

Chapter 33

When Northern Swahili met southern Somali

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Some twelve hundred years an incipient Northern Swahili community had moved up the Kenya coast as far as the Lamu Archipelago, where it came in contact with one or more Somali communities and the isolate Dahalo community. This paper initially uses phonological innovations in the early Swahili dialect to establish the general fact of contact, and then attempts to use sets of loanwords to identify the Somali source. Due to inadequate sources, it has proved difficult to identify the source(s) with certainty but initial contact with Tunni over some centuries, followed by later contact with Garre, is the most plausible explanation. The Tunni and Garre later exited, the latter leaving strong traces behind in Boni.

1 Purpose

The target here is a micro-area in NE Kenya and SE Somalia.¹ It was once home to where northern Swahili (including Mwiini², the language of Brava) and some of its relatives are assumed to have emerged and developed, starting some 1200 BP, amidst a background of southern Somali communities. This has been suggested before (Nurse 1983; 1985) but not examined in such detail. The main differences here are the a) inclusion of Mwiini, b) inclusion of southern Somali (see the list in §2, below) other than Aweera = Boni, and c) stratigraphy of the Northern Swahili Dialects (ND). The analysis involves the use of phonological innovations and lexical borrowing, and includes some non-linguistic information.

¹The label “southern Somali” is used in the title solely as a convenient geographical term. By contrast with Northern Swahili, southern Somali is not a recognized linguistic grouping.

²Mwiini is here considered a Northern Swahili dialect, although others regard it as a separate language.

2 Players, in order of chronological entry on stage

2.1 Dahalo

Dahalo is a Cushitic language with a Khoesan component (lexis, clicks) (see Figure 1 for a map). Khoesan split from Sandawe at least 20,000 years ago (S. Tishkoff *pc*).³ Khoesan communities are assumed to have been spread across East Africa from Ethiopia south for many millennia. We do not know when or where Khoesan and Cushitic came together to form Dahalo, nor how long the Dahalo have been in situ, although minor hints suggest several millennia (Nurse 1986). Today a few hundred (?) aging Dahalo speakers remain.

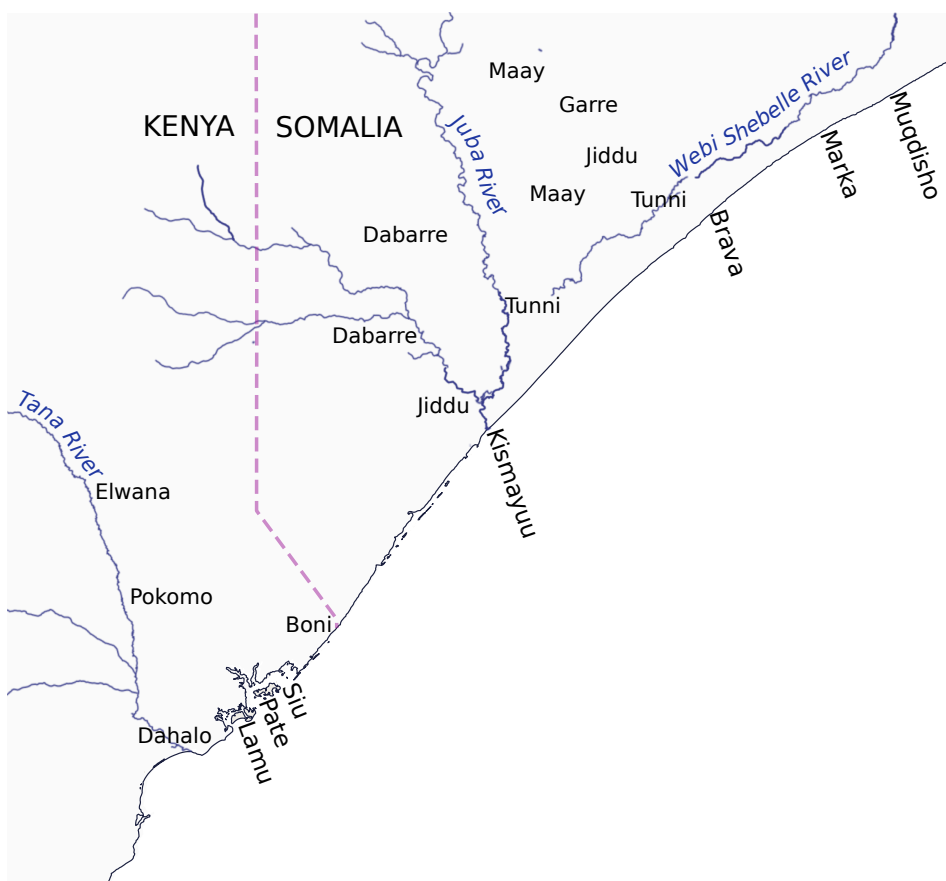


Figure 1: Linguistic communities in the Kenya-Somalia border area

³Dates are approximate. Populations from Ethnologue (Lewis et al. 2015).

