Peter Bakker and Maarten Mous (eds.)

MIXED LANGUAGES

15 Case Studies in Language Intertwining

STUDIES IN LANGUAGE AND LANGUAGE USE

13

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Editors

CIP-GEGEVENS KONINKLIJKE BIBLIOTHEEK, DEN HAAG

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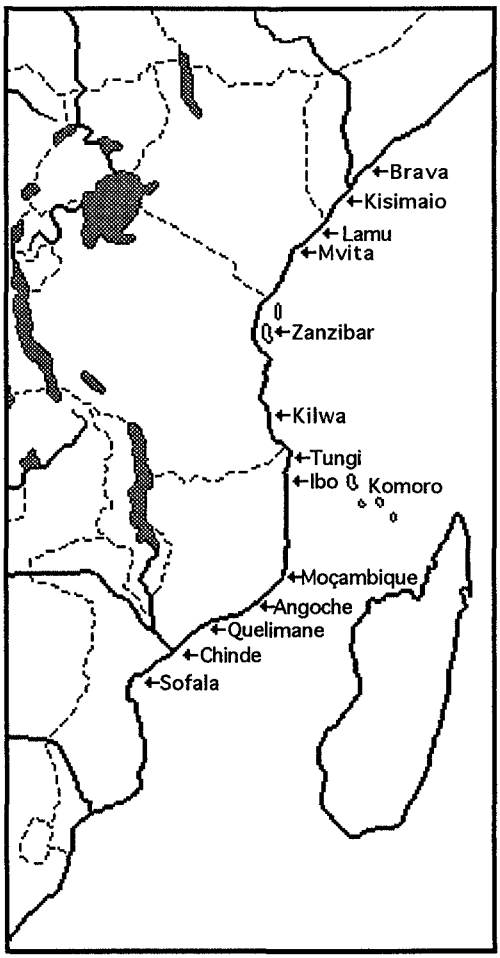
KIMWANI AT THE SOUTHERN FRINGE OF KISWAHILI

Thilo C. Schadeberg

1. Background and history.

KiMwani is spoken in Cabo Delgado, the northernmost coastal province of Mozambique, in several towns and villages along the coast between Pemba and Moçimboa da Praia, and on the islands of the Querimba archipelago of which the most populous one is Ibo. There may be as many as 50,000 speakers. All KiMwani speaking communities are strictly coastal; the people are followers of Islam; they build several types of sailboats; fishing is an important part of their economy; men like to engage in trade and to spend a certain period of their life travelling abroad. In all these regards, the KiMwani speakers are neatly in contrast with their inland neighbours, the Makonde and the Makua. They regard themselves as part of the greater world of Swahili, which creates some distance with the neighbouring ethnic groups. The ethnonym *Mwani* is very appropriate: it means '(at) the coast' which looks like a calque of the term *Swahili*.



Sociolinguistically, KiMwani is not much different from other 'ethnic' languages of the area. It is acquired as

a first language by all members of the community; which other languages are learned (if any) depends on the individual's course of life, i.e., education, occupational contacts and travels may lead to learning Portuguese and EMakhua, but also other Bantu languages including KiSwahili. Bilingualism with ChiMakonde is not particularly common.

KiMwani owes its existence to the first Swahili expansion which must have occurred around 800-1000 A.D. There is archaeological evidence that by that time, a string of Swahili towns had been created along the coast of the Indian Ocean, from southern Somalia to central Mozambique and also on Zanzibar, the Comoro islands and possibly on the coast of Madagascar. We assume that some early forms of KiSwahili were spoken at all these places but we have no linguistic records. Sofala at the southern end of this Swahili network was the link to the gold trade with Zimbabwe. When the Portuguese arrived in the Indian Ocean (after 1500), they tried to usurp this lucrative trade, and one of their first feats was the utter destruction of Kilwa. From that time onwards, the Swahili communities south of the Ruvuma appear to have had much less regular and intensive contact with the northern parts of the Swahili world, and probably also with each other. However, contact has never been broken completely, and even today religious leaders go north for training and boats from southern Tanzania and from Zanzibar carry on trade in Mozambique.

