Bajuni Land, Language and Orature

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Introduction

This book examines Bajuni cultural heritage and draws out community memory, historical experiences, affirmations of identity and artistic endeavors. It is one of the many products developed by Twaweza Communications and its partners Shungwaya Welfare Association and Swahili Resource Centre through a grant by the *British Council Cultural Protection Fund* in partnership with the *Department for Digital Culture, Media and Sport*. It is a first of its kind and joins our lower primary school text books (*Chusomeni Kibajuni* – Grades 1, 2, 3 – with accompanying teachers' guides), *Mashairi a Kibajuni*, an anthology of poetry, *Shavulani ni Shaulani*, narrative poems by Mohamed M. Kombo and a Bajuni cultural heritage project website www.bajuniheritage.org. It is our hope that these products will open the door for more research and documentation of cultures in Africa.

The Bajuni (also known as *Watikuu* and their language Kibajuni or *Kitikuu*) are mainly found in the Islands along the coastal strip between Kisimaiyu (Kismaiyu, Kismayu) in Somalia and Lamu in Kenya. The Islands are adjacent to mainland settlements and were in the past linked, paired and a continuum. The paired settlements carried similar names only distinguished by the terms '*yuu*' (upper) in reference to the island settlement and '*tini*' (lower) in reference to the settlement on the mainland. Prior to the Orma attacks of the 16th century, the Bajuni traversed the coastal region trading and establishing socio-cultural connections with other communities. Due to the salinity of the islands, they sought farming grounds on the mainland.

Map of the Bajuni coast from Nurse, 2013

Although the Bajuni are viewed in most academic literature as a sub-group of the Swahili and their language a dialect, they are differentiated in Kenya and Somali national demographics. Moreover, while some self-identify as Bajuni, others identify as Swahili. In the 2019 Population Census Report, the population of those who self-identified as Bajuni was recorded as 91,422 and that of the Swahili as 56,074 out of a national population of 47, 564, 296 people.

While some Bajuni trace their origin to Yemeni-Ethiopian roots, others locate their ancestry among the Southeastern seafarers (Austronesia), to Persian Shirazi and Bantu speaking agriculturalists in Shungwaya, the

Bantu people's point of dispersal. This fluidity of 'being Bajuni' is not surprising; cultures and identities are socially constructed and political. They are sites of contestation and statements about situatedness, visibility and otherness. Given this community's history of displacement and dispersal experienced during the shifta war (1964-1967), the violence after the regime of Mohamed Siyad Barre was overthrown on January 26, 1991 and the Al-Shaabab attacks in Somalia and Kenya, there has emerged a strong feeling of exclusion and neglect. The shifta war in particular is remembered by the Bajuni community for displacing them from their farms on the mainland. There had been regular incurssions by Somalia on Kenya in November and December 1963 as Kenya attained its independence. On December 25th 1963, two weeks after independence, a State of Emergency was declared in the North Eastern region of Kenya and the Governor – General Malcolm MacDonald invoked the Preservation of Public Security Ordinance to arrest and detain people without trial. A five mile 'Prohibited' zone along the Kenya – Somali border was established. No settlements or movements were permitted. The war spread to the coastal region of Kenya as the Orma pastoral community backed the shifta. Lamu and Tana River were declared, along with the North-East as 'Prescribed' areas in April 1964. Emergency powers were extended to engulf Marsabit, Isiolo, Lamu and Tana River districts in 1966. The Bajuni were caught in between these attacks and many became internally displaced. The memory of the shifta war is captured in all the chapters in this book, especially in the poetry of Abubaker Khuchi. The affirmation of Bajuni identity is linked to this historical experience.

It is also linked to the danger of erasure by homogenizing effects of Swahili identity. The invocation of the Swahili identity is viewed by certain members of the Bajuni community as seeking to erase their unique history and experiences. By speaking their language, preserving their heritage, and telling their stories the Bajuni claim their identity, history and knowledge systems. Through works of art they express their culture and safeguard some of their proverbs, riddles, idioms and sayings.

This book begins with a discussion of *vave* agricultural ritual poetry performed on the eve of burning the scrubland as part of their slash-and-burn cultivation method in preparation of new grounds for cultivation. While land is no longer distributed through vave, this ritual practice is still very much socio-politically relevant. The chapter therefore shows

how this genre is used for political commentary and how it is invoked in Bajuni historical imagination.

The chapter on vave opens the door for an analysis of the poetry of Mohamed Kombo, a versatile spoken word artist who composes and distributes his poetry through social media. The chapter shows how Kombo draws on his heritage to speak to the contemporary challenges. This analytical chapter is followed by the story of the poet Abubaker Khuchi and an excerpt from his historical narrative poem. To give the reader a taste of Bajuni heritage, we have a section that carries pictures of performances and material culture.

One of the ways in which languages are developed is through the writing of grammar books and dictionaries. With the availability of grammars, it is possible to write teaching materials. The chapter on the grammar of Bajuni language gives us a glimpse of the key linguistic features. The reader will notice that certain consonants are rendered in different ways. For example, /n/, /d/, /t/ are written as /n̲/, /d̲/, /t̲/ in the grammar chapter to mark dentality. However, in the chapter which analyzes the poetry of Mohamed Kombo, they are marked with an apostrophe: /d'/, /n'/, /th'/, and /nd'/ because that is how Mohamed Kombo captures those sounds in his poetry. Additionally, Abubaker Khuchi renders the aspirated voiceless velar as /kh/ whereas Kombo does not mark the voiceless velar as aspirated. We have retained this orthographic renderings of Kombo and Khuchi in the analysis of their poetry. One hopes that the orthography of Bajuni will be standardized for purposes of uniformity in writing.

The book also has a chapter on material culture and some images and concludes with a discussion on Bajuni land issues. This last chapter argues that the Bajuni have insecure land tenure in Kenya and Somalia. The land issues addressed in the chapter call for inclusive land governance policies and practices in order to ensure that the community enjoys the political, economic, social, cultural and spiritual benefits that accrue from secure land rights.

Chapter One

Mwanati[1] – Child of this Soil: Vave and Political Commentary

Jasmin Mahazi

with poems
by
Mwanabule Hamisi and Azuwaji Shali[2]

VAVE A HAMUYAMBO[3]

1. Hamuyambo, waume wa mwambo?
   Vake va urembo, muhali gani?

   [How are you, men of the forest?
   Women of beauty, are you of sound health?]

2. Hamuyambo, mwalojenga jengo,
   Shuwa mbiji limango
   Shuwara ni nini?

   [How are you, constructors of the building?[4]
   Launch the field (field-boat)
   What is the intention?]

3. Mboni ku mat'ut'u?
   Jumu la vachu
   Kwa kula muchu amet'ut'umia

   [Why is there a crowd?
   A crowd of people
   Everyone is gathered]

4. Hachuyambo, waume wa mwambo
   Wake wa urembo, chusalimini

   [We are fine, us men of the forest
   Us women of beauty, we are safe]

5. Hachuyambo waume wa mwambo
   Na dhijana dhechu salimini

   [We are fine, us men of the forest
   And our children are safe]

6. Hachuyambo chwalojenga jengo
   Shuwa mbiji limango
   Shuwara ni nini?

   [We are fine, us constructors of the building
   Launch the field-boat
   What is the intention?]

7. Kwa matutu chumepanga dhicha
   Dha k'ondo kuchecha
   Na ambao hucha kesho nasende

   [Communally we arranged a battle
   A war to fight
   And who is afraid should not go tomorrow]

8. Kongo ngeni, uiye iyoni
   Huna masikani, a n'yi wa kukaa

   [Welcome guest, who arrives in the evening
   You have no dwelling place, no town to stay]

9. Haya nyamisa shingo
   Ungie kwa ndani

   [So bend your neck
   And enter]

10. K'inyamisa shingo
    K'ingia kwa ndani
    Tanip'ani?

[If I bend my neck
And enter
What will you give to me?]

11. T'akupa karibu
Iliyo na aibu
Ni matulubu
Kuyiwa nawe n'geni

[I shall welcome you
With a welcome full of shame
It is our desire
To be visited by you guest]

12. Kongo nda nchu mweni
N'geni ni t'ongo
Havoni nlango
Na kiambiwa k'ongo
Haingii kwa ndani

[The welcome is for the guest
The visitor is blind[5]
He doesn't see the door
And when he is told to enter
He won't come in]

13. Haye takunip'ani
K'inyamisa shingo
K'ingiya kwa ndani
Tanip'a nini?

[What then will you give to me
If I bend my neck
And enter
What will you give to me?]

14. T'akupa haba….[6]
Ni ile habari, iliyo na kheri
Yungwa na Bauri tutaipambua

[I give you ne[ws]
That is the news of good fortune
Yungwa and Bauri,[7] *shall we extinguish]*

15. Nikupokee wako simbo
Nchu wa nt'ii nene

[I will receive your walking stick
You person of the coastal mainland]

16. Chuandamane
Nikuonye mame
Kiumbu kimoya

[Accompany me,
I will show you my mother
The dignified one]

17. T'akuvua ngodhi
Nikupe gololi
Dhembe na t'okodhi
Marere kombwani

[I will undress you from your dirty clothes
And give you shining clothes to wear
The hoe and the axe
I will keep for you in the corner]

18. Nikupe mayi unwe
Nikupe boke kit'araboke
Tumbaku chunuke
Chuchie puani

[I will give you water to drink
I will give you the casket of tobacco
So we can sniff tobacco
filling our nose with it]

19. Kichi cha shamba ni gogo
Nkalidhi ukalie, ukalie kachi
Uchupe habari, uliyo nao

[The field's chair is the trunk of a tree
The wealthy sits on it, sit in our midst
And give us the news which you have]

20. Simambaye, shika
Rubu hakika, n'yi mbwa Rabuka
Keti unwe mayi

[Simambaye, listen well
And Rubu certainly is the town of God
Sit and drink water]

21. Nikupe sadaka
Enye mwafaka
Wimbi huipika
Na kuitamani

[I will give you alms
Which is of a bargain
I cook millet
and long for it]

22. Nikupe nlingamano
Kwa vakuu…
Na nkuchamano
A mikuu k'onde

[I give you an agreement
From the great- (ancestral land spirits)[8]
And a meeting
At the great fields]

23. Nikupe karamu
A ntuzi tamu
Na kaumu iyonao

[I give you a feast
With a tasty sauce
And a crowd of people will witness]

24. Nikupe karamu
A ntuzi tamu
More na shahamu
Nkuchowedhe

[I give you a feast
With a tasty sauce
Oily and greasy
Into which I will dip the food for you]

25. Haye t'akupa kiemba
Cha shali nembamba
Mikili a simba iliyo maungoni

[I shall give you a turban
Out of a fine shawl
The lion's tail, hanging at the back]

26. T'akupa kichanga
Uivapo kwimba
P'anda na mayoe nikuwatie

[I shall give you a round mat
In case you know how to sing
The flute and noise I shall leave to you]

Introduction

Among matrifocal societies every individual had usufruct access to land or else land was distributed through matrifocal and oral socio-political arrangements, such as the agricultural vave ritual. The annual agricultural vave ritual is performed by Bajuni Muslim farmers on the northern Swahili coast on the eve of burning the scrubland as part of their slash-and-burn cultivation method in order to attain new grounds for cultivation. While land is no longer distributed through vave, this ritual practice is still very much socio-politically relevant. I call this ritual a matrifocal site of knowledge, at which women and men, young and old alike, learn from each other and have the right to actively participate and voice their concerns. This chapter outlines how this agricultural ritual, a performative oral literary genre, in each instantiation is the living and making of history as well as a political commentary. It outlines how the vave genre is used in the making of a history which becomes relevant for the present and for shaping a better future. Subsequently, it discusses how vave is used in Bajuni historical imagination.

Bajuni historicism is based on performed oral texts that were composed in socio-political discursive settings in the past, and which are orally transmitted and re-voiced on specific occasions in the present. Thus, the annual agricultural vave ritual is also a performance of postmemory (cf. Hirsch, 2012) at which Bajuni memory of forceful displacement is transmitted to the next generation through the enacted oral text (Gearhart, 1998, 2005). The performed vave text, however, also creates in every ritual participant an emotional identity and builds an emotional community that counteracts the experience of painful loss that was inflicted through brutal attack and forced migration. I commence by describing this Muslim seafaring-farmers' agricultural ritual performance called vave.

Vave is enacted on the eve of the communal burning of brushwood in order to attain new fertile cultivation grounds. After Bajuni farmers, several months previously, have privately chopped off the woods of the fallow-laid fields that they intend to cultivate and that are attached to each other, they communally burn the vast tracts of scrubwood in the driest and hottest season of the year (between March and April). The burning of such vast tracts of land is a hazardous and communal endeavor for which they perform the vave ritual beforehand. Female and male farmers meet at dusk in a spot near the fields that are to be burned the following day, usually on the immediate coastal mainland, while most of the farmers' habitat is on the islands. The ritual performance ends at dawn when the farmers retreat to their fields to prepare the burning.

The ritual is constituted of three main modes of performance; while the first one occurs only once, the other two are performed in interchangeable intervals throughout the entire night. First comes the recitation of extracts from the Qur'an that are usually recited at the deathbed or at funerals. In this mode of performance, two specific Qur'anic texts, which feature in every Swahili/Bajuni funerary rite, *hitima*[9] and *sura Ya-Sin*[10], are recited. The communal vocalization of these Qur'anic verses provides a sense of sedation and reassurance which in turn lends strength and inspires confidence. Making Qur'anic texts audible is a physical bodily practice that bestows to words the power to heal and protect the human soul. The transcendental atmosphere created by the audition of the Qur'anic text is enhanced by the intoxicating scent of incense that is burned during

every Qur'anic recital. The enactment of the Qur'anic text also arouses in the reciter a catharsis, that is, a purging of combined emotions of fear, pain, sorrow, grief and pleasure in the awareness of one's own finiteness. Weeping out such feelings of virtuous fear and awe (*khashya* or *taqwa*), as well as humility (*khushu*) about one's pettiness and finiteness in the face of God's omnipotence, has long been an integral part of the vave, which is conducted on the eve of a communal hazardous endeavor.

The modes of performance that are carried out in alternative sequence are randa and vave. Randa is a vigorous dance at which the men march in a circle on a mat to the rhythm set by women clapping mangrove sticks on a bamboo pole. Within this mode, all ritual participants, including two vave mastersingers, are active. They repeat improvised verses that are cast into the group by any participant, man or woman. The monotonous and repetitive body movements elevate the ritual participants into a trance-like mood. This is enhanced by the apathetic and continual repetition of anterior (on the spot composed/improvised) and posterior (pre-existing precursor) verses that are interposed.

The vave mode of performance, by which the whole ritual got its name, is characterized by two vave mastersingers who engage in a call-and-response dialogue speech act through the recitation of vave verses, while the remaining ritual participants accompany their antiphonal recital with a humming sound (*shivu*). The vave mastersingers are each framed by two farmers, one on either side. Symbolically, they are there for consultation (*kushauriana*) and to support the vave master in decision-making when engaged in the call-and-response. This mirrors daily Bajuni social verbal interaction as, indeed, do all literary devices that are used in the enactment of the vave text. *Basmallah* formulae are customary and virtuous; proverbs and epithets are modest; truncation and riddles assure the listener's attention and cultural competence. These 'small genres' (Barber, 2007) from day-to-day speech, which proliferate and transmute within the vave text and its enactment, are rhetoric devices that signify that vave is indeed a discursive genre with a negotiative text. They actually are the means with which communication through the posterior (pre-existing) vave text becomes at all possible.

The two mastersingers engage in verbal combat, negotiating through the recitation of pre-existing vave verses which primarily consist of Bajuni

agricultural know-how. The lyrics talk about the different steps in this slash-and-burn agricultural method; they call upon higher forces in order to intercede and assist in their hazardous task the next day and they narrate historical occurrences. According to one group of vave mastersingers the vave corpus consists of twelve songs in equal number of the different coastal peoples in that area. However, according to another group it consists of 24 songs. The vave text, that preserves farming knowledge through nautical imagery and metaphors, is used in critical discourse to negotiate socio-religiously contested aspects, amongst others, of the vave ritual itself (Mahazi, 2018). This posterior vave text is reordered in performance according to the context, which means according to what a particular vave singer wants to tell his opponent or the vave-conducting community; whereas the opposing vave singer has to apprehend what his challenger has voiced (through the highly metaphoric fixed vave text) and respond to it (again through the fixed vave text).

The vave verbal exchange can be an immediate critique that is expressed by certain individuals concerning a concrete issue in a particular context. This means that, in this vave dialogue, each vave singer makes a choice of what he is saying (and through which vave verses). As in negotiations such as these the issues are mainly of a controversial nature, the choice of which vave text passages to respond with (to a particular individual in a particular moment) requires ethical know-how. Thus, in performance, the vave singer does not only prove his knowledge but also his moral agency. The call-and-response speech and the textual material, including the cryptic language and metaphorical speech of the vave genre, presents a corpus of knowledge which, if internalized, helps the disciple in the art of rhetoric and logical argumentation. First, one has to master the memorization of the vave text, while later in the performance prove one's knowledge through a contextually fitting and clever application. Vave is a text of pre-existing knowledge that is in practice re-ordered, re-organized or even re-modeled according to the situated context and purpose of the speaker, discussion or conversation.

The entire recitation is marked by a distinct wailing melody. The remaining participants accompany the two groups with sobbing and humming, which is why the vave songs are sometimes also referred to as *shivulande* ('the humming of outside (the mainland)'). The vave verses

that are sung in such manner train the ritual performer in social discourse and rhetoric, as well as cultivating moral behavior by appealing to the senses through the particular sad and somber vocalization of the vave text. Hence, the vave genre is associated with the emotions of pain, deep sorrow and distress for which its origin tradition tells of a farmer's death that was this genre's cradle. In conversations I had with my interlocutors, the enactment of the vave ritual had been repeatedly referred to as an outcry of pain and grief (*kiliyo or ukele wa vave*).[11] Vave's origin tradition also justifies the commensurability between this agricultural ritual and Muslim funerary customs.

Finally, the sad and somber mode of vocalizing the antiphonal vave text lends these communicative devices their moral appropriateness. The wailing melody and lamenting pronunciation of the vave verses imparts a sense of grief and sadness to the ritual participants. The mentioning of ancestors as well as the recently departed evokes sorrow, and the dramaturgic sobbing and crying enhances the peculiar somber atmosphere. The two mastersingers deliver their verses recitative, starting slowly and accelerating to an inaudible mumble towards the end of each verse. Only the accompanying humming (*shivu*) of the remaining ritual practitioners adds musicality, by laying the vocal ground of vibrating air to the mastersingers' dialogic performance. This bodily vibrative humming of the majority of ritual participants is the main medium for creating the trance-like atmosphere within this mode of performance. That is also why elderly and more experienced ritual participants prompt their companions to enhance their humming multiple times within a performance.

The invocation to higher forces, the intoxicating scent of frankincense, the sound due to the clapping on the bamboo pole, the bodily movements – in particular that of the articulation organs for the humming and somber vocalization style – plus the extra-linguistic features such as the sobbing of ritual participants, create a very powerful, spiritual and transcendent atmosphere throughout the entire agricultural ritual.

SHAULANDE

A: Sadi Malinde kongoye Mwana Malinde n'yiini
Nataka shau la kwenda nde shau la kwenda mwamboni

[Sadi Malinde old man, Son of Malinde of the town
I need advice for going out, advice for going to the forest]

B: Mwanangu senende nlima sipande
Utararuka p'ande udhikwe barani

[My son, do not go, don't climb that mountain
You'll be torn into pieces, to be buried on the mainland]

A: Baba niata nende nlima nipande
Niraruke p'ande nidhikwe barani

[Father let me go, let me climb that mountain
Also, if I should be torn into pieces, then I must be buried on the main land]

B: Senende, nlima sipande, kuna simba hunguruma
Akilia huenda mbee, akirudi tindo tindiya nyuma

[Do not go, don't climb the mountain, there is a lion roaring
While he roars, he moves forward, his retire is his deed which he leaves Behind him]

A: Niata nende nlima nipande, dhiguni dha chende hadhina samani
[Let me go, let me climb the mountain, bags of dates have no value]

B: Nenda kusiendwa, noni wa bara asiyankuwa
Sange wala songonge na nkono wako siche kuumia
Ukishikecho kit'oka kidhicho, mbayo wako ushike sana
Ukishika sana talima nchama, usimike kapu na dhipundu
Ukirahisi mwambo tavunda nungu, na nyiini tavua mpishi
Ni njiwa valoiva sana

[Go before anyone goes, early, before the mainland bird starts calling
Do not be lazy, do it with effort and don't be afraid of hurting your arm
When you hold a heavy axe, hold your axe firmly
If you hoe with effort, you will harvest millet
You will fill the kapu and dhipundu[12]
If you take it easy, the field will break the cooking-pot
And this will kill the cook in town;[13] the njiwa[14] knows best]

RANDA

Simama umpembe mwana, Yusufu ata kulia
[Stand up, soothe and sway the child, Yusuf stop weeping]

Miki nivudhia Shali, mboni hapa simvoni?
[Miki go ask for Shali, why is he absent?]

Huvonaye usindizi, na shehena chomboni?
[How can you be sleepy, with a vessel full of cargo?[15]]

Ndhadhi uko katani, necheani mpokedhi
[The parent is delivering, go and get me a midwife[16]]

Kesho chumfume ndovu, damu huenea angani
[Tomorrow we will pierce the elephant, its blood will cover the sky[17]]

Kufa, alikufa chumwa, hakuna wakubakia
[Even the prophet died, no one will last forever]

Havo valochangulia, isi pia ni safari
[Those who preceded, we too are on the same journey]

Memory practice and history making

Texts among the Bajuni are made in specific situations as comments to specific incidents. These texts are, especially due to their metaphorical language, constructed to be detachable from the flow of conversation so they can be repeated, quoted and commented upon in the future, i.e. so they can be inserted within diverse contexts. These posterior or anterior texts are autonomous entities and, at the same time, context-dependent speech acts (Barber 2007:3).[18] The rendering of a given instance of discourse as text, detachable from its local context is called entextualization (Barber 2003:2; 2007). Some, especially elderly Bajuni, who did not enjoy a standardized education, 're-voice' texts, that is, borrow texts composed in the past within a specific context, and insert them into new contexts in the present, at times giving them a new meaning. Vave poetic text forms which were composed in socio-political discursive settings in the past and which are orally transmitted and re-voiced on specific occasions in the present, lay open an indigenous historicization that differs from

the so-called 'standard' history (cf. Vansina, 1985 and Saavedra Casco, 2007).[19] Stewart argues that alternative historical practices require appreciation as systems of thought rather than rejection as '*inferior types of knowledge*' (2012,191).[20] Until now, he postulates, the definition of history is restricted to Western historicism and the works of recognized historians. However, Western historicism is '*but one specific and recently developed principle of historicization […] with peculiar ideas about linear temporal succession, homogeneous time units (days, weeks, minutes), causation, and anachronism*', and must be widened (Stewart, 2012,197). He continues that '*(t)his historicism must not be allowed to exclude alternative modes of thinking about and representing the past as forms of history'* (Stewart, 2012, 197). The Bajuni farmer's principle of historization, on the one hand, is based on ideas of 'origin'[21] and, on the other hand, utilizes poetic verbal compositions.

The following will show how Bajuni seafaring farmers define history or historical truth and, subsequently, how history is postulated and narrated. Texts that were composed in specific situations can become a source of history if repeated in future contexts. Thus, people 'make' their histories by recalling and re-voicing specific texts just as well as by letting some created texts fall into oblivion. What follows are examples of how the vave text is used in the making of history and, subsequently, how it is used in the vave-conducting people's historical imagination.[22]

Two Lamu citizens, with different educational backgrounds, once argued about the authenticity of historical knowledge/facts which both had acquired about the coastal region. Both presented their separate versions of coastal history, each maintaining that the knowledge of historical facts he had acquired was superior to his opponent's historical knowledge. One of them, a farmer and vave mastersinger, who was educated in the local Qur'anic school (*chuoni*) and in the agricultural field through religious texts, oral traditions and practice, claimed that he won this intellectual battle because he provided the 'real' historical proof. His opponent, who was at that time a museum employee, had undergone 'formal' education in the government school in addition to the obligatory Islamic education for Muslim children. The farmer, who was also my vave teacher and who had passed on the narration of this intellectual battle to me, said the following:

> History is not to praise Pate or Siyu.[23] It is to narrate, starting from where people came from, where they went to, and you need to have the evidence for where they came from and for where they settled. (…) I asked him, what is your proof? An historical account of the incidents -kisa- is a proof. I asked him what incident had occurred? But 'the book' did not work well. (…) So, he called me out: 'Then you tell us!' And I didn't have to say much.[24]

Usually among the Bajuni, the knowledge of a particular subject acquired orally and internalized by someone is objectified as 'the book (in the head)'. In this case, the vave mastersinger makes a double pun as '*the book*', or the knowledge his intellectual opponent had in his head, is drawn from actual books, in opposition to the knowledge that he acquired himself through oral narration. Upon this comment, the vave master delivered his historical evidence for his version of the coastal history by reciting pieces from different songs of the vave song corpus. These different songs, of which pieces are used as historical evidence to support his account in prose, are the *tavukaye* (how shall I cross/succeed); *vave a kamasi* (vave of peoples); *vave a masheekuu* (vave of dawn/the great scholars[25]); and *vave a panda vije* (vave of the early horn-blow).[26] The excerpts of these songs he quoted refer to different peoples of the Bajuni coast and their characteristics and deeds.

After giving his poetical 'evidence', our vave master triumphantly said to his adversary:

> Your history has no evidence. A historiography needs evidence: what incident did your clan carry out? All ethnic groups have their historical evidence; the one without is an inferior people.[27]

The vave teacher's view that a people without history is an unworthy people is, ironically, similar to the controversial and much-debated western Eurocentric position, or the former colonialists' view. However, it is not about having or not having history, but about being able to 'read' the history of others or one's own as a matter of fact. If one is ignorant about a people's particular way of preserving, transmitting and making history, then it is easy to accuse them of having no history. History among the Bajuni farmers is preserved, transmitted and constituted as performed oral texts. Verses that were composed at and for particular historical

incidents are preserved for future generations who re-voice them as evidence for these particular historical incidents.[28]

Vave ritual battles had in the past been occasions at which coastal farming land was annually distributed anew through the solving of vave riddles. In the following account of a vave occasion that was retold by my vave teacher and late mastersinger *marehemu* Abdalla Kale, five brothers, Bwana Mahadhi wa Mbwarahaji, Shalo wa Mbwarahaji, Kupi wa Mbwarahaji, Famau Mbwarahaji and Chuvo Mbwarahaji, were required to solve vave riddles concealed in metaphors which reflected their lives at the time of resisting overseas rule at the turn of the 20th century. According to the narration, the five brothers, only with the help of their wise mother *mame* Chacha, managed to win the vave ritual competition for several succeeding years. In other words: due to their or rather *her* artistic skills, they attained the right to cultivate land for several consecutive years, which again means they obtained wealth and power over the other people living in that area who during this time became dependent on buying crops from them and/or being hired by them for work, and so forth.

The vave riddles, which were set in this recounted vave occasion, talk of caravans or sea turtle entourages coming out of the sea, i.e. the hereafter, and of death and burial in the water. Or else, the talk is of the successful war of Aden by an invisible civil defense that is led by an absent ruler as a metaphor for hunger (alluding to the physically absent colonial British Kings). In another example the vave lyrics mirror the situation of this time of British, German and Omani-Zanzibari invasions of the Bajuni coast, through mentioning the, at that time, popular practice of hoisting the flags on this coastal area, by overseas powers. This fight over territory with hoisting flags as sign of territorial hegemony naturally had repercussions on Bajuni peoples' poetic creativity in their socio-political debates and negotiations. In one remembered vave occasion the victorious farmers from Mvundeni, who managed to win the vave battle over farming land, called themselves descendants of the King and, subsequently, the only heir to cultivate on a particular tract of land due to their prowess in performing the vave. For this reason, until today if the talk is about either the artistic prowess of someone, about the artistry of randa and vave, about the town Mvundeni or about someone of the

Mahadhi lineage, the people would remember and recite the following posterior phrase with its poetry-praising connotation:

> 'Vave kwa Bwana Mahadhi na randa ni Mvundeni.'
> *[Vave belongs to Mr. Mahadhi and randa belongs to Mvundeni.]*

Meaning both, Bwana Mahadhi - one of the above mentioned successful five brothers and vave mastersingers -, and the town Mvundeni from which he originated, are the same, and that victory, and hence intellectual prowess and thus agricultural and economical superiority, remains with the people of Mvundeni. At the same time this verse upholds the matrifocal value that a piece of land or a place is always usufruct and only "belongs" to the one who in a particular year won the vave and randa poetic battle.

Some of the important characters mentioned in vave oral narrations as vave mastersingers, forefathers or heroes, such as Mahadhi[29], Shalo, Tora and Avutila[30], can be found as political dissidents or collaborators in German and British colonial records from which Ylvisaker partly draws for her 19th century history of the Lamu Archipelago (1975). My attempt to reconstruct a family tree in order to better understand who is who and lived when, only unveiled my literary patrifocal biases of a lineal historical understanding in which genealogy determined biologic descendance from a common male ancestor and "*was scaled up to social distinctions like aristocratic lineage*" (Bear et al., 2015).[31] Instead, the matri-philosophical notion of belonging to a common worldly non-biological human kin (instead of to different tribes, nations or races), has the potential to free ourselves from historical crimes of our ancestors and thus reduce the danger of committing similar crimes or to become partner in crimes against our "brethren" ourselves. The vagueness that arises through matrifocal, oral and performative ways of knowledge transmission, for example through particular obscuring naming practices, secured matrifocal values of care, nurturing, love, compassion, non-biologic kinship, immediacy, ephemerality, egalitarianism, communality and spirituality. Past events and past lives are equally essential for contemporaries, i.e. presently living people.

As a community of knowledge practice (Lambek, 1993), the vave-conducting seafaring-farmers by annually performing vave, in the sense of making history, fulfill their intergenerational duty of caring and sharing ethical knowledge with the next generation. Furthermore, they fought to

maintain the sovereignty over their lands and until today preserve, nurture and transmit historical knowledge - or matrifocal knowledge of the past - by inscribing it "*through performative practices in the performing body*" (Martins, n.d.).[32]

Vave in political rallies

This section focuses on how the vave genre features in socio-political issues outside the agricultural field. Several political rally songs and performances that were performed in the year 2013 (during the burning season) draw on vave's lyrics, metaphors and its performance mode. On the Bajuni/Swahili coast, poetic art forms such as the *ngoma* (musical dance performances) and the political realm have always existed in a symbiosis.[33] While in Western thinking, poetry and politics are referred to as two separate fields and at times even as incompatible,[34] in the Bajuni/Swahili way of thinking they go hand in hand. Askew (2003) suggests that aesthetic principles -as expressed in Swahili music- are determinative and not separate or less important than economic or political practice. She argues that on the Swahili coast, economic and political practice need not be conceptualized as distinct from aesthetic principles; neither here do art forms and aesthetic principles derive from nor are shaped by society, politics or history. Through an historical and comparative analysis of two musical genres, Askew shows that '*politicking constitutes a Swahili (...) preoccupation*', and that in Swahili communities, political action is a key aesthetic principle (2003; see also Kresse, 2010).

The songs that were composed during pre-election times are polite political critical statements that mirror the people's dissatisfaction towards Kenyan politicians, policies, politics and government. Although the Bajuni undoubtedly comprise the majority of all Swahili ethnic-subgroups in number, due to their financial and social status that is mainly based on a maritime rural lower income, they have little say and support within coastal politics, much less in national politics, within which they together with other Swahili groups comprise a Muslim minority within predominantly Christian Kenya (Kresse, 2010; see also chapter on questions of Bajuni land by Omar and Nyamanga in this volume).

In the following I will present four poems or songs that were composed, based on the vave genre, by Bajuni in the island towns of

Kiwaiyu and Mkokoni in the northern part of the Lamu archipelago, as well as in the Bajuni urban neighborhoods of the city of Mombasa prior to the local government (Member of Parliament) elections in 2013. The first pre-election composition is by Mwanabule Hamisi, who expresses her sentiments towards the 15 years long neglect by the former MP towards her kin and radiates a feeling of hope for the new candidate. The second pre-election poem is by Azuwaji Shali from Mkokoni who encourages his kinsmen to contemplate about the forthcoming election. Both poems draw from vave imagery and metaphors and are composed as part of the discourse concerning the up-coming elections. The third and fourth pre-election compositions, which can obviously be called political rally performances, are even modeled after the vave and randa modes of performance. The adoption and application of literary devices from the vave testifies to this agricultural genre's popularity, as the majority of the Bajuni can empathize with its literary figures, even if for many their livelihoods have now become more urban.

On Saturday, March 16th, 2013, ten days before the new governor of Lamu County was announced, I was visiting my relatives in Kiwaiyu. After my request for an introduction to vave singers from this island, my cousin Ali took me to *mzee* Mohamed Kombo Bwana. However, at that moment there were more urgent matters to discuss than vave songs and the vave ritual. Everyone was talking about the up-coming regional and national elections. *Mzee* Mohamed Kombo Bwana and his son Bakisanga Mohamed Kombo lamented the miserable situation of the Bajuni people in Kenya since post-independence time. Their bitter conversation, full of anger towards members of parliament (MP) and the Kenyan government, was interrupted by the spicy apposition in the female voice of *mzee* Mohamed Kombo's wife, Mwanabule Hamisi,[35] who converted these hostile sentiments into a (for local standards) more appropriate form of expression, by reciting a poem that expressed sentiments of sadness, self-pity and a sense of betrayal (cf. Abu-Lughod, 1986, 187). Nevertheless, her words simultaneously emanated a feeling of hope for the up-coming elections. For the last fifteen years Fahim had been MP of Lamu West Constituency. Although the majority of the district's inhabitants recognized his incompetence, he was now again campaigning for governorship, fighting against, in those days, the newcomer candidate

Issa Timammy. The following are Mwanabule Hamisi's five verses which contain a sense of betrayal and yet, simultaneously, hope.[36]

1) Hunvudha Fahimu, aveeye mambo haa?
Duniani n'ja hakachi tamaa
Kura chumpe Issa gavana wa manufaa

[I ask Fahim, how could this happen?
On earth, man never gives up hope
We voted for Issa – the able governor]

2) Kisha hunvudha Fahimu, aveeye mambo haa?
Ikisabiwa kura mache amenipaa
Kadi chumpee Issa gavana wa manufaa

[Then I ask Fahim, how could this happen?
When votes were counted, my saliva evaporated
We voted for Issa, the able governor]

3) Kisha humwambia, Kwa nyaka kumi na tano - isi Bajuni hulia
Hutukuwa kura dhechu, chukenda kudhimbiria
Hongera Issa Timammy, kadi chumekupachia

[Then I tell him, For fifteen years we Bajuni cry
Voting for you was like throwing our suffrages away
Congratulations Issa Timammy, we voted for you]

4) Kisha humwambia, Alhamdulillahi chunshukuriye Jalia
Matako chuatakao, Rabbi mechutimidhia
Hongera Issa Timammy, kura chumekupachia

[Then I tell him, Praise be to Allah, we are thankful to the Almighty
What we wished for, God has granted us
Congratulations Issa Timammy, we voted for you]

5) Humwambia Shakila sasa, humwambia:
Mwanangu mwana Shakila, Rabbi takupa salama
Akupe mianga mema, usiku na ntana
Kura chumekupachia, umekuya pwani salama

[I tell Shakila now, I tell her:
My child, mwana Shakila[37], God will protect you
Will give you good light, day and night
We voted for you, you've arrived safely]

Especially the repetitive opening of each verse '*Then I will tell him/her*:' and the recurring closing '*we voted for you*', indicating direct speech, hint to the fact that this poem is in the first instance a vessel of communication. After her recitation, Mwanabule briefly summarized her poem for me in ordinary speech which put emphasis on the fact that the Bajuni for fifteen years now continuously *cry* due to being betrayed (*hunyanyaswa*) by the MPs. *Mzee* Mohamed Kombo and his son Bakisanga continued their conversation on the incompetence of the former MPs and the betrayal by the government in order to explain to me what Mwanabule Hamisi meant with her poem.

