ISHANGO

Our editorial line

Ishango Press · Éduquer ou périr

ISHANGO EDITIONS

Our editorial line

Ishango is a think tank. Its motto, Éduquer ou périr — educate or perish — is not a turn of phrase for the occasion: it describes a balance of forces. A society that does not produce its own knowledge ends up consuming other people's, including about itself. The press carries that work on by other means. It publishes books that add to the knowledge available in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and that make it readable here.

The observation that led us to open a catalogue is a simple one. A Congolese researcher finishing a serious piece of work long had two options: look for a publisher in Paris, where the subject is treated as regional, or pay for a print run themselves that nobody would distribute. In both cases the book fails to reach the reader it was written for.

So we publish here, in Kinshasa, doing the work the word publishing implies: a critical reading, copy preparation, proofreading, typesetting, a cover, legal deposit, distribution. We turn down more texts than we publish, and that is the condition for a title in the catalogue to mean something.

What holds an essay in political economy and a collection of short stories in the same catalogue comes down to two requirements. The first is craft: a sentence that holds, an argument that follows, a language the author has made something of. The second is usefulness to the reader here — not utilitarianism, but the idea that a book published in the Congo should find someone to speak to in the Congo.

We do not set themes and we do not commission manuscripts. Nor do we expect a text to share our analyses: an essay that contradicts a publication of the think tank will be read exactly like the others, and published if it is good.

Finally, we read work written in national languages. This is no favour to anyone; it follows from the same idea. A knowledge society that thinks in an inherited language alone shuts out half its readers.

The editorial line

What holds an essay in political economy and a collection of short stories together in the same catalogue comes down to three requirements. They apply to every genre, and they are not negotiable.

> **01 · An argument, not a mood**
> A text enters the catalogue if it defends something and sees it through, even where that contradicts a publication of the think tank.

> **02 · Verifiable sources**
> Claims rest on sources a reader can go and consult. That is what separates an essay from a long opinion.

> **03 · Readable prose**
> Outside the circle of specialists, work that nobody reads changes nothing. The press publishes in French, Lingala and Kiswahili.

Every manuscript is read by two members of the reading committee, one of them a researcher from outside the press; the author receives a reasoned answer, favourable or not, within a period announced at submission. Books are printed in Kinshasa wherever quality allows, and policy briefs remain free to download: they are made to be read by those who decide.