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# The Interview as Trial and Error and as Encounter: Inside the Black Box of a Historian in Tanzania

Florence Wenzek

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historienne en Tanzanie*

*A entrevista como tentativa e como encontro : a câmara negra de uma  
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# The Interview as Trial and Error and as Encounter: Inside the Black Box of a Historian in Tanzania

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

A Kiswahili version of the title, detailed abstract and keywords are available in the appendix to this article (translated by Hassan Said, independent publishing consultant, Kenya).

### **Data related to this article:**

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Collection including the source documents and data used in this article, produced by the author during her fieldwork, as well as the sound recordings, the transcripts and translations of the interviews here discussed.

See also, at the end of this article, the section “List of documents and data related to this article,” for a complete list of titles and numerical identifiers of the materials cited.

## Introduction

- 1 In a book on his practice of oral history published in 1991, Alessandro Portelli called on us to rethink our ways of writing: “Let [our work] contain the dialogic history of its making, and the experience of its makers. Let it show how historians themselves grow, change, and stumble through the research and the encounter with other subjects. Speaking about the ‘other’ as a subject is far from enough, until we see ourselves as subjects among others and we place time in ourselves and ourselves in time” (Portelli 1991, 76).
- 2 This article responds to Portelli’s call by revisiting the entire process through which I collected and interpreted interviews conducted for my doctoral thesis on female education in Tanzania during the colonial and postcolonial periods (Wenzek 2022). In doing so, it contributes to the literature on interview practices in the humanities and social sciences. Although this literature contains a wealth of reflections, it seldom fully responds to Portelli’s call to make all the stakes of an interview visible.
- 3 Historians have reflected on the archival silences that interviews help to fill, the new approaches interviews open up, and the specific biases of this type of source, among them the prism of memory (Institut d’histoire du temps présent 1981; Portelli 1991; Voldman 1992; Baillargeon 1993; Dermenjian and Thébaud 2009). Sociologists’ work has focused more on the different interview forms (structured, unstructured, and semistructured) and theorized different approaches—the “ethnographic interview” and the “comprehensive interview,” for instance (Beaud and Weber 2010; Ramos 2015). In parallel to this, sociologists have written about the issues involved in interpreting results and generalizing conclusions from individual cases documented in interviews (Demazière, Dubar, and Baudelot 1997; Donegani, Duchesne, and Haegel 2002; Achin and Naudier 2010; Dubar and Nicourd 2017). Although the multiplicity of approaches has established schools whose positions sometimes seem irreconcilable, there is a dialogue around interview practices that crosses disciplinary boundaries (Müller 2006; Berlière and Lévy 2010).
- 4 In the case of the history of Africa, the first oral sources were mustered from the early 1960s. These were grand narratives of past times, and they were collected from an elite specialized in mentally preserving and reciting a historical and literary heritage (Vansina 1961; 1985). Then, following different time frames depending on the academic space, the collection of oral sources became oriented towards conducting interviews with or recording the life stories of notable figures or “ordinary” people. This allowed social histories of colonization or, more recently, of the first decades following independence to be written (Gwassa and Iliffe 1967; Bujra 1975; Strobel 1979; White 1990; Geiger 1997; Jézéquel 2003; Giblin 2005; Hugon 2009; Decker 2014; Dinani 2017). Last, the linguistic and postmodern turn in social sciences prompted Luise White (2000) to suggest that interviews be analysed not for what they say about individual experiences, but rather for what they say about collective representations.
- 5 In this context, methodological reflections have continued on from discussions that have taken place in other fields of study, particularly anthropology and the history of women and gender (Gluck and Patai 1991; Baillargeon 1993; Ferguson and Gupta 2005; Fouéré 2008; Thompson 2019). In particular, they consider the effects of the researcher’s status as “foreigner” or “local/native”; they examine the effects of the

double subjectivity at work when it comes to searching for interviewees and conducting interviews; and they bring to the fore the power dynamics between those doing the research and those who are its focus (Diawara 1985; Vansina 1985; White, Miescher, and Cohen 2002; Renard 2010; Rillon 2012).

- 6 Although these studies are of great value, the variety of epistemological and ethical issues posed by interviews is rarely dealt with as a whole, even though these issues all intertwine within each research project. Showing how a specific investigation was constructed through multiple decisions taken to best address these questions has three key worthwhile aspects. First, as Alessandro Portelli (1991) emphasizes, this approach is essential to account for how interviewees produce their personal narratives of the past. Impossible though it is to fully restore the richness of these discourses, which inevitably lose a dimension when translated into writing and placed within a historical analysis drawing on multiple sources, their specificities can be better understood. In doing this, in this article I shine a light not only on all my publications related to this research but also on the interviews, which I have made available for those who wish to use them.<sup>1</sup> Second, I aim to contribute to the historiography on the ethical and methodological issues involved in interviewing, while moving beyond the impasse to which it has sometimes seemingly led. Critical reflections tend to present an irreconcilable opposition between the ethical ambitions of researchers, whose aim is often at least partly to make historically ignored voices heard, and their practices, which are trapped in fundamentally unequal social and economic structures (see, for example, Gluck and Patai 1991, or certain contributions in White, Miescher, and Cohen 2002). Although the complexity of these issues means that a single method of interviewing or universal solutions to these debates cannot be put forward, my intention is to demonstrate how I responded to them, within the specific conditions of my research, as best as possible via trial and error. My approach therefore corresponds to the mission of *Sources*: I show, amid growing mistrust vis-à-vis scientific expertise, how a piece of situated research was constructed, in tandem with making some of the sources I collected available (Fouéré, Rillon, and Pommerolle 2020). This approach also responds to the growing calls to archive documents from our social science investigations so as to allow our fields to be subsequently revisited and a social history of scientific production to be written (Laferté 2006).
- 7 The article also aims to expand on certain interview-related ethical issues that are still seldom a topic of discussion in the literature—for instance, anonymizing interviewees and sharing the collected data. In addition, it studies the role of intermediaries; details of these individuals are rarely offered in the literature, even though intermediaries are often essential in establishing contacts as well as, sometimes, in conducting interviews and dealing with the many side issues connected to these. An increasingly large body of historical works shows this in the case of older research: between the nineteenth century and the early post-independence decades, European scholars owed much to their multiple African helpers, who played the roles of interpreters, guides, informants, or research assistants (Schumaker 2001; Dulucq and Zytnecki 2006; Bank 2008; Dulucq 2009; Bank and Bank 2013; Labrune-Badiane and Smith 2018; Camara, Bertho, and Rodet 2020; Maxwell 2022). Moreover, there are critical analyses of current major research programmes in which data collection is entrusted to “field” researchers who have little or no involvement in the rest of the work. These studies show that such a division of labour perpetuates unequal power relations between north and south, and they highlight the resources mobilized by these researchers to produce the data, the lack of

recognition they receive, and the effects of the division on the data obtained (Randal et al. 2013; Biruk 2018; Coetzee 2019; Governance in Conflict Network 2021; Abdelghafour 2022). My aim here is to examine the ethical and methodological issues arising in other forms of exchange and collaboration, in the context of research conducted by an individual who did not delegate data collection. I did not use assistants per se—that is, people who have research training and were alongside me for much of my source-collection work—but my work would not have been possible without the help of many Tanzanians. Accurately conveying their contributions is an ethical issue (recognizing the collective dimension of knowledge production) that is all the more pronounced because European knowledge about Africa—historically and often still today—has been predicated on making the role of these intermediaries invisible.

- 8 The investigation presented here focused on female education, which I engaged with to reexamine the process of national construction in Tanzania between the late colonial period and the first two postindependence decades (Wenzek 2022). Nation-building was the major challenge of these forty years, during which the colonial territory of Tanganyika gained its independence and joined with the neighbouring archipelago of Zanzibar to form the United Republic of Tanzania (1964). This new state pursued a socialist policy agenda that expressed the hope of founding a prosperous and truly independent nation (Aminzade 2013). Education was given a central role in this national project due to the social, economic, and political benefits it was expected to yield: both schools and courses for adults aimed to give individuals training that would prepare them to actively contribute to nation building. The role women should play in this young nation was debated, and so was the matter of their education. Considering the educational trajectories of girls and women since then and the policies, debates, and practices related to these allows an analysis of the gender-related issues involved in Tanzanian national construction as it was debated, organized, implemented, and experienced.
- 9 Whereas archives, press sources, and other published documents allow the construction and implementation of educational policies as well as the public debates underpinning them to be analysed, the series of thirty-nine interviews I conducted made it possible to examine the experiences and life paths of women who grew up during the period under study.<sup>2</sup> The aim of these interviews was to study education through the prism of individual experiences. Age and gender were the only selection criteria for the interviews: I sought women born before the mid-1960s so that they would have been of school-going age during the period under study. I spoke both with women who received a long schooling and with those who were unschooled, because my study focused on diverse educational forms beyond the school institution (adult education courses, Quranic schools, youth movements, family education) and because the perspectives of unschooled individuals are vital when it comes to writing a social history of schooling.
- 10 After setting out the epistemological issues involved in constructing the corpus, this article examines questions of consent and data usage. It then analyses the elements that situate the interviewee contributions collected, the role of intermediaries, and the issues of subjectivity and memory at work in the interviews. For the latter, in particular, it draws on examples from the two interviews published with this article (Document 1 and 2).<sup>3</sup>

## Establishing the corpus: A combination of choices and chance

- 11 How does one go from individual experiences documented in interviews to conclusions about collective dynamics? Several studies show that collecting multiple personal accounts allows “acting variables”<sup>4</sup> to be identified, despite the specificity of each account (Achin and Naudier 2010). But it is still necessary to question and clarify who the people speaking are and how they were chosen or encountered. Establishing the corpus is based on a constant back-and-forth between choices grounded in epistemological reflection and the need to adapt to chances arising from encounters in the field. This back-and-forth is what I present here, from the selection, before fieldwork began, of a regional scale, to the way in which I worked with a range of intermediaries to meet women from various backgrounds.