> Let me tell you, so that it becomes comprehensible. The poem means that these fifteen years were given to the MP, the counselor and president. (...) Now, you see, the MP to whom we gave our votes was of no use at all. If we were in hardship, he didn't know us, any problem we had he would just ignore. None of them would ask about our well-being. When we had troubles *(nkasa)* in our village, he (the MP) wouldn't know us, the same with the counselor, you see?! So, in these fifteen years we gave them their positions as counselor (by voting for them), but they wouldn't do anything for us. They wouldn't offer any help. That means for fifteen years now we are crying. We are going to vote and by that we are throwing our votes away. We support them as candidates, but they don't support us. This time the people have hope that if they gave this candidate their votes, he will then as governor help them in coping with their problems. (…) When they (the candidates) get the position (as MPs, governors etc.,) they, and the government in general, don't bother about us any longer. If they get (international financial) aid, they won't ask about us anymore, they might get subsidies and do with it what they wanted, do you understand?! There are a lot of issues; our calamities are as when the fishing nets of the fishermen get lost in the sea, or they are destroyed by big ships or cut by sharks. When we approach them, they don't help us with anything. You see now, for fifteen years we are crying. We won't get support of any sort. But this time we have hope in this governor candidate. And we explained to him that for fifteen years we endured hardship, that this time we voted for you. We will watch and keep you under review now, whether you will help us or whether you will dodge like the others who preceded you in the last fifteen years.

Did you understand well? This is the main concern of this poem.'[38]

For Mwanabule this interpretation in ordinary speech given by her son was already a too-direct complaint, and she requested from me to better

write down the poem and interpret it by myself in private.[39] Bakisanga, however, was not disturbed by his mother's expression of unease, and continued to speak verbosely on the background of this poem of complaint and hope in order to enlighten me. He explained that since independence almost no one originating from the Lamu district was able to obtain a title deed for the land he cultivated or lived on for generations already, while up-country people were easily entitled landownership in coastal areas. Bakisanga continued to explain to me that the Kenyan government established *kedabless* (KWS - Kenya Wildlife Service) in the Lamu-Kiunga district who tell the local population to go and farm, but who don't pay one for the losses suffered when wildlife destroys their plants and livestock. Instead, they set a fine of one million Kenyan Shillings or six years of imprisonment if the farmers protected their fields and livestock from marauding animals by killing these harmful beasts.[40] Bakisanga approves that KWS protected wildlife, but he wished that in cases such as when hyenas invade the village and kill the peoples' donkeys or destroy their harvest, the ruling MP would help them out and not leave them at the mercy of KWS's ill-conceived laws. The result is that farming has become difficult for the coastal inhabitants who now have to rely on imported food from abroad or the mainland. At this point, Bakisanga alludes to Madi Shali's song *Miaka sitini na tatu*. Songs are common and accepted reference points. Madi Shali's song to which Bakisanga is referring, tells about the desertion of Bajuni towns after the Somali *shifta* invasion in the 1980's. 'If it were not for the desertion of the five towns between Kiunga and Mkokoni', Bakisanga says, 'and if these towns were still there, there would be not such a big gap where wild animals could easily approach and harm the people by ruining their mainland farms'. 'And we would still have our own food', Bakisanga concludes, 'and wouldn't depend on mainland imports'. Then he quotes from Madi Shali's song: '…So concerning the people of Kiunga we said: *The people from Kiunga we wrongly called stupid, as they disobeyed the command* (of the government to abandon the town). You see? That is why that man sang that song.' If they all had stayed in spite of the threat, all the deserted towns would today prosper just like Kiunga. Carefully, Bakisanga remarked: 'This now is a trick (*njama*) the government applies to chase off the people, so that they won't return, the towns are desolate, food has to be imported from the mainland. Right now, they (the

government) use the same mechanisms.' This assumption that disguised Kenyan policemen were responsible for the violent expulsion of Bajuni towns in the 1980's (1974) was echoed in several conversations I had with different people. It was also mentioned in connection to current suddenly-erupting, so-called '*ethnic*' riots at the coast; for example, the riots between Pokomo and Orma in Witu in spring 2013 or the mid-June 2014 Al-Shabab killings of non-Muslims in Mpeketoni. All cases, including the so-called Somali *shifta* invasion in the Bajuni mainland villages in the 1960's and 1980's, are regarded as a concealed plan by the government to get hold of this part of the coastal area. Furthermore, the planned Lamu port, which is part of the Lamu Southern Sudan Ethiopia (LAPSSET) corridor, has proliferated the community's suspicion of the government as greedy and malevolent towards the coastal people. According to the government, the LAPSSET corridor is an initiative to push Kenya toward an industrializing middle-income nation. The project plans include the building of a new road and rail network, an oil refinery and pipeline, an airport, and the development of several upscale resorts for tourism revenue (Laher, 2011, 9). '*The government is not seen as a positive agent for change but rather a conspiratorial force bent on self-enrichment through outright theft and corruption*' Laher observes (2011, 6). Ridhwan Laher interprets the coastal people's experience as a 'collective chronic trauma that is generation overarching'.

> The vast majority of Kenyans are still seeking to resolve their dispossession and alienation from their land. This unfinished business is a reservoir of collective memory that captures the hardships of subjugation under colonialism and the frustration with the slow and often inefficient and corrupt manner that land claims have been dealt with since independence (Laher, 2011, 4).[41]

All the above-mentioned issues were, as Bakisanga explained to me, the interpretation of his mother's poem. 'We suffered a lot of injustice by the government and there was no one to defend us. We hear stories from America, and Germany, now we hope that also our governors will do their work correctly. So, let me go fishing now.' Bakisanga concluded and left the house.

Throughout the conversation, which was rather a monologue by Bakisanga, his parents tried to contribute their thoughts but couldn't

express their anger in ordinary speech as well as their son did. Especially the mother, again and again, would fall back to repeating her poem's verses. With her poem that fully captures her sentiments, Mwanabule intends to directly address the governor candidates. This is her way of bringing her and her people's concerns across. Bakisanga, who realized his parents' difficulty to express their anger and disappointment towards the government in ordinary speech, and knowing that the politicians would hardly regard his mother's poem as serious, offered to deliver these concerns in ordinary speech to the new governor candidate when he paid their island a visit. 'Alright, I will talk to Issa Timammy when he comes; if you don't talk - I will talk,' he said.[42] Here Bakisanga uses the more standard Swahili word for speaking (*kuongea*), which lacks the connotation of ambiguous, metaphorical and poetic speech, unlike the more colloquial term *kunena*.

While Mwanabule Hamisi's poem addresses the governor candidates themselves and was intended to be sung in front of the candidates upon their political rally visits to the island; the second pre-election poem which I came across was rather intended to be heard by the voters.

In the late afternoon of the same day, while my cousin's teenage daughters and I were resting our feet, having just returned from the daily one and a half hours walk to the island well to fetch sweet water for drinking and prayer ablutions, the middle-aged Asumani Ntikuu passed by. He met us on the porch in front of my cousin's house as we were waiting for the donkeys to dawdle in slowly with the full cans of water which we had loaded onto them at the well before our return. Asumani Ntikuu stretched out his arm and handed me a piece of paper, saying: 'This is the poem I was looking for.' It was another pre-election poem, this time composed by Azuwaji Shali from Mkokoni, as stated below the poem's tenth and last verse. The poem appeals to the people to be contemplative about the up-coming elections so as to achieve a change for the better. It is particularly interesting as it draws upon imagery, metaphors and phrases from the agricultural vave songs in abundance, and connects it at the same time with imagery of the contemporary modernity in which the Bajuni now live. Thus, the first verse alludes to the phrase which anyone who makes a phone call to someone whose phone is off hears from the official female voice of the automatic answering device: '*The prescriber cannot*

be reached at the moment, please try again later!' When my cousin's daughters realized that I had started reading silently what was written on the sheet that Asumani Ntikuu gave me, they urged me to read the poem out loud. So, I began voicing the script: 'The poem says:' (*Kala shairi*)[43]

1) Aso na simu ni mteja – dunia mepambazuka
Hunena na nchu mbali – aiyeleo hunyuka
Vachuwene ni verevu – Bajuni huva vadhuka

[The one without a phone is a prescriber who cannot be reached - it has dawned on earth
One can talk to someone in the distance – the one sleeping wakes up
They saw us as smart – we the Bajuni are becoming dumb]

The second verse incorporates a phrase from the corpus of vave songs. *Kundu kuvamba* means: 'when the reddish morning light shines' and is a phrase abstracted from a vave song, in which the farmers are praised for being at the fields even before the reddish morning light has begun to illuminate the fields. Here it alludes to the fact that today the people would rather await the morning light under their blankets.

2) Hulivucha burengeti – hungoja kundu kuvamba
Aridhi chumeikosa – wala hachuna mashamba
Chwara kama manyasi – mocho ukiya huramba

[We pull up the blankets – and wait for the morning light
We've lost our land – and we don't own any farming fields any longer
We've become like grass – burning off when fire runs over us]

From the third verse on, the poem is about the importance of political participation. These verses also talk more concretely about the issues which were merely alluded to in Mwanabule's poem discussed above. Moreover, it explicitly talks about land grabbing, corruption, and divide and rule policy of the Kenyan government.

3) Hachuyachia akili – chungali usindidhini
Chumedhichulidha nyoyo – dhalikuva makini
Kama hachudhichechei – haki chutapacha lini?

[We've not yet come to commonsense – we are still in drowsiness
We've calmed down our hearts – we are not worried
If we don't fight for our rights – when will we get them?]

4) Vabunge na sirikali – ndivo valochulaghai
Vakatukuwa aridhi – bila ya kufikiria
Lakini sasa veyavo – chutavataua upia

[Members of Parliament and the government
are the ones who tricked us
They took our land – without consideration
But those who come now – we will choose them anew]

5) Ndudhangu Vabajuni – kiva hachuvi imara
Siku dhote chutalia – na kudhipacha hasara
Makabila achuteke – kwechu isi ni idhara

[My Bajuni brethren – if we won't be strong
We will cry forever – and receive losses
Other peoples are laughing at us – for us it is shameful]

6) Chushikane kwa dhati – chwepukane na idhara
Chwaiva tabia dhavo – huchuchenda kila mara
Chukipanga la mikao – ivo hupacha tijara

[Let us hold together tightly – as to avoid shame
We know their habits – they do it to us over and over again
When we divide ourselves into groups – they will be the ones to profit from it]

7) Yambo la kushangadha – vabunge vechu va Amu
Vamengia nyaka kumi – imevavelea tamu
Na sasa vataka tena – ya yana havafahamu

[What is so strange is - that our members of parliament from Lamu
Have been in the office for ten years – they like the taste of it
And now they want it once again – and don't remember what they promised yesterday]

8) Nasi chuko na hamu – vakiya huvapokea
Hao mapeni mavili – kupawa chundadhovea
Sasa ni kumalidhika – chukose pakuekea

[And we are now excited – we welcome them when they arrive
We've gotten used to be bribed with two pennies
Now we will be finished – and have nowhere to go]

9) Chwaelewa siku dhote – n'nyonge hapachi haki
Na wala hana hakimu – akenda kushitaki
Kura ni silaha ako – hata ukipawa laki

[We understand that it is the powerless who always don't get justice
And nor have they a judge – for them to file a case
It is your vote that is your weapon – even if you are bribed with a hundred thousand]

10) Siasa itakao kuya – ni muamko mpiya
Ndudhangu sikusoma – sivoni la kuvambia
Kwa haa angu machache – chuve na madhingatia

[The upcoming political season – is a new awakening
My relatives I'm uneducated – I don't know what to tell you
Only these few words – let us be contemplative]

Ndimi Azuwaji Shali – Mkokoni
[It is I Azuwaji Shali – from Mkokoni]

This poem does not, like Mwanabule's poem, talk to a particular candidate, but appeals to the voters to be more contemplative about voting. The poem reiterates Mwanabule's theme of the 'Bajuni crying' and adds another popular theme, namely the 'Bajuni sleeping', which is also featured in Madi Shali's famous songs *Hulaliani?* ('What do you still sleep for?') and *Wabajuni amkeni (Walolala meamka)* ('Wake up Bajuni people (those sleeping have woken up)'). The combination of an agricultural as well as 'modern' lifestyle, which the Bajuni simultaneously practice, is made apparent through this poem, which in part makes it so appealing. The poem's allusions to the vave text caused my cousins to emphatically report about a political rally which was held in Kiwaiyu for the senator candidate Omar Lali, of the Kiunga ward district which stretches from Kiunga to Kiwaiyu, who is also known as *Subo*, which refers to the agricultural vave ritual. *Subo* is a term usually used as an outcry to spur on the fire to burn down the thicket completely during the burning part of Bajuni slash-and-burn cultivation method and is also used afterwards as an expression to say that the burning was successful.

The transformation of the agricultural ritual for the purpose of a political rally was apparently well received as my cousins enthusiastically recounted the occasion to me even some months after it was performed. '*The rally was exactly modeled after the vave ritual. Women were clapping with mangrove sticks on a bamboo pole and even a little fire was lit at noon*',[44] they remarked. They took out their mobile phones and showed me the recordings they took of the vave rally performance. As they were not satisfied with the sound quality, the girls began to recite the verses they remembered themselves:[45]

1) Alipokwenda kijana na nchu n'dhima ende
Shilingi arubamia imi nami nitodhee
Subo ushishie nke na arishi utodhee

[Where a youth went, an old one also went
Four hundred shillings I also spent
Subo had a wife, and he paid the bride price for her]

The first sentence they remembered alludes to a verse from the vave song *shaulande* (lit. advice for the outside mainland) in which a mother gives her fatherless son the consent to go to the mainland for agricultural endeavors by saying: *Go before anyone goes, early, before the mainland bird starts calling*. (*Nenda kusiendwa, noni wa bara asiyankuwa*). The last line of the first verse uses the senator candidate's nickname *Subo* to metaphorically declare that this senator candidate is an authorized leader since he is the owner of land (i.e. a bride) which he rightfully acquired. Particularly, this metaphorical equation of land and the bride, forces us to seriously take into consideration Moko et al.'s non-Western definition of the notions of 'ownership' and 'belonging' as inalienable communal entities (Moko et al., 2023).

Like the vave songs, this song is structured in a call and response speech act, so that the second verse is a response by the 'bride', again affirming that the 'groom' takes up his position legally, as she agreed to be married to him. Here the 'bride' does not call her 'husband' by the nickname *Subo* but by the term of endearment *Badi,* which in Arabic means 'wonderful/unique man'.

2) Badi unichidhie peche - nami nikubalie
Ndidho sifa dha mwananke - kiinyuka nisikidhie
Subo ungidhie bunge - na kichi uketilie

[Badi put a ring on my finger – and I agreed to it
It is a virtue of a woman – I heard it when growing up
Subo enters the parliament and resides on his seat]

The phrase '*to reside on his seat*' with which the second verse ends is also modified from a vave song's phrase which goes: *The shamba's chair is a tree stump, the sitter seated on*. (*Kiti cha shamba ni gogo, uikalie nkalidhi*.) The following verses are more in the political pre-election poetry mode, which throw phrases of insult towards the opposing party or candidate, who here is called *Bota* - the bedwetter.

3) Huu Bota kukojoa menichia wasiwasi
Nimetanga kwa mashua mpaka nimepanda basi
Bota hakupacha dawa - Kombo chwaa hii pempasi

[The bedwetter urinating worries me
I have travelled all around with a dhow – until I had to take a bus
Bedwetter didn't get a remedy – Kombo come and take these pampers for him]

4) Alhamdulillahi kwa Mola meshukuru
Sikusadha sipichali Moshi nimesikilia
Asanta Badiri wechu pempasi nimeipokea

[Praise be to Allah - to God I give thanks
I didn't leave out a single hospital – even to Moshi I went
Thanks to you, Badiri – I received the pampers]

The singing of competitive insulting verses in a call-and-response speech act is a characteristic of political pre-election songs (Amidu, 1993 & Njogu, 2001). The multivocality in which different speakers respond and call to each other uses imagery drawn from the vave text.

The people from the remote island Kiwaiyu were not the only ones who drew from the vave ritual for enacting pre-election political rally performances; the Bajuni residing in urban and cosmopolitan Mombasa felt equally attracted to praise their senator candidate in the vave ritual mode.

I did not witness this performance myself but was given the DVD of one that circulated among the Bajuni. The DVD pictured a group of Bajuni men who had gathered in a neighborhood of Mombasa town in order to encourage others to vote and to support their governor candidate by using the performance modes of the vave genre. The following presents an abstract of the lyrics of this political rally performance in the vave mode. The bystanders accompany the speaker with the humming (*shivu*) that is characteristic for the vave recitations and alludes to the sound of the mainland.

Here at our home in Kenya, I am quarrelling with bad persons
It is hurting me, vaveee, because we are told we make no effort
And that we won't make it in the race

But I am it's (Kenya's) child, even a child of this earth
It hurts me, it hurts, it hurts, let out your voices
You have the freedom to speak, to fight for your rights
That you were given by God

Here in Kenya and it is your home, eee vaveee
So let out your voices, so that the world might hear
Fight for the rights that were given to you by God

You let out your voices, so that the world might hear
Fight for the rights that are God-given
This (knocking with the walking stick on the ground) is your right
It is not a share of alms

We tell our people: this what I have told you, stand up for our rights
Vavee and my body that is not upright yet
I was told, don't climb it, that mountain don't ascend it
You will be torn apart and be buried on the mainland

I answered, I will climb that mountain, even if I should be torn apart
And be buried on the mainland, so tell me who is the master?
To throw away your rights without stumbling, to receive money, to be bribed
Today Bunu, the one who cheated you shall be cheated as well

After this tense recitation in the vave mode, and with the particular vave tone of sorrow and pain the performance continues in the randa mode that breaks loose from the tense situation, with the feet stamping on the

ground as if to confirm the words that have just been voiced and that reaffirm one's being the child of that earth. Through the verbal text as well as through performance (in the vave as well as in the randa mode) the vave-conducting community declare that Kenya is their homeland, that it is one's right to vote and that one can only make progress if one stops accepting politicians' bribes.

While it becomes ever more obsolete to converse through verse in daily interaction, more communal occasions must necessarily be found in which one can converse and compete through poetry. One such new platform is the political rally, which escalated since Kenya introduced the multiparty and local government system in the 1990s. These political rallies which include many aspects of the *ngoma* – dance, music and songs – are a collective catharsis (Fanon, 1952) in the sense of intellectual purification through which the people can divert their energy into rivalrous competition through poetical speech acts. Thus, it was not surprising to discover that some people who deeply adhered to the aims of the separatist group MRC, and who propagated the idea not to vote in the upcoming elections, soon converted to become euphoric supporters of a senator, governor or presidential candidate whom they could praise and promote through familiar verbal art forms. The local politicians have made use of and profited from the negotiated and competitive component of the local way of communicating to fulfill their objectives, while the separatists failed in their struggle to call a strike on the elections, primarily because they did not use this local communicative mode. Imagery, metaphor and mode of performances of this agricultural vave ritual, which contemporary Bajuni have converted into political rally performances, have become powerful devices used to attract a large constituency.

Conclusion

The interdependence of man and soil rests on the fact that the earth was desolate wilderness and barren of life before humankind was created to till the soil and cultivate the earth, while mankind needs the produce of the soil to survive. The theological link between Adam[46] and *adamah* (biblical Hebrew: red clay) not only emphasizes how the first man was made of red fertile soil, but also that man was created to cultivate the land on earth. The prophet Adam, for Bajuni farmers, therefore, is not only the

first human being from which all human beings originate, moreover, he is the first farmer, and thus their first agriculturalist ancestor from whom the Bajuni farmers have inherited their knowledge of cultivation. '*Adamu ndiye mwenye kulima*.' (Adam is the one who cultivates.)[47] This chapter entitled '*Mwanati* (Child of this Soil)' was intended to outline the Bajuni agricultural vave ritual and to show its momentousness in history-making and political commentary. It was meant to visualize Bajuni farmers and ex-farmers connection to the place, land, earth and soil which they inhabit and till, as well as how they cultivate their identity as a Muslim farmer on this part of the East African coastland.

Remembered, retold and relived are vave occasions with their riddles and specific texts, as well as particular individuals who were involved in solving and composing them. The vave text as a woven fabric that '*attracts attention and outlasts the moment*' (Barber, 2007, 2) has been created at some point in time but was constructed to be detachable from the flow of conversation so that it could be repeated, quoted and commented upon in the future. The pre-existing vave text is inserted in diverse contemporary contexts, proving its qualities of being a context-dependent speech act as well as an autonomous entity. Thus, the vave text and its enactment within the ritual can be regarded as a form of history-making, since particular historical instances and names are remembered and recited (cf. Harneit-Sievers, 2002). The vave phenomenon, which is, among others, a medium of Bajuni historical memory, also shows such traits as the fusion of history and religion. One can say that the vave text is crafted around the Bajuni farmers' social and moral positions. With every reenactment of the vave text, the farmers construct their Muslim identity. First, the vave text narrates about the Bajuni originating from four Muslim *sheikhs* crossing over from the Arabian Peninsula to the African mainland *Shungwaya*; secondly, the dialogic character of the vave textual thrust enables the negotiation of the compatibility of the agricultural vave ritual with the main concepts and demands of Islamic religion (Mahazi, 2018).[48]

The inhabitation of the vave text by the vave performers and their historical imagination that is informed by the vave text, and also the vave rituals modified into political rally performances have shown how relevant this agricultural genre still is. The vave text that narrates

about the crossing of the waters and ultimately achieving a successful agricultural task is lived out concretely whenever the farmers cross to the mainland to perform the vave ritual and burn and farm their fields (Mahazi, 2018). With the enactment of the vave text and ritual, the Bajuni farmers confirm and consolidate their attachment to the earth which they inhabit and till. Moreover, they validate their authentic and original right to that land; establishing oneself as a *mwanati – child of the soil* which one cultivates and abides. The enactment of the vave text itself produces a kind of place (cf. Barber, 2007, 213) to reside for Bajuni refugees, whose loss of more solid monuments leaves them with little but the creative use of their language. The people's use of kiBajuni or, better said, kiTikuu – the language of the great mainland – is, as we have seen, in these days of national repression at least, politically informed. By using kiTikuu, Bajuni farmers, and more so, social, religious and political activists such as, *malenga wa SaYanga wimbi kali* Mohamed Mohamed Kombo (see chapter by Kimani Njogu on his poetry in this volume), *ndhee wa kibajuni* Abubaker M.B. Khuchi (also see chapter by Kimani Njogu and Nafisa Awadh on his poetry in this volume), *shujaa* Mohamed Mbwana, *pescatore* Salim bin Abeid, and *marehemu sheikh* A.M. Msallam highlight their rootedness in the East African coastal mainland.[49]

VAVE A HESABU

1. Aliangwe hucha, ingwe dhichukucha
   Nanga a nsuchu hulia kupanda

   [Raindrops from the sky drop to the ground[50]
   The anchor of the forest cries to be pulled out]

2. Dhimekwima, p'indi dha kulima
   Na nyakati njema, dhimesimamia

   [It has arrived, the time for cultivation
   And good times have come]

3. Subhala heri wayoli
   Waungwana hamuyambo?

[Good morning friends
How are you civilized people?]

4. Nchi dhivuli dhivili
Kimoya kibula, kimoya suheli

[A tree with two shadows
One north, one south]

5. Kambieni cha kibula
Cha suheli kimenena nini?

[Tell the northern one
What did the southern one say?]

6. Kimenena dhicha cha kibula
Cha suheli kimenadi amani

[War said the one in the north
The southern one proclaimed peace]

7. Kimenena kidha cha kibula
Cha suheli kimenadi mianga

[Darkness said the one in the north
The southern one proclaimed brightness]

8. Kimenena dhishindo cha kibula
Cha suheli kimenadi matwari

[Peal of thunder said the northern one
The southern one proclaimed rainfall]

9. Huisha miateni, pepo dha gandeni
Hiya isharani, pepo dha iyuu

[Two hundred are over, mainland wind
Its signs are the winds from the sea-side]

10. Tilidhangwe, dhichache ingwe
Dhikitinda ingwe, medha mbono

[Raindrops, come from the sky
When they fall to the ground
Plant the castor oil plant]

11. Chutatedha kwa nemo
Bao la dhishimo
Kikosa nemo, vucha nchaji

[We will play the board game with pieces
Should I fail to take a piece, I will use my reserve]

12. Koroma mbiji, penyeso mbiji
Ndoni mukaenge

[The vessel groans, where no bamboo was
Come and have a look]

13. Mwana Mbera hunwa mayi
Kwa mdomo, akitawanya kwa mbavu

[Mwana Mbera (the outrigger) drinks water
With her mouth, while she spills from her side]

14. Tutavuka na mbudhi
Mbili shiridhi
Atulembe mbwai
Twendapo mwamboni

[We will succeed with a goat
A two-colored one
Who keeps the sky clear
As we go into the forest]

15. Machanga kutapasa
Kwendea ni makosa
Na mwendo chalikuwe
Mara moya huchuwata ndiani

[To sail with woven sails is a mistake
And the far distance
Can disappoint us
All of a sudden]

16. Na changa echu ni a nguvo
    Kuvukia micho hiyo

    [And our sail is of cloth
    To cross those channels]

17. Chukatakasani na moyo
    Na ruhu ikawa nchima

    [And we cleared our hearts
    So that our souls were full of hope]

18. Dhombo dhechu ndha nsaji
    Farumani nda mbiji

    [Our vessels are made of teakwood
    The boom of bamboo]

19. Kisha kuinwea mayi
    Baharini huhowea

    [After it has drunk water
    It still floats on the sea]

20. Mashua dhechu huchumia kalafati
    Jahadhio hudhidi nno
    Kwenda joshi huishua

    [Our sailing boats are caulked with cotton
    If the boat is used too much
    While sailing upwind it breaks the waves]

21. Tachekwa changa, pasi na mwongoti
    Tavucha ngushi, pasi na farumani

    [We hoist the sail, without a mast
    And pull the sheet, without a yard]

Endnotes

[1] *Mwanati* is a contraction of the two words *mwana* (child) and *nti* (land, earth or soil). The term has a strong meaning for the Bajuni farmers to denote their connectedness to the coastal lands they inhabit and cultivate, and conveys these coastal people's ambiguous and difficult relationship to the Kenyan nation state. A popular saying is the rhyming phrase '*mvundati ni mwanati*' (the destroyer is one's own fellow-countryman).

[2] I would like to express my thanks to both contributors of these two poems, *shukran jazilan*, as well as to all my interlocutors who are mentioned in this chapter where they occur.

[3] The two vave excerpts that frame this chapter are transcriptions from vave performances that were led by my vave teachers and mastersingers (*fundi a vave*) Bwana Msuo Ali Famau, Mahamadi wa Bini, Tora Abushiri, Mohamed Kale and Abdalla Kale. They were recorded during different vave occasions between the years 2005 and 2015 in the context of my masters and doctoral theses.
Acknowledgement: I would like to express my gratitude to my doctoral supervisor Prof. Kai Kresse and all my above-mentioned vave teachers together with *marehemu* Mohamed Kombo Bwana, Omar Shee, Kassim wa Bini, Shigoo Adio, Mbwarahaji wa Bwana and *Sheikh* Ahmed Muhammad Msallam – who have all taught me so much. The analysis, perspective, interpretation and translation errors, for which I take responsibility, are solely mine. My thanks go not only to them, but also to the entire vave-conducting community in Lamu and the Lamu Archipelago, who has welcomed me so generously into this heritage of our ancestors. *Shukran wa jazakum Allahu kheran*!

[4] i.e. 'who achieves something big'

[5] He is ignorant and doesn't know what to expect.

[6] The word is truncated.

[7] These are the names of two farming sites.

[8] Probably truncated due to its contested nature. The last word of the stanza completes the truncated word, which is vakukonde ancestral (land) spirits.

[9] Hitima or khitma, meaning to 'finalize', is the compilation as well as the recitation of several last short sura or chapters of the Qur'an.

[10] Sura Ya-Sin is the 36th chapter of the Qur'an and said to be the 'Heart of the Qur'an', having healing and consoling power, which is why it is often read for the sick or at the deathbed.

[11] In this origin narration, the farmer's son cries out 'yoo vave', meaning "oh what pain, what sufferance!", when he discovers that his father is dying. Some say that he meant to cry out 'yoo baba' (oh my father), some say that vave is an old kiBajuni term for mother. This latter explanation is confirmed by Sacleux' dictionary entry, which says: Wawe (Mv. = Am. Wave, G. vave). 'O Mother!' First word in an ancient folk anthem, which is sung while incense is burned, at the eve of burning the wood which was chopped in

preparation of a field for cultivation. In the past the same ceremony was carried out before the departure of a caravan (1939:1019).

[12] Kapu and dhipundu are both baskets weaved from coconut palm reeds, the latter is a long one specially made to transport and keep food.

[13] It is assumed that one is able to kill the cook due to hunger.

[14] Njiwa was translated as 'your wife'; proposing to further consult one's wife, who knows best about this topic.

[15] A vessel full of cargo may be referring to a trade expedition that is about to depart; here it applies to the upcoming burning of the forest. One is not supposed to sleep the night before the burning, but to participate in the vave ritual.

[16] Similar to the preceding phrase, this one alludes to the approaching burning.

[17] The fire caused by the burning of the thicket, with its accompanying smoke, covers an amazingly vast distance into the earth's atmosphere; this is symbolized by an elephant shedding blood, representing the smoke and fire, respectively. The smoke is often very reddish, due to the red earth of the fertile mainland.

[18] Speech act or an illocutionary act is any act that is performed by a speaker in making an utterance, such as greeting, offering an apology, a request, complaint, invitation, i.e. any utterance that serves a function in communication (Austin 1965).

[19] Saavedra Casco (2007) uses Swahili poetry as historical evidence.
We all agree that there can be no objective 'standard' history of any place or people – hence, my inverted commas when talking about 'standard' histories. Nevertheless, there are a few authors who through incorporation of different sources (archaeological, linguistic, oral traditions, etc.) made an attempt.
Ylvisaker (1975) gives good insights into the socio-economic politics of the Bajuni in the Lamu Archipelago of the 19th century in which Bajuni people are presented as the major actors in defending their homelands from overseas intruders. Allen (1993) made efforts to re-construct a history on the basis of oral narrations, while Horton & Middleton (2000) made use of archaeological findings to unearth the history of the northern Swahili coast. See Asad (1993) for a discussion on the controversial term 'history'. See also Spear (2000).

[20] Stewart's research on the Greek island of Naxos made him wonder whether information about the past gained through dreams, spirit possession rituals, or dancing performances can also count as histories. In his book, he also makes clear how people not only create their own past by responding to their dreams in the present, but that they do this as an existential expression of the struggle for agency, in this way working for a better future. He explains that the recovery of the bones of St. Raphael, martyred by 'Turks' nearly five hundred years earlier, resonated with their own more recent history and activated pangs of mourning (2012).

[21] See more on origin and myth in Middleton (1992, 34ff.).

[22] See Harneit-Sievers (2002) for more discussion on history making. In some places, some groups adopt the Old Testament as a sort of substitute for local history while other groups use ritual rather than history as a medium for ethnic identity (2002, 373).

[23] Here, he is alluding to the Swahili town chronicles, which have been widely published, see e.g. Hichens (1938), Tolmancheva (1993), Werner (1914/15).

[24] Interview with Abdalla Kale in Lamu, 25.02.2014: Tarikhi si kusifu Pate na Siyu. Hutukua zile (ziswa) watu walotokea, watu walipotoka, walipochangulia, na uwe na ushahidi; walitoka wapi? Walishukia pahala gani? (…) Ushahidi wenu ni kitu gani? Kisa ni ushahidi. Kisa gani kilitokea? Kitabu hakikufanya kazi. (…) Haa we tupe! Sikuwaambia mengi.

[25] *Masheekuu* is the contraction of *mashee kuu* and literally means 'great scholars', but it has acquired a double meaning; especially the vave-conducting community in everyday speech also refers to the early morning period during which this vave is sung as *masheekuu*.

[26] These are regarded as the standard known corpus of vave compositions that people draw from for evidence of history. Any vave song can serve, but some are more fitting.

[27] Interview with Abdalla Kale in Lamu 25.02.2014 *Tarikhi yenu hayana ushahidi. Tarikhi huhitaji ushahidi*, *kisa gani alifanya kabila yako? Kabila zote zina ushahidi ambayo hana ushahidi ni kabila dufu.*

[28] That texts (poems, songs, verses) are important historical evidence is not only obvious for the oral transmission of history, but also in the increasing number of 'historical' literatures that has emerged recently among government school educated Bajuni. Here I put 'historical' into inverted commas because the literature written by the Swahili themselves cannot easily be categorized as a specific genre as in Western tradition. The books by locally educated people show historical, biographical, literary, political and ethnographic aspects intermingled (El-Maawy, 2009; Msallam, 2009; Nabhany, 2011 and Sefu, 2023). In his book manuscript, Said Sefu (2014), for example, quotes from 21 songs, poems and verses as 'evidence' for the historical facts he provides, rather than as a literary illustration as is often done in standard history books. That bits and pieces of texts are authentic evidence of historical incidents is not only obvious when investigating the local literature and/or oral historical accounts, but also when observing the recipients, listeners or readers who become more alert and receptive when a historical account is presented to them in verse form.

[29] Mahadhi son of the wise *mame* Chacha was not only known for his melodious vave recitations but also for his melodious playing of the *kinanda*, a stringed instrument, for which he became the namesake for the Swahili literary term *mahadhi* which denotes 'audition', 'sound' or 'melody'. Thanks to my father Mohamed Lali Mahazi for passing to me this knowledge about our ancestors' musical vocation. In Yemen Arabic the term *mahazi* is used for 'riddle' (Piamenta 1990:93), which suggests that *bwana* Mahadhi earned his name from his skill of solving these difficult vave riddles, albeit with his mother's help. Mahadhi aka Ban Taws Msuo (read: Bantauzo Msuo) wa Bahero meaning son of *mfalme* King Taws (Daud which is David) *msuo* 'The Knife', 'The Grind' or 'Cutting edge', a title similar to the better known Bajuni title *fumo* 'The Spear'. According to Athman Lali Omar, whose own maternal grandfather was Bwantaudhi (Bwana Daudi

Ahmed), the name Bantauzi is a kiAmu/kiMvita corruption of Bwantaudhi, which again is a kiBajuni corruption of Bwana Daudi. Thanks to Athman Lali Omar for this personal comment, Nov. 11th 2018.

[30] Avutila aka Taws Msuo wa Bahero could have been the wise *mame* Chacha's brother and biological father to Mahadhi, or *mame* Chacha the biological mother and Mahadhi called Taws Msuo wa Bahero maternal uncle (*avu*), uncle Tila which in kiBajuni is *avuTila* and the name by which this Bajuni 19th century hero is known. For more information on Avutila and Mahadhi see Ylvisaker (1975), Salim (1973) and Adolf von Tiedemann (1889:272).

[31] https://culanth.org/fieldsights/gens-a-feminist-manifesto-for-the-study-of-capitalism

[32] Leda Martins points out that in one of the Bantu languages of the Congo, the same verb, *tanga*, designates the acts of writing as well as dancing, while the noun *ntangu*, derives from the same root and is one of the designations of time. (Martins, n.d.) The same must hold true for other Bantu languages such as kiSwahili and kiBajuni or kiTikuu. https://hemi.nyu.edu/eng/seminar/usa/text/leda_paper.html

[33] Political poems and songs have been recorded from the 19th century on. See for instance Abdulaziz (1979), Amidu (1993), and Njogu (2001).

[34] See Caton's memories of how he learned about the incompatibility of poetry and politics in his childhood in America, which he narrates in the opening of his book (1990).

