

Bakani ba Kanda

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ABSTRACT (English)

This visual essay is an attempt to revive the Meroitic script in modernity through Kandian (African) Manga art. The legitimacy of adopting Meroitic letters, which derived from the Rometian (Ancient Egyptian) demotic script, is due, not only because it is an ancestral Kandian writing system, but also to the relationship established between Meroitic and other Kandian languages (Diop, 1977; Imhotep, 2020, 2023; Mboli, 2010, 2024; Obenga, 1993; Sy *et al.*, 2014). Therefore, the *meroitization* of modern Kandian languages is based on this fact; and the *endoglossization* of Kandian Manga or Comics through an *endographization* (using indigenous writing systems) is what this artwork proposes with *Bakani ba Kanda* (Kings of Africa) in Ikota language of Central Africa.

KEYWORDS

Meroitization of Kandian languages; Kandian languages; Ikota language; African Manga

Reis d'África

RESUMO (português)

Este ensaio visual é uma tentativa de revitalizar a escrita meroítica na modernidade por meio da arte mangá kandiana (africana). A legitimidade da adoção das letras meroíticas, que derivaram da escrita demótica rometiana (egípcia antiga), deve-se não apenas ao fato de ser um sistema de escrita ancestral kandiano, mas também à relação estabelecida entre o meroítico e outras línguas kandinianas (Diop, 1977; Imhotep, 2020, 2023; Mboli, 2010, 2024; Obenga, 1993; Sy *et al.*, 2014). Portanto, a *meroitização* das línguas kandinianas modernas baseia-se nesse fato; e a *endoglossização* do mangá (ou de histórias em quadrinhos) kandiano por meio de uma *endografização* (uso de sistemas de escrita autóctones) é o que esta obra de arte propõe com *Bakani ba Kanda* (Reis d'África) na língua ikota da África central.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Meroitização das Línguas Kandinianas; Línguas Kandinianas; Língua Ikota; Mangá Africano

ΒΕΧΕΝΞ Ε ΧΑΡΑ

ΜΩΛΕΙ (bekwel)

ΜΕΙΚΙΑΛΑ ΜΕΠΩΤ ΜΑΚ ΙΕ Ε ΜΕΦΩΟΥΑΛ ΕΙ ΕΒΑΔΑΝΟΟ ΜΕΙΚΙΑΛΑ Ε ΒΕΚΩΩ ΜΟΥΣ ΤΟ ΜΑΝΓΑ ΒΩΤ ΕΧΑΡΑ. ΜΕΚΙΕΛ ΕΝΟΟ ΜΕΙΚΙΑΛΑ ΜΕΙΝΗΚ ΕΙΒΩΤ ΕΚΟΓΩ, ΕΙΝΑΤΟΥΣ ΠΕ ΕΙΔΗΜΟΤΗΚΗ ΕΙΒΩΤ ΕΚΗΜΑ, ΙΕ Ε ΕΙΤΕΠ ΜΕΙΚΙΑΛΑ ΜΟΟ ΤΙ ΜΕΙΚΙΑΛΑ ΕΙΒΩΤ ΕΧΑΡΑ ΝΕ ΕΙΤΕΠ ΛΕΙ ΙΟΟ ΝΕ ΕΙΘΗΡΙ ΕΙΛΕΙ ΕΧΑΡΑ ΤΙ ΝΕ ΝΙΗΧ ΝΚΩΤ (Diop, 1977; Imhotep, 2020, 2023; Mboli, 2010, 2024; Obenga, 1993; Sy *et al.*, 2014). ΤΙΝ, ΜΕΚΙΑΛ ΜΕΙΩΝΞ ΜΕ ΧΑΡΑ ΤΟ ΚΑΡΑΜΑ Ε ΒΕΚΩΩ Ε ΕΙΤΕΠ ΤΑΚ; ΕΣΑ ΕΙΜΑΝΓΑ ΤΟ ΜΕΙΩΝΞ ΜΙΝΑ ΝΕ ΤΟ ΜΕΙΚΙΑΛΑ ΜΙΝΑ ΙΕ Ε ΜΕΠΙΚΙΕΛ ΕΛΕΕ ΤΟ ΚΑΝΑ ΒΕΧΕΝΞ ΕΧΑΡΑ ΤΙ ΤΟ ΛΕΙ ΒΕΚΩΤΑ Ε ΧΑΡΑ ΕΝΙΗΧ.