2.2 Somali

Early Eastern Omo-Tana communities started to move SE into Somalia ca. 3000 BP and were in situ in southern Somalia by 2000 BP (Ehret 1995). Many local movements ensued over the next two millennia. Six Somali dialect communities near the target area now can be assumed to have been so also in the past, and are the likely candidates as sources for the material in the ND. They are the:⁴

1. Maay, interriverine⁵, from just south of Muqdisho almost to Kismayu, with over 500,000 speakers
2. Tunni, coastal, from near Merka to north of Kismayuu. 20,000 to 60,000 speakers. Earlier, possibly also further south.
3. Dabarre, interriverine. 20,000 to 50,000 speakers. Tunni and Dabarre are similar. Dabarre is little known.
4. Jiddu, interriverine and coast south of Brava. 20,000 to 60,000 speakers. Not enough is known.
5. Garre/Karre⁶, interriverine and widely scattered, with over 50,000 speakers.
6. Boni, also called Aweera. They live in a small area 60km long, mostly in NE Kenya with a few in SE Somalia, in villages in a forest bordering the coast. 3,000 speakers. Karre and Boni are similar. Along with Tosco (1994) I assume that Boni is a Dahaloised variety of Karre that arose when the Karre moved down to the coast into contact with Dahalo.

Other than the Boni and the more recent Orma and northern Somali, no Somali Cushitic group is south of Kismayuu today, so some group or groups once in situ here, have migrated north (see §6). Nuuh (1985) suggests that the Garre did not withdraw north but were rather absorbed into the Orma moving south.

⁴The distribution of these southern Somali communities is based on maps drawn by Lamberti in the 1980s (Lamberti 1983), before civil war erupted in 1991. They may have changed in the meantime. The outbreak of war had other effects. Up to 1991 the language situation in Somali was fairly stable but when the central government collapsed, coastal Swahili communities were attacked, genocide followed, and the communities collapsed. Dialect ability in the ND communities in northern Kenya has been reduced by a combination of economic and educational factors.

⁵“Interriverine” refers to the area along and between the rivers Juba and Shebelle, the only well watered part of the region and thus long a magnet for farmers and pastoralists.

⁶I follow Tosco and use Karre for the language, Garre for the/a clan. Also spelled “Karee”.

2.3 Bantu

Early Bantu moved into East Africa in the closing centuries BC, and one group, labeled the North East Coast Bantu, had reached an area in NE Tanzania, bounded by Mombasa and the Usambara, Taita, and the Pare Mountains, by the early centuries AD. All relevant Bantu languages here form part of the Sabaki group, a subset of NECB⁷. The early ancestral Swahili northern dialect (ND) community moved up along the immediate hinterland of the Kenya coast from NE Tanzania and was most likely living in villages in northern Kenya, in the Lamu Archipelago and adjacent mainland coast, slightly before 800 AD. Two other early Sabaki communities, ancestral to Pokomo and Mijikenda, had by this time also spread into the interriverine area in southern Somalia. The early Elwana community was probably along the Tana River in NE Kenya (Nurse & Hinnebusch 1993: 485ff, 499ff). The three earliest settlements on the Kenya coast are on Pate and Lamu Islands, at or slightly before 800 AD, with nearby sites on the mainland being slightly later (Wilson 2016). The ND and related Sabaki communities are the:

1. Mwiini (ND), up to 1991 exclusively in and around Brava, 10,000 to 15,000 speakers, now scattered, worldwide, few still in Brava, new speakers said to be emerging as outsiders move in (Vianello, p.c).
2. Bajuni (ND), SE Somali and NE Kenya coast and islands. Few speakers are left in Somalia. Ca. 20,000 Bajunis in NE Kenya, but how many are good speakers?
3. Siu (ND), in and around Siu Town, northern Pate Island. 6,000.
4. Pate (ND), in and around Pate Town, Pate Island. 3,000.
5. Amu (ND), in and around Lamu Town, Lamu Island. 15,000. Also other lects on Lamu Island.
6. Malindi (ND), in and around Malindi Town, between Lamu and Mombasa. Size of population speaking the dialect unknown.
7. Mombasa (ND), Mombasa city. It is likely that >25,000 speak the main dialect, Mvita. Also other smaller lects in and around around Mombasa, mostly dead or dying. Malindi and Mombasa are largely ignored in what follows.

