the form *tunguli*. In the dictionaries the form *tunguri* is used (Johnson 1939:480; TUKI 2001:328). Katembo as many other Swahili speakers often interchanges /l/ and /r/. Another example will be discussed later.

Madenge and *Kipepe*. *Asterix* and *Obelix* need a full page for this (Goscinny; Uderzo 1971:25f).

Soundwords and violence

Although the Swahili comic has developed an own kind of beating scenes[10] Katembo is close to the original in the first violent scene of his episode as a comparison of picture 3 and 4 indicates: a spear is cracking on the right side of the panel. Both drawings are dominated by a cloud of dust out of which a foot and hands appear. *Obelix'* strong fist has been changed into a severely damaged Barukuna head. Whereas Uderzo only uses lines to indicate violent action Katembo adds splashing blood to illustrate that scene (*SANI* 70:30; Goscinny and Uderzo 1974:25). The signs of violence are more drastic in Swahili than in the original *Asterix*. Uderzo and Goscinny indicate the results of violence by stars, broken weapons, torn clothes, black eyes and a tongue hanging out of the mouth. Katembo uses the more drastic Swahili code for violence, especially in the last fighting scenes. His victims fart in despair, they run around with missing limbs and axes, arrows and knives sticking out of their bodies, their heads get chopped off and fly through the picture while their blood is dripping all over the scene as can be seen in picture 5.Also the soundwords of the fight have been changed. Only BIMM! was used as by Goscinny. BOUM! have become BOU!. The sound PAFF! Has been translated into the Swahili sound of KARB! Finally a new sound has been added. The breaking of the spear is silent in the original but Katembo added a KHA!.

Another soundword change can be noted in the blowing of the signal horn. The sound of the horn changed from a BOOOOO BOOOO and BAAAOOOO BOOOAAA into a POOOOOM. The Swahili horn sound seems to be more melodic to the listener as Katembo adds musical notes and a clef which are missing in the Gothic sound. The rest of the picture as striking similarities. The horn blower stands on top of a stone wall holding the horn in his right hand and the body turned slightly to the left. (*SANI* :31, 71:28; Goscinny Uderzo 1974:28).

> (**insert K 70 30 Bimm.jpg** Picture 3: *SANI* 70:30
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> **G E 25 Klopperei Bimm.jpg** Picture 4: Goscinny and Uderzo 1974:25
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> **K 71 29 _Hauerei Trad,jpg** Picture 5: *SANI* 71:29.

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[10] Instead of a soundword a noun describing trouble and violence is written in the middle of a dust cloud, like *kasheshe*. Popular are also metaphors of violence like *Kosovo*, which became a synonym for trouble.

Body-language

The following sequence of an interpreter interrogating *Bi Arafa* in the service of the Barukuna king seems to be taken from the *Asterix* album one by one. Two comparisons of this sequence can be found in pictures 6 to 9. In the pictures the positions of the figures and the way they hold their arms and heads do rarely vary from the original. But a closer look reveals striking differences. It is interesting that the body language of the interpreter is different as he translates the lie that *Bi Arafa* will give out her medicine. Uderzo stressed that lie with a heavy nodding and folded hands. This seems to have no Swahili equivalent as Katembo's interpreter stresses this positive statement by moving his hands downwards. Moreover the Mbarukuna interpreter is shaking all over the sequence, indicated by fine trembling lines, whereas the Gothic interpreter is not. Shivering out of fear seemed to be the correct translation of body language for fear by Katembo. The translation in the speech balloons is more or less the same. The chief wants to know whether the magician is willing to share his or her knowledge, in *Bi Arafa*'s case. In the case of refusal he threatens to kill the interpreter as well. A threat which makes the interpreter not to translate the words of the magicians but to tell the chief what he wants to hear. Interesting is the translation of *Getafix*' strict "never" into "si, rahisi". That shows that even in a very pressed situation a Tanzanian would be so polite to avoid a strict "hata" or "hapana" but prefers to give a vague "it is not easy".