### A defining choice: Adopting a regional scale

- 12 Although I analysed public debate and educational policies at the national level, to understand lived educational experiences, I chose a regional scale: social relations with schools, families’ strategies as to schooling, and pupil trajectories cannot be understood without analysing the “connection to the territory” (Condette and Castagnet-Lars 2018, 25). Moreover, the strong internal contrasts within Tanzania preclude any national generalization about cultural and social practices, though various works of social history on Tanzania have shown the great value of a local approach to studying national construction (Maddox and Giblin 2005).
- 13 Having never been to Tanzania before I began my thesis, no personal factor influenced my choice of the region in which I conducted interviews. I opted for the Tanga region, which is particularly pertinent for this study because about three-quarters of its population is Muslim, while the remainder is primarily Christian.<sup>5</sup> Although in both 1957 and 1967 about a third of the Tanzanian population identified as Muslim, meaning there were as many Muslims as there were Christians, Muslims both had less schooling than did Christians during the colonial era and were marginalized during the construction of the independent state (Ilfie 1979; Westerlund 1980; Said 1998; Ludwig 1999).<sup>6</sup> The lower access to schooling among Muslims means that studying a region where Muslims are overrepresented is necessary to make them visible in the educational archives. Focusing on the Tanga region, therefore, made it possible to examine how the inclusion of women in the nation played out differently for Christians and Muslims (for a synthesis of these results, see Wenzek 2023b). Last, it is worth highlighting that the Tanga region has the advantage of being relatively easy to reach from Dar es Salaam, where I was collecting records. I had not thought much about this dimension before I entered the field, but it turned out to be very practical for the purpose of organizing relatively short research stays (two three-months stays).
- 14 Additionally, there are particularly strong contrasts between the region’s spaces: alongside the diversity of its rural, coastal, hilly, and mountainous zones, there is the city of Tanga, which was the second-largest city in the country throughout the studied period (a population of sixty thousand in 1967—far behind Dar es Salaam’s 270,000 but far ahead of those of other cities, which did not exceed thirty-two thousand).<sup>7</sup> This created scope for examining how relationships to education differed across urban and

rural environments. I did not visit every corner of this vast region, but I did go to several of its contrasting districts, meeting women in isolated as well as connected rural spaces, small towns, and district or regional capitals. The mobility of the women I interviewed allowed me to cover an area larger than the places I personally visited: several grew up in Pangani, to which I did not go, or in various places in the Usambara Mountains, where I remained close to Soni. The only underrepresented district in the interviews is Handeni, because I did not visit it, because it is less connected to the districts I spent time in, and because attending school was less common there than it was elsewhere. Although most interviews were conducted in towns, the majority of women came from rural areas. My trips to villages for some interviews did not yield anything particularly new: I had already become familiar with rural women's trajectories. However, these trips did bring me face to face with the difference in material welfare between cities and villages—a difference that persists to this day—and with the difficulties of access that continue to significantly isolate some rural communities, even if these have been becoming less acute over the past three decades.

- 15 The data I gathered in the interviews confirmed the relevance of the regional framing: while growing up in the Tanga region was not a selection criterion for the interviews, all the women I met had lived in the region during the period under study. The majority had lived there since childhood; a few arrived as adults or experienced various relocations at some stage in their lives. The regional framing aligns with the fact that during the period under study, when women changed where they lived or studied, staying in the region was more common than leaving it was. Therefore, the interviews reveal trajectories that go beyond regional confines while having their roots and culminations there. However, this focus precluded studying the trajectories of women who had permanently left the region.
- 16 Last, the regional scale proved small enough to allow different narratives about specific schools to be corroborated. It also enabled me to create a network of intermediaries that was both dense and varied enough so as to put me in contact with women who belonged to completely different networks.

### **In the field: Relying on multiple intermediaries**

- 17 One chance meeting aside, all the women I interviewed were introduced to me through different intermediaries. Seeking to meet women who came from different generations and a range of social, educational, and religious backgrounds, I approached several people whom I had met separately, and they introduced me into different networks.
- 18 My first trip to Tanzania, in 2018, was an opportunity for various encounters and some exploratory interviews, alongside archival research in the Tanga region's schools. For instance, in the Anglican parish of Magila, to which I had gone to consult archives, the priest, thinking I would not find data relevant to my topic, had arranged interviews with two elderly men from the parish for me. Given that I had not requested these meetings and was unsure of what to expect, really they were informal conversations. The parish secretary, Esther Mssika, took me to their homes, and she later had me meet her mother, with whom I conducted a recorded interview. In parallel to this, the parish's archivist, Monica Mbezi, introduced me to a woman from the parish.
- 19 In 2019, my first series of interviews conducted in Korogwe and Muheza was helped along by the bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Tanga, Maimbo William Fabian Mndolwa.

I had contacted him on the advice of the historian Andreana Prichard and the mother superior of the Community of the Sacred Passion; I had conducted an interview with the latter in June 2019. I first met the bishop at Magila parish's annual fete on 29 September 2019, where he had me present my request for interview volunteers to an assembly of several hundred members of the congregation. Some of the women volunteered, and at a meeting in his office in Korogwe the next day, the bishop, with the help of his secretary and a pastor, compiled a list of women from his diocese who were potentially relevant interlocutors. In a similar vein, the Anglican pastor of Muheza, Paul Ruhinga, introduced me to two women from his parish. He could have introduced me to more, and I could also have contacted Tanga's pastor, but I decided not to make further use of this network.

- 20 Although it had indeed proved particularly effective for quickly meeting a large number of women (leading to fourteen interviews), it was limited in several respects. First, it was inevitably creating a certain level of social homogeneity in my corpus. This homogeneity was less significant than I had initially feared, as one woman had grown up as a Muslim and another as a Lutheran, and they represented diverse social backgrounds. However, it was very common for the women to have attended school for long periods, and their standard of living was above average. The fact the list had been drawn up by the bishop probably caused women who were particularly active in the community to be put forward. Several were pastors' wives.
- 21 To bring balance to my corpus, I relied on my other connections. Joël Niganile, curator of the Tanga Museum, whom I met in 2018, provided an initial entry point for this city. He had already organized an interview with his mother for me. He had me meet other women with whom I would conduct interviews, as well as other key people. First among these were his colleague Mohammed Majura and Mohammed's wife, Fatma. They hosted me and put me in contact with two women from their neighbourhood. Joël's colleague Mohamed Mazige introduced me to two of his great-aunts, who in turn introduced me to other Muslim women from their generation. Finally, through Joël I met Salama Bwanga, who, after giving me an interview, became an important intermediary.
- 22 As the president of the section of the Women's Union of Tanzania (UWT) for her neighbourhood (Mzingani), she knew most of the women residents, regardless of whether they were members of the union. We spent several days visiting women in her neighbourhood and in Sahare, an adjoining neighbourhood that is distinctive because life there is still largely like that of a coastal village, the men engaged in fishing activities and the women in weaving. These visits led to eight interviews with both Christian and Muslim women from very diverse social backgrounds. This was the result partly of her spontaneous approach to my research, and partly of our discussions: I encouraged her in this direction by explicitly requesting to meet women with very little schooling as well as highly schooled Muslims so I could fill gaps in my corpus.
- 23 Last, Elizabeth Mbuya, a friend who is a teacher working in Soni in the Usambara Mountains, asked several people on my behalf in her town, with the help of her friend Salustia Tilumanywa, a secondary school teacher. The last two interviews arranged through their efforts added to the corpus's geographic and social diversity.

## Women from varied backgrounds

- 24 The range of characteristics of the women I encountered therefore resulted from a combination of chance encounters and an effort to diversify both intermediaries' and interviewees' backgrounds. The resulting corpus is diverse to some degree, particularly in generational terms: born between 1924 and the early 1960s, some experienced a time when sending girls to school was an uncommon social practice, others a time when it was very widespread; some grew up during the colonial period, others at the moment of independence or under socialism.<sup>8</sup> Alongside this, there is diversity in terms of religion and educational background, as the table below shows.

Highest schooling level attained	Overall total	Total of Muslims
<b>No schooling</b>	3	3
<b>Primary education</b>	26	12
<i>Left before end of primary school (Standard VI or earlier)</i>	6	5
<i>Standard VII (final level of primary school from 1966)</i>	12	6
<i>Standard VIII (final level of primary school between 1950 and 1966)</i>	8	1
<i>followed by vocational training</i>	10	1
<b>Secondary education or beyond</b>	10	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>18</b>

- 25 The fact that the Muslim women in the corpus received less schooling reflects an imbalance recognized at Tanzania's national level for the period studied. The inclusion of women with no or little schooling in this corpus was one of my study's strengths, since works on the history of education in Africa tend to focus on educational elites. However, the small number of highly schooled women in this corpus was one of its limitations: few women included in it were involved in activism. While many unschooled people mobilized for Tanzanian independence, in the postindependence era it has much more commonly been the school-educated who have engaged in activism (Geiger 1982; 1997). Therefore, my corpus's limited documenting of very long periods in formal education means the links between educational trajectory and activist engagement, which are abundant in the context of pupils from an elitist institution, as has been shown for Francophone West Africa (Barthélémy 2010), cannot be explored.
- 26 Furthermore, none of the women I interviewed had attended adult literacy courses in any meaningful way; these were a flagship policy of the socialist regime throughout the 1970s and 1980s. All I could gather were accounts of how attending these courses was difficult, these complemented by perspectives from women who had taught such courses. This absence in the corpus results from the fact that most people of an age to attend adult courses during the period studied have died, as well as from the fact that I

managed to meet only a small number of women with no or little schooling. To integrate the perspectives of women who had attended these courses, it would have been necessary to conduct a specific study, as Julie Weiskopf did,<sup>9</sup> in one of the five locations where more intensive programmes were conducted in the early 1970s.

- 27 Despite these limitations, my corpus constitutes a valuable entry point into the diversity of Tanzanian women's educational experiences in the Tanga region. A sense of this diversity can be obtained by reading the biographical notes summarizing their backgrounds (Document 3, sec. 3.2, Biographical notes, in chronological order of birth). This corpus was built with the help of the intermediaries I have described, but its form was also influenced by whether or not the women with whom I requested interviews consented.

## Consent and data usage

- 28 Consent is a prerequisite for any interview in the social sciences, but precisely what the term encompasses deserves attention. How is consent gathered, and how can refusals be understood? Beyond consenting to the interview, what do people accept or wish for in terms of disclosing their identity and sharing what they said in a broader environment?

### Collecting consent and refusals to be interviewed

- 29 During the interviews I conducted in 2018, I gathered consent informally and orally, during the discussions preceding the interview. In 2019, I drew up a form, complying with an academic standard increasingly imposed internationally as a means of ensuring the ethical dimension of research (Document 4, Consent form). However, this choice was not an obvious one, insofar as it had the potential to create distance in a context in which use of the written word is limited. What led to this decision were two observations I made at the beginning of my 2019 stay. First, a Tanzanian midwife with whom I was discussing my work in an informal setting raised this issue. For her, having forms of this kind and getting them signed was essential. Two days later, I noted the use of such a form in a history thesis conducted in Tanzania by a Tanzanian. These two factors led me to think that such a procedure would be accepted, or even expected, by some of the women I met. So I drafted a consent form, using as a template a document from Université Laval that I found online. I adapted it in three ways. First, I made anonymization optional rather than systematic. Second, I removed the mention of any compensation to avoid this being an incentive to accept the interview, though I planned to provide a form of compensation once the exchanges were completed (see below on these two points). Third, I removed a mention committing researchers to return their results because, although I was sensitive to the importance of such an approach, I knew I could not fulfil it during this research stay, and I was not sure whether I would have another stay. I translated the modified form and had it reviewed by Esther Mssika and Mohamed Mazige.<sup>10</sup>
- 30 In practice, using the form was an additional constraint on the research, and determining how to introduce it required trial and error, but it was never a barrier to conducting interviews. Its main limitation was its procedural dimension: consent is set out in black and white, but all its nuances are lost. This shortcoming is striking if one

thinks about the efforts involved in using such a form: a laborious process of building trust leads to a binary response, while the entirety of the exchanges surrounding the interview, as well as their progression, reveals a diversity of relationships with the interview. Although I will expand on these elements, at this juncture I can offer an overview of this diversity before highlighting the benefits of using a consent form.

