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In Need of Connection: Reflections on Youth and the Translation of Film in Tanzania

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Introduction

As actor in Swahili language film productions that started to boom in the mid-2000s, Steven Kanumba has acquired superstar status in Tanzania.[1] Accordingly, the expectations among his fans and the general Tanzanian public were high when 25-year old Kanumba was invited to participate at the opening ceremony of the reality show *Big Brother Africa* (BBA) which opened its gates for the forth time in September 2009. The ceremony and show were based in South Africa, but the format itself was transnational in the sense that contestants in the *Big Brother House* represented a broad range of African countries. The language chosen for the show was English, a language which Kanumba, the star of Swahili film productions, was hardly able to understand as it turned out when South African journalists wanted to interview him. This provoked a hot debate among Tanzanians and the Tanzanian press; especially "yellow press" newspapers such as *Sani*, *Kiu* or *Amani* were filled with articles and readers' comments on this incident.[2] Similar to the following comment by an anonymous writer of a readers' letter, many journalists and readers saw Kanumba's poor performance in English during interviews as a shame for Tanzania: "This shame, I don't want to get it as Tanzanian anymore. The one from yesterday is sufficient…!!!"[3]. Others however, defended Kanumba by arguing that just like important public figures of other countries, he should have been

[1] Cf. the biography on Kanumba's website ('Kanumba').

[2] Besides, for not speaking good English, Kanumba was also ridiculed for not being dressed as fashionably as the actual participants of the BBA show who represented the young and stylish upper-class from various African countries. Cf. also the discussion on Kanumba's appearance at the opening of Big Brother 4 on the website of the show ('Big Brother Africa').

[3] Quoted in *Kiu*, September 10 –16, 2009, p.2

allowed to speak in his own language Swahili: "I don't think that Kanumba made a mistake. Why was the Chinese president when he came to Bongo and spoke Chinese being translated; why can the leader of France speak French when he goes abroad, in a mixture with bad English, and who laughs at him? So stop this, guys, let us say that when he, Kanumba, has to go abroad, he should speak Swahili and then be translated […]"[4]

The heated debate about a Tanzanian national star at odds with the English language at the *Big Brother Africa*, highlights the importance of Swahili in popular culture production in Tanzania. The rapid and impressive success of genres such as *Bongo Flava* music (cf. Englert 2008a, 2008b) or *Bongo Muvis* as the products of the growing video film industry in Tanzania are also called (cf. Böhme 2006), cannot be imagined without the use of Swahili. The crucial role of the national language in Tanzanian popular culture has become evident in yet another sphere of cultural production: the translation of foreign films into Swahili. These very successful so called *"filamu zimezotafsiriwa"* are the subject of this essay.

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The translation of films from languages such as English, Hindi/Urdu or Chinese into Swahili is a phenomenon that has quickly grown into a successful business in Tanzania in the last couple of years. The films are mainly products of the USA, of India and China, but also of countries such as Thailand, Malaysia or Nigeria. The pirate copies that reach Tanzania, however, seem to be primarily imported from China (Interview with DJ Mark, 2009).[5] In Tanzania, the films are subject to a series of transformations that help to increase the appeal of these films to their predominantly youthful Tanzanian audience.

This essay focuses on these transformation processes and aims to show how films are shaped by the work of the translators *("watafsiri")*[6], but also by the

[4] Quoted in "Kanumba Ajuta" in *Amani*, September 10-16, 2009, p.2, translated by B.E.

[5] The pirated film copies usually reach Tanzania from China by AirMail. They are sent for the very low price of 500 TSh only (about 30 Euro cents) excluding postage. Occasionally though, translators also buy original copies for the price of 3500 TSh to 4000 TSh because of their superior quality (Interview with DJ Mark, 2009).

[6] "Translator" is the expression which the Tanzanian film translators use for themselves and which I use in this text. They are sometimes also referred to as film narrators (cf. Krings 2010) or Veejays (cf. Groß 2010, Carvajal Gomez/Groß 2010).

people who work in the video parlours *("vibanda vya video")*, the places where these films are usually consumed. It is based on research that was carried out in Masasi (Mtwara region) and Nachingwea (Lindi region) in February 2009 and in Dar es Salaam, Morogoro (Morogoro region) and Bagamoyo (Tanga region) in September 2009. Fieldwork consisted of interviews and informal conversations with film translators, video shop and video parlour owners as well as film consumers. Participatory observation, which included watching translated films in various film parlours, especially in Morogoro, was another major part of the research.