⁷The Northeast Coast Bantu, a linguistic grouping involving over 20 communities along the coast of southern Somalia, Kenya, and northeastern Tanzania. See, inter alia, Nurse & Hinnebusch 1993: 4-19.

8. Elwana. Along Tana River, Bura to Garissa. >8,000.
9. Pokomo. Along Tana River, from coast to Bura. >65,000.
10. Mijikenda. Just inland of coast north of Mombasa. >630,000.

2.4 Communities excluded from this study

Since the focus here is from 800 to 1400 AD, besides the communities above four others known to have been in the area over the last two millennia played little or no role: (1) an unidentified Bantu community in the interriverine area in the early centuries AD, (2) the Mushunguli, along the Juba, descendants of escaped slaves from Tanzania, who settled there in the nineteenth century, (3) Orma, and (4) Northern Somali, who both arrived from the north over the last 500 years, too late to influence the events being discussed, although both are now present in the area.

3 Aim and assumptions

The purpose of this paper is twofold, to: see if this archaeology-based scenario can be linked to linguistic – specifically phonological – innovations within the ND, and to try link any such developments to a specific southern Somali community.

Northern Swahili refers to the communities speaking Swahili dialects from Brava down to the Mombasa area and just south. The archaeological sites in the whole area, assumed to be Swahili, were located in the Lamu Archipelago and/or adjacent mainland, slightly before 800 AD. I assume these to be those of the Proto-ND community. The northern communities at Mombasa and maybe Malindi and Mambrui must have been the first to move out of the area, as Mombasa shows signs of Swahili settlement already by the late 11th century. They were followed closely by the ancestors of the Bravanese, and maybe of people formerly beyond Brava at Munghia, Merka, Gezira, and Mkudisho⁸, who had all moved north by ca 1100 AD. Archaeological sites in the traditional area occupied by Bajuni are later, starting in the 14th or 15th century (Wilson 1992: 91), along the 250km line from Dondo and adjacent settlements on the Kenya coast, north as far as Kismayu. That these dates are later maybe because archaeological data is incomplete or because the ancestors of the Bajunis spread along the coast later

⁸The name Shaangani, a Mkudisho quarter, and some pottery sherds there, suggest Swahili connections.

than the other communities. So far, this chronology is based largely on archaeology. The area in which the proto-ND communities lived was shared with one (or more?) southern Somali-speaking communities. Other than the tiny and low-status Boni community, no southern Somali communities live in that area today.

4 Phonological innovations: ND dialects including Malindi and Mombasa

Southern Swahili dialects, from the Kenya/Tanzania border south, are conservative phonologically – that is, they are close to their Sabaki and North East Coast Bantu forebears – while all the northern dialects have innovated, so it is easier to arrange the latter stratigraphically as branches on a genealogical tree. Several dozen innovations⁹ are scattered across the ND spectrum, but most are local and recent, and/or cannot be clearly linked to Somali influence. Those in Table 1 are significant because they occur in all ND and have diagnostic value because they do suggest a Somali source.

These are arranged in approximate chronological order. Numbers 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 involve some form of dentalization. Among coronals, worldwide (Maddieson 1984), in Africa, and in East African Bantu, alveolars are more common than dentals. All the Somali dialects in the area (also Orma) have a dental series as their only or predominant coronal set. Few have phonemic voiced fricatives, although most have [ð] as an allophone of a /d/. Thus it seems that by entering a Somali “dental” area, early ND made an adaptive articulatory choice. Elwana, Pokomo, and Mijikenda have also acquired dentality (Nurse & Hinnebusch 1993: 572-5). Three different mechanisms are involved in the acquisition:

1. the dentals enter in large sets of borrowed vocabulary, as in Pokomo and Mijikenda;
2. inherited alveolars became dental, as in Elwana, presumably by the community absorbing many outsiders for whom dentality was the norm;
3. a phonetic process for the change from (pre)palatal to dental, as in the ND. In both cases the tongue lies in the same region but different parts of the tongue act alternately as the active articulators at the point where they lie. For palatals the blade operates on the palate, while the apex is raised,

⁹For instance, over 30 phonological features distinguish Bajuni from Standard Swahili (see Nurse 2013/2011, click on *Bajuni Database*, and go to the list at the end of *Wordlist*).

lying behind the teeth. For dentals, the apex operates on the teeth, while the blade is lowered from the palate. Disposition of blade and tip of tongue is identical or similar in both but, in a kind of rocking movement, one part is raised as the other is lowered.