[35] Mwanabule Hamisi is a midwife.

[36] Poem composed by Mwanabule Hamisi, 16.03.2013 in Kiwaiyu.

[37] Shakila Abdalla Mohamed was at that time a Bajuni female counselor candidate. Today, Hon. Shakila is the first female representative for Lamu County and serves as the nominated senator for women affairs.

[38] Interview with Bakisanga Mohamed Kombo in Kiwaiyu, 16.3.2013

[39] People do not make their interpretation explicit but react to a poem's meaning by composing another poem in response, while the addressed must infer the interpretation which is implied in the response poem.

[40] The elephants' migration to the coast coincides with the period when food crops are grown. The worst enemies are birds (Ylvisaker, 1975, 27, 90/91).

[41] http://www.savelamu.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/Lamu-At-the-Crosssroads-by-Ridwan-Laher.pdf (accessed August 16th, 2014). Farms Destroyed in Lamu to Pave Way for Lamu Port (January 22, 2012) http://www.savelamu.org/farmers-in-lamu/ (accessed August 16th, 2014).

[42] Interview with Bakisanga Mohamed Kombo in Kiwaiyu, 16.3.2013 Haya Issa Timammy akiya mimi nitaongea, kama nyinyi hamtaongea. Mimi nitaongea.

[43] Poem by Azuwaji Shali 2013 in Mkokoni, obtained by Asumani Ntikuu in Kiwaiyu, 16.03.2013.

[44] Vave usually is performed at night for which reason a bonfire provides a source of light.

[45] Wimbo wa Subo 'Omari Lali' Song of Subo alias Omar Lali. Noted down according to my cousins' recitation on 16.03.2013 in Kiwaiyu.

[46] The Hebrew name Adam, meaning 'to be red', has strong etymological connections with the biblical Hebrew word for 'red clay'- adamah. This etymological link is used to reinforce the theological link between the soil and humankind. Prof. Dr. Florentina B. Geller personal comment, Berlin 2012

[47] Mohamed Kale Interview Lamu 2005; 21.3.2014. See also Omar (1990). Hence the farmers call upon the prophet or their ancestor Adam for assistance in their agricultural endeavor.

[48] In the vave supplication prayers, the ancestral farmers, amongst them the first agriculturalist prophet Adam, are named since they were the ones who knew these farming procedures best. This, however, is for some Muslims against the principle of tawheed - the oneness of God - and, thus, reason for discussion (Mahazi, 2018).

[49] It might be suspicious to you the reader that only very few women are mentioned in this book chapter. The problem lies in the methodology of this art (of researching and writing) that rests on Western patriarchal epistemology, which seeks out interviewees and official teachers who are then mentioned in the written text. However, be assured that the women, who are equally physically present in the vave ritual, also assume an important role in the transmission and development of this agricultural genre. The case is that music and dance performances such as vave are matrifocal social institutions that manifest matrifocal characteristics like equity, reciprocity and mutuality. They are dialogic and inherently intergenerational. Matrifocal knowledge practices such as the vave performance manage to dis-personify, spread and multiply intangible and ephemeral knowledge content in order to create particular communities of practice (Wissensgemeinschaften), instead of culminating in one renowned knowledge expert, single author or historically immortalized hero. Women are mostly those who have their tracts of land burned communally and decide to conduct an inaugurating vave ritual for this purpose. They are often the ones who finance the vave ceremonies, who supply and cook the food for it. They actively set the rhythm and compose chorus verses during the randa mode in the vave performance. Although, as noted during my research, they were not voicing the vave verses in performance, nor did they transmit them to the next generation outside the ritual context. This might have been different in the past, if one thinks of the wise mame Chacha who is still remembered in the vave lyrics (cf. Askew 1999). Therefore, do not be misled by the printed word of this text.

[50] According to one of my vave teachers this verse translates as "The axe works, held by the axe-holder".

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Chapter Two

Mohamed Kombo: The Bajuni Spoken Word Artist

Kimani Njogu

Introduction

I first encountered the poetry of Mohamed Kombo of Kiwaiyu[1] in June 2022 through the Swahili scholar and poet, Professor Alamin Mazrui. Alamin and I had worked closely in writing the book *Swahili in Spaces of War: A Sociolinguistic Odyssey* (2023). In doing so, we delved rather deeply into how national, regional, and global wars had interacted with the Swahili language. His attention to Mohamed Kombo's poetry had been prompted by Dr. Alwi Shatry, a microbiologist and poet, who had come across Kombo's performance after it had been widely circulated through online platforms. Mazrui encouraged me to go online and experience some of Kombo's audio poetry. I did so and found a rich and powerful oral performance of Bajuni poetry.

At the time, I was waiting to hear from the British Council's Cultural Protection Fund (CPF) in London if I had been awarded a grant to document the Bajuni language, oral traditions and poetry. The grant application was part of my personal and organizational commitment to identifying, documenting, reviving, preserving and promoting endangered cultural heritage in its various forms, especially within the context of climate change and violent conflicts.[2] The CPF grant was awarded in November 2023 and it provided me with the opportunity to explore the Bajuni culture more directly having only peripherally experienced it through my friend and graduate school roommate, Athman Lali Omar. It reconnected me to my earlier reflections on oral poetry. I sought Mohamed Kombo and held virtual meetings with him, even as I made connections in Tchundwa, Siyu, Kizingitini, Lamu and other Islands on the northern Kenyan coast to

record and contribute to the documentation and increased understanding of Bajuni culture by presenting it through a multiplicity of formats.

The purpose of the chapter is to provide an initial glimpse of the poetry of Mohamed Kombo, the versatile Bajuni poet who writes and performs for his people to enrich the community's literary repertoire, safeguard their language and affirm their collective identity and history. In his creative journey, Kombo follows in the footprints of traditional Bajuni oral poetry and navigates its fluidity and overlapping specificities bringing to the fore histories, cultures and social experiences while simultaneously finding space to comment on national, regional and global happenings. He uses his poetry as social commentary and to look back and artistically reconnect with the Bajuni poetic traditions, including *vave* and *gungu* (Mahazi 2008, 2010, 2018; Omar, 1990). Kombo's poetry is imbued with a strong sense of social justice and a politics of inclusion and equity which may be located in his early years as he grew up in Kiwaiyu.

The early years

Mohamed Kombo was born in 1968 in Kiwaiyu, on the northern Kenyan coast. His mother Mwanabule Hamisi Swalehe and father Mohamed Kombo Bwana had twelve children (eleven sons and one daughter). He was the first born and was followed, rather quickly, by his brother. Mohamed Kombo barely breastfed and took time before he could learn how to walk due to a weak bone structure. He soon grew out of those early challenges and asserted his place in the community. He did not go beyond the madrasa and primary school in his formal education. But he learned substantially outside the school system. Surrounded by elders who valued their culture, Kombo recognized that his community had a rich history and orature. This early exposure to poetry had a profound effect in his journey as an artist. His parents were storytellers and embellished their narratives of events with verses composed to capture particular happenings. Kombo told me:

> "…Kila wakati wakiwa nyumbani babangu angeeleza kuhusu mambo yaliyotokea na kutemka shairi la huo wakati liloimbwa kuhusu hayo mambo yaliyotokea. Na hakuchaguwa yawe yametoka kwenye *vave, randa, nyimbo, utendi*, au *kimai*. Na mama alitulea sisi kimashairi, kila

tukikosea adabu angetufunza kwa kutueleza shairi liloimbwa kufanana na yale tulio fanya.

[…Whenever we were at home, my father would tell us stories of events and recite a poem that emanated from them. It did not matter if the verse came from the poetic tradition of vave, randa, nyimbo, utendi [narrative poetry], or kimai [fishing songs]. And our mother performed traditional poetry to teach us community values. When we misbehaved, she reprimanded us by linking a poetic verse with our behaviour.]

Kombo also learned from his grandfather, Mzee Bwanakombo Bwana Muhaji Mwalimu, a poet of repute among the Bajuni. He remembers one of his grandfather's poems:

Kila kabila makani, sasa Ndodhi huvuvuwa
Hakinawiri kimea, ikilimachia vuwa
Mwendravo kwa ladhima, ikisadifu huvuwa.

[Every community has its indigenous land, our land Ndodhi[3] is humming in pain
Our plants are not strong, if the rains are delayed
Those who force their beliefs on others, if they succeed, they have killed.]

In that verse Mzee Bwanakombo, Kombo's grandfather, reflects on notions of identity, land, conflict, the changing environment and freedom of thought. The Bajuni have specific historically significant settlement areas on the northern part of coastal Kenya and southern Somalia. Over the years, however, there have been numerous attempts to dislodge them from their land and they have been at war with the Oromo, Somali, Portuguese and Arabs. They have always fought back to reclaim their dignity and freedom. A common statement among the Bajuni is that life without freedom is comparable to death.

Another poet around Mohamed Kombo as he grew up was his aunt and friend Bishumi Mbwaramadi who composed and performed poetry. He also heard the poetry of his aunt (the elder sister to his mother) Kalisumi Mbwaramadi Said (Bitima Badiri). Among others, she composed the poem:

Mambo hunipacha imi, bingwa mwana wa rubani
Ni kadhi ake idhimbi, kuvunda nsaanani
Ningaishi baharini hunidhuru mai pwani

[I have experienced challenges, me a champion and daughter of a captain
It is normal for the wave to crush on the reef
Although I live in the sea, I am hurt by seawater.]

The narrator is sharing personal pain and anguish emanating from a marital relationship gone sour. Although she had been appropriately prepared for marriage by her parents and is a member of the new family through marriage, she is not happy with it.

Mohamed Kombo's uncle Madi Mbwana wa Ndhee (Mohamed Mbwana Mzee) was also a composer of poetry. He composed this poem as a comment on challenges in a marital relationship.

Nalipo livona vumbi, moyo ulifanya shaki
Kenda vabishie kambi, havaneni havateki
Nipewa nadhi akumbi, hufuwa haifuliki

[When I saw dust, my heart was sad
On arrival I saw they were divided into factions
None would speak or smile
I was given a coconut with its husk, I tried to remove the husk
But it just would not work.]

When the narrator saw that the marriage was in trouble, he tried to reach out to the in-laws to try to resolve the issues. However they were all hostile and did not attempt to help address the marital challenges.

Growing up, Kombo heard and saw other poems being performed although he did not know those who composed the lyrics. Among the poems he heard and remembers is the following, also found in Said Sefu Siyaka's manuscript:[4]

Kwechu Kiwaiyu Ndodhi, marere numba dha ngava
Kwene sifa dha maodhi, kwa mipapa na miteva
Huvakumbuka vadhee, kina Ngunya[5] magavava
Bandari nda Lali wa Shee.[6]

Picha kwa mbali siegese, Kiwaiyu cha Ngunya
Ipapa ijamba sese, ifahali manyung'unya
Huumpi hunena eche, lake ni kunyang'anya
Mayuto mwana wa nima, huya nima mayuto

Kiwaiyu musichukane, Omwe musichie khombo
Kiwaiyu khwa vamame, Omwe nivekele dhombo
Nivekele fedha kare, na dhahabu na michembo
Kwa udhuri wake umbo, huvaa na kunawiri.

[Our Kiwaiyu where fishing takes place, homes made of mud and twigs
Famous for fishing sites, with sharks and the groupers
I remember the elders, Ngunya and the community guardians
The harbour of Lali wa Shee

[Pass from a distance, Kiwaiyu the Island of Ngunya
Courageous and manipulative, leader of all under his protection
You do not give him voluntarily, he says, "Give it to me", he takes by force
Regrets come after the act, they come afterwards

[Do not insult Kiwaiyu, do not put a blot on Omwe[7] our town
Kiwaiyu is my mother's home, it is in Omwe where I kept my tools
I kept silver, and gold and seedlings
Due to their beauty, we wore and shone.]

The poet praises Kiwaiyu, famous for all types of fish. The reference to the community leaders suggests the existence of a local governance system. It would appear that Ngunya, the leader, had dictatorial tendencies. He took things by force and regretted eventually. The poet draws on the Bajuni proverb "Mayuto mwana wa nima" to point out that regrets only come after the act. In the Said Seif Siyaka's manuscript (mentioned above) there is the story of Ngunya Mgunya, very strong and daring Bajuni fisherman who used to traverse the coastal region from Kiwaiyu to Vanga, Wasini and Pemba. He terrorised other fishermen in Pemba and Zanzibar until he was tracked down by police officers in the service of Sayyid Bargash, the Sultan of Zanzibar. He took off, escaped and ended in Kisimaiyu, Somalia. The poet makes reference to community towns and the wealth around them to show that they were thriving. Young Mohamed Kombo listened, learned, and took in the form and content of the poetry performed in his community.

In the early years of his life, Mohamed Kombo was also a student at the Madrassa in Kiwaiyu and performed the religious *kaswida* na *maulid* songs under the guidance of his teacher Sheikh Ustadhi Ahmad Muhammad Lali. Later he became a member of the choir and drummer

at the Kiwayuu Primary School, learning through his teacher Mohamed Bahero.

Growing up, he listened to the poetry of his uncle Swadiki wa Kale and performed poetry in weddings. He also joined the Mwanzele Band and performed alongside Hamisi wa Kalu (Vinji wa Kalu). In view of his skills at playing the Giryama Mwanzele instruments, he was nicknamed 'Kajoo' by Vinji wa Kalu. That became is band name.

Mohamed Kombo's poetic performances is rooted in those earlier experiences in Kiwaiyu, the larger Lamu archipelago, and among the Giryama musical group. It is this creative background which nurtured his artistic potential and that was to be activated to make Kombo one of the most prolific poets writing and performing in the Bajuni language.[8]

Bringing newness to Bajuni poetry, performing the *Uneni* spoken word

The practice of rendering spoken word poetry to a live audience is an ancient feature of Africa's poetic tradition with vocalization of poetry in the form of songs, chants, praises, incantations and so on (Okpewho, 1992). Spoken word poetry was part and parcel of community life and orature. With the growth of print and electronic media, African cultures have been transformed and oral genres have been recast in fundamental ways. They have been drawn into new performance spaces. Artists have seized the opportunities provided by media to revitalize their cultural heritage and create new forms of artistic expression.

In the performance of traditional oral poetry, metacommunicative devices are used to signal that the presentation is a performance of a fluid pre-existing text before an active audience. The performer draws on community knowledge and displays communicative competence including awareness of verbal forms broadly shared within the community even as they inject newness. Because a performance is a mode of language, a way of speaking, the performing artist sends out signals of meaning to audience members. These signals could include invocation of belief systems, archaisms, figurative language, repetition and parallelism, paralinguistic features such as tonality, formulaic expressions, appeal to culturally shared textual statements and truths among other markers.

The media landscape has given opportunities for oral poetry to be utilized in national and local broadcasting stations to amplify claims of identity of ethnic groups and their affirmation of autonomy. It also provides new ways of learning and archiving oral genres. Even more significantly, electronic media has "brought texts and performances to new audiences, within Africa as well as beyond the continent" (Barber, 2009). While performance of poetry was in the past spatially restricted, developments in information technology and availability of online and offline performance spaces have made the poetry, as a spoken word, more visible. Oral genres which were previously closed and only found among specific segments of society are opened up to be experienced by others.

The Bajuni poetic heritage is mainly associated with *vave* – about which Jasmin Mahazi writes in this book. The *vave* poetry is core to the Bajuni identity. Other poetic heritage forms include the *randa, kimai, gungu,* and *goma.* They were traditionally performed during specific occasions and seasons (Gearhart, 1998). With the increasing need to make poetry more accessible to wider audiences and to address diverse social issues, Bajuni poets are utilizing different media and techniques, including collaborations between composers, performers and technicians to present their works. They are recording, transmitting and storing their compositions in multiple formats and platforms and rekindling the tradition of communal storytelling to perform poetry that is socially engaged and distributing it beyond their homelands.

The prolific Mohamed Kombo (*Malenga wa SaYanga [Wimbi Kali]*)[9] is one of the foremost Bajuni spoken word artists. He calls his poetic form ***uneni*** (the spoken word) and it is this poetic form that he is giving to the Bajuni literary tradition and instrumentalizing it for social commentary. In an online conversation on 15th October 2023, he informed me that he composed and performed in the uneni poetic form to reenergize Bajuni poetry as cultural heritage with social significance and to create other ways of artistically engaging his community.

> "…Sababu mojawapo ni kutaka hii fani ya ushairi ikuwe; sio tu kubaki pale ilipoachwa na waliyoigunduwa, bali na sisi washairi wa leo tuendelee kugunduwa mitindo mipya ya kuandika mashairi ili kuikuza zaidi hii fani. Sababu nyingine ni kutafuta njia bora za kuleta mawasiliano kati yetu sisi kama jamii. Ndio vile utaona mashairi haya ya uneni huwa hayaimbwi kwa sauti ama mahadhi bali hunukuliwa kimazungumzo.

Sababu ya tatu nikutafuta njia ya kukuza mazungumzo juu ya mambo ambayo ni muhimu yazungumzwe na jamii katika ima kuyakuza mamboye, ama kuyarekebisha,na hata pia kuyapa nguvu mapya yaliyotujiya ambayo yana faida kwa jamii."]

[…One of the reasons was the need to enable poetry to grow; that it should not be static by being left when it was during the time of its founders; but that we as contemporary poets continue discovering new styles of writing poetry to grow the art form. Another reason, is the search for ways to communicate among ourselves, as a community. And that is why you will find that the uneni poems are not rendered as songs with a particular rhythm and melody but rather presented as a conversation. The third reason is to find a way for community dialogue over key issues in order to strengthen them or rectify them or promote new ways that are beneficial to the community.]

His first composition was a lament on the shifting community life which he witnessed on his return to Kiwaiyu after years of absence. This first poem came from the pain, angst, and hurt that the poet felt on his return home. He wrote:

1. Iti kiilivacha, nalilivona kongo
   Huu na ulee huchecha, na vangine ni misongo
   Pungudhani machacha, musichuchapise nongo

   [When I stepped on the land, I saw trouble
   People disagreeing and others are gangsters
   Minimize disagreements, and spare us calamities]

2. Iti kiilivacha, nalilivona kongo
   Vamoya huchecha, sababu dhiso mpango
   Nyukani kumekucha, asokavoni ni tongo

   [When I stepped on the land, I saw trouble
   Families disagreeing for no good reason
   Wake up it's dawn if you don't see then you're blind.]

His once peaceful and safe community was disintegrating and in pain. To give hope to his people, Kombo decided to use his artistic skills – nurtured in the early years of his life – to encourage individual and collective reflection on the need to go back to cultural roots, even as the community embraces new ways of life. The poet also took a dive into the

poetic tradition of his people for inspiration and artistic tools - including melody, diction, metricity and rhyme schemes.

It is instructive that Kombo started composing poetry after moving to the United States. Prior to that he performed poetry composed by others. He saw how African-Americans and Native American communities were stereotyped, dehumanized, and segregated. He experienced racism directly and carried intense feelings of alienation and powerless as an immigrant. The widespread social alienation he saw drove him to reflect deeply about his identity as a Bajuni and the values, beliefs, and memories he had carried along as he traveled from Kiwaiyu. The alienation he suffered could have taken two separate trajectories: stupefy him to inaction or ignite a spark towards solution seeking. It did the latter and inspired Kombo's creativity and the urge to speak directly to his people through poetry.

When I asked him how being in the USA had affected him, he told me:

> "…baada ya kuhudhuria *cultural festival* za wanati ama wenyeji wa hapa Amerika, kujuwa vile ambavyo wamedhulumika na kuendelea kudhulumika, lakini wanaamini umoja wao na kuhifadhi tamaduni zao ndio njia ya pekee ya kuweza kufahamika na kujulikana waliyoyapitia, wakiamini kwamba wakifanya hivi watasaidika kwa njia moja ama nyengine, na walifaulu kusaidika japo kidogo kwa kuwa *recognized as first citizens of America*, na wana haki tafauti na wengine wote. Pia historia yao na tamaduni zao, *art, craft* zao kuhifadhika basi hawana haja ya kumuelezea mtu wao ni nani, kwa sababu utambulisho uko wazi. Niliwahi kupata fursa ya kuzungumza na *elders* wao na nilifunguka akili pakubwa sana. *So yes*, kuwa USA kuliniathiri pakubwa kimawazo kwa njia nzuri japo ni kwa kupitia ambayo siyakupendeza."[10]
>
> *[...after attending a cultural festival of the indigenous communities or native Americans, knowing how they have been oppressed and continue to be oppressed but they still believe that their unity and the preservation of their heritage is the only way of being understood and their historical experiences recognized, in the belief that if they do that they would benefit in one way or another and they succeeded at least to a certain extent for being recognized as first citizens of America and they have rights that are different from other communities. Moreover, the preservation of their history and cultures, their art and craft means that they do not need to explain to anybody who they are because their identity is obvious. I got an*

opportunity of speaking with their elders and it raised my consciousness to a very large extent. So yes, being in the USA affected my thinking positively and significantly, although through processes that were unpleasant.]

This inspirational trajectory is precisely the same that propelled Negritude, the movement of the 1930s born in Paris out of a consciousness of race identity and the pursuit of a collective solidarity among Africans. The affirmation of shared identity and heritage and the reclamation of self-respect and dignity in the face of racism led to a journey of rediscovery of authenticity, acknowledgement of culture and history and the identification of points of convergence. The Harlem Renaissance intellectuals including Langston Hughes, Richard Wright and Claude McKay moved to Paris to join forces with others in the Negritude movement. They wrote poetry and bemoaned the divisions among black people. They called for the unapologetic affirmation of their shared identity and history.

Mohamed Kombo's poetry speaks to this cultural consciousness of 'being Bajuni' – the shared cultural heritage, history, language, land, and values. In his poetry, he encourages his audience to draw on its collective memory to strengthen community solidarity and unity.

A word on style

Kombo composes his poetry to speak it out melodically or render it as music, as is the tradition with Bajuni poetry. He uses balanced lineation, flexibility in syntactic features, syllabicity, meter and rhyme as stylistic devices to enhance the aesthetics of his compositions. In the longer *utendi* (narrative poems), each line carries eight syllables (*mizani*) with a rhyming syllabic unit (*kina* [singular]; *vina* [plural), with each stanza (*ubeti* [singular]; *beti* [plural] having four lines. In his quatrain verses, each line carries sixteen syllables with the first and second hemistiches (*vipande*) carrying eight syllables. Each line has a caesura (a pause) which is marked with a punctuation. Whereas the second hemistich in the quatrain might carry rhyming syllables, the first caesura might not. But at times the poet dispenses of some of these features – especially uniformity in syllables per line – if they do not conform to his melody and message.

Some of his forms do not conform to uniformity of meter, just as Bajuni songs do not (Donnely & Omar, 1982, 1987).

Occasionally, he utilizes proper names and other allusions to signal the compositions alignment with real life situations. Through the activation of other texts and references familiar to his audience, the poet sends out connotations and meanings associated with the name. The proper names function as quotations by referencing and 'repeating' a prior text. He invokes poetic license to create news words such as **Shivulani – Shivu la ndani** [the internal humming] to enhance poeticity of his composition and enrich the Bajuni language. Kombo uses these artistic devices to enrich his poetry while composing it, before recording it and distributing it to his audiences virtually.

In most of his poems, we witness a series of religious invocations. The invocation of religious texts serves to situate the poet theologically as member of the Islamic faith and the continuous presence of a Theological Principle during the act of the narrative's enunciation. Rooted in a Theological Principle, the poet carries more salience in the ears of the audience because, beyond them, there is a Super-addressee (the Creator).[10] The intensely dialogic connections between culture, social life, spirituality and community rhythms found in Kombo's poetry have a strong impression on his audience. They listen to his poetry and distribute it generously through their networks.

As performed by Mohammed Kombo, the *uneni* art form carries a wide range of artistic attributes. While it uses meter and rhyme, the poetry is not constrained by them. Instead, the poet draws on the aesthetics harnessed by his community through orature and uses linguistic and literary facilities as needed to communicate with his audience. He uses metricity in a loose manner and as a 'cautious approximation' of received prosody (Njogu 2004). The uses of lineation, rhythmic control, rhyme, repetition, and syntactic parallelism and manipulation are invoked to mark continuity and change in Bajuni poetic resources.

Poetry for Mohamed Kombo is not a private expression but, rather, a significant social responsibility through which audiences experience new knowledge and reflect on what it means for them and their communities. His spoken word is relational to other Bajuni poems and is interconnected

with them. The poetry can be understood as a 'mosaic of quotations' (Bakhtin 1981) of cultural and religious texts. To bring newness to ancient forms and comment about contemporary events, Kombo adopts intertextuality as a strategy of engagement with precursor texts and draws on allusion, creative appropriation and self-reflexive references to be in conversation with Bajuni cultural texts and contexts. He looks back at the rich poetic tradition and renders it with textual freshness in a conversational style. In other cases, he uses the traditional rhythm and melody to present new audio texts. His audience is online and therefore the distribution channels are mostly virtual.

For Kombo, the utilitization of the uneni poetic form among the Bajuni is a socially significant and functional endeavour. Because it is conversational, the art form is not constrained in terms of depth and breadth of thematic interests. In his words "… *Mtindo huu hauwachi nyuma lolote lile ambalo ni muhimu kufahamika, kutambulikana, kupiganiwa, kutangaziwa na mengine yote muhimu*." […This art form does not leave out any important issue worth knowing, recognizing, fighting for, making public and all that is valuable.]

Decline of community life

In most of his poetry, Kombo reflects on the decline of Bajuni community life. There is a longing for old ways – the collective care, safety and sociability. This life which the narrative voice recalls nostalgically has been disrupted by internal and external factors and there is a strong sense of loss. Through his poetry, Kombo seeks to find common ground on which the community life of the past can be reimagined and enabled. In the narrative poem, **Vadhani va Kiwaiyu** (Reflect, oh people of Kiwaiyu), he remembers the humanity and communal Kiwaiyu he saw as a young person.

1. Kiwaiyu nalipo nyukia
   Maisha nalo ashuhud'ia
   Ali ni njema kwechu d'unia
   Malimwengu chukiafurahia

[Kiwaiyu where I grew up
The life I witnessed
That world was good to us
We enjoyed different ways of the life]

2. Ubinad'amu ulikuveko
Undrugu haukuva maudhiko
Uswahibu haukuvund'a miko
Utamad'uni ulipawa mashiko

[There was humanity
Brotherhood was not a burden
Friendship did not break taboos
Culture was well grounded]

3. Vachu vechu valipend'ana
Kwa mangi n'yini valisaid'iana
Kwa harusi na kifo havakuatana
Kwa raha na sumbuko valiyivana

[Our people loved each other
They supported each other in the village on many things
In weddings and in death they were together
In happiness and pain they supported one another]

4. Chwalidhungukwa na nema, kila aina
Ntia, marukatwa, na kh'afu chukavuna
Dhiboma vatonyi havakudhanyiana
N'ama dha kasa na nguva chukiavanyiana

[We were surrounded by good things, of all type
We harvested different types of wild berries
Fishermen never sold each other the tuna fish
We freely shared the sea green turtles and dugong]

5. Chukivind'a kh'ungu vakipachikana
Ajaliwao fungu chukikumbukana
Dhikuni, mai, mocho chukipanana
Kwa ruhu safi kinyongo hakuna

[When hunting we got plenty of meat
We shared with kins near and far
Firewood, water and fire we shared
In love and without ill feelings]

6. Chukipanana ch'eche dhabishee
Pia wimbi, buru, kundre na mavee
Machikichi na machanga aenedhee
Eo dhoṯe hidhi hakuna dhipoṯedhee

[Sharing grain harvest
Also millet, maize, cowpeas, and pearl millet
Water melons and canary melons are in abundance
Today all these are finished and not found any more]

7. Chombo chali chikendra safari
Hakulipa ipeni kila alokuva nsafiri
Mana alind'echu isi voṯe bahari
Na chombo ch'andruechu n'dhuri

[When a vessel set sail
Passengers traveled free of charge
Because the sea belonged to all of us
And the vessel belonged to our good brother]

8. Hachukuva maṯajiri va pesa
Wala va n'umba dha kisasa
Lakini maisha haakuchuchesa
Kuva ruhu chwalidhichakasa

[We were not rich with money
Nor of modern houses
But life was not torturous
Because our hearts were clean]

9. Langu imi ndruo lalikuva lako
Lako halikuva lako pweke ako
Yapo haakukosekana maudhiko
Kuyivana halikuva sumbuko

[Whatever was mine was yours
What was yours was not yours alone
Although misunderstandings were inevitable
Caring for each other was not a bother]

10. Harusi ndrudhangu ali nd'an'yi n'dhima
Haukulipwa upishi wala kuṯedha ngoma
Chukialikana kwa furaha na kuṯerema
Chukiṯangamana vana na vachu vadhima.

[Weddings, my friend, was a community activity
Neither the wedding menu nor the musical performers had to be paid
We invited each other in happiness and celebration
The young mingling with the old]

11. Akiwaa mmoya wechu n'yini
Akiwadhwa nasi vo̱te kijijini
Ven'e kupeka mai na kh'uni
Ṉtabibu malipo haku̱tamani

[If one of us was sick in the town
S/he was nursed by all of us
Some took water and others firewood
And the doctor did not demand to be paid]

12. Afapo nchu n'yini, kikh'e̱tiwa machanga
Vangine vakipeka kichoveo, vangine vunga
Vakipikiwa ven'e nsiba, vasipache ku̱tanga
Ama chakula kuechewa, ruhuma kudhijenga

[When one died in town, a mourning period was observed
Some took the stew and others flour
We cooked for the bereaved to give them solace
Or they were given food to bring them peace]

13. Mai̱ti hadhikwi, majirani vaongojewe
Apekwe mwana Chandrani, vaambiwe
Endre na Ki̱tangani, va Nkokoni vaviliwe
Kendre chombo, Nd'au vasisahauliwe

[Burials had to have neighbours presence
A child was sent to Chandrani to inform them of the death
Another was sent to Kitangani and Mkokoni to pass the sad news[12]
A vessel set sail to Ndau, lest they are forgotten (for burial)]

14. Mwana akikosa ad'abu vaongwana
Akikemewa na nchu n'dhima alonvona
Vadhadhi van'yi vo̱te vakiaminiana
Na hishima kwa umoya vakivekeana

[If a child misbehaved, gentle people
He was guided by an older member who witnessed
All parents of the town trusted each other
And each one respected the other]

15. Nchu akijenga n'umba vend'ani
Akisaid'iwa na vo̱te valo n'yini
Wiki mbili achachu hungia ndrani
Haukuva na udhicho umasikini

[If someone built a house, my friends
They were supported by all in the town
Within two or three weeks they would move in
Poverty was not a burden]

16. Mama akishikwa na u̱tungu, chukiichana
Vaume kwa vake, ndrani na ind'e kud'irikana
Kupokewa n'geni wechu, akidhawa mwana
Mbwechu isi pia, kwa furaha chukiambiana

[When a mother was in labor, we informed all
Men and women all converged
To receive the child that has been born
The child was for us all we told each other.]

According to the poet, this communal life continued for long with each caring for the other and children were brought up collectively by the village until social and economic disruptions, family divisions and feuds, competition, and individualism creeped in. By presenting the egalitarianism that defined Bajuni life in the past, the poet draws on a critical point of social reference and points to the possibility of a return to a safer and caring life rooted in the cultural heritage of his people.

Shivulani - Musical humming as community advice

The **Shivu** (humming sound) is integral to Bajuni oral poetry. It carries **Shauri** (advice), which can be internal to the community (**'shauri la ndani'**) or external to it (**'shauri la nde'**). Kombo shows this crucial role of the Bajuni hum in the poem "**Shivulani ni Shaulani**" ('*shivu la ndani ni shauri la ndani*' – the community hum is community advice), with the '*nda*' in '*ndani*' truncated.

The poet lays the foundation of his *uneni* by paying tribute to his Creator and his ancestors. The poem starts – as is the tradition in Bajuni poetry- with an articulation of his faith and praises to God. The poet invites his audience to pray to God, the Creator who gave creatures

consciousness. The poet pays homage to the Creator of the scorpion, the falls, and the buffalo horns. This is the Creator of the burning fire, the itching sensation, the shark, shells and clams and dune palms, which are part of Bajuni cuisine. He invites his audience to appreciate the power of God; Creator of the earth which has ants, the sky which has clouds and the sea that has waves. This is the God, the poet states, that created the aloe plant, the porcupine and the sea urchins. The poet stands in awe at this Creator of the universe and invites his audience to respect Him and appreciate His power and unpredictability. He then proceeds to pay homage to the ancestors who created the Bajuni language and gave his tongue their words of wisdom as part of community heritage.

Having foregrounded these two sources of his knowledge, the narrator proceeds to affirm his freedom of expression. He calls on his audience to join him in celebrating humanity.

8.	Namba sikomi	*[I say, I will not stop*
	Kh'ele na dhivumi	*Shouting in happiness and humming*
	Dhawavo ulimi	*The words from their tongues*
	Valo changulia	*Of those who came before us]*
9.	Napia siat̲ami	*[And I will not talk*
	T̲adhivia ulimi	*I will stop my tongue*
	Vadhee vangu imi	*If my own ancestors*
	Vakit̲o nikubalia.	*Stop me from speaking]*
10.	Bisumila nambe	*[In the name of God, let me say*
	Ruhu nidhipembe	*Let me cool the spirits*
	Kwa nyimbo niimbe	*Let me say it through songs*
	Shivu mukinishikia	*While you support me by humming]*
11.	Na mangine nichendre	*[And I will do other things*
	Uchu wechu niulindre	*To protect our humanness*
	Tamad'uni dhivandre	*And promote our culture*
	Bid'ii chukidhichilia	*If we work hard on it]*
12.	Uchu wechu niupend'e	[I will show love to our humanness
	T̲amad'uni nidhit̲und'e	*I will safeguard our culture*
	Na vainga nivadhind'e	*And educate those who know not*
	Echu vasiakimbie	*So that they do not abandon our culture]*

13.	Ndrudha nivambie	*[My brother, let me tell you*
	Echu chusiakimbie	*Let's not run away from our heritage*
	Chuwakumbachie	*Let's embrace*
	Akuchukudha	*That which enriches us]*
14.	Malime chukalime	*[Farmers, let us go farming*
	Nṯonyi chukaṯome	*Fishermen, let us go fishing*
	Ilimu chukasome	*And education, let us pursue it*
	Bila upingani	*Without opposition]*
15.	Mavuko valo hifadhi	*[Those that have archived our history*
	Na malimo auyudhi	*And agricultural skills*
	Vave kuchupa hadhi	*And the vave poem dignifying us*
	Shukurani huvapachia	*To you we are grateful]*
16.	Hachuvaṯoi kh'ombo	*[We will not demean*
	Vaelewa va mambo	*Those with knowledge*
	Valo imba nyimbo	*Those who sung the songs*
	Dha kuchuelea	*Which we understood]*

Affirming the Bajuni language

Languages are agents of communication and simultaneously carriers of history and culture. They are the collective memory bank of a people, their common heritage and the repository of their values and ethical foundation. Because culture is a product of human interaction through language as their work to eke a living from land and other spaces, it carries with it images and values harnessed by individuals as they come into contact with others. These images and values are then transmitted through language. In other words, language and culture have an intensely inseparable dialogic relationship. We enter into a culture through language and vice-versa. In their interaction, some languages acquire greater status and prestige than others on account of their social, educational, economic, or political positioning. Even within language dialects, one variety might be more prestigious than the others on account of the life changing opportunities that it brings along.

Because the Bajuni people live far north in relation to the speakers of other Swahili dialects found in Kenya and Tanzania, are less educated and economically endowed compared to speakers of other dialects and

have suffered for years due to conflicts in southern Somalia and northern Kenya, their language carries less prestige and status compared to the Swahili spoken in Mombasa, Lamu and Zanzibar. Bajuni youth at times seek to increase their acceptability in these spaces by dropping their language and adopting that of the host communities, including in the naming systems.