Connections – Mobility – Empowerment

> *„For all the while, in Africa's cultures, there are those who will not see themselves as Other. Despite the overwhelming reality of economic decline; despite unimaginable poverty; despite wars, malnutrition, disease, and political instability, African cultural productivity grows apace: popular literatures, oral narrative and poetry, dance, drama, music, and visual art all thrive. The contemporary cultural production of many African societies, and the many traditions whose evidences so vigorously remain, is an antidote to the dark vision of the postcolonial novelist."*
> (Appiah 1991: 353)

Africa has often been perceived as standing at the receiving end of cultural flows and thus as subject to cultural imperialism. A perspective that emphasises the "homogenizing operations of global capital and its adjuncts" is certainly too narrow and ought to be broadened by bringing in a 'view from below' (cf. Smith 2001 cited in Crang/Dwyer/Jackson 2003: 440). This, however, plead Gupta and Ferguson (1992: 19), should not mean to over-celebrate the "inventiveness of those 'consumers' of the culture industry (especially on the periphery) who fashion something quite different out of products marketed to them, reinterpreting and remaking them, sometimes quite radically, and sometimes in a direction that promotes resistance rather than conformity" as this would mean to "dismiss […] the 'grand narrative' of capitalism (especially the 'totalizing' narrative of late capitalism), and thus of evading the powerful political issues associated with Western global hegemony." While unequal power relations certainly exist, and need to be acknowledged, it is important to note that

mass media can also provide a challenge to the notion of cultures as separate entities (Gupta/Ferguson 1992: 18-19). Further, they can "provoke human agency in the form of cultural selectivity, adaptations, and, sometimes, resistance" as Mensah (2006: 73) remarks.

What is needed are detailed studies based on empirical research which show in which ways forms of mass media are being consumed and what they mean to their audience. Interpretation should then start from a balanced view of transnationality and the insight that "[…] there is nothing intrinsically 'given' about the politics of transnationality, and those who make appeals to concepts of non-fixity, in-betweenness and third spaces as inherently progressive construct transnationality in equally one-dimensional terms as those who equate transnationality with the operations of monolithic, Americancentred transnational corporations." (Crang/Dwyer/Jackson 2003: 443)

In this article, I do not want to emphasise the "resistance" potential that possibly lies in the reinterpretation of forms of mass media to which video films certainly belong. I will rather look at these forms of mass media from the viewpoint of "connectivity". I argue that the translation and modifications of films in Tanzania are primarily means to make the worlds shown in the films more understandable to its Tanzanian audience and are not intended to be read as acts of resistance against a homogenising global film industry.

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Owning a television set still constitutes mostly an elitist asset in many African countries; in Tanzania, television ownership is particularly very low. According to the Tanzania Household Survey 2002, it is only at 2.6 per cent – declining to 0.2 per cent in rural areas […] "(cited in Hales et al. 2004: 7). Despite the low rate of television ownership in private households, television or video consumption plays an important role in Tanzania. As Hales et al. (2004: 7) note, "based on anecdotal evidence, the reach and impact of the recent broadcast of the *Big Brother Africa* series was massive so the percentage of television owners may be a very poor indicator of the power of this media." While television is accessible in bars that often require consumption, videos are mostly being watched in video parlours that

charge very low entry fees. Thus, different from television, these films might be accessible to an even broader part of the population.

In the realm of television, Western – or more specifically North American – formats dominate TV screens in many African countries. However, the topics presented are decidedly of local relevance and the majority of viewers therefore experience them as "African" (Dolby 2006: 43). Certain shows, such as *Big Brother Africa* provoked a wide debate and a lot of critical reactions. Many of the negative reactions came from religious leaders and were based on moral grounds, but also African leaders such as the former Namibian president Sam Nujoma and intellectuals such as the Nigerian writer Wole Soyinka questioned the format of the show. Their "critiques seemed to derive from a dismissal of popular culture as meaningless fluff that distracts people from the more pressing issues of the day" (Dolby 2006: 38). One exception was former South African president Nelson Mandela who welcomed the format and personally invited the winner of the first show in order to congratulate her for her achievements for the African continent. He thereby recognised the potential of shows like *Big Brother Africa* to act as forums "through which ordinary people voice their opinions and participate in open, public discourse in ways that often are not possible through established (if often contested and fluctuating) political channels. Citizenship thus is an active process that involves the core of people's daily existence, including the ways in which they interact with and use popular culture" (Dolby 2006: 35). While the participants in the *Big Brother Africa* show all had upper-class background and most of them had lived - in many cases as students – for some time outside the African continent, the audience was far more heterogeneous and consisted largely of much less privileged young people. Still, it were exactly these young people for who the show was of special appeal because it provided them with a feeling of connection to a "global sphere". As Dolby (2006: 32) reminds us: "[…] regardless of their actual access to media, youth around the world are captivated by the images and sounds that flow from screens and boomboxes; being part of popular culture is a key component of modernity and feeling that one is somehow connected to the global flows described by Arjun Appadurai (1996)".[7]

[7] Cf. Brennan (2005: 485) who makes a similar point with regard to cinema in the colonial period. See also Englert/Moreto (2010) for a discussion of the *filamu zimezotafsiriwa* in the context of history of film in Tanzania.