The oldest record of KiMwani is a word list collected in the 1840's (Bleek 1856) which is not much different from recently collected material.

2. The linguistic evidence.

The most likely source languages of KiMwani are KiSwahili and ChiMakonde. KiMwani shares lexical, morphological and phonological features with both these languages. KiSwahili and ChiMakonde are both Eastern Bantu languages though not particularly close within that branch of Bantu. Nevertheless, the task of unambiguously identifying the source of lexical items and bound morphemes as well as their syntax and their sounds is far from easy and may never be completed. The problem is not confined to ambiguity arising from cognate forms and parallel structures in both possible source languages. Neither KiSwahili nor ChiMakonde are today homogenous languages, and even if the dialectal variation were fully documented it would still be hard to know what to compare. In addition, we are dealing with a possible time depth of some 1200 years, and we do not know when the most critical phases of interaction occurred. In other words, the source languages of (some earlier form of) KiMwani are some unrecorded earlier form of some variant of KiSwahili and some unrecorded earlier form of some variant of

ChiMakonde.

Lexical evidence: KiMwani shares more lexical elements with KiSwahili than with ChiMakonde. This is true of basic vocabulary and also of maritime terminology, but it may be different for other semantic areas. (The Swadesh-figures are 66% for KiMwani-KiSwahili ('Standard'), and 53% for KiMwani-ChiMakonde.) Specific KiSwahili cognates include words which KiSwahili - and KiSwahili alone - has adopted from Arabic, e.g., *damu* 'blood', but also words of Bantu origin, e.g., *-erufi* 'black' (KiSwahili *-eusi*). Other lexical isoglosses do not link KiMwani specifically to KiSwahili but to the so-called Sabaki language group which comprises Swahili and its closest genetic relatives. An example is *kiswa* 'head' (KiSwahili *kichwa*) which is a unique Sabaki innovation replacing the common Bantu word *mutwe* which is preserved in ChiMakonde.

Morphological evidence: KiMwani also shares morphological elements with both possible source languages. For example, KiMwani has two subject concords for the second person singular, *ku-* and *u-*, and also for class 1, *ka-* and *a-* 's/he', and the choice between them depends on the conjugational form ('tense'). This is a typical feature found in North-East Coastal Bantu, including southern Swahili varieties, but it is not found in ChiMakonde and its close relatives. On the other hand, KiMwani is very much like ChiMakonde in being able to use common nouns in any of the three locative classes, with nominal prefixes *pa-*, *ku-* and *mu-*, where KiSwahili would add a generic locative enclitic *-ni* instead of one of these prefixes.

Phonological evidence: KiMwani shares some distinct phonological features with ChiMakonde. The most striking one is the representation of the original Bantu prenasalized voiceless stops:

Bantu	KiSwahili	KiMwani	ChiMakonde
*mp	p^h	m	m
*nt	t^h	n	n
*ŋ	k^h	Ø	ŋ

(The distinctive aspiration is lost in most modern Swahili dialects and not represented in standard orthography.) Prenasalization being the prefix of certain noun classes, we even find morphophonemic alternations which show that we are dealing not just with a historical sound change but also with a live phonological process. An example are the singulative and collective forms of the word for 'firewood':

KiSwahili:	ukuni / k^huni
KiMwani:	lukuni / uni
ChiMakonde:	lukuni / diɳuni

These sound correspondences occur even in words which are not attested in ChiMakonde and hence presumably inherited from KiSwahili; e.g., *anzu* 'a long gown worn by men' (KiSwahili *kanzu*).

On the other hand, a less striking and probably more recent phonological isogloss separates ChiMakonde from both KiMwani and (most varieties of) KiSwahili: the palatalization of **ki* to *chi*; e.g., the nominal prefix as it appears in the names of the languages, as well as lexical items such as *nkira* 'tail' (KiSwahili *mkia*; ChiMakonde *nchila*).