By affirming the Bajuni language and culture in the 'Shivulani ni Shaulani' poem, Mohamed Kombo seeks to reclaim his community's linguistic and cultural rights. He says:

75.	Mila na ṯamad'uni	*[The customs and cultural heritage*
	Dhechu Vabajuni	*Of us, the Bajuni people*
	Chusidhimbirieni	*Let us not discard them*
	Uwingani kungia	*This would lead us to ignorance]*
76.	Arand'a na vave	[*With the randa and vave poetry*
	Kwechu bora ave	*Let them be better*
	Ndrisi isi ven'eve	*It is us ourselves*
	Vakuihifadhia	*Who would preserve them]*
77.	Chusimameni vachuvone	*[Let us all rise to be seen*
	Ndrudha chusikuṯamane	*Let us not be meek*
	Aubajuni pache afane	*That the Bajuni heritage be promoted*
	Palee akichung'aria	*And to shine before our eyes]*
78.	Chuimbeni vasikie	*[Let us sing so they can hear us*
	Vave vaidhingaṯie	*That they pay attention to vave*
	Ila ndrio vasiichie	*But they should not spoil it*
	Kwakuṯo kuvaelea	*For not understanding it.]*
79.	Chuneneni asikiwe	*[Let us speak up to be heard*
	Echu achambuliwe	*Our culture be recognized*
	Na luga ihifadhiwe	*Our language be safeguarded*
	Ipache kubakia	*So that it is not lost]*
80.	Echu chuaand'ikeni	*[Let us write our community stories*
	Akisomwa dhiṯabuni	*To be read in books*
	Uchambuliwe Ubajuni	*And Bajuni life be analyzed*
	Dharau kuukachalia	*Our community be not despised]*

81.	Luga echu asilia	*[Our indigenous language*
	Ndrimini ikibakia	*If we continue using it*
	Ni uchu kuiṯakia	*It is a claim to our humanity*
	Na kuichambuwa	*And to know ourselves]*
82.	Iso naluga sikabila	*[There is no community without a language*
	Hili halina n'jad'ala	*This is not debatable*
	Kibajuni hala hala	*Our Bajuni language with rigor*
	Hifadhi kukivekea	*Let us safeguard it]*
83.	A nchu haivi ako	*[Another person's language cannot be yours*
	Uṯaṯekwa nnuko	*You will be a laughing stock, you idiot*
	Muengeni Mbeko	*Just look at Mbeko*[13]
	Ake aishishievo	*The way he holds onto his language.]*

Commentary on women in society

As a young man, Mohammed Kombo was emotionally close to his mother and supported her in domestic chores and in undertaking other duties which were culturally considered to be feminine. This tendency to lean more towards his mother was frowned at by community members who embraced a patriarchal view of the world in assigning social and cultural responsibilities. The gender disparity and inequity witnessed in the formative years may have contributed to his poems on women among the Bajuni. In his compositions, he celebrates women and calls for them to be respected and dignified. He also challenges women to resist objectification and the commodification of their bodies.

In the Islamic faith, the mother occupies a special place of importance, responsibility and respect. There is the story about Prophet Mohammad (Peace Be Upon Him) and his position on women. It is said that a man came to the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) and asked him to advise him on whom between the mother and father he should take into consideration. The Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) answered, "Your mother". The man said, "Then?". The Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) said, "Your mother." The man said, "Then?" the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) said, "Your mother." The man said, "Then?". The Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) said, "Your father." To underscore the role of the mother, the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) said, "Paradise lies at the feet of mothers." In other words, the woman's role as a mother is a sacred one. The poem 'Mahavule na

Jamii' is pegged on this fundamental belief, to which Mohamed Kombo subscribes. Such hadith are more likely to be found among matrifocal Muslims and many Swahili poets often praise their mothers and women.[14]

The poet starts his poem in the name of God, the Creator of the Woman. Through reproduction, generations are safeguarded. He praises the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) and reminds us that he said mother ought to be respected three times more than the father. This is the foundation, the poet says, upon which he praises. The poet then proceeds to enunciate the women who contributed to the growth of Islamic faith.

He writes:

1.	Huand'a kwa ina Lake	*[I begin in His Name*
	Mola wechu Atukuke	*Praise be our God*
	Alonvumba mwananke	*He created the woman*
	Kidhadhi kihifadhike	*To safeguard generations]*
2.	Hunswalia wechu Nchume	*[We praise our Prophet*
	Alonena ahishimiwe mame	*Who said that mother be respected*
	Mara chachu kuliko mume	*Three times more than the father*
	Na kuntukudha nisikome	*And I will not stop praising her]*
3.	Kachika mapicho a Kiisilamu	*[In the history of Islam*
	Chusikose eo kuvafahamu	*Let us always remember*
	Vanavake chunavo vahishimu	*The women we respect*
	Kwa imani nawavo ukarimu	*For their faith and generosity.]*

He celebrates the early Muslim women - Nana Hadhija, Nana Sumeya, Nana Asiya – for their faith and sacrifices. He further reflects on the discourse around the female body in which it is viewed as a site of struggle over value systems. The poet takes the position that the female body ought to be protected and celebrated in its diversity of appearance. Addressing women directly, the poet links religious teachings with contemporary lives:

15. Machiviini vanavake huiyanika
Wembamba upache kudhanyika
Unene hautakikani kuchayika
Valonona sasa hudharaulika

[On television, women expose themselves
Slender bodies are advertised
Big bodies are frowned at
The big bodied are despised]

16. Sid'unia a mila nyendro na ṯabia
Ni wakaṯi wa usheṯwani kubarikia
Hishima na siṯara hadhina maridhia
Uvundro na ulanisi dhind'achuvamia

[It's not a world of culture, value and morality
It's a time for evil deeds to be celebrated
Respect and decency are no longer valued
Dirt and greed have ambushed us]

17. Eo kuva bora ni kudhia
Kuva d'ufu ni kusuluhia
Haa ndrio and'ao chuyia
Kuchuharibia echu d'unia

[To be a good person nowadays is to be stupid
To be stupid is to be clever
This is what has befallen us
To mess up our world]

18. Vavadharauvo vanavake, nvalanisi
Vasoyiva sitara, na uchu havauyisi
Vaso na haya, wala aibu maibilisi
Validhawa na mwananke, kwa ubora havantusi

[Those who despite women, are useless people
Those who do not know privacy, have no humanity
Those without shame are evil doers
Born of a woman, they can't be better than her.]

19. Hutauliwa vanavake, kama samaki
Kwa ina la fesheni, hachuvoni dhiki
Haa ni madharau, musiyashabiki
Kuvakosesha dha ubinad'amu haki

[Women are paraded and chosen as if they were fish
In the name of fashion, we feel no agony
But this is degrading, celebrate it not
It denies people their fundamental rights.]

In the contemporary world, a culture of body idealization and standardization is systematically created, perpetuated and maintained through media, advertising and the fashion industry. External physical beauty as defined through certain body types is celebrated and the inner self undervalued. This social construction of the 'preferred body image' and the marketing and commodification of it is, in the eyes of the poet, objectifying and dehumanizing. He asks women not to be enticed by it through body idealizing channels of fashion shows, television, Tik Tok, instagram, or Facebook but to instead value their humanity and dignity and not bring themselves to shame. He urges them to use social media platforms cautiously.

22. Chiki choki[15] isivahad'ae
Wala a aibu musiachwae
Akimbieni musipumbae
Akuvachafuwa mamboe

[Do not be misled by Tik Tok
Or accept that which brings you shame
Avoid that without hesitation
That which is destructive]

23. Kwa vuso[16] kitabu musihad'aike
Uhavule ukakosa udhuri wake
Ngiani kwa akili musighurike
Kwa mavidio aulanisi muepuke

[Do not be misled by Facebook
To undermine your beauty as girls
Move in cautiously to avoid deception
And avoid negative videos]

24. Siveni dhishadhi dha isi nveledhe
Ngiani pache mila echu muikudhe
Tamad'uni ndrio mudhitukudhe
Na d'ini echu muichangadhe

[Do not become bundles of fish, let me tell you
Embrace the new media and promote our customs
Praise our cultures also
And make our religion visible.]

The poet is aware of the power that social media platforms carry in shaping behavior, even as he uses them in his poetry. In the hands of some users, social media platforms can carry messages that are manipulative and misinforming. Considering the absence of community media literacy skills among poor communities such as the Bajuni, the poet's cautionary statement about uncritical consumption of social media is well grounded. Equally important is his encouragement to girls to recognize their cultural grounding and pursue secular and religious education. Throughout the narrative poem 'Mahavule na Jamii' the poet celebrates women as givers of life and deserving of respect and dignity.

Safeguarding Gungu

Gungu poetry is one of the oral poetic traditions of the Bajuni community that is disappearing and which some poets – including Mohamed Kombo – are reviving through an intertextual approach that blends remnants of the 'received' gungu and new compositions. Gungu is characterized by a slow rhythm with a repetitive melody. In its earlier renditions, gungu was performed in social occasions such as marriages and the leading minstrels (*malenga*) competed in performing poetry in the form of a dialogue (*kujibizana*). Traditionally, the lead gungu performer (the Shaha) would be presented - by the community- with a brass tray (the gungu) with money, betel, water and sugar. The Shaha would then call his fellow poets to share the gifts presented to him with fellow poets before inviting them to perform. The gungu brass tray was used as a signal of the performance. In the performance one poet would compose an enigma or puzzle (*kufunga nyama*, [to tie the animal]) and another would solve the puzzle (*kufungua nyama* [untie the animal]). The gungu poetic riddling was an arena for questioning and negotiating relationships.

As heritage, the *gungu* poetry was performed on occasions in which interpersonal and intersocial relationships were being established or solidified and took the form of as a poetic dialogue between two artists. Writing about gungu poetry, Mohamed Abdulaziz says:

> *Gungu* was a great oration dance of Lamu, it was danced in Mombasa. It was held at marriages or other important social, and political occasions. The poets could meet and challenge one another in the art of composing *mashairi*. Almost the whole town would attend these dances. It was a suitable occasion for the poet sages not only to entertain their audience, but also to exchange ideas, and seek advice from one another (1979: 118).

The gungu genre, like many other forms of traditional oral poetry, is disappearing fast. While there are remnants of ancient verses, it is hardly performed as a dialogue between poets. The remnants are performed in marriages by individual poets. To revive the genre, Mohamed Kombo has been composing gungu poetry and performing it using the ancient melody.

Between tradition and newness in a gungu poem

In this *gungu* poem, Kombo integrates his composition (posterior text) with a reproduced traditional version (anterior text) in a dialogic relation. The anterior text was shared with him by Bajuni elders. In this intertextual engagement, the anterior text and the posterior text enrich each other. The anterior text attains a new life even as the posterior text gets a ground on which to stand. This *gungu* poem is performed as a '*wimbo wa kunyoza'* (a shaving song) during a wedding ceremony to prepare the groom for marriage. The narrator invites the audience to prepare space so that the groom can be shaven customary in Bajuni culture. The performance of the dialogized poem carries the *gungu* traditional melody.

1. Songani mbee na kisahani
   Na mwene wembe niichiani
   Bwanaharusi chun'nyoweni
   Ni mila echu isi Vabajuni

   [Move forward with the brass tray
   And call the one with the razor for me
   Let us shave the bridegroom
   As is our Bajuni custom]
   (M.M. Kombo addition)

2. Ndoni ngomani kwene nshindro
Chapuwa echani chubike nsondro
Sherehe yivani nidhechu nyendro
Bila adhishindro basi karibuni

[Come to the dance where there is a beat
Bring the chapuwa drum to play msondo
You should know celebration is our ways
Without hesitation, join in]
(M.M. Kombo addition)

3. Hamudi Hamudi sin'yongweyongwe
Ito la hasidi lisikuenge
Kuna nchi pwani hichwa nvunje
Hunawiri tandu na mashinae

[Hamudi, Hamudi,[16] it's not the n'yongwe plant
The evil eye should not to see you
There is a tree by the seashore called casuarina
Its branches glowing and all around the stem]
(Traditional verse transmitted across generations)

4. Mwanangu mmoya sikunchuma
Sikumpa yembe kwendra kulima
Nimpee chuvo kwendra kusoma
Apache ilimu na Kuruwani

[I didn't send one of my children errands
I didn't give him the hoe to go farming
I gave him the (holy) book to go and learn
To get education and learn Quran]
(Traditional verse transmitted across generations)

5. Na n'ngine mwana sikunchuma
Sikumpa wavu kwendra kutoma
Nimpee buku kwendra kusoma
Ayive kwandika na kuilimika

[And I didn't send another to errands
I didn't give him a net to go fishing
I gave him a book to go and learn
To know how to write and gain knowledge]
(M.M. Kombo addition)

6. Pwani liyie idau la Vashambara
Tena kila siku ni midirara
Sivataki bure tavapa fedha
Chakula na nguvo fuli numbani

[At the seashore came a vessel of Vashambara[18]
Then every day there is abundance
I don't want you for free, I will pay
Much food and clothing at home]
(Traditional verse transmitted across generations)

7. Na liyie idau kutoka Maka
Landidha Nkudisho hadi Marika
Ndrio mbeu njema iso nashaka
Navene kuyaa hutumaini

[And there came a vessel from Mecca
It set sail from from Mogadishu towards Marka
It is a good seed without a doubt
And those who plant it have hope]
(Traditional verse transmitted across generations)

8. Vayie venyeji kutoka Amu
Nalo kivangoja tena kwa hamu
Ruhu imechuwa kwa tabasamu
Ya Rabi imani chuongedhee

[They came indigenous people from Lamu
Those who I was anxiously waiting for
My heart is calm as I smile
God Almighty, increase our faiths in each other]
(M.M. Kombo addition)

9. Chandrika kichanga chwanike mbeu
Ndrilo jadi lechu Vakiaiyu
Isi vene kwamba hwamba hiyau
Nani vapulishi mwapulikae?

[Place the mat to dry the seeds
It is our tradition the people of Kiwaiyu
Us who speak, this is how we say it
And you who listen, how do you hear it?]
(Traditional verse transmitted across generations)

10. Hupeka fatiha kwavo vadhee
Hoko valipo chuvaombee
Hii mila avo chuhifadhie
Hachutambiria kuva vachumwa

[I send prayers to the departed elders
We pray for them wherever they are
These customs of theirs let us safeguard
We won't throw them away to become slaves.]
(M.M. Kombo addition).

Instead of being presented as a dialogue between two poets, the *gungu* is presented as an interaction between texts composed at different historical times. This poem performed during a marriage ceremony is a pointer to the choices that parents have to make when bringing up their children. While some children are engaged in farming and fishing activities, others are provided with secular and religious education. Out of the ten stanzas in the poem, five are from the anterior text and five from the posterior text. This balancing of the texts is a marker of the mutual dependence between the past and the present. It is also a statement on cultural heritage as living and changing.

Conclusion

Mohamed Kombo composes and performs poetry to provide a window through which Bajuni identity, culture and history can be appreciated. While some of his texts are original compositions, others are reworked from memory; from a remembering of what was said in precursor poems. In bringing to life earlier texts, he invites his audience to travel with him in a journey of rediscovery of the self and to acknowledge the shared culture and history. His poetry is an affirmation of the power of orature in Bajuni cultural heritage. He is constantly aware of his audience and intermittently calls on it to participate and be in dialogue with him. First, he composes orally by developing content and the form of the poem in his mind before turning the oral text into a written text. His poems are therefore initially oral before they become written. He audio records his composition, presents it in a unique baritone voice and distributes the recording through virtual platforms. He connects his poetry to the

conditions of the Bajuni people, deepens our understanding of their lives and contributes in the reimagining of their identity.

Because genres are alive, Kombo injects ancient texts with newness through appropriation and engagement. In doing so, he increases their presence in socio-cultural events such as weddings. He alludes to prior texts – including religious texts – to contextualize his poems and affirm his situatedness. Through the Uneni genre and the utilization of social media platforms, Mohamed Kombo has reinvigorated Bajuni poetry in powerful ways.

Endnotes

[1] The word 'Kiwaiyu is alternatively spelt as 'Kiwayuu'. Both spellings are correct and are derived from 'Kisiwa cha iyu' and 'Kisiwa cha yuu' respectively, to mark it as a raised Island. I use Kiwaiyu in this chapter because that is the form found in Mohamed Kombo's poetry. Kiwaiyu is an Island on the eastern part of the Lamu archipelago and is located in the Kiunga Marine Natural Reserve, a park that covers about 50 Islands and coral reefs. The Kiwaiyu community are engaged in agricultural activities on the mainland or in fishing.

[2] Although there are some writings about poetry from Lamu, Mombasa, Tanga, Unguja and Pemba among other Swahili Islands, poetry from the Bajuni community is hardly known. There does exist some writings on vave farming poetry (see for example, Omar 1990; Gearhart 1998; Donnely & Omar 1982, 1987; Shariff, 1988; Mahazi 2008, 2010a, b; 2018).

[3] Ndodhi is a nickname used by the Bajuni people in reference to Kiwaiyu.

[4] The version remembered by Mohamed Kombo is not different from that recorded by Said Seif Siyaka, except for some orthographic renderings.

[5] Ngunya was a community leader in Kiwaiyu famous for harassing fishermen in the south coast region especially in Zanzibar. The term 'Wagunya' (used derogatively in reference to the Bajuni) could be traced to this leader.

[6] Lali wa Shee was a community leader

[7] Omwe was a small Bajuni town built by the Kiwaiyu community. It was fully vacated due to widespread insecurity in the area and the residents became Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Lamu, Malindi, Mombasa and other coastal towns. Other towns left desolate due to insecurity included Shango, Matironi, Simambae, Mvundeni, Stesheni, Ashuwei, Rubu, Mwambore, Kiduruni, Mwadhi, Dhipingoni, Mbeledhoni, among others.

[8] The reader will notice that in his writing, Mohamed Kombo marks certain consonants with diacritics and specifically the apostrophe. He does this to mark dentality and the spirated voiceless velar. Therefore, in his poetry one finds /dʾ/, /nʾ/, /thʾ/, /khʾ/,

/ndˈ/. This is the orthographic challenge that faces many Bajuni writers because of lack of standardization. In an effort to standardize Bajuni, learning materials are now being developed to mark dentality with an underscore. Thus Bajuni orthography is attempting the standardize the marking of certain consonants as follows; /n̲/, /t̲/, /d̲/. This is work in progress and as more materials are developed the standardization will create uniformity in writing. This article has retained Mohamed Kombo's writing style.

[9] Since 2020, Mohamed Kombo has composed and performed under the name of Malenga wa SaYanga (the minstrel, Voice of the Ngaya Strong Wave). 'SaYanga' is drawn from "Sauti ya Ngaya' (the Voice of Ngaya). Ngaya is a section of the ocean which carries a strong wave between three Bajuni Islands – Kiwaiyu, Ndau and Pate. 'Wimbi Kali' is a strong wave. By using this label, Kombo defines his compositions as unsettling. His message could be as uncomfortable as riding on the wave but important for the community to move forward. Prior to 2020, he had composed and performed as Malenga wa Ngaya Sounds (minstrel of Ngaya Sounds) and Jazzirian Mkombozi (Jazzirian the Liberator). The fact that the Ngaya wave is located between the three Bajuni islands is indicative of the poet's immediate audience. The Bajuni community is his primary addressee. Though his message is uncomfortable, he suggests, they need it just as they need to cross the Ngaya strong wave, when traveling.

[10] Personal communication with Mohamed Kombo on January 1, 2024.

[11] Commenting on this aspect of Kombo's poetry, microbiologist Alwi Shatry told me that this is testament to "the wholesomeness of Bajuni (and general classic Swahili) poetry. A worldview fashioned by the integrated Islamic values that are inseparable from the Bajuni and Swahili world views. Modern dialogue among the Swahili themselves is replete with divine allusions". He also shared a personal anecdote: There has been enormous circulation of Kombo's poems among the Swahili. He was recruited into the Kombo fan base via WhatsApp and he became an instant convert. After his sister sent the narrative poem Mahavule, he was so impressed that he shared the poem with Prof. Alamin Mazrui who immediately saw the originality and greatness of Kombo's work (Personal correspondence on 5th January 2024).

[12] Chandrani, Kitangani and Mkokoni are towns in Kiwaiyu. All settlements among the Bajuni are small towns.

[13] 'Mbeko' is a proper name.

[14] See works on matrifocal Muslims in the Indian Ocean, including Mahmood Mau (2023)

[15] Chiki choki is a phonological adaptation of Tik Tok

[16] Vuso is 'face' and in this case 'vuso kitabu' refers to 'Facebook'. Later on in the narrative poem, the terms 'wasapu' and 'instagramu' are used for 'WhatsApp' and 'Instagram' respectively.

[17] Hamudi is a male person's name.

[18] Vashambara is in reference to Wasambaa an ethnic group in Tanzania.

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Chapter Three

Abubaker Muhammad Bahero Khuchi: Teacher and Poet

Kimani Njogu & Nafisa Awadh

This chapter was inspired by a conversation we had with Abubaker Muhammad Bahero Khuchi as we worked on *Chusomeni Kibajuni*, a series of Early Child Development books in the Bajuni language targeting learners in Grades 1, 2, and 3. We were discussing with Bajuni teachers the extent to which Bajuni orthography would borrow from standard Swahili. The writing and poetry of Bahero Khuchi was invoked in the conversation and we started looking at how he wrote Bajuni consonants. It was clear from the onset that sociolinguistically Bajuni speakers eschewed writing their language using the orthography of standard Swahili fully. They needed some variation to affirm their identity as Bajuni and render their speech more appropriately in the written form.

Orthographies are complex visual representations of language and thought that are designed to facilitate communication in written formats. Considering the intertwining of phonology, morphology, and certain cognitive processes involved in decoding of print, it is imperative to consider sociolinguistic and pedagogical factors in making decisions about orthography. Our appreciation of Khuchi's poetry was further inspired not only by the fact that he had written about the condition of the Bajuni community but also because he had made an individual effort to develop a Bajuni orthography.

Abubaker Khuchi is a retired teacher who has worked in the education for a period of over 30 years. Throughout his life, he has strongly advocated for the promotion of Bajuni language and culture within his community and beyond. He was born in Kiunga, a division in the Lamu County located on the coastal region of northern Kenya, in 1952 according to records in his National Identity Card. Like many

Kenyans of his generation, he does not know precisely when he was born because of inadequacy of record keeping at birth.

He was raised in a middle-class Bajuni family in Kiunga by his father, Muhammad Bahero Khuchi, and his mother, Inya Muhammadi Bakari Muhammad. His father practiced agriculture, and this made Abubaker a skillful farmer at an early age. In our conversation, he told us that life at home was not easy because his father was single handedly the bread winner of his family, and farming was the only source of income and food for the family. His father had an inclination to creativity and loved to recite the ritual *vave* and *randa* poems, about which Jasmin Mahazi has written widely and also in this book (Mahazi, 2008; 2010 a; 2010b,; 2018). As part of preparing the field in readiness for cultivation by burning bushes, Bajuni farmers would congregate and perform the ritual *vave* poetry. Then after successfully burning the bushes, the farmers would go back to the village happily and recite the *randa* poems. However, if the burning was not successful, they did not recite the *randa*. Khuchi told us that there was a time when the fields did not burn as expected and therefore most of the farmers went back to the village sad and some even cried. They could not recite the ritual poem but Abubaker's father recited it. According to Abubaker, one of the stanzas in the *randa* that his father recited was:

1. N'dhovu nimemwangusa,
   Pembe sikunsumua,
   Sikusadha la kufanya,
   Ibakie kuivua.

   [I have brought down the elephant
   But I did not cut the ivory
   Nothing was left to do
   Except for me to commit suicide]

The *randa* performer in this stanza communicates that while the most significant task was accomplished, it was not completed, and he is in immense pain as a result of this failure. The failure to communicate that the bush burning did not go well could be through collective silence or vocalization. Khuchi's father chose vocalization as a way of communicating his anguish at the incompleteness of the bush burning ritual.

Later Abubaker's parents divorced, and his mother got married to another man by the name Abudi Omar Gogo. Thereafter, Abubaker migrated to Faza with his mother and stepfather. Omar Gogo was an administration police officer who served in the rank of a corporal within the police service in Faza. A few years later, Omar was transfered to Lamu and then back to Kiunga. He moved with his family at all times.

Abubaker Khuchi was the only child of his parents but later had step paternal and maternal siblings. His paternal siblings were Ahmad Muhammad Khuchi, Saidi Muhammad Khuchi, Salimu Muhammad Khuchi and Omari Muhammad Khuchi and his maternal siblings were Nana Abudi Omar, Omari Abudi Omar and Mwanaedhi Abudi Omar. All his maternal siblings have passed on.

Growing up, Abubaker attended the religious madrasa lessons where he learnt how to recite the Quran in an accelerated manner because he had to start his secular school education. He joined Kiunga primary school despite the widespred negative attitudes towards secular education from his extended family. Due to insecurity in Kiunga, the family relocated to Faza: a small town on the North coast of Pate Island. He joined Faza Primary School to continue with his primary education. When he sat for his Certificate of Primary Education (CPE) in 1968, he passed well and was ready to enroll in a secondary school. His favorite subjects at Faza primary school were Mathematics and English.

In 1969 Abubaker joined Shimo La Tewa Secondary school, in Mombasa to pursue his secondary education. His Admission Number was 1525 and his favorite subject was French. He was appointed president of the School French Club and participated in co-curricular activities such as basketball, volleyball, and rugby. In 1972, he sat for the national examination (East African Certificate of Education) and performed well enough to continue with high school (Forms 5 and 6). Unfortunately, he did not get the chance to continue with education immediately since he got employed as an untrained teacher. At the time, teachers were in high demand and a secondary education was enough for one to be employed. He taught as an untrained teacher at Mangai primary school in the densely forested Boni zone and Kiunga primary school. Although he was an untrained teacher, he was promoted to be a headmaster at Ishakani primary school due to his commitment and hard work. At the

primary school, he taught all subjects including Mathematics, English, Science, Kiswahili, Music, Physical Education, and Islamic Education. The scarcity of teachers meant that one taught many subjects and did not have to specialize.

While teaching as an untrained teacher, he also enrolled for a Teaching In-Service Course at Shanzu Teachers Training College in 1973 which he attended during the school holidays. The Teaching In - Service course did take 2 years to complete but due to some challenges at Shanzu Teachers Training College, Abubaker completed the course in three years.

At Shanzu Teachers Training College, he privately registered for the East African Advanced Certificate of Education (EAACE). He sat for this examination at Chandaria hall in Mombasa in 1975 and got a Principal E. During the same year, he also sat for his Teaching In- Service course examination at Shanzu Teachers Training College and got a certificate of teacher education P1. In 1976, he privately registered again for the East African Advanced Certificate of Education (EAACE) but still got a Principal E Grade which could not get him a chance to join university.

After getting his P1 certificate from Shanzu Teachers Training College, he was appointed permanently by the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) as a teacher with effect from 1st May 1980 at Kiunga Primary School in Lamu division. He was later promoted as a TAC (Teacher Advisory Center) tutor and was posted to Witu division. His role as a TAC tutor involved preparing teaching materials and preparing teaching aids.

Abubaker later joined the Ministry of Education and in 1989 was appointed as the acting Assistant Primary School Inspector (APSI) and posted to Kiunga division. Soon after, he was interviwed for a position in the public service and, on passing, was appointed as an Education Officer III. Later he was promoted to the position of Education Officer II. He served in various offices including in Witu, Lamu, Tana River, and Kilifi.

Along the way, he realized that he could write poetry. This recognition was prompted by the fact that his paternal and maternal grandfathers (Bahero wa Sidhi and Bakari wa Muhammadi) and his paternal and maternal grandmothers (Nyabudhi wa Dilimua and Fatima wa Yakubu) were poets. He believed that his poetic abilities were natural but he had

not explored them. He started writing poems in the Bajuni language. Most of his poems praised his language and narrated Bajuni history. He utilized poetry to transmit messages to his community. He wrote and self published his Bajuni poems.

According to Abubaker, his maternal grandmother, who was from Mwambore, narrated a poem during his mother's wedding and in one stanza she said:

21. Mwambore na Kiunga ni mwendo kuvakichambo,
Chuiye kutedha ngoma na kuangalia mambo,
Mabwana sabalaheri na mabibi hamuyambo?

[Mwambore and Kiunga are places that are distant apart,
We have come to dance the music and explore the village,
Therefore we greet you all, men and women.: How are you?]

Working as an educational officer, he was interested in having Bajuni language included in the teaching syllabus as a subject of study in his community. He was then selected to work in a panel in Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD), previously known as Kenya institute of education (KIE). His main work was assessing books written to cover subjects in the syllabus before they were approved and published. He assessed the following subjects: Mother Tongue, Islamic Religious Education and Kiswahili. This opportunity gave him a platform to air out his dream of enrolling the Bajuni language as a subject into Kenya's new education curriculum. His ambition was thwarted by people who argued that Bajuni was a dialect of Swahili and could not therefore be included. He then pushed the agenda of making Bajuni as a subject till he became successful. With the help of Bajuni elders and other members of KIE panel in Lamu he started documenting Bajuni language.[1] He started the process of developing the Bajuni orthography and standardizing the development of teaching materials. As is the case with many Bantu languages, how to write Bajuni palatal nasals <ny> versus <n̲> was a matter that concerned Abubaker.

Here is the orthography he developed:

LETTER	WORD
N'he	N'heusi, n'hembamba, n'hengedhi, man'he.
N'hi	N'hingi, in'hi.
N'ho	N'hoka, n'hoki.
N'hu	Mun'hu, n'hungun'hungu
Ca	Caa, camba, carawe.
Ce	Cesi, ceva, cengele.
Ci	Cingi, cifa, ciya
Co	Colova, colomwe, codobwe.
Cu	Cuvu, cudu, cululu, curu

He chose to represent the aspirated voiceless velar as a <c> or <kh> and the palatal nasal as <N'>. In this way, he affirmed the uniqueness of Bajuni as a dialect of Swahili and provides a direction that Bajuni orthographers might consider. It is this orthography that he uses in writing his poetry

Later Khuchi stopped working for the Ministry of Education. He joined Islamic organizations to work as an Islamic missionary. As a missionary, he has had the opportunity to travel to many countries including India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and the Comoro Islands. Abubaker Khuchi speaks many languages including his mother tongue Bajuni, Swahili, English, French and a little bit of Arabic.

Abubaker Kuchi wrote a narrative poem in five volumes with the title *Ncchu cwavo yapo tini mwa irara* [Home is home, even if under a coconut tree]. The poetry calls on the Bajuni to value their home even if it has no economic development and is marginalized. It is in this narrative poem that he explains their history as Bajunis from Kiunga.

In his narrative poem, Abubaker narrates the effect of the seccesionist *Shifta war* (1963-1967) waged by the Somali community against the Kenya government soon after Kenya attained independence in 1963. The Somali community in the Northern Frontier District (NFD) had united behind the Northern Province Progressive Peoples Party to seek

recognition of their rights to self-determination and unity with the Somali Republic.

It is because of this war that many people were displaced from their homes with Lamu East being the worst hit. Bajuni homes in Kiunga, Ishakani, Simambae, Rubu, Ashuwei among others were left desolate as people fled to other peaceful parts of the Lamu archipelago.

Since Abubaker's hometown was Kiunga, he narrated all the incidents that occured during the Shifta war. He says that Kiunga people had to leave their homes due to the insecurities. They fled from the Somali fighters and also the Kenyan army.

He explains further that the city was burnt down, and military tanks were brought and broke both small and big houses in Kiunga. This is evident in stanza 21 of his poem:

1. Dhikachiwa na dhifaru
   N'humba ndodi hata curu
   Mola wechu chwashukuru
   Chukaanda kuvundiwa

   [They brought in military tanks,
   Small and even big houses,
   We are grateful to you Lord,
   They started breaking them.]

Moreover, Abubaker also mentions other towns that were affected such as Witu and Mkunumbi. But for Mkunumbi, Abubaker says that the shiftas invaded the town and Mkunumbi people fled, but their houses were not burnt. This is evident in stanza 36:

36. Ncunumbwi ilingiwa
    Na mui vakaatiwa
    Lakini haikuchiwa
    Mocho n'humba hata moya

    [Mkunumbi was invaded,
    And the city was abandoned,
    But they did not,
    Burn a single house.]

But what happened after Shifta war according to the poet? When the war ended, people went back to their homes in their towns, but this was not the same with the people of Kiunga. When they went back to their town, there were no houses as they had either been burnt down or broken down by the military tanks. He gives a description of the town by saying when people went back to Kiunga, there was no city but thorn trees all over. This is evident in stanza 39:

39. Sasa va̲take kujenga
Hiyo ya pili Kiunga
Hakuna mui ni minga
Ndio ilionea

[Now they wanted to build,
The second Kiunga,
There was no city but thorn trees,
That were all over the place.]

He narrates further by saying that the government never helped the Kiunga people in cutting down the trees nor giving them a free permit. Furthermore, they were not given the chance to choose a plot where they wanted to build their houses. The government ordered people to take predetermined plots. The people had no choice. This was evident in stanza 40 and 41.

40. Licha kucachiwa michi
Hata bure parimichi
Na kudhengea makuchi
N' humba dhavo kudhimbia

[Never were they helped cutting the trees,
Nor given a free permit,
They had to find palm leaves,
To thatch their houses.]

41. Kivanda ni vapawacho
Vacheme vachie mocho
Dhigudho, pau na ficho
Ikava ni kununua

[The building plot was what was given,
To clear and burn,
Pillars, rafters, and lath,
Had to be bought.]

In his narrative, Abubaker also presents a view of how the old Kiunga looked like in terms of the arrangement of the houses and the names of the people who lived in those houses. This is evident from stanza 44.

44. Kwanda tavapa ramani
A Kiunga a dhamani
Kwa rasini na Kwa pwani
Nan'hi mupache elewa

[First, I will give you a map,
Of the old Kiunga,
From Kwa Rasini to Kwa Pwani,
So that you may understand.]

Evidentially, composing poetry is documentation and record keeping of community events and experiences.

Here we present some of his poetry from his book: Ncchu cwavo yapo tini mwa irara, Volume 1.

1. Naanda kwa ina lako
Bwana Mungu pweke ako
Unipe uwedho wako
Lengo langu kutiniia

[I start with Your name
The only God,
To give me the ability,
To fulfil my goal]

2. Nataka kufahamisha
Maneno kuafupisha
Nyaka n'hingi dhilokwisha
Mambo aliotokea

[I want to inform,
With brevity,
Many years ago,
The things that happened.]

3. Mwaka sitini na chachu
Kupacha uhuru wechu
Ilibikwa miyi echu
Na vasomale horiya

[In nineteen sixty-three,
As we got our independence,
Our cities were attacked,
By the Horia Somali.]

4. Kwanda taeledha kwechu
Valipacha tabu vacchu
Vaingie kwen'he mwichu
Kiunga kuikimbia

[First I will explain about my home,
People suffered,
By entering the forest,
Fleeing from Kiunga.]

5. Vacchu valitoka mui
Vangine vakenda kui
Kwa pwani a Ntungui
Kiwani kukimbilia

[People left the city,
Some went to Kui,
By the coast of Ntungui,
Migrating to the Island.]

6. Aliko ni ramadhani
Wahidi wa ishirini
Chukangia makosani
Kwa muthi chukaila

[It was during Ramadhan,
On the twenty first,
We committed a sin,
By eating in the afternoon.]

7. Kisha chukabikwa tena
Tena na tena na tena
Usiku mara ntana
Dhikini chukaingia

[Then we were attacked again,
Again, and again and again,
At night and sometimes during the day,
We became distressed.]

8. Vakaechwa asikari
Hapo hali a hatari
Chukarevewa safari
Mana chuyie kulindwa

[Police officers were brought,
Due to insecurity,
We were forbidden to travel,
As we were being protected.]

9. Alotaka kusafiri
Sheti avuye kwa siri
Kwa wati sio kwa gari
Mwichuni akaichia

[Whoever wanted to travel,
Had to leave in secrecy,
On foot and not by vehicle,
Entering the forest.]