- 31 First, my requests for interviews led to a number of refusals, which were always given well before the form was introduced. They were expressed either by the woman to whom I presented the project, or by a husband or brother, who interposed at that time or intervened between the initial meeting and the planned time for the interview. The refusals came about either because the person was not willing to talk about her personal history with a stranger or because of tensions concerning compensation.<sup>11</sup> Even though I did not mention that interviews would be compensated when I introduced myself, some anticipated they would be, and the matter was brought up when the refusal was discussed: Why would I conduct an interview with one of the women of the household without being interested in the male head of the family or paying him as well?<sup>12</sup> The status of the intermediary vis-à-vis the individuals to whom an interview request was made played an important role: Elizabeth Mbuya, a teacher in a village in the Usambara Mountains, where she is seen as an outsider because she is from the Kilimanjaro region, received the highest number of refused requests. Of the four women she asked, one refused and two were forbidden by their husbands from doing the interview.<sup>13</sup> Some refusals, however, may have been related to the individual's being reserved about her personal history rather than to any mistrust in me. This is shown by the attitude of Mtoo, one of Mohamed Mazige's great-aunts. She did not agree to an interview with me, but she invited me to eat and asked other women for me, leading to an interview conducted at her home.<sup>14</sup>
- 32 Accepting to do an interview, moreover, can correspond to a whole range of attitudes. The form provided for cases of people who would accept to do the interview but without a recording, but I ultimately did not use it for this: these people were too reserved for the exchange to be valuable. I therefore did not proffer the forms for these interviews and did not use them in my research. Refusing to have the interview recorded, however, was very rare. It seems that women agreeing to an interview shared the view of Mariam M., who laughed about participating in the production of "science" when giving her consent to recording.<sup>15</sup> Her friend Mwanahamisi M., whom I interviewed just before her, rounded off my presentation of my approach by specifying that it was "to record [her] voice":<sup>16</sup> voice capture, less intrusive than image capture, is easier to accept.
- 33 Among these recorded interviews, behind the formal consent given, some women were very enthusiastic, whereas others, visibly not particularly interested in the exercise, or remaining guarded for reasons that were not explained, were only minimally committed. These attitudes were disconnected from the reaction to the form, which was a source of concern for many—even those who were most interested in the proposed exchange. The form always came as a surprise and often created a certain level of apprehension. This might sometimes have been a question of poor reading skills or poor eyesight, because their anxiety melted away when I suggested we read the form together or I read it aloud. Frequently, though, their apprehension was more a question of fearing the implications of signing a document. In these cases, the intervention of a third party was what reassured them: several turned to their husband

or the intermediary who had put us in contact. Owing to these difficulties, which I experienced with school-educated women, I did not use the form for women who had received no school education, instead gathering their consent verbally during the recording.

- 34 Ultimately, despite the constraints it imposed, the form proved an interesting basis for discussing the interview's implications: presenting the form meant formally giving time to this issue, and so it encouraged the parties involved to ask questions and thereby set out their concerns. For this reason, presenting the form at the end of the interview gradually prevailed as the most productive approach. Not only could interviewees then be confident in reading and signing the form since they knew what they had shared with me, but they also actively engaged in a dialogue about what their involvement in my research meant. Two choices left open in the form in particular, on data anonymization and dissemination, made it possible to have a more in-depth conversation with the interviewees about how their accounts would be used.

## Anonymity

- 35 Although anonymizing data collected verbally is the norm in most social sciences, this is not the case in history. In an effort to highlight socially marginalized individuals, or at least those whose life experiences are underdocumented, many historians make the choice to name the people whom they interview, thereby putting them on an equal footing with people who left written records. The fact that these individuals are still alive, however, raises weightier ethical questions: they and their loved ones may prefer a certain degree of anonymity. Historians are therefore divided on the issue of anonymization, with novice researchers left facing a seemingly unsolvable dilemma (Spencer 2005). Personally finding it difficult to choose between these two options, since the interviews did not on the face of things cover confidential or sensitive subjects, I asked each woman about the issue. I emphasized that there was no "right" or "wrong" answer, explaining that including their name was a way of highlighting a personal journey but that it could expose them, since my research would potentially be published online or in various print formats.
- 36 Their initial attitude was hesitation. Several asked the intermediary who had introduced us for advice, or they asked what the other women whom I had met had chosen; others asked me to decide for them. A few, however, chose anonymity without hesitation, sometimes explicitly citing particularly intimate and painful episodes from their lives (sexual harassment, separation and so forth) that had been raised. Others opted to include their name, saying they had "nothing to hide." That expression indicates that, despite my attempts to present the choice neutrally, they considered allowing their name to be used the preferred response.
- 37 None explicitly mentioned the recognition that comes with seeing one's name and story published in a book, but this seems to be an underlying factor in some reactions. Several women chose their own pseudonym, incorporating elements linked to them (a name in their parents' language, which is often not their legal name and is not necessarily the name they usually use; their mother's family name). Through doing so, they revealed a desire to leave their mark while maintaining their anonymity. Mwanajuma J., whose interview is published with the French version of this article (Document 1), rejected using a pseudonym because she might "forget" it, which hints at

a wish to be able to recognize herself in my writings (Document 1.). Such attitudes echo the feelings of a Beninese woman I met during my master's research: having learned that she had once been interviewed by a Frenchwoman who was conducting research on the graduates of the French West Africa Women's Teacher Training College (École normale d'institutrices de l'Afrique occidentale française), I gave her Pascale Barthélémy's book (Barthélémy 2010). She opened it and immediately looked for her name, stopping, filled with emotion, at the list of interviewees and pointing out her maiden name. Although some women are indifferent to seeing their experience appear in a book, others associate it with a form of recognition.

- 38 This observation explains why anonymity should not be imposed systematically and without discussing it with interviewees. However, taking into account the heaviness of some hesitations, the rather intimate nature of several of the accounts, and the strong networks of acquaintance connecting the interviewees from the Anglican community, the number of accounts I anonymized, twelve in total (with family names only represented by an initial), was higher than the number of women who requested anonymity.<sup>17</sup>

## Data sharing

- 39 Driven by my own frustration at being unable to access the interviews conducted by Susan Geiger as part of her research on women's mobilizations for Tanganyikan independence (Geiger 1997), I started to reflect on the issues involved in making interviews available to other researchers even before I conducted the first of my own. Although Geiger wrote in her book that she would make them available to any researcher interested in them, she has since passed away, and none of the institutions and researchers I contacted to locate the interviews has been able to tell me whether they have been preserved. Current experiments with depositing recordings or transcripts online, which are expanding as part of the digital turn, open up interesting possibilities for avoiding such data losses (Fouéré, Rillon, and Pommerolle 2020). Whereas sociologists are interested in these for the purpose of obtaining comparative perspectives that sometimes involve diachronic intervals, the goal in history is to create "oral archives" to preserve the recollections of witnesses who will no longer be accessible in a few years.<sup>18</sup> The eldest woman I met during my investigation, born in 1924, passed away before I completed my thesis.
- 40 However, two issues arise from depositing one's interview data online: first, the economic and environmental cost of putting highly specialized material that will be of interest to only a very limited number of people online; and second, the interviewees' agreement for the data to be shared in this way. I thus included this matter in the consent form (Document 4) and discussed it with all the women I met.
- 41 Unlike the matter of anonymity, the question about it caused little hesitation. Half of my interviewees felt that they wanted to entrust their story to me alone: the discussion was part of a relationship of interpersonal trust, and their words were not intended for unfiltered dissemination to a wider audience. The other half, by contrast, wanted to contribute to research by permitting the recording to be shared.<sup>19</sup> The steps involved in research seemed much less alien to these women, none of whom had a university education, than I had expected. The eldest of the group, who had received about ten years of schooling but never managed to obtain her teaching diploma, mentioned she

had already done three interviews with other researchers.<sup>20</sup> Another, who had hesitated when asked about anonymization, eventually asked for her name to be included: the pastor, whom she had turned to for advice, had pointed out that other researchers might seek her out, and the idea of her name appearing in a history book appealed to her.<sup>21</sup>

- 42 I therefore envisage different types of sharing for different purposes. The fourteen interviews for which I have authorization for sharing will be accessible on specific request, particularly because for five of them, dissemination is conditional on maintaining anonymity. I have also selected three interviews for wider dissemination. One is being published in edited form to make the account easier to read (Wenzek 2023c; 2023d). The other two are being published in tandem with this article in unedited form to show how the account was produced within the interaction.<sup>22</sup> These are the voices of two women with contrasting experiences: Mwanajuma J., a woman who did not attend school; and a woman who completed the highest level of secondary school before receiving teacher training: Honorata R. To analyse these accounts, engaging in critical reflection on the conditions under which they were produced is necessary.

## Situated words: The dynamics of research relationships

- 43 Following the recommendations for ethnographic interview methods, throughout the investigation I recorded the dynamics of the research relationships in field notebooks (Beaud and Weber 2010).<sup>23</sup> These notes facilitated ongoing reflection on the continuous redefinition of research relationships, the salient issue being the consequences of these on what the interviewees said and the research's ethical dimension.

### A young Frenchwoman amid *mama wazee*: Kiswahili as a bridge

- 44 The research relationships were primarily defined by my position as a young, White, female, Kiswahili-speaking French student amid Tanzanian women who, owing to their age, can be described as *mama wazee*. The term, meaning “older” or “senior” women, emphasizes the respectability conferred by age. It also identifies them as mothers (*mama*), motherhood being primarily social in this case: their status as women and their age make them recognized educators, regardless of whether they are biological mothers. Our interview relationships were structured by our shared condition as women; this combined with an age difference that, in some cases, led to a grandmother-granddaughter-like relationship. I benefitted from a significant generational distance here, because such relationships are more conducive to confidences than are parent-child ones—something true in Tanzania and Europe alike (Makobwe 1975; Lefebvre 2022, 9–10).
- 45 However, such a bond of trust was far from always present, owing to what set us apart: as a foreigner and a White person, I sometimes aroused mistrust, leading to several refusals of my interview requests. Something of a distance also sometimes stemmed from the educational gap—none of the women had received a university education—as well as from a difference in living standards, this signalled by my skin colour and

French origin (more so than by material possessions; these I kept to a minimum in the interviews, the Dictaphone being the exception to this rule).

