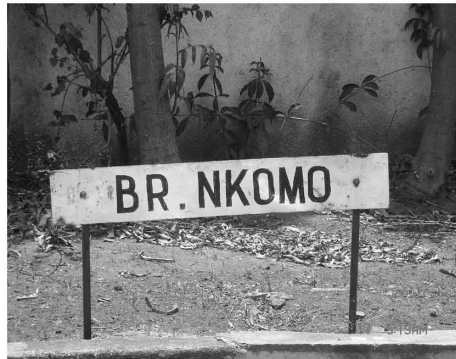


LINGUISTIC IDENTITY IN A GLOBALIZING URBANSCAPE: THREE SWAHILI CITIES

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Cities all over the world constitute a totality of urban cultural productions within which linguistic culture has been one of the most remarkable features that define the city. For example, in addition to 'French' architectural designs or 'French' business culture is the French language that defines Paris. A visitor is overwhelmed by French language in whatever corner they turn. How contemporary African cities are defined by the African unique linguistic complexities is an aspect that has not evaded sociolinguists' attention (e.g. UF's project: *The Languages of Urban Africa (LUA)*, 2009, PI: Fiona McLaughlin). This study is a continuation

of the LUA project specifically aiming at exploring how linguistic identities are negotiated in Africa's globalized or globalizing urban settings. Swahili cities on the east African coast and its off-shore islands present an interesting case due to their long urban traditions (one of the oldest urban civilizations on the continent). Dar es Salaam (Mainland Tanzania), Mombasa (Kenya) and Zanzibar (Zanzibar) with a shared cultural background have been selected as the focus of this study as they are potentially well located (in space and time) for a productive comparative analysis.

Today, Dar es Salaam (DSM), Mombasa (MBS) and Zanzibar (ZNZ) indisputably are among the largest global cities in the east African region. DSM has a population of approximately 5 million people, MBS has a population of over a million, and ZNZ about a half million. All three have a lot in common, historically and in contemporary times. All cities represent the emergence and evolution of the Swahili civilization. They first emerged as trading centers during the early Indian Ocean Trade that brought merchants from the Arabian Peninsula and the Indian sub-continent to the east African coast in the first part of the 2nd millennium. Gradually, trading centers grew into remarkable city states particularly in the case of MBS and ZNZ, then they turned into colonial administrative and/or commercial capitals during European colonization of Africa in the first half of the 20th century, the

status that would be inherited by the newly independent nations in the second half of the 20th century. Today, they do not only constitute part of the global urban Africa, but also popular destinations of Western and Oriental tourists and host cities to the Kiswahili study abroad programs.

Throughout these centuries, Kiswahili language and culture have consistently remained one of the major elements of their cultural identity. Certainly, no any linguistic or cultural landscape that remains static. In this regard, linguistic and cultural dynamics have also become part of general evolution of these cities. Farouk Topan (2006), for example, refers to these Swahili cultural dynamics as 'from coastal to global.' The bottom line is that there has been continuity and change in the Swahili cultural landscape, a phenomenon that has attracted a significant attention of scholars who study Africa. This project aims at highlighting the relatively sidelined phenomenon that pertains to the dynamics of linguistic landscape in African urban setting.

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