Katembo adds thought balloons to the interpreter (*SANI* 70:31) which are not used by Uderzo and Goscinny. These thought balloons are filled with Swahili exclamations "leo" (today, meaning, what a day), "duh" (expression of surprise) and "lo" (expression of bad surprise). Uderzo was able to express the stress and fear of the interpreter by changing his face colour into green and yellow. Further more Uderzo's interpreter's physiognomy was more detailed which allowed him to express fear with the eyes and uncertainty with the nose. Maybe fear is not expressed in green and yellow in African faces, besides that *SANI* is published in black and white and its printing quality is rougher which might have hindered Katembo to work more on his interpreter's face.

Of course *Bi Arafa* does not give her secret to the Wabarukuna. *Madenge* has the idea of brewing a medicine to cause civil war in Ubarukuna and escape while the Wabarukuna are busy killing themselves. This is a slight variation on the original theme where the Goths started a civil war as they received the medicine due to their natural greed and thirst for war.

insert G E 26 si rahisi.jpg Picture 6: *SANI* 71.

K 71 31 Never.jpg Picture 7: Goscinny and Uderzo 1971:26.

K 71 31 Atajaribu.jpg Picture 8: *SANI* 71.

G E 26 Perhaps.jpg Picture 9: Goscinny and Uderzo 1971:26.

Written Explanations

Written explanations are more often used in Katembo's work. Out of the sixty seven pictures he drew only 23 without explaining text in a box. Whereas out of 421 picutres of Uderzo only 58 have written explanations. This is 14% compared to 66% of Katembo's drawings. The only sequence of Katembo without many panels is taken nearly one by one from *Asterix*, the scene where the chief asks the interpreter to order the druid to prepare the magic portion. Katembo is using more written explanations than Uderzo and Goscinny because he has to explain many things in words, that are not evident from the action in his drawings. This is a result from the fact that he shrinked the story to around ten percent of the original to make it fit into 7 volumes of *SANI*. He has not enough space to give all the details in a drawing. If he had used as many pictures as in the original it would have taken 70 volumes and nearly six years for the reader to wait until the happy end.

Speech-balloons

Katembo's speech-balloons have different styles. Sometimes they have the classic balloon shape as in the final drawing. There they are round, the lines of the text follow the oval of the balloon (*SANI* 71:29). In other cases as in the first picture of the episode in *SANI* No. 70 the balloon follows the text and its paragraphs, having a straight line at the top and the bottom and slightly rounded lines on the sides. A third balloon variety appears on page 31 of *SANI* No. 70. There the balloons have a rectangular shape. There is no difference in the content of these three types of balloons evident. But there is a fourth balloon type with a zigzag-frame (*SANI* 70,30 and 71:28). The zigzag-frame indicates that the speaker is talking in a loud harsh voice to his audience.

Lettering

One device of indicating different languages is taken from the *Asterix* volume. There the Germanic talk is represented by Germanic fracture font, whereas Gaulish is written in Latin

script as usual. In No. *SANI* 70 it is obvious that the Wabushi and the Wabarukuna do not understand each other and they need a translator. Katembo indicates the different languages by the size of the letters. The Wabarukuna only talk in small letters whereas the Wabushi talk in capital letters. But as the difference is not clearly visible many readers do not understand this means of lettering.

By drawing pictures in the balloons Katembo indicates the thoughts of their protagonists. In issue No. 69 *Madenge* has an idea indicated by a light bulb. In the following picture in issue 70 *Madenge* thinks of a cloud of dust, definitely indicating a fight.

Spoken Language

The figures in *Asterix* stories are famous for their play on words which are, as it is said, up to 80% untranslatable out of the French language and cultural context. Goscinny is parodying various accents, playing around with words, mixing modern and ancient forms. Thus in all *Asterix* translations much of the verbal humour gets lost. But it can be said the he and his comrades talk the standardized form of any languages avoiding swearing, curses and slang. Thus making it readable for children without the danger of interference of any forms of censorship.