Many young Africans see physical mobility as a precondition to progress in life and to social mobility (Langevang/Gough 2009: 749) - their reality however, is often characterized by "enforced localization" (Bauman 1998: 70 cited in Kenway/Hickey-Moody 2009: 847). The movement of young people is regulated by a number of factors, among them gender and generational relations, and especially the mobility of young women is subject to control. The means and cost of transportation are obviously another factor that regulate young people's mobility. (Langevang/Gough 2009: 748f.) Poorer youths are deprived of mobility in terms of access to physical travels – due to legal restrictions especially outside of national borders. In this context can film, but also other forms of popular culture such as music or fashion, offer the feeling of connection to young people by giving them "the possibility of imagining themselves in relation to different places and communities that are filled with the possibilities which their embedded lives cannot provide" (Kenway/Hickey-Moody 2009: 845). Dolby (2006: 40) makes a similar point in reference to the *Big Brother Africa*-phenomenon when she notes that "these forms of popular culture actually constitute a substitute against the limited possibilities of travel for African youth".

Liechty (1995: 186 cited in Langevang/Gough 2009: 752) has argued that "mass media, together with migration and imported foreign goods, 'are like windows on to modern places' and support a mentality of 'self-periferalisation' and marginality". The question whether it is cynical to promote the consumption of foreign places through film in a context where travel is not a possibility certainly has to be asked. However, I find it more cynical to dismiss the relevance of connection provided through the consumption of film on the ground that travels are for most out of reach in reality; such an attitude seems also to be shaped by the fear that young Africans might read these films as incentives for migration.

The consumption of film products from all over the world in many cases also inspires young Tanzanians to engage themselves in the production of popular culture. The shooting of movies has over the past two years become popular among youths all over the country. Similar to *Bongo Flava* music some 15 years earlier, has the production of *Bongo Muvis* (also known as *filamu za kibongo*) started as an upper-class phenomenon in the urban context of Dar es Salaam. Only in the last two years has film production also expanded to other parts of the country such as Morogoro where since 2008 several groups of young people dedicate themselves to film production. In

the even smaller – and more remote – towns of Masasi (Mtwara region) and Nachingwea (Lindi region) has film production started on the local level in 2008 and 2009, respectively (Interview with Majeed Suleiman, 2009; Chidi Chinanga, personal communication, 2009). In Dar es Salaam has the great increase in productions in the meanwhile led to a situation in which film makers have to wait for several months to get their productions released because there are only two companies that offer post-production facilities (Interview with Hamisi, 2009). The growth of Tanzania's film production is certainly good news to the country and it is exciting to see how fast it is developing and how it is spreading from Dar es Salaam to all over the country.

However, I do not want to limit the empowerment aspect in this discussion to the fact that foreign film productions inspire young people to engage in the business of film translation or production themselves. Rather, I want to argue that the consumption and appropriation of transnational cultural products such as films also contribute to strengthen the ability of young people to reflect on their own society. When Tanzanian film translators retransform cultural products to make them suitable for their own society as is the case with the *filamu zimezotafsiriwa,* they do so according to their own measures and according to the demands of their audience, and importantly, not according to the demands of the Tanzanian state. Their importance lies as much in the "feeling of connection" they transfer as in the potential to undermine a narrow view of what "good" popular culture should look like. In the Tanzanian context, this debate is very much characterised by a hierarchic generational dimension which was particularly evident in the nation building processes during the post-independence period (cf. Ivaska 2002, Burgess 2002). However, views, that popular culture production by young people needs the guidance of the elder generation because the young would otherwise be largely unable to distinguish between "good" (Tanzanian), and "bad" (foreign/neocolonial) influences, are far from out-dated and continue to prevail also among academics. Still, for the generation that grew up in the period of media liberalisation during the 1990s, being Tanzanian and being part of a globalised world is not a contradiction as is visibly expressed in their creation of popular culture.

Film Translation: Context and Environment

The main centre of film translation in Tanzania is Dar es Salaam where most translators are based and businessmen who distribute the film copies have their offices.[8] In the towns of Bagamoyo and Morogoro, located at less than one, respectively three, hours travel from Dar es Salaam, there are no locally based film translators. In more remotely located towns such as Masasi in Southern Tanzania, film translators such as Hemed Musa (cf. Englert/Moreto 2010) cater for a local market.

The translated film copies that are produced in Dar es Salaam are distributed via traders who pick up large quantities of film copies directly from the offices, usually against prior order. They then transport them to towns and villages all over the country where they sell them to local owners of video shops or video libraries.[9] The owners of video parlours usually rent them from these places on a day-to-day basis for a price of 300 TSh (15 cent) per VHS and 500 TSh (25 cent) per VCD/DVD.[10] When VCDs came up in Tanzania, many people expected VHS to quickly disappear. It turned out though that in places where people largely borrow films rather than buying them, and where sand and dust characterise the environment, VCDs pose a problem because they get easily scratched. VHS cassettes proved to be much more resistant and are therefore still the preferred choice of many owners of video libraries. Moreover, VHS decks are also cheaper to purchase then VCD/DVD decks and are thus a more affordable investment for those who want to open a video parlour (Interview with Suma and Sara, 2009). Thus, translations are originally inserted on DVD technology but

[8] The most important businessman was certainly Ajay Chavda who had his office in Nyamwezi street in the busy Kariakoo area until it was raided by the Tanzanian Copyright Society (COSOTA) on August 20, 2009 (Interview with DJ mark, September 2009; cf. also Krings 2010: 28-29).