Syntactic and semantic evidence: There can be no doubt that KiMwani shares many expressions with KiSwahili. The counting of the hours of the day and the night is a case in point. In East Africa, Swahili speakers start counting at (what Europeans would call) six o'clock; KiMwani speakers do literally the same, except that the clocks of Mozambique are one hour behind East African local time since the country belongs to a different time zone. - But there are other expressions which seem to point to a ChiMakonde origin. For example, the KiMwani word for 'face', *kumaso*, is literally a locative form meaning 'at the eyes', and it looks like a calque of ChiMakonde *kumeho*. (The KiSwahili word *uso* 'face' is not derived from the word for 'eye'.) Another example is the use of the infinitive in a genitival construction to express certain types of relatives; e.g., *ulwere wa kwitiwa magundula*, lit. 'a disease of being-called magundula' would not be the most appropriate way of saying this in KiSwahili, but it is the normal (or maybe the only possible) equivalent in ChiMakonde.

3. Conclusion.

It remains a great challenge to unravel the history of KiMwani, and to embed it in the history of Eastern Africa, Swahili, and the Indian Ocean. The monumental work on the linguistic history of Swahili by Nurse and Hinnebusch (1993) provides an invaluable basis for this task. Data on KiMwani as well as on several varieties of ChiMakonde are presently being collected and analysed.

My own research into KiMwani is not nearly advanced enough to reach definite hypotheses about the origin of this language. For the time being, my working hypothesis is that the majority of the first speakers of KiMwani were

native speakers of ChiMakonde who decided to join the world of USwahili. The language shift was not perfect which may have been due to the limited availability of the target language. It is difficult to date this process. The origin of some KiMwani speaking community more than a thousand years ago may or may not be when and where the language acquired its present characteristic features.

Reconstructing the history of KiMwani is not the same as answering the question of its classification. It seems to me that present models are not well equipped to deal with less-than-perfect language shifts.

The generally held opinion is that Swahili crystallized from the group of Sabaki languages, most likely somewhere at the coast of northern Kenya, and probably during the seventh century A.D. From its beginnings, Swahili culture and with it presumably its language spread south along the coast and also colonized the Comoro Islands. In southern Tanzania, no old forms of Swahili have survived the 19th century spread of KiUnguja. In the older literature, frequent mention is made of a stretch of coast and a Swahili dialect called *Mgao*, but linguists have not been able to uncover any linguistic data. The recent 'rediscovery' of KiMwani proves that more southern varieties of the Swahili language group did exist and have survived outside the sphere of Zanzibar influence.

In fact, KiMwani is not the only surviving Swahili language in Mozambique. ChiMakwe is spoken along the coast to the north of KiMwani, at Palma and in the villages on the shore of Tungi Bay, just south of the Ruvuma river which forms the border between Mozambique and Tanzania. Further south, in the province of Nampula, right in the middle of the linguistic area of EMakhua, EKoti is spoken in the coastal town of Angoche and on the adjacent islands. Some fifty kilometres north of Angoche there is a language called ESangaji. Just as ChiMakwe and KiMwani have obvious input from ChiMakonde, so do EKoti and probably also ESangaji share many features with EMakhua. However, the distance between any of these four languages appears to be about as great as their distance from KiSwahili proper.

Other Swahili languages may still exist further south at the places indicated on the map (see Pires Prata 1982), but no linguistic evidence has been recorded.

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This is the first published collection of papers on mixed languages. Mixed languages are languages with a grammatical system from one language and a lexicon from another. This excludes pidgins, creoles, and code-switching, as well as heavy borrowing. All authors have first hand experience with the language they discuss. The languages cover a time period of almost four millennia. Over 20 languages are dealt with, from Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe and the Middle East: Amarna-Akkadian, Callahuaya, Copper Island Aleut, Ilwana, Island Carib, Javindo, KiMwani, Ma'a/Mbugu, Maltese, Media Lengua, Michif, Petjo, eight Romani (Gypsy) mixed dialects, Shelta, and Town Frisian. The papers go into questions such as: How are the languages mixed structurally? How did they come into being? What social factors are responsible for their genesis? This collection is of great interest for historical linguists, creolists, code-mixing researchers and other language contact specialists.

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