- 46 I made several material and methodological choices to establish a discussion that seemed informal, encouraging the talk to flow. First, following the advice of Beaud and Weber (2010), when the introductory conversation naturally turned to the questions I wanted to pose, I began recording without indicating I had done so (once consent to record had been clearly expressed). However, it is noteworthy that some women themselves made a clear distinction between these two phases by moving us to another room or indicating, through a few words or gestures, that they were ready to begin the interview. Some recordings therefore begin with my introductory question, whereas others pick up the discussion in progress. With the same goal of making the interview as close as possible to an informal conversation, I did not have paper and pen in front of me to take notes, and neither did I read out the questions I wanted to ask. I had put these into an interview guide that I memorized to lead the conversation, though first attempting to explore the avenues that my interviewees suggested.<sup>24</sup>
- 47 The approach was essentially a semistructured one. A first, deliberately open question offered the women an opportunity to tell their life story. Some women seized it, giving a lengthy autobiographical presentation that provided all the keys needed to continue the discussion. In the case of those who were less forthcoming, the guide helped me to move towards unaddressed themes and uncover aspects of their lives that they had not mentioned spontaneously. The women's level of schooling was quite determinative in terms of how they talked: the school-educated women found it easier to set out an orderly biographical narrative and, more generally, gave longer responses, whereas with the unschooled women, my questions came in more quickly owing to the brevity of their responses. In this regard, comparing Mwanajuma J.'s and Honorata R.'s interviews is relevant, even though Honorata R. was not one of the school-educated women who talked the most, particularly when she gave her initial story.
- 48 Conducting the interviews in Kiswahili, Tanzania's national language, also helped to reduce the distance between the interviewees and me. Initially, I was not confident enough in my language proficiency to be sure I could conduct the interviews alone. Therefore, for my first attempt, I was assisted by a friend, Maingu Nyanjala, who had offered to serve as an interpreter. She had no training in such a role, so she did not help me to understand much more than what I grasped myself; moreover, her presence and role led the woman I was interviewing to address her more than she did me. The interview was therefore arduous and ended quickly, the dialogue being too difficult to maintain. A second interview with the same person, conducted one-on-one a few days later, convinced me to do without an interpreter's help: despite occasional misunderstandings in both directions, I hit upon a high quality of exchange.<sup>25</sup>
- 49 This was confirmed by the rest of my interviews: my command of Kiswahili, though imperfect, still allowed me to overcome different factors distancing me from the women. Although speaking the national language is common among social science researchers working in Tanzania, my effort to do it contrasted with the fact that most foreigners in the country do not know the language, and it generally elicited sympathy. Moreover, my limited familiarity with the language often led me to ask for confirmations, which sometimes elicited useful additional information. Last, my difficulties and errors put me in the position of a learner in the presence of an expert, which mitigated the hierarchy caused by my educational level. This advantage existed

in all my interviews with the women, because all school-educated people are perfectly proficient in Kiswahili, and the few unschooled women I met spoke it as their mother tongue or, like Mwanajuma J., as their language of socialization since childhood. This was another of my reasons for choosing the Tanga region. The entire coastal population speaks Kiswahili, whereas unschooled people in the rest of the country, and especially women—who travel less than men for work—do not necessarily speak it. This choice meant that the unschooled women I met had this language as a vector for connection to the nation, which is a significant specificity at the national level.

- 50 However, the women did not all speak the same Kiswahili. On the one hand, those who went to school speak its standardized version: I found they used the language as I had learned it at the Institut national des langues et civilisations orientales (National Institute for Oriental Languages and Civilizations; Inalco). On the other hand, the unschooled women's Kiswahili posed specific challenges to me, because it contains many localisms of both vocabulary and verbal forms. For instance, in Tanga the temporal prefix used to express the present tense, *-na-*, can be replaced by the prefix *-wa-*, which is never used to express tense in classical Kiswahili but is used in it to form subject or object prefixes. The linguistic distance caused by this difference seems to have gone in only one direction: I had more difficulty understanding them, but my classical Kiswahili did not pose a problem for them, because it dominates the Tanzanian public space. However, it introduced a greater distance than that which I had with the school-educated women, with whom I had stronger linguistic proximity.

### Meeting in the home: Advantages and disadvantages of the domestic setting

- 51 Another determining factor in the interview relationship was the location where I conducted the interviews. A few exceptions notwithstanding, this location was each individual's home. I preferred this setting because, per the logic of ethnographic interviews, it provides multiple clues about the interviewee's living conditions, helping to contextualize the discourse (Beaud and Weber 2010). I therefore noted, for instance, my impressions of how fine the furnishings were and the home's internal organization (Document 6). Opting for the home did not guarantee quietness, a recurrent recommendation in interview manuals that is difficult to comply with in a context such as Tanzania. A lack of quietness inevitably impacted the quality of the recordings. Although some are very difficult to listen to, particularly the one with a woman who lives on a major road on the outskirts of Muheza, in most cases the background noise of the recordings is of interest, because it offers an insight into the interview context. For instance, behind Honorata R.'s voice several things can be heard: the pounding rain that is part of daily life during the rainy season; a television, which could be kept on in a well-off household such as hers (a young person, probably her grandson, was watching it at the start of the interview, paying no attention to our exchange); a few greetings, as the living room is a place people pass through and are welcomed in; a ringing phone, which she ignored, showing the interest she had in our exchange (Document 2, Interview with Honorata R., and 6, Extracts from the Field Notebook, sec. 6.2, Notes on the interview with Honorata R.).
- 52 The home also seemed an advantageous choice for most of the women: being older adults, they do not get out much but still have domestic responsibilities, and so they

were able to resume their activities as soon as the interview was completed. Using the home also allowed the women I met to choose the spatial arrangement for the interview session: some set me up on their terrace, others in the home's communal room, depending on the degree of closeness they wished to establish with me. For our second interview, Mwanajuma J. took me to a bedroom.<sup>26</sup> This gave us a more intimate space for dialogue than the communal room, where, during the first interview, we were surrounded, more or less continuously, by many members of her household. Her choice here was similar to that made by Amina M., who preferred to do the interview outside her home, in a room at the museum that Joël Niganile made available to us. This let her speak without fear of being overheard by her family, a concern not expressed by the other women, but an understandable one given that she wanted to talk about initiation rituals, a practice shrouded in secrecy.<sup>27</sup> Analysing the spatial arrangements for the interviews therefore provides information about the research relationships established with each person; these are also expressed through material exchanges.

### Compensation and gifts from interviewees: Material exchanges in the interview relationship

- 53 I provided each woman I interviewed with a form of compensation as a thank-you. This was in conformity to a certain social expectation that leads most researchers working in Tanzania to engage in this practice, which is discussed among colleagues but rarely mentioned in writing. However, this choice is far from universally accepted in the social sciences, in which there is a prevailing concern about commercializing the relationship and thereby biasing the data obtained, or of blurring the line between research activity and humanitarian action. In a number of contexts, such compensation is scarcely ever expected. But when there is a significant economic gap between researcher and interviewees, refusing to consider any compensation based on these principles can be challenging. One Congolese researcher has explained, for instance, the discomfort she felt due to her adherence to such a “field ethics” (learned in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Belgium) during an interview with a woman in serious precarity (Bashizi 2020). It is therefore primarily researchers working with people in precarity who resort to material compensation (Monteil 2022).<sup>28</sup> In my case, it seemed essential to take into account that, for the least well-off of my interviewees, the time devoted to the interview could conflict with one of the remunerative activities (in particular, small-scale crafts or trade) that such women continue to engage in, despite their age. More broadly, though, my discussions with colleagues working in Tanzania and with my intermediaries led me to believe that material compensation would be the most appropriate way to express appreciation to the interviewees. Since this was always given at the end of the interview, after they had signed the consent form and without my having mentioned it beforehand, it did not differ significantly from the various forms of gifts and symbolic compensations that researchers provide more routinely (Mauger and Pouly 2019). However, as it was provided in response to the time and information given during an interview, it was clearly distinguished from humanitarian donations.
- 54 I varied the form of compensation given, doing so based on my intermediaries' advice: in the network of Anglican women, on Esther Mssika's recommendation, I gave *kanga*, a set of two pieces of fabric that is typically a part of a Tanzanian woman's wardrobe. I

did the same in Tanga until Fatma Majura and Salama Bwanga pointed out that both women of very limited means and more affluent women might have more significant needs, meaning a donation of money was more appropriate. From that point onwards, I sought each intermediary's opinion. In the Soni region, Elizabeth Mbuya and Salustia Tilumanywa recommended giving sugar and soap, essential but costly everyday products that can be scarce for an older woman. These recommendations appear to have been linked to religion: no Christian suggested a monetary donation. To set the monetary amount, I chose to stick closely to the cost of the *kanga*. At the time, this was 7,500 Tanzanian shillings (TShs), which is equivalent to about 3 euros. I generally gave 10,000 TShs, and sometimes 5,000 TShs if the interview was short (less than forty minutes). Switching to monetary compensation also allowed me to thank people with whom I had a brief and unrecorded exchange; these I gave 2,000 TShs.<sup>29</sup>

- 55 Central to discussions about compensation is the question of the practice's influence on participation in an investigation and on the data collected (Abrial et al. 2022). Those who resort to it tend to emphasize that it is one element among others in encounters, which are not reduced to it, even when the compensation is announced in advance: participants often forget about it and, at worst, they are simply less engaged in the interview (Filipe 2022). This is what I observed in the case of one of my interviewees, who seemed to give the interview primarily for the compensation she was anticipating.<sup>30</sup> Without showing significant engagement in the interview as a whole, she nevertheless recounted some very interesting anecdotes about her experience as a pupil. Although not all people who agree to an interview have the same interest in the exercise, they tend to get involved and at least put effort into some responses. And out of all their answers, these are the ones that are quoted in the works subsequently published.<sup>31</sup>
- 56 Generally, the women actively engaged in the interview process, often elaborating at length on subjects I had not asked them about. They also showed me personal photographs, expressed interest in the photos of their old school that I showed them, and enjoyed going over their life stories with me. One woman even requested a recording of our exchange.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, many offered material gifts, usually in the form of a snack or a meal. Among the Anglican women in Korogwe, this was automatic, in contrast to those from Muheza: there seemed to be competition among these women, who were all aware that I would be meeting others among them. Elsewhere, what the women chose to do varied more. Economic factors inevitably played a role in these shows of hospitality: a well-off Muslim woman served me a three-course meal, something the less well-off women would have not had the money for, or the time to cook such a meal.
- 57 Ultimately, interviewees' reactions to compensation clarified their relationship with the interview process. Although the majority accepted it with a restraint connected to norms of modesty and politeness, some gave emphatic praise or thanks, while others protested. One woman combined her protests with several counter-gifts: she covered the cost of my motorbike taxi—her nephew was its rider—to the location of my next interview and then to my accommodation, and a stop at her house on the return journey allowed her to give me two bags containing several dozen kilos of maize and manioc from her fields. This very large counter-gift was atypical, and it signalled her desire to position herself as a benefactor. She also emphasized that her granddaughter was a student like me and expressed a wish for us to meet. Therefore, she took the

interview as an opportunity to enhance her and her family's social capital, doing so while also asserting her economic capital.<sup>33</sup>

- 58 Material exchanges thus played a significant role in my interview relationships, both my interviewees and I using them to express our gratitude for the exchange. The entries on this area in my notebooks provide a way of analysing the degree of the interviewees' engagement in the interview process.

## The intermediaries in the research

- 59 Whereas the first sections of this article introduced my intermediaries and some of their roles in my research, this section aims to set out more systematically the various forms of support they provided and to reflect on their impact on the research relationships as well as on the motivations behind their involvement.

