Evidence from Retroflexion in Kizigua:

How Language Maintenance was Possible in the Context of Forced Migration in Pre-Civil War Somalia

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Kizigua

- An underdocumented language originally from Tanzania
- “Wazigua” is the ethnonym
- Part of the larger Bantu language family
  - One of the largest language families in Africa
  - Related to Swahili
- Focus of presentation on dialect spoken in Somalia
2 Migrations, 2 Outcomes

- 19\textsuperscript{th} Century: Tanzania $\rightarrow$ Southern Somalia
  - Migration due to slavery
  - Maintenance first observed by Crevatin (1993) based on 1980’s field work
  - Focus of current presentation
- 1990’s: Somalia $\rightarrow$ Kenya $\rightarrow$ elsewhere including the US
  - Migration due to Somali Civil War
  - Youngest generation shifting to monolingualism in English
How was maintenance possible?

Two factors:

1. Coincidental contact with other Bantu Groups
   ✤ Evidence found in presence of retroflex sounds

2. Relative isolation of Southern Somalia
   ✤ Lack of contact with a more politically influential language
Data

- **Historical**
  - Dictionary of Late 19\textsuperscript{th} Century Tanzanian Kizigua (Kisbey 1906)
  - Secondary sources discussing history of the region

- **Linguistic**
  - Consultant work with present day speakers
  - Began with 4-month long Field Methods course
  - Continued by working with additional speakers in the community
Historical Context

- Eno & Eno (2007)
  - Famine and drought as impetus for migration
  - Arab-Omani traders lured (“tricked”) Wazigua to Somalia
  - Worked as slaves in plantations
  - Heavy resistance
    - Over 20,000 slaves escaped on foot between 1865-1890
    - Formed fugitive slave communities including Gosha
  - Gosha became an independent state
Contact with Other Bantu Groups

- At the time of arrival in Gosha, contact with 2 major groups

1. Groups already present in Southern Somalia
   - Bantu: Bajuni, Pokomo
   - Other: Oromo, Boni

2. Other fugitive slaves
   - All Bantu: Shambara, Yao, Makua, Nyindo, Lima, Nyasa
Linguistic Evidence for Contact with Other Bantu Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sound</th>
<th>Somali Kizigua Word</th>
<th>Tanzanian Kizigua</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>t</td>
<td>matunqəa</td>
<td>matunda</td>
<td>‘fruit (pl)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nt</td>
<td>wantu</td>
<td>wantu</td>
<td>‘people (pl)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q</td>
<td>maqquq'u</td>
<td>madudu</td>
<td>‘bugs (pl)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nd</td>
<td>ihundu</td>
<td>-nkundu</td>
<td>‘red’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Retroflexion present in Somali Kizigua but not in Tanzanian Kizigua (Kisbey 1906, Mochiwa 2008)
- Pre-nasalized retroflex stops (/nt/, /nd/) focus of discussion
Development of Retroflex Sounds

- Since absent in both 19th Century and 21st Century Tanzanian Kizigua, most likely developed in Somalia
- Did they develop independently or due to contact with other languages that do have these sounds?
- If they developed independently, there would need to be phonetic motivation.
Research on Retroflexion

- Bhat (1973)
  - Most thorough typological survey of retroflexion
  - Examined 150 languages containing retroflex sounds
    - Found most to cluster in several geographical areas
  - Concluded that most cases involved contact with another language that already has these sounds
  - Very few phonetic environments leading to independent development
    1. Preceding a back vowel (/u/, /o/, /a/)
    2. Implosion (a typologically rare phonetic feature)
Possible sources of Retroflexion?

- Phonetic reasons identified by Bhat (1973) not applicable to /nt/ and /nd/.
- So must be due to contact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Pre-nasalized Retroflex Sounds</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oromo</td>
<td>Cushitic</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>Gragg (1982)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somali</td>
<td>Cushitic</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>Saeed (1999)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Dialects of Swahili (Bajuni, Amu, etc)</td>
<td>Bantu</td>
<td>nd</td>
<td>Nurse (1985)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pokomo</td>
<td>Bantu</td>
<td>nt, nd</td>
<td>Nurse (1985)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What does this mean?

