

NOTES ON THE CI-MIINI DIALECT OF SWAHILI

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During the summer of 1961¹ I had the good fortune to meet two Somalis on their way back home from study in Europe. They were both residents of Brava, on the southern Somalia coast, and described themselves as 'Bravanese'. They had lived in Brava since childhood and spoke a dialect of Swahili which they referred to as Ci-Miini (perhaps that referred to elsewhere as Ci-Muyini). In the very short time available I made the following, obviously very tentative, notes on the dialect, which to my knowledge has not been described elsewhere. A tape of some of this material, spoken by Mr. B. M. Sufi, is available at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London.

PHONOLOGY

There are five vowel phonemes as in 'Standard' Swahili. Since the status of vowel-length is not clear from the material, it has seemed preferable to mark it, rather than to make any *a priori* assumptions in relation to other dialects of Swahili. Length is indicated by a length sign following the vowel (a:, e:).

The consonant phonemes are set out in the table given on p. 72.

Both informants tended to use a special intonation pattern which vitiated any inferences on the significance of tone, which is not marked in the following notes. There is evidence, however, that it may well be significant: Cf. iyâ! 'get to know (something)' with iya, 5/6 sun².

There seems to be stress on the first vowel of the stem or root rather than on the penultimate syllable as in Standard Swahili.

MORPHOLOGY

Noun Classes

1/2 m-, mu- (mono-syllabic stems), mw- (preceding a vowel)/ya-

munt'u/yant'u,	person
mwana/yaana,	child
mzere/yazere,	elder, old man

3/4 m-, mu- (monosyllabic stems), mw- (preceding a vowel) mi-

muti/miti,	tree
muyi/miyi,	town, large village
mwiya/miiya,	thorn
munḡa/miunḡa,	garden, plot

¹ At the outset of a year's study leave from the S.O.A.S. to whom I should like to express my thanks.

² (^) indicates a high/falling tone; (˘) indicates a high tone.

5/6 i-/ma- commonly augmentative and/or derogatory

ijiye/majiye,	stone, large stone
ishkiro/mashkiro,	car
ito/ma:to	to, eye
ijarfa/majarfa,	fishing net

7/8 ci-, sh- (preceding k, p, t, f, s, c)/zi-, s- (preceding k, p, t, f, s, c)

ciburi/ziburi,	small sand-dune
cili/zili,	bed
cinema/zinema,	cinema
ciṭa/ziṭa,	head
cint'u/zint'u,	thing
shkapu/skapu,	basket
shtenzi/stenzi,	poem ('utenzi')
shpande/spande,	piece
shtoka/stoka,	axe

9/10 n-/n-

ndiṛa/ndiṛa,	path, way
ṇumba/ṇumba,	house
ṇombe/ṇombe,	cow
mbuzi(mbusi)/mbuzi,	goat
ṇuṇi(nyunyi)/ṇuṇi,	bird
nsi/nsi,	fish

11/10 l-, Zero-/n-

ltambi/ntambi,	wick
limi/ndimi,	tongue
lkambaṛa/nk'ambaṛa,	rope
lfuo/nfuo,	beach

14 u-

ukuṛu,	largeness
usura,	beauty

15 ku-, x- (preceding voiceless sounds p, t, k, c, f, s), k- (preceding vowels a, o, u, with concomitant lengthening of the vowel)

kuṛima,	cultivating
xsula,	wanting
ka:tura,	splitting

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mahala,	place
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A number of one-Class words were also noted :

mazu(moi, mayiri), 6,	banana(s)
mayi, 6,	water
malungo, 6,	body
gele, 9,	maize
mishpi, 4,	fishing-line

Finally, some odd-pairings :

5,4	ixori,	palm-leaf bag
	yino/mi:no,	tooth
11,4	ljint'u,	giant
7,4	cijint'u,	large, clumsy person

Adjectives

Adjective prefixes are as for nouns, with two exceptions : that for Cl. 14 is m-, and that for Cl. 16 is n-, as for Cl. 9. The following stems were noted :

-re,	long, tall	-kuru,	big, large
-haba,	small	-embauba,	narrow
-hundu,	red		

Possessives

The following six stems were recorded :

-a or -aka,	my	-i:tu,	our
-o,	your	-i:nu,	your (pl.)
-e,	his, her	-a:wo,	their

The associated prefixes are as follows :

Cl. 1/2 w-/y- ; Cl. 3/4 w-/y- ; Cl. 5/6 y-/y- ; Cl. 7/8 c-/z- ;
Cl. 9/10 y-/z- ; Cl. 11/10 l- z- ; Cl. 14 w- ; Cl. 15 kw- ;
Cl. 16 y-.