10. Vacchu vakenda kiwani
Hakuketiki n-yini
Hofu dhiyee nyoyoni
A kuya kushambuliwa

[People went to the Island,
As it was not safe in the city,
Hearts filled with fear,
Of being attacked.]

11. N'humba havakudhihora
Na wala hava kugura
Valichelea hasara
Ruhu dhavo kupotea

[They never abandoned their houses,
Nor did they leave their homes,
They feared the loss,
Of losing their souls]

12. Mui ukachiwa mocho
Hakika kichendo hicho
Achi huvuwawa sacho
Vasiwedhe kuingia

[The city was burned down,
For sure that action,
Claiming to kill Pythons,
To not enter the city]

13. Maadui vatangia
Kwa mbali vakitokea
Kisha vatashambulia
Ni rahisi kuvavona

[The enemies will enter,
From far as they approached,
Then they will attack,
As it will be easy to see them.]

14. Valikuya ni valinda
Mboni n'humba valivunda
Vakachwatia uvanda
Kupacha kunyan'ganyia

[They came as guards,
Then why did they demolish houses?
And left us with the field,
Fighting for it.]

15. Pakitokea machacha
Pakava pana na dhicha
Vachhu tabu vakipacha
Sirikali huchechea

[When there is trouble,
And a fight emerges,
And people facing difficulties,
The government intervenes.]

16. Huchechea dhote mbili
Ruhu pamoya na mali
Vakachumia akili
Dhote vakadhikomboa

[The government protects both,
The soul and the wealth,
By using their minds,
Rescuing both.]

17. Ni vachhu valivonewa
N'humba dhavo kuvundiwa
Afaa kushitakiwa
Ama kulipwa fidia

[People were oppressed,
Their houses being broken down,
They were to charge them,
Or be compensated.]

18. Na hakuna alonena
Na valiveko mabwana
Ni ajabu curu sana
Haki kutotaradhia

[No one spoke,
And there were prominent people,
It was surprising,
That they never sought their rights]

19. Iliatwa misikichi
Kahishimiwa ni chachi
N'humba dhote dha makuchi
Colova dhikaatiwa

[The mosques were left,
Honoring them as places of worship,
But the palm-leaves houses,
Were burnt down.]

20. Na vachhu valivoveko
Vakava kana havako
Vakashikwa na dhit-heko
Dumi vakiangalia

[And the people who were present,
Acted like absent,
They laughed,
As they watched the fire.]

21. Dhikachiwa na dhifaru
N'humba ndodi hata curu
Mola wechu chwashukuru
Chukaanda kuvundiwa

[They brought in military tanks,
Small and even big houses,
We are grateful to you Lord,
They started breaking them.]

22. Lakini Sheahamadi
Kwa n'humba dha baabadi
Kava iye hana budi
N'humba dhavo kuchechea

[But Sheahamadi,
For Baabadi's houses,
Because he did not have a choice,
He protected them.]

23. N'humba hidho ni ajabu
Mbali mbali si karibu
Lakini akajaribu
Dhikava dhitabakia

[It is surprising that the houses,
Were far apart and not close,
But he tried,
And they were left untouched.]

24. N'humba dhavo dhalibaki
Yapo wavona si haki
Na ivapo husadiki
Vulidha utaambiwa

[Their houses were left,
Even though it was unfair,
And if you doubt it,
Then ask and you will be told.]

25. N'humba ngine dhali mbiti
Dha makuchi si dha bati
Na simichi dhake iti
Dhikava chutavundiwa

[And other houses were still new,
Made of palm-leaves and not iron sheets,
And its cement floors,
All were broken down.]

26. Cikuchayia akali
Ni n'h umba a Binluli
Karibu na Ishelali
A kwanda kuinunua

[Mentioning in brief,
It's the house of Binluli,
Which is near Ishelali's house,
The first one to be bought.]

27. Alinunua kwa nyani?
Sasa nikupe yakini
Mwanabule asumani
Ndie alon-dhanyia

[Where did he buy it from?
Now let me give you the details,
Mwanabule Asumani,
Is the one who sold it to him.]

28. Yapo aliko nda michi
Aliibika simichi
Na ntomo kachikachi
Ikava kana mpia

[Even though it was made of wood,
He added cement,
And reinforced plaster work on it,
It looked like new.]

29. Milango ake imara
A vanishi a kung'ara
Madirisha barabara
Ni tayari kuingiwa

[Its strong doors,
With shinning varnish,
And good windows,
Ready to settle in.]

30. Kuva n'hingi n'humba hidhi
Kudhikumbuka ni kadhi
A nana Mbwaramahadhi
Nao pia tavambia

[These houses being a lot,
Remembering them is not easy,
That of Nana Mbwaramahadhi,
I'll also tell you about it.]

31. Basi vachhu va Kiunga
Sitanena ni vainga
Valichelea kupinga
Amuri ilotolewa

[So Kiunga people,
I won't say they are fools,
They feared disagreeing,
With the given decree]

32. Valiko vakiichea
Haki dhavo kuchechea
Majumba kuchekechea
Vakavona ndo sawa

[They feared,
Fighting for their rights,
Houses being burnt,
They thought it was right.]

33. Miyi mingi ilibikwa
Na raia vakachekwa
Valobaki vakacheswa
Dhikumoni vakachiwa

[A lot of cities were attacked,
And its citizens captured,
The remaining were tortured,
And were left in distress.]

34. Kisha vakarudi kwavo
Vakaingia n' humba dhavo
Lakini kiunga sivo
Mambo alivotokea

[Then they returned to their homes,
And went to their houses,
But it was not the same in Kiunga,
With the things that happened.]

35. Wicho nao ilibikwa
Na vachhu vangi kushikwa
Na n'humba dhavo kusakwa
Na vangine kukimbia

[Witu was also attacked,
Many people captured,
And their houses searched,
While others fled]

36. Ncunumbwi ilingiwa
Na mui vakaatiwa
Lakini haikuchiwa
Mocho n'humba hata moya

[Mkunumbi was invaded,
And the city was abandoned,
But they did not,
Burn a single house.]

37. Churudi tena kiunga
Nalonena si vainga
N' humba dhavo kudhivanga
Ambadho valivundiwa

[Going back to Kiunga,
As I said they were not fools,
Listing their houses,
That were broken down.]

38. Kupachikana Amani
Valivoveko kiwani
Vakashukia n-yini
Kubuni kiunga pia

[When peace was restored,
Those in the Island,
Came back to the city,
To build new Kiunga]

39. Sasa vatake kujenga
Hiyo a pili kiunga
Hakuna mui ni minga
Ndio ilionea

[Now they wanted to build,
The second Kiunga,
There was no city but thorn trees,
That were all over.]

40. Licha kucachiwa michi
Hata bure parimichi
Na kudhengea makuchi
N' humba dhavo kudhimbia

[Never were they helped cutting the trees,
Nor given a free permit,
They had to find palm leaves,
To thatch their houses.]

41. Kivanda ni vapawacho
Vacheme vachie mocho
Dhigudho, pau na ficho
Ikava ni kununua

[The building plot was what was given,
To clear and burn,
Pillars, rafters, and lath,
Had to be bought.]

42. Hela nivape habari
Maneno mutafakari
Hata kana hamukiri
Tafadhalini sikia

[Let me give you some information,
For you to think about,
Even if you won't approve,
Please listen.]

43. Nataka nivaeledhe
Maneno niaenedhe
Miyini niachangadhe
Kila nchhu kusikia

[I want to explain to you,
And spread the word,
In the cities I announce,
For everyone to hear.]

44. Kwanda tavapa ramani
A Kiunga a dhamani
Kwa rasini na Kwa pwani
Nan'hi mupache elewa

[First, I will give you a map,
Of the old Kiunga,
From Kwa Rasini to Kwa Pwani
So that you may understand.]

45. Chutaanda Kwa Rasini
Ukiingia n-yini
Utokapo Mararani
Madirasa tatapia

[We will start with Kwa rasini,
As you enter the city,
Coming from Mararani,
You will find a madrasa.]

46. Kisha kuna barabara
Iendao hadi Bura
Kabula vachhu kugura
Vakenda kuilimia

[Then there is a road,
That leds to Bura,
Before people migrated,
Is where they used to go farming]

47. Ukiingia n-yini
Abudi wa Asumani
Mwanavo Mwanauvani
Hii n'humba taandia.

[As you enter the city,
Abudi Asumani's house,
The brother to Mwanauvani,
That's the first I will start with.]

48. A Nyashee wa Urembo
Banati na Inyekombo
Vana va moya ichumbo
Nadho pia tavambia

[Nyashee Urembo's house,
Banati and Inye Kombo,
Are siblings,
I will also tell you about their house.]

49. Fatuma wa Bwana Fumo
Na mwanavo Madi Fumo
Na Hadhija akivemo
Hava vali n'humba moya

[Fatuma Bwana Fumo,
And her brother Madi Fumo,
As well as Hadhija,
They lived in one house.]

50. Fatuma wa Asumani
Na Bisharo wa Nduani
Bwana Imi Asumani
Dhavo dhaliko pamoya.

[Fatuma Asumani,
And Bisharo Nduani,
And Bwana Imi Asumani,
Their houses were close.]

51. Hamadi nchhu n-dhima
Na Bahero na Fatima
Mwanamimi na Fatuma
Hava ni laini moya

[Hamadi, the old man,
Bahero and Fatima,
Mwanamimi and Fatuma,
Their houses were in one line.]

52. Na kwa Bahero wa Sidhi
Famau Mbwaramahadhi
Bwaheri na Inyasidhi
Marahamu nda ifia

[And at the house of Bahero Sidhi,
Famau Mbwaramahadhi,
Bwaheri and Inyasidhi,
All are no more.]

53. Mametiti Mwanaedhi
Taveledha wadhi wadhi
Kwake kwaliko na mbudhi
Idhiwa chukinunua

[Mamatiti Mwanaedhi,
I'll tell you frankly,
There were goats at her house,
Where we used to buy milk]

54. Boi na Hadhija Joji
Kana Nyekembo na Boji
Bwana Mungu N-vumbaji
Na hava kachuvumbia

[Boi and Hadhija Joji,
Nyekombo and Boji,
God the creator,
Created them for us.]

55. Kabulia ndila cuu
Karibu na Menkuu
Madi Lali wa Nkuu
Kiunga aliyekuya

[Before the main road,
Close to Memkuu,
Madi Lali Nkuu,
Came to Kiunga]

56. Alambiwa ni n'geni
Achi kwavo ni Ngomeni
Nendani kanfungeni
Hoko jela akachiwa

[He was said to be foreigner,
That his home is Ngomeni,
He was locked up,
In a cell he was put]

57. Na Abudi wa Saidi
Na wa Lali Muhamadi
Valikuya makusudi
Kura kwavo kudhengea

[Abudi Saidi,
And Muhamadi Lali,
Came purposely,
To register as voters.]

58. Vakava vatenda dhavo
Huku Kiunga si kwavo
Na dhichambulisho dhavo
Kiunga dhiandisiwa

[They had to go back,
As it was claimed Kiunga was not their home,
And yet their identity cards,
Were registered in Kiunga.]

59. Churudi kwen'he ramani
Chuateni a Ngomeni
Kamwe ivo si vageni
Wala havana hatia

[Back to our map,
Let's put Ngomeni aside,
They were not foreigners at all,
Nor were they at fault.]

60. Inya Isufu Nyalali
Na a Bihia si mbali
Achie kwen'he akili
Ndipo utapoelewa

[Isufu Nyalali's house,
Was close to Bihia's,
Put this in your mind,
Only then will you understand.]

61. A Nyekombo wa Halidi
Banati nduwe Abudi
Na Nyashee Muhamadi
Dhavo ni lani moya

[The houses of Nyekombo Halidi,
A sister to Abudi,
And Nyashee Muhamadi,
Are in one line.]

62. Kivachaya valo hai
Mima na pia Makai
Amekufa hako hai
Mwanapembe mejifia

[Mentioning those who are alive,
Mima and also Makai,
She is dead not alive,
Mwanapembe is no more.]

63. N'dhee Suo na Diwani
Kwa tini a Nyasumani
Valikuva ni jirani
Navo pia takwambia

[Mzee Suo and Diwani,
Next to Nyasumani,
They were neighbors,
I will also tell you about them.]

64. Inyekombo wa Malau
Bado siyansahau
Hodari kutinda pau
Na n'humba kuchuekea

[Mwenyekombo Malau,
I have not forgotten him,
An expert in cutting down rafters,
And building our houses.]

65. Mwanamiri wa Yakubu
Taveledha bila tabu
Ake aliko karibu
Na Tima Obo sikia

[Mwanamiri Yakubu,
I'll tell you without trouble,
Her house was close,
To Tima Obo's.]

66. Kwa tini n'humba a Nana
Lakutwa nda Ishebwana
Dhaliko karibu sana
N'humba hidhi navambia

[On the mainland side, is Nana's house,
And to the West is Ishebwana's,
They were so close,
These houses I tell you.]

67. N'humba a Asha Nyekimbo
Mamiri na Banyekombo
Vadhae Madi Nyekombo
Na Umari na Swafia

[Asha Nyekombo's house,
Mamiri and Banyekombo,
They gave birth to Madi Nyekombo,
Omari and Swafia.]

68. Nyalali na Bavuae
Na Mwanase ni mwanae
Na Muhamadi ni ndue
Ngomeni valoguria

[Nyalali and Bavuae,
And their children Mwanase,
And Muhamadi,
Migrated to Ngomeni.]

69. Madina wa N-jahidi
Famau wa Mwanaidi
Na Kalècho sina budi
Vachhu hava kivachaya

[Madina N-jahidi,
Famau, son of Mwanaidi,
And Kalècho I must,
Mention these people.]

70. Na huu Famau Wembe
Kwake akiya mahembe
Matamu kana wembembe
Mbwa Suo nae elewa

[And this Famau Wembe,
Used to bring mangoes,
Sweet like honey,
He is the son of Suo, I tell you.]

71. Marahamu Madi Kupi
Viveledhe kwa ufupi
Iko karibu na kwapi
Sitaki kuvasumbua

[The late Madi Kupi,
I will tell you in brief,
Where his house is located,
Lest I bother you.]

72. Iko karibu na Khuchi
Ishe Bakari wa Khuchi
Karibu na nsikichi
Muadhini husikia

[It is close to Khuchi's house,
The father of Bakari Khuchi,
Close to a mosque,
Hearing the prayer call]

73. N-jahadi wa Alii
Ishe Moyo na Alii
Kijumba chake mbalii
Ndipo alipoifia

[Mjahidi Alii,
Father of Moyo and Alii,
His small house is far away,
Where he passed on.]

74. Hadija Obo kwa tini
Na Nyabudi uvavuni
Ukipicha nsisini
Huva hukuangalia

[Towards the mainland, is Hadija Obo's house,
And Nyabudi on the side,
If you pass by the tamarind tree,
You will see their houses.]

75. Chukiuca barabara
Ndia a honde dha Bura
Dhaliko n'humba imara
Nadho pia tavambia

[When you cross the road,
The paths to Bura farms,
There were strong houses,
I'll also tell you about them.]

76. Kuna n'humba a Rashidi
Mwanavo Madi Abedi
Ndugu hava sina budi
Kwa Mungu kuvaombea

[There is Rashidi's house,
Brother to Madi Abedi,
These siblings I must,
Pray for them to God.]

77. Ahamadi wa Rehema
Mwanamisi ndue Tima
Kuna kisima kwa n'hima
Cha mayi a kupikia

[Ahmadi, son of Rehema,
Mwanamisi, sister to Tima,
There was a well at the back of their house,
That they used its water for cooking.]

78. Kale nae alivaka
N'humba ake kwa hakika
Hakuwahi kuieka
Vasomale valingia

[Kale also built,
Indeed, his house,
He never settled in it,
When the Somalis invaded]

79. Kwa tini kwako na n'humba
A Shebwana kana kwamba
A cambaa si a kamba
Valiwahi kuguria

[Next, there was a house,
Of Shebwana,
Made of strips of palm- leaves and not ropes,
They once moved to it.]

80. Lakutwa Shee Mahadhi
Akichunanga cunadhi
Shehe wechu mwen'he hadhi
Kijumba kaivakia

[On the West is Shee Mahazi's house,
He collects Chinese dates,
Our honourable Sheikh
Built a small house for himself.]

81. Churudieni n'yini
Chuande nsikichini
Upande wa nsisini
Chupache kumalizia

[Let's go back to the town,
And start from the mosque,
On the side of Tamarind tree,
So that we finish.]

82. Tima Kupi na Ridhai
Ni vachhu valiko hai
Mahamudhi hako hai
Marahamu nda ifia

[Tima Kupi and Ridhai,
Are still alive,
Mahamudhi is not alive,
He is no more.]

83. Halima Adi Quini
Na mongochi nlangoni
Vachhu vote kwa Rasini
Vakava hunsikia

[Queen Halima Adi,
At her house was a flag post,
Everyone in Kwa Rasini,
Would listen to her.]

84. Nai ikinsikia
Nae kaichumikia
Ng'ombe hucachwa mikia
Huva akiangalia

[Nai Association obeyed her,
As she served it,
By cutting off cow's tails
As she watched.]

85. Halima kiveshwa koja
Kanena wingi si huja
Ng'ombe vote vatakuja
Hata pia na ngamia

[When she was crowned,
She said that numbers are not an issue,
All the cows will come,
As well as the camels.]

86. Alikinena ki Amu
Kuja si neno igumu
Ni kuya ng'ombe fahamu
Dhamwa dhipande ngamia

[She said in Lamu dialect,
"Kuja" is not a difficult word,
It is the coming of the cows,
For the Association to reach its climax.]

87. Mbee kwali na uvanda
Pindi iliapo panda
Vadhuka vakivapanda
Hapo agoma ikilia

[There was a field ahead,
When the trumpet was blown,
People became possessed,
As the music plays.]

88. Vana chiani sulubu
Chushindane na aibu
Wala chusivone tabu
Dhamwa kudhisimamia

[Children, work hard,
To overcome shame,
And let us not find it difficult,
To fight for our Assossiciations.]

89. Ufalume yambo bora
Si yambo la masihara
Vakitedha kwa bacora
Iguu iti hulia

[Kingship is an important thing,
It is not a joke,
When they dance with sticks,
Their feet hit the ground.]

90. Kwa Pwani siyaingia
Nkao wa Jumuia
Pia nitavasifia
Mambo aliotokea

[I am yet to start with Kwa Pwani,
Where The Jumuia Association is situated,
I will also tell you,
Things that happened.]

91. Churudieni Mepuni
Chumalidhe kwa Rasini
Mana nina na kwa Pwani
Nataka kueledhea

[Let's go back to the map,
So that we finish at Kwa Rasini,
Because there is still Kwa Pwani,
I want to explain.]

92. Tima Sidhi n'humba ake
N-dhina rafiki ake
Na Shomari duka ake
Dhishikemene pamoya

[The house of Tima Sidhi,
N-dhina, her friend,
And the shop of Shomari,
All are aligned together.]

93. Vaarabu Baabadi
Muhamadi Shehamadi
Bilako ni Sheabudi
Pangine huyasikia

[The Baabadi Arabs,
Muhamadi Shehamadi,
Sheabudi's nickname is Bilako,
Maybe you have not heard.]

94. Sharifu wa Mbwasumai
Nae inya ali hai
N'humba ake natumai
Wa yiva ilivokuwa

[Sharifu Mbwasumai,
His mother is still alive,
I hope you know about her house,
How it looked like]

95. Kwa iu Madina wavo
Sidhi Lali ndie shevo
Ni vachachu vana havo
Na Tima Sidhi pamoya

[To the East is Madina's house,
Sidhi Lali is their father,
They are three siblings,
As well as Tima Sidhi]

96. Sida An-dala ake
Aliveko pweke ake
Hakuceti na ndudhake
Mana aliuvasiwa

[Sida Abdala's house,
Was in solitary,
She didn't stay with her siblings,
As she was married]

97. Duka la Binihilali
Mwanavo Bwanfadhili
Madi Halidi hucheli
Huva akiangalia

[Binihilali's shop,
Brother to Bwanfadhili,
And Madi Halidi's hotel,
Faced each other.]

98. Shehamadi duka lake
Ni a dari n'humba ake
Iye na rafiki dhake
Huva vakiangalia

[Shehamadi's shop,
Was in a storeyed house,
His friends and him,
Would sit together and talk.]

99. Duka la Shee Shalil
Na Kiju ndue Alii
Hili laliko mbalii
La kwanda kushambuliwa

[Shee Shalil's shop,
And Kiju, brother to Alii,
This was a different shop,
And the first one to be attacked.]

100. N'humba nlidhokumbuka
Ni hidhi hidhi hakika
Kana iko nalouca
Musiche kuniambia

[The houses I remembered,
Are the ones I have mentioned,
If I skipped any,
Please let me know.]

In this narrative poem, Abubaker Khuchi skillfully documents the experiences of his people. He mentions specific people, places, and events. The poem then becomes a community archive for use by current and future generations. In writing the narrative poems, Khuchi continues playing his role as a teacher.

Endnotes

[1] Due to lack of standardization of Bajuni orthography and the need to mark Bajuni as different from standard Swahili, Ababuker Khuchi marks spirated voiceless velar as /kh/. We have retained this orthographic rendering. One hopes that the orthography of Bajuni will be standardized for purposes of uniformity in writing.

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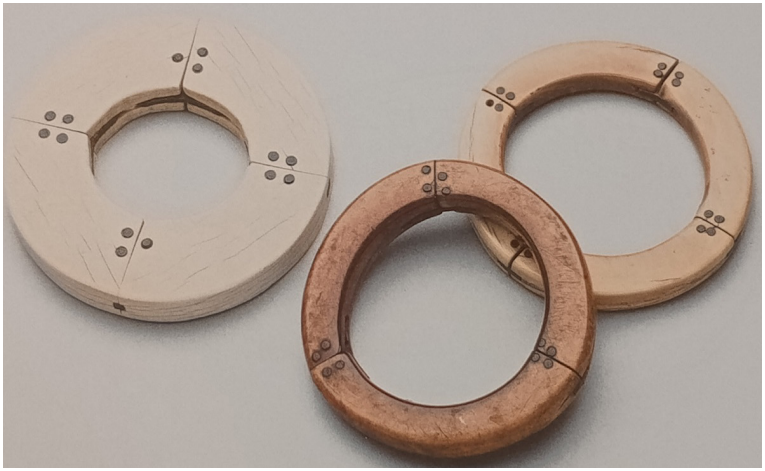
Bajuni heritage in pictures

1. Tata, A common fish trap made out of coconut leaflets mid-rib used by Bajuni artisanal fishermen. (Photo credit: Mohamed Hassan)

2. Kata/Kacha, Traditional Bajuni water collector from the cistern or water jars. (*Photo credit:* Mohamed Hassan)



3. Bangili, A 19th century, Bajuni bracelets made out of Ivory and Ebony wood. (*Photo Credit:* Krannert Art Museum & Kinkead Pavilion)

3. *Majasi*, 18th-19th century gold ear spools worn mostly by Bajuni by affluent women. (*Photo Credit:* Krannert Art Museum & Kinkead Pavilion)

5. Kinu, Cereals and spice pounder made from African teak trunk decorated with Bajuni styed carving patterns probably 19th-18th Century. (*Photo credit:* Mohamed Hassan)

6. Kofia, Swahili/Bajuni embroidered hat with pini pattern style commonly made by Bajuni women and men. (*Photo credit:* Mohamed Hassan)

7. Mbuzi, A traditional Bajuni coconut grater made from hard wood and decorated with unique incised Bajuni style motifs probably dating to 19th Century. (*Photo Credit:* Krannert Art Museum & Kinkead Pavilion)

8. Jiwe la kupazia, Cereals grinding stone commonly used by Bajuni women to prepare maize and millet flour. (*Photo credit:* Mohamed Hassan)

9. Ala za muziki, Musical instruments used by Bajuni Women in Siyu Island performing traditional music and dance. (*Photo credit:* Twaweza Communications)

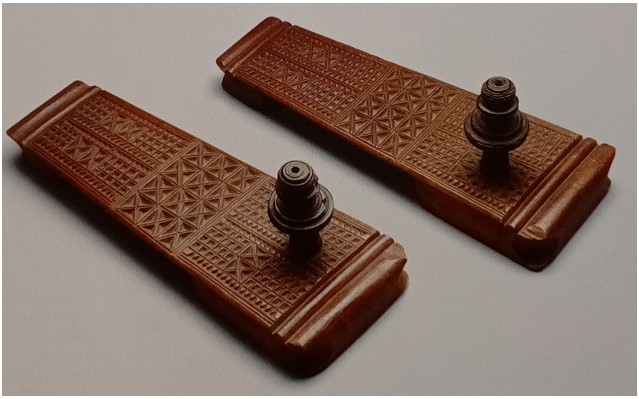
10. Goma, Main drum made out of hardwood trunk and decorated with chain, rosettes, and teeth motifs symbolizing unity of purpose to the dancers. The *Goma* is the main drum in Ngoma ya Barani dance troupe. (*Photo Credit:* Krannert Art Museum & Kinkead Pavilion)

11. Chango cha chakula, Bajuni hanging kitchen food wooden storage basket probably 19th Century. *Photo credit:* Mohamed Hassan)

12. Njugu na matunda. Nuts and fruits (*Photo credit:* Jasmin Mahazi)

13. Makubadhi, High quality stitched leather sandals probably made in Marka Somalia. *Photo Credit:* Ethnologisches Museum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz (working photograph)

14. Makubadhi, High quality stitched leather sandals probably made in Siu or Bajuni villages of Somalia. *Photo Credit:* Ethnologisches Museum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz (working photograph)



15. Ziatu za miti, Wooden sandals decorated with Bajuni geometrical patterns probably made in the late 19th Century. (*Photo Credit:* Krannert Art Museum & Kinkead Pavilion)

16. Gudulia la Kutanganya, A rare wooden blender for making juices, yoghurt, ghee, and also flour dough probably made in the 19th Century. (*Photo credit:* Mohamed Hassan)

17. Bajuni slash-and-burn cultivation method on usufruct land. (*Photo credit:* Jasmin Mahazi)

18. *Lamu Island:* Men display a cultural practice "Sherehe ya kunyoza". Done in preparation of a groom. (*Photo credit:* Twaweza Communications

19. Tchundwa Island: A group of Bajuni men performing Vave song. (*Photo credit:* Twaweza Communications)

20. Vave mode of performance. (*Photo credit:* Jasmin Mahazi)

21. Randa mode of performance. (*Photo credit:* Jasmin Mahazi)

Chapter Four

The Structure of Bajuni Language

Rukiya Swaleh

Introduction

The Swahili community boasts of over twenty dialects that arose due to geographical barriers hence the differences in their phonological and morphological differences. The Swahili dialects stretches from Kismayu in Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania to Mozambique in the South. These dialects include: Chimiini in Somalia; Kiamu, Kisiu, Kipate, Kitikuu, Kimvita, Kijomvu, Kivumba, Chichifundi and Kingare in Kenya; Kipemba, Kiunguja, Kimtang'ata, Kimgao, Kimakunduchi, Kitumbatu, Kihadimu in Tanzania; Kingazija in the Comoro island, and Kingwana in Zaire.

Kitikuu is one of the dialects spoken in the northern part of Kenya and southern Somalia in the islands of Kiunga, Shanga, Ndau, Kiwayuu, Rasini (Faza), Tchundwa, Mbwajumwali, Myabogi and Kizingitini. Kitikuu is the language derived from Tikuu to mean nchi kuu' ('big town/city') and its people known as Watikuu, people from the big town/city. Their language is Kitikuu. It is this language that is also called 'Bajuni,' but the term Bajuni is recent having been introduced with the coming of the Arabs along the coastal strip of East Africa. In this Chapter we will use the term Bajuni.

Historically the Bajuni, just like other Eastern Bantu communities, entered into Kenya through the horn of Africa. They settled in a place called Shungwaya which, according to Chiraghdin and Mnyampala (1977:48), is located in Kismayu in Somalia. However, after attacks from the Orma community, the Bajuni moved into the interior of Kenya and settled along the East Coast of Kenya. With time the number of community members increased and they occupied the larger coastal region stretching from Mogadishu to Mombasa.

Guthrie (1971:50) in his classification, placed Kiswahili in G40 and the Bajuni dialect in G41. According to Johnson's classification, (1922:39) he placed Kiswahili as Zangi languages in F and the Swahili dialects between the numbers 21-22, Bajuni being 21e.

Bajuni dialect is one of the Swahili dialects. The dialect has internal phonological and lexical variations which differ across the speech community. For example, the morpheme for the perfect aspect marker in Bajuni is {**ndo}** and **{nda}** (Swahili standard is **–me**-), and although majority of the speakers use **{ndo},** there are those from Ndau and Mkokoni that use **{nda}.** There are also differences in the use of lexical items. In some areas, speakers use very archaic Bajuni words while in some areas speakers use accepted borrowed words from Arabic or standard Swahili. But these are negligible and do not make Bajuni people from different places to have problems in communication. All Bajuni from all corners of the world can communicate and understand one another without any hindrance.

In terms of economic activities, the Bajuni are historically agriculturalists, carpenters, fishermen and weavers. Before the Shifta attacks in the 1960s, there were a lot of agricultural activities in the hinterland of Bajuni areas of Kiunga like Simamboye, Mwambore, Rubu, Mvundeni, Ishakani, Kiwayuu, Mkokoni and Lakuwaza. The Bajuni used to feed the whole of Lamu island and the surplus transported in boats to be sold in Mombasa and other nearby towns. Thanks to the Bajuni, Lamu used to be self-sufficient in food supply. Fishing was commonly done in the islands of Kizingitini, Shanga, Ndau, Mkokoni and Kiwayuu. The Bajuni were also great weavers especially in basketry, mats and *makuti*[1] thatching

This chapter presents the descriptive grammar of the Bajuni dialect as spoken in Bajuni islands from Southern Somalia to Northern parts of Lamu. As stated above, the dialect has some phonological and lexical variations across the speech community but the grammatical structures are basically the same.

The descriptive grammar is divided into three areas: the phonology, morphology and the basic syntactic structure of the language. Under phonology, we describe the sound structure of Bajuni including the consonants and vowels inventory. The second component is the

morphology of Bajuni and it is here that the noun classification and word formation processes are discussed. Inflectional and derivational morphology is also illustrated. The third section is the description of Bajuni syntactic structure including phrases, clauses and sentences.

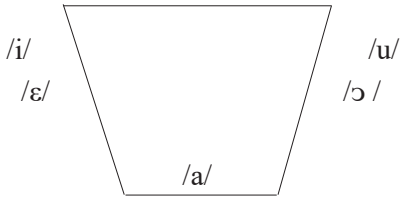
The Phonology

In this section will discuss the sound system in the Bajuni dialect that will consist of the vowels and consonants.

The Vowels

The Bajuni dialect has five vowels (Swaleh, 2017:10). These are; /a/, / ɛ/, /i/, / ɔ / and /u/.

The vowels can be shown according to their place of articulation.



The vowels /i/and /ɛ/ are front vowels, while /u/ and /ɔ/ are back vowels while /a/ is in the middle. Vowels /i/ and /u/ are articulated when the tongue is raised up and vowels /ɛ/ and /ɔ/ are articulated when the tongue is in the middle and the last vowel /a/ is articulated when the tongue is down at the floor of the mouth.

Vowel	Phonetic Symbol	Example	Gloss
a	/a/	/asali/	*honey*
e	/ɛ/	/ɛnɛndra/	*go*
i	/i/	/ihɛmbɛ/	*mango*
o	/ɔ/	/ɔsa/	*wash*
u	/u/	/ufa/	*crack*

The vowels in Kibajuni are similar to those in standard Swahili. In Bajuni just like in standard Swahili there are no long vowels as found in other Bantu languages. Whenever two similar vowels follow each other, one of them can be deleted/left out or pronounced as two vowels. The two consecutive vowels are articulated as two different syllables, not as one syllable.

Examples:

tʃɔ$ɔ, pa$ a, kaa, muumba , maalumu$

vaalimu→valimu; vaana→vana nk.

The Consonants

The Bajuni dialect has 24 consonants.

Bajuni consonants according to their place and manner of articulation using phonetic transcription

	Bilabials	Labiodental	Dental	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Stops	p b	d	t̪ d̪			k g	
Fricatives		f, v	ð	s	ʃ		h
Affricatives					tʃ ʄ		
Liquids				l r			
Glides	w				j		
Nasals	m		n̪	n	ɲ	ŋ	

(Adopted from Swaleh, 2017 with changes as necessary)

The Bajuni dialect has 24 consonants compared to standard Swahili which has 26 consonants. The dialect does not have phoneme /ɣ/ in words

like *'ghali';* phoneme /z/like *'zawadi'*, phoneme /x/ in words like *'kheri'* and /θ/ in words like '*thaumu'*. Furthermore, Kibajuni has four dental phonemes; /t̪ /, /d̪/, /ð/ and /n̪/ while standard Swahili has two, /ð/ and /θ/.

Orthography of Bajuni consonants and examples

Orthography	Phoneme	Example	English Gloss
b	/b/	baba	*dad/papa*
ch	/tʃ/	chakula	*food*
d	/ d̪/	damu	*blood*
dh	/ð/	dhaa	*give birth*
f	/f/	fungua	*open*
g	/g/	gali	*expensive*
h	/h/	hamu	*anxious*
j	/ɟ/	jaribu	*try*
k	/k/	karibu	*welcome*
k^h	/k'/	khandu	*dress/robe*
l	/l/	lia	*cry*
m	/m/	mame	*mom*
n	/n/	anika	*hang cloth/ put out to dry*
n	/ n̪/	numba	*house*
nd	/nɖ/	andika	*write*
ndr	/nd̪r/	ndrimu	*lemon*
ny	/ ɲ/	nyuka	*wake up*
ng'	/ŋ/	ngo'mbe	*cow*
p	/p/	pan̪a	*mouse*
r	/r/	ramba	*lick*
s	/s/	sauti	*sound*
t	/t̪ /	tasi	*type of fish without scales*
t^h	/ t̪'/	t^hakuya	*I will come*
v	/v/	vanafundi	*students/pupils*
w	/w/	wali	*cooked rice*
y	/j/	yambo	*Issue*

Note: Kibajuni is not a tonal language just like standard Swahili.

The Morphology of Kibajuni

In this section we look at the word formation processes. In Kibajuni, nouns are categorized according to their noun classes. The noun classes are very important as they influence the concordial agreement in sentences.

Noun Class

Bajuni utilizes 15 out of 23 noun classes of Proto-Bantu. This is the same as the number of noun classes found in Standard Swahili, but they differ in the morphemes used.

Noun Class	Nominal Prefixes	Concordial affix
1	n -, mu-	a-
2	va-	va-
3	n-, mu-	u-
4	mi-	i-
5	i- Ø	li -
6	ma-	a-
7	ki-	ki-
8	dhi-	dhi-
9	n-	i-
10	n-	dhi-
11	u-	u-
10a	n- Ø	dhi-
11a	u-	u-
6a	ma-	a-
14	vu,u-	u-
15	ku-	ku
17	pa-	pa-
18	ku-	ku-

Noun class 1&2

Noun class 1 in Kibajuni comprises of animates and the plural form is found in class 2. The nominal prefix of class 1 is **{n-}, {mu-}** and the plural is **{va-}.**

Examples:

Class 1	**Class 2**	**Phonetic transcription**	**Gloss**
N-chu	Va-chu	ntʃu- vatʃu	*Person/ people*
Mu-ana→mwana	Va-ana →vana	mwana-vana	*Child/children*
N-nyama	Va-nyama	nɲama-vaɲama	*Animal-animals*
Mu-ungwana	Va-ungwana	muuŋgwana-vauŋgwana	*Gentleman-gentlemen*
N-dhadhi	Va-dhadhi	nðaði-vaðaði	*Parent-parents*

The concordial agreement for class 1&2 is **{a}** and **{va}** respectively. There are human and animals that do not start with **{n-}** or {**mu-}** in singular and **{va-}** in plural but they still take the concordial agreement of **{a-} {va-}.**

Examples:

Ndhungu **a**likuya yana/ Vadhungu **va**likuya yana.
A whiteman came yesterday/whitemen came yesterday.