### The intermediaries' multifunctional support

- 60 I can distinguish four main types of contributions that my intermediaries made to my research. The first I have extensively described above: by making requests to acquaintances or mobilizing their networks or authority to encourage women to speak with me, they played a crucial role in the construction of my interview corpus. It is worth noting that they always approached more women than the number I eventually met because of the rejections that we came up against. Some intermediaries called on their loved ones, while others mobilized networks associated with their professional, community, or political activities: the pastors, as well as Esther Mssika and Monica Mbezi, approached members of their parish, and Joël Niganile reached out to women he knew through his work as a curator. Elizabeth Mbuya, meanwhile, contacted her pupils' parents, and Salustia Tilumanywa came with me to the home of a woman whom she met during an election count. Some intermediaries pointed out that they had thought of a particular individual because of her storytelling skills or specific commitment to girls' education: Joël, for instance, directed me to one of the few women still conducting initiation ceremonies for pubescent girls. Salama Bwanga, on the other hand, took me to as many women as possible in the constituency for which she is a UWT delegate, without making any specific selection beyond the social and educational backgrounds I had indicated. This diversity among intermediaries therefore gave me access not only to a variety of social backgrounds but also to individuals who, despite their having similar social characteristics, varied in terms of their propensity to speak and to confide within the context of a social science investigation (see Mauger and Pouly 2019 for more on this).
- 61 My intermediaries also played an essential cultural-translation role, teaching me to become proficient in codes for creating and maintaining good relations with my interviewees. Much of what I learned from them came through observing their methods. For example, I noticed that Fatma Majura chose her late-afternoon visits to her women neighbours as the time to introduce me to two women.<sup>34</sup> That said, I also learned a great deal by asking my intermediaries to explain their way of doing things. Their work therefore involved explaining norms of politeness and courtesy, as well as implicit expectations in this type of social interaction. My dialogue with Salama Bwanga was particularly extensive, as our walks between visits were conducive to

discussion. They allowed me to understand how she adapted her approaches according to multiple parameters. For instance, she knew a particular woman would expect us to arrive for the interview on time, while others did not adhere to such a precise schedule. And she knew that another woman who appeared to be well-off needed money rather than a gift because she faced significant medical expenses.<sup>35</sup>

- 62 My intermediaries' third major contribution was linguistic. Maingu Nyanjala assisted me in finding the correct Kiswahili phrasing for the preliminary draft of an interview guide in 2018; in 2019, Esther Mssika and Mohamed Mazige performed the same work for a much more developed guide, as well as for the consent form. This help also extended to working with interview recordings. Between my two stays in Tanzania, I transcribed the few interviews I had so far conducted, and I asked Elizabeth Mbuya to produce a second transcription of one so I could check my work.<sup>36</sup> I later abandoned the project of fully transcribing all interviews, choosing a lighter form of transcription in which discussions that were less relevant to my research were condensed and some statements were directly translated into French. However, I opted to make exact transcriptions of the interviews in which the most dialectal Kiswahili was used to ensure I had a precise understanding of it. Mohamed Mazige's help was crucial here: we listened to excerpts that I was having problems with together, and he taught me the Tanga region's local dialectic peculiarities, sometimes with the help of Joël Niganile, whom he consulted now and then.<sup>37</sup> I also sought his help in December 2021, asking him to revise and complete my partial transcription of Honorata R.'s interview so I could include it in the appendices of my thesis (Document 2). Beyond these specific tasks, my intermediaries were among my main Kiswahili-speaking interlocutors and played a big part, along with my interviewees, in improving my proficiency in the language. Their linguistic support sometimes involved confirming the irreducible ambiguity of certain statements. Our many informal conversations about my research meant their support extended beyond the matter of understanding the interviews. Joël Niganile pointed out to me the highly derogatory nature of the term *ngumbaru* ("adult," but also "simpleton"), which was used in the press in the 1960s.<sup>38</sup> Since multilingualism is widespread in Tanzania, their assistance was not limited to Kiswahili. Esther Mssika and Joël Niganile, for example, provided explanations of the term *zaiko*, which I found in a manuscript source. It comes from Kibondei, Kishambaa, and Kizigua, local languages of the Tanga region. These exchanges continued beyond our time in the Tanga region: on the latter point and other ad hoc queries, I contacted them via phone messages from France. Finally, Nathalie Carré, a Kiswahili instructor at Inalco, along with participants in the translation workshop she held in 2022–2023 in Paris, helped to refine my translations, as did the anonymous reviewers of my published articles.
- 63 More sporadically, my intermediaries also acted as informants. Joël Niganile, for example, helped me to locate the former colonial girls' school in Tanga by telling me its current name, and he, along with Fatma Majura, informed me about the use of educational poems for young girls, including the famous *Utenzi wa Mwana Kupona*.<sup>39</sup> Within a broader conception of what intermediaries are, and beyond the arranging of the interviews themselves, it is also worth mentioning that throughout my research in Tanzania I benefited from the assistance of multiple individuals who located places I was interested in, advised me, and helped with my travel arrangements. In a country with almost no transportation-service maps, I relied on various interlocutors to obtain directions and information about the buses I needed to take. This reliance on diverse informants was not unique to my status as a foreigner, since Tanzanians also need such

help when arriving in a region with which they are unfamiliar. Nevertheless, it undoubtedly created a fieldwork experience that was different to what one would experience when conducting research in Europe or North America, where information is much more widely available in written formats, meaning that accessing it requires far fewer social interactions.

## Effects of symbolic and physical presences on research relationships

- 64 Manuals on interview methodology often recommend prioritizing one-on-one interviews, unless group interviews have been chosen, on the basis that this format is most conducive to encouraging interviewees to speak freely. However, my intermediaries were present during an interview on more than one occasion. It is therefore essential to examine the effects of such a physical or indirect presence on the interviewees' willingness to speak freely and on the quality of the exchanges.
- 65 Although I tried to present to my primary intermediaries what I considered to be the ideal organization for conducting interviews (a preliminary meeting in their presence, followed by a one-on-one interview), they largely organized the meetings according to their own criteria. My notes on the interview with Mwanajuma J. and her neighbours reveal this dynamic: as I was arriving, I planned to introduce myself before returning later for one or two interviews, but in the end I conducted three interviews, during which I was surrounded by Mohamed Mazige and various family members (Document 6, sec. 6.1, Notes on the interview with Mwanajuma J.). I will not go over all the configurations I experienced, but it is interesting to contrast two: the symbolic presence of the pastors versus the physical presence of other intermediaries.
- 66 The women I met through the Anglican network in Korogwe and Muheza were introduced by their pastor, on a recommendation from their bishop. On the day the bishop drew up the list of women whom he recommended I meet, Korogwe's pastor took me to visit them, and I managed to see three who were at home, as well as the husband of a fourth. For the interviews themselves, since I could not go on my own to visit people in these towns without addresses, the pastor himself took me to their homes, arranged for a driver from the diocese to do so, or asked the interviewee I was just seeing to take me to the next one. The latter was what happened in the case of Honorata R. Although the interviews were then conducted one-on-one, the pastor and, indirectly, the bishop were symbolically present, for the parishioners met me on their recommendation. While most women appeared quite open to the exercise, a few entered into it with visible reluctance. Honorata R. was not one of them. The recording begins with our laughing together, which highlights how all it took for us to establish a rapport was an initial exchange about the snack she served me (Document 2 and 6, sec. 6.2, Notes on the interview with Honorata R.). And at the end of the interview, in a sign of trust and friendship, she agreed to let me take a photograph of her as a memento for my personal archives.
- 67 My other intermediaries had no authority, spiritual or otherwise, over the women to whom they introduced me, so these potential interviewees were at greater liberty as to whether to accept the interview request. For instance, in Magila parish, the pastor did not assume the role of intermediary, which was voluntarily taken up by Esther Mssika and Monica Mbezi. As lay workers, they did not hold strong authority in the parish.

Similarly, Salama Bwanga's introductions for eight interviews in and around Tanga did not have a constraining effect, despite her responsibilities in the UWT. In fact, several women rejected the idea of an interview or a recording, and this resulted in informal conversations. Furthermore, the women who did accept to do an interview had no hesitation about explaining their reasons for not joining the UWT (usually the monetary contribution required) to Salama Bwanga.

- 68 Unlike the pastors, these intermediaries tended to stay for the interview, intervening from time to time to express compassion or seek clarifications but remaining largely unnoticed and distanced when the conversation flowed smoothly. They therefore added to the quality of the exchanges. For instance, Esther Mssika prompted her mother to describe her schooling experience to me in a more specific way. When we were with Helena H., she rephrased some of my questions, and she made very empathetic noises in response to the difficulties that Helena H. described, facilitating the continuation of the narrative.<sup>40</sup> Mohamed Mazige, meanwhile, resolved some mutual misunderstandings between his great-aunt Mwanajuma J. and me, clarifying that what she referred to as "Kiswahili courses," where she learned "Aliph, Bee, Tee" (the Arabic alphabet), was in fact Quranic school (Document 1).

### Intermediaries' motivations

- 69 The intermediaries had a variety of motivations for helping me. Within the Anglican Church, the assistance stemmed above all from the interest certain individuals and the institution itself had in constructing historical knowledge. The bishop has a doctorate in history from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, and when I met him he showed me two theses on the Tanzanian Anglican Church, including his own (Mndolwa 2012).<sup>41</sup> Moreover, perhaps on his initiative, the diocese was in the process of establishing an archival centre coupled with a small museum at its historical seat in Magila, and the priests in charge of the centre were keen to help me when I introduced them to my research. Their support falls within a common practice for a church: supporting research helps to extend the institution's reach. What strengthened this support all the more was that my research topic had the potential to highlight the Anglican Church's merits, since the church was a pioneer in girls' schooling and vocational training in East Africa (Prichard 2017).
- 70 The support I received from my other intermediaries was also partly a matter of their interest in my research, which varied according to their personalities. For example, Esther Mssika particularly enjoyed coming with me to interviews, following the life stories with interest. Mohamed Mazige, meanwhile, said after the interview with Mwanajuma M. that he found it very difficult to speak with older people whose answers sometimes stray far from the questions asked, and during the interview with Chiku J. he went about his business.<sup>42</sup> On the other hand, he had a real appetite for linguistic questions, which made our work sessions on my interview guide and transcriptions particularly pleasant, with my Gallicisms and the interviewees' dialectal expressions constantly inspiring amusement in him. For Joël Niganile, my research resonated with his work as a curator of the Tanga Museum, and he inquired about the possibility of exhibiting the photographs of Tanzanian schools that I had collected in Britain and Tanzania.<sup>43</sup> Beyond exhibitions, he organizes regular meetings with a few individuals sharing his interest in local history. Among these is Mohammed Majura; although he

did not ask to be involved in my research, his wife Fatma introduced me to her mother-in-law and a neighbour.<sup>44</sup> In doing so, she worked her network of acquaintances to my advantage, and as an academic specializing in Swahili poetry, she inquired about how I was conducting my research, asking questions in particular about using an interview guide and the recompenses I offered to my interviewees and intermediaries.

- 71 In the case of most of these intermediaries, another explanation for their help is that they wished to establish or strengthen a friendly relationship with me. Such intercultural friendships are based in particular on a mutual interest in relations that offer insight into different lifestyles and ways of being. They are also stimulated by the social capital they represent: just as the connections were a precious resource within my doctoral research, for these individuals a friendship with me opened up possibilities that they explored. For example, Maingu Nyanjala asked me to review her master's dissertation on batik, which she was writing as part of her degree in business management. And years after I had left Tanzania, Elizabeth Mbuya asked for my help in finding scholarships to study in Europe. For Salama Bwanga, coming with me to visit women in her constituency helped her to put her social resources on display, thereby enhancing her local reputation.
- 72 Last, some intermediaries' support was also financially motivated, since I compensated the ones who helped me the most. Transcribing interviews was the only task for which remuneration was discussed before any work was done. It was not for other tasks because these were initially ad hoc and not particularly time consuming (going with me to meet someone; answering a specific language-related question). When I could see that the intermediaries were devoting more and more hours to me, I decided to compensate them. And so in my notebooks I kept a record of the hours Mohamed Mazige, Esther Mssika, and Salama Bwanga spent with me, and I chose two different payment amounts: one for accompanying me to meet people, and a higher one for time spent working on the form, the interview guide, and the transcriptions. However, this financial dimension was not vital: none of them expressed an expectation of remuneration, and it simply encouraged Mohamed Mazige and Salama Bwanga to continue a collaboration they were already heavily invested in. Esther Mssika protested against the gesture, which I made at the end of our work together. All this tallies with what has been shown about research assistants: they mainly accept these roles because they are interested in developing scientific knowledge about their country or region, and hope it will help them to build their career (Mudinga 2020). While research assistants are trained in research, responsible for the entirety or a significant part of data collection and remunerated for it, the finding can be extended to intermediaries who do not meet these criteria if the notion of "career building" is extended to broader motivations, particularly enriching one's friendship network and social capital.