This is discussed in more detail in Nurse 1985, the results are exemplified in Nurse & Hinnebusch (1993: 572-575) and the details are not discussed further here.

It can be seen that Bajuni is at the centre of the dentalization changes, being affected by all six innovations, Siu/Pate by four, Amu by three, Mwiini and the Mombasa dialects by only two. #3 and #8 do not involve dentalization and are only mentioned for the sake of completeness.

Table 1: Dentalization in Northern Swahili^a

	North ND				South ND	
	Mwiini	Bajuni	Siu/Pate	Amu	Malindi, Mombasa	Base form/SD
1	<u>t</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>t</u>	[c]
2	<u>nd</u>	<u>nd</u>	<u>nd</u>	<u>nd</u>	<u>nd</u>	[nj]
3	nd ^r	nd ^r	nd ^r	nd ^r	nd ^r	[nd]
4	nz	<u>nd</u>	<u>nd</u>	<u>nd</u>	nz	[nz]
5	z	ð	ð	z	z	[z]
6	s	θ/s	s	s	s	[s]
7	ny/ <u>n</u>	<u>n</u>	ny	ny	ny	[ny]
8	t	c	c	t	t	[t]

^aComments on the table. Underlining = dental, ny = palatal, c, j = alveopalatal. For #6 I heard only [s] in Kenyan Bajuni in the 1970s, but have since heard [θ] from some Somali Bajunis. For #7, Mwiini behaves inconsistently, some words having the dental, others the palatal, no obvious conditioning factors. My guess is that the dentals, or the process itself is a loan from Bajuni where dental nasals are the regular outcome and Bajuni was the nearest community to the south. What happens in #8 might be a systemic compensation for #1, which led to all ND having (inherited) /t/ and (innovated) /t/ for a while – the subsequent affrication made the two less similar. Siu and Pate generally behave like Amu but here as Bajuni. I would guess that the change of [t] to [c] occurred under Bajuni influence. Portuguese records indicate that Bajuni influence and numbers were much greater in the past than today.

What do #1, 2, 4, 5, 6, and 7 tell us about the stratigraphy of the northern dialects? P-ND is defined by #1, 2, 3, which developed presumably in one or more of the early settlements, from about 800 AD to before just 1100 AD, when early Mwiini and Mombasa broke away. #4 developed while early Bajuni, Amu, Siu, and Pate were still adjacent and more or less in situ, between 1100 AD and when Bajuni started to spread along the coast. The implementation of all six changes in Bajuni suggests, by staying more or less in situ on the coast, it remained open to ongoing and later Somali influence (#5, 6, 7), after Mwiini moved north, Mombasa south, and Amu/Siu/Pate stayed the islands.

5 Lexical borrowing from Somali in the ND dialects

The set of phonological innovations in Table 1 point to pressure from Somali-speaking communities but do not identify specific communities. But which Somali? The most obvious way of identifying possible donor communities is by examining loan sets, first those common to all ND, which would point at borrowing in the 800 to 1100 AD period, then in Bajuni/Amu/Siu/Pate, the group left after Mwiini and Mombasa broke away, then in Mwiini, Bajuni, and Amu/Siu separately, and finally in other possible groupings.

5.1 Sources

It is relevant to mention briefly the quality and quantity of the data available. For Dahalo (Nurse 1986; Ehret et al. 1989; Tosco 1991; various minor sources), Mwiini (Kisseberth & Abasheikh 2004), Bajuni, Amu, Siu, Pate (Sacleux 1939; Nurse 2013/2011), Tunni (Tosco 1997; Vianello p.c.; Ehret's notes), Boni (Heine 1977; 1982; Sasse 1979), Karre (Tosco 1994), Elwana (Nurse 1994; 2000), Giryama = Miji Kenda (Deed 1964), Pokomo (various) reasonable data exists but only for Swahili dialects and Giryama/Mijikenda are the quantities of data really adequate. For other southern Somali dialects the lexical data is poor in quantity but also often in quality.

This is important because without large bodies of lexical data it is not possible to pinpoint the language donor communities properly.