Kiboko **a**livuawa/Dhiboko **va**livuawa.
The hippo was killed. The hippos were killed.

Paka **a**linshika paɲa/Paka v**a**livashika paɲa.
The cat caught the rat/ The cats caught the rats.

Mu-idhi→mwidhi **a**lijepa senti ɲingi/Va-idhi→Vidhi **va**lijepa senti ɲingi.
The thief stole a lot of money. The thieves stole a lot of money.

Asikari huu **a**ʈalindra ɲumba echu/Asikari hava **va**ʈalindra ɲumba dhechu.
This soldier will guard our house/These soldiers will guard our houses.

Noun Class 3 & 4

The nominal affix for class 3 & 4 in Bajuni dialect is {n-}/{mu} and {mi-}respectively. In this class we have names of trees, some body parts and several other nouns that start with n-/mu singular and mi- plural.

Examples

Ndhidhi – midhidhi	Root/roots
Nchi –michi	Tree-trees
Nchungwa - michungwa	Orange tree-orange trees
Nfupa- mifupa	Bone-bones
Mu̱to –mi̱to	Pillow-pillows
Nkeka-mikeka	Mat- mats
Muyi- miyi	Town- towns

The concordial agreement in singular takes a prefix {u-} and plural {i-}.

Examples

Class 3	**Class 4**	**Phonetic transcription**	**Gloss**
N-chi ulikachwa	Mi-chi ilikachwa	ntʃi ulikatʃwa - mitʃi ilikatʃwa	*The tree was cut. The trees were cut.*
N-kono undotoka	Mi-kono ind̪otoka	nkɔnɔ und̪ɔt̪oka-mikɔnɔ ind̪ɔt̪oka	*The hand has dislocated-The hands have dislocated.*
N-nadhi undoanguka	Mi-nadhi indoanguka	nnaði und̪ɔaŋguka-minaði ind̪ɔaŋguka	*The coconut tree has fallen-The coconut trees have fallen.*
Mu-iko→mwiko ulichekechea.	Mi-iko→miko ilichekechea	mwikɔ ulitʃɛkɛtʃɛa-mikɔ ilitʃɛkɛtʃɛa	*The wooden spoon got burnt-The wooden spoons got burnt.*

Class 5 & 6

The nominal affix for class 5 is {i} or an allomorph [Ø] while the plural takes the affix of {ma}. In this noun class there are several items in Kibajuni that fall here.

Examples:

Class 5	**Class 6**	**Gloss**
i-guu – igu:	ma-guu- magu:	*leg-legs*
i-pipa - ipipa	ma-pipa –mapipa	*barrel-barrels*
i-ngi – iŋgi	ma-ingi – maiŋgi	*egg- eggs*
i- t̪o - it̪ɔ	ma- t̪o - mat̪ɔ	*eye-eyes*
i-bafe - ibafɛ	ma-bafɛ- mabafɛ	*basin-basins*
i- t̪ambara -it̪ambara	ma- t̪ambara- mat̪ambara	*old piece of cloth- old clothes*
i-ɟiwe - iɟiwɛ	ma-ɟiwe - maɟiwɛ	*stone-stones*
i-hɛmbɛ	ma-hɛmbɛ - mahɛmbɛ	mango- mangoes

The nominal class of 5 and 6 take the concordial agreement of **{li}** in singular form and **{a}** in plural form. Here are examples of sentences taking the concordial affix in singular and plural forms:

Class 5	**Class 6**	**Phonetic transcription**	**Glossary**
Iguu **li**ndofura	Maguu **a**ndofura	igu: lind̪ɔfura-magu: andɔfura	*The leg has swollen- The legs are swollen.*
Ipwera **li**taviva	Mapwera **a**taviva	ipwɛra li t̪aviva-mapwɛra a t̪aviva	*The guava will ripen- The guavas will ripen.*
Ienyo **li**ndovoa	Menyo **a**ndovoa	iɛɲɔ lindɔvɔa- mɛɲɔ andɔvɔa	*The tooth has decayed. Teeth have decayed.*
Igugu **li**lisumuliwa.	Magugu **a**lisumuliwa	igugu lilisumuliwa-magugu alisumuliwa	*The weed was uprooted. The weeds were uprooted.*

Class 7 & 8

In Kibajuni the nominal class 7 in singular takes an affix **{ki}** and class 8 which is plural take an affix {**dh}.** Nominal class seven can also take an allomorph [tʃ] after undergoing a phonological process of palatalization. For example: /ki-uma/→/kj-uma/→ tʃj-uma→[tʃuma].

Examples of word in class 7 &8

Class 7	**Class 8**	**Gloss**
Kichi -kitʃi	Dhichi - ðitʃi	*Chair-chairs*
Kichandra - kitʃandra	Dhichandra - ðitʃandra	*Bed-beds*
Kinu – kinu	Dhinu - ðinu	*Mortar-mortars*
Chombo - tʃɔmbo	Dhombo - ðɔmbɔ	*Container-containers*
Chakula - tʃakula	Dhakula - ðakula	*Food-foods*

The concordial agreement for class 7 in Kibajuni, uses the affix {ki}/{ch} and in plural {dh}. Examples in sentences:

Class 7	**Class 8**	**Phonetic transcription**	**Glossary**
Kikombe **ki**ndovundika	**Dh**ikombe dhindovundika	kikɔmbɛ kinḓɔvunḓika-ðikɔmbɛ ðinḓɔvunḓika -	*The cup has broken-the cups have broken*
Chakula **ki**tapikwa	**Dh**akula dhitapikwa	tʃakula kiṯapikwa-ðakula ðiṯapikwa	*The food will be cooked-The foods will be cooked.*
Chumba **ki**lisafishwa	Dhumba **dh**ilisafishwa	tʃumba kilisafiʃwa-ðumba ðilisafiʃwa.	*The room was cleaned-The rooms were cleaned*.

Class 9 &10

The 9 and 10 takes a nominal prefix of N-N but not all nouns start with N-N, there are those that do not take any specific affix, hence /Ø/, null affix. This is a class with different kinds of nouns and for singular and plural form it doesn't change but remains the same.

Examples of nouns in class 9 &10

Class 9	**Class 10**	**Gloss**
n̪umba	n̪umba	*house-houses*
Ɲguvo	ŋguvo	*cloth-clothes*
nd̪ovu	nd̪ovu	*elephant-elephant*
isi	isi	*fish-fishes*
n̪ama	n̪ama	*meat-meat*
n̪oka	n̪oka	*snake-snakes*
mɛða	mɛða	*table-tables*

The concordial agreement for class 9/10 is {i} and {ð} respectively. We have different animals that fall in this class but for concordial agreement they take the animate class of 1 & 2. Examples of sentences in this class:

Class 9	**Class 10**	**Phonetic form**	**Glossary**
Numba **i**lidhanywa.	Numba **dh**ilidhanywa.	n̪umba iliðaɲwa-n̪umba ðiliðaɲwa.	*A house was sold- The houses were sold.*
Nadhi **i**tapikiwa wali.	Nadhi **dh**itapikiwa wali.	naði it̪apikiwa wali-naði ðit̪apikiwa wali.	*The coconut will be used to prepare rice-The coconuts will be used to prepare rice.*
Isi **a**ndopikwa.	Isi **va**ndopikwa	isi and̪ɔpikwa-isi vand̪opikwa.	*The fish has been cooked-The fish have been cooked.*
Nachi **a**liumia.	Nachi **va**liumia	natʃi aliumia- natʃi valiumia.	*The buffalo got hurt-The buffaloes were hurt.*
Paka **a**linshika pana.	Paka **va**livashika pana.	Paka alinʃika pan̪a-paka valivaʃika pan̪a.	*The cat caught a rat. The cats caught thee rats.*

Class 11 & 10a

This class takes a nominal affix U in singular and N in plural or sometimes does not take a prefix in plural hence null morpheme {Ø}.

Examples of words from this class:

Class 11	Class 10a	Gloss
Udhi- uði	Nyudhi-ɲuði	*Thread-threads*
Uteo - uʈɛɔ	ʈeo- ʈɛɔ	*Winnower-winnowers*
Ulimi- ulimi	Ndrimi-ndrimi	*Tongue-tongues*
Ucha- utʃa	Nyucha-ɲutʃa	*Bow-bows*
Uvambaa-uvamba:	Mbambaa-mbamba:	*Wall-walls*

The concordial agreement for class 11 and 10a is {u} in singular and {dh) in plural. Examples in Kibajuni sentences:

Class 11	Class 10a	Phonetic form	Gloss
Udhi **u**likachika.	Nyudhi **dh**ilikachika.	uði ulikatʃika-ɲuði ðilikatʃika.	*The thread got cut-the threads got cut.*
Ulimi **u**ndoumia.	Ndrimi **dh**indoumia.	ulimi unɖɔumia-ɲdrimi ðinɖɔumia.	*The tongue has hurt-the tongues have hurt.*
Uvambaa **u**tabomoka.	Mbambaa **dh**itabomoka	uvamba: uʈabɔmɔka-mbamba: ði ʈabɔmɔka.	*The wall will fall. The walls will fall.*

Class 11a & 6a

In this class in singular form takes the nominal prefix of class 11 {U} and the plural takes the prefix of class 6, {Ma}.

Examples of words from this class:

Class 11a	Class 6a	Gloss
Udowe -udɔwɛ	Madowe -madɔwɛ	*Nail-nails*
Usiku- usiku	Masiku-masiku	*Night-nights*
Uovu- uɔvu	Maovu- maɔvu	*Bad deed-bad deeds*
Utungu-uʈuŋgu	Matungu- maʈuŋgu	*Bitterness*
Ubava-ubava	Mabava- mabava	*Wing- wings*
Uledhi –ulɛði	Maledhi-malɛði	*Upbringing*

For nouns like *uovu*, *utungu* and *uledhi* are abstract nouns that take the class of U-Ma while some abstract nouns take the class of U-U, for example; *udhuri, udhivu, uchafu, upweke* as we will see in our next class.

Class 14

In this class we have majority of the abstract nouns and uncountable nouns. All uncountable nouns take the nominal prefix {vu} while the abstract nouns take a prefix {u}. In this class the nominal prefix does not change in singular and plural forms.

Example of uncountable nouns:

Class 14	**Phonetic form**	**Gloss**
Vunga-**vu**nga	vuŋga- vuŋga	*Flour-flour*
Vuyi-**vu**yi	vuji –vuji	*Porridge-porridge*
Vuongo-**vu**ongo	vuɔŋgɔ-vuɔŋgɔ	*Clay-clay*

We also have abstract nouns in this class that take the prefix {u} in singular and plural.

Class 14	**Phonetic form**	**Gloss**
Udhivu-**u**dhivu	uðivu-uðivu	*Laziness*
Udavadhi-**u**davadhi	uɖavaði- uɖavaði	*Gluttony*
Upendo-**u**pendo	upɛnɖɔ - upɛnɖɔ	*Love*
Ujinga-**u**jinga	uɟiŋga - uɟiŋga	*Stupidity*
Udhuri-**u**dhuri	uðuri – uðuri	*Beauty*

Concordial agreement in this class takes {u} in singular and plural forms.

Class 14 singular	**Class 14 plural**	**Phonetic form**	**Gloss**
Vunga **u**lisuka.	Vunga **u**lisuka.	vuŋga ulisuka.	*The flour spilt.*
Vuyi **u**tapikwa.	Vuyi **u**tapikwa.	vuji utapikwa.	*Porridge will be prepared*

Udhivu **u**tanvua.	Udhivu **u**tavavua.	uðivu utanvua-uðivu utavavua.	*Laziness will kill him-laziness will kill them.*
Ujinga **u**linsababishia hasara.	Ujinga **u**livasababishia hasara.	uɟiŋga ulinsababiʃia hasara. uɟiŋga ulivasababiʃia hasara.	*His/her stupidity caused the loss.* *Their stupidity caused the loss.*

Noun Class 15

This is the class that contains nouns formed from verbs by the use of the infinitive 'ku' as the prefix. Nouns in this class comprise of the stem and the prefix {ku} and it can take an allomorph of [kw]. Nouns in this class do not take a plural marker, they remain the same in singular and plural.

Examples:

Class 15	**Phonetic form**	**Gloss**
Kutedha	kuṯɛ̪ða	*To play*
Kuimba	kuimba	*To sing*
Kuuka	ku:ka	*To jump*
Kuendra-**kw**endra	kwɛndra	To go
Kuvoa	kuvɔa	To rot

The concordial agreement of class 15 is {ku} and it doesn't change in singular and plural.

Examples

Class 15	**Phonetic form**	**Gloss**
Kutedha kwake kulichufurahisha	kuṯɛ̪ða kwakɛ kulitʃufurahiʃa	*Her dancing delighted us.*
Kuovoa kulinchulidha.	kuɔvɔa kulintʃuliða	*His marriage comforted him.*
Kuuka kwake kulimuumidha iguu.	kuuka kwakɛ kulimu:miða igu:	*His jumping caused him to hurt his leg.*

Noun Class of Place: 16 & 17

The noun class of place in Kibajuni is class 16 and 17 and is represented by nominal prefix {pa} and {ku} respectively. For class 16 it refers to a particular place but class 17 refers to general place, not specific. Kibajuni does not have class 18, {mu} like in Swahili Standard.

Examples:

Class 16	Class 17	Phonetic form	Gloss
Mahala ha**pa** **pa**pendwa.	Mahala hu**ku** **kw**apendwa.	mahala hapa papɛndwa mahala huku kwapɛndwa	*This place is clean.* *That place is clean.*
Sokoni hapa ni pachafu	Sokoni hu**ku** ni **ku**chafu.	sɔkɔni hapa ni pachafu. sɔkɔni huku ni kutʃafu	*This market is dirty.* *That market is dirty*

Verb Morphology

Verb morphology in Kibajuni like other Bantu languages can take different affixes, both prefixes and suffixes. The prefixes and suffixes perform different functions in those words. The verb root is the nucleus and can be affixed different affixes before the root or after the root. The verb root will always remain unchanged and can take inflectional and derivational affixes to give meaning to the verbs.

The Verb Root

In Kibajuni the verb root takes different structures as shown below:

	Structure of the root	Examples of verb roots	Examples of verb stems	Gloss
a	K, KK	-l-, -p-, -ny-, -nw-	kula, kupa, kunya kunwa	eat, give, excrete, drink,
b	VK	um-, at-	uma, ata	*bite, leave*
c	KVK	tedh-, pik-, lim-, som-, vak-, viv-nen-, pich- tek-	ʈedha, pika, lima, soma, vasa, viva, nena, picha, ʈeka	*Play, cook, cultivate, read, light (fire), ripen, say, pass, laugh*
d	VKK	imb-, omb-,	imba, omba	*sing, pray/beg*

e	VK	us-, ag-, os-	usa , aga, osa	throw, bye, clean
f	VKKVK	anguk-, ambach, - andik	anguka, ambacha andika	*fall, stick, write*
g	VKVK	adhim-,	adhima	*borrow*
h	KV	fu-, va-, vu-	fua, vaa, vua	*wash, wear, remove/take out*

Verb Affixes

The verb forms in Kibajuni takes diverse affixes, both before the root of the verb (prefixes) and after the root of the verb (suffixes). The prefixes in Bajuni verbs includes the personal marker, class agreement marker, negative marker, tense and aspect marker, reflexive marker, conditional marker and object marker. The suffixes that come after the verb root include the final vowel, negative marker, mood marker, reflexive marker and derivational markers.

Verb prefixes

Prefix function	**Verb prefix**	**Example**	**Gloss**
Personal marker	ni, chu, u, mu, a, va,	**ni**ṯakula, **chu**ṯakula, **u**ṯakula, **mu**ṯakula, **a**ṯakula, **va**ṯakula	*I will eat, we will eat, you will eat (sing/ plu.), she/he will eat, they will eat,*
Class agreement	u- i, li- ya, ki- dh, u-dh, u, ku, pa, ku.	nchi **u**lianguka, michi **i**lianguka, iyaani **li**lianguka, mayani **ya**lianguka, kichi **ki**livundika, dhichi **dh**ilivundika, udhi **u**likachika, nyudhi **dh**ilikachika, vuyi **u**lisuka, kula **ku**linshidra, pake **pa**lisafishwa, kwake **ku**lisafishwa.	*The tree fell-The trees fell. The leaf fell-the leaves fell. The chair broke-the chairs broke. The thread got cut off- the threads got cut off. The porridge spilled. She could not eat. Her place was cleaned (definite). Her place was cleaned (indefinite).*

Negative marker	si, ha	Sikula - hachukula, Hukula - hamukula, hakula-havakula	*I didn't eat-we didn't eat, you (sing) didn't eat- you (pl) didn't eat, he/she didn't eat - they didn't eat.*
Tense marker	hu, li, ṯa	imi hula, alikula, vaṯakula	*Am eating, he ate, they will eat.*
Aspect marker	ndo, hu, ka,	Ni**nḏo**kula, iye **hu**la, a**li**kuya a**ka**soma kiṯabu a**ka**la a**k**aiyala.	*I have eaten, he eats, he/she came, read a book, ate and slept.*
Reflexive marker	'o'	Mwana a**lo**umia - Vana vali**vo**umia/ valoumia, nchi u**lo**kachwa - michi i**lo**kachwa, iyenyo li**loṯ**olewa-menyo a**lo**tolewa.	*The child that got hurt, The children who got hurt,* *the tree that was cut- the trees that were cut, The tooth that was removed- The teeth that were removed.*
Conditional marker	ki, ngeli, ngali	U**ki**va nkuru ṯakupa simu, U**ngali**kula u**ngali**shiba, U**ngeli**tedha u**ngeli**shidra.	*When you grow up I will give you a phone. Had you eaten you will be satisfied.* *Had you played you would have won.*
Object marker	n/mu, va	Mwana ali**n**baulia, Vana vali**va**pikia. Ali**mu**imbia	The child urinated on her/him. Children cooked for them. He/she sang for her/him.

Verb Suffixes

Verb suffixes are affixes that come after the root of the verb. Kibajuni has suffixes attached after the root of verbs like final vowel, negative marker, mood marker, reflexive marker, immediate past and derivational markers.

Examples:

Suffix function	**Verb suffix**	**Example**	**Gloss**
Final vowel	A	pik-**a**, ṯedh-**a**, imb-**a**, uk-**a**	Cook, play, sing, jump
Negative marker	I	sil**i**, hapik**i**, havatedh**i**, hachuimb**i**	Am not eating, she is not cooking, they are not playing, we are not singing
Mood marker (imperative)	a, ani	pik**a**! uk**a**! imb**a**! imb**ani**! pik**ani**! ṯedh**ani**!	Cook! jump! Sing! Sing (pl)! cook (pl)! tedhani (pl)!
Reflexive marker	'o'	Mwana aimba**o** ṯapacha dhawadi. Vana vasoma**vo** hufaulu.	A child who sings will get a present. Children who studies succeeds.
Immediate past	ie/ee	ukimbidh**ie**, upis**ie,** wend**ee**, usom**ee**	He just ran, he just passed, he just went, he just read
Derivational markers	ia/ea, an, ish/ez, w, iw/ew,	ruk**ia**, chekea pig**an**a, chom**an**a, pik**ish**a, chez**esh**a pik**w**a, chom**w**a pik**iw**a, som**ew**a	Jump towards, laugh at Fight, burn each other Make to cook, make to play Be cooked, be burnt Be cooked for, be read for

Agreement

Personal pronouns agreement

In Kibajuni we have affixes for personal pronouns for first person, second person and third person both singular and plural.

1st person singular {ni} plural {chu}
2nd person singular {u} plural {mu}
3rd person singular {a} plural {va}

Examples in sentences:

1st person: Sing. **Ni**-alikula →Nalikula chakula Pl. **Chu**-alikula→ Chwalikula chakula

(I ate food - We ate food)

Sing. **Ni**ṭasoma kwa biḍii. Pl. **Chu**ṭasoma kwa bidii.

(I will study hard - We will study hard).

2nd Person: Sing. **U**ṭakwendra sokoni? Pl. **Mu**ṭakwendra sokoni*?*

(Will you(sing) go to the market? - Will you (pl) go to the market).

Sing. **U**ṭachelewa sukuli. Pl. **Mu**ṭachelewa sukuli.

(You (sing) will be late to school - You (pl) will be late to school).

3rd person: Sing. **A**lipondrwa na inya. Pl. **Va**lipondrwa na venyavo.

(He/she was beaten by her mother - They were beaten by their mothers)

Alikuya mapema yana. Pl. **Va**likuya mapema yana.

(He/she came early yesterday/ They came early yesterday).

Class Agreement

Class agreement takes the concordial agreement of different classes as we have seen. Each noun will take an agreement according to the class it belongs, here are few examples:

Nnadhi **u**lianguka – Minadhi **i**lianguka.

(The coconut tree fell - the coconut trees fell).

Ingi **li**nḍovundika - Maingi **a**nḍovundika.

(*The egg has broken - The eggs have broken).*

Kichandra kiṭayaliwa – Dhichandra dhiṭayaliwa.

(*The bed will be slept on - The beds will be slept on).*

Ṉumba p'ia **i**lipakwa rangi - Ṉumba p'ia **dhi**lipakwa rangi.
(New house was painted - New houses were painted)

Tense and Aspect markers

Kibajuni uses various tense and aspect markers in their verbs to denote different context.

Present tense

In Kibajuni the affix {a} is used for present tense. Although this affix is not commonly used as Nurse (1982a) says, this tense marker is only used for some few verbs like 'penda, taka, weza and jua'. Mostly it is used as auxiliary verbs in sentences.

Examples:

1. Sing. Ni-a- ṯaka kufua nguvo→Naṯaka kufua nguvo. *(I want to wash clothes).*

   Pl. Chu-a- ṯaka kufua nguvo→chwaṯaka kufua nguvo. *(We want to wash clothes)*.

2. Sing. Mwana a-apenḏa kula bodo kwa isi. *(The child likes eating ugali with fish).*

   Pl. Vana vapenḏa kula bodo kwa isi. (*Children likes eating ugali with fish).*

3. Ni-aṯaka→Naṯaka kusoma Kuruani. *(I want to read Qur'an).*

   Pl. Chu-aṯaka→Chwaṯaka kusoma Kuruani. *(We want to read Qur'an).*

Future tense

Kibajuni uses the prefix {ṯa} as a future tense marker.

Examples in sentences:

a) Sing. Mwana aṯasoma kiṯabu. Pl. Vana vaṯasoma dhiṯabu. *(A child will read a book. The children will read books).*

b) Sing. Mbudhi aṯakula magugu. Pl. Mbudhi vaṯakula magugu. *(A goat will eat grass. Goats will eat grass).*

c) Sing. Kichi kiṯachengedhwa. Pl. Dhichi dhiṯachengedhwa. (*The chair will be repaired. The Chairs will be repaired).*

Past tense

Kibajuni distinguishes two past tenses relating to the distance in time a particular act occurred in relation to the moment of speaking. For immediate past Kibajuni uses {ie} or {ee} as a suffix and for distant past uses {li}.

The immediate past

For the root of the verbs that have a vowel {a,{i},{u} they take the suffix {ie} while the verbs with the verb root with the vowel {e} or {o} they take the suffix {ee}.

Examples:

1. Sing. Hassani wend**ee** hondreni changu asubuhi. Pl. Kina Hassani vend**ee** hondreni changu asubuhi. (*Hassan went to the farm since morning. They (Hassan and others) went to the farm since morning).*
2. Sing. Baba ugur**ie** kwechu. Pl. Baba vagur**ie** kwechu. *(Dad has moved from our house. Dads have moved from our house).*

For immediate past, the act has been done today, before the end of the day today, if it takes longer then we use the distant past.

Distant past

In Kibajuni, the distant past uses the prefix{li} like Standard Swahili.

Examples:

a) Sing. Amina a<u>li</u>kula wali yana. Pl. Kina Amina va<u>li</u>kula wali yana. *(Amina ate rice yesterday. They (Amina and others) ate rice yesterday).*

b) Sing. Nchi u<u>li</u>kachwa. Pl. Michi i<u>li</u>kachwa*. (The tree was cut. The trees were cut).*

Habitual aspect

In Kibajuni the habitual aspect marker is {hu} which signifies habitual action which also means usual. In Kibajuni just like Standard Swahili the {hu} aspect marker is used for both singular and plural and the subject prefix is not used. The same habitual prefix {hu} is also used as present continuous aspect marker in Kibajuni while in Standard Swahili {na} is

used. Some authors like Steer (1976), Ashton (1982) and Mohammed (2001) take the prefix {na} as a present tense marker but {na} is a present continuous aspect marker in Standard Swahili. Therefore, Kibajuni takes the prefix {hu} as a habitual aspect marker and also present continuous aspect marker.

Examples:

a) Sing. Mwana hu̱tedha. Pl. vana hu̱tedha. (*The child is playing/Children are playing. The child usually plays/ The children usually play).*

b) Sing. Ng'ombe hunwa mayi kisimani. Pl. Ng'ombe hunwa mayi kisimani. (*The cow is drinking water at the well/ The cows are drinking water at the well. Also: Usually the cow drinks water at the well. Usually the cows drink water at the well).*

Present perfect aspect

In Kibajuni the present perfect aspect marker is {nḏo} to signify a completed action with reference to the present. Some Bajuni from places like Ndau uses {nḏa} instead of {nḏo} for the same meaning. These are some of the minor differences which are there among the Bajuni. But for the sake of this paper we will use {nḏo} which is used by the majority of Bajuni speakers.

Examples:

a) Sing. Nchi u**nḏo**anguka. Pl. Michi i**nḏo**anguka. *(The tree has fallen/ The trees have fallen).*

b) Sing. Ndhee a**nḏo**pondrwa.Pl. Vadhee va**nḏo**pondrwa. (*The old man has been beaten/The old men have been beaten).*

Negation

Negation is also an important marker in Bajuni verbs. Most of them occur as prefix but we have few suffixes. In Bajuni the prefix {si} and {ha} are used as subject prefix. All subject prefix use {ha} except for first person singular uses {si}. For future tense and present continuous/habitual aspect takes the suffix {i}.

Examples:

1. Imi **hu**la - Imi **sili.** *I am eating/ I usually eat- Am not eating/ Am usually not eating.*
2. Iye **hu**tedha- Iye **ha**tedh**i.** *He/she is playing/ He /she is not playing.*
3. A**ṯa**soma kesho- **Ha**som**i** kesho. *He/she will read tomorrow/ he/she will not read tomorrow.*

Negation of infinitive verbs, the prefix {ṯo} is added after the affix ku- of infinitive verbs.

Examples:

a) Kuimba-ku**ṯo**imba. *To sing/ not to sing*

b) Kupika-ku**ṯo**pika. *(To cook/ not to cook).*

Negation of present perfect tense {nḏo} is replaced with the prefix {ya}:

1) Va**nḏo**kula chakula chote- **Ha**va**ya**la chakula cho**ṯe**. (*They have eaten all the food/ they have not eaten all the food).*
2) Nchi u**nḏo**kachwa- Nchi **ha**u**ya**kachwa. (*The tree has been cut – The tree has not been cut).*

For negative conditional aspect of {ki} Kibajuni uses {sipo} like Standard Swahili.

a) U**ki**pika wali ṯakula-U**sipo**pika wali sili. *(If you cook rice I will eat/ If you don't cook rice I will not eat.)*

b) U**ki**pacha kadhi nijengea ṉumba – U**sipo**pacha kadhi sinijengee ṉumba. (*When you are employed construct a house for me/ when you are not employed don't construct a house for me).*

The infinitive

In Kibajuni just like Standard Swahili, the infinitive form is recognized with the addition of prefix {ku} in the stem of the verb. Here are examples:

Kula *(to eat)*, kuimba *(to sing),* ku**ṉ**edha *(to play),* kusoma *(to read*), kusimama *(to stand)*

Negating the infinitives in Kitikuu uses the prefix {ku**ṯo**}:

Ku**ṯo**kula *(not to eat),* ku**ṯo**imba *(not to sing),* ku**ṯo**ṯedha, *(not to play),* ku**ṯo**soma *(not to read),* ku**ṯo**simama *(not to stand)*

The imperative

The imperative in Kibajuni takes the stem of the verb and is used in the expression of commands hence must end with an exclamation mark.

Examples:

Ila! (eat!) imba! (sing!) ṯedha! (play!) soma! (read!) simama! (stand!)

The plural of imperatives in Kibajuni adds the suffix {-ani} to the verb root:

Il**ani**! *(eat!)*, imb**ani**! *(sing!)*, ṯedh**ani**! (*play!)* , som**ani**! *(read!)*, simam**ani** *(stand!)*

Negating the imperatives, Kibajuni uses the prefix {u} for second person singular and ends with the suffix {-e}. Here are examples of negating commands and also negative subjunctive.

Usile! *(Do not eat!),* Usiimbe! *(Do not sing!),* Usiṯedhe! *(Do not play!),* Usisimame *(Do not stand!)*

For negating plural imperatives, add the second person plural as the prefix:

Musile! (*Do not eat!*), Musiimbe! *(Do not sing!),* Musiṯedhe! (*Do not play!)* Musisimame! *(Do not stand!).*

Phrase Structures

Phrases are classified in different groups like noun phrase, verb phrase, adjective phrase and adverb phrase.

Noun Phrase

The elements that falls under noun phrase in Kibajuni are as follows:

a) Single noun or two nouns

i) Amina alikuya yana. *(Amina came yesterday).*

ii) Mame na baba hupika chakula. (*Mom and dad are cooking food).*

b) A noun and an adjective

Adjectives can be of different types like demonstrative, numeral, possessive, descriptive etc.:

i) Mwana huu hasikii nno. *(This child is naughty).*

ii) Vachu vaṯano valivuwawa. *(Five people were killed).*

iii) Kichi changu kinḏovunḏika. (*My chair has broken).*

iv) Nchi nkuru ulikachwa. *(The big tree was cut).*

c) Pronoun and pronoun with modifiers

i) Isi vote chuṯakuya. *(We will all come).*

ii) Imi sili wali eo. *(Am not eating rice today).*

iii) Ivo vavili ni vidhi. *(Both of them are thieves).*

iv) Huu mbwake. *(This is hers/his).*

Verb Phrase

The basic verb phrases in Kibajuni takes the following forms:

a) Where there is the main verb in a phrase

i) Mame hupika chakula. (*Mom is cooking food).*

ii) Mbudhi alikula magugu. *(The goat ate the grass).*

b) Main verb occurring with auxiliary verb/s

i) Mwana apenḏa kulia. (*The child like crying).*

ii) Mwalimu alikuva akisoma na kuanḏika ubavoni. (*The teacher was reading and writing on the board).*

c) Copular verb standing as a verb:

i) Halima ni mwalimu ndhuri. *(Halima is a good teacher*).

ii) Mwidhi ndriye huu. (This is the thief).

d) Verb with an adverb

i) Maria husoma sana. (*Maria reads a lot)*

ii) Vana hava havasikii nno. *(These children are very naughty).*

e) Verb and an object

i) Maria aliuka kamba. *(Maria is skipping a rope).*

ii) Mwana hunwa shai. *(The child is drinking tea).*

Adverbial Phrase

Adverbial phrase in Kibajuni comes after the verb, it can be one, two or compound as shown:

i) Mwalimu hufundrisha kwa udhuri. (*The teacher teaches well).*
ii) Ndrege ilianguka kwa nshindro nkuru. *(The airplane dropped with a huge bang).*
iii) Isi ni nkuru nno**.** *(The fish is so big).*

Adjectival Phrases

In Kibajuni the adjectival phrases act as modifiers of the noun and they normally come after the noun or pronoun. There are different types of adjectives namely descriptive, numeral, possessive, demonstrative and quantitative.

Examples in sentences:

i) Mwana huu ṯapondwa nno. (*This child will be beaten a lot).*
ii) Vana hava voṯe vaṯasoma sukuli moya. (*All these children will go to the same school).*
iii) Valimu vachachu vaṯaaṉdikwa kadhi. *(Three teachers will be employed).*
iv) Ng'ombe vangu valikula sumu yana*. (My cows got poisoned yesterday).*
v) Mwanafuṉdi nrefu mwembamba alipicha nṯihani. (*The tall slender pupil passed her examination).*

The Clause Structure

A clause is larger than phrases, words and morphemes and mostly smaller than the sentence. Clauses are classified as main or independent clause and subordinate or dependent clause. A clause can be a simple sentence (independent) or part of a sentence (dependent). A clause is mainly made up of a subject and predicator.

Subject

Kibajuni being an SVO (subject-verb-object) language, normally the subject takes the first position in a sentence. The subject can be nouns, pronouns or subject prefix of nominal concord.

Examples:

a) Fatuma aṯapika chakula. (*Fatuma will cook the food*).

b) Iye hayi eo. *(He/she is not coming today).*
c) Alisoma kwa bidii. *(He worked hard in his studies)*

Predicator

The predicator mostly follows the subject in a clause, but it can stand on its own and carry a nominal prefix. The predicator is a verb of different types.

Examples:

a) Halima hula dhiadhi. *(Halima is eating potatoes).*
b) Hamisi ni mwalimu ndhuri. *(Hamisi is a good teacher).*
c) Atashindra mashindrano. *(He will win the competition).*

Complement / Object

The complement is mostly a noun acting as an object in the clause/ sentence.

Examples:

a) Wadhiri alitembelea sukuli echu yana. (*The minister visited our school yesterday).*
b) Mwalimu alinpondra mwanafundi kiboko. *(The teacher canned the student).*
c) Paka alinshika pana. *(The cat caught the rat).*

Types of Clauses

Clauses in Kibajuni are divided into two; main clause/ independent clause and subordinate/ dependent clause.

Main / Independent clause

Main or independent clause is a clause that can stand on its own as a simple sentence. Main clause conveys a complete meaning in a sentence. Main clause takes a predicate to make it independent, and it can also take a subject and an object.

Examples of main clauses:

a) Alisoma. *(He read).*
b) Halima ni mwalimu. *(Halima is a teacher).*

c) Nḏoo hapa! (*Come here!)*
d) Hassani aṯakuya kesho. *(Hassan will come tomorrow).*
e) Mwanafunḏi huanḏika ubavoni. *(The learner is writing/usually writes on the board).*

Subordinate/ Dependent clause

Subordinate clause is dependent, meaning they cannot stand on their own and to have a grammatically correct construction. It needs an independent clause to make it complete/ acceptable. In a sentence, subordinate clauses are normally identified with subordinate markers to link with the main clause like ili (so that), ingava (although), ivapo (when/if), kwamba (that) and the use of 'o' relatives and amba-.

Examples:

a) Ivapo mutachusubiri chutakuya kula. *(If you will wait for us we will come to eat).*
b) Ingava mwalimu ni ndhuri, vanafunḏi havapasi ntihani. *(Although the teacher is good, the learners do not pass exams).*
c) Asosikia hai kwangu. (*Those who are naughty are not coming to my place*).
d) Valodhama vanḏopachikana vanḏokufa. (*Those who drowned, have been saved but already dead).*
e) Mwana aloumwa na ṉoka anḏoechwa sipichali. (*The child who was bitten by a snake has been brought to the hospital).*

Sentence

A sentence is the largest unit of grammar after phrases and clauses. It contains expression of a complete statement. There are three types of sentences:

a) Simple sentences
b) Compound sentences
c) Complex sentences

Simple sentences

Bajuni simple sentences contains independent clause/ thought.

Examples:

Subject and verb

i) Alii alisoma. *(Ali read)*
ii) Iye alisoma /Alisoma. *(He read)*

Subject, verb and object

i) Maria alivaa nguvo. (*Maria wore clothes).*
ii) Iye alivaa nguvo/ Alivaa nguvo. *(She wore clothes).*

Subject, verb and two objects

i) Halima aṯavapa vana dhawaḏi. *(Halima will give the children presents*).
ii) Iye aṯavapa vana dhawaḏi / atavapa vana dhawaḏi. (*She will give presents to the children).*

Complex sentences

These are sentences with two or more clauses and one must be a subordinate/dependent clause. As we had seen in Kibajuni, subordinate clauses may take subordinating conjunctions like *ingava, ivapo, ili, kwamba, kwa kuva, kama* and reflexives.