## Subjectivity and the prism of memory: From interview to analysis

- 73 At first, both the subjectivity inherent in the interview process and the prism of memory that structures narratives collected several decades after the period under study were perceived as limitations to the reliability of interviews as a historical source. In response to criticism, historians working with sources of this type demonstrated the possibility of corroborating information from them using the same

methodology applied to written sources. In parallel, in the broader field of humanities, developments in the study of emotions and subjectivities have enabled the subjective and the prism of memory to be fully integrated into analyses (Baillargeon 1993). Depending on the research questions posed and the type of information sought, I used one or the other methodological approach.

- 74 The first parts of my interviews focused on life stories to establish the family environment, the interviewee's school attendance or lack thereof, and the path her life had taken more generally. A second phase revisited various aspects of her educational experience, both as a learner and, in the case of fourteen of the interviewees, as a teacher (Document 5). The collected data fit along three analytical axes that required different approaches to subjectivity and the memory prism. The first axis primarily entailed reflection on factual-level reconstruction, whereas the other two involved more closely connecting that reconstruction with an analysis of experiences.

### Reconstructing educational pathways: Facts amid forgetting and silence

- 75 The first axis was a matter of reconstructing, based on individual narratives, the familial configuration in which schooling decisions played out. In the case of this axis, the analysis relies mainly on factual elements obtained through specific questions (for example, what the parents did for a living and when the interviewee started school). The factual dimension of the information sought had to contend with some interviewees' faltering memory, or, more broadly, with the fact that they do not conceptualize these facts in the same categories as a historian would. For instance, Mwanajuma J. did not know her year of birth, immediately saying, "I wouldn't be able to state it."<sup>45</sup> Eager to answer the question, she nevertheless suggested, without my restating the question, three ages (fifty years, forty years, eighty-five years). The last suggestion proved most accurate, based on the information given by her younger, school-educated sister, who did know Mwanajuma J.'s year of birth (1939).<sup>46</sup> The inability to state one's birth year or age, which is characteristic of unschooled individuals, meant information had to be sought elsewhere, the interview content documenting only these individuals' lack of interest in this information.<sup>47</sup>
- 76 Proficiency in the historian's categories also proved decisive in their descriptions of their school attendance: when asked about the highest educational level attained by her brothers and sisters, Mwanajuma J. responded, "They were teachers. I do not know the school grade you need to study until to become a teacher. All of them were teachers."<sup>48</sup> She was vague as to the educational paths taken by her children, showing that even as a mother she is significantly removed from the school system, despite the concern she explicitly stated about her children's succeeding at school. Her remarks therefore record her long-standing unfamiliarity with the school system, rather than her family members' exact pathways. By contrast, school-educated women like Honorata R. were at ease listing the grades each of their siblings passed.
- 77 However, even within the remarks of such women, brothers' and sisters' school careers are still often vague, because the women spontaneously centred their narratives on themselves. I asked many questions to document the range of paths within sibling groups, but especially when there were many children, the answers were often vague. Given this self-centred dimension of the answers, interviewing multiple members of

the same sibling group proved particularly fruitful, as the two cases where this was possible demonstrate (see also Hadj-Ahmed 2024). The case of Zainabu M. and her younger sister Amina M. is particularly interesting in this respect. Amina M. said hardly anything about her older sister, and vice versa. But the family circumstances they described were not the same at all: whereas Amina M. characterized their father as a parliamentary member, Zainabu M. described him as a COMWORKS employee who became a construction entrepreneur. The younger sister therefore focused on her father's political career, and the elder sister pushed it aside to focus on his early occupational roots. The difference can only be partly explained by the five-year age gap between them. Corroborating information on parents' occupations or other factual details was rarely possible, and so the data collected provide only a partial vision of each family's social background.

- 78 In parallel with my more factual questions, my broader inquiries aimed to gauge parents' involvement in their children's schooling and their wider educational choices. Although these questions sometimes yielded nothing, they also elicited valuable anecdotes. For instance, when I asked Honorata R. about her learning to do domestic tasks at home, she described the domestic science classes with the missionaries that her mother attended (Document 2). However, comparing Zainabu M.'s and Amina M.'s accounts again reveals the breadth of what can be missed in an interview with just one person. Amina M. explained she had undergone an initiation ritual (*unyago*), but through Zainabu M. I learned their father was strongly opposed to it. And Zainabu M. had refused the initiation when her mother suggested it, using her father's stance, which she knew about, to support her position. Accordingly, the initiation Amina M. underwent, which she presented as something she would obviously have done, takes on a different meaning: she could have avoided doing it, and she chose to do it behind her father's back.
- 79 Although corroborating sources that document individual journeys within a specific family is challenging, these narratives can be read in conjunction with administrative archives and sociological studies that take a quantitative approach to parental attitudes towards the school institution. Statistics and reports produced by the education department in the colonial era offer an idea of the proportions of children and girls enrolled in school according to location and year. For the postindependence period, the education ministry did not produce statistics as regularly, but we can rely on the work of Tanzanian sociologists. In the 1970s and 1980s, they conducted extensive quantitative surveys on parental attitudes towards schooling, focusing especially on the phenomena of non-schooling and absenteeism (Auger 1970; Carr-Hill 1984; Mbilinyi 1974; 1976). Sources such as these studies help to identify whether the pathways documented in the interviews were uncommon or widespread. For instance, for a woman of her generation, the path taken by Mwanajuma J. is not surprising: she was born in 1939, and in 1947, about the year when she should have started school, the schooling rate for children in Tanganyika was only 10 percent.<sup>49</sup> The path taken by Honorata R., born in 1948, is more exceptional: she was already part of a minority when she began school in 1954, though thanks to a fast rise in the number of schools, about 34 percent of children had access to primary education (Tanganyika 1955, 10). However, reaching the highest level of secondary school is where she especially stands out: while 31,070 of the 93,300 pupils who began school in 1954 were girls, Honorata R.

was one of the 260 girls out of 930 pupils who reached the highest secondary grade, Form VI, in 1968 (United Republic of Tanzania 1969, 12).

- 80 Therefore, comparing the interviews with one another and with other sources enhances and reinforces what can be drawn from individual accounts. But the retelling of educational pathways was also shaped by a subjective dimension, based on how these pathways were experienced and are perceived today. This subjectivity is even more pronounced in stories about school experiences and life paths.

### **Analysing lived experiences, in and out of school**

- 81 The second analytical axis concerns the educational experiences themselves. The interviews do not fully allow these to be addressed. For instance, when it comes to assessment practices, they provide at best a vague description of how easy (more often than how difficult) achieving good results was. School archives, on the other hand, make it possible to situate a pupil within her cohort and study how her marks evolved over her time at school (Wenzek 2022). Moreover, recounting school experiences has to contend with reconstructing the pupil experience through an adult's eyes. Some researchers suggest that when it comes to these personal accounts, adults are "almost predestined to conclude on a positive note," because they have "defected to the other camp": their position leads them to adopt the idea that school rules are intended to benefit pupils (Dams, Depaepe, and Simon 2014, 19). The interviews I conducted tended to confirm this interpretation. For Honorata R., and so too for the majority of my interviewees, "the [school] rules were not hard," but actually "light,"<sup>50</sup> even though she described routine monitoring of correspondence, while others reported brutal or even cruel punishments. The women therefore put themselves on the same side as the adults who legitimize the educational methods deployed by the school institution, regardless of their childhood experiences. Remarks made in this regard can also be explained by how strict families and Quranic education can be (Stambach 2000; Paqueron de Fommervault 2017). However, in parallel with these conclusions that reveal adult opinions, the interviews yielded many anecdotes that reconstructed daily school life in terms of both its worthwhile and, sometimes, its oppressive or violent aspects. Here, cross-referencing sources on practice produced by educational institutions is crucial for seeing another view of school experiences and interpreting the perspectives inherent in the accounts (see Wenzek 2023a).
- 82 The third analytical axis, which relates to life paths beyond the schooling the interviewee received, gave rise to another type of corroboration: using an ethnographic interview approach (Beaud and Weber 2010), I compared what the women said with observations. My analysis here therefore focused not only on the women's words but also on their living environment, way of speaking, gestures, and posture. In this vein, the difference between Honorata R. and Mwanajuma J., or more broadly between the most and least school-educated women, is striking. First, their current living conditions are strongly linked to their school journey, with the more school-educated being significantly more affluent, something the size of their house as well as the home's fixtures and fittings revealed. Unsurprising though this observation is, it is a very powerful demonstration of the extent of social inequalities inherited from the colonial period and the early days of independence. These have continued to be reinforced by

educational inequalities, which, from the 1970s and the advent of mass access to primary education, shifted to the secondary level (Samoff 1979; Malekela 1983).

- 83 Beyond living standards, educational disparities have led to marked cultural differences. Some of these can be made out in the women's voice modulations in the recordings: the speech of the women who did not attend school is quick and choppy, and they raise their voices easily, especially when responding to a question that stirs emotions—for instance, when Mwanajuma J. says, “School wasn't a chance I had; I educated my younger siblings who were born after me.”<sup>51</sup> Conversely, school-educated women like Honorata R. speak at a steady, calm pace with a controlled tone, lowering their voice when talking about subjects considered to be intimate—puberty, for example—to the point of sometimes becoming almost inaudible (Document 2). The women who did not attend school had relaxed body postures, sitting on the ground, and sometimes lying on it, resting on an elbow. I only observed postures like these in one interview with a school-educated woman, and I have a particularly strong personal connection with her.<sup>52</sup> These differences highlight the strong ethic of bodily discipline instilled by the school institution, which has been studied in other African contexts (Barthélémy 2010; Panata 2016).
- 84 Silences, awkwardness, and laughter can also be analysed to understand how personal accounts are shaped by both subjectivities and the stakes of the research relationship. Instances of laughter are indicated in my interview transcripts, but listening to the recordings reveals much more about the multiple meanings of that laughter. Some instances of laughter are a matter of the joy prompted by recalling a happy memory. Others are more about the interviewee's feeling of awkwardness at being asked a question to which she has either no answer or an answer she finds embarrassing. For instance, when asked questions about the initiation (*unyago*), an intimate practice whose ritual dimension is intrinsically linked to the secrecy surrounding it, my interlocutors often first laughed. Nevertheless, they then provided some elements of response—albeit vague ones—because only the specific contents of what is taught are secret.<sup>53</sup> To broach this intimate but also controversial subject—*unyago* is criticized by both Christian and Muslim authorities—my status as a foreigner was to my benefit: several people were surprised I knew of this practice, and that let them explain it without fear of judgment. Silence on this subject was therefore relative, whereas for family planning it was much more pronounced. Even though, outside the interviews, this topic was discussed in my presence by people in their sixties, none of my interviewees admitted to having engaged in family-planning practices, quickly closing this taboo and intimate subject with a firm denial. This, for example, is what Honorata R. did (Document 2).
- 85 My observations extended beyond the interviews: throughout my six months in Tanzania, I noted what I saw of the practices surrounding food preparation and consumption that the women participants engaged in, both before and after the interviews, as well as in other contexts. Through doing so, I concluded that the incorporation of school norms in this domain is minimal, in contrast to those governing how to speak and behave in public. Indeed, although domestic sciences have had a central place in girls' education from the colonial period to the present, and particularly until the end of the socialist era, my observations indicate that some of their key recommendations, such as cooking standing up at a work surface, are only

adopted by women cooking in a professional setting with the appropriate equipment. The majority of women cook seated on a low stool, as their mothers did.