5.2 Karre and Boni: the devoicing of Somali morpheme initial /d/ and /g/, and the reduction of NC to C (stop)

Boni and Karre share features which distinguish them from other Somali varieties. One is the devoicing of Somali morpheme initial /d/ and /g/. So where

other Somali varieties have *daar* ‘touch’ and *guur* ‘migrate, move house’, Karre and Boni have *taar* and *kuur*. P-Somali *cimbir* ‘bid’ but G/B *shim(m)ir*. In what follows I take the position that Boni is the result of a coming together of Karre and Dahalo or a Dahalo-like language, when the Karre moved into what is now the Boni area. The term “coming together” is used advisedly, as there are different explanations of how this took place.

5.3 The sociolinguistic picture

There are two relevant factors. One is the size of the communities involved. It can be seen from Figure 1 that today the southern Somali communities (except Boni) are much larger than the ND communities. While it is tricky to guess at the size of earlier Somali communities, it is safe to say that the Swahili communities were always small, largely because they depended on wells for fresh water. The wells had and have a balance of fresh and salt water, and if too much fresh water is extracted, the well is eventually overwhelmed by salt water, becoming undrinkable, and the dependent community is doomed.¹⁰ So it is reasonable to guess that relatively small Swahili communities on the islands were surrounded by larger mainland Somali communities. In such a situation, the likely direction of borrowing – of language and other material – is from larger to smaller.

The second factor is economic. As early Sabaki groups – early ND, Elwana, Pokomo, Mijikenda – moved up the coast, they almost certainly combined subsistence farming with hunting. At some point early Swahili communities made the move to maritime activities (fishing, and trading across the Indian Ocean). Wilson (2016) summarizes what was found by the archaeologists (Chittick, Horton) who excavated the three earliest large sites on the island, Pate, Shanga, Manda. At Pate, fish, turtle, chickens, cattle, camels, wild ungulates were present in the deepest levels, 750–850 AD, and sheep/goats by 850–1000 AD. At Shanga, fish were early but only in quantity after 1000, and chickens also appear early. Sheep/goats and cattle are in the record by 840, but in quantity only after about 980. Local hunting groups, such as Dahalo, on the adjacent mainland relied on hunting and fishing. Wilson (2016: 132) cites Horton’s suggestion that “Shanga might have been a multicultural society from its foundation, including (non-Bantu?) pastoralist elements”. Camel bones at Shanga are dated at 1075 AD, and camels certainly came south with Somalis, possibly along with cattle. Nurse (1985: 72) cite a tradition among the Pate people that “the origin of Pate was a per-

¹⁰ This happened at Ngumi Island, a Bajuni settlement in southern Somalia, while at nearby Chula Island, the water is only fit for cattle, and water has to be brought in for humans.

son from the mainland who was of the Sanye¹¹ tribe”. Clearly the non-linguistic evidence suggests the early presence of Somali and other groups.

5.4 Somali loanwords in various ND groupings

The total number of clear loanwords in the ND is much larger than what appears in this section. In Table 2 are included only the words which are loans in the ND and have a likely origin in some Somali dialect (or Dahalo, or maybe Orma).

The strengths and weaknesses of this lexically based approach can be seen from this list (more items could be added). With the exception of ‘deaf’ and ‘dried meat’, all 20 items here are clearly from some Somali source. They cannot be from Karre or Boni as they lack the devoicing of /d, g/, so we can say that they originate in D, J, M, or T. But beyond that, it is not possible to point at a clear single donor for these early ND borrowings: the available lexica do not show these items, so unambiguous source identification is impossible. The best candidate is Tunni. For geographical and (sketchy) historical reasons, Maay and Jiddu are unlikely candidates. We do not know enough of Dabarre.

I think it would be risky to draw too many conclusions about the nature of these loans until we have more complete data. However, most of these terms do not seem to indicate much economic or cultural influence from the Somali contact, which suggests that Somali influence may have resulted from sheer numbers.

At the breakup of the protocommunity, the earliest Bravanese moved up north around 1100 AD, to Brava and maybe further (see §3). For their language, Mwiini, there is a fine dictionary (Kisseberth & Abasheikh 2004), with some 5000 entries. Some entries are followed by a Swahili form, so mostly of Bantu origin, some are Arabic, some are followed by a Somali word, indicating probable Somali origin, and some are followed by no reference to any other language. Some pages have not a single Bantu entry. The authors admit they only consulted a Standard Somali dictionary and had little access to material from Somali dialects. Vianello (p.c.) has calculated that “some 20% of the general lexicon consists of borrowings from Somali and of Arabic words that have entered Chimiini through Somali”. Standard Somali is of northern origin but much of the material in Mwiini is of

¹¹Name for any local hunting group.