Complex sentences with subordinating conjunctions

a) Alisoma kwa biḏii **ili** apiche nṯihani. *(He worked hard so that he passes the exam).*
b) **Haṯa kama** vangalikuya singalivapa dhiṯabu. *(Even if they would have come, I would not have given them books).*
c) **Ivapo** vaṯaruhusiwa kungia nawe uṯangia. (*If they will be allowed to enter, you will also enter).*
d) Hamisi alikuya **ingava** alichelewa. *(Hamisi came though he delayed).*
e) **Kwa kuva** alivunḏa sharia, asikari alinshika. *(Because he broke the rule, the police got hold of him).*

Relativization: Complex sentences with relative 'o' or amba-

a) Mwanafunḏi a**lo**anguka andoechwa. (*The learner who fell has been brought).*

b) Kisu ki**lo**nkacha ni hichi hapa. *(The knife that cut her is this).*
c) Maradhi a**lo**nshika an̲onkondresha. (*The disease that afflicted her/him has weakened her/him).*
d) Mahali vali**ko**ku̲taua hakufai. (*The place they chose is not suitable).*
e) Vanafun̲di **ambavo** vatasoma kwa udhuri, vatapawa dhawadi. *(For those learners who will read well they will be rewarded).*

Complex sentences without conjunctions and relativization:

a) U**ki**la kwa udhuri u̲tapacha nguvu. *(If you eat well you will grow healthy).*
b) U**ngali**kuva na sen̲ti u**ngali**nijengea n̲umba. (*If you had a lot of money you would have built a house for me).*
c) Ali**po**kuya nkuchanoni vachu vote valimwangalia. *(When he came for the meeting everybody was staring at him).*

Compound Sentences

Compound sentences are two or more simple sentences combined as one sentence with the use of coordinating conjunctions or without. In Kibajuni the main coordinating conjunctions are na, lakini, kama, kwa sababu, au, t̲ena, mbedha nk.

Examples of sentences with coordinating conjunctions:

a) Hamisa husoma lakini Hamisi hufua nguvo. *(Hamisa is reading but Hamisi is washing clothes).*
b) Mame hupika chakula na vana huosa dhombo. *(Mom is cooking and children are cleaning utensils).*
c) Fatuma hakuya sukuli mbedha hasikii udhuri. (*Fatuma did not come to school maybe she is not feeling well.)*
d) Mwana aliumwa na imbwa t̲ena akaanguka. *(The child was bitten by a dog and he also fell).*
e) Mwanafun̲di alipondrwa na mwalimu kwa sababu hakumalidha kadhi. (*The learner was canned by the teacher because he/she did not finish the work).*

Some compound sentences can be combined without coordinating conjunctions, here are examples:

a) Alichumwa akanunue isi, hakwendra. (*She was sent to buy fish; she didn't go).*
b) Mame hupika chakula meshekuu, isi vote chuiyele. *(Mom cooks the food very early in the morning, we are all sleeping).*
c) Alii, mwene duka, hafungui duka mapema. *(Alii, the owner of the shop, does not open the shop early).*
d) Baba alikuya n̪umbani; nin̪dokwisha kuiyala. *(Dad came home; I had already slept).*

For compound sentences two simple sentences or two independent clauses are combined to form one sentence with the use of coordinating conjunctions or without.

Conclusion

This paper has given a descriptive analysis of the structure of Kibajuni language. It has outlined the phonology of Kibajuni looking at the Bajuni vowels and consonants. It has described the Bajuni morphology and discussed in detail the nominal and verbal morphology of Kibajuni. Lastly is the syntax of Kibajuni where the phrases, clauses and types of sentences in Kibajuni are described.

Endnotes

[1] Makuti are sun-dried leaves of the coconut palm used for roofing along the Kenyan coast.

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Chapter Five

Historical Analysis of the Formation of Bajuni Material Heritage from 1300AD to 1900

Athman Hussein Athman

Introduction

The Swahili coast has received substantial histo-archaeological and anthropological research over 5 decades. These studies have mainly concentrated on the migration, maritime trade, linguistics, and hinterland connections to the Indian Ocean. The output of the efforts has been publication of papers, books, and reports. Though the Bajunia re among the biggest and popular amongst the Swahili sub-groups, sadly their political, cultural and, mercantile history has not been adequately studied. Perhaps the most significant studies so far accomplished are the ones done by Grottanelli (1955), Bujra (1968), Nurse, (1980) and Mahazi (2018). However, all the studies did not specifically dwell on the Bajuni material culture. This paper seeks to address the gap by exploring the period before and after the coming of the Portuguese. More importantly, it will look at the Omani Arabs tenure in East Africa coast and their contribution in enriching the Bajuni material culture.

In preparing the paper, the author utilized social research methodologies such as consulting and relying on primary and secondary sources of information and review of published and unpublished materials including works of prominent anthropologists, like Grottenelli (1955), Bujra (1968) Brown (1988), Namunaba (2020) and archaeologists who excavated various historic sites in the region such as Willson and Omar (1997), Horton (1996), Kirkman (1964), and Chittick (1980) and to arrive at an objective view on the Bajuni material culture. The study has established that Bajuni are people with deep-rooted cultural traditions and history accumulated over long period of time and have enjoyed

centuries of tranquility but political misfortune befell on them after independence of both Somalia and Kenya that disturbed their cultural bond and economic fortunes. This study is a maiden attempt to bring to the surface the historical incidences that have led to the formation of Swahili-Bajuni material heritage albeit not exhaustive in the technical aspects of the Bajuni material culture which can be left for further studies.

The Bajuni people

The Bajuni are a distinct community belonging to the larger Swahili people whose geographical location commences from Kismayu to the north down to the Lamu archipelago, the Kenyan and Tanzania coast dropping down to northern Mozambican littoral. In between the same geographical area, the Bajuni (also known as Watikuu) have for centuries occupied a narrow strip including several offshore Islands within a distance of about 250 Kilometres from the Kismayu moving down to Lamu Archipelago. Their main language is Kitikuu (whose grammar is discussed by Rukia Swaleh in this book) and virtually all of them profess Islam as their religion. Just like other Swahili groups, the Bajuni subsisted through fishing, agriculture, livestock husbandry, and maritime trade. Outside aforementioned occupations, the Bajuni are also exquisite artisans and have for centuries demonstrated their amazing skills in dhow building, woodwork, wood carving, textile production, pottery, masonry, and metallurgy. Their rich material heritage has accumulated over many centuries, of trade, travel, intermarriage, colonization, and settlement of foreign groups of people mainly from Arabia, Persia, Portugal, China, and India.

They are known to be peaceful people who lived in small towns ((*mui (sing/mii (pl.))* before the coming of the colonial powers and before the shifta menace which drove them out of their ancestral land. Each town survived as an independent city-state with its own town leader or elder popularly referred to as *ndhee wa mui (town elder) (*Grottanelli 1955). The town elder ostensibly dealt with daily political and administrative matters and also acted as a religious Sheikh who ruled on family disputes using Islamic jurisprudence. Both the Quran and unwritten cultural laws and traditions were applied in governing the towns depending on the case when settling internal or external disputes. However, the Islamic laws

superseded all other laws on the land. For centuries, the Bajuni towns enjoyed peaceful coexistence and traded independently yet cooperated in cultural and religious matters. However, the maiden test of their independence came when the Portuguese conquered the East African coast and forcefully dissolved the internal ruling system of many of the Bajuni towns within the Indian Ocean littoral forcing the legendary Zenj Empire to pay allegiance to Lisbon (Strandes 1961; Berg 1974). Although most of the coastal towns resisted and revolted against the Portuguese all the same, the tranquility and independence were never to be regained. The last straw that broke the camel's back was the arrival of the British and Italian colonialists who created the international boundaries which saw the once culturally and religiously cohesive community of the Bajuni split and alienated between Kenya and Somalia.

The Bajuni history and cultural formation

The legendary Bajuni "empire" before the 1885 partition of East Africa by European imperialists commenced from Kismayu stretching down south to Lamu archipelago in a long strip of about 250 kilometers. From the Somalia side, the Bajuni are dominantly found in Kismayu, Koyama Island, Gedeni, Ngumi Island, Bur-Kavo, Madoga, Fuma, Chula Island, Chovae Island, Mdova Island, Kulmisi, and Kiamboni. On the Kenyan side along the coast, they occupy Ishakani which is right at the border with Somalia then Kiunga, Matironi, Ashuwei, Rubu, Mwambore, Mvundeni, Simambae, and Mkokoni. On the Lamu archipelago, they live in Kiwayuu, Ndau, Faza (Rasini), Chundwa, Myabogi, Mbwajumali, Kizingitini and Mtangawanda. On the eastern side of Pate Island, near the old Shanga, there is Shanga Rubu, and Shanga Ishakani one recent didemic town that grew after *Shifta* attacks of 1960s which forced the dwellers of the two mentioned towns to move from the mainland (Ochieng & Omar, this Volume).

Going back to 1900 and before the Second World War (1939-1945) the total population of the Bajuni in all the towns was not more than 5000 people. Grottaneli (1955) reported that in 1926 the lowest-populated Bajuni town was about 150 persons while the highest-populated town of Chula had about 300 people. Grottanelli (1955) further asserts that the total population of all the towns before the Second World War on the

Somalia side was about 2000 or less. Whilst, on the Kenyan side Horace Clive in his 1945 report estimated that the population was not more than 2500. The mentioned census does not include Siu, Pate, Lamu, Shela, and Matondoni as inhabitants of these towns claim that they do not trace their ancestry to *Tikuuni* (Bajuni region). The census figures have continued to suppress Bajuni identity with the latest survey of 2019 aggregating them to 90,000 persons - a figure which fearlessly disputed by the local politicians. The imprecise ethnic distinction between the Bajuni and Swahili may have played. It is likely that during the census some Bajuni were identified as Swahili and vice versa.

The origins of Bajuni people cannot be divorced from the larger early history of Swahili people because there are obvious similarities in terms of culture, belief, livelihood, and language. Thus, in any discourse of the aforesaid areas, we have to begin by generalizing the discussion before going to the specific areas unique to the Bajuni.

Before the coming of Islam historians and linguists have agreed that the Bajuni are part of the Swahili people and therefore all trace their origins from the proverbial Shungwaya region which is geographically located between Marka, Somalia down south to the River Tana in Kenya (Nurse, 1980; Allen, 1993). Before 600AD the communities living around this region were mainly Bantu-speaking people who trace their origins in the modern-day Congo but split up with the rest to trek down to the Shungwaya region roughly between 2500BC to 1500CE (Posnansky, 1980; Sutton, 1980). But even at Shungwaya there was also confusion and internal clan fights which led to certain groupd, beside the Bajuni, migrating down south. However, the Pokomo and the Mijikenda communities remained on the Kenyan coast but opted to do farming as the principal occupation compared to the Wangozi who were both farmers and seafarers (Nurse, Hinnebusch,1993). During this time, the Bajuni people were mainly referred to as Wangozi and their language was Kingozi (Nurse, 1980). Probably the coinage of the name Wangozi was because the people were good at turning cow skin into formidable domestic leather products and attire. Other historians suggest that the Wangozi attire which was made out of cattle skin was the reason that made them caustically referred to as *wavaa ngozi*. At this time most of the Bantu Wangozi were foragers but gradually assimilated to the coastal environment which gave them

options to interact with the vast sea at their disposal compared to the Bantu kinsmen who were left at the interlacustrine region (Allen, 1993).

In their new home, Wangozi (henceforth the Bajuni or Watikuu) started to develop new ways of livelihood such as fishing and seafaring to ease them up from foraging (Posnansky, 1980). In trying to deal with the perilous vast sea challenges the Watikuu gradually learned the skills of making small vessels like *mitumbwi* (canoes) and later graduated to bigger *mashuwa* vessels to help them explore far lands. It is perhaps against this reason that most of the Bajuni towns developed along the shoreline to effectively interact with the ocean. The Bajuni often invoke their Shungwaya lineage and remain the only Swahili speaking community associated with the Shungwaya legend of migration since their arrival from Congo up to date. This attestation has given them the often expressed claim that Swahili language developed from Kitikuu (Nabhany, Personal communivcation). Questions such as the point at which the community changed its name from Watikuu to Bajuni remain. Is it before or after the coming of Islam? There are many conflicting versions of how Watikuu came to be known Bajuni. However, the most plausible is the one advanced by Bajuni oral historians that the name Bajuni derived from a clan of *Al-Jun* who came from Arabia and settled on the Somalia side of the Bajuni land and after intermarriage with the Watikuu the offspring were called the Bajuni (Khuchi, Personal communication, 2020). Certainly, this is an open-ended discourse that the author will not wish to wade through owing to the limited space allocated to the essay to concentrate on the subject of the Bajuni material heritage.

The arrival and introduction of Islam by the Persians and Arab settlers, traders, and evangelists was a turning point for the Bajuni community. Centuries of intermarriage and commercial interaction stimulated by Indian Ocean monsoon winds which drove dhows of mercantilists and fortune seekers from Arabia, Persia, and India made a huge impact on the Kingozi language and culture (Allen, 1993). The period from 600AD to 1300AD stands out as the beginning of Zenj Empire which saw the emergence of tens of well-organized Bajuni settlements dotted from southern Somalia down to Kenya and Tanzania to the northern Mozambique (Chittic,1980). The unknown Greek writer of the *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* made a good account of the East

African coast; painting a picture of well-organized people in terms of trade and use of *mtepe* (sawn boat) for transportation (Freeman-Grenville, 1962). The sawn boats have for centuries believed to have been built in the Lamu region up till the 1930s with the Bajuni providing both the building material and the master craftsmen known locally as *mafundi* to manufacture them (Brown, 1988; Prins, 1965).

Without doubt, the new religion brought by the Middle Eastern settlers energized the region with a completely new layer of laws, culture, and tradition which slowly fused together with the Bajuni-Bantu culture through conjugal interaction and trade (Muhiddin, 1993). This is the period the *Watikuu* people got a complete cultural make-over which saw the introduction of a new line of ethnic groups, clans, and genealogies brought out of the intermarriage between Wanati (the indigenes) *and* the immigrants. (Pouwels, 1987). The offspring of the two groups besides possessing Bantu-related clans and sub-clans in their social and cultural setup, also claim to directly belong to Arabian and Persian ethnic lineage. Hence the Watikuu/Bajuni embraced Persian clans such as *Shiradhi or* Washirazi, Al-naufali, Al Kindy, Al-Ausi, Al-khazraji all these ethnicities came from Hijaz mainly Mecca and present-day Yemen. Besides the new Arabian clans, there were also slightly older clans that trace their origins from Cushitic Somalia such as Firado, Kachwa, Kismayu, Tawayu, Avutila, Kilio, Daile, Amshiri, Hartikawa, Dili, Gare, Abugado, amongst others (Grottanelli 1955; Nurse, 1980).

The newcomers turned around the Bajuni trade patterns from inter-town to continental via the Indian Ocean to link up to Arabia, Persia, India, and the far East. The Bajuni boats arrived from the aforementioned places to bring in merchandise such as dates, dried fruits, cloth, silk, porcelain ware, glass beads, weapons, and furniture. The foreign merchants were able to barter with the natives' goods which included elephant tusks, gold, slaves, hides skin, and cereals (Chittick, Rotberg, 1975). With the newcomers presence, the vibrant and flourishing international trade saw the emergence of very wealthy and well-organized stone towns like Shanga, Pate, Manda, Lamu, Mwana, Ungama, Shaka, Gede, Unguja-Ukuu, and Kilwa. The Bajuni towns including Kismayu and Marka benefitted from these encounters. Their mosques were built using coral stones, and lime mortar with mangrove poles supported roof slabs (Wlson, 1980; Garlake, 1966).

The period between 1000AD to 1400 is referred to as the golden age of Swahili civilization. Foreign explorers such as Al Masoudy, and Al Idris offered an in-depth analysis of the coast revealing well-sophisticated, wealthy, and organized towns dominated by staunch Muslims (Freeman-Grenville, 1962) It is during that period explorers mentioned for the first time the *daulate-zinj* and the existence of *banu sahel* or people of the coast if loosely translated from Arabic language (Hall,1996). However, the much-privileged Swahili Empire's golden age ended in 1500 with the arrival of the Portuguese and later the Omani Arabs which saw the dismantling of the powerful and autonomous Swahili city-states to create a single dominion.

The Portuguese and Omani influence on Bajuni material heritage

The Portuguese bumped into the East African coast through sheer luck. In trying to find a way to India they made unannounced stop-overs at Kilwa, Mombasa, and Malindi and were astonished by the wealth and grandeur of these towns. After returning to Portugal, they decided to conquer the Swahili coast and emasculate the region to their benefit. Several military expeditions were done from 1500 and lasted for ten years which saw the entire group of coastal city-states from Kilwa up to Marka fall under Portuguese rule (Strandes,1961). During their two hundred years of harsh autocratic rule, they burnt, plundered, and forcefully controlled city-states like Kilwa, Pate, and Mombasa. They imposed their hash laws which destroyed four centuries of seamless trade links with Arabia, Persia, and India (Hall, 1996).

The economic gains of the golden age which saw the transformation of the east African coast and the introduction of foreign merchandise in the form of furniture, metallurgical products, domestic appliances, leather products, textile materials, and cloth slowly faded away under the hands of Portuguese. The Portuguese rule was a curse to the east African coast as throughout their stay the region became the bedrock of conflicts until the Omani Arabs came in 1698 and eventually ejected them after severally attempts (Berg, 1974). Though the Portuguese left the east African coast with bitterness, they nevertheless, introduced some material culture such as the *kasha* (treasure chest) and throne chair which later was redesigned

to become a common piece of furniture in most of the local and aristocratic houses, particularly in the Lamu archipelago.

The new rulers from Oman did not receive much resistance compared to the Portuguese. Except for Pate, Siu, and Mombasa who wanted to be independent, most of the towns agreed to pledge allegiance to the Omani leaders. After all, the new rulers were Muslims and enjoyed almost similar cultural practices. The Omani, Al-Yarubi Sultanate took over a devastated region as a result of the high-handedness of the Portuguese's 200 year's rule. This was a a huge challenge in bringing back the lost glory. The Al Yarubi empire which stretched from Arabia, Baluchistan, and all the way to East Africa became a huge burden in terms of administration. (Berg, 1974; Sheriff, 1992). They therefore decided to post the Mazrui clan to rule East African coast on their behalf. However, the Mazrui saw a fortune in the east African coast and decided to detach the region from the declining Al Yarubi Sultanate. Upon succeeding in cutting links with Oman, they embarked on stabilizing the region's polity and also getting an endorsement from various Swahili Sheikhs. This allowed the Mazrui to start reinvigorating coastal trade and also reconstruction of the dominion towns which were ravaged by the Portuguese's constant bombardment and plunder (Hinawy, 1950). The Omani rule revived the prosperity in the region which had been suppressed by the Portuguese. The port cities, like Mombasa, Lamu, Kismayu, Malindi, Mombasa, Zanzibar, and Kilwa were expanded. During this time, the Bajuni towns thrived as the rich agricultural land regained its status as the granary of the region exporting cereals like maize, millets, sim-sim, and cotton for the regional market and exporting mainly to Arabia (Muhiddin, 1993). Moreover, the mangrove poles which were the most sought-after commodity by Persia and Arabia building sector became a key export commodity which in turn made the Bajuni community richer (Ylvisaker, 1979). The increasing commercial activities in the region proportionally multiplied the wealth made the affluent thus stimulating the importation of exquisite and leisure commodities from Arabia, Persia, and India to furnish their newly built palatial homes (Fleisher, 2018). Moreover, the vibrant economy created a huge demand for skilled artisans and craftsmen who found their way to East Africa to satisfy the pulsating construction industry. The foreign artisans mainly from India and Arabia became instrumental in designing

new palaces, mosques, and towns (Aldrick, 1990). Prior to the Portuguese and Omani rule and to the entry of the foreign artisans, local Bajuni artisans were designing the mosques and towns.

In 1743 Al Busaidy clan captured Oman from Al Yarubi and decided to expand their dominion to East Africa after noticing Mazruis unwavering influence. After protracted battles, in 1823 they managed to emasculate the east African coast from the Mazrui and banish them to the towns of Gasi and Takaungu (Burton, 1872).

The taking over of the coast by the El Busaidy Sultanate increased the momentum to develop the region. To ensure that the East African coast did not fall to other interested groups, the El Busaidy Sultanate under Said Sayyid in 1840 decided to transfer the government from Oman to Zanzibar. Sultan Said Sayyid's tenure is regarded as the second golden period of the east African coast (Muhiddin 1993). He recruited administrators and technocrats from India to come and help him in the management of his newfound dominion. His friendly policies opened doors to hundreds of immigrants, builders, scholars, artisans, speculators, financiers, traders, and middlemen from Arabia and South East Asia to freely come to settle and trade (Aldrick, 1990; Athman, 2018, 2003). Zanzibar was like the contemporary Dubai attracting merchants from all over longing to purchase slaves, agricultural produce, furniture, carved doors, gold, elephant tusks, household ware, and the latest clothing fashions. Said Sayyid died in 1956 leaving a legacy in the development and expansion of the east African coast and the hinterland. Whilst achieving so much, he nevertheless, managed to dissolve chieftains of all east African coastal city-states from southern Tanzania all the way up to Kismayu and made them swear allegiance to the Zanzibar Sultanate. This marked a turning point in Bajuni cultural heritage. Sayyid Said's successors continued with the same zeal and strategies pulling in more settlers mainly from South East Asia and Arabia. From 1840 to 1900 there was a dramatic importation of household items, furniture, and carved doors mainly from India and Arabia prompted by high demand that came out from the construction of new residential and business premises commissioned by wealthy Arab and Indian families (Martin, 1978). The Indian material heritage became a symbol status in many coastal households leading to Swahililization of items over a period of time.

How Bajuni material culture evolved?

The east African coast has been a cultural convergent and fusion point before the arrival of Islam and after. History sources reveal that Egyptians, Greeks, Phoenicians, Indians, Arabs and Persians were the maiden foreigners to set foot in the Azania coast which is basically a littoral stretch of about 2750 kilometers from Kismayu to Ilha de Mozambique. All the civilizations that have interacted with the east African littoral either through intermarriage or trade left a cultural mark which after a period was assimilated and thus created a new layer of material and non-material heritage. Gradually, the ethnic pot adopted new cultural ingredients to come up with unique styles, motifs, and ornamentation above their own known ethnic material culture (Allen, 1973). The evolvement of the *Kingozi language* to Swahili, plus distinct dialects also culminated in the formation of unique material culture from pure ethnic Bantu to distinctive Swahili styles, and motifs (Flesher, 2018; Athman, 2003). By the 10th Century AD, the Azania coast saw the emergence of port cities consisting of exclusive Arab-Islamic architecture with stone buildings made out of mortar and coral rug. Some towns like Kilwa, Manda, Shanga, and Pate had in their housing stock storey buildings with roof slabs supported by mangrove or *banaa* beams.

In most Bajuni towns the houses were separated by a narrow street probably to create shade and retention of wind that ends up cooling the alleys (Donley-Reid, 1992). The interior of the houses had a unique spatial plan with outstanding partition of galleries or *milia* and one self-contained room for the parents plus an extra toilet for the family and guests. At each end of the galleries a locally made mostly *mwakisu, samadari* bed, or imported *shingo ya ngamia* bed likely made in Siu or India would be placed. Together with the beds, there were also a host of furnishings embellishing the house which were either made locally or imported. Amongst the standout decorative items are porcelain plates from China or Persia placed orderly in the niches symbolizing opulence and class within the society (Longair, 2018). Normally, most of the houses particularly for the aristocrats would be fitted with a carved entry doorway with the interior decorated with niches and plaster designs mostly with geometric patterns (Allen, 1973). However, not all the Bajuni towns had buildings consisting of stone buildings. Actually, in most Bajuni towns the dominant dwelling

was made from mud and thatched roof except mosques and tombs which were constructed using coral rugs and lime mortar.

As we trace the evolving history of Bajuni material heritage perhaps we need to know what material culture is. All of what is referred to as tangible cultural possessions which have been acquired gradually by society over a period of time is what can be termed as material heritage or culture. The possessions in this case, can be tools, weapons, utensils, machines, ornaments, pieces of art, buildings, monuments, written records, religious images, clothing and objects of distinct value. The Bajuni had four periods of enriching their material heritage.

The first was during the Kingozi era which can be put between 1000-500BC when there was minimal contact with the outside civilizations other than the Bantu material heritage (Sutton, 1968). During this time mud and thatched roof houses were commonly in existence, and probably the simple *mwakisu bed* was also in place. Additionally, the *Ngozi* attire for both men and women was fashionable at this time, and since this period is associated with 1st millennium, iron-based implements such as jembe, spear, and knives were in use. Since Wangozi were Bantu, it's clear during this time they had already mastered the art of making pottery utensils which were authenticated by the presence of fragments of pottery materials in all Bajuni archaeological sites (Horton 1986; Wilson,1980). Excavations done in Kismayu, Shanga, Mtwapa, and Mambrui all reveal the existence of organized metallurgical works before the coming of Islam.

After the Wangozi period came the age of Islam where hordes of immigrants, adventurers, traders, evangelists, and colonialists came to the Azania coast. Their interaction with the natives gradually created the spiritual, technological, and cultural fusion that resulted in the emergence of wealthy city-states. According to archaeologists, the most formidable, oldest, and wealthy city-states such as Shanga, Manda, Pate, and Siu were those within the Lamu archipelago (Middleton, 1992). During their hay days (1000-1400AD) the aforementioned port towns had robust trade links with other Indian Ocean port cities importing assorted merchandise such as porcelain ware, jars, cloth, weapons, and furniture (Ylvisaker, 1979). Gradually the overseas items were in abundance in the Bajuni towns which stimulated local artisans to produce copies of the items particularly

those made out of timber, leather, and cotton (Allen, 1973). One town that came to be referred to as the factory of Bajuni material culture was Siu located in the Lamu archipelago west of Pate Island which between 1400-1800 was the crucible that cooked the Bajuni material culture.

The third phase of the formation of Bajuni material culture was during the 200 years of Portuguese rule which started in 1500 and ended in 1700AD. It is on record that the Portuguese did not stimulate any development and expansion of Bajuni towns apart from building military forts to help suppress constant rebellions by the natives. However, before they were removed by Omani Arabs they left *kasha*, (treasure chest) and throne chair which was remodeled in Siu town to come up with a variety of designs and embellishments (Brown, 1986).

The final phase was the post-Portuguese period (1700-1900) in which both the Mazrui and later El Busaidi Oman Arabs made a complete cultural make-over of the east African coast through the introduction of their patriarchal customs and ways of life including dress code. This was the time when the new rulers encouraged importation of a variety of items, new styles of furniture, and assorted styles of carved doors to satisfy the huge demand by the aristocrats, administrators, and wealthy settler-merchants who were putting up new houses in towns like Zanzibar, Tanga, Mombasa, Malindi Lamu, and other Bajuni towns up to Kismayu (Sheriff, 1987). Local craftsmen, though skilled, could not meet these demands. It is also during this period both the Omani rulers and the Indian merchants imported a variety of carved doors for different purposes. The wealthy Omanis choose to import the imposing and intricately embellished square carved door directly from Oman for their new houses. On the other hand, the royal families seemed to have different tastes in doors and thus elected to import huge and imposing carved doors with half-round crowns (Aldrick, 1998). These doorways were both made in Oman and India but later they were manufactured in Zanzibar after the Sultans encouraged skilled craftsmen of all trades to come and settle in his dominion and wotk alongside the local craftsmen. Apart from the doors they also imported exquisite furniture from India to go along with their palatial homes. The Indian merchants were much more particular in their choice of doors in their new houses and business premises. Since they were largely shopkeepers and traders, they, therefore, imported directly

from India the so-called Gujarati doorway known for its strong shutters purposely built to wade-off break-ins by thieves (Athman, 1996).

The period between 1800 to 1900 is regarded by the locals as the last golden age of the east African coast. The huge trade volumes between East Africa and mainly Arabia, India, and Europe other parts of created many wealthy middle-class who choose to invest in real estate because of soaring demands for homes (Sheriff, 1987). The economic prosperity could be visibly seen in Zanzibar, Mombasa, Tanga, Malindi, Lamu, Bajuni towns up to Kismayu. It is on record that during the tenure of Sultan Barghash (1870-1888) most of the coastal towns were reorganized by Indian and European planning architects. Almost all coastal towns received a facelift and for the first time along the street's bazaars appeared hanging ornate wooden balconies. Zanzibar was the capital of the Sultanate and hence it was the trend-setter and influenced all sectors of the economy and culture (Martin, 1978). Regional and local merchants thronged to Zanzibar just like same way now Kenyans are traveling to Dubai to buy the latest and fashionable clothing, jewelry, furniture, and domestic appliances for business and private use. Though the merchandise was mostly from overseas, the traders would nevertheless, buy them for personal use and also vend to other coastal towns.

The Siu handcraft factory and enhancement of Bajuni material heritage

One cannot ignore Siu in any discussion of east African material culture. Siu flourished in the 13th century but, took a nose-dive during the Portuguese period. It later picked up again in the 18th Century. According to Howard Brown (1988) between 1700 and 1850, Siu reached its zenith and became the center of Islamic theology, art, and craft. During its heyday, Siu was one of the Swahili towns that was self-sufficient in terms of food production and manufacture of household items including furniture. Oral historians reveal that Siu's expertise in the manufacture of unique and exquisite handcraft products could be a result of a 14th-century marooned Indian dhow in which besides the seafarers they were also craftsmen who later settled in the area and trained the locals how to make a variety of handcrafted items (Brown, 1988; Namunaba, 2020). It is believed that certain furniture styles such as the famous Siu stools whose legs were

beautifully lathed and painted in red, green, and black colour were influenced by the marooned Indians because similar kinds of stools and beds were also found in the Gujerati region. Another outstanding piece of furniture made in Siu was the original *kitanda cha pili pili*, *kitanda cha shingo ya ngamia* and *kitanda cha samadari.* The three famous beds were so attractive to the locals that owing to elaborate and intricate woodwork, they became status symbols in the Swahili society and also used for payment of dowry (Allen 1974). Siu was an economically vibrant town despite not using the expansive ocean to its advantage. As opposed to other Swahili towns that depended on fishing for livelihood, interestingly, Siu society abhorred fishing as they referred to the occupation kazi *ya watu wa chini* (a job for the disadvantaged) (Brown, 1988). Perhaps knowing that there was a huge market domestically and, regionally for handcraft items they thus concentrated their energy on that sector. Hence, the skilled craftsmen of Siu not only upped their game of producing unique quality furniture, but also, they were good in textile work, paper making, book printing and binding, leather work, metallurgy, gold, and silver-smithing making all types of jewelry (Brown, 1988).

In leather work, Siu manufactured the best sandals fervently sought by the wealthy and aristocrats across the Swahili coast and beyond. Moreover, in woodwork, the Siu craftsmen produced a remarkable variety of doorway styles such as the red painted and incised carved door with a rectangular frame and another almost similar shape but decorated with geometrical carving popularly known as "Bajuni" style. Besides the doors, Siu town was known for the production of throne chairs said to have been influenced by the Portuguese but later the local craftsmen created their own designs and added with variety of inlay patterns. Siu textile work was also famously produced for local use and export such as *viguni* (kikoi), kanzu, sails, and, embroidered hats and silk materials. The abundant and cheap labour mainly from the slaves as well as the lower-class groups pushed the wheel of production in all trades to satisfy both local and regional markets. At its zenith (1300 -1800), Howard Brown (1988) states that (the Population of Siu was between 25,000 and 30,000 people, making it the highest among the competing towns north of River Tana to Kismayu. As Allen (1974) discloses, by 19th century Siu became the factory of handcraft exporting its products far and wide. Siu was also a cultural and spiritual Mecca where many of the local and regional

Muslim scholars depended on acquiring hand-written Quran and Islamic manuscripts done in a variety of Arabic calligraphic styles in the field of Hadith, Maulidi, and Jurisprudence. They were also good at making musical instruments such as *zumari, goma, tari, msewe, njuga, chapuo, kigoma, nai, dafi, msondo,* and *vumi*. Amongst, the key customers for the Siu material art and crafts were the affluent Bajuni from the neighbouring towns who favoured imported carved doors, cloth, clay pots, dhow sails, chain locks for the doors, beds, and many other items.

On the other hand, learning from the craftsmen of Siu, other Bajuni towns also manufactured their own handicraft products either by remodeling the imports from Siu and other places to suit their taste or creating their own styles. Within the Swahili, the Bajuni have dominated the dhow building sector for centuries to the present times (Grottaneli, 1950; Prins,1965; Welsh, 2020). The Boni forest has been a reliable source of supplying timber and logs for dhow building, furniture, and household items. The Bajuni towns were also suppliers of *kitanda cha mwakisu*, clay ports, weapons, knives, swords, drums, coconut graters, brooms, and floor mats of different designs -among others. Excavations done in some of the Kenyan Bajuni towns unearthed evidence of the existence of spindle whorls dating to 10th century which suggests that the Bajuni were also good in *kutarizi* cotton spinning and cloth making which they could have adopted from the Banadir coast known for production of exquisite Banadir *Kikoi* and women wrap-around dresses (Brown, 1988). However, the arrival of the Europeans in Zanzibar and, the rise of Lamu as an economic hub on the north coast, and the subsequent internalization of new trade routes, which flooded the east African market with modern products killed-off the Siu and generally Bajuni handcraft industry.

Conclusion

The many centuries of east African coastal peoples interaction with the outside world coupled with a huge number of foreign immigrants who have made the region their home has enriched the local material culture in almost all trades. New comers (mainly male) including the Omani Arabs intermarried with local people and took up the local identity. They became Bajuni or Swahili. Anything that was introduced in the coastal

culture as long as it did not clash with the Islamic beliefs and local cultural traditions, without doubt, after some time, was adopted and domesticated. It is against this reason that the Bajuni material heritage from clothing, furniture, household items, jewelry, metalwork, weaponry, and woodwork was hugely enriched. The Bajuni towns' strategic location has given them the advantage of embracing diverse east African as well as Indian ocean material cultures. Things could have been promising for the Bajuni towns if partition was not executed by British and Italian colonialists which saw the alienation of several Bajuni towns between Kenya and Somalia. This certainly disturbed the free-flowing inter-town trade links and with local coastal inhabitants that had extended for centuries. The last nail in the Bajuni coffin was the shifta menace shortly after Kenya's independence where constant and sporadic attacks on both sides of the international border divide forced them to abandon their towns to relocate to Lamu, Malindi, Watamu, Ngomeni, and Mombasa. Fleeing the ancestral land was painful. It made the Bajuni the first internally displaced people in Kenya and they thus lost substantial intangible and tangible heritage that they had built for centuries.

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Chapter Six

Land, Identity and the Bajuni Community of Kenya and Somalia

Ochieng' Philemon Nyamanga & Athman Lali Omar

Introduction

The Bajuni are a Bantu speaking community native to Kenya and Somalia. Their homeland in Somalia is Kismayu and the Islands of Chula, Madoga, Satarani, Ras Kiamboni, Bur Gabo, Dudey, Koyama and Chovae, while in Kenya, they inhabit various islands of the Lamu archipelago (Kiunga, Mwambore, Ishakani, Simambae, Rubu, Matironi, Mvundeni, Mkokoni, Shanga, Rasini (Faza), Tchundwa, Mbwajumwali, Myabogi, Kizingitini, Ndau, Kiwayuu, Mtangawanda and Ashuwe). As an agricultural, fishing and seafaring community, the Bajuni depend as much on land as on the Indian Ocean for their livelihoods. In this chapter we discuss the Bajuni land question within the context of their marginalization as a minority community. We also provide perspectives on how the challenges of land tenure could be mitigated.