- 86 My observation additionally focused on literacy. In this regard, the consent form had an unexpected heuristic value, because it allowed me to assess individuals' degree of self-sufficiency in reading and writing skills, both for letters (the woman's name) and numbers (the date). For example, several women misrendered "2019" as "20019," "12019" or "0219." This limited proficiency in basic academic skills contrasts sharply with the high value all the women who attended school placed on this educational experience. A cross-analysis of my observations and the interviewees' words therefore suggests that, in many cases, they valued the school experience more for what it represents than for the skills it instills.
- 87 Last, my analysis as a whole involved comparing the interviews with published accounts, these being the outcome of work undertaken by Tanzanian groups focused on researching women's history. The national scope of these accounts allowed me to expand my research's perspective beyond the Tanga region, and it strengthened arguments about national construction arising through school education. Moreover, collected in different contexts, these accounts highlight dynamics beyond those which emerged in my interviews. *Unsung Heroines* is a compilation of the lives of women from backgrounds of limited means; only some of the accounts discuss educational experiences, but they shed light on aspects that my interviews largely did not address. In particular, they document the experiences of older women whose time at school was brief but who threw themselves into education later in life (Ngaiza and Koda 1991). The second published account I used, whose title translates as "Our Stories," brings together the life stories of members of a women's history group: although not all the women are researchers, they have highly privileged social backgrounds and undertook schooling to a high level (Besha 1998). They recount their school experiences in detail, paying significant attention to gender discrimination, something the group's joint work likely helped to bring to light.
- 88 Through a critical approach that incorporates reflection on the context in which the interviewees' words were spoken, as well as through systematic corroboration with other types of sources, the subjectivity and memory at play in the interviews, rather than being obstacles to using the interviews as a source, therefore turned into elements that enriched the analysis.

## Conclusion

- 89 In this article, I have sought to demonstrate how my interview practice was based on a constant back-and-forth. In my analysis, an understanding of the interviews was developed through placing them side by side with other sources. However, long before this stage, the very conditions for conducting the interviews depended on methodological and ethical choices that were made at the intersection of preliminary fieldwork reflections and the need for adaptations as the research progressed. Intermediaries played a central role, guiding me through these adaptations.
- 90 The initial steps of work on this article were part of a reflexive process vis-à-vis my methodology; this I developed by revisiting methods established by other researchers, starting with keeping a field notebook that sets out the social conditions within which

the interviews took place (Beaud and Weber 2010). The act of writing and rewriting this article in response to peer reviews led me to significantly refine this reflexivity. This speaks to the merit of a greater discussion, within forums for academic debate, of the inner workings of data production in social sciences, not only to enable retrospective investigations, but also to refine, through collective discussion, our ethical and methodological choices. In this regard, it seems to me that for all the points raised, reflections remain open, particularly when it comes to interview methods that could be mobilized to strengthen each case study within the framework of research where more time is available on the ground. Conducting separate interviews with the different members of a group of siblings appears to be particularly promising for the purpose of working not against but with interviewees' silences, memory, and subjectivity.

## List of documents and data related to this article

Document 1. Interview with Mwanajuma J. (14 & 26 November 2019, Tanga): Transcript and translations.

Publication (*Sources*): <https://doi.org/10.4000/sources.1302>.

Data (Nakala): <https://doi.org/10.34847/nkl.c9b6m17t>.

Document 2. Interview with Honorata R. (8 October 2019, Korogwe): Transcript and translations.

Publication (*Sources*): <https://doi.org/10.4000/sources.1317>.

Data (Nakala): <https://doi.org/10.34847/nkl.4daa4214>.

Document 3. Description of the Interview Corpus.

Publication (*Sources*): <https://doi.org/10.4000/sources.1303>.

Data (Nakala): <https://doi.org/10.34847/nkl.8760x3u4>.

Document 4. Consent Form.

Publication (*Sources*): <https://doi.org/10.4000/sources.1318>.

Data (Nakala): <https://doi.org/10.34847/nkl.212673k4>.

Document 5. Interview Guidelines (Kiswahili-English, and French).

Publication (*Sources*): <https://doi.org/10.4000/sources.1304>

Data (Nakala): <https://doi.org/10.34847/nkl.efaftv9b>.

Document 6. Extracts from the Field Notebook.

Publication (*Sources*): <https://doi.org/10.4000/sources.1319>

Data (Nakala): <https://doi.org/10.34847/nkl.8760x3u4>.

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## APPENDIXES

# Mahojiano ya Kimajaribio na ya Ana kwa Ana: Ikirari ya Mwanahistoria akiwa nchini Tanzania

## Ikisiri

Makala hii inawasilisha uchunguzi unaojikita kwenye mahojiano yaliyofanywa kama sehemu ya tasnifu ya historia kuhusu elimu ya wanawake nchini Tanzania. Inadurusu mchakato mzima, kuanzia uteuzi wa eneo la utafiti na wahojiwa hadi uchanganuzi wa mahojiano yaliyofanyika. Sambamba na mwelekeo ambao ulipendekezwa na *Sources* wa kubainisha na kudhihirisha wazi michakato ya utafiti, makala hii inazama ndani ya “kisanduku cheusi” cha kazi yangu kama mwanahistoria nikizingatia malengo mawili na walengwa wawili, ingawa tofauti kwa kiasi fulani.

Kwanza, nawaangazia watafiti kwenye nyanja za elimu na jinsia ambao wangetaka kusaili kwa undani matokeo ya kazi yangu au kuyatumia tena mahojiano niliyoyafanya. Taarifa zilizotolewa katika makala hii zinawaruhusu wasomaji na wahakiki kuupa muktadha ushuhuda uliokusanywa, na kuwapa ufumbuzi muhimu wa uelewa wa namna nilivyofikia katika kupambanua tajriba za kimasomo za wanawake ninazowasilisha katika utafiti wangu. Hivyo basi kuchochea majadiliano ya namna uteuzi wa mbinu zangu zilivyoathiri matokeo, na mielekeo faafu ya ziada inayoweza kuboresha na kuimarisha uchanganuzi uliopendekezwa. Kwa kuongezea, kama sehemu ya juhudi hizi za kuupa muktadha ushuhuda uliokusanywa, ninatoa nyaraka zitakazowezesha baadhi ya mahojiano yangu kutumika tena, kwani wanawake kumi na wanne walinikubalia nishea mahojiano yao yaliyorekodiwa. Makala hii inagusia hususan hali za wahojiwa wawili kwa mapana na marefu, unukuzi wao ukichapishwa sawia na toleo la Kifaransa la makala hii. Mahojiano hayo yanafichua mitazamo ya wanawake wawili kutoka mazingira tofauti: mmoja ambaye hakupata nafasi ya kwenda shule, na mwingine akiwa na elimu ya sekondari, tukio nadra katika kizazi chake. Zaidi ya mahojiano hayo mawili, naweza kushea mengine kumi na mawili na watafiti ambao wanashughulikia historia ya elimu au wanawake nchini Tanzania.

Pili, nawaangazia watafiti ambao hutumia mahojiano katika utafiti wao wa sayansi ya jamii na kujihusisha na masuala ya kimethodolojia na kimaadili yanayotokana na zoezi hili. Baadhi ya sehemu ya makala hii zinashughulikia mada ambazo tayari zimejadiliwa kwa kina katika maandishi haya (uteuzi wa wahojiwa na kubana jina na utambulisho, kujenga uhusiano na wahojiwa, ubainishaji au usawiri wa ngazi za kumbukumbu), ilhali sehemu nyingine zinagusia masuala ambayo hayajatiwa maanani sana, kama vile fidia, jukumu la waunganishi, na misingi, uanzishwaji na uhifadhi wa simulizi). Nikijadili masuala haya, ninakumbuka mara kadhaa za kujaribu na kutofanikiwa, pamoja na uzoefu wangu kama mtafiti chipukizi wakati nimekabiliwa na mapendekezo kinzani na kufanya kazi katika muktadha wa mila na tamaduni ambazo misimbo yake sikuifahamu sana au sina weledi nayo. Matokeo ya uchaguzi wangu, ambao nauwasilisha hapa, uliathiriwa zaidi na mikutano ya ana kwa ana na watu niliowahoji na kupitia kwa waunganishi wengi walionisadia katika utafiti wangu. Kwa kuainisha namna ya kufanya uchunguzi maalumu, natafakari namna maadili ya mahojiano ya sayansi ya jamii inavyokita mizizi kwenye muktadha wa zoezi lenyewe.

## Maneno muhimu

vyanzo vya simulizi kwa mdomo, waunganishi, elimu, wanawake, Afrika Mashariki, Kiswahili, kubana jina na utambulisho, idhini

### NOTES

1. Two interviews have been made available under open access in tandem with the publication of this article (Document 1 and 2, see below, “List of documents and data associated with this article”); a third has been published elsewhere (Wenzek 2023c; 2023d).
2. Here I do not consider my five additional interviews that focused on experiences of teaching.
3. The documents cited in this article and numbered from 1 to 6 are published alongside this article in this issue of *Sources*, and their content is also available as citable and reusable data on the Nakala and Cocoon platforms. For their full title and online identifier, refer to the section “List of documents and data associated with this article.” See also the liminary box “Data related to this article.”
4. *Translator’s note*: Our translation. Unless otherwise stated, all translation of foreign language material cited in this article are our own.
5. According to the 1957 census, 72 per cent of the region’s population was Muslim, 19 per cent was Christian, and 7 per cent adhered to local beliefs. Republic of Tanganyika, *Statistical Abstract 1963* (Dar es Salaam: 1964), 24.
6. The final third adhered to local beliefs. Republic of Tanganyika, *Statistical Abstract 1963* (Dar es Salaam: 1964), 24 and United Republic of Tanzania, *Statistical Abstract 1970* (Dar es Salaam: 1972), 53.
7. Bureau of Statistics, 1967 *Population Census. Vol. 2, Statistics for Urban Areas* (Dar es Salaam: 1970), 3.
8. See Document 3 for further details (Description of the interview corpus, 3.1: Summary Table).
9. She went to the islands of Ukerewe and Mafia in 2018 (research results not yet published).
10. Thesis notebook no. 1, 28 September and 1 October 2019. There were two versions of the form, since I conducted a few interviews before Mohamed Mazige advised me to make certain reformulations.
11. Thesis notebook no. 2, 18 November 2019.
12. Thesis notebook no. 2, 19 November 2019. On anticipating compensation, see also 30 November 2019.
13. Thesis notebook no. 2, 29 and 30 November 2019.
14. Thesis notebook no. 2, 16 November 2019.
15. “*Sayansi*.” See the note on this subject in my thesis notebook no. 2, 14 November 2019, Document 6, Extracts from the Field Notebook; sec. 2, Notes on the interview with Honorata R.