[9] The films are also bought by traders from the neighbouring countries such as Congo, Rwanda, Zambia, Malawi or Mozambique (Interview with DJ Mark, September 2009). In Kenya film translation equally booms, also in other languages than Swahili, such as for example Kikuyu and Luo (James, pers. comm., September 21, 2009). The art form of video narration is especially popular in Uganda which is also considered as the place from which Tanzania's first film translator Lufufu derived his inspiration (cf. Krings 2010: 4-5; cf. Groß 2010: 2, 10).

[10] Buying a VCD/DVD costs approx. 5000 TSh (2,5 Euro), whereas a VHS is usually slightly cheaper (Interview with Sara and Suma, 2009). In Masasi however, it costs 1500 TSh (90 Euro cent) to borrow a film (cf. Englert/Moreto 2010: 229).

copies are then largely produced on VHS, the technology that suits the local conditions.[11] (Interview with DJ Mark, 2009)

Proper cinemas do not exist anymore in most Tanzanian towns (cf. Brennan 2005: 509, 507). The consumption of commercial films – especially the translated films (*filamu zimezotafsiriwa)* largely takes place in video parlours.[12] The audience of the translated films present in video parlours is predominantly young and male, and lives in the poorer periphery of urban centres or in villages. The entrance fee to the small video parlours is very low at 100 TSh (5 cent) for youths and grown-ups and 50 TSh (2,5 cent) for children. The *filamu zimezotafsiriwa* are rarely found in the video shops or video libraries that mainly offer *Bongo Muvis* (Tanzanian film productions) which are screened only in a comparatively small number of video parlours. Besides, video parlours are mainly located in the neighbourhoods. This is an important point since transport is often difficult and dangerous after dark, the time of the day when most people want to watch films.

Physical access to places where films can be watched is obviously an even bigger obstacle in villages. The context in which films are being watched in villages is very little explored but it can be assumed that film consumption is higher and more relevant than TV consumption because films can be watched with the help of a generator in places where a satellite dish may be missing. Nginjai Paul Moreto accounts memories of watching films when he grew up in Kambala, a small village inhabited by Masai people in Morogoro region in the 1990s. As there was no access to electricity in Kambala at that time, a group of young men usually went to one of the bigger villages like Dakawa located at some 6-8 kilometres distance, to watch films. Due to the long distance, people would watch several films in a row for a flat rate of some 500 TSh (30 cent), generally not knowing in advance what films would be shown. (Interview with Nginjai Paul Moreto, 2009).

In towns such as Morogoro, video parlours can be found in most neighbourhoods, but are generally absent from the better-off areas. In some places, there is quite a concentration of them such as for example in

[11] Exceptions are video stores in downtown Dar es Salaam where only DVDs and VCDs are on offer whereas VHS cassettes seem to have completely disappeared.

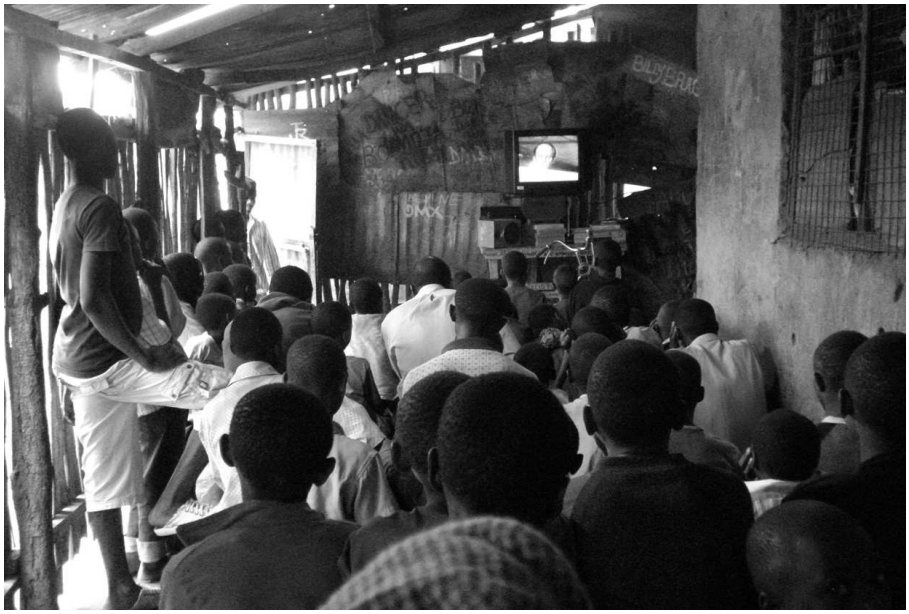
[12] Apart from these there are also the so-called *"gari ya sinema"* (cinema cars) which usually tour with films sponsored by NGOs, churches or mosques or companies to promote their messages.