Demonstratives

Two demonstratives were recorded :

(1) 'This here' Cl. 1/2 uyu/aya ; Cl. 3/4 uyu/aya ; Cl. 5/6 iyi/aya ;
Cl. 7/8 ici/izi ; Cl. 9/10 iyi/izi ; Cl. 11/10 ili/izi ; Cl. 14
uyu ; Cl. 15 uku ; Cl. 16 iyi.

(2) 'That there' -je. The stem is preceded by Demonstrative (1), or by a shorter form excluding the initial vowel thus :

cint'u icije OR cije,	that thing
lkambala ilije OR lije,	that rope

Verbs

The simplest form of the verb is the Imperative, consisting of Root + a, thus, **winda** ! 'hunt'. This form seems to occur when addressing any number of persons.

More usually, however, tenses are made up of some or all of the following :

pre-prefix + verbal-prefix + tense-sign + object-infix
Root + extension + suffix

It appears that the verbal-prefix, especially in positive tenses, does not always occur. In some tenses prefixes were only noted for Cl. 1a ('I'), Cl. 2a ('we'), 2b ('you'), 2c ('they'), while in others only the Cl. 2 prefixes occurred.

No data on radical extensions were collected.

Four suffixes were noted : -a, -e, -i:re, to which must be added a fifth, relative tenses. Of these the second is restricted to the so-called 'Subjunctive' and the -ka- -e tenses. The third only occurs in one negative tense (see (a) below). The fourth only occurs in tenses connoting either 'Completion' or 'Past time'. It is realized as -e:re following root-vowels e, o, and preceding consonants, subject to various realizations in roots of a shape -(C)V(V)C-, thus :

preceding g, k are realized as -sh-	-big-, hit,	-bishi:re
	-pik-, cook,	-pishi:re
preceding t is realized as -s-	-pit-, pass,	-pisi:re
preceding r is realized as -z-	-zar-, give birth,	-zazi:re
preceding nd, mb are realized as -nz-	-end-, go,	-enze:re
	-tumb-, dig,	-tunzi:re

Contrast the above with -rim, cultivate, -rimi:re
 -rud-, return, -rudi:re
 -sul-, want, -suli:re

There is some evidence that the first vowel of the suffix is short if the preceding root vowel is long.

Data on longer roots are insufficient to make generalizations but note the following :

-faxat-, run,	-faxe:te
-fungul-, open,	-fungi:re
-turuk-, fall,	-turushi:re
-atur-, split,	-ati:re

With monosyllabic roots either -i:re or -e:re may occur :

-f-, die,	-fi:re
-n-, drink,	-ne:re

Finally a number of eccentric forms were noted :

-bah-, become lost	-be:re
-pat-, obtain,	-pe:te

The following tenses were recorded :

Positive : (1) -naku-(-nax-) -a	'Present time'
(2) -t'aku-(t'ax-) -a	'Future time'
(3) -Zero- -i:re/e:re	'Completion' and 'Past time'
(4) -c(i)/(sh-) -a	'Simple conditional'
(5) yaŋi ku- -i:re	'Past time'
(6) -sula- -a	'Conditional' (?) Relation between
	this tense-sign and -sul-, Like, <i>waŋi</i>
(7) na-Zero- -e	'Subjunctive' (1st Pers. Sing. <i>s-</i>)

One invariable tense was also noted :

(8) hu- -a	'Habitual'. An alternative form <i>kuta hu- -a</i> appears to co-exist
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Negative : (1) -Zero -i	'Near Future' and 'General'
(2) -t'aku-(t'ax-) -a	'Future time'
(3) nt'a- -naku-(-nax-) -a	'Present time'
(4) nt'a- -ku- -a	'Completion' and 'Past time'
(5) yaṛi -kunt'u -ku- -a	'Past time'
(6) sk'a- -e	'Conditional'
(7) sk'a- -a	'Conditional'

Positive relative tenses recorded for tenses 1, 2 and 3 are characterized by a final -o. Only one negative relative tense was recorded which appears to be variable :

nt'uku- -a (cf. 4 above)

Finally, an object infix series was noted as follows :

Cl. 1a, b, c, -n-, -ku-, -m- / Cl. 2a, b, c, -ci-, -ya-, -ya- ; Cl. 3/4 -u-/-i- ;
Cl. 5/6 -i- -ya- ; Cl. 7/8 -ci-/-zi- ; Cl. 9/10 -i- -zi- ; Cl. 11/10 -li-/-zi- ;
Cl. 14 -u- ; Cl. 15 -ku- ; Cl. 16 -i-.