Land is the primary resource required by every human community not only for practicing agriculture but also for establishing homes. As an essential inheritance gift that children so critically expect from their parents, land has always been a source of tension within and between communities. It is a critical socio-economic resource whose ownership, allocation, and access are emotive because they determine the economic well-being of individuals (Ochieng, 2021: 34). The *Shifta* menace of the 1960s and 1970s drove the Kenyan Bajuni off their land, significantly alienating them. The Bajuni felt more undermined by the state when their land in Mpeketoni was transferred to 'outsiders', especially people from Central Kenya, through the Lake Kenyatta Settlement Scheme. The Bajuni feel that their land rights are insecure within the existing political systems.

Political systems refer to recognised types of political organisation; that is, the set of formal legal institution that constitutes a government or a state. In this setting, we refer to the two states (Kenya and Somalia) and the social organisation of the component communities. Corruption, impunity and insecurity prevail in the two states of focus. Impunity refers to an exemption from punishment or freedom from the injurious consequences of an action. Insecurity refers to the state of being exposed to danger or threat; lack of protection from danger. We briefly look at the concept of marginalization, a crucial concept in sociology, political science, social psychology, and other fields studying social inequalities and injustices that intricately affect most human societies. This concept is used often in the Bajuni community in relation to the challenges of land ownership and limited access to livelihood opportunities compared to other ethnic groups.

The concept of marginalization

As a multidimensional, multi-causal, historical phenomenon, marginalization refers to a situation whereby a region or a group of people are confined to a lower or peripheral edge of the society by being denied access to social-economic, cultural or political opportunities of the wider society (UNDP, 2015). Etefa (2019) considers marginalization as the process of relegating, downgrading or excluding people from the benefits of the state. In this context, marginalization is based on persistent historical or cultural reasons or on social, economic and political choices made by those in control of the local, national or global system (Etefa, 2019). Marginalization is manifested culturally, socially and structurally (Billson 2005). Cultural marginalization implies dilemmas of cross-cultural identities and assimilation. Social role marginalization refers to tensions occurring when individuals are restricted from belonging to a positive reference group. Finally, structural marginalization refers to the social, economic and political powerlessness and disadvantages accruing from exclusion.

Marginalization undermines national cohesion and has generated substantial debate among conflict and peace scholars, economists, human rights advocates and political scientists across the globe. Lessman (2015) observes that internal conflicts produce colossal human tragedies,

creating humanitarian crisis that could destabilize countries and regions of the world. Scholars note that conflicts are a major reason for persistent underdevelopment by destroying capital stocks and reducing expected investment returns. Article 10 (2) (b) of the Constitution of Kenya, identifies marginalization as a serious threat to national cohesion. The constitution endeavours "to promote human dignity, equity, social justice, inclusiveness, equality, human rights, non-discrimination and protection of the marginalized."

Socio-economic marginalization in Kenya mostly manifests itself in unequal access to land, skewed development of physical infrastructure, and disproportionate provision of social services such as education and health facilities among others (Ochieng, 2021: 31). Article 43 of the Kenyan Constitution recognizes the socio-economic and cultural rights of all citizens. It identifies 'Vulnerable and Marginalized Groups' (VMGs) as minority communities who have been put on the periphery through historical processes and prohibits alienation of marginalized groups by virtue of their relatively small population or any other reason making them unable to participate effectively in the socio-economic life. It recognizes the inhibitions caused by foraging and pastoralism to economic development owing to their intent on preserving unique cultural identities. The VMGs should be equally engaged in contributing to national development through their inclusion in political life. Article 260 of the Constitution further recognizes the need to pay special attention to "marginalized communities", defined as "any small community that has been unable to fully participate in Kenya's socio-economic life; traditional community that preserves its unique cultural identity from assimilation, and remains outside Kenya's integrated social and economic life." (Ochieng, 2021: 31). It is an indigenous community that maintains a traditional lifestyle and livelihood based on a hunter or gatherer economy.

The term 'marginalization' gained currency in sociological research in the 1960s, upon the realization that some developing countries demonstrated rapid economic growth, but societal members were receiving increasingly unequal shares of success. Anthropologists study marginal groups, believing that by observing marginal groups of a society, they would discover how that society defines itself and is defined by other societies, and what constitute its key cultural values (International

Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences, 2018). Marginalized groups are usually excluded from power and resources that enable self-determination in economic, political and social settings.

Methodology

This chapter relies largely on primary and secondary information drawn from community interactions and review of relevant published and unpublished material, the resultant information being analysed and presented thematically.

Bajuni community

The principal ethnographic and geographical sources place the Bajuni, also known as Watikuu, community in their traditional territory a long coastal settlements and islands between Lamu and Kismayu. The **Bajuni** mainly reside on the Bajuni Islands and surrounding coastal areas between Kismayu and Mombasa, especially near Kenya's border with **Somalia**. Grottanelli (1955), Prins (1967), Nurse (1980, 1982) describe the Bajuni as a community divided into nearly fifty clans (*ukoo, uchumbo*, or *kamas*i): al-Ausi(i), al-Kindi, al-Khadheraji(i) Nofali, Abimali, Abugado, Amshiri, Avutila, Vyangove, Birkao (or Buri Gavo equated with Shungwaya), il-Barawi, Chandraa/Tendaa, Chithindani, Chovae, Tchula, Chundra, Daile, Dili, al-Famaui, Firado/Ferado, Garre, Gede, Hartikawa, Kachwa, Kava, (Na)Kilio. Kismayu(u), Kiunga, Kiwayuu, Koyama, Kudai, Ngumi, Omwe/Vumwe/Vumbe, Rasini, Rasmali, Simambaye, Shiradhi, Shungwaya, Tak(w)a, Uero, Umbuyi, Upembo, Utanuni, Uwani, Veku, Vekwaa, Vumbu, Dhipingoni, Dhitindini. The size of the entire Bajuni population in Kenyan and Somalia remains unknown.

Centuries ago the Bajuni experienced Arab influence to their culture and religious beliefs. They trace their origins to diverse groups; primarily coastal Bantu descendants, hunter-gatherers, as well as Arab, Persian and Somali immigrants of Malayo- Indonesian ancestry. As a Muslim community, the Bajuni are guided by Islamic laws in conducting their affairs with their lives revolving around the Mosque and daily prayers. Their customs and traditions state that they migrated from Shungwaya due to conflicts with the Cushitic Orma and Somali, who pushed them

from their native land to their current locations. Every Bajuni must give his children Islamic education and rely on the Kadhi to handle criminal and civil disputes. At birth, a Bajuni child is held by the father, family friend, or teacher, who recites the *adhaan* prayers on its ears and is instructed on Islamic teachings. Bajuni men and women collaborate in the realisation of community livelihoods based largely on fishing, sailing, trading, woodcarving, boat-making and metalwork. Men and women usually gather at their respective compartments of the Mosque each prayer time for daily worship. There are also important community Baraza in which all members participate in deciding on crucial community matters.

Political turmoil in Somalia left thousands of Bajuni shattered by persecution and conflict. A minority community, the Bajuni suffered untold discrimination during Mohamed Siyad Barre's reign (1969-1991). From 1974 their fishing gear and boats were confiscated as they were compelled to join government cooperative societies and the fishermen were evacuated from their islands (Abby, 2005: 14). With the outbreak of the Somali civil war and the overthrow of the Barre regime in January 1991, the Bajuni fled Somalia to UNHCR refugee camps at Kwa Jomvu and Utange in Mombasa. In May 1994 these camps extended to "Swaleh Nguru", Liboi, Ifo, Dagahaley, Hagadera, Kakuma, Ruiru, Marafa, Hatimy, housing over 4, 542 people. Recurrent clashes between Kenyan villagers and the refugees, in March 1997, forced the Kenyan authorities to close most of the refugee camps. The UNHCR relocated 16,704 Somali refugees to Dadaab and Kakuma. By the year 1996, Bajuni and other Somali refugees were resettled in 20 sites throughout the U.S.A (Rasbridge, n.d.).

Marginalization of the Bajuni

The history of marginalization is connected to minorities and marginalized groups and communities. Social segregation of minority groups in Somalia dates back to periods before the armed conflict of 1991. Siyad Barre's regime gave minority groups some prominence, mainly from the Gaboye (Midgan), Tumal and Yibir in high military and government posts. The regime did not institute any tangible programmes to empower minority groups, but seriously violated their basic human rights and right to development. In 1975, large sections of Bantu agricultural lands in

Jilib and Jamame were systematically appropriated by the Siyad Barre regime under the pretext of development projects through the Resources Sharing Policy of Hawliyo Hantiwadaag, the socialist ideology the regime adopted (IDMC, 2007; UN-Habitat, 2020). The lands appropriated include lands in Marerey and Mugambo, where the Marerey Sugar Project and Mugambo Rice projects were set up. The Bantu farmers in these areas were forced to abandon their lands without any compensation. They lost hundreds of mango trees, large fields of maize crops, and large quantities of underground crops. Land in the area was rewarded to Siyad Barre's supporters from the Marehan and Dhulbahante clans, creating untold suffering to Bantu families in the Lower and Middle Juba riverine areas.

In Kismayu and the Bajuni Islands, the Bajuni faced similar abuses. They were forced to join the Somali Fishing Cooperative, established in Kismayu in 1974 by the Marehan, Majerten and Dhulbahante people who had no fishing culture. The latter took over most of the fishing equipment including fishing boats and forced the Bajuni to join the cooperatives, thus significantly affecting the Bajuni economic lifeline. Minority groups in the north were denied rights to own land or livestock and confined to blacksmithing and shoe making. In Kismayu, the seaport, airport and commercial activities remained under the Habregedir and Marehan. The Bantu and Bajuni worked only as underpaid servants. The Bajuni, attacked by militiamen from Habargedir during the initial periods of armed conflict, suffered land confiscation and rape, and forced to abandon their homes to become refugees in Kenya.

According to the National Gender and Equality Commission, (NGEC, 2014: 10), insecurity drove the Bajuni to Kilifi in the 1960's (Allen, 2008) as the *shifta (*bandits*)* forced them (the Bajuni people) from their mainland possessions at Shakani, Sideni, Mambore and Manda (Nguri, 2021: 33; Okoth-Ogendo, 1976: 13). Landless, uneducated with only a few in formal employment, the Bajuni are hardly represented in governance structures in the country. Major factors driving exclusion and marginalization include poverty, identity, assimilation, and political considerations, among others. Minority Kenyan communities remained unrecognized and continually excluded from the mainstream, economic and socio-political development during the colonial and post-colonial era. Lacking government social infrastructure (electricity, markets for their

animals and produce, clean drinking water, flood protection), insecurity in many pastoral lands occasioned by the cattle rustling results in displacements, death, property destruction, closure of schools and health facilities. Ethnic groups with small populations, such as the Bajuni, perennially disadvantaged from exercising their political rights and joining legislative and policy institutions. Thus, the Watta, Yaaku, Terik, Ilyana and Bajuni find themselves pushed to the periphery in both elective and nominative political positions by majority populations. The communities also suffer periodic food insecurity and in the implementation related to affirmative actions. They also have limited access to education.

Bajuni land question

The question of land remains critical a matter in various parts of the world. The Kenya Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC), established in 2008 to address injustices from 1963 to 2008, touched on land matters owing to the contentions surrounding it. TJRC (2012) notes the various vital uses to which land is put: commercial, religious, social and cultural purposes. The intriguing land questions are connected with historical injustices centring on the denial of access to deserving members of the community for productive purposes. As a primary resource for production, required for practicing agriculture and establishing homes, land is an essential gift passed from one generation to the next through inheritance. Due to its significance, land has always been a source of tension within and between communities and was central to Kenya's liberation struggle (Njogu, 2015). Njogu observes that land has always been at the centre of African politics and economics. He affirms that 'it has shaped liberation struggles in all regions of the continent and is associated with most violent conflict as communities struggle over power and resources' (Njogu, 2015: 6).

This section discusses the instances and impacts of land injustices and marginalization that the Bajuni communities in Kenya and Somalia have experienced over the years and the changes that have accompanied the new constitutional dispensation in Kenya and the political stabilization in Somalia in-so-far-as minority group interests are concerned. While notable positive changes are in existence in both countries, it is feared that

community land issues remain unresolved and are among the challenges necessitating the push for further reforms.

Minority groups in Somalia faced numerous socio-economic problems even prior to the endless armed conflicts in Somalia following the overthrow of President Mohamad Siyad Barre (1910-1995) in 1991 and were subsequently magnified with the collapsed State. The problems arose from divergent cultural values that segregated and excluded minority communities from dominant clans; the six Somali clans: Isxaq, Dir, Darood, Hawiyye, Digil and Raxanwiin. The minority were considered socially 'inferior', without full rights and had low social, economic and political status. As a result of the social segregation, economic deprivation and political manipulation, minority groups were systematically excluded from mainstream government positions. The few who held positions had no power to speak for their communities. Bantu groups, among them, Bajuni, suffered systematic land confiscation and property seizure. Minority groups were politically manipulated to oppose dominant clans, resulting in animosity between them. When the Somalia state collapsed, the minority clans suffered brutal reprisals.

In Kenya, land tenure issues that accompany historical changes, remain crucial matters to date. As land problems become more complex, the country requires a proper implementation plan for its comprehensive land policy. The various land commissions set up to address these problems have progressively captured the political, economic and cultural aspects relating to land. The Bajuni land claims are central to land discussions. Prior to Kenya's independence in 1963, the Bajuni were recognized by the colonial government to have had their own land, stretching from southern Somalia to the Tana Delta and were considered equal partners with other Kenyan communities. Unfortunately, the *shifta* menace of the 1960s and 1970s drove the Bajuni off their land and to date, the Bajuni feel alienated from their land through the Government`s laxity to solve the insecurity in Lamu region. Swahili and Bajuni land problems emanate from the insecurity that banditry has occasioned over the years. The Bajuni people believe that it's the lack of Government's political will that has made them aliens in their own country.

Land is a crucial asset whose allotment and use need to be well monitored and regulated by sound and impartial laws. Kenya has relied

on colonial land regulations that alienated land from the communities by proclaiming all land as Crown Land (see, the Crown Lands Ordinance of 1915; Sorenson, `Land Policy in Kenya 1895-1945: Kanogo 1989: Breen 1976; Kenya Land Commission, 1934). In 2000 the Bajuni gave submissions to the Land Commission chaired by Mr. Charles Njonjo in answer to the squatter questions and general land use and control- as a basis of a concrete land policy. In 2016 a community land policy was also enacted. What now remains is the implementation of the policy to address the community fears.

Overall condition of Bajuni lands

Most of the Bajuni lands form part of what is today Lamu County, which has three major types of soils: red loam soils; sandy soils and rocky soils. The red loam soils have high fertility and are found mainly along the lowlands of Witu, Mpeketoni and small parts of Amu and Kiunga divisions. They support the production of maize, beans, cassava and cowpeas. The sandy soils, which have moderate fertility, are found in the Amu and Faza divisions where they support the coconut palms, maize and cassava production. Rocky soils found within the northern marginal parts of Witu and Kiunga divisions support only scanty grassland vegetation and livestock (Lamu District Development Plan, 1997-2001: 15).

The islands could support a dense urban population. Faza and Kizingitini have the highest population density (31.6 persons per sq. km in 1999), Kiunga has the lowest density (1.9 in 1999) and Amu Division has the highest population (See, Lamu District Development Plan, 1997-2001: 12, 13). Pate, nearly double the size of Lamu or Manda, has more arable lands though lacking in good drinking water. Manda is mostly red sand and coral rock with mangrove swamps. The Bajuni Islands are limited agriculturally. All the towns depended on the resources of the adjacent mainland for their food supplies and wealth. Most farms were only small holdings, held by individual families; however, wealthy merchants controlled large plantations worked by landless clients and slaves. The main produce was food stuff- millets, sorghum and rice- consumed locally and traded along the coast. Cotton was also grown to supply the local weaving industry and mangrove poles, cowries and orchella weed, rubber and salt were collected for export. On the islands themselves, weaving,

basketry and sail-making were major craft industries, while coconuts, mangoes, dates and tamarind were grown for export (Spear, 1981: 93-94).

Most of the townspeople seasonally migrated to the mainland to cultivate. Majority of the inhabitants lived in mud and wattle houses while the elite who dominated commerce, had elegant stone houses and mosques. They retained an elaborate social stratification system, which ensured that the majority of the archipelago`s population remained farmers, craftsmen and fishermen. Each Bajuni settlement had its own ruler (sultan). They governed with advice of a small council and the *kadhi* (*qadi*) was in charge of the courts and Islamic law; *Muhtasib,* in charge of the police-force and *Emir* or *Wazir*, in charge of administration (Atieno Odhiambo et al 1977: 20). In the recent past. the Bajuni have revived their Council of Elders, whose Chairman was recognised by the state during the Mashujaa Day celebrations in Kericho County on 20th October 2023.

Bajuni land possessions

The Bajuni of Pate Island occupied three towns − Pate, Siyu and Faza − each of which had large areas on the mainland under their control (Ghaidan, 1975: 21). When the Pate ruling family (the Nabahani), were deposed, serious political upheavals engulfed the community as Sultan Ahmed Fumo Luti fled with a thousand followers to the mainland around 1840 (Ylvisaker, 1982: 2). Pate had longstanding commercial contacts with the people of Tana delta and the rulers found it a safe refuge. However, in 1865, Zanzibari pressure forced the Sultan to withdraw to Witu. Pate's sphere traditionally encompassed the mainland areas facing the creeks of Mongoni, Mgini and Wange, extending as far as Nduruni. The borderline for the mainland controlled and farmed by Lamu and Pate, was at Magogoni. Nabahani (Sultan Ahmed bin Fumo Luti, or Simba of Witu as he was called) still had overall control over the land in which he was resettled and at Siyu. He leased out large tracts of Bajuni ancestral (Siyu land including Wange and Kiangwe and Manda Island) to the Germans by 1880. Areas such as Ukunga, midway between Mpeketoni and Kipini belonged to Pate and Siyu. Siyu and Tchundwa inhabitants used lands adjoining Pate's sphere east of Ankish in the areas of Wange and Dodori creeks, varying each specific year, with some overlap. Faza had much of their cultivation around Ndau Bay. The Bajuni cultivated

large areas of the land on the mainland extending many miles up to Boni forest areas including Mangai and Bolaa as well as the entire coast from Mkooni, past Mambore, Kiunga and Ishakani, as far as Bur Gavo. The Bajuni lands, for that matter, extended extensively from Lamu to around Kismayu in Somalia.

Colonial claims to Swahili and Bajuni lands

Around 1866 the vast area of Lamu archipelago came under various jurisdictions: Zanzibar, Britain and Germany. After Sayyid Said, the Sultan of Oman and Zanzibar, had been invited by the people of Lamu in the early part of the century to assist them in turning a joint Pate - Mazrui offensive, Lamu Island and the lands under cultivation by Lamu townsmen and neighbouring villagers, became subject to the Sultan's rule. Several Omani Arabs poured in thereafter. The Omani Arabs intermarried and remained town dwellers, and some of their most influential rulers acquired expansive land both on the islands and on the mainland (Ylvisaker, 1979: 22).

When the European colonialists came, even the Sultan's lands were placed directly under them and there was competition over land everywhere. The competition was resolved peacefully through commissions and agreements. The Zanzibar Commission of 1885-6, formed following persuasions made by the British to the Germans and the French to inspect the coast, decided that the main islands and ports were in the Sultan's dominions. They noted that Mombasa was a crucial entry-port into the interior. The Sultan's coastal possessions stretched from Ruvuma River to Warsheikh of Benadir region, Somalia. The partition treaty of October 1886 affirmed and apportioned this land to the Sultan of Zanzibar and recognized his authority over the islands of Zanzibar, Pemba, Mafia and Lamu as well as over the coast, to a depth of ten miles (16km) from River Ruvuma to Kipini. Kismayu, Barawa, Merka, Muqdisho and Warsheikh were also recognized as the Sultan's (the lands in southern Somalia were transferred to Italy when Jubaland was ceded in 1925). The territory between the Rivers Ruvuma and Tana was divided into German and Britain spheres of influence by a line which now marks the boundary between Kenya and Tanzania. Dar es Salaam became a German possession leased from the Sultan. Britain

recognised the German possession of Witu and the corridor to the sea at Manda (Marsh & Kingsnorth, 1972: 94-96). The Treaty accorded the British, Zanzibar (1890), Uganda (1894) and Witu (as part of British East Africa Protectorate) (1895). Germany's previous claim to Witu and the territory between it and Jubbaland, including the Lamu archipelago was quashed (she got the Island of Heligoland in the North Sea, as a valuable naval base). Germany got the Sultan's ten miles strip (on Mrima Coast, Tanganyika) which had been leased since 1886 for 200,000 Sterling Pounds.

The above captures the changing fortunes in East Africa and especially in the Coast, where colonial onslaught led to changes in land tenure and several legal apparatus were introduced to regulate land acquisition, ownership and development as colonial structures were laid out. They encouraged white settlers into their spheres of influence, who took up arable land that were best suited for their occupation (the White Highlands). They defined all uninhabited land as Crown Land (Government Land) and government authority prevailed (see, Crown Land Ordinance, 1902). Later all land came under the Crown (Crown Land Ordinance, 1915; Sorenson, 1967). Several restrictions on land were therefore enforced on the natives, who were put in the reserves and many people became squatters. Most of the land in Lamu County today is Government land (5,054 sq. km) and only 24% of the land (1760 sq. km) is under freehold and leasehold (Lamu District Development Plan, 1997-2001: 16). Whatever policies the Colonial Government enacted seem to have been adopted wholesale by the independent Government of Kenya. New developments and policies hardly deviate from this general norm (see, Community Land Policy, 2016).

Swahili and Bajuni land tenure system

Marguerite Ylvisaker (1979), Janet Bujra (1968) and Usam Ghaidan (1976) provide ample details on agriculture and land tenure systems in the Lamu region. The Swahili and Bajuni have two types of lands, shamba and konde. Land that had trees and which was heritable, leasable, saleable or disposable in any way considered desirable to its owner is known as a *shamba*. On the other hand, land that was held for temporary use for which there is no right to sell or inherit is known as a *konde*.

Individuals and groups could hold land through inheritance or by purchase. Every land transaction was monitored and registered by the *Kadhi*. Lamu land transactions before 1888, for example, were recorded in handwritten documents called *khatt* (Ghaidan, 1976:109). The traditional method of land acquisition and use in the coast was group tenure, in which a group of islanders would occupy an arable area, clear and burn the fields, leaving stumps and large trees (baobab and tamarind) as land marks. Shifting cultivation was the main agricultural system. Each farmer held some parcel of land in which slave labour was used, each plot being cultivated for two to three years and then left fallow to regenerate as a new piece was occupied and cultivated for roughly six years before being evacuated. Land belonged to the people so long as they cultivated and they would not bar anybody from annexing any parcel for his use (Ylvisaker, 1982: 7).

This is the same system promoted by the Islamic Law (Sharia), as it allows anyone to occupy any unclaimed land by advertising or marking out its boundaries. Strictly speaking, however, no one owns land: it is merely held in trust for the coming generations. The Colonial Government considered any unoccupied land as public land, but from 1915 all land was brought under the State; when the Independent Government took over, it maintained this temperament on land so that almost all land today is government owned and was used as a political tool to buy support and alienate those who had divergent opinions.

Bajuni agricultural pursuit was a formal activity. Pate had thriving tobacco plantations and supported coconut palms, mangoes and other fruit trees in its fertile soils. With its shoreline fringed with luxurious coconut palms Siyu town was considered the pulse of Lamu region owing to its influential political activities on the island and the mainland. Following Bajuni customs within each island town, a group of men, *wajumbe ya wakulima* were the expert leaders of production, who monitored the seasons and predicted the outcome of each season and were respected. The slave farmed lands were set up into one block and that farmed by small freemen in another block. Once they arrived at a given cultivable area, the farmers and their labourers built their temporary shelters (*makuti bandas*) in a joint village that was supported by collective donations for their sustenance (also managed by the Jumbe). Bajuni farmers had individual

plots at Hindi and other villages, and labourers were supervised by the *nokoa* (slave supervisor). Lamu landowners and the Bajuni of Mgini had a number of such supervisors in charge of their estates. The *nokoa* had to cooperate with the *jumbe*. Collective farming in Bajuni lands and individual tenure were respected.

The efficiency of agricultural systems depended on peace and flourishing trade, availability of cheap labour (slaves), rainfall and seasonal variations, good farming soils and wildlife. Apart from these, political rivalries and colonialism ushered in new dimensions that negatively affected the region's agriculture and by 1885, Lamu was reported to be derelict. When Frederick John Jackson (a British explorer and later administrator) visited the Jipe area (in 1884) there were two large slave villages, the place was well cultivated and producing much sorghum, sesame, groundnuts and rice. During the month of September in each year, most land was fallow, save for the paddy fields that had a bumper crop, which the weaver birds destroyed as there were few slaves to chase the birds away and gather the crops (Ylvisaker, 1979: 91). In the wake of the abolition of slave trade and slavery, many slaves became free or escaped from their former lords, and embarked on establishing new settlements. Many of the slave settlements were desolated by the British and German expeditions, witnessing the degradation of land and decrease of agriculture in region.

How is land ownership today?

Somalia has no land laws under development as no institutions exist at a regional level. At the local level, land management decisions are made as the need arises by authorization of the controlling group or governor, or between competing informal authorities. In Kismayu, the controlling group authorizes municipal decisions on an ad hoc basis; there are no municipal regulations, nor does public revenue collection exist on land and property. In some areas in Mogadishu, land allocation for public purposes is managed at the neighbourhood level, focusing on negotiations among the community members themselves. The Transitional Federal Government hopes to institute land reform when stable Government is established in Somalia (Norton, n,d). Jubaland where the Bajuni live has a pluralistic legal land governance system whereby statutory, customary

and Islamic law coexist. Under the customary law, land is treated as a sacred collective good, a symbol of power inherited from the ancestors, and is communally owned. Islamic (or sharia) law is a system of religious rules derived from the Qur'an and Hadiths; it has a stronger power and is more respected than the customary law in Somalia. Statutory law is the codified law developed by formal state institutions. The 1975 land law in Somalia formally eradicated customary land tenure, proclaiming all land as held by the state requiring registration. Most lands in Jubaland are unregistered and numerous land conflicts obtain (UN-Habitat, 2020: 30, 31).

Addressing Bajuni land problems

By 1960, Somalia had gained its independence, while Kenya gained independence in December 1963. The Kenya National Assembly Official Record (Hansard) contains several records of discussions on land ownership and rights. This official record, dated Jun 24 - Jul 30, 1971 documents a discussion of traditionally Bajuni lands (Lamu, Kenya) and dissenting opinions as to ownership. In the official record of May 28 - Jul 4, 1974, there were questions regarding what government actually had jurisdiction over the Bajuni community lands. With the downfall of the Somali government in 1991, Bajuni people experienced abandonment. It was a period of 'Troubles" and marginalization that led Chairman of the Bajuni, Hon. Mohamed Ismail Barkale (Maxamed Ismaaciil Barkaale) to petition the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) for the lawful rights of the Bajuni people in December 2003 (www.somalitalk.com). Barkale was a delegate to the 2003 Somali peace talks. Greater effort has been made to address Somali statelessness and to address issues of land, leadership and revival of the Somali State.

Dealing with the refugee problem

Most of the displaced minorities were not willing to return to their original lands until only very recently. Some feared renewed persecution, while others lost all their possessions and means of livelihood and had no incentive to return. However, a considerable number of minorities have returned from refugee camps. These include the Bajuni from Kismayu and the Bajuni Islands, and Gaboye, Midgan, Tumal and Yibir

in Somaliland. Some 2,000 Bajuni voluntarily repatriated from Jomvu refugee camp in Kenya to Somalia in 1997, following the Government of Kenya's decision to close the three refugee camps (Benadiri, Bravan and Jomvu camps). Had the Bajuni remained, they would have been forced to relocate to Kakuma on the border of Kenya and Sudan, or Dadaab, in the north-eastern part of Kenya. Many minority refugees declined the relocation claiming that the living conditions were too harsh in the two camps. With the help of UNHCR and the Mombasa community, the Bajuni refugees were repatriated to Kismayu and their Islands. The UNHCR gave the repatriating Bajuni's some assistance to "jumpstart" their livelihoods: ten fishing boats and nets. They received no further assistance thereafter, even though they desired to rehabilitate their wells, water catchments, schools and health centres, which were destroyed during the war (Reliefweb 2002).

Solving the Bajuni land problems

- The Bajuni have had long-standing attachment to their ancestral land for centuries and deserve to retain, use and dispose as the *sharia* enjoins.
- Address all land conflicts amicably. All grabbed Bajuni land should be returned unconditionally, so that the landless kinsmen could have a chance to pursue productive activities that are traditionally approved for the wellbeing of their society.
- Abolish all land charges (such as surveying fees, adjudication fees, registration fees and such like) that could predispose anyone to sell his or her land to raise the needed fees as it has been in the past. Land officers should be ready to serve the people by not abusing their office through corrupt land deals.
- Monitor good land usage. Some people have a tendency of leaving their land idle or improperly utilized. As a mandatory requirement once issued with land, the owner should undertake to develop it and access provided.
- As security of Tenure, all allotted land should be well registered and land certificates issued for free. Even land for communal usage (waqf land) (Ghaidan, 1976:111) requires to be well covered.

Conclusion

An attempt has been made to show the extent of the ancestral land of the Bajuni and to also trace the roots of the Bajuni problems centring on land as a basic productive resource that everyone should possess. Land can be used as security for obtaining loans for investments in business ventures, and for crucial financial commitments (school fees, medical fees). Landless is very agonizing for lacking an inheritance societal asset. The Bajuni ancestral lands were taken over due to the Government's laxity to tame the hostile banditry as well as through corrupt deals involving the Lands Office and the Provincial Administration.

The grave Shifta menace contributed to the homeless of hundreds of Bajunis who became squatters and refugees. In Faza alone, four hundred and fifty Bajunis took refuge in 1964. Kenyan citizens and their leadership have spoken against corruption, the desire to eradicate poverty and general marginalisation of the minority communities. One way of doing so is to provide essential resources to the populace: the Bajuni squatters' desire to repossess their ancestral land so as to regain meaningful productive activities (farming, fishing and trade) that insecurity robbed them of.

Land queries need critical, competent, considerate and immediate attention. Landlessness due to insecurity, corrupt acquisition and other causes must be fully addressed and remedied by establishing inheritance claims to land and enforcement of effective use after appropriate land certificates are issued. Delay in issuance of Title Deeds is an abuse. All squatters should be considered for resettlement. Land transactions involving public land that may reflect shadowy deals should be repossessed to public ownership and all land possessions vetted. Another very important issue to address is the different types of land tenure: private, public, customary.

The establishment of Commissions is never the best way to tackle critical land issues, considering the bad history of such commissions. Even when some of the past commissions provided sound recommendations, the Government was always reluctant to implement them. The constitution gives citizens freedom to acquire property and settle anywhere in Kenya. A rather humane approach ought to be used in settling land questions without provoking ethnic tensions. Overall thorough land survey,

adjudication and registration, must be conducted in the whole country in which the voice of the community members should be respected. In Somalia a proactive land management system should be put in place.

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Conclusion

Local knowledge is derived from the particularities of community experiences and histories delivered through language. Just like culture, it emerges from the process of labor as people interact with each other and with nature. Culture is the carrier of this journey of curiosity, discovery, learning, unlearning and the building of institutions. It transmits the moral, aesthetic and ethical values which consequently become entrenched and manifested as the embodiment of community consciousness about their world, but within a context of individual agency. This consciousness is then transmitted across generations to communicate the community's tangible and intangible cultural heritage. But cultures do not grow out of internal processes alone. They are also subject to external forces and influence through contact with other communities and societies.

Cultural heritage is a vital resource with intrinsic and extrinsic value for communities and humanity in general. As the chapters in this book have shown, the Bajuni people value their tangible and intangible cultural heritage. The essays have shown how the heritage has inherent value expressed artistically, aesthetically, intellectually and in identity formation processes, as a site of belonging. It also carries instrumental value because it can be used to serve political, economic, social, spiritual and environmental ends. Beginning with an examination of the *vave* ritual poetry and its place in farming and poetry and culminating in the essay on insecurity of land tenure, we have discussed how Bajuni cultural heritage has been a site of community organizing, inspiration and instrumentalization to voice identity and belonging, create artistic works, advance community values, and claim linguistic and socio-cultural rights.

The Bajuni mainly live on the Islands and the adjacent mainland areas. They have been victims of violent conflict and are also experiencing the effects of climate change. The essays show that their heritage is in jeopardy and ought to be safeguarded for future generations through inclusive policies related to language, culture, and land governance, documentation of heritage experiences, research, intergenerational knowledge transfer

and the utilization of opportunities provided by advances in information technology.

In determining if a linguistic variety is a dialect or a language, linguists use the criteria of 'mutual intelligibility'. Two linguistic varieties are dialects of the same language when speakers can 'understand' each other. Yet many speakers of German varieties and Dutch varieties on the German-Netherlands border understand one another even when they claim to speak two different languages. Prior to the 1990s ethnic conflicts in the Balkans, Serbo-Croatian was considered by its speakers as a single language with many dialects spoken in Serbia, Bosnia, Herzegovina and Croatia. Later Croatian and Serbian started being viewed as different languages. The Bajuni people are considered a sub-group of the Swahili and their language (Bajuni/Kitikuu) categorized as a dialect of Swahili. However, the essays in this book have shown consistently that the Bajuni consider their variety as a language in its own right. This is not surprising because, in the final analysis, the difference between a language and a dialect is a political distinction. It is about power and identity. Within the Swahili dialect continuum, Bajuni is further north and distanced from that spoken in Zanzibar which formed the basis for standard Swahili. While mutual intelligibility between the dialects may have existed in the past, the separation in time and space coupled with the strong feeling of economic and political exclusion, have led to the Bajuni affirming their difference. Objective linguistic criteria is not sufficient in determining if two varieties are dialects of one language or two separate languages. There is fluidity in distinctions: there are moments when Bajuni is a dialect of Swahili and other moments when it affirmed as a separate language. Sociopolitical considerations sit alongside the linguistic criteria.

The UNESCO 2003 Convention for Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage identifies five main domains through which intangible cultural heritage is manifested. These are oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle; performing arts; social practices, rituals and festive events; knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; and traditional craftsmanship. The chapters in this book have touched, to varying degrees, these domains among the Bajuni people. There has also been discussion about how the domains are linked with land, a vital site of community heritage. In the analysis of oral traditions

and poetry, we encounter numerous artistic expressions including proverbs, riddles, narrative poems and many more. The traditions are used to pass on knowledge, values and collective memory. The essays on v*ave*, Mohamed Kombo and Abubaker Khuchi have shown how poetry has been activated to keep the Bajuni culture alive.

The essays show that the Bajuni cultural heritage reinforced through continuous evolution and reenergization. Intangible cultural heritage is sustainably kept alive if it is relevant and adds value to its community, is continuously recreated and transmitted generationally. Safeguarding cultural heritage is not about fixity or freezing, but rather the transfer of knowledge, skills, memory, and experience. One of the most important elements in this process is strengthening the diverse manifestations of heritage. We have shown in this book how the Bajuni use vave for political commentary, how Mohamed Kombo draws on the vave and gungu traditions to articulate perspectives about community values and how Abubaker Khuchi uses the narrative poem to capture the historical experiences of his people. The chapter on material culture shows the creative aspects of Bajuni and the artistry and the functionality of the products developed

Finally, we believe that community involvement in cultural heritage work is inescapable. A key guiding principle of heritage work ought to be people-centeredness. We must listen to community voices, anxieties, concerns and solutions in harnessing experiences, valuing the past and planning for the future. In the writing of this book, we have consciously involved the Bajuni community as we sought to understand the issues and how to address them. The writers of the essays in this book put the Bajuni people at the center of their research and sought local rooted solutions to heritage concerns. This publication opens a window for Kenyan and international students and academia to undertake further research about the Bajuni people.

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