¹²B = Boni, Dab = Dabarre, Dah = Dahalo, G = Karre, J = Jiddu, M = Maay, PSC = Proto-Southern Cushitic (Ehret), S = Somali T = Tunni

¹³Is this a mistake for tamari?

¹⁴‘Beestings’ (first milk) and ‘limp’ are a puzzle: why does Mwiini have the general Somali shape in both while the other dialects have the Karre shape? I assume separate borrowings.

Table 2: Somali loanwords shared by all ND = early ND

Mwiini	Bajuni	Amu etc	Cushitic ¹²
<i>aabo</i> ‘a male name’	<i>abawa</i> ‘older brother’	<i>abawa</i>	T <i>abow/aboo</i> , B <i>ab’ue</i> , general S <i>abboow(e)</i> , M <i>aawow</i> ‘dad’. Is the Mw item from the same source as the others?
<i>baaya</i> ‘my older sister’ <i>bay and abbaay</i> ‘female names’, <i>abadhe</i> from T <i>hawa’adi</i>	<i>abaya</i> ‘older sister’	<i>abaya</i>	General S <i>abbaaye</i> , T <i>abaaya</i> (<i>abada</i> ‘title for women in poetry’), not in B
	<i>avahadi</i> ‘gum for earache’	<i>avahadi</i>	prob. from T, as other S shapes are different
<i>buru</i> ‘small fried wheat cake’	<i>buru</i> ‘maize’	<i>buru</i>	B <i>b’uuru</i> ‘maize’, Arabic <i>burr</i> ‘flour, wheat’, common S, Maay ‘pie’, PSC <i>bur-</i> , Dah <i>b’uru</i> . From Arabic?
<i>dambari</i> ‘beestings’	<i>damari</i> ¹³	<i>tamari</i>	S <i>dambar</i> , d > t and mb > m characterize G and B. G <i>tamar</i> Dah <i>kamari</i> (k a mistake for t?) ¹⁴
<i>daara</i> ‘touch’ <i>dhaayika</i> ‘melt’	<i>dara</i> <i>dayuka</i>	<i>dara</i> <i>dayuka</i> , <i>deyuka</i>	General S <i>daar</i> , Bo <i>taara</i> , Maay <i>taar-</i> S/Tu <i>dhay</i> ‘spread ointment’
<i>chi-duku</i> ‘navel’ <i>dhu</i> ‘marrow’,	<i>doko</i> ‘anus’ <i>i-duhu</i> ‘marrow’	<i>doko</i> <i>duhu</i>	S <i>dhuuq</i> ‘vagina’ S <i>dhuux</i> , T ‘marrow’, M <i>dhuu</i>
<i>dhuko</i> ‘deaf’ <i>dhaghaala</i> ‘partly deaf’ <i>duguwa</i> limp’	<i>duko</i> ‘deaf’	<i>duko</i>	S <i>dhegoole</i> , J <i>dhagaali</i> , M <i>dheghaal</i> , PSC <i>duux</i> , Dah. <i>d’uuko</i> . So <i>dhukay</i> ‘ear wax’
	<i>dukuva</i> ‘be lame’	<i>dekua</i>	S <i>dugua</i> , M <i>dugh-ow</i> (note g to k in Baj, Amu etc)
<i>fuura</i> ‘swell’ <i>i-garabu</i> ‘shoulder blade’ <i>guura</i> ‘move, migrate’ <i>i-goroori</i>	<i>fura</i> <i>i-garabu</i> <i>gura</i> <i>i-gururu</i> ‘curdled milk’, <i>also</i> <i>kirori</i>	<i>fura</i> <i>garabu</i> <i>gura</i> <i>gururu</i>	S, J, Dah all <i>fuur</i> S, T, M all <i>garab</i> , J <i>garaw</i> , (but G <i>karab</i> , B <i>karub</i>) S, T, etc <i>guur</i> (G and B <i>kuur</i>) S <i>garoor</i> , M <i>guruur</i> , T <i>goroor</i> ,
<i>mazu</i> ‘banana’	<i>idhu</i>	<i>izu</i>	Common S, B <i>maadu</i> (pl), Dah <i>madhu</i> . From Arabic?
<i>chi-skita</i> ‘dried meat or fish’	<i>musikita</i> ‘strip of dried meat’	<i>musikita</i>	Dah <i>sikkwita</i> , <i>misikita</i>
<i>muna</i> ‘younger brother/sister’	<i>mnuna</i>	<i>mnuna</i>	B <i>bamuna</i> ‘younger sister’