Chamwino Magengeni where several video parlours mingle with market stalls and places where beer and coffee is consumed. Most video parlours are specialised in one or two film genres so that their audience knows what to expect (Interviews with Sara, 2009; Suma, 2009; see sketch below).

In the video parlours located in the densely populated neighbourhoods such as Chamwino Magengeni or Chamwino CCM, only translated films are being shown because customers would otherwise stay away. At the Masika video parlour in the centre of Morogoro town, however, occasionally also films that have not been translated - especially action movies might still get an audience despite a lack of translation.

The spaces where films can be consumed are generally regarded as unsuitable for "good" women – one factor which explains why so few women attend the video parlours (cf. Interview with Mama Sonia, September 2009). Further, due to the prevailing gendered work patterns women generally have less leisure time to spend. The audience of the Masika video parlour in downtown is even more gendered as the other video parlours in the neighbourhoods. This is due to the gendered mobility of people which means that most women rather stay in the neighbourhoods and do not frequent the town centre as often as men. However, also in the video parlours in the neighbourhoods there are generally few women in the audience; hardly did I see more than one or two women in an audience of 50 or more people. In Dar es Salaam, the number of women who watch film in public places is much higher than in the smaller regional towns such as Morogoro. Nginjai Paul Moreto quotes a woman who remarked that "it would be a shame for a clever woman from the city like Dar not to know who is a star in acting, singing, Taarab, Bongo Star Search or without knowing what happens in the translation of film". (Email, February 28, 2010)

In certain video parlours in Dar es Salaam, also live translation - largely carried out by the same translators whose work is produced as mass product - can still be experienced (cf. Groß 2010: 2, 10, 13-16; Carvajal Gomez/Groß 2010). The film shows in regional towns included in this study seemed to rely exclusively on translations recorded in VHS or VCD format.



Photos: Outside and inside a video parlour in Chamwino CCM, Morogoro**.** (© Birgit Englert, 2009)

Film Translators and Practices of Film Translation

The oral translations provided by the film translators are neither proper dubbings nor voice-overs but rather what could be termed as 'delayed dubbing', i.e. the voice of the translator is inserted after the original voice which remains to a large extent audible. The film translators actually do much more than just translate the films. They guide their audience through the film by constantly giving references to what happened before and what is going to happen in the story later on.[13] They also provide their audience with background information on the setting of the film as well as the personal life of the actors. Advertisements for their own translated films are another typical feature of the *filamu zimezotafsiriwa*. More recently, also advertisements for other products run through the picture during a film screening (Nginjai Paul Moreto, Email, September 15, 2010).

Krings (2010: 9-10) suggests to view "video narration in fact [a]s a means to transfer video films into oral narratives." He further argues that "[a]ll these different forms of commentary, however, have the same general effect, for they cause the (foreign) images to lose their governing function in telling the story. The added voice-over takes the upper hand over the pre-existing moving images which turn into mere illustrations of the verbal narrative. The hierarchy of original and copy is thus reversed, […]. It is the video narrator who gains control of and reigns over foreign images." (Krings 2010: 16) While Krings is certainly right in pointing at the controlling function held by the film translator, or narrator as he calls them, I do not share Krings' impression that images turn into "mere illustrations of the verbal narrative". I rather suggest viewing the techniques used by the film translators as an attempt to increase the meaning of the images, and not to reduce their meaning.

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The current star among Tanzanian film translators is DJ Mark. He chose this pseudonym after a sheikh versed in astrology told him that the letters M, K and J would bring him luck. He is, however, also known under names such as *„sauti ya simba"* ("the voice of a lion") or *"sauti ya hela"* ("the voice of

[13] For a more detailed account on the technique of translation compare Groß (2010: 64-117), Englert/Moreto (2010: 230-234), Krings (2010: 11-25).

money") or *„kidume kikuku ngbendu wa za banga"*[14], and uses all of them to introduce himself in the films. Thirty-two-year old DJ Mark was born on Zanzibar where he also completed primary school. He was not able to advance his education further and in 1997, at the age of 19, he moved to Arusha region in the north of the country to look for job opportunities. He started to work as a self-employed small-scale miner and spent his evenings watching video films at the mining centre where someone was providing live translations. At that time, his own level of English was very low but watching movies on a regular basis helped him to acquire a good passive knowledge of the language. DJ Mark therefore came to notice the mistakes the translator in the mining centre was making and started to assist him; he then gradually took over as translator himself. When the government forced small-scale miners to leave the area, he decided to settle in Arusha where he continued to work as live film translator in a video parlour. He succeeded to set up three video parlours which he managed with the assistance of his wife. After a period of moving between Arusha and Dar es Salaam he decided to settle in Dar es Salaam on a permanent basis and thus asked the Indian film businessman Ajay Chavda to employ him as film translator. Chavda at first refused to employ him because at that time he was selling many films that had been translated by the first Tanzanian film translator, Captain Mukandala alias Lufufu (cf. Krings 2010: 3 and Krings fthc. for more background on Mukandala).[15] DJ Mark, however, eventually managed to convince Chavda of his skills as translator and since late 2007 his work has become widely distributed (cf. Groß 2010: 14-15). The Tanzanian audience received the translations by DJ Mark very well and the boom experienced by the film translation business in the last few years certainly is connected to his work (cf. Interview with DJ Mark, 2009 and with Nginjai Paul Moreto, 2009). DJ Mark was paid around 6000 to 7000 TSh (3 – 3,5 Euro) per film and according to his own account he translated up to three films per day. He estimated his total oeuvre to include more than thousand films. DJ Mark is especially known and appreciated for the translation of