16. “*kurekodi sauti yako.*” Ibid..
17. For an overview of the anonymized profiles, see Document 3, sec. 3.1, Summary table.
18. “Pratiques contemporaines de l’histoire orale. De l’entretien aux archives orales” conference, EHES, April 2019, <http://crh.ehess.fr/index.php?6614>.
19. See the list in Document 3, Sec. 3.1.
20. Thesis notebook no. 1, 2 October 2019.
21. Thesis notebook no. 2, 10 October 2019.
22. These interviews are available in the original Kiswahili and in translation in English and French (documents 1 and 2).
23. Excerpts can be consulted in Document 6, Extracts from the Field Notebook.
24. This can be found in Document 5, Interview guidelines.
25. Field notebook no. 1, 31 May and 28 July 2018.
26. Thesis notebook no. 2, 26 November 2019.
27. Thesis notebook no. 2, 13 November 2019.
28. See also the seminar led by Stéphanie Abrial, Lorraine Bozouls, Margot Delon, Laure Hadj, and Efi Markou (Abrial et al. 2022).
29. Thesis notebook no. 2, 18 November 2019.
30. Thesis notebook no. 2, 18 November 2019.
31. On this subject, see Luise White’s remark on the relevance of questions that encourage a position to be taken (White 2000, 26).
32. On the use of photographs as a resource in interviews, see Document 2, Interview with Honorata R.
33. Thesis notebook no. 2, 11 October 2019. See also thesis notebook no. 1, 1 October 2019.
34. Thesis notebook no. 2, 13 and 26 November 2019.
35. Thesis notebook no. 2, 21 and 22 November 2019.
36. An edited and annotated version of this has been published (Wenzek 2023c; 2023d).
37. The interview in Document 1 is among those which were worked on in this way.
38. Thesis notebook no. 2, 11 November 2019.
39. Thesis notebook no. 2, 13 November 2019. On this poem, see Biersteker (1991).
40. Thesis notebook no. 1, 2 October 2019.
41. Thesis notebook no. 2, 30 September 2019.
42. Document 6, sec. 6.1, Notes on the interview with Mwanajuma J., and thesis notebook no. 2, 16 November 2019.
43. Thesis notebook no. 1, 4 October 2019.
44. Thesis notebook no. 2, 13 November 2019.
45. “*Mwaka sasa ninashindwa kutaja*”; Document 1.
46. Thesis notebook no. 2, 16 November 2019.
47. On how to obtain dates from people who do not know them during interviews, see White (1990, 26–27).

48. “*Walikuwa walimu. Sijui kuishia walimu ni darasa gani. Wote walikuwa ni walimu.*” Document 1.
49. National Archives, Kew, CO 691/198/1, Tanganyika Territory, “A Ten Year Plan for the Development of African Education” (Dar es Salaam: 1947).
50. “*sheria hazikuwa ngumu,*” “*nyepesi.*” Document 2.
51. “*Shule sikubahatika nilikuwa niwasomesha wadogo zangu waliozaliwa wanaofuata mimi.*” Document 1.
52. Document 6 and thesis notebook no. 2, 25 November 2019.
53. For additional reflections on ways to conduct research on this topic, see Fair (1996) and Thompson (2019).
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## ABSTRACTS

This article presents an interview-based investigation conducted as part of a history thesis on female education in Tanzania. It reviews the entire process, from the choice of the study site and interviewees to the analysis of the interviews conducted. In line with the approach proposed by *Sources* of making research processes visible and explicit, it delves into the “black box” of my work as a historian with two objectives and two, somewhat different, audiences in mind.

First, I address researchers in the fields of education and gender who wish to enter into a critical dialogue with my results or reuse the interviews I conducted. The information offered in this article allows readers to situate the collected testimony, providing them with the keys needed to understand how I arrived at the portrait of female educational experiences I present in my research. It thus prompts discussion of how my methodological choices influenced the results, and of potential complementary approaches to refine and enrich the proposed analyses. Moreover, as part of this effort to situate the collected testimony, I provide documentation enabling some of my interviews to be reused, since fourteen women agreed to let me share their recorded interviews. The article details in particular the conditions of two interviews, the transcripts of which are published in tandem with the French version of this article. These interviews reveal the perspectives of two women with contrasting backgrounds: one who had no access to schooling, the other with a secondary education, a rare occurrence in her generation. Beyond these two interviews, I can share twelve others with researchers working on the history of education or women in Tanzania.

Second, I address those who use interviews in their social science research and are concerned with the methodological and ethical issues raised by this practice. Some sections of the article deal with topics already widely discussed in the literature (interviewee selection and anonymization, building relationships with interviewees, the prism of memory), while others deal with issues that have received far less attention, such as compensation, the role of intermediaries, and the constitution of oral archives. Discussing these issues, I recount my process of trial and error and my experience as a young researcher confronted with contradictory recommendations and working in a cultural context whose codes I did not fully master. My choices, which I present here, were influenced heavily by my encounters with the people I interviewed and with the many intermediaries who helped me in my research. By setting

out clearly how I undertook a particular investigation, I reflect on how the ethics of social science interviews are rooted in situated practices.

Cet article présente une enquête par entretiens menée dans le cadre d'une thèse d'histoire sur l'éducation féminine en Tanzanie. Il revient sur l'ensemble de la démarche développée, depuis le choix du lieu d'enquête et des interlocutrices jusqu'à l'analyse des entretiens. Dans la lignée de l'approche d'explicitation et de visibilité des démarches de recherche que propose *Sources*, il ouvre ainsi la « chambre noire » dans laquelle j'ai travaillé en tant qu'historienne, avec deux séries d'objectifs, pour deux publics en partie distincts.

Premièrement, il s'adresse aux personnes qui, travaillant sur les questions éducatives et/ou de genre, souhaitent construire un dialogue critique avec mes résultats ou réutiliser les entretiens que j'ai réalisés. En donnant des éléments pour situer les paroles recueillies, l'article donne les clés pour comprendre la fabrication du portrait des expériences éducatives féminines dressé dans ma recherche. Ce faisant, il permet de discuter la manière dont les choix méthodologiques ont influencé les résultats, et sur les démarches complémentaires que l'on pourrait développer pour affiner et enrichir les analyses proposées. Par ailleurs, en situant les paroles recueillies, je fournis une documentation permettant la réutilisation des entretiens que j'ai réalisés, puisque quatorze des femmes rencontrées ont donné leur accord pour que les enregistrements soient partagés. L'article détaille en particulier les conditions de réalisation des deux entretiens déposés en lien avec l'article, en version originale swahilie et en traductions française et anglaise. Ils donnent à voir les perspectives de deux femmes aux parcours contrastés, l'une n'ayant pas eu accès à l'école, l'autre ayant eu une scolarité secondaire, fait rare dans sa génération. Au-delà de ces deux entretiens, douze autres peuvent être partagés avec des personnes travaillant sur l'histoire de l'éducation ou des femmes en Tanzanie.

Deuxièmement, cet article s'adresse à toutes les personnes qui, utilisant les entretiens dans leurs recherches en sciences sociales, s'interrogent sur l'articulation des enjeux méthodologiques et éthiques. Certaines sections de l'article reviennent sur des enjeux déjà bien présents dans la littérature sur l'entretien en sciences sociales (sélection des personnes rencontrées, relation d'enquête, anonymisation des enquêtées, prisme mémoriel), d'autres portent sur des questions beaucoup moins traitées, en particulier les questions de rétribution, le rôle des intermédiaires et la constitution d'archives orales. Pour tous ces enjeux, je montre mes tâtonnements de jeune chercheuse face à des recommandations contradictoires et dans un contexte culturel dont je ne maîtrisais pas tous les codes. Les arbitrages présentés doivent beaucoup aux rencontres avec les personnes enquêtées ainsi qu'avec les multiples intermédiaires qui ont contribué à ce travail. En explicitant la construction d'une recherche singulière, il s'agit de réfléchir à la manière dont l'éthique de l'entretien en sciences sociales se construit dans des pratiques situées.

Este artigo apresenta uma pesquisa baseada em entrevistas realizada como parte de uma tese de história, sobre educação feminina na Tanzânia. Analisa a abordagem desenvolvida em todas as etapas, desde a escolha do local de inquérito e das interlocutoras até à análise das entrevistas. Na linha da abordagem de explicitação e de visibilidade das abordagens de investigação proposta por *Sources*, abre assim a «câmara escura» na qual trabalhei como historiadora, com duas séries de objetivos, para dois públicos parcialmente distintos. Em primeiro lugar destina-se a quem, trabalhando em questões educativas e/ou de género, deseje construir um diálogo crítico com os meus resultados e reutilizar as entrevistas que realizei.

Ao fornecer elementos para contextualizar as respostas obtidas, o artigo fornece a chave para entender o retrato das experiências educacionais femininas traçado na minha pesquisa. Ao fazê-lo, permite discutir a forma como as escolhas metodológicas influenciaram os resultados e as medidas complementares que se poderiam desenvolver para aperfeiçoar e enriquecer as análises propostas. Por outro lado, ao contextualizar as respostas obtidas, forneço documentação que permite a reutilização das entrevistas realizadas, uma vez que as catorze mulheres com quem me

encontrei deram o seu acordo para que as gravações fossem partilhadas. O artigo detalha, em particular, as condições de realização das duas entrevistas relacionadas com o artigo, em versão original swaili e em traduções francesa e inglesa. Elas dão a ver as perspectivas de duas mulheres com percursos contrastantes, uma não tendo tido acesso à escola, a outra tendo tido uma escolaridade secundária, facto raro na sua geração. Além dessas duas entrevistas, as outras doze podem ser compartilhadas com pessoas que trabalham na história da educação ou sobre mulheres na Tanzânia.

Em segundo lugar, este artigo dirige-se a todas as pessoas que, utilizando as entrevistas nas suas investigações em ciências sociais, se interrogam sobre a articulação entre questões metodológicas e éticas. Algumas secções do artigo abordam questões já bem presentes na literatura sobre a entrevista nas ciências sociais (selecção das pessoas a entrevistar, relação com a entrevista, anonimato das entrevistadas, prisma de memória) outras dizem respeito a questões muito menos tratadas, em especial as questões de retribuição, o papel dos intermediários e a constituição de arquivos orais. Para todas estas questões, mostro as minhas tentativas, como jovem investigadora, face a recomendações contraditórias e num contexto cultural do qual não dominava todos os códigos. As conclusões apresentadas devem muito aos encontros com as inquiridas, bem como aos múltiplos intermediários que contribuíram para este trabalho. Ao explicitar a construção de uma pesquisa individual, reflectimos sobre a forma como a ética da entrevista em ciências sociais se constrói em práticas localizadas.

## INDEX

**Geographical index:** Tanzania

**Palavras-chave:** fontes orais, intermediários, educação, mulheres, África Oriental, swahili, anonimato, consentimento

**Keywords:** oral sources, intermediaries, education, women, East Africa, Kiswahili, anonymity, consent

**Mots-clés:** sources orales, intermédiaires, éducation, femmes, Afrique de l'Est, kiswahili, anonymat, consentement

## AUTHORS

**FLORENCE WENZEK**

Centre Population et Développement (CEPED UMR 196). <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3112-3367>