southern or unidentified Somali origin. The result is that the dictionary has many items not of Bantu, not of Arabic, and not of Northern/Standard Somali origin. Thus the percentage of words of Somali origin is likely to be much higher. My guess is it might be as high as 30% or maybe 40%. So many centuries of coexistence and bilingualism have resulted in very heavy borrowing in Mwiini from Somali. These items cannot be from Karre/Boni because they do not show the phonological characteristics of those dialects. Phonologically they might be from Tunni, Dabarre, Jiddi, or Maay: it would be worthwhile identifying the phonological and lexical differences between these four and against the unidentified lexical items in Mwiini.

Mwiini has also been influenced in non-lexical (morphological, syntactic) ways. Some of these are discussed in Nurse (1991), Henderson (2010), and Vianello (2015).

From what we know of the history of Brava in recent centuries, the most likely source is Tunni. They live and have lived in and around the town for centuries or maybe longer. Vianello (p.c) quotes a letter, written by influential Tunni elders to the Italian authorities in 1953, stating that they had been in the Brava region for 800 years, which of course cannot be confirmed.

After the departure of the Bravanese to the north and Mombasans to the south, a rump of early Bajuni/Amu/Siu/Pate speakers remained. A set of some 25 items is shared by those dialects.¹⁵ They are a mixed bunch: some from an unidentified Somali dialect (not G or B), a couple from Karre/Boni ('beestings', 'limp', see Table 2), some of unknown origin. It stands to reason that one of the sources might be the continuing presence of the same Somali community that left its imprint on the original ND community (Table 2, Tunni?).

Next, the Bajuni community spread north along the coast. Bajuni has some 30 borrowings, many of which seem to be of Somali origin. Contrary to expectation, few are unambiguously from Boni/Karre, but an interesting item is *k^hamasi* 'clan', with characteristic Boni/Karre devoicing, where Tunni has *gamaasi*.¹⁶ The exact Somali source of most is again unclear but may be (?) one of the sources already

¹⁵For reasons of space, these and others following are not shown. I can send them to interested readers.

¹⁶There is another interesting possibility. In older Bajuni poetry I found *loya* 'cattle'. Tosco (p.c) tells me he finds as the plural of *lo* in Karre the form *looyi*, which with the suffixed article gives *looya* (vowel shortened to Bajuni *loya*) 'the cows/cattle'. He describes it as a "strong connection with Karre".

mentioned (Tunni). A few apparently originated in Dahalo.¹⁷ Ehret has pointed out to me that there is some evidence for a possible second Somali group in far northeastern Kenya before 1500 AD.

After the Bajuni exit, the Amu, Pate, and Siu communities remained in situ. They share a small set of loans, but so small as to make conclusions impossible. Likewise, Mwiini and Bajuni, historically close geographically, share a small loan set from Somali, but examination of these adds little to the general picture. They do not appear to be of Karre/Boni origin so may also be from Tunni.

5.5 Conclusions from loanwords (and phonology)

There has been a continuous Somali-speaking presence on the mainland adjacent to the Lamu Archipelago from 800 AD – and probably much earlier – to the present. But the nature of the Somali presence changed during that period. For much of that time, except recently, speakers of southern Somali dialects probably outnumbered the ND communities. At a more recent point in the period the Karre appeared, then withdrew, leaving their imprint in place in the form of the Boni and their language. In the early part of the period – and continuing till an undefined date – the Somali community was different – Tunni, Dabarre, Maay,¹⁸ or Jiddu. There may even have been more than one Somali presence, but it is more economical to assume a single community, unless more than one can be demonstrated. The most likely single candidate is the Tunni, until and unless more lexical data becomes available for the other communities (Dabarre, Maay, Jiddu). I had hoped to be able to show a better, more concrete conclusion.

The somewhat sparse evidence also suggests a Dahalo presence in the area from the earliest period. Various articles in the bibliography deal with Dahalo influence on individual non-Dahalo language in the area but the picture would be improved by an examination of the phonological and lexical influence of Dahalo across the whole area.¹⁹

¹⁷Sands finds it surprising that the Dahalo could have had much impact. The main source of data for lexicon for flora and fauna in the ND was Sacleux (1939), a huge volume of 1000 pages of fine print. I started through it but was daunted and abandoned the task. Once all the data there has been extracted and compared with that for Dahalo we will gain a better overview of the role of Dahalo.