[14] This name is a reference to the name of the former dictator of Zaire Mobutu Sese Seko Kuku Ngbendu Wa Za Banga who DJ Mark admires for his great powers which he compares to his own. (Nginjai Paul Moreto, Email, October 24, 2010; cf. Groß 2010: 70). It was Sandra Groß who first pointed me at the similarity.

[15] See also the documentary by Carvajal Gomez/Groß (2010) in which Mukandala is featured extensively - next to DJ Mark and other translators based in Dar es Salaam.

films in English *("Kizungu")*. It is remarkable though that while he has made himself a name as *the* translator of English language movies in Tanzania, he still does not speak the language from which he translates. He accounts that his preference for English movies was mainly guided by pragmatism: he prefers them because they usually last only 90 minutes while Indian films tend to be considerably longer.[16] Due to the time constraints under which he works, he often does not even watch the film before he starts translating in case the film is in English or has at least English subtitles. Only in cases where subtitles come in other languages such as Spanish, Portuguese, French, or Thai, he takes time to watch the film first. Even films that do not contain any English at all, neither in the dialogues nor in the subtitles, do deter DJ Mark from translating. As he notes, he disposes of enough experience in the business which enables him to understand any filmed story – even if he does not know the languages. When I talked to DJ Mark in September 2009, he had plans to leave the tiresome translation business and to start another business like a barbershop or something similar. In 2010, he set up his own studio in Mtoni Mtongani area in the south of Dar es Salaam from where he now also distributes his films on his own (Nginjai Paul Moreto, Email, September 27, 2010).

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Another popular film translator based in Dar es Salaam is Juma Khan who is specialised in Indian films. He is also valued for his ability to provide his audience with background stories on the life of the artists such as their relationships or their favourite pastimes (e.g. interview with Mama Lugendo, 2009). King Rich, who has made himself a name as the translator of Nigerian video films (cf. Krings 2010: 6-7), and Baba D are other well-known translators whose work is often mentioned while others do not seem to have reached the same publicity (cf. Groß 2010: 12).
Competition among film translators is high (cf. Englert/Moreto 2010: 228) and the audience and judges their skills (Interview with Suma and Sara, 2009). In 2009 film watchers but also owners of video shops, video libraries or video parlours, seemed to share the opinion that the work by DJ Mark was the best currently available in Tanzania (cf. Interviews with Star

[16] DJ Mark basically divides films in two categories *"Kizungu"* and *"Kihindi"*. In the "Kizungu" group he also includes Chinese, Thai and any other film which is not Indian.

Mbwiso, 2009; Omari, 2009; Suma, 2009). DJ Mark, well aware of his own popularity, confirmed that he would also translate films that have already been translated by someone else, knowing that his interpretation would become more popular than the preceding one. His popularity seems also be related to the fact that in his translations he makes use of slang expressions that appeal especially to a youthful audience. Mukandala, better known as Lufufu, whose film translations dominated the market for more than a decade, however usually sticks to Standard Swahili (Groß 2010: 90-92, cf. Interviews with Mukandala and DJ Mark in Carvajal Gomez/Groß 2010).[17] Further, Lufufu's films are said to be more difficult to understand because he translates much more accurately and therefore talks much faster than the younger generation of translators.[18] In general, the younger translators do not translate as accurately as Lufufu but tend to leave out passages which they do not consider important. In any case, they do not translate word by word; what the translators and their audience consider important is that they are able to convey the original intention of the director to the audience – which may include adding new elements to the film. This ability to add "flavour" ("vionjo") to a film is exactly the skill by which the film translators get judged: *"kuingiza vionjo vya kuvutia, changamsha zaidi, yawezekana zaidi ya ilivyokuwa katika hali halisi ya filamu"* "("to insert attractive flavour, to make it more lively, if possible, to make the film better than it originally was") (Interview with Suma, September 2009).

It becomes evident that from the point of view of the Tanzanian audience, the films are not being destroyed by the insertion of the voice of the translator – as it may seem to audiences not used to that format.[19] Rather

[17] See the detailed comparison of the translations of *"Titanic"* by DJ Mark and by Lufufu made by Sandra-Katharina Groß (2010). Although Tanzanian film watchers often mentioned the work of Lufufu, I personally could not find any copy of his films in the stores any more. Actually I did not come across a single copy of a film translated by Lufufu anywhere in Bagamoyo or Morogoro, let alone Masasi where only films translated by the local translator Hemed Musa were available (see Englert/Moreto 2010 for a detailed account of the translation business in Masasi).