- Since Bajuni, Pokomo, and other Northern Dialects of Swahili among the few language with pre-nasalized retroflex sounds, one of these language likely the source of pre-nasalized retroflex sounds in Somali Kizigua.

- Presence of pre-nasalized retroflex sounds show evidence of contact with these Bantu groups.
  - But, this is not an ordinary case of contact.
  - It is contact with similar languages.
  - Similarity crucial in contributing towards maintenance.
    - But how so?
## Corresponding Cognates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tanzanian Kizigua</th>
<th>Bajuni</th>
<th>Somali Kizigua</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-nkundu</td>
<td>ekundu</td>
<td>ihundu</td>
<td>‘red’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nkonde</td>
<td>honde</td>
<td>honde</td>
<td>‘cultivated field’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kenda</td>
<td>kendə</td>
<td>cendə</td>
<td>‘9’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nkunde</td>
<td>ukunde</td>
<td>uhunde</td>
<td>‘bean’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tunda</td>
<td>cunda</td>
<td>tundə</td>
<td>‘fruit’ (sg.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Possible Scenario?

- Adult speakers of Bajuni or Pokomo learning Kizigua may have pronounced Kizigua cognates with retroflex
  - Passed this pronunciation along to future generations
- Children born to both Wazigua and Bajuni or Pokomo parents adopted retroflex pronunciation of Kizigua words
  - Retroflex variant may have had important social meaning
- Contact with similar languages makes this type of change possible
  - Also makes it look like a systematic sound change
Other Fugitive Slaves

- Most fugitive slave groups lost their native language
- “unlike most of the East Africans sold into captivity in Somalia, the [Wazigua] were not children, but adults.”
What does this mean?

- Wazigua less likely to shift to other languages
- Children from other groups acquired Kizigua
- An overall increase in number of Kizigua speakers
- Ethnic and linguistic lines blurred for many present-day speakers
  - Example: One speaker interviewed has Wazigua ancestry on one side of the family and Makua ancestry on another. Kizigua still primary language
  - Interethnic marriage not uncommon
  - Nevertheless, Kizigua language maintained
Relative isolation

- Following the disestablishment of Gosha, European colonization (1894-1960) seems to have had little linguistic impact (except for a handful of loans from Italian and English)

- Southern Somalia relatively isolated from outside world

- Crevatin (1993) discusses isolation
  - Discovered many Kizigua speakers unfamiliar with Somali
  - Lack of loan words from Somali
  - Evidence of relative isolation up through the 1980’s (more than a century after arrival in Somalia)
More recent situation

- Ethnic Somalis did not have political control of Wazigua territory until 1960.

- Younger speakers (born after ~1980) more likely to also speak Somali and to use Somali loan words when speaking Kizigua

- Current situation very different from late 19th / Early 20th Century
Summary

Language maintenance possible for more than a century in Kizigua due to:

- Contact with other Bantu languages
  - Similarity to Kizigua played a role in maintenance
    - Illustrated with the development of pre-nasalized retroflex sounds
    - Their typological unusualness makes them unlikely to have developed independently. Contact more likely.
  - The formation of Gosha made Kizigua a dominant language in the region before ethnic Somali control
    - Further contributed to maintenance by encouraging other Bantu groups to shift to Kizigua

- Relative isolation
  - Lack of a more politically influential language present in Southern Somalia.
  - Lack of another language to shift to.
Conclusion

- Migration is not new in human history, nor is language change in the context of migration. Yet, relatively little work on historical situations.

- Language maintenance in Late 19th and Early 20th Century Somali Kizigua a relatively unique historical case of language and migration with relatively unique findings.

- Migration tied to slavery relatively well-studied in the New World, but outcome for Kizigua is very different.
  - Maintenance rather than creolization or shift.
  - Somali Kizigua has developed typologically rare sound.
  - Increased in markedness?
Acknowledgements

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Asante! / Thank you!
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