But *Madenge* and *Kipepe* use slang, kiswahili cha mitaani, kihuni. For example in *SANI* 66 to *Kipepe* after they fell behind *Arafa* and her friend: "*Anko tukazane bwana, ona vigagu vinatuacha"*, uncle lets exert man, look the oldtimers leave us behind. *Anko* with the meaning of "uncle" is the colloquial form of *mjomba* derived from English. Kigagu is slang for an old person.

In *SANI* No. 70 *Madenge* says "*Tulianzishe la kigetogeto … tuyapangilie madili yetu*" – Let's start the ghetto-thing, let's plan our deals. This talk would definitely be criticized and banned if bodies like BAKITA (Baraza ya Kiswahili ya Tanzania) had a say in comic production[11]. The "ghetto thing" and "deals" as slang for a wild beating are a quite recent development of Swahili language in an urban underground culture context. If a Swahili comic uses latest slang it is well received by the readers.

Another example of colloquial Swahili which would not make it into a serious public surrounding is the untranslatable language of the fighting Wabarukuna in the last part of the episode: *Umenipata mume mwenza kuna lingine sema basi – kutembea na mke wangu isiwe*

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[11] There is also a comic guarding the purity of Kiswahili: Mzee kifimbo cheza (Graebner 1995:264). This Mzee is guarding the Swahili language to be clean of the dirty influence of uncivlized talk.

nongwa yaani mimi mume mwenza wako? (You got me the co-husband, but there is another, what do you say to that? - To walk with my wife do not be disagreeable… this means I am your co-husband?).

This rude language of sexual hints and admitted adultery would hardly make it into the clean world of the asexual figures of *Asterix* nor would it be heard on official Swahili occasions. But of course it would give someone credit in street quarrels. This indicates that Swahili comics do not represent polished talk of officials as it is read and heard in newspapers, radio or television. But they use the language of the ordinary man - the mwananchi - which is spoken in the streets. This is a striking difference to Goscinny's and Uderzo's story.

The last example of sexual language is an unwilling slip of Katembo's pen in the process of lettering. In the last picture of the episode *Madenge* justifies the civil war in Ubarukuna by saying *kiranga haliliwi,* meaning sexual mania is not being eaten. To the reader it appears as if the greed and brutality of the Wabarukuna is classified by *Madenge* as *kiranga*, which means sexual mania (TUKI 2001:148). But according to Katembo *Madenge* is not that rude. He wanted to say *kilanga haliliwi,* naughtiness is not being eaten, which indicates that he is not tolerating the mean behaviour of the Wabarukuna. It is obvious that *Madenge* interchanges /l/ and /r/ as many East African Bantu speakers do.

The moral

Finally the moral of Katembo's story, which is shown in picture 10, is a different one compared to *Asterix*. Uderzo and Goscinny were just making fun out of their war thirsty and power gambling neighbours, the Germans, whose desire to rule the world could be traced back to the times of *Asterix*. The Gauls just started a civil war in the country of the Goths so that the Goths may be occupied with slaughtering themselves instead of disturbing the peaceful Gauls. But for Katembo it is also a lesson to stop tribalism and religious fundamentalism in order to avoid civil war. This is what the Mganga *Bi Arafa* explains to *Madenge* and *Kipepe*: *Unasikia Madenge mjukuu wangu. Ukabila na udini ni sumu kali sana! Penye ukabila na udini hali kama hii ni rahisi ya kutokea. Nyie ndiyo taifa la kesho hivyo msikubali vitu hivyo viwili vikawasambaratisha kama hawa Wabarukuna.* (You listen *Madenge*, my grandchild. Tribalism and religious fundamentalism is very a strong poison. Where there is tribalism and religious fundamentalism a state like this is very likely to

happen. You are really the nation of tomorrow. Therefore do not agree to these two things, they will divide you as these Barukuna.).

Obviously many countries surrounding Tanzania suffer or have suffered from civil war (Rwanda, Burundi, Congo, Uganda, ethnic clashes in Kenya) which is often explained by tribalism. What religious fundamentalism can cause is reported in the news from Ireland, Israel, Sudan, to name a few.