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ΒΕC&Π-ΜΕΚΩΔ

ΕΚΙΑΛ ΜΕΙΩΝΕ ΜΕ ΧΑΡΑ ΤΟ ΕΙΚΑΡΑΜΑ ΕΙΒΩΤ ΕΚΟΓΩ; ΕΙΛΕΙ ΕΧΑΡΑ; ΛΕΙ ΒΕΚΩΤΑ; ΜΑΝΓΑ ΧΑΡΑ

Introduction

Inspired by *Gabao mangaka*, a Gabonese Facebook group of young African Manga creators (whom I admire a lot), together with my project to write Kandian (African) languages through ancestral scripts (hieroglyphics, Meroitic, Coptic, etc.), I have thought of giving Kandian Manga, and in particular, Gabonese Manga a bit of originality or ancestrality by proposing a production entirely in Gabonese languages (Ikota, Fang, Punu, Nzebi, Bekwel, etc.) to better fit the decolonial approach of African Renaissance (Asante, 1988; Thiong'o, 1986), and art has a major role in that process.

This art is a combination of AI generated image and an experimental writing of the Ikota language using the Meroitic script (derived from the Egyptian hieroglyphic script). Since the advent of the Artificial intelligence, artists have considered using it to assist them in their creative process, even though its use has been receiving a lot of criticism (Medina; Farina, 2021; Venancio Júnior, 2019). And, not being talented in drawing myself, I use AI generated image as an example of a pattern (concept) to conceptualize, envision and externalize what I want to see in African Manga art, which could inspire Gabonese (and Kandian) Manga and comics creators¹.

The *Meroitization* (Rilly; Voogt, 2012) of Kandian languages is one of my projects to contribute to the linguistic and literary decolonization of Kanda (Africa). This work has been possible thanks to works of researchers such as Mboli (2010, 2024), Imhotep (2020), and many others (Bilolo, 2011; Diop, 1977; Obenga, 1993), who have established a genetic (and cultural) relationship between the Ancient Egyptian language, the Meroitic language (from the Nubian city of Meroë) and other Kandian languages.

Therefore, *Bakani ba Kanda* (African kings, or Kings of Africa) is an attempt to give a new layer to African Manga and comics based on their *endoglossization* (use of indigenous languages). I think that the Manga art is very important for the decolonization process of Kanda. In other words, being able to see characters who reflect ourselves (Asante, 1988), like it used to be (Lepsius, 1849), would make young Kandian people (in the continent and in the diaspora) proud of who they are (Taylor, 2016), and reading the

¹ Zebracomics: <https://zebra-comics.com/home>

stories in their own languages would be of great freedom and identification (Thiong'o, 1986)².

The first image (Lepsius, 1849) shows the Kushite Pharaoh (King) Taharqa with his wife queen Takahatamun in front the king and god Hemana (Amun) and his wife the queen and goddess *Muwate* (Mut). The second image shows a Kushite queen being served; there is a Meroitic inscription above the servant's head. The third image (Lepsius, 1849) depicts a Meroitic King in front of the king and god Wosore (Osiris) and the queen and goddess *Raseta* (Isis). The last image is our AI generated image (from the software ClipDrop)³ which displays Kandian youth in a classroom (learning environment); those young men and women represent future leaders and rulers (Bakani) of Kanda.

Image 1: the Kushite Pharaoh Taharqa and his wife in front of Amun and his wife



Source: Lepsius (1849)

² The danger of a single story - Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: <https://ed.ted.com/lessons/TXtMhXIA>

³ ClipDrop: <https://clipdrop.co/>

Image 2: a Kushite queen



Source: Lepsius (1849)

Image 3: a Kushite king in front of Osiris and Isis



Source: Lepsius (1849)

Image 4: *Bakani ba Kanda* (Kings of Africa)



Source: author, 2024.

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