[18] One of the video stall owners in Morogoro claimed that Lufufu's films were still preferred by audiences in the villages for the simple reason that people there tended to be more conservative and would thus remain loyal to the translator they already got used to (Interview with Omari, 2009). Others were of the opinion that also in the villages DJ Mark nowadays had become the preferred choice (Interview with Suma, 2009).

[19] This was the reaction of some colleagues at the University of Bordeaux when I showed them parts of a film which had been subject to „delayed dubbing" in Swahili.

they are being improved through the process of translation which turns the films more interesting to the local audience. From their perspective, the translation is not a nuisance that has to be endured if one wants to better grasp the meaning of the film but to them the film actually gains in value through the translation process (cf. Englert/Moreto 2010, cf. Krings 2010).

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The additional explanations provided by the translators, often take the form of comparisons between what is happening on the screen and Tanzanian realities. In *"The Last House on the Left"* (2009), the remake of the US-American horror movie from 1972, DJ Mark, for example comments on a film scene where 18 year old youths are declared as officially grown-up. He remarks that "*Wazungu* (i.e. "white" people) are considered to be grown-ups when they reach the age of 18 while *we* here are still living at home when we are already 45"[20] - a remark that points to the constrained mobility experienced by many Tanzanians and the resulting "prolongation" of youth.

Another example is from the film *"The Guyver"* (1991) which has been equally translated by DJ Mark.[21] When a white person, a *Mzungu,* appears in the film, DJ Mark refers to him as a Makonde[22]. When I noticed this with astonishment, I was explained that the *Mzungu* in this particular film was a very serious and angry man. In the Tanzanian context a widespread prejudice attributed these adjectives to the Makonde people from the Southern part of the country and thus this comparison would make the character of the *Mzungu* in the film *"The Guyver"* more comprehensible to the Tanzanian audience.

Another frequent translation technique that is especially much employed by the younger generation of translators, first and foremost DJ Mark, is to change the name of geographical places in the film into well-known geographical names in Tanzania, thereby turning foreign places into places in Tanzanian space. A bad neighbourhood in a US-town shown in the film

[20] Quote after notes that were taken while watching the film on September 1, 2009, at the video parlour at Masika in the centre of Morogoro town.

[21] I watched the film in a video parlour in Chamwino CCM shown on September 4, 2009.

[22] The Makonde people live in South-Eastern Tanzania, especially around the Makonde Plateau in Mtwara region.

thus becomes referred to as "Temeke" whereas a posh neighbourhood might be referred to as "Upanga", both well-known areas in Dar es Salaam whose names generate the respective associations in their viewers.
In his analysis of the translation (in the form of subtitles) of the French film *"La Haine"* into English, Mével notes that

> „[A]lthough the translation is denotatively accurate, the Anglophone viewer is put under the impression that the action is taking place in a Harlem project, because the language used in the subtitles almost systematically bears a different connotation than the original dialogue. […] There are a countless number of such examples in the subtitles: 'une racaille' becomes a 'gangsta' in the subtitles, 'un enculé' is turned into a 'mothafucka', and Vinz's 'amis' become his 'homeys'. Because of this process of relocation, the translation fails to convey the film director's symbolic resistance to the traditional notion of Frenchness, and the film is not so much about French youngsters in their *cité* as it is about 'bros in the hood'. The specificity of the situation of the French *cités* does not survive the process of translation, and Kassovitz's political message about the exclusion of an entire strata of the population left both at the periphery of the city and of French society, is definitely weakened if not altogether lost. [...] *Through the subtitles, the translators have created a new identity, one that does not exist in the original"* (Mével 2007: 55, italics B.E.).

In the example above, the creation of a new identity that was caused by the translation is perceived as the result of deficiencies of the latter. The subtitles are perceived as destroying the original message of the film to such an extent that in the meanwhile even the production of a new translation has been started (Mével 2007: 55-56). This is quite different from the case of the Tanzanian film translators whose interventions into the geographical "realities" of the film are not experienced as deficiencies or a lack of understanding of the original meaning but rather as proof of their ability to fulfil the expectation of their audiences. The transfer from the original location in the scene to a Tanzanian location is explicitly desired and makes up much of the appeal of the translation. Not only because of the extra Tanzanian "flavour" that it adds to the film, but also because it helps the Tanzanian audience better understand the geographies referred to by relating them to geographies with which it is more familiar.

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On the one hand, film translators are known and appreciated for adding a lot of new information to the films; on the other hand, they also cut parts of the original information. They censor films by either simply not translating certain things or by deciding to cut parts of the pictures if they regard them as unsuitable for their audience (cf. also Krings 2010: 25). Censorship can also take the form of advertisements that are placed above certain sequences of the film that are not meant to be seen (cf. Groß 2010: 116).