Bi Arafa has similarities with the Father of the Tanzanian Nation Mwalimu Nyerere. She is slim and tall and has grey short hair. She is very wise and full of knowledge and obviously very respected, as the first Tanzanian president was. Nyerere's legacy is the fight for a peaceful and free nation. He always warned about tribalism and religious fundamentalism which could destroy the peace Tanzania is enjoying. On the other hand with this argument everybody who criticises the country's rulers is branded a troublemaker who should shut up to avoid a civil war.

insert Die Moral von der Geschicht.jpg Picture 10: *SANI* 71.

Conclusion

Katembo was inspired by a French Comic episode, appropriating it in parts so closely that the line to copy right violation is not always clear[12]. But at the same time he translates it into a different cultural context and adds a moral notion which was never implied in the original. Uderzo and Goscinny have always stressed that their characters are created just for entertainment[13]. But Tanzanian artists rarely do *l'art pour l'art* or make fun just for the sake of laughing. They feel obliged to educate the society. The artist Ka-Batembo "dedicates his efforts to making comics for social change"(worldcomics 2001a)**.** Especially as people are more interested in the cartoon characters of *Karikenye*, *Polo-Chakubanga* or *Bogi Benda*, than in politics, as David Kyungu states (Kyungu 1991:9), the Tanzanian artists feel obliged to use them not only for fun but also for education. The popular Tanzanian cartoonist Kipanya says "*Watu wanazijua na wanaziheshimu katuni kwenye magazeti kama kipanya, Bi Mkora*

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[12] But Katembo was not the first to adopt the theme of *Asterix* and the Goths. Rolf Kauka published a German version called *Siggi der kleine Germane*, which was published in Kauka's magazine *Lupo* in 1965. But Siggi the little German whose village was situated at the river Rhine, was stopped by mighty Goscinny. He went to court and it was ruled that *Siggi* was a copyright violation (vgl. Stroll 1974:14, Selles 2002).

[13] „Wir haben einzig und allein ein Ziel: selbst Spaß zu haben und anderen Spaß zu machen. Das ist unser bescheidener Beitrag während unseres kurzen Aufenthaltes auf diesem Planeten." (Our one and only aim is to have fun for ourselves and to entertain others. This is our humble contribution during our short stay on this planet) (Uderzo 1986:128).

(Majira) au Zero (Mtanzania) na tunaweza kuzitumia kuwaelimisha watu" (Kipanya 2001:6) (The people know and respect the cartoons in the newspapers like kipanya, Bi. Mkora or Zero and we can use them to educate the people.) This is what Katembo does by reviving Nyerere's appeal for unity and peace. By taking something foreign or global and making use of it in the own local society he is doing a kind of hybridisation. He uses the story of *Asterix* and puts it in a familiar surrounding. On top of it he is giving it a new moral ending. Thus he explains global problems of civil war in a local way. It is obvious that the civil war of the Wabarukuna is caused by *Bi Arafa*'s medicine. In the same way it can be explained that the ongoing civil wars are caused by medicine as well. An explanation which is within the world of thought of many East Africans as many leaders are said to possess strong spiritual powers or work together with ritual experts to sustain their rule. But this might be an over-interpretation as Katembo himself had only the conflict in Morogoro region in mind when he drew his story. There, pastoralists and farmers were in fierce battle over land issues and Katembo wanted to give a warning, where internal quarrels can lead to. Katembo's story has a *mafunzo* for the reader, a lesson to be learned as it is appreciated by the Swahili audience from their traditional hadithi – narrations, may they be oral or written or in this case drawn.

Rose Marie Beck wrote an article about "Swahili Comic or Comic in Swahili?" She is raising the question whether in Swahili Culture special forms of comic have developed or if it is just an ordinary western comic. Concerning *Kipepe* it can be asked in the same way: "*Asterix* in Swahili or a Swahili *Asterix*?" The answer is that Katembo has not simply translated *Asterix* into Swahili but has made a real *mswahili* out of him, a true East African.

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