¹⁸There are few serious suggestions that Maay played a role. It is included because it is in the area.

¹⁹Some of the consonant changes listed by Ehret (1980: 115-26), or their outcomes, are similar to those undergone by other languages in the area.

5.6 General non-linguistic history of the area

Several historians and others have weighed in on the (non-linguistic) history of the target area, and mainly on two topics: one, which was the original southern Somali group that influenced early ND from 800 AD for several centuries, and two, when did the Garre move south into the area.

The only substantial relevant claim about the original southern Somali group is in Lewis (1969: 15ff). Following earlier Italian scholars, who in turn had gleaned their information from Tunni oral traditions, he states that

“the Tunni once lived on the Juba River, then moved south and settled between Kismayuu and Lamu in the tenth or eleventh centuries AD, then “later” moved north again, across the Juba to settle near Brava, where they live today (which is just north of Kismayuu to just south of Merka, including Brava).”

That is an amazing claim, as it is not based on language. The place and the date correspond quite closely to what is claimed above, on linguistic grounds. The starting point, the “tenth century”, corresponds quite closely to the 800 AD date suggested above. It contains an obvious flaw – what exactly is that dating based on? The linguistic picture needs to be firmed up by examining more closely these lexical borrowings in the ND and how they fit with Tunni. We also need to know better when the Tunni finally withdrew.

All sources agree that Garre people moved south into the area: Bajuni traditions are quite detailed on this – Garre moved onto the islands from the north, original inhabitants e.g. on the north of Koyama Island were forced south, the newcomers carved their mark on a tree opposite Koyama Island before crossing over, Bajuni clan names are of two kinds, one of Bantu origin/toponymyms while the others are southern Somali in origin, and one clan is even called the Garre (the others have not been identified yet). The Garre interacted with original hunter-gatherers, probably Dahalo, resulting in the Boni dialect, left behind when the Garre withdrew or were assimilated into the Orma.

The point of disagreement concerns when the Garre arrived. Some scholars have them arriving recently, just before 1700 AD, as the Portuguese were leaving. At the other end of the scale, others, for example, Nuuh (1985), date the Garre arrival seven centuries earlier, late in the first millennium AD. The loanword evidence in §5.4 above, first in the rump language/dialects left after the departure of the Bravanese and Mombasans and continuing through to the emergence of Bajuni, suggest contact with Karre starting some time after 1100 AD, thus inclining to the earlier date.

6 A corollary: the southern dialects of Swahili

Möhlig (1984-5: map p.345) and Nurse (1985: map p.60), independently, show the ancestors of the southern Swahili dialect (SD) communities, including Mwani in Mozambique, as migrating south from a Proto-Swahili origin in the Lamu Archipelago area. In view of the conclusions drawn here, that seems unlikely. All the Sabaki languages which originally went north to the Lamu area or further, show clear signs of Somali influence, phonological (esp. dentalization) and lexical. The SD show no such signs, for which there are two explanations. Either – less likely – the early SD community did go north but stayed a short time, short enough to have avoided all influence from Somali dialects, or – more likely – the SD never went north, having split from the ND at some prior point, which would mean that the Proto-Swahili community was located somewhere other than the Lamu area, somewhere further south. Where might the earliest SD have been located? Archaeology suggests the island of Kilwa, the earliest and largest site in the SD area, roughly contemporary at 800 AD with the three large early ND sites. And in that case, where might the putative Proto-Swahili area have been?

7 Conclusion

In the twelve centuries since this narrative began, huge changes have occurred in and around the target area. In 700 AD, only one southern Somali community, possibly Tunni, and the Dahalo lived there. Around 800 AD an early ND community arrived, along other Sabaki communities. The interaction between early ND and the Somali community changed early ND speech. Eventually that early Somali community withdrew – when? – and the Garre entered the scene. They interacted with Dahalo, resulting in the Boni dialect. Dahalo has declined slowly and inexorably over the whole period. First the Orma, then northern Somali moved steadily south into the area. The ND communities, who once lived on the islands and farmed extensively on the adjacent mainland, increasingly withdrew to the islands. This pressure from the north intensified, squeezing Orma into Kenya, followed by northern Somalis themselves, and pushing southern Somali communities south and east. For the ND, the final act came after 1991, when central government collapsed in Somalia, and the two remaining Bantu communities in Somalia, Bravanese and Bajuni, were reduced to almost zero as northern Somalis spread east and south. Since 1991, civil war has changed the linguistic picture to an as yet undetermined extent.

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