Such censorship concerns almost exclusively scenes in which sex, nude or improperly dressed persons are portrayed. Scenes containing excessive violence are however rarely the targets of censorship; films about war and violence are rather considered to be informing people about their dangers. As DJ Mark accounts such films would tell Tanzanians to value that they are living in peace even though they might be living in poverty - an argumentation along the lines of the infamous Tanzanian saying *"bora wali na maharage kwenye amani badala ya wali nyama kwenye vita"* / "better rice and beans in peace than rice and meat in war times" (cf. Interview with DJ Mark, 2009).

Besides the film translators, also the persons who run the video parlours make sure that films are adapted according to the particular setting in which they show them and according to the composition of the audience of a particular show. In this regard, also the actual location of the video parlour plays an important role as these are often fenced by a simple wooden fence which allows people to gaze through from outside. Therefore, the persons who run the video parlours usually take measures to make sure that the film screening does not disturb the neighbourhood; scenes that are deemed unsuitable for the women and children in the neighbouring courtyard maybe fast-forwarded – if necessary also against the wishes of the audience. In extreme cases the projectionist might even decide to stop the film altogether (Interview with Star Mbwiso, 2009, Omari, 2009).

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All film watchers I spoke to emphasised how these films provided them with a window to the world and allowed them to learn more about life outside of Tanzania. Due to the pirating industry, have not only the space-gap but also the time-gap increasingly become closed. Tanzanian film watchers may get to see international films only a few months or weeks

after they had been released (cf. Larkin 2008: 148, Englert/Moreto 2010: 230-231). Sara, the owner of a video parlour in Chamwino Magengeni, told me with pride that in September 2009 she had the film *Hellboy II* on show even before its official release in the USA in 2010. Due to the piracy of a preview copy, she claimed it had already reached Tanzania a year earlier. A search on the Internet revealed that her claim was not correct because *Hellboy II* had already been out in the US in 2008. Regardless of this fact, I think that her apparent misinformation shows very well what it means to Tanzanians film watchers to be able to capture global cultural flows without the great delays that were usual in the past.

It is clear that in legal terms the translated films are illegal products whose production is based on a violation of the copyright law (cf. Englert/Moreto 2010: 228, 230-231). Tolerated for a long time, the films have thus also been subjects of a raid in August 2009 that primarily targeted the illegal duplication of the Tanzanian film production *Bongo Muvis* (cf. Krings 2010: 28-29). Increasing enforcement against the film translation business seems to be influenced by two underlying factors: its recent tremendous growth and complaints by *Bongo Muvi* filmmakers who claimed to increasingly suffer from competition from the translation business with foreign films (Interview with DJ Mark, 2009; cf. Krings 2010: 29).

From my point of view, there is no convincing evidence that the translated films harm the business of filmmakers and actors of the Tanzanian film industry – while pirate copies of these films certainly do. The two genres, are in many respects complementary and are being consumed in different spaces: the *Bongo Muvis* are largely accessible to a better-off, generally higher educated, audience who can buy and watch them at home. The translated films, *filamu zimezotafsiriwa,* rather have a low income, generally less formally educated, audience who watches them in the video parlours in community with others. Apart from this, they also have very complementary functions. The genre of translated films can largely be seen as a space where connections to the global space can be experienced whereas *Bongo Muvis* form a space where the own creativity can be explored. Furthermore, translated films are a space where stories from different parts of the world are being retold in Swahili whereas *Bongo Muvis* are a space where *stories from Tanzania* are being told in Swahili.

Conclusions

The *filamu zimezotafsiriwa* are a good example of transnational cultural products that are being appropriated and turned into Tanzanian cultural products thereby connecting Tanzanians, and more generally Swahili speaking East Africans, to the global space of popular culture production. These films are especially important for their main audience, the great majority of young people who dispose neither of higher education nor higher income. In a context where due to economic and legal reasons very few Tanzanians ever get to travel abroad or the chance to experience life in other countries, access to the *filamu zimezotafsiriwa* is a possibility to experience different realities - and to relate them to the Tanzanian situation.

What happens here in the case of film translations is certainly a kind of 're-writing', though not in the sense this term is usually understood within postcolonial studies, i.e. not primarily with subversive intentions. The way cultural products, in this case films, are modified is not influenced by the desire to produce something "subversive" or to "write back" to the centres of global film production. Rather, the aim of the film translators is to connect to the world *in their own ways* and *for their own purpose*. A comparable point is made by Mwangi (2009) who argues in his analysis of East African literature that "counter to the predominant argument within postcolonial theory, which holds that African literature has been obsessed with 'writing back' to an imagined colonial center, since the mid-1980s, African novels have become primarily interested in dialoguing with other African texts rather than with an external audience." (Koh 2010: n.n.). In similar veins, the process of film translation is addressed towards a Tanzanian, or more generally Swahili speaking, audience that is encouraged to participate in global cultural flows.

That apart, are the *filamu zimezotafsiriwa,* next to *Bongo Flava* music and *Bongo Muvi* videos, another genre that has helped to transform Tanzania into a country which successfully produces and exports popular culture in Swahili to the neighbouring countries in the East African region. This also increases the chance that Kanumba might one day not be forced to speak in English at a transnational African TV show.

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