Examples :

mi t'axkoma kesho/mi sit'axkoma kesho, I shall/shall not come¹ to-morrow
ye t'axkoma kesho/(ye)hat'axkoma kesho, he will/will not come to-morrow
akome:ṛe yana, I came yesterday

akome:ṛe ṛe:ro, I came to-day, have come to-day

mi hukoma kamapema, I generally come early

ngamira yaṛi kube:ṛe yana, the camel got lost yesterday

ngamira yaṛi kunt'ukubaha, the camel didn't get lost

ngamira uyu nt'anakubaha, this camel isn't getting lost

kana mi coṛoka t'amwona, if I go I'll see him

kana mi cize xkoma simwoni, if I don't go I'll not see him (-iz-, refuse)

kaenda sulamwona/cinasulamwona, if I had gone I/we would have seen him

k'acize kenda sk'amwone, if I hadn't gone I wouldn't have seen him

k'ashcize kenda sk'acimwona, if we hadn't gone we wouldn't have seen him

rimwambiṛe naye OR nḡoo OR nakome, I told him to come

Relative sentences seem to be preceded by a form similar to Demonstrative (2) but with a different tone (low-toned instead of high/low ?) :

mwana uje yaṛi kube:ro yana mbwaka, the child which was lost yesterday was mine

munt'u uje t'axfanyo kazi barabara t'axshinda, the chap who will work properly will win

munt'u uje nakuyo ni yaye, the man who is coming is my father

ngamira uje yaṛi kube:ro mbwaka, the camel which is lost is mine

uje munt'u nt'ukuya yana vari kuxadiṛi, the man who didn't come yesterday was ill

(-xadiṛi not clear, normal past form appears to be -xadi:ṛe)

¹ Come in the sense of 'arrive'.

Since some of the personal pronouns have been listed above, the full set appended below :

mi, I ye, thou ye, he, she si, we ni, you wo, they

Two kinds of non-verbal sentences were noted :

(1) Characterized by ni/siwo (siyo), is/is not :

munt'u uyu ni/siwo mure, this man is/is not tall
limi ni ihundu, the tongue is red
majiye aya siwo makuru, these stones are not big
zint'u izi siwo zihaba, these things are not small

(2) Characterized by -koi in questions and by s- or nt'a in answers :

Question yakoi yant'u ? where are the people ?

ukoi munt'u ? cikoi shkapu ? sikoi skapu ? where is the man/
basket(s) ?

Answer sayā/sayaje, they are here/there

Cl. 1/2 suyu/suje ; sayā/sayaje : Cl. 7/8 sici/sicije ; sizi/sizije :

Cl. 9 siyi/siyije

nt'ayako, they are not here/there (?)

Cl. 1 nt'aako ; Cl. 7 nt'aciko ; Cl. 8 nt'aziko

PROVISIONAL INVENTORY OF CONSONANT PHONEMES

	Bi/ Labial	Lab./ Dental	Dental	Alveo- lar	Pal./ Alv.	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Stops : Voiceless	p		t	t			k	
Voiced (Impl.)	b		d	d			g	
Aspirate	p'		t'	t'			k'	
Affricate :					c	j		
Aspirate					c'			
Fricative :	ɸ	f	th	s, z, ɾ	sh		x	h
Rolled :				r				
Lateral :				l				
Nasal :	m	ɳ		n		(ny)	ŋ	
Semi-vowel :	w					y		

Nasal Compounds : (mb, nd, nɖ, ng, nz, nt, nt', nɳ, nt')

- Notes* : (1) It is not clear from the data whether there are phonemically distinct explosive stops.
(2) The affixes -ci- and -ku- are realized as -sh- and -x- respectively preceding p, t, k, c, f, s, sh (but no example of -ci- preceding sh recorded).
(3) The inter-dental n (ɳ) occurs in many contexts where ny occurs in 'Standard' Swahili.
(4) The symbol ɾ stands for an untrilled r, similar, in Prof. A. N. Tucker's view, on an initial hearing of the tape, to the English 'fricative' r. Though it has an l-like quality it is nevertheless clearly distinguishable from l. Its occurrence appears to be restricted to stems and roots and to the post radical (root) suffix -i: ɾe/ -e:ɾe.
(5) The retroflex ɖ occurring only in the cluster nɖ is similar to the sound I recorded in Mombasa in 1954 and noted in 'Kimvita : an enquiry into dialectal status and characteristics', *Journal of the East African Swahili Committee